WOMEN OF COLOR INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF SAFETY AND VIOLENCE WHILE STUDYING IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this dissertation was to understand women of color international graduate students' conceptualizations, perceptions, and experiences of violence and safety, in addition to the influences of those perceptions and experiences on their lives, while studying in the United States. I perceived women of color international graduate students to be at a particular juncture of political context and oppressions that could influence their experiences. I conducted a qualitative interview study of 11 women of color international graduate students enrolled in doctoral programs at two universities in the southern United States. I was informed by a framework made up of intersectionality and transnational feminism.

I learned women of color international graduate students' conceptualizations of violence and safety complicated those found in the literature by understanding violence and safety in terms of physical, non-physical, and security aspects. Participants also had complex experiences and perceptions, including experiences of sexual harassment, threats of physical violence, discrimination, and silencing. Participants shared financial and visa status insecurity as contributing to lack of safety. I found policies and events factored into participants' assessments of safety to varying degrees, with gun violence and campus carry factoring in heavily while sexual harassment from faculty members was less of a concern. Coronavirus emerged as contributing to lack of safety. Influences on participants' lives included the creation of strategies to maintain safety and prevent violence. In addition, I found participants spent a lot of time and

energy thinking about their safety. Participants had perspectives about effects on their own lives including loss of freedom and increased empowerment.

I asked participants about their perspectives of university responsibility. While some participants did not perceive the university had additional responsibility than what was already done, others perceived their universities could improve on transparency and training. Their recommendations informed my recommendations in the final chapter. I offered implications for practice and policy, including universities making changes within and advocating for changes at a state and national level. I also discuss implications for theory, including the need for a racialized, gendered, internationalized, and graduate student worker lens, and one that incorporates women of color international graduate students' previous and current locations. Suggestions for future research include research with other populations and taking into account changing contexts. I offer implications for methods including those that may help researchers studying precarious populations. My hope is this research will positively influence women of color international graduate students' experiences in the United States.

Copyright by SAPNA NAIK 2021 This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Soon after starting my doctoral program at Michigan State University in 2013, a series of personal, national, and international events forced me to think about safety on college and university campuses in ways that I had not before. For example, in 2014, a national report was released indicating failures of U.S. higher education institutions in addressing sexual violence on their campuses. Two years after that, I worried what the new presidential administration would do, especially for marginalized people in the United States including students in higher education. I considered my safety and wondered about the perceptions of a group in a far more precarious position than I was in, namely international students. I thought about what I perceived as the irresponsibility of higher education institutions to admit students, then leave them vulnerable. The culmination of these thoughts and experiences led me to wanting to understand the experiences of women of color international graduate students around safety and violence.

Problem Statement

Women students, students of color, international students, and graduate students, and people who hold more than one of those identities, have shared their narratives of experiences of violence while studying in higher education institutions in media outlets like *Inside Higher Ed* (e.g., Dorje, 2017; Grollman, 2017) and *The Atlantic* (e.g., Patterson, 2016). Some narratives have been published in scholarly outlets, as will be discussed in the literature review. Even if these narratives have not been published in peer-reviewed journals, their presence suggests students experience violence and a lack of safety while studying in higher education institutions. Specifically, students' stories about sexual harassment, sexual violence, racism and discrimination, and exploitation as graduate students, point to a problem of violence in the academy for students.

I contend that women of color international graduate students experience higher education institutions, violence, and safety in a way that is particular to them given their multiple identities and social positions as women of color, international students, and graduate students. Women of color international graduate students may also experience various levels of safety and violence in their interactions with the university, the state, and the community, and with individuals within each of those institutions, and because of their experiences in previous states and societies. Furthermore, from the perspective of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), women of color international graduate students experience violence and safety in a way that is greater and different than the addition of experiences as members of all of those groups. The purpose of this dissertation was to further explore how women of color international graduate students experienced and perceived violence and safety while studying in the United States.

Higher education institutions have responsibilities to minimize violence and maintain safety for the students they bring to campus. This is equally true for specific, often marginalized, populations within the institution, such as women of color international graduate students. An intersectional perspective, however, posits women of color international graduate students may be experiencing violence in higher education in ways that are not fully understood only by looking at the experiences of women students, of international students, of students of color, and of graduate students. Without understanding and addressing the precarious relationship women of color international graduate students have with higher education institutions, the institution fails to fulfill its obligation to its students. Higher education institutions should aim to understand the experiences and perceptions of violence and safety among all of their students to address violence and better facilitate safer environments for students' wellbeing and educational opportunities.

Research Questions

Thus, the research questions guiding this study were as follows:

- 1. How do women of color international graduate students studying in the United States conceptualize violence and safety?
- 2. How do women of color international graduate students perceive and experience violence and safety while studying in the United States?
 - a. How do events and policies influence women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety?
- 3. How do women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety influence their lives?

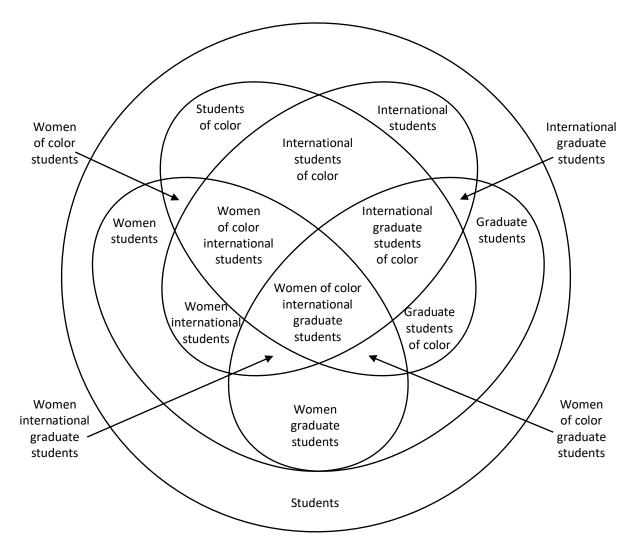
Framework

My research questions and overall impetus to study women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of safety and violence in the United States were heavily influenced by concepts I learned formally, through higher education, and less formally, as a woman of color in the United States. While I had originally thought my framework would be used in my data analysis, through discussions with my committee during the proposal defense and dissertation defense, I came to realize my framework had informed all aspects of the study's design. Therefore, before I continue, it is important I illuminate for the reader the concepts and theories that informed my framework and subsequently the study design.

The framework is made up of intersectionality, transnational feminism, and the concepts of racialized gender violence and epistemic violence. These theories allowed me to conceptualize and develop this study about experiences and perceptions of violence and safety of those embedded in colonial histories and settler colonial presents. Women of color international

graduate students have intersecting identities in the United States as depicted in Figure 1. This depiction led to my understanding that I needed to include intersectionality within my framework, which will be explained further in the next section.

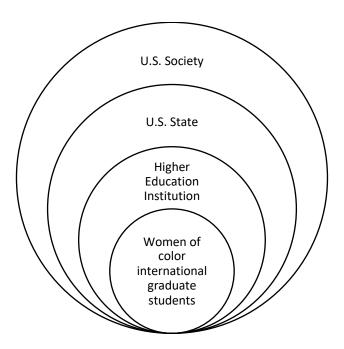
Figure 1: Intersecting Identities of Women of Color International Graduate Students in the United States



Note. This diagram will be referenced later in this chapter to depict conversations and context as well as in Chapter 2 as an organization method for the literature review.

Furthermore, I perceived women of color international graduate students as being embedded within and interacting with the U.S. state, higher education institutions, and society. A diagram of this concept is shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Women of Color International Graduate Students in Relation to Higher Education Institutions, U.S. State, and U.S. Society



Although I am using the concepts of intersectionality, transnational feminism, epistemic violence, and racialized gender violence together within my framework, each of these concepts have different origins and cannot or should not be reduced to the same ideas. As Falcón (in Falcón & Nash, 2015) explained, despite their differences, intersectionality and transnational feminism can coexist and can be politically complementary.

Intersectionality

The term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to speak about the experiences of Black women in the U.S. legal system. Specifically, Crenshaw (1989)

used the term to explain Black women's employment discrimination. Crenshaw (1991) later explained intersectionality with regard to violence against Black women:

I consider how the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism, and how these experiences tend not to be represented within the discourses of either feminism or antiracism. Because of their intersectional identity as both women *and* of color within courses that are shaped to respond to one *or* the other, women of marginalized within both. ... My focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed. (pp. 1243-1245; emphasis in original)

Focusing on rape and domestic violence, Crenshaw's (1991) use of intersectionality as a way to explain violence Black women in the United States faced further gave me reason to include intersectionality in the framework. Collins (1998; 2017) further explored intersectionality and violence experienced by Black women and explained violence was defined by racial and gendered oppression. Collins (2017) contextualized violence in the current political era, explaining how violence and other concepts are related: "Racism, sexism, heterosexism, capitalism, nationalism and similar systems of power all rely on violence to sustain domination" (p. 1466).

Since Crenshaw's foundational texts, intersectionality has taken on new meanings and uses, including in higher education research (Harris & Patton, 2018). Carbado et al. (2013) explained, "intersectionality is a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytical tool" (p. 303), and it has been used in many different ways. They also contend that a goal of intersectionality "was not simply to understand social relations of power, nor to limit

intersectionality's gaze to the relations that were interrogated therein, but to bring the often hidden dynamics forward in order to transform them" (Carbado et al., 2013, p. 312). I use intersectionality in part to not only frame my understanding of women of color international graduate students' experiences, but also because I consider this an activist project.

I was wary of using intersectionality as part of the framework for my study because I was afraid of misusing the term or contributing to it becoming a buzzword and depoliticization (Bilge, 2013; Harris & Patton, 2018). It was not enough to just acknowledge intersectionality, however; I had to include it as a component of my framework. Harris and Patton (2018), in their analysis of 97 higher education articles and their use of the term "intersectionality," asked the question, "can a study promote intersectionality, or aspects of intersectionality, without framing the study through (concepts related to) intersectionality?" (p. 21). They argued the answer is complex, but higher education researchers should do intersectional research. Collins (2009) explained that intersectional scholarship has gone towards personal identity narratives, which have their use in understanding experiences, but also argues for when the "critical analytical lens of intersectionality was attuned to assessing significant social issues, thinking through the mechanism of intersecting systems of power themselves, and/or trying to do something about social inequalities" (p. ix). In my study, intersectionality offered both the ability to better frame the narratives of women of color international graduate students and how their experiences may be produced and influenced by social structures and institutions, namely higher education institutions and the state.

Transnational Feminism

As explained above, intersectionality emerged from Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) work within the United States. Salem (2014) argued for coupling intersectionality with a decolonial

approach to critique its potential Western bias. For this reason, I am coupling intersectionality with transnational feminism in my framework to understand the experiences of women of color international graduate students.

Transnational feminism is a school of thought that offers a way to understand realities across national borders and taking into account experiences across race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality. This school of thought was articulated by Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty (1997) in the edited book, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Chiu (in Blackwell et al., 2015) argued that transnational feminism "is a political framework—a way of seeing that potentially offers a feminist escape from overdetermined colonial and colonizing, liberal and neoliberal, Western paradigms, narratives, processes, methodologies, practices, and applications" (p. 6).

More specifically, transnational feminism also provides a way to think about women of color and their labor in the world. It is important to note that Mohanty (1997, 2003) wrote about women's labor in terms of "third-world" and immigrant women. Here, I am applying these concepts to talk about women of color international graduate students, in a place of relative privilege compared to the women that Mohanty writes about. At the same time, there are hierarchies within the academy, potentially relegating women of color international graduate students to the lower ends of the hierarchy. One example can be seen in a paper by Cantwell et al. (2018), in which some international graduate students perceived that they were being taken advantage of as cheap labor in contrast to their domestic counterparts.

Racialized Gender Violence and Epistemic Violence

Colonization and violence are intimately connected (Y. Figueroa, 2015). Leigh Patel (2016) made a connection between violence and colonization by posing the following question:

Why is it that ... colonized peoples, now sharing physical space with those who colonized them, remain at the lower end of the social system in terms of access to security, health, and wealth, and experience the daily impacts of systemic violence? (p. 14)

More specifically, racialized gender violence, the concept of which emerged from decolonial feminist thought (Lugones, 2008), and epistemic violence, the concept of which emerged from postcolonial thought (Spivak, 1988), are functions of colonial systems.

Racialized Gender Violence

Lugones (2008) made explicit the connections between the modern gender system and colonialism, arguing that European colonialism imposed the current gender system through "slow, discontinuous, and heterogeneous processes that violently inferiorized colonized women" (p. 12). Lugones (2008) called attention to organizational complicity with racialized gender violence: "We need to understand the organization of the social so as to make visible our collaboration with systematic racialized gender violence, so as to come to an inevitable recognition of it in our maps of reality" (p. 16). In the context of higher education, I take this to mean that as constituents of higher education institutions, we must first recognize complicity with racialized gender violence, in policy and practice as well as in silences and inaction, in order to change it.

Epistemic Violence

Spivak (1988) explained the concept of epistemic violence: "the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as the Other. This project is also the asymetrical [sic] obliteration of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (pp. 280-281). Nanda (2005) further clarified that epistemic violence is "the violence of knowledge, or

more properly, the violence of 'discourse,' which includes the complete apparatus of knowledge-production" (p. 575). Dotson (2011) made clear the usefulness of epistemic violence as a concept:

Spivak's ... insight into the difficulties of addressing a type of violence that attempts to eliminate knowledge possessed by marginal subjects is still useful today. As she highlighted, one method of executing epistemic violence is to damage a given group's ability to speak and be heard. (p. 236)

Dotson (2011) further elucidated the concept of epistemic violence with relationship to testimonies. Dotson offered two types of testimonial oppression that are practices of silencing that engage in epistemic violence: testimonial quieting and testimonial smothering. Dotson explains that testimonial quieting

occurs when an audience fails to identify a speaker as a knower. A speaker needs an audience to identify, or at least recognize, her as a knower in order to offer testimony. ...

[Patricia Hill] Collins ... claims that by virtue of her being a U.S. black woman she will systematically be undervalued as a knower. (p. 242)

Second, Dotson explained, "testimonial smothering is the truncating of one's own testimony in order to insure that the testimony contains only content for which one's audience demonstrates testimonial competence" (p. 249). Survivors of sexual violence, for example, truncate their own testimonies due to experiences of previous reactions to others' testimonies, including disbelief and accusations of lying (D. Patterson et al., 2009). In addition, international students' knowledges are often undervalued and international students are often silenced in spaces within higher education (Mayuzumi et al., 2007). I will discuss these experiences in more detail in the literature review.

Influence of Postcolonialism

It is important for me to note that postcolonial perspectives inform my understanding of and approach to studying women of color international graduate students and their experiences. Postcolonialism offers a useful way to understand women of color international graduate students' experiences as the internationalization of higher education is embedded within the context of a colonial and postcolonial world. As Crossley and Tikly (2004) explained, "postcolonial approaches share a common commitment to reconsider the colonial encounter and its continuing impact from the perspective of formerly colonized countries, regions, and peoples, but within the context of contemporary globalizations" (p. 148). I contend contemporary globalizations, including the movement of people, facilitate the continuity of colonial legacies. Furthermore, Leela Gandhi (1998) explained, postcolonialism "holds out the possibility of thinking our way through, and therefore, out of the historical imbalances and cultural inequalities produced by the colonial encounter" (p. 176).

I conceptualize women of color international graduate students as being subject to the historical imbalances produced by the colonial encounter as discussed above. This means that women of color international graduate students are subject to objectification and inequities. Higher education institutions can promote their values of internationalization by recruiting and admitting international students but women of color international graduate students' knowledge and ways of knowing can still not be validated (Mayuzumi et al., 2007; Zhou et al., 2005). Furthermore, international students are valued as tokens as long as they do not become disruptive: "tokenism is only institutionally convenient if practices by those who are tokens do not disrupt the norm" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 43). Speaking up about differential treatment,

including perceptions and experiences of violence or lack of safety, could be considered disruptive.

The Value of the Framework

I chose intersectionality and transnational feminism, along with the concepts of racialized gender violence and epistemic violence, to make up a framework because I thought they would allow me to see aspects of women of color international graduate students' experiences that another framework may not illuminate, namely how they experience and perceive violence and safety while studying higher education institutions within a complex society and political reality. The framework informed how I would go about studying participants' experiences and perceptions, through the concepts chosen to study (namely, women of color international graduate students and violence), the research questions, and the questions I asked in interviews.

I assumed women of color international graduate students' present realities are informed by colonial histories. For example, I thought international graduate students are subject to visa policies that have come about as a result of colonization of the United States and those in power determining who does and does not belong in the country. Thus, I chose to ask about visa policies. I assumed women of color international graduate students are subject to racism, sexism, and nationalism that stemmed from colonial histories and colonization of students' home countries. In addition, I assumed women of color international graduate students' experiences of racism, sexism, and nationalism were inseparable, consistent with intersectionality, so I did not ask about each of those specifically but rather violence more broadly. Women of color international graduate students are perceived as a relatively cheap source of labor within the academy, a situation stemming from colonial histories and the structure of the academy itself. Women of color international graduate students sit at an intersection of identities and powers, of

the state, society, and higher education institutions. They may experience various forms of violence or threats to safety as a result of their position. If they speak up about their experiences and in turn disrupt the systems of powers in any way, they are subject to consequences, including losing their funding and visas, and be subject to removal from academic programs. As a result of my assumptions influenced by the framework, I then asked participants about these types of experiences.

Thus, rather than the framework being a tool for analyzing interview data, the framework informed my conceptualization of the study, study design, and interview questions. In addition, in deference to the framework as well as the methodology that will be discussed in Chapter 3, I followed my interpretation of participants' words and ideas to guide my organization of the findings chapters rather than trying to impose the concepts from the above theories onto participants. In this way, I believe I intuitively tried to honor the philosophical commitments to ideas of intersectionality and transnational feminism through using participants' words.

Definitions of Concepts and Guiding Assumptions

In addition to the concepts derived from and informed by the framework explained above, I will further explain a few key concepts and assumptions, specifically related to women of color international graduate students, violence, and safety. These concepts and their inclusion in my research questions and study were informed by the theories that made up the framework.

Women of Color International Graduate Students

I use the term "women of color international graduate students" to mean international graduate students who identify as women and have been racialized as people of color in the United States. I choose to focus on women who are racialized as people of color in the United States, because as Lee and Rice (2007) found, white international students' experiences are

"women of color" interchangeably, but with the recognition that some international students may not identify as women of color in their home country if they are of the dominant race in their home country but are racialized as people of color, or non-white, once arriving in the United States. This concept is illuminated by Alexander and Mohanty (1997): "We were not born women of color, but became women of color here" (p. xiv). The criteria for inclusion and exclusion for the study sample is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

More specifically, international students are on a student visa, non-citizens, and nonpermanent residents (ACE, 2006). As mobile non-citizens of a country, international students hold a different status than domestic students and may face legal barriers (Marginson et al., 2010). International students, however, should be afforded protections just like any other students based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Marginson, 2012). Marginson (2012) explained, "all people, wherever located, are entitled to live under a regime enabling them to exercise self-determination, in which they are not just nominal but effective rights-bearers" (p. 209). Higher education institutions have a responsibility to ensure the safety of students they bring to their campuses, no matter their nationality. Furthermore, as Shahjahan and Kezar (2013) discussed, higher education institutions are "entities that are responding to and influencing actors and a concept of society that go beyond the 'national container'" (p. 20). This means that higher education institutions have a responsibility extending beyond the citizens of the country, and international students should be made safe just as any other student. To fully serve the needs of international students, then, higher education institutions must understand their perceptions and experiences of violence and safety.

I focus on the experiences of racialized women students. Women international students have qualitatively different experiences from men international students based on existing research (e.g., Forbes-Mewett & McCulloch, 2016; Lee & Rice, 2007). Furthermore, they may experience racialized gendered violence that is embedded within a colonial system of relationships (Y. Figueroa, 2015; Lugones, 2008). International students who are racialized as people of color in their host country have experiences of racism or neo-racism, in ways that international students perceived as white do not (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Graduate students have different experiences from undergraduates, often due to age, family responsibilities, and differing relationships with the university (Cavell, 2000). For instance, they may be teaching assistants and have students of their own or work directly with faculty members in lab or research settings. Graduate students who serve as teaching assistants or instructors may also have a different relationship with the university than those students who do not have teaching roles. Some graduate students, who completed undergraduate degrees outside of the United States, may have had more experiences with different higher education systems than undergraduate international students, who may have only experienced U.S. higher education. Graduate students might have a different financial relationship with the university from undergraduates if they are on fellowship, work, or have other means of financial support, such as funding from their home countries (National Science Foundation [NSF], 2018).

Violence, Safety, and Security

In the sections that follow, I introduce several definitions that inform U.S. higher education as well as my own understandings of violence, safety, and security. These definitions come from a variety of sources, including scholarly literature within and outside of education, higher education practice, and governmental and nongovernmental agencies. It is important to

note the definitions included here are not exhaustive but rather are those that influenced my thinking and development of the study.

Violence

I present here definitions of violence and types of violence coming from multiple sources. Based on these definitions, and my own evolving thinking, I understand violence as broader than physical violence. In the explanations that follow, I explain definitions of violence coming from scholarly literature followed by definitions related to sexual violence that come from higher education practice and law.

Discussions of Violence in Scholarly Literature. Scholarly literature has contributed to my broad understandings of violence. As Q. Green and Shahjahan (2013) explained, racially minoritized people face "non-physical forms of violence [including] misrepresentation, invisibility, lack of resources, forced assimilation, invalidation of one's history, absence of diverse perspectives, microaggressions, and bodily misrecognitions" (p. 131). Young (1990) explained systematic violence as one of the five faces of oppression. The category of violence includes physical violence as well as "less severe incidents of harassment, intimidation, or ridicule simply for the purpose of degrading, humiliating, or stigmatizing group members" (Young, 1990, p. 61). Furthermore, Young explained,

the oppression of violence consists not only in direct victimization, but in the daily knowledge shared by all members of oppressed groups that they are *liable* [emphasis in original] to violation, solely on account of their group identity. Just living under such a threat of attack on oneself or family or friends deprives the oppressed of freedom and dignity, and needlessly expends their energy. (p. 62)

In addition to these broader definitions of violence, I am also influenced by the more specific concepts of epistemic violence and racialized gender violence, as discussed in the framework. I also include the concept of "academic violence" as explained by Falcón and Philipose (2017):

...the accumulation of pain and injury caused by the exertion of influence and control by the academic institution is an expression of academic violence. This type of institutional violence is cumulative and interconnected in nature, meaning that academic violence is neither about random nor isolated incidents. Some common cases of academic violence include attacks on academic freedom, inhumane working conditions for university employees, ... unchecked abuses of power, ambiguous and inconsistent tenure requirements, regular tenure denials to faculty of colour, and the dismissal of faculty whose work challenges prevailing relations of power, to name a few. (p. 186)

Falcón and Philipose also contended that academic violence disproportionately targets women of color. This conceptualization of violence goes beyond physical acts of violence to systemic and structural forms and allows for concepts of racialized gender violence and epistemic violence, as discussed in the framework.

Discussions of Sexual Violence in Higher Education Practice and Law. Higher education organizations' conceptualizations of sexual violence in particular have informed practice and policy. ACPA—College Student Educators International (2015) uses the concept "sexual violence to include sexual assault, sexual harassment (both online and in person), intimate partner violence (domestic and dating violence), and stalking" (p. 6). Higher education institutions are also informed by higher education related legislation including Title IX and the Clery Act, which will be discussed further below.

Definitions within higher education practice, including the Clery Act, are, however, also influenced by law. The Violence Against Women Act, first passed in 1994 and reauthorized in 2013, informs higher education's reporting requirements and responsibilities. Specifically, the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act includes dating violence and stalking, in addition to other forms of sexual violence, which in turn have added additional reporting requirements for higher education institutions (Brown, 2015). Other governmental agencies in the United States also inform definitions of sexual violence and intimate partner violence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2015b) defines sexual violence (SV) as follows: "SV refers to sexual activity where consent is not obtained or given freely" (para. 1). Intimate partner violence, a related but not equivalent concept, "describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy" (CDC, 2015a, para. 1).

A more internationalized definition of violence against women comes from the UN. The definition of Violence Against Women by the 1993 UN declaration (as cited in True, 2012) is as follows:

physical, sexual, psychological/emotional, and, most recently, economic violence or exploitation... The forms of violence against women and girls mentioned in the definition are multiple and wide-ranging.... Violation of the right to life, liberty, and security of the person shapes the enjoyment and fulfillment of all other human rights, including economic and social rights such as the rights to work, health, social security, education, food, housing, water, and land. (p. 9)

This definition offers an umbrella for domestic violence, relationship violence, and sexual harassment. In addition, this definition points to some of the consequences of violence that include how a person is able to fulfill their rights to life.

The institutionalized nature of these definitions, however, may not be the way participants would describe their experiences (D. Paris, personal communication, December 9, 2015). For this reason, it was important for me to be open to how students conceptualize their experiences, rather than imposing an institutionalized or clinical definition upon them (D. Paris, personal communication, December 9, 2015). After discussion with my committee, a research question was added to better understand how participants conceptualized violence, along with safety, and I added questions to the first interview protocol specifically addressing definitions. Participants' conceptualizations will be presented in Chapter 4.

Safety

The term "safety" is also complex. In its simplest form, safety is an absence of violence or threat of violence. In addition, I am informed by popular conceptions of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, in which safety is a prerequisite for other needs. (I later learned, however, Maslow did not conceptualize the pyramid model I had come to know and had been influenced by many ideas including those of the Blackfoot Nation [Ravilochan, 2021].) Although complete safety may not be possible, I argue a sense of safety is necessary to facilitate students' wellbeing and success, specifically that of women of color international graduate students.

In the context of college campuses, Quinan (2016) complicated the idea of safety, "because what is safe for some is certainly not for others" (p. 361). Postsecondary campus safety is often discussed in literature and practice, but rarely, if ever, explicitly defined. Literature often discusses "campus safety" in terms of safety from gun violence, mass shootings, and other

violent crimes (e.g., Schafer et al., 2018). Leonardi and Meyer (2016), in the context of school safety for LGBTQ youth in the United States, advocated for a definition of safety that extends beyond the absence of violence; their concept of internal safety takes into account identities and social contexts. More specifically, students' identities must be affirmed. Conducting the research, however, better illuminated the relationships between safety and violence and women of color international graduate students.

I focused on perceptions and experiences of safety and violence because I hold the assumption that students cannot realize their potential, learn, and produce knowledge if they are not, or perceive that they are not, in a safe environment or if they experience or perceive some form of violence. If they are silenced in the classroom and as scholars, they cannot contribute to knowledge production in the higher education environment (e.g., Mayuzumi et al., 2007). If they experience or see others who experience threats to their safety, students cannot fully participate in their education. Thus, violence undermines goals of institutions to educate students. Such violence further undermines the goals of the institution to internationalize by bringing in international students in the first place by preventing international students from contributing to the institution and knowledge.

Security

I had originally wanted to include security as a concept and point of discussion from my study but dropped it before starting interviews because the study felt too large. Security, including financial and housing security, however, came up in first interviews. Although I did not ask participants their conceptualizations of security during interviews, their answers illuminate their perspectives about security, presented in Chapter 6. To better conceptualize security, I use Marginson et al.'s (2010) definition of human security as "maintenance of a stable"

capacity for self-determining human agency [emphasis in original]" (p. 60). Under this definition, people ought to be able to exercise agency freely. Violence and insecurity prevent people from exercising agency, as informed by the definition of violence against women described above. Of course, states not only fail to protect certain populations from violence but in fact enact violence upon its people. That said, I think it is an ideal that states, and as a corollary, higher education institutions as mechanisms of the state, should strive to minimize violence and keep its people safe. As a result of this assumption, I do believe that higher education institutions have an obligation to maintain security, including financial, housing, and food, of their students on their campuses.

As will be seen in the findings chapters, Chapters 4 through 9, participants had their own conceptualizations of violence, safety, and security. I also asked participants for feedback on some of the definitions presented in this chapter. While some agreed, others also disagreed with the broad nature of the definitions of violence I chose. Participants' conceptualizations became an important aspect of the study and informed how they answered other questions as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Context and Conversations

I conceptualized this study within a particular political context that informed the development of the study and interview questions. Specifically, I developed my ideas and wrote the dissertation proposal between Fall 2015 and Spring 2019, a time of political change in the United States I thought was relevant to women of color international graduate students, given the election of Donald Trump as president, subsequent changing immigration regulations, increased attention to conversations about sexual violence, and greater visibility of white supremacist violence. During this time, beginning in Fall 2017, I also became involved in the Graduate

Employees Union at Michigan State University to advocate for housing security for graduate students. The changing political and societal contexts motivated me to pursue the topic for this dissertation, as I perceived an increased precarity for women of color international graduate students.

Thus, in this section, I provide context and situate the study within the conversations happening within and about higher education regarding students with certain identities and about students and campuses in general, leading up to and during the data collection period of the study during the 2019-2020 academic year. Despite the framework described earlier in this chapter influencing my assumptions about the inseparability of types of violence, violence in conversations is often discussed in terms of specific identities and violence towards people of those identities. More specifically, these conversations were about graduate students' labor and exploitation, international students' experiences of violence, students of color and racialized violence, women students and gender-based violence, and students more broadly and gun violence. In addition, I discuss conversations relevant to all students in higher education institutions in the United States, namely that of violence and safety on campus with regards to gun violence. This conversation was added as a result of participant interviews, which made me realize the importance of thinking about the influence on gun violence on college campuses. In the next sections, I briefly discuss the conversations about experiences of the population groups that, combined, partially represent women of color international graduate students' experiences.

Women of color international graduate students presumably experience or perceive one or more of these types of violence as a result of being members of each of these groups, as is shown in Figure 1 above. These experiences, however, are not in a vacuum. I originally thought of women of color international graduate students as being embedded and interacting within a

U.S. higher education institution, which is in turn embedded in and interacting with the U.S. state and society, as is shown in Figure 2 above. This conceptualization was in part a recognition that events and policies within the United States can influence participants' experiences, as well as an understanding that violence and safety are not concepts isolated to campuses. I assumed participants' experiences and perceptions would be influenced by what was going on in the state and society. In Chapter 10, I will revisit Figure 2 to explain how it evolved as a result of findings.

As mentioned above, I framed the conversations happening in five broad overlapping areas that in part prompted my construction of the research problem. These conversations are depicted in Figure 1 by identity group and with the overarching conversation about guns. These are conversations about violence and threats to safety experienced by people within a specific identity group because they are members of that group: (1) graduate students, specifically exploitation of labor as graduate student workers; (2) international students and violence based on immigration status; (3) students of color and racialized violence in higher education institutions; and (4) women students and gender-based violence in higher education institutions. Within overlapping sections of these broad conversations are additional conversations on graduate student women and a specific type of violence, sexual harassment. Finally, I present (5) students and gun violence. My dissertation on the experiences of women of color international graduate students is situated within these emerging and ongoing conversations happening nationally. Furthermore, these conversations gave impetus to study women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences related to safety and violence in U.S. higher education. I discuss each of these conversations in more detail below. The order of the conversations is not indicative of their relative importance or salience; instead, I reversed the

order of "women of color international graduate students" and started with graduate students below and ended with the conversation about guns and all students. It is also important to note these conversations of course continued after I completed data collection, but I am only representing here the conversations that happened before and during data collection. I discuss ongoing conversations and topics in Chapter 10.

Graduate Students and Exploitation of Labor

Many higher education institutions in the United States rely on the labor of graduate students to conduct research and teach undergraduate students (Cavell, 2000). Specifically, research universities rely on graduate students as teaching and research assistants. Graduate students, especially doctoral students, however, have high rates of mental health concerns, and many drop out. In one article in *The Guardian* (2018), an anonymous staffer at a UK university points out that three out of ten PhD students develop a psychiatric condition, and that stresses often fall on PhD students who are most vulnerable. T. Patterson (2016) argues, in the U.S. context, that universities themselves contribute to graduate students' mental illness and ultimately to some quitting, including via lack of support from faculty, a culture of critique, and lack of mental health support services.

Furthermore, graduate student status does not allow for the freedom of speaking up. Waymack (2018), in her essay showing the lack of graduate student voices in media pieces that pertain to graduate students, writes, "Graduate students do not have academic freedom. We are not protected by tenure. We are not protected by university codes on research. We are at the mercy of our committees, and then of a capricious and cliqueish job market" (para. 1-2). The position of graduate students means their actions are constrained by their realities and need to get a job after graduating.

The labor of graduate students has been fraught, most notably seen in efforts for graduate students to unionize and bargain for better pay and working conditions (Cavell, 2000). Graduate students have been pushing for unionization, particularly after a 2016 ruling allowed for graduate student unions for form at private colleges and universities (V. Patel, 2016, 2017). Graduate student unions were at risk, however, with the potential overturning of unionization laws from the Trump administration (Gluckman, 2018; V. Patel, 2017). In addition, at Penn State University, students perceived a threat to international students who were told they could lose their visa status if they went on strike (Quinlantan, 2018). As one international graduate student wrote, however, graduate student unions are particularly beneficial to international graduate students in helping with navigating a hostile climate, helping to eliminate discrimination against international students, helping with funding, and providing community (Chatterjee, 2019). In 2017, graduate students were in the national conversation in response to the GOP-sponsored tax legislation in the House of Representatives that would have taxed graduate students' tuition waivers, making graduate school financially inaccessible to most (A. Figueroa, 2017). Although this provision failed, the conversation highlighted the precarious position of graduate students in the United States and the undervaluing of their labor in higher education institutions.

The abuse of graduate students can have dire consequences. A Chinese international graduate student died by suicide in 2019 following alleged abuse from his advisor (Flaherty, 2021). Flaherty (2021) also discussed other cases of abuse and mistreatment from faculty members towards graduate students in the United States, stating, "International students, whose legal status is [sic] this country is wrapped up in their performance as students, and who may have different cultural perspectives on mental health, may be particularly vulnerable to predatory

faculty members" (para. 26). Cases of abuse detailed in the article also included sexual misconduct.

International Students and Violence Based on Immigration Status

Higher education institutions in the United States espouse the values of internationalizing their campuses. An important component of internationalization has been the recruitment of international students. For example, Schwille (2017) pointed to bringing in international students as a key aspect of internationalizing Michigan State University's College of Education. The conversation about international students is often framed as international students providing many benefits to the United States and its higher education institutions, such as economic benefit and adding to diversity (e.g., Krislov, 2019). Glass et al. (2015) explained, however, higher education institutions include internationalization in their strategic plans but do not always ensure they have the capacities and support mechanisms in place for international students.

In addition, national conversations and policies have influenced international student enrollment. In the 2019-2020 academic years, over one million international students were enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States although this number dipped slightly from the previous two years (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2020).

International students made up 5.5 percent of the total higher education student population in the United States (IIE, 2020). At some institutions, however, the percentage of international students is much larger. Of the total number of international students enrolled in the 2019-2020 academic year, 851,958 were currently enrolled students, a decrease of 2.3% from the previous year (IIE, 2020). This decrease was predicted by several news outlets and attributed to the current political climate and policy shifts, which will be described in more detail below.

The numbers of international graduate students also tell a story about shifts in international student enrollment in U.S. higher education. International graduate students make up more than one-third of the total enrolled international student population, but the number has been decreasing since the 2017-2018 academic year (IIE, 2020), although the number of doctoral students is now going up. The reasons for the overall decline are not clear. According to a report from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS; Okahana & Zhou, 2018b), highly selective research institutions were least affected by the decreases in international graduate students, and "at doctoral highest research institutions, three out of ten (29.9%) of first-time enrollees were international graduate students" (p. 3). In Fall 2017, international graduate students were highly represented in the following fields: "engineering (52.7%), mathematics and computer sciences (52.0%), and physical and earth sciences (32.8%)" (Okahana & Zhou, 2018b, p. 14). These fields also have the lowest share of women, respectively (p. 12). Also of note is the shift in international graduate student applications and enrollments from specific countries. Specifically, enrollment from first time graduate students from India decreased from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017, and applications and enrollments from Saudi Arabia and Iran decreased significantly, with a 16% decrease in first-time graduate student enrollment from Iran (Okahana & Zhou, 2018a).

The political climate of increasing visibility of hate crimes and xenophobia in the United States in recent years could have been at least partially responsible for influencing international student enrollment in the United States (Cantwell, 2018; Quinlantan, 2018). International student enrollments began to decrease two years after 2001, in part because of increased visa regulations and potential students' perceptions of being unwelcome in the United States (American Council on Education [ACE], 2006). Along with the 2016 U.S. presidential election, xenophobic sentiments became more visible and anti-immigrant incidents rose in the United States (Southern

Poverty Law Center [SPLC] Hatewatch, 2016), including at college campuses (Jaschik, 2016). Even before the election, international students were wary of coming to the United States if Donald Trump was elected (Fischer, 2016). Since the election, multiple analyses predicted a potential decrease in the number of international students coming to the United States (Altbach & de Wit, 2016; Bothwell, 2016; Choudaha, 2016; Herships, 2017; Long, 2016; Redden, 2016). A survey of 294 international student recruitment professionals in February 2017 revealed a decrease in applications from international students at 38% of surveyed institutions, while they have stayed the same or increased at 60% of institutions (AACRAO, 2017). The survey also found that potential students were concerned about immigration policies and being unwelcome, particularly among students from the Middle East and India. In 2016, international students who were already in the United States expressed concerns about Donald Trump's election in terms of their safety and long-term security (Long, 2016; Redden, 2016). It is important to note, however, that discrimination against international students in the United States was not new in 2016 and not isolated to that political era. Past anecdotal evidence suggests international students had faced overt discrimination for some time (Redden, 2012).

In addition to the climate, policy shifts could have influenced international student enrollment in the United States. After the Executive Order travel ban on refugees and visaholders from seven Muslim majority countries on January 27, 2017, many higher education institutions and organizations released letters of support for international students (i.e., USA Today College staff, 2017). The second version of the executive order, released on March 6, 2017, removed Iraq from the list of countries but seems to be consistent in purpose with the first (New York Times, 2017). The third version of the travel ban was allowed by the Supreme Court on December 4, 2017 (de Vogue, 2017). In June 2018, the Supreme Court upheld the legality of

the executive order by striking down a lower court decision (Hurd & Schwartz, 2018). The implications to higher education institutions in the United States have included decreases in student visas granted from the affected countries as well as an overall unwelcoming message sent to international students (Redden, 2018). Fischer (2017), however, argued that then-President Trump's policies were not entirely to blame for the decrease in international student applications and enrollment, indicating that educational policies of countries like Brazil and Saudi Arabia have also resulted in a decrease of international students from those sending countries.

I contended that a reason for slowing of the growth of new international student enrollment may have been due, in part, to perceptions of increased violence toward and decreased safety of international students. Aside from the news articles and editorial pieces referenced above, however, perceptions and experiences of safety and security in the political climate had not been published at the time I had conceptualized this study. Furthermore, while much research exists on the experiences of international students generally (e.g., *The Journal of International Students*), less research existed on experiences and perceptions related to violence among international students in the United States (exceptions included S. Kim & R. Kim, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007). Among those studies that did address violence, research did not explicitly disaggregate by gender, race, and graduate student status. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of one group of international students, namely women of color international graduate students.

Students of Color and Racialized Violence

Students of color have been historically excluded from, then underrepresented in and exploited within, U.S. higher education institutions. Texts like *Ebony and Ivy* (Wilder, 2013) uncover the racist history of higher education institutions in the United States including their

reliance on the labor of enslaved people. Furthermore, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) and other indigenous scholars have shown the academy's and researchers' reliance on indigenous peoples as objects of their research around the world.

A report from ACE (Espinosa et al., 2019) illuminated the state of students of color in higher education. Specifically, proportions of people of color were increasing in the United States, and representation of people of color was also increasing within higher education. At the same time, degree attainment for Black students in the United States was lower, with high dropout rates and low six-year completion rates (Brown, 2019). One third of graduate students were people of color, not including international students, but only one-fifth of full-time faculty were people of color (Espinosa et al., 2019).

Students of color also face racism in the academy, in addition to, and resulting in, underrepresentation and low completion rates. Prominent incidents in the past few years have brought renewed attention to the racism students of color face in U.S. higher education. In 2015 at the University of Missouri, the student body president posted on Facebook about racist slurs he faced, resulting in a sustained student movement, including protests by the university's football players (Thomason, 2015). The events at University of Missouri drew national attention to racism on college campuses. In 2016, reports of racist incidents increased on college campuses, including the presence of hate speech and intimidation of students of color (SPLC Hatewatch, 2016). Another prominent incident took place at University of Virginia (UVA) in August 2017, when white supremacists marched on campuses with torches (Van Syckle, 2017). The following day, in the city of Charlottesville, a white supremacist drove his car into a crowd of counterprotesters killing one person (Gravely, 2018). Several students of color did not feel safe on campus following these incidents (Van Syckle, 2017). At the end of the academic year,

Black students at UVA reflected on the trauma and mental illness that occurred as a result of the white supremacist rallies (Van Syckle, 2017). While UVA had mental health services, many students felt that the university was not doing enough.

There have also been incidents in which campus police, the people whose presence is meant to keep students safe, were called on Black students, creating an unsafe environment and potentially violent situation for those students. In one case, a Black woman graduate student at Yale was napping in a common area of her dorm when a white student called the campus police (Hannon, 2018). In another, at my current institution of employment, The University of Texas at San Antonio, a faculty member called the university police after a Black woman student had her feet up on the seats in front of her (Martinez, 2018). The university administration found that the incident was not racially motivated, but the professor was removed from the classroom, and in the public eye, it was considered racially motivated. Although neither of these incidents resulted in physical violence upon the students, the emotional scars upon the students who were directly affected and other students of color within the institutions likely remain. Harris-Perry (2018) explained how prominent incidents, like those at University of Missouri and UVA, along with the histories of Black students on campus, shape the experiences of college students now.

Underrepresentation, exploitation, and racism shape students of color and their experiences and perceptions in higher education. My aim in this study was to better understand how a specific group of students of color, namely women of color international graduate students, experience racialized violence in the forms of underrepresentation, exploitation, and racism. Furthermore, I am interested in how these personal experiences and experiences of others influence their perceptions and lives.

Women Students and Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women students is most often perceived to be gendered violence. Gendered violence in higher education must be understood in the context of the history of sexual violence in higher education and policy decisions that shape how higher education institutions handle gendered violence. Although sexual violence has always existed in higher education, a prominent starting point from a policy perspective is Title IX. In 1972, The Education Amendments of 1972, amending the Higher Education Act of 1965, were passed. They included Title IX—Prohibition of Sex Discrimination. Section 901 reads as follows: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial aid" (Education Amendments of 1972, 1972, p. 373). Although previously known for its application to college athletics, Title IX has since been applied to sexual violence on college campuses. In 1990, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, simply known as the Clery Act, was passed as a means to require campuses to disclose crime statistics (McCallion & Feder, 2014). The Act was in response to the rape and murder of its namesake, Jeanne Clery, on a college campus in 1986. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (2001) released guides on sexual harassment and Title IX, in which the authors codified sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination under Title IX. In addition, the authors indicated the scope of sources of harassment: "a student may be sexually harassed by a school employee, another student, or a non-employee third party" (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2001, p. 3). In 2011, OCR released a "Dear Colleague" letter that provided guidance and reaffirmed the responsibilities of higher education institutions to respond to sexual violence under Title IX (Ali, 2011).

The year 2014 saw a spike in attention towards sexual violence on college campuses in the United States. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) made public its investigations of 55 higher education institutions for violating Title IX, which prohibits sex discrimination in publicly funded educational institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In January 2014, then President Obama began the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault (White House, 2014). Senator Claire McCaskill (2014) released a report in July 2014 indicating the failures of higher education institutions in preventing and investigating sexual assaults. In September 2014, President Obama announced the "It's On Us" campaign, aimed at ending sexual assault on college campuses (Somanader, 2014). As a result of federal attention, many national media outlets, including *NPR* (Kamentz, 2014; *NPR*, 2014; Smith, 2014), the *Huffington Post* (2014), *Time* (Gray, 2014), and the *New York Times* (Bogdanich, 2014), to name a few, began series and published several stories on sexual assault on college campuses.

After the election of President Trump and subsequent confirmation of Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, Title IX protections were rolled back (Kreighbaum, 2017). There was a change in tone over how the federal government said colleges and universities should address sexual violence, including allowing for cross-examination of survivors by accused persons (Pauly, 2020). Students, however, continually pushed back and organized against the Title IX protections for survivors both federally and within their institutions (Pauly, 2020).

Since the resurgence of attention in 2014 due to the release of the 55 institutions named in investigations as well as federal policy, higher education researchers have published on sexual violence on college campuses (e.g., Wooten & Mitchell, 2016), including research and analyses centering minoritized students' experiences (Harris & Linder, 2017). Despite an increased

attention to sexual assault in media and research, and specifically an increase in attention to groups of minoritized students, one area lacking research is in understanding sexual violence in relation to international students (ACPA—College Student Educators International, 2015). Thus, this study aimed to center women of color international graduate students in understanding sexual violence on college campuses.

Graduate Student Women and Sexual Harassment

A more specific area of conversation about sexual violence on college campuses is that of graduate student women facing sexual harassment within higher education institutions. The discussions of sexual harassment have been going on for decades, emerging soon after the discussions of sex discrimination with the passage of Title IX in 1972. Specifically, "the term 'sexual harassment' itself grew out of a consciousness-raising session Lin Farley held in 1974 as part of a Cornell University course on women and work" (Siegel, 2003, p. 8). Incidents of professor-graduate student sexual harassment cases have been reported for years, including those reported on Libarkin's (2017) website of incidents of sexual harassment in academia. A blog series called Conditionally Accepted highlighted sexual violence in the academy in the U.S (Grollman, 2017). Furthermore, graduate students are vulnerable to sexual harassment because of their position as students and employees within the university (Qadir, 2018). Specific highprofile stories of faculty harassing graduate students at major universities have emerged including those documented by Quinlan (2017). In addition to leveraging social media to highlight and advocate for graduate student safety on higher education campuses, graduate students are also turning to unionization as a potential way to address sexual harassment (Gluckman, 2018; Strabuk, 2017). A study by Cantalupo and Kidder (2018) found that ten

percent of female graduate students in the United States surveyed reported sexual harassment by a faculty member. This study will be discussed in more detail in the literature review.

Campus Safety and Gun Violence

The language around campus safety is often identity neutral and often refers to campus crime and gun violence. The U.S. Department of Education has a Campus Safety and Security website with tools and data on safety and security related to criminal offenses, hate crimes, VAWA offenses, arrests and disciplinary actions, unfounded crimes, and student housing fires (U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, n.d.). The Clery Act requires reporting on crimes on campus, including murder, sexual misconduct, assaults, property crimes, drug violations, and hate crimes (McCallion & Feder, 2014). What has gained a lot of attention regarding campus safety, however, is safety from gun violence and mass shootings.

Particularly after the mass shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007, discussions about campus safety have centered around preventing such tragic incidents, including about mental health resources, access to guns, and communication on college campuses. Ten years later, Camera (2017) reviewed changes higher education institutions had made, including physical changes like locks on classroom doors, as well as the development of emergency warning systems and training for campus constituents.

Partially in response to mass shootings, state legislatures began passing campus carry legislation, which allows for concealed carry of firearms on public college and university campuses. News articles have shown reactions of campus constituents, with large numbers being opposed to the laws. At the University of Houston, for example, faculty members were concerned about the impending implementation of the law and received training to not discuss sensitive topics with students, potentially affecting teaching (Moyer, 2016). At the University of

Texas at Austin, professors sued to block the law from being implemented in 2016, arguing it would prevent class discussions on controversial topics (Watkins, 2016). While years after the law was passed in Texas and other states no visible impacts have been seen, Valentine (2019) reported other consequences including physical changes, like gun safes and signs, costs of replacing staff, and the changes to teaching by not talking about controversial topics as discussed above.

Summary of Context and Conversations

The discussions related to violence and safety about students in general, women students, students of color, international students, and graduate students are quite varied. There are a lot of discussions happening in higher education institutions and in the public more broadly about safety and violence, including gun violence, sexual violence and harassment, racism and xenophobia, and graduate students' experiences. The intersection of these conversations gave me impetus to study women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of safety and violence.

Chapter 1 Summary

In this chapter, I provided the purpose of my research, which was to understand the experiences and perceptions of violence and safety among women of color international graduate students studying in the United States, as well as my research questions. I described my framework, which is made up of intersectionality, transnational feminism, and the concepts of racialized gender violence and epistemic violence, and informed by postcolonialism. I then clarified my assumptions and definitions of terms used thus far. Finally, I provided context and conversations within which I embedded my research, namely national conversations around types of violence in higher education.

What separates my study from existing ones is as follows. First, while studies of international student experiences in the United States existed, I focused on graduate students, who have a different relationship with the university than do undergraduate students. Specifically, they may be more likely to be working to fund their education, through graduate or research assistantships. They may also be more likely to be serving in teaching roles. A growing number of graduate students rely on research and teaching assistantships to fund their education (NSF, 2018). Second, I focused on women, whereas few studies on international students have centered the experiences of women. Third, using a framework consisting of intersectionality and transnational feminism, along with concepts of racialized gender violence and epistemic violence, allowed me to conceptualize my study with the assumption women of color international graduate students' multiple marginalized identities and transnational locations influenced their experiences and perceptions of safety and violence. Fourth, current and ongoing changes in the United States prompted further considerations about how those changes (e.g., visa policy, immigration debates, Title IX policies, gun policy) implicated women of color international graduate students in the context of the study.

In the next chapter, I will review literature on perceptions and experiences of violence and safety related to women of color international graduate students. I aim to build a case to study the experiences and perceptions of violence and safety among women of color international graduate students.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As a reminder, my research questions are as follows:

- 1. How do women of color international graduate students studying in the United States conceptualize violence and safety?
- 2. How do women of color international graduate students perceive and experience violence and safety while studying in the United States?
 - a. How do events and policies influence women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety?
- 3. How do women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety influence their lives?

The first goal of the literature review was to understand the existing scholarly literature about violence and safety in the higher education context related to women of color international graduate students. A second goal was to build a case for studying experiences and perceptions of violence and safety for the specific group of students of women of color international graduate students. In addition to literature from higher education scholars and journals, literature presented in this literature review is drawn from a variety of other fields, including psychology, criminal justice, and others. The existing published research covers a great deal of ground, and I admittedly may have missed important studies. The strength of the existing research is the variety of lenses and methods through which they study issues of violence and safety. I aimed to add to the existing literature by focusing on a specific population, women of color international graduate students, a particular lens of intersectionality and transnational feminism, and specific experiences of violence and safety.

The literature review chapter is organized in a way that mirrors the organization of conversations in Chapter 1 and as depicted in Figure 1. Specifically, I discuss the scholarly literature related to violence and safety in higher education with regards to each of the following groups: graduate students, international students, students of color, and women students. I end with the students in general and a discussion of gun violence. Within each of these sections, I address the literature in relation to my research questions: (a) overall perceptions and experiences of safety and violence, and (b) influence on students' lives of those perceptions and experiences of safety and violence. Because the amount of literature about each of these populations' perceptions and experiences of safety and violence and their implications varies, the length of each section is not consistent. Furthermore, in some cases, I used my judgment to artificially separate perceptions and experiences from influences on lives as authors may have reported these findings together. The organization of the first part of the chapter mirrors the organization of context and conversations discussed in Chapter 1. After discussing the literature related to each of the larger groups, I will review literature at the intersections of these groups, as is depicted in Figure 1 in Chapter 1. Where literature is more specific than the broad groups outlined above, I have included in the section on literature at the intersections.

Graduate Students and Violence Related to Graduate Student Status Perceptions and Experiences

The roles of graduate students have long been discussed including the ambiguity of their roles (Daine et al., 1973) and relationships to faculty (Cohen et al., 1980). In their book, Hinchey and Kimmel (2000) cited a 1998 AAU report that illuminates the problem of student exploitation, or graduate students as cheap labor for the institution. Hinchey and Kimmel (2000) claimed, however, that the suggestions offered in the AAU report are contradictory in that they

encourage seeing graduate students as students first while also positioning them as resources. In their survey study of doctoral students published in 1998, Anderson and Swazey (1998) found that 27% of doctoral students surveyed felt exploited by faculty. In addition, studies have shown graduate students experience sexual harassment. In their study of Economics PhD students, Barreira et al. (2018) found 16% of participants experienced sexual harassment as a PhD student, with more than one-fifth of women reporting sexual harassment, and 21% of domestic students versus 11% of international students. Of the sexual harassment incidents reported, more than 60% were from another graduate student, and 19% of sexual harassment was from a professor. Additional studies including sexual harassment towards graduate students will be discussed later in this chapter.

More recent literature on graduate students and exploitation is focused on intersections, such as women graduate students, international graduate students, and graduate students of color. A growing based of literature also points specifically to sexual harassment of graduate students by faculty. This literature will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Influences on Lives

Though causation is not clear, something about the graduate student experience has resulted in mental health concerns among graduate students, as discussed in Chapter 1. Studies have also shown the correlation between graduate student status and mental illness. In their survey study of graduate students, Evans et al. (2018) found graduate students were "more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population" (p. 282). Furthermore, more than half of graduate students with anxiety or depression disagreed they had a good work-life balance. Half of students with depression or anxiety disagreed their advisor provided mentorship or felt valued by their mentor. Barreira et al. (2018), in their study

of Economics PhD students in the United States, found "about 18% of students are experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression and anxiety" (p. 2), approximately three times the rate among the general population. Furthermore, they found 11% had suicidal thoughts in the previous two weeks. The authors also found, "women and international students have a higher prevalence of mental health issues than men and U.S. students, respectively" (p. 3). It is important to note, however, mental health issues are not unique to graduate students in the United States. A study by Levecque et al. (2017) found mental health issues among PhD students in Belgium, namely that half of PhD students in the sample had at least two symptoms of psychiatric disorders, and one-third of the sample had at least four, including depression. They found predictors included work-family conflict and job demands.

Another influence on the lives of graduate students of graduate student exploitation has been worker organization. Unionization has historically been a remedy to worker exploitation. Graduate students have been unionizing for collective bargaining purposes since the late 1960s in the United States (Julius & Gumport, 2002). In their study, Julius and Gumport (2002) found graduate students' unionization is driven by economic realities:

Among the primary reasons for graduate student unionization is the lengthened time required to complete a graduate degree, coupled with an increased reluctance on the part of students to live in what they perceive as academic ghettos. Many older graduate students desire to start families, need health care coverage and job security, and perceive the faculty with whom they work to be living in comparative luxury. (p. 196)

Rogers, Eaton, and Voos (2013), in their comparison on unionized and nonunionized graduate students, found unionization has positive influences including improved pay and improved

mentoring by faculty. In other words, unionization has helped alleviate some of the concerns of graduate students, including exploitation of their labor.

Contribution of My Study

Graduate students have experiences of exploitation and potentially resultant mental health issues. More studies about graduate students are in the second part of this chapter on intersections; however, in my study, I aimed to look at a specific group of graduate students, namely women of color international graduate students.

International Students and

Violence Related to International Student Status or Xenophobic Violence

There is not a lack of literature on international students in the United States and in other countries, including in a dedicated journal, *The Journal of International Students*. Much of the research on international students in the United States, though, focuses on their broad experiences or other aspects of their experiences, including sense of belonging and language. For example, international students in the United States may face financial, cultural, and language issues (Sherry et al., 2010) and struggles like accessing visas, travel, and employment (Bista & Foster, 2011). In addition, literature often focuses on international students as a whole, rather than disaggregating by national origin, gender, and other identities. This research is valuable, however, in understanding the experiences of international students, and some include experiences of violence and safety, so I have included some in this review to illuminate what is known already about international students and what is left to be explored.

To supplement the U.S.-based literature on international students, I draw upon literature from contexts outside of the United States, specifically from the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. I have chosen these countries because they are top destination countries for international

Australia, Canada, and the United States have histories as British settler colonies. Although there are some notable differences, such as the populations and relationships between international students and domestic students (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2015), the literature from these countries improves the understanding of violence and threats to safety that international students may face in the United States.

Perceptions and Experiences

I have divided the literature on international students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety into several categories. It is important to note the authors of the pieces themselves did not necessarily ascribe labels of violence and safety to the experiences discussed in their articles. Findings are presented in the following sections: Classroom experiences, discrimination and racism, and physical violence.

Classroom Experiences

The most common studies of international students explore their experiences in the classroom. Although the studies do not focus on violent experiences themselves, these studies illuminate experiences international students face in the classroom that influence their overall experience. To include these findings here required some interpretation of the findings on my part because the authors themselves do not call the experiences violent. I interpret the experiences described in the literature to contribute to epistemic violence, explained in Chapter 1. The findings from the following studies illuminate practices of silencing international students in the classroom, which I consider to be an implication of a form of violence. The implications will be discussed in more detail below, while the perceptions and experiences will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

In research on international graduate students, the focus tends to be on language difficulties. For example, many international graduate students have a hard time understanding professors and other students in class due to speaking speed and accents (Kuo, 2011). Another study elucidated the experiences of 20 graduate students in a mathematics department, indicating international students felt integrated to the department, but compared male international students, male domestic students, and female domestic students (Earl-Novell, 2006), leaving out female international students.

International students also experience microaggressions in the classroom. Sue (2010) defines microaggressions as "the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (p. 3). Microaggressions are not always the product of negative intent. For example, S. Kim and R. Kim (2010) state, despite institutions' profession of a commitment to diversity and multiculturalism, both the curriculum and classroom dynamics remain insensitive to international students' experiences. They highlight how international students, who are often in the numerical minority, find it difficult to offer alternative perspectives linked to their cultures because instructors are not viewed as receptive to these ideas (S. Kim & R. Kim, 2010). International students may also feel they are treated unfairly or ignored by faculty (Yan & Pei, 2018).

In addition, most faculty members are limited in their cross-cultural knowledge of where their international students are coming from (Haigh, 2002). Haigh (2002) argues while institutions claim to be friendly to international students, their academic practices continue to remain focused on local knowledge and as such are hostile towards foreign students. In addition, students can experience mismatches of cultural knowledge (Hung, 2006). A lack of

understanding of U.S.-based knowledge can be due to a lack of a mental schema in which to place the U.S.-knowledge:

lacking American history and culture schemata, Asian students have no *slot* into which to fit the concept of the modern U.S. civil rights movement. Thus, they may not be able to fully comprehend, or appreciate the impact of desegregation on American education. (Hung, 2006, p. 180)

The lack of cross-cultural knowledge on the part of instructors and the subsequent misunderstandings of international students can inhibit their full participation in the classroom, which is discussed in further detail in the implications section.

Discrimination and Racism

Existing research tends to look at international students from an individual level and may ignore larger structural and environmental issues like racism (Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry et al., 2010). Cantwell and Lee (2010) used a lens of neoracism to explain the discrimination international postdocs face in U.S. and U.K. contexts: "neoracism is a framework to explore structural racism in the context of immigration where race, culture, and nationality interact complexly to produce a hierarchy of social positions" (p. 497). They found postdocs from Asian countries often experienced less supportive supervisors and unequal working conditions compared to their counterparts from Western countries. In their study of international students in the United States, Lee and Rice (2007) point to mistreatment of Middle Eastern people in the United States and explain, "even before 9/11 women who wore veils or saris had difficulties integrating with campus life and suffered unpleasant experiences" (p. 385). Lee and Rice found students experienced verbal attacks and sexual harassment. While students did not report physical violence in that particular study, verbal attacks and discrimination were common.

In their study, Sherry et al. (2010) found Muslim students reported ignorance of Islam. They also found students experienced inclusion in the community differently depending on where they were from, with students from the Middle East and South Asia feeling less included than those from Western countries. Lee (2010), in her quantitative study of international students' perceptions, found perception of discrimination was related to racial background of the student. The intersections of race, gender, religion, and nationality is of note in the above literature, giving further impetus to understand the experiences of women of color international students.

In the Australian context, Marginson et al. (2010) also found experiences of racism and discrimination among international students. Although the context of racism in the United States and Australia are different, the study illuminates how international students experience discrimination. In their qualitative study of international students in Australia, Marginson et al. asked, "Have you experienced hostility or prejudice while in Australia? From other students? From local people? In relation to nationality, religion, dress or other matters?" (p. 419). Of course, not all students felt hostility and many got along with local students and perceived them to be welcoming. Marginson et al. reported 99 of 200 interviewees answered yes to the above question. Even among those who did not answer yes, the researchers perceived the students' answers to indicate instances of discrimination. They found Muslim students felt the most hostility given stereotypes about Muslims in Australia, and Muslim women wearing hijab were particularly susceptible. Many of the students interviewed also discussed instances of racial epithets directed toward them on the street. Some even expressed being denied housing on the basis of race. The intersection of race, gender, religion, and nationality is of note in the above examples, giving further impetus to understand experiences of international students.

International students also perceived discrimination with regard to housing. Forbes-Mewett et al. (2015) and Marginson et al. (2010) found that places where international students were accommodated and could afford to live were perceived as less safe areas. In addition, a participant in Yan and Pei's (2018) U.S.-based study explained having to pay extra to move into an off-campus apartment and perceived it to be due to discrimination from the landlord.

Physical Violence

Experiences of physical violence can have consequences on not only those directly affected but also those in their community. Even fear of physical violence can affect international students. In a study from 1984, Sundeen (1984) conducted a quantitative analysis of fear of crime among international students in the United States and found their status as a newcomer, as well as not feeling like they could be protected in their environment, led students to feel most afraid. Over time, they felt safer. Since then, of course, the number of international students has increased dramatically, and new research could illuminate different perceptions of violence among international students.

Researchers in Australia have studied physical violence on international students as a result of their context. The international student population in Australia grew extensively between 1985 and 2005, largely due to the government's favorable immigration policies and policies of multiculturalism allowing for international students to enter and stay in Australia (Marginson et al., 2010). In the mid-2000s, however, xenophobic attacks upon international students, particularly international students from China and India (Marginson et al., 2010) sparked pressure from the Chinese and Indian governments upon the Australian government and higher education institutions to address the safety of their students (Nyland et al., 2010). Marginson et al. (2010) explain this "does not mean that there is a special problem of student

security in Australia in that international students are worse off there than in other countries" (p. 34). More specifically, documented attacks began in the early 2000s (Marginson et al., 2010), and in 2007, the "Australian Educational International ... report[ed] only 75% of international students [were] satisfied with the provisions made for their safety" (Nyland et al., 2010, p. 95). The consistent denial there was a problem on the part of the Australian government "was perceived as a sign that Australian officials believed Australia's reputation in the market place was more important than the safety of Indian students" (p. 97). Pressure from the Indian and Chinese governments finally prompted the Australian government and institutions to act, including the government sending delegations to discuss student safety. In addition, Universities Australia released a plan in 2009 indicating commitment to international student safety and "a national response and close cooperation between all education providers and the Commonwealth government, state authorities, foreign governments and their diplomatic representatives" (Universities Australia as cited in Nyland et al., 2010, p. 98).

In another study, Azmat, Osborne, and Rentschler (2011) studied the perceptions of Indian male international students in Australia. The authors based their study on the finding from a report (Larsen et al. as cited in Azmat et al., 2011) that found Indian male international students were more likely than their peers from other countries to experience crime. In their study using focus groups of a total of 53 Indian male students, the population of students attacked a few years earlier, Azmat et al. (2011) found, "students were divided over whether they perceived the attacks as racial hate crimes or opportunistic and over intercultural issues, but their perceptions were aligned on issues of systemic ineffectiveness and media reporting in response to the attacks" (p. 326). More specifically, students perceived the police and justice system were ineffective at dealing with attacks on Indian students. They did not all agree the attacks were

motivated by racism; some believed they were opportunistic and due to behaviors by Indian students such as alcohol use. Some limitations existed in this study, including the lack of women participants, but the study provided a better understanding of the perceptions of a specific international student population.

Another factor in perceptions of safety and violence could be the students' countries of origin. Returning to Marginson et al.'s (2010) study, many of the participants made comparisons of safety between their home country and Australia, indicating they felt safer in Australia than in their home country. Those students were from Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, and Zimbabwe (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 234). Students from Japan and Singapore thought their home countries were safer than Australia. In contrast to Sundeen (1984), who found background characteristics did not make a difference in perceptions of crime, Marginson et al. found students' backgrounds do matter. In their study of students and those who work with students, Forbes-Mewett et al. (2015) also found perceptions and understandings of crime depended on country of origin, particularly with regard to knowing what is considered a crime, comfort with law enforcement, and reporting.

Influence on Lives

Participation

In a study by Tatar (2005) on the reasons for the lack of Turkish international graduate student participation in the classroom, the author explained students have difficulties "conforming to U.S. academic life" (p. 337). The onus is on the student to conform or adjust to the U.S. context, and little to no responsibility is placed on the institution and its structures, both in and outside of the classroom, to be more accommodating of international students (S. Kim & R. Kim, 2010). Grimshaw (2011) refers to this idea of conformity as "when international

students come to our country they need to adapt to our way of doing things" (p. 704), which encourages assimilation to the dominant ideas (Trice & Yoo, 2007). Trice and Yoo (2007) highlight how international students felt American faculty imposed their cultural norms and expectations on them.

Furthermore, attitudes from faculty can influence a lack of academic participation among international students. In their study of 12 international students, Yan and Pei (2018) found after students expressed feeling ignored or dismissed by faculty, they did not want to visit office hours. Similarly, negative interactions with or feeling ignored by other students meant that students did not participate (Yan & Pei, 2018).

Another study by Mori (2000), in assessing the mental health of international students, found these students experienced stressors of cultural adjustment to U.S. education particularly related to linguistic challenges. International students from non-Western cultures struggled with others' unintelligible accents which diminished their ability to both understand classroom discussions and to clearly articulate their ideas and contribute to those discussions (Mori, 2000). Li and Collins (2014), in their study of Chinese doctoral students, also found multiple pressures in addition to social isolation heightened psychological vulnerability.

Studies from Canada illuminate discrimination in the classroom, and I would argue, silencing as described above. In a study of Chinese international students in Canada, Zhou et al. (2005) explain classroom silence:

[S]ilence is not merely defined as an individual decision not to speak. Rather, more importantly, it is understood as classroom processes in which Chinese students' individual characteristics interact with classroom context to engender their reluctance to participate, despite opportunity to do so. (p. 297)

In their autoethnography, four international graduate students from Japan studying in Canada, Mayuzumi et al. (2007), discuss the process of silencing. Often, faculty members assumed them to be quiet and did not give them an opportunity to speak. When they did speak, they were not heard. One author reported only being heard when she spoke about Japan. As one author in Mayuzumi et al. (2007) explained,

[L]abelling people based on stereotypes is basically shutting the door for them to come up with new ideas and knowledges. It is a form of colonization in the sense that it is imposing on us who we are without knowing our subjectivity. (p. 588)

These experiences shut down international students and thus affect their ability to experience their education fully. The studies reviewed above show the implications of negative classroom experiences upon international students and warrant further attention.

Shifts in Behaviors

Researchers have found the perceptions of physical violence have influenced international students and their behavior. In their book, Marginson et al. (2010) focus on their empirical qualitative study of 200 international students in Australia on a variety of topics related to international security. Regarding physical violence, they asked, "Are you safe and secure in Australia?" (p. 227). They found most participants (90%) said yes, but many offered qualifications. For example, some students indicated they changed their behavior by not going out at night or by choosing to living in student-heavy environments. Of those who did not feel safe and secure in Australia, more than expected were from India and China. In addition, many of the students said they or their friends had experienced some form of hate crime including street harassment. A small number of students interviewed had experienced physical violence.

Students who experience discrimination or harassment may not be inclined to complain, as in Yan and Pei's (2018) study, in which students said "they kept quiet after the incidents for fear of losing their F-1 visa status" (p. 466). More specifically, "participants would deliberately avoid responding to or questioning the people who treated them differently, fearing retaliation" (p. 467). Furthermore, in addition to not complaining, students in Yan and Pei's (2018) study internalized and blamed themselves for behaviors directed toward them. Yan and Pei attribute this self-blame to wanting to make themselves feel better about the discriminatory incident or because they did not want to complain and jeopardize their visa status.

In addition, as mentioned above, Marginson et al. (2010) found students altered their behavior to avoid situations that might put them at risk of violent crime. Similarly, a quantitative study of international students in the United States explored risk factors associated with victimization (Daigle et al., 2018). Their analysis "showed that international students were less likely to report violent victimization than non-international students" (p. 3064). In addition, they found, for women, "international student status significantly reduced the odds of victimization" (p. 3065). Daigle et al. found the lower rates of victimization correlated with fewer risk factors, including less binge drinking and social isolation. Their study thus found complex relationships between international students' reporting, risk factors, and victimization. Daigle et al. concluded, although isolating oneself reduces the risk of victimization, it also reduces the connections that make up a positive college experience. Thus, there is reason to believe international students fear of crime and controlling their behaviors to avoid violence may also have unintended consequences on their collegiate experience.

Contribution of My Study

There is not a dearth of literature on international students. There are, however, few studies that take an intersectional approach, including a raced and gendered analysis. Additional studies on specific groups of international students are in the intersections part of this chapter. In my study, I aimed to better understand the experiences, perceptions, and influence on lives on a specific group of international students, namely women of color international graduate students. I also thought it would be important to understand the experiences of international students during the political context of 2019-2020, when my study was conducted.

Students of Color and Racialized Violence

Much of the literature noted in the previous section on international students included international students of color, or international students who have been racialized, even though authors may have not labeled those participants as students of color and students themselves may not perceive themselves that way. International students experience racism and discrimination connected with their national, racial, and ethnic identities. There is of course also a large body of knowledge on the experiences of students of color in higher education. Current experiences of students of color in higher education are shaped by histories of higher education. Black students, in particular, have been historically oppressed within higher education institutions. Bishop Mustaffa (2017) historically maps the oppression of Black people in U.S. higher education, from the colonial era in which Black slave labor built higher education institutions, to exclusion of Black students from higher education institutions, to the thwarting of Black resistance in more recent times.

Perceptions and Experiences

Several studies of students of color on college campuses exist, exploring their experiences from a variety of perspectives, including campus climate (Rankin & Reason, 2005), marginality (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998), and sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007). These perspectives highlight the importance of understanding institutional roles in maintaining inequality. Solórzano and Villalpando (1998), for example, point to the importance of understanding how higher education institutions maintain marginal positions of students of color. Rankin and Reason (2005) found that students of color perceived a more negative campus climate and experienced higher rates of harassment than did White students.

Studies have also shown that students of color experience racial microaggressions.

Solórzano et al. (2017), in their qualitative study of African American undergraduate students' experiences of racial microaggressions and campus climate, provided a substantial review of the literature related to racial microaggressions. In their study, they found racial microaggressions were felt in academic and social spaces. In the classroom, for example, students shared their feelings of invisibility and being ignored by faculty as well as low faculty expectations of them (Solórzano et al., 2017).

Influence on Lives

Solórzano et al. (2017) described the implications of racial microaggressions including "the resulting negative racial climate and African American students' struggles with feelings of self-doubt and frustration as well as isolation" (p. 69). Students also reported the negative effects on their academic achievement, including dropping classes or transferring to another institution. Campus climate can also influence students' lives in terms of their sense of belonging. The topic of racial campus climate and sense of belonging has been long studied. Hurtado and Carter

(1997) found that perceptions of negative campus climate had a negative effect on Latino students' sense of belonging. Ten years later, Johnson et al. (2007) found that students of color had less sense of belonging than White peers, and that perceptions of campus climate strongly influenced sense of belonging. Y. Kim et al. (2018) found race mediated the relationship between campus climate and sense of belonging, with African American men perceiving a less positive campus climate and a lower sense of belonging.

Contribution of My Study

The literature on students of color and racialized violence points to the experiences of students of color on college campuses that affect their overall experiences. I argue that international students who are read as students of color also may experience racial microaggressions and negative campus climate, but those experiences are mediated by their international student status. This gave me further impetus to study women of color international graduate students to better understand how the intersection of identities complicate students' experiences.

Women Students and Gendered Violence

In this section, I review literature related to women students and gendered violence. I begin with influential studies that have shaped the narrative around sexual violence on college campuses in the United States, namely that large percentages of women on college campuses have experienced some type of sexual violence. More recent studies confirm the prevalence of sexual violence on campus. Many of the studies on sexual violence on college campuses focus on undergraduate students. I conclude with a section on the influence of gendered violence on women students' lives.

Perceptions and Experiences

Gendered violence in higher education in the United States is nothing new. According to Kamentz (2014), Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) published one of the first studies on sexual assault on a college campus. The tone, however, was very different than the literature seen today, with authors naming survivors as "offended girls" and placing blame on them rather than those who assaulted them. Kanin and Parcell (1977) revisited and replicated Kirkpatrick and Kanin's original study. They found that 50% of survey respondents reported some sexual aggression towards them, and that the patterns of male sexual aggression in dating-courtship relationships had not changed much since their first study published in 1957.

Partially in response to Kirkpatrick and Kanin's (1957) study, Koss and Oros (1982) developed and tested a survey instrument called the Sexual Experiences Survey using a sample of 3,862 college students to identify varying degrees of sexual aggressive behaviors and incidents. One reason for developing the survey was to uncover hidden cases of rape, given the inadequacy of previous instruments. They found that six percent of women who responded in the survey reported that they had been raped. In addition, respondents indicated high rates of feeling pressured to have sex and being physically coerced. The survey has been used and cited many times since then (a Google Scholar search revealed that it has been cited over 1,000 times).

Cortina et al. (1998) studied sexual harassment and assault on a large Midwestern university campus. Of a sample of 1037 women undergraduate and graduate students, "49% of undergraduate and 53% of graduate women had experienced at least one sexually harassing behavior at least 'once or twice' from an instructor or professor while at the university" (Cortina et al., 1998, p. 426), although 20 to 25% labeled the associated behaviors as sexual harassment. Among the women experiencing sexual harassment the most were African American and Latina

women and lesbian and bisexual women. Furthermore, 11% of undergraduate women and 3% of graduate women experienced attempted or completed rape; the authors, however, explain that the definition was narrow and the rate could have been higher. Cortina et al. also found one in six undergraduate and one in ten graduate women experienced sexual harassment and sexual assault.

In December 2000, the Department of Justice released a report called "The Sexual Victimization of College Women" (Fisher et al., 2000). The report's text begins, "During the past decade, concern over the sexual victimization of female college students has escalated" (p. 1). Furthermore, the report's authors explain, "college campuses host large concentrations of young women who are at greater risk for rape and other forms of sexual assault than women in the general population or in a comparable age group" (p. iii). Fisher et al. (2000) found from their study of college women in the 1996-97 academic year that "during any given academic year, 2.8 percent of women will experience a completed and/or attempted rape" (p. 33). In addition, because some women in the study experienced multiple completed or attempted rapes, the authors concluded "from a policy perspective, college administrators might be disturbed to learn that for every 1,000 women attending their institutions, there may well be 35 incidents of rape in a given academic year" (p. 11). They also found that "about 9 in 10 offenders were known to the victim" (p. 17). They also found students did not report sexual assault to law enforcement: "fewer than 5 percent of completed and attempted rapes were reported to law enforcement officials" (p. 23).

In 2001, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) released guidelines that explicitly connected Title IX to sexual harassment of students, as sexual harassment prevents full participation in educational programs, and is therefore a form of sex discrimination (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Literature on sexual violence in higher education has grown with increased

national attention in the past few years. Since the release of the "Dear Colleague" letter (Ali, 2011) that reinforced the role of colleges and universities in preventing sex discrimination, including sexual violence, on campus, numerous government reports have been released (e.g., McCallion & Feder, 2014; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; White House, 2014).

The Association of American Universities (AAU) conducted campus climate surveys in 2015 and 2019. The report of the second one (Cantor et al., 2020) indicates continued sexual misconduct on college campuses, including rates of 13% of "nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or ability to consent" (p. vii), with rates higher among women undergraduate students at 25.9% than for women graduate and professional students at 9.7%. The researchers also found increases in rates from 2015 to 2019 for undergraduate and graduate women. Furthermore, regarding sexual harassment, Cantor et al. (2020) found the following:

Among all students, 41.8 percent reported experiencing at least one sexually harassing behavior since enrollment. Overall, 18.9 percent of students reported sexually harassing behavior that either "interfered with their academic or professional performance", "limited their ability to participate in an academic program" or "created an intimidating, hostile or offensive social, academic or work environment". (p. xiii)

In addition, the authors found, "among graduate and professional women who were sexually harassed, 24.0% of incidents were by a faculty member or instructor" (p. xiii).

In addition to experiences of sexual violence among women students on college campuses, some have studied perceptions of safety. Kelly and Torres (2006) conducted a qualitative study of undergraduate and graduate women students. The authors found participants "reported a chilly campus climate that served to further perpetuate a culture of fear for their campus safety" (p. 24). They found many participants thought about their safety, and their fear

for their safety was shaped by their own experiences as well as experiences of friends as well as hearing about rapes and attacks on women. The authors also found, "graduate women appeared to be more aware of the daily concerns about walking on campus alone, especially at night" (p. 33). In their mixed-methods study, Starkweather (2007) explored perceptions of safety among students at Ohio State University and found that women were more likely to feel unsafe than men. Conversely, in her thesis study of perceptions of campus safety at a university in Tennessee, Dozier (2017) did not find any statistically significant difference between gender and race of students' perceptions of campus safety.

Influence on Lives

Outcomes

The effects of sexual violence on students on college campuses have been long reported. Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) found "offended girls" withdrew emotionally from their university, parents, and peers; the authors, however, did not report on any academic or attrition outcomes of the students studied. In terms of outcomes of rape or attempted rape, Fisher et al. (2000) claimed, "victims in the sample generally did not state that their victimization resulted in physical or emotional injuries" (p. 22). In this study, the researchers also did not consider the influences of sexual assault on students' academic outcomes.

In their study, Cortina et al. (1998) studied educational outcomes related to sexual harassment and assault. One finding showed an association between sexual assault and negative perceptions of campus climate, including feeling "less respected, less accepted, and treated less fairly on campus than other women" (Cortina et al., 1998, p. 436). In addition, Cortina et al. found an association between sexual harassment and safety, as well as sexual harassment and self-efficacy: "increases in harassment frequency were associated with increases in

undergraduate fears for personal safety on campus. Most important, harassment even altered graduate women's evaluations of their academic competence; as harassment increased, so did their doubts about their own self-efficacy" (Cortina et al., 1998, p. 436). Cantor et al. (2020) found participants reported several consequences of sexual assault. These included behavioral and emotional consequences, including avoiding the perpetrator and concern for safety, along with effects to well-being. In addition, they found academic and professional consequences, including decreased class attendance and difficulty concentrating.

Resource Use

One influence on survivors' lives seems to be decisions to use available resources. In the AAU study (Cantor et al., 2020), researchers found 46.8% of survivors contacted a program or resource, including counseling, but only 11.2% and 9.4% contacted campus and local police respectively. The authors also found that only 45% of those who "reported nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent" (p. xv) thought it was "very or 'extremely' likely school officials would take a report of sexual assault seriously" (p. xv). In another study, researchers found that among 247 female undergraduate students, almost 40% had reported an experience with sexual assault (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016). In comparing victims and nonvictims, Burgess-Proctor et al. (2016) found that victims were less confident in campus resources than nonvictims. In addition, victims indicated that they were less likely to attend a self-defense course on campus than were nonvictims (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016). In their quantitative study of female survivors on one university campus, Spencer et al. (2017) found "220 of 232 female students who were survivors of sexual assault did not report their assault to university officials" (p. 171). The study focused on survivors who did not report and found a variety of reasons for not reporting including, "It was not a big enough deal," "I didn't know

who to report to or that I could report," "It wasn't related to the university," and "I was afraid." A limitation the authors noted was the sample was not demographically representative of the university; the university was 50% white, but the sample was 84% white. In addition, graduate students made up 9% of the sample.

Avoidance Strategies

In addition, students who felt unsafe developed avoidance strategies to make themselves feel safer, including staying home at night, even perceiving these behaviors as normal (Starkweather, 2007). In their qualitative study, Kelly and Torres (2006) found some participants "adopt[ed] habits they had been told would keep them safe, such as not walking alone at night and locking their doors" (p. 30), but participants recognized that while these behaviors might make them feel safe, their safety was not guaranteed. Cantor et al. (2020) found that in addition to 77.4% of women respondents "avoiding or trying to avoid the person," other outcomes included loss of interest in daily activities, withdrawal from interactions with friends, and stopping participating in extracurricular activities. It is not clear why participants adopted these behavioral changes, however. Another quantitative study by May et al. (2010) also found gendered avoidance behaviors among the general population.

Contributions of My Study

As discussed above, a great deal of literature exists on gendered violence on college campuses, including sexual violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. As noted, however, much of the literature above focuses on undergraduate students. In addition, studies often do not address race, or a majority of participants are white. Additional studies addressing racially minoritized students and graduate students is included in the intersections section in the second half of this chapter. My research adds to the discussion about gendered violence, and by taking

an intersectional approach, I aimed to show how it is difficult to separate violence based on gender versus other identities women of color international graduate students hold.

Students and Safety Literature

As noted in Chapter 1, discussions about student safety often have to do with mass shootings and the potential for gun violence on college campuses. Also as noted in Chapter 1, this was not something I had thought about before starting data collection, and thus this was not an original part of my literature review or interview protocol. As I soon realized in interviews, however, gun violence was a contributing factor to participants' assessment of safety. As a result, in this section, I review literature related to guns on campus.

Perceptions and Experiences

Perceptions about gun violence revolved mostly around perceptions of campus carry. In their quantitative study of undergraduate students at 15 universities, Thompson et al. (2013) found most students were not supportive of concealed carry on campus. Female students were more likely to oppose the policy but victims of crime were more likely to support it. More students also said they would feel unsafe if concealed carry was allowed. In their quantitative study of students, staff, and faculty at a large university in the Midwest about perceptions about campus safety policies, Kyle et al. (2017) found most faculty, staff, and students disagreed with students being able to carry weapons on campus, with more students supporting the policy than faculty and staff. In another quantitative study on students at six Illinois campuses, Schafer et al. (2018) found students mostly did not support concealed carry on campus, but support for this policy differed among different groups of students, with women being less likely to support such policies.

Influences on Lives

There does not seem to be much published literature on the influences on students' lives of campus carry, but there are studies on faculty and staff perceptions of influences on their lives and work. Specifically, Somers et al. (2020) studied 32 women staff members' perspectives at the University of Texas at Austin. The researchers found, "Most participants (28 out of 32) felt generally safe on campus, although several expressed concerns that this was changing due to campus carry" (p. 84). In addition, most participants were fearful due to the new campus carry law and worried about increased gun violence and an escalation of violence from emotional situations. In his qualitative study of 13 faculty members at a university in Texas after the campus carry law went into effect, Cradit (2017) found faculty members consciously and unconsciously made changes to their teaching and interactions with students.

Contribution of My Study

Although my study did not focus on campus carry and gun violence, it came up within participant interviews, so I am including it in my literature review. I am focusing on a specific population of students, women of color international graduate students, many of whom had teaching roles and may have been affected by the campus carry laws. In addition, existing literature does not disaggregate based on national origin. In fact, I had likely not thought about the importance of campus carry and gun violence because I am used to the idea of gun ownership in the United States. I found out, however, that international students bring in a much different perspective. Thus, my study adds to the discussion about campus carry and gun violence from a international perspective.

Literature at the Intersections

As discussed in Chapter 1, national conversations are taking place about the student populations of graduate students, international students, students of color, women students, and students more broadly, and the violences and threats to safety that each of those groups face. Fewer conversations are taking place about those at the intersections, with the exception of a growing conversation about women graduate students and sexual harassment. Although national conversations are not necessarily happening for other groups with multiple identities, or at those intersections as depicted in Figure 1, there is scholarly literature that explores the experiences of groups at these intersections. In the following sections, I will discuss literature on these groups. In the following sections, I have not divided perceptions and experiences from implications as I did in the previous sections, for ease of reading. As will be seen, the literature shows that experiences are more complex than the sum of violences; for example, women of color face more than sexism and racism than their intersecting identities would suggest.

Women of Color Students and Sexual Violence

Existing literature on sexual assault both within and outside of the higher education setting illuminate the need to conduct a racialized gender analysis. A nearly two-decade old study (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998) reported findings from a national telephone survey of 8,000 women and 8,000 men conducted in 1995 and 1996. The researchers found statistically significant differences in reporting of rape and sexual assault among racial groups. Specifically, Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) found,

American Indian/Alaska Native women were most likely to report rape and physical assault victimization, while Asian/Pacific Islander women were least likely to report rape

and physical assault victimization. ... Hispanic women were less likely to report rape victimization than non-Hispanic women. (p. 12)

The authors, however, cautioned that the study had small numbers of participants from American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian-American/Pacific Islander groups, and that more research must be done to understand sexual violence among racial and ethnic groups.

Despite this call, current research appears to have not addressed the lack of attention to race. A reading of journal articles in two special issues of *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* (Jordan, 2014) reveals few instances of discussions or considerations of race in college campus sexual violence. Most of the articles do not mention "race" at all. Of those that do, most of the articles' authors state that more research is needed on race regarding sexual assault on college campuses. For example, when discussing existing research, Gidycz and Dardis (2014) explain, studies on self-defense training on college campuses use samples of mostly white women, noting the exclusion of the intersection of race and gender in the research. A few articles report on some aspects of race; for example, Sabina and Ho (2014) reported, "studies... that tested for differences in reasons for not reporting to the police found that reason varied by type of sexual assault, victim race, location of incident, and severity" (p. 216). Harris (2017) calls for centering women of color in the discussion of sexual violence on college campuses as women of color endure sexual violence more frequently yet are underrepresented in the literature and to expose the oppressions that underlie sexual violence.

One such study that centers women of color on college campuses is a quantitative study of experiences of intimate partner violence among undergraduate students at HBCUs (Barrick et al., 2013). Of the study participants, most of whom were Black women between ages 18 and 20,

a higher percentage experienced intimate partner violence compared to students at predominantly white institutions.

Women International Students and Sexual Violence

A few studies show the need to study international students and sexual violence in the U.S. context. Based on the Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) study discussed above that found statistically significant differences in reporting of rape and sexual assault among racial groups, there is reason to believe international students, too, may have different reporting patterns than other groups, and thus a reason to study sexual violence perpetrated against international students.

An article by Australian scholars Forbes-Mewett and McCulloch (2016) reports on a qualitative study of 65 international students in Australia and the United States and their perceptions of gender-based violence. Forbes-Mewett and McCulloch made clear the intersectional nature of women international students' experiences, including gender, race, class, as well as language and being in a foreign environment. The researchers found female international students discussed multiple forms of gender-based violence, including sexual favors, sexual harassment, and intimate partner violence, which they usually kept hidden.

International student women were often exploited by faculty members and others who perceived them to be vulnerable. In addition, stalking was a commonly reported behavior. Forbes-Mewett et al. (2015) found, in their study of international students in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, like Marginson et al. (2010), female international students often altered their behavior to avoid situations that put them at risk for sexual violence.

Forbes-Mewett and McCulloch (2016) concluded international student women were particularly vulnerable as they did not have legal or family support systems, had language

barriers, and felt shame. Furthermore, they found, "international students do not wish to report incidents of gender-based violence for fear of repercussions, including deportation, the shame of not living up to family expectations, and fear for their own safety and that of family members" (p. 361). This is important to note as violence against international students may be underreported and students may not be getting necessary support services. The study provided a comparison between the United States and Australia, and the authors found the students in the United States were more open about sexual violence and found resources to be more accessible than students in Australia. I would argue, however, the understanding about international students' perceptions regarding gender-based and other forms of violence is still insufficient and warrants further research.

International Graduate Students

International graduate students experience compounded effects of racism, xenophobia, and exploitation as graduate students. In their study about international graduate students and their labor, Cantwell et al. (2018) framed international graduate students' labor in terms of a framework of mergers and acquisitions. In many cases, students felt that they were treated well, with support and as research collaborators. In several other cases, however, students were treated not as collaborators, but as employees and as cheap labor. Students perceived that they were exploited but did not speak up because they were dependent upon their advisors for funding and their ability to stay in the United States (Cantwell et al., 2018). In my study, I aimed to understand these experiences of exploitation from a gendered perspective by focusing on the experiences of women international graduate students.

In their qualitative study of African international graduate students, George Mwangi et al. (2019) found African international graduate students encountered barriers including assumptions

made by American students and faculty about them, "which negatively impacted their academic and social experiences at the university" (p. 58). Participants also experienced racism and discrimination while lacking support and resources, including food insecurity. Some students also expressed not being able to participate in class and an unwelcoming class climate. The authors also found, however, that students organized and provided support to one another.

In her dissertation study, Bonistall Postel (2015) explored international graduate students' experiences, perceptions, and understandings of sexual violence in the United States. She found that international graduate students experienced victimization, including "street harassment, sexual harassment, dating violence, and sexual assault, at the hands of advisors, bosses, coworkers, partners, friends, acquaintances, and strangers" (p. 153). Many also had ambiguous understandings of sexual violence issues. Some factors that inhibited their vulnerability to victimization included friendship and support groups and help-seeking behaviors. Bonistall Postel's (2015) study is important to understand the experiences of international graduate students with regard to sexual violence. What separates my study from hers is that I took a raced and gendered approach to violence, and I did not focus on sexual violence.

Graduate Students of Color

In her piece, Gay (2004) discussed the marginality that graduate students of color experience, including physical, cultural, and intellectual isolation, and neglect. Although she does not name it as such, I would name some of these experiences as epistemic violence as described in Chapter 1. In their critical race theory informed narrative study of doctoral students of color, namely Latina/o students and Black students, Gildersleeve et al. (2011) found Black and Latina/o doctoral students feel racialized aggressions everyday. The result of this is "producing black and Latino/a students who self-censor, question their self-efficacy, adopt or

refute rules and norms of their discipline, feel stifled in their scholarly endeavors, and rely on peer support networks..." (p. 108).

Women Graduate Students

Although the sexual harassment of graduate students is nothing new and has been previously studied (e.g., Fuehrer & Schilling, 1987), recent studies have shown the prevalence of sexual harassment, particularly of women graduate students. In an AAU study in 2015, one in ten female graduate students reported being sexually harassed by a faculty member (Cantor et al., 2015). In their quantitative study of graduate students, Rosenthal et al. (2016) found over a third of female graduate students surveyed experienced sexual harassment from faculty or staff, more than experienced by male graduate students. In addition, they found that those students who experienced sexual harassment "reported a diminished sense of safety on campus" (Rosenthal et al., 2016, p. 374). They also found a general perception of lack of safety on or around campus among female graduate students. Students who were harassed by faculty or staff also perceived institutional betrayal, or failure of the institution to respond well.

Another study by Cantalupo and Kidder (2018) reviewed media reports, federal civil rights investigations, and lawsuits to analyze faculty sexual harassment of students. They found that women graduate students often experienced physical sexual harassment as opposed to verbal sexual harassment, as is commonly thought. Harassers were also found to be serial harassers. Furthermore, Cantalupo and Kidder explain the reasons that graduate students are vulnerable to sexual harassment by faculty, including length of programs and small communities; hostile environments due to power differentials; and lack of ability to complain due to consequences (pp. 9-10).

Women of Color Graduate Students

Women of color graduate students experienced compounded effects of racism and sexism in their programs. In their qualitative study of women of color PhD students' experiences in doctoral programs and how a support program influences their experiences, Aryan and Guzman (2010) found students had negative experiences in their doctoral programs. For instance, one participant said, "The academy isn't designed to make women of color feel comfortable and safe" (Aryan & Guzman, 2010, p. 74). The participants expressed feelings of isolation and lack of support in their programs. Aryan and Guzman concluded that the women of color in the study were frustrated due to the racism and sexism they experienced in their graduate programs. In their quantitative study of graduate students, Noy and Ray (2012) found women of color "perceive their advisors to be less respectful" concluding "perhaps racialized processes discussed in other areas of social life are also present in graduate education in the form of perceived discrimination in student-advisor relationships" (p. 903). The authors predicted these negative relationships could result in women of color being less likely to complete programs or receive good letters of recommendation. Furthermore, women of color graduate students have documented their experiences of microaggressions and racism (Ruvalcaba et al., 2020) and racialized gender violence (Roberts-Gregory, 2020) in their graduate programs.

Women International Graduate Students

Studies I found on the experiences of women international graduate students were not explicitly about their experiences and perceptions of violence and safety, but illuminate aspects of their experiences that are worth exploring further. One thesis study conducted in Canada of female international graduate students found that a student society helped as a space for learning and adjustment, but still, students felt sexism present in that space (Dogus, 2013). Conversely, in

another qualitative study, Le et al. (2016) found female international graduate student participants had generally positive views of their university and a high sense of belonging.

Studies also considered present experiences within the context of past experiences and were specific to students from particular countries. For instance, Qin (2000) studied Chinese international graduate student women's self-understanding in the context of their past and present socio-cultural realities. In their qualitative study of Saudi graduate student women in the United States, Sandekian et al. (2015) studied students' academic experiences. A salient aspect of the study was taking into account students' past experiences. Specifically, they found that comfort with interactions with men depended on past experiences of mixed-gender educational settings. The study did not get into feelings of safety, however, and a stated limitation of the study was researchers were not Arabic speakers and the participants lacked English fluency, which prevented getting into nuances that otherwise might be illuminated (Sandekian et al., 2015). Another qualitative dissertation study of Saudi international graduate student women showed how participants conceptualized their ethnic identity in complex ways and within their local contexts and power dynamics (Barth, 2016).

A dissertation study by Balın (2014) explored the experiences of Turkish international student women pursuing graduate studies in the United States. This study, too, took into account past experiences of participants to better understand their present experiences. Although not about safety, the study complicates notions of safety; specifically, Balın found that many of the women interviewed expressed a greater sense of safety to explore who they were, an experience they were not afforded in their home country of Turkey.

Summary of Intersections

In the second part of this chapter, I reviewed studies at the intersections of women students, students of color, international students, and graduate students. These studies complicate those reviewed in the first part of the chapter; namely, experiences at the intersections seem to be more complex than the addition of those experiences.

Chapter 2 Summary

The literature discussed above showed me the need for further research at the intersections of international students, graduate students, women students, and students of color, and more specifically on women of color international graduate students. Existing research on each of these groups and at their intersections show that students have nuanced experiences and perceptions of safety and violence. Specifically, each group discussed experiences violence and safety in relation to their identities, and students at the intersections experience violence and safety in compounded ways. Furthermore, those experiences and perceptions have implications on students including on their wellbeing, academics, sense of belonging, behaviors, and participation.

The existing published literature discussed in Chapter 2, as well as evidence presented in Chapter 1, illuminated the need for my research. From the literature, there is some understanding of the experiences of various groups of students with regard to violence and safety. I hope that my study of women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety will provide higher education researchers and practitioners with a more complex understanding of violence and safety in higher education and the relationships between students, their higher education institution, societies, and the state.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

For this study, I adopted a qualitative, critical, feminist research methodology informed by intersectionality, transnational feminism, and several critical qualitative research scholars. I strived, in the research, to make consistent my framework, my methodology, and my choices of methods. In this chapter, I discuss the methodology, positionality, methods for data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations, and participants. As a reminder, my research questions are as follows:

- 1. How do women of color international graduate students studying in the United States conceptualize violence and safety?
- 2. How do women of color international graduate students perceive and experience violence and safety while studying in the United States?
 - a. How do events and policies influence women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety?
- 3. How do women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety influence their lives?

Methodology

As mentioned above, my qualitative, critical, feminist methodology is influenced by several scholars. More specifically, the methodology aims to be consistent with the intersectionality and transnational feminist framework described in Chapter 1 and is supported by additional scholars. Scholars including Mohanty, Alexander, and Lugones come from different backgrounds but offer ways to understand the experiences of women of color. Roshanravan (2014) explained that the scholars' theories to understand oppressions of women of color from different backgrounds can work in tandem for resistance.

Transnational feminism also offers a foundation for methodology. Specifically, I utilize Falcón's (2016) paper that "offers feminist principles and a set of working criteria to undergird the development of a critical transnational feminist methodology" (p. 174). As Falcón (2016) explained:

As transnational feminist scholars actively seek to shift epistemology away from an imperialist model of knowledge extraction and instead collaboratively shape it, the tenets of transnational feminism offer a paradigm in which to cultivate a methodology to practice decolonizing forms of research. (p. 174)

I will continue to refer to Falcón's methodology in later sections.

I am additionally influenced by qualitative scholars who illuminate tenets of advocacy and collaboration in critical, feminist research. According to Shields (2012), "critical research begins with the premise that research's role is not to describe the world as it is, but also demonstrate what needs to be changed" (p. 3). I bring a particular perspective about safety and violence regarding international students, and I cannot pretend to be neutral about the need for safety for international students and institutional responsibility for ensuring it. I intend for my proposed research to be used to potentially change existing conditions for international students. As Shields explained,

[C]onducting critical, advocacy-oriented research requires a commitment of the researcher to support and advocate for those whose voices are not always clearly heard. It implies a commitment to work to influence policies and practices that perpetuate marginalization and exclusion rather than integration and membership in school communities. (p. 10)

In addition, feminist research perspectives inform my choices to engage in collaborative work (Kirsch, 1999). As Shields (2012) explained regarding her research, this also means not talking *for* but *with* participants. From a transnational feminist perspective, my choice to engage in collaborative interviews is intentional as a means to understand the experiences of women of color international graduate students. Mohanty (2003) contended, "few studies have focused on women workers as subjects—as agents who make choices, have a critical perspective on their own situations, and think and organize collectively against their oppressors" (p. 72). In this case, the women workers are the women of color international graduate students *with* whom I studied.

Feminist researchers have encouraged the use of open-ended interviews because they "help establish interactive and non-hierarchical relations among researchers and participants" (Kirsch, 1999, p. 25). Feminist researchers encouraged closer relationships and conversation formats within interviews, in which "interviewers can show their human side and can answer questions and express feelings" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 711). As Holstein and Gubrium (2002) explained, collaborative interviews are "active, meaning-making occasions" (p. 113). Active interviews require acknowledgement that interviewees are not "repositories of knowledge" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p. 113), but interviews are instead sites of knowledge construction between interviewer and interviewee. These feminist research practices informed the design of my research.

Finally, I was informed by humanizing research methodology in the construction of the study. I use Paris's (2011) conceptualization of humanizing research:

Humanizing research is a methodological stance which requires that our inquiries involve dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of care and dignity for both researchers and participants. ... it is particularly important when researchers are

working with communities who are oppressed and marginalized by systems of inequality based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other social and cultural categories. (pp. 139-140)

Together, these scholars have influenced my critical, qualitative, feminist, and humanizing methodology, which in turn influenced my methods, explained later in this chapter. Next, I discuss my positionality, which also informs my study.

Positionality

In addition to my approach to the research and choices of methods being informed by the framework and methodology, I am heavily influenced by my own identities and experiences. As such, it is important for me to discuss my positionality. As K. Green (2014) explains, an aspect of her critical qualitative methodology is "critically exploring researcher positionality" (p. 149). Part of this is understanding where I am coming from in the research, and how my own histories and experiences influence the research. There are three important aspects of my positionality that inform how I approach the research that I will discuss below: my identities and identifications, my experiences of working with women of color international graduate students, and my experience of an abusive relationship while in graduate school. Then, I will discuss how I perceived my role as a researcher in this study.

My Identities and Identifications

I am a second-generation Indian American and a child of immigrants, and I identify interchangeably as a South Asian American woman and as a woman of color. This understanding of myself has grown over time, especially during my time in graduate school, and informs my choice to study women of color in my proposed dissertation. Learning more about intersectionality and how to name my experiences, I have realized how I move through and

perceive my educational and general experiences as a woman of color rather than as a woman and a student of color.

Simultaneously, I am a woman of color domestic graduate student, not an international student, so I am unable to understand the experiences of being a woman of color international student in the United States firsthand. However, as Blackburn (2014) said about being a White researcher:

[T]his does not mean I should limit my research to participants who mirror me. Rather, it is imperative to work across differences toward social justice. ... researchers must assume responsibility for learning as much as they can about experiences beyond their own. (p. 53)

As such, I am committed to learning as much as I can about the experiences of international students, one way being through my research. I am, however, also aware of my privileges as a U.S. citizen, as explained by Falcón (2016). Falcón identifies this privilege as imperial privilege, which means, for example, I do not need to have a visa to study in the United States and have power as a domestic student over international student participants. This privilege enables me to speak and write about the injustices that women of color international graduate students face because I am not subject to consequences like loss of a visa. Falcón warns, however, that I should not interpret this as my *right* to speak for others.

In addition to identifying as a South Asian American, woman of color, I identify strongly with higher education institutions, especially the ones that I have attended, and being a lifelong student, and now, a graduate student. I mentally divide up my life in terms of the educational institution I was affiliated with at the time: 2003-2007, University of California, Berkeley; 2008-2013, University of Texas at San Antonio; and 2013-present, Michigan State University. As a

part of that identification with institutions, I perceived the university as a particular place: a sanctuary for learning. In addition, I perceived the university to be a safe place, because I had always felt safe there. Despite having certain racialized negative experiences during the last year and a half of my time at Berkeley, I did not associate the negative experience directly with Berkeley. I also received support from my supervisor and other support services, while at Berkeley. My understanding of safety of higher education institutions, and my own place within them, however, has shifted significantly in the past eight years. This is in part due to personal experiences of relationship violence, which I will discuss in more detail below, but also a greater understanding that safety for some not only does not mean safety for others but may even be in conflict with the safety of others. For example, racial and sexual violence incidents on college campuses in the past few years in addition to class discussions, have made me realize that not everyone feels safe at the university and in fact the university can be a cause of feeling unsafe and violence. Furthermore, the sexual abuse scandal at MSU that made national attention has made me much less proud to be affiliated with this university and has also made me better understand institutional complicity with violence. This shifting understanding of higher education, and my original perceived safety within it, has encouraged me to further study students' perceptions and experiences of safety and violence in relation to higher education institutions.

My Experiences of Working with International Students

I am a domestic student, and I had the opportunity to work with international students starting in my master's program. I first began working with international students as a summer intern in residence life at UC Berkeley in 2009. Many international students study at Berkeley during the summer. My understanding of international students' experiences at that point was

little. I was trained from a rules-enforcement perspective; specifically, we were told that international students often do not have a full knowledge of U.S. laws, such as the alcohol age limit, so we may need to educate about and enforce those rules.

I worked with international students more closely when I began working as a writing consultant and academic coach for graduate students while in and after a master's program at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Many faculty members referred their students to our office, particularly international students, for their graduate writing. Through those positions, I met with many international students. As a result, I began researching academic support for international students. I found literature on general experiences and literature focused on English deficiency among international students.

The experiences of working closely with several international graduate students at UTSA encouraged me to be more critical of the literature I was reading. I met students from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and China, among several other countries. Many of the students who I worked closely with were women of color international graduate students. Working with them on academic writing, I learned that their experiences in U.S. higher education went beyond the simplistic explanations of difficulties with English as was presented in the literature. For instance, one woman who I became close to once cried in my office due to the ongoing violent conflict in her home country. Many of the women I worked with wore a hijab, which I assume affected how they moved through the institution as well as how people within the institution responded to them and shaped their experiences. Almost all of the students told me of their discomfort with speaking up in class. While the institution was becoming increasingly reliant upon international students for revenue, most of the classes they were enrolled in were U.S.-

centric in content. My experiences with these students, and the desire to get beyond simplistic explanations about their experiences, were the impetus for me to pursue doctoral studies.

My Experience of an Abusive Relationship

I was in an abusive relationship early on during my time as a doctoral student at Michigan State University. I did not realize what I was going through at the time, but in subsequent semesters, I learned more about relationship violence. I also grew increasingly paranoid about the presence of my abuser on campus after our relationship ended and he showed up to my door unannounced several months later, even though he left the institution a few months after that. The institutional structures including Safe Place, and personal supports, namely my friends at Michigan State University, helped me get through that experience, although the experience lives with me daily. At the same time as my understanding grew, national awareness and structural changes at Michigan State University in response to sexual violence grew, heightening my understanding of how others experienced relationship and sexual violence within Michigan State University and higher education institutions across the United States.

I note my experience of relationship violence for a few reasons. First, this experience has undoubtedly changed the course of my academic trajectory and, more specifically, my choice to research safety and violence in higher education from a racialized gendered lens. Second, I was aware through the research process what it meant to be a survivor in the context of studying safety and violence, particularly with women of color who may have experienced sexual violence and relationship violence. Third, as described above, this and other experiences have shifted my understanding of higher education institutions and safety within them, influencing how I perceive institutions and their roles in students' lives. I recognize, however, my institution

provided services that helped me through the experience, whereas many others did not, and continue to not, receive support from their institutions.

My Role as a Researcher

The identifications, and experiences have influenced my perceived roles as a researcher, which I describe below. Specifically, first, I perceive my role to be that of an advocate. Second, I must allow room for participants' stories and not impose my own experiences and perceptions onto their experiences and perceptions.

Advocacy

My experiences, as well as learning that there was insufficient attention to women of color international students' experiences with safety and violence, have led me to adopt an advocacy approach to the proposed research. Shields (2012) explains that taking on an advocacy role as a researcher means supporting and advocating for those whose voices are not always heard, in this case, women of color international graduate students. I strongly believe that higher education institutions must ensure safety and minimize violence towards international students, just as for any other students. One means of learning about ways to do that is through research to hear women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and security. Furthermore, centering women's voices is necessary to understand their unique experiences. A supportive and advocacy approach (Shields, 2012) includes empowering the students that I would be working with and advocating on their behalf for recognition and alleviation of the inequities that perpetuate violence.

Allow Room for Stories

A second role, and related to the idea that there is no one truth to be uncovered, is to allow participants to tell their stories, whatever those might be. In other words, as Brushwood Rose and Granger (2012) explained,

[W]e might understand the story as a space in which the storyteller risks her or his connection to the world by both finding and creating useful objects – in this sense, it is up to the researcher never to ask, 'Is this the truth, or did you make it up?' (p. 232)

Brushwood Rose and Granger also complicated the idea that a participant's story can be told in one sitting; it is incomplete. This informed the choice to allow for more one interaction with each participant, so that participants could tell their story partially or in parts if need be. My role as a researcher within these stories, however, was to allow for the participants to tell their stories and not assume that they are not true. This was especially important given the nature of the stories that students might have told, regarding experiences of violence and safety, which are often difficult to tell.

It is important, however, for me not to impose my ideas of what I am looking for (i.e., negative experiences and perceptions of violence and safety) onto participants; as Souto-Manning (2014) explained, it is "important to look closely and listen carefully in order to understand the perspectives and experiences of participants in their own terms rather than superimposing our own perspectives of what is problematic and needs to be transformed" (p. 201). Thus, I aimed to ensure that participants are co-researchers and included as much as possible in the research process.

As a result of my experiences, I want to contribute to the research to promote positive experiences for women of color international graduate students across U.S. higher education

institutions. I am very aware, however, that because I was born and grew up in the United States and am a domestic student, that I will not truly understand the experiences of international students. In addition, I am aware of the emotional nature of my proposed research and my emotional connections. My positionality introduced potential ethical issues, described later in the chapter.

Methods

I aimed to make the design and structure of the methods in my study consistent with my framework and qualitative, critical, feminist, and humanizing research methodology, as described above in the methodology section. As such, the interviews were collaborative, co-constructed, and open-ended. In this section, I will discuss research sites, participant selection criteria and rationale, participant recruitment, compensation, interviews, transcribing, complications, data analysis, and limitations. As it is important to me to show the struggles throughout the data collection process, I share details about how and when the methods and choices changed throughout.

Sites

In an effort to maintain student participant privacy and to learn from a variety of perspectives, I had originally proposed to recruit women of color international graduate students attending doctoral-granting non-profit higher education institutions across the country and conducting interviews solely online via Zoom. My committee members recommended choosing one or a few institutions that I could focus my search for participants and offer participants inperson interviews. Based on the committee's feedback, I created a list of potential higher education institutions in the southern United States from which to recruit participants. I selected doctoral-granting, nonprofit institutions based on their proximity to me physically. Each

institution also had to have an international student office. I learned more information about the context of each of the institutions, including demographics (number of international students, graduate students, students of color, and women students), based on what was publicly available on their websites. I decided on a list of three institutions from which to begin recruiting participants. However, after recruiting from the first two on my list, I had enough participants that met the participant selection criteria listed below, so I did not attempt to recruit any participants from the third institution.

The pseudonyms for the two institutions I chose were Blue University and Green University. Both are large, research-intensive, doctoral-granting, nonprofit higher education institutions in the southern United States. I will not include details about demographics of each institution here so as to maintain privacy of the participants. Both institutions, however, have international offices and significant numbers of international graduate students based on data from their websites.

Participant Selection Criteria and Rationale

I specifically recruited "women of color international graduate students" to participate in the study. As discussed in Chapter 1, the choice of "women of color international graduate students" was in part influenced by the framework made up of intersectionality and transnational feminism, along with the conversations and context in the United States. The recruitment strategies will be described in the next section in detail. The criteria included in my recruitment email (see Appendix A) are expounded upon here. First, I chose to include women only because I wanted to center the voices of women and better understand their unique experiences. I recruited participants who self-identified as a "woman of color," meaning participants could be transwomen and ciswomen, although that was not explicitly stated in the recruitment materials

and I did not ask afterwards to confirm. Second, I specifically recruited those who identified as "women of color," to maintain focus on the intersections of gender, race, and nationality. I recognized that some may not perceive themselves as women of color in their home country, as they might be of a dominant group, but may recognize themselves as women of color once arriving in the United States. Thus, I recruited participants who self-identified as women of color, rather than imposing my judgment of what that means. Third, I included only those who are on a student visa. In other words, these students are only in the United States because of their student status and are not citizens, permanent residents, or immigrants. Fourth, I focused my study on graduate students, which for the purposes of this study, were institutionally-funded doctoral students. The choice to exclude undergraduate students from this study is intentional, as graduate students have particular relationships with the university and faculty and have more experiences in academia than most undergraduate students. I also excluded master's students, law students, and medical students who are often not funded by the university, and in the case of master's students, whose programs are typically much shorter in time than doctoral students' programs. I also excluded doctoral students who are self-funded or funded by their home country, as they too have differing relationships with the university than those students who are funded by the university. Fifth, I aimed to recruit students with varying nationalities, in an effort to uncover multiple perspectives. Sixth, I recruited students from across multiple disciplines and fields to gain a variety of perspectives, though this process was more difficult than anticipated as described in the next section. Finally, I recruited participants who are at varying stages of their doctoral programs. After receiving emails from interested students, I emailed them to confirm they were an international student on a student visa, a doctoral student, and a graduate assistant, research assistant or teaching assistant at their institution, and that they identified as a woman of

color, if they did not already do so in their initial response. A few prospective participants were then excluded because they did not meet one of the criteria, most often the doctoral student criteria.

Participant Recruitment

After receiving approval from Michigan State University's IRB on September 3, 2019 (STUDY 00003179), I began the recruitment process on September 26, 2019. Based on my initial list of three higher education institutions, I contacted a staff member via email at each of the three institution's international student offices about forwarding my call for participants to their students. I received one email back saying that the staff member could not forward my email. Another institution's staff member also mentioned not being able to forward my email but suggested that I could submit a request to post the call on their office's blog. My advisor and I decided that this would not be the best route because then the institution would become more identifiable. The third institution did not respond. My next step was to contact others at each institution who might be willing to forward my email to international graduate students, including those leading graduate student organizations. When I did not get any participants using this route, I discussed with my advisor the changes I could make to the recruitment process in October 2019. We decided on two major changes: (1) I would change the number of interviews required from participants from three to two, and (2) I would email doctoral students directly by using departmental pages with students' email addresses.

I rewrote my recruitment email to include two, instead of three, interviews (the recruitment email template is in Appendix A). Then, I started with one institution and searched the university's departmental pages that had lists of graduate students with their emails. It is important to note that while some colleges and departments had easily accessible lists, some did

not, so colleges and departments are not evenly represented. I copied the accessible email addresses and emailed all students from each department and asked them to read on if they identified as a woman of color international graduate student or, if not, to forward the email to other students who might fit the criteria. After exhausting accessible emails at one institution, I moved on to the second institution's departmental websites.

Through this method, I emailed approximately 1200 graduate students from two institutions and received many responses. In addition, I received more responses after one participant emailed her contacts. After receiving more than 15 emails from interested students, I chose not to recruit from the third institution. I included all interested participants assuming they met the criteria above and were able to complete the first interview within the Fall 2019 semester. There were 12 participants who were able to interview in Fall 2019, and all 12 agreed to a second interview in Spring 2020. All participants self-identified as women of color and were institutionally-funded doctoral students, with the exception of one participant who was funded by an international scholarship. One participant dropped out of the study after receiving her transcripts for review, so 11 participants are included in this study. More details about the participants are included in the last section of this chapter.

Compensation

As a means of incentive and to show my gratitude, I offered each participant two online gift cards for Amazon.com totaling \$50: one at the end of the first interview for \$20 and one after completion of the second interview for \$30. The incentive allowed me to thank the participants for their time and emotional and mental labor. Falcón (2016) further explained the necessity of gifts, particularly working with women of color: "Given the enormous amount of unpaid labor women in particular are too often asked to perform throughout the world, an

interview stipend or a gift of appreciation is an important act of reciprocity" (pp. 182-183). I sent Amazon gift cards to participants via their preferred email address within a day after each interview.

I applied for and was awarded \$2,500 for the Doctoral Research Small Grant from the Michigan State University's College of Education Department of Educational Administration in December 2019. This funding covered the cost of the Amazon gift cards described above, along with the costs of the audio recorder, gas and parking for in-person interviews, transcriptions through Rev.com, and NVivo software for data analysis.

Interviews

I originally proposed to conduct a three-interview series, following Seidman's (2006) suggested structure for interviewing. As discussed above, after not receiving any interest from my first call for participants, I changed the number of interviews to two and condensed Seidman's suggested interview structure. Prospective participants replied to my mass emails or emailed me directly if they learned about the study from someone else. For those who met the criteria and were available for a first interview during the Fall 2019 semester, participants and I scheduled interviews based on common times and desired locations. I gave participants a choice of whether they wanted to interview in person or over Zoom in the recruitment email.

Once an interview was confirmed, I sent either a Zoom link, or we decided where to meet. I emailed the informed consent document (see Appendix B) to all participants. For Zoom interviews, I asked participants to give or decline their consent for the interviews and audio recordings on a Qualtrics form. For in-person interviews, I took a paper copy of the informed consent document and asked participants to give or decline their consent for the interviews and

audio recordings by signing on the document. I gave a paper copy to each in-person participant who wanted one.

Before starting the recording to the first interview, I introduced myself and the study. Then I asked each participant for a pseudonym. I asked participants if they had any questions about the informed consent document, asked them to sign the document if they had not already, confirmed informed consent if they had already signed the document, and confirmed audio recording consent. For in-person participants, I recorded using a handheld digital audio recorder. For Zoom participants, I used Zoom to record. I also took handwritten notes during each interview to supplement the recordings.

I used unstructured, active, and interactive interviewing, though I did have prepared interview protocols for both interviews, which appear in the Appendix C. To ensure I was consistent with transnational feminist methodology, I followed Falcón's (2016) suggestion of making the interview into a dialogue, which allows for a collaborative nature of the interview. This meant changing interview questions according to each participant as well as allowing for the interviewees to guide the direction of each interview. The reader will notice I have included pieces of dialogue throughout the findings chapters. For each interview, I aimed for 60 to 90 minutes, but I did not want to restrict the length of the interview to the detriment of content, so a few interviews ran longer than 90 minutes. I went into each interview with a set of concepts and questions I want to ask about, but the focus was allowing the interviewee to tell me about their experiences and stories, consistent with Falcón's (2016) transnational feminist methodology.

The first interview with each participant was conducted during the Fall 2019 semester, ranging between November 3 and December 22, 2019. Four participants chose to interview in person at or near one of the university's campuses, in a location of their choosing on one of my

available dates. Seven participants chose to interview over Zoom at one of my available days and times. All participants consented to audio recording the interview with the exception of one participant. Of those recorded, first interviews ranged from 42 to 134 minutes, averaging 76 minutes.

During the first interview, I asked the participant to share her educational and life history (Seidman, 2006), with a focus on safety and violence (see Appendix C for protocol). As discussed in Chapter 1, the framework heavily influenced the questions I asked during the interviews. I asked about positive and negative experiences she had had in the United States, as well as about her conceptualizations of safety and violence. In addition, I asked about experiences of violence broadly, rather than about sexism, racism, and xenophobia specifically, as I was informed by intersectionality. I entered each interview with a set of questions, but I did not stick to the order and exact wording depending on the flow of the interview. After the first interview, I also shared with participants a list of resources specific to their university for graduate students and about safety, violence, and reporting. I have not included this sheet in the appendix as it would reveal the universities.

The second interview with each participant was conducted during the Spring 2020 semester. Ten of the interviews took place between January 21 and February 15, 2020. The last interview took place on April 4, as we had difficulty finding a common time to meet before then. Two of the interviews took place in person on the same day in February based on participants' and my availability, in locations of each participant's choosing. The other nine interviews were conducted via Zoom. All participants, with the exception of one, consented to me audio recording their interviews. Of those recorded, second interviews ranged from 28 to 120 minutes, averaging 64 minutes.

The focus of the second interview was to reflect on meaning-making (Seidman, 2006) about safety and violence (see Appendix C for protocol). Again, the choices of questions were influenced by the framework. The two-interview model allowed me to develop trust and a relationship with each participant, particularly about sensitive topics like violence, which allowed for richer narratives. It also allowed me to follow up on topics discussed during the first interview. I started with follow up questions and asked about each participant's winter break. Given the pace of events globally, I also asked about those where appropriate. I brought a set of questions that I stuck to more closely than in the first interview, asking about specific events and policies. I also asked about my assumptions about intersectionality leading to the research and about participants' experiences in the interviews.

Transcribing

Ten participants gave permission for me to audio record their interviews. In my handwritten notes, I also indicated non-verbal communication, including pauses, nods, and laughter. The 20 audio recorded interviews added up to just over 23 hours of recordings. In an effort to speed up transcription, I decided to use Rev.com for transcriptions. I sent the first set of interviews to Rev.com in late December 2019 and the second set of interviews in late February 2020. I then listened to all recordings again and corrected them as necessary through listening to the audio and based on my handwritten notes. For the one participant who asked that neither of her interviews be recorded, I took detailed notes during each interview, by hand for the first interview and typed for the second. I then revised them and sent them to her in lieu of transcripts. For the rest of the participants, I sent most of the first interview transcripts to participants before the second interview, but in some cases, I sent both after the second interview. For all participants, I sent both transcripts after the second interviews as no one sent corrections after the

first round. I realized afterwards I should have sent the transcripts much quicker after each interview, so that the interview was fresh on the participants' minds, but I waited some time to send transcripts, close to the end of the Spring semester.

As an aspect of the transnational feminist methodology (Falcón, 2016) of my dissertation, I offered participants an opportunity to view transcripts if they chose and opportunities to make corrections if they chose. Falcón (2016) called this process interactive consent:

Once an interview has been transcribed, I email the transcript to the interviewees and inform them that they have an opportunity to review the document. Interviewees are then *free to make any changes and modifications they see fit to the transcript or even to revoke* the interview entirely. (p. 183, emphasis in original)

One participant, after reviewing both of her transcripts, decided to remove herself from the study. In addition to the transcripts, I included as data responses to my questions about coronavirus sent to participants with their transcripts, which will be described in more detail below.

Complications

After the first set of interviews and during and after the second set of interviews, many world events took place related to violence and safety and many of my participants. These include increased tensions between Iran and the United States, the spread of coronavirus within and then outside of China, the announcement of another travel ban, the spread of coronavirus across the world and into the United States, racist attacks on East Asian people in the United States, economic downturn and increased unemployment, shutting down of higher education institutions in the United States, beginnings of reopenings of the U.S. economy and subsequent increases in coronavirus cases again, increased attention to state killings of Black people in the

United States and globally, resulting in widespread protests of police brutality and anti-Black racism, an executive order regarding visas and online classes, and a Department of Homeland Security ruling on limits to duration of stay for international students.

A majority of the second interviews took place in January and February 2020 before the significant spread of coronavirus in the United States and thus before most higher education institutions moved to remote operations. Coronavirus had become significant around the world, however, including in some participants' home countries, and thus had become a topic of discussion in a few of the second interviews. To get a better understanding of how participants felt about coronavirus and everything that came with it, I asked participants via email when sending their transcripts to review, some version of the following: "How have you been affected by the coronavirus pandemic? More specifically, how has all of this affected your feelings of safety?" I asked for permission from participants to include their responses in my dissertation if they answered. Six participants answered to varying degrees.

Ideally, I would have wanted to ask in even more detail about the coronavirus and complications that came along with it, including how travel restrictions, social distancing, and campus closures affected the students and their wellbeing, their families, and their research, teaching, and progress to degree. In addition, though I had not originally planned to ask about certain topics, such as protests and police, some participants brought up those topics during the first and second interviews. I would have wanted to revisit these topics during a third interview or interaction, given a renewed and increased widespread scrutiny of police brutality against Black people in the United States beginning in May 2020 and subsequent protests around the United States and world. As I had already sent most of the interview transcripts to participants, had already followed up about coronavirus and sent a separate email after the international

student ruling during the summer of 2020, I decided not to follow up via email about the topic of police violence.

Data Analysis

Miles et al.(2014) and Bhattacharya (2017) influenced my data analysis choices. Specifically, I used their concepts and methods of inductive analysis. After receiving transcripts back from participants, I printed all transcripts and started the first cycle of coding by hand. I did not have specific themes in mind before starting this process, though I was informed by my research questions as well as the concepts of safety and violence discussed in Chapter 1. I identified many codes and subcodes through this process. Throughout the process, I wrote notes and created diagrams to help me to understand the themes I noted. After the first cycle of coding, I decided to do a second cycle using NVivo. I grouped together codes into fewer codes, then went through each transcript again, starting with the first interviews then moving onto the second interviews.

During this second cycle, my codes did not seem to reflect my thinking, so I spent a lot of time reorganizing and coming up with other ways to code the transcripts. This resulted in an earlier version of Figure 3 presented at the end of Chapter 4. Through discussion with my advisor and an experienced qualitative researcher, I settled on an organization I was satisfied with. I did not, however, send analyses to participants as I had originally intended, due to time constraints, and because by the time I was ready to, several months had passed since the interviews had taken place.

While I had originally intended for my framework to be a way to analyze the data, that did not end up being the case. Specifically, the framework came to inform my research questions and interview questions and the ways I conceptualized violence and safety going into the

interviews. After I soon realized participants did not conceptualize violence and safety in the same ways I did, I relied more heavily on their conceptualizations as a way to organize the findings. This will be further explained in Chapter 4. The choice to use participants' words was consistent with my methodology, in that participants drove the data analysis. It is important to note, however, the framework informed heavily the ways I asked questions and my ideas about violence. As such, I included concepts within violence that others and even some participants may not have, like discrimination and silencing. I argue, though, the ways I have organized and presented data in the findings chapters was part of the data analysis. Choices of what to include where reflects participants' thinking along with my thinking informed by my framework.

Limitations

Limitations of my methods resulted in a lack of representation of departments and countries. Specifically, a limitation of the method of emailing doctoral students directly based on publicly available email addresses on department webpages was that many departments did not have their graduate students' emails listed. Most notably, the engineering departments I searched did not have their students' email addresses listed; as a result, there are no students from Engineering represented in the study. In some cases, there are two participants from the same department included in the study, because more than one person from the same department responded to my email. Another unintended consequence was that the four participants from Green University were in sciences or applied sciences departments while all seven participants from Blue University were in social sciences or humanities departments.

Another limitation was in participants' country of origin. Eight participants identified their home country as an Asian country, two participants were from a Middle Eastern country, and one participant was from an African country. No participants were represented from Latin

America, Australia, or the Pacific Islands. In addition, no participants who responded identified as being from white-majority countries. Many potential participants who responded to my email were from South Asian countries, perhaps because of my name and through snowball sampling from one of the participants, though several of those respondents could not participate in the given time frame or did not qualify based on their degree program. Four of the final participants were from South Asia. Unfortunately, the one participant who dropped out after reviewing her transcripts was from an otherwise unrepresented country and region and underrepresented continent. These limitations give rise to directions for future research, discussed in Chapter 10.

Ethical Considerations

Falcón (2016) explained that scope of academic institutions in protecting participants: "Academic-based ethical norms do not take into account the social structural violence that research has inflicted on the communities under study and in the name of (secular) scientific understanding" (p. 182). Beyond the requirements from the Institutional Review Board, I also considered the additional ethical responsibilities I have as I pursued my research. The positionality, roles, and chosen methods that I have outlined above introduced several issues of ethics and power into the research including issues of collaboration, representation, research as violence, and research within a settler colonial state. These considerations had the potential to undercut the purpose of my proposed research to understand the experiences and perceptions of women of color international graduate students. I worked, however, to minimize these barriers within the research process starting by being transparent and reflexive. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss each of these ethical considerations in more detail.

Collaboration

Research itself is connected to histories of colonization and imperialism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) began their chapter discussing how research has been used as a way to represent the colonized as the Other and to maintain colonization. They argued, "from the very beginning, qualitative research was implicated in a racist project" (p. 2). Leigh Patel (2016) further argued, "logics of coloniality, which are connected to property and stratifications of society, are problematically enlivened through educational research" (p. 12). The connection between qualitative research and coloniality introduces ethical issues, particularly when researching the experiences of violence of individuals who have often been deemed the Other. One means of I tried to address the colonial histories of qualitative research was to introduce feminist, collaborative research methodologies as I discussed above. Problems, however, could emerge when collaborative methods reaffirm the problems that they intend to alleviate (Kirsch, 1999).

Specifically, Kirsch (1999) explains that the collaboration and friendship espoused by feminist research may raise an ethical question of intervening: "Participant-researcher relations become further complicated when researchers observe participants whose behavior or actions they consider unfair, perhaps even harmful or dangerous to others" (Kirsch, 1999, p. 34).

Addressing this could damage a close participant-researcher relationship. Ignoring it could be irresponsible. According to Kirsch (1999), most researchers have to make decisions about what to do in the moment. In instances where I disagreed with a participant's assessment of a situation, or characterization of certain people as violent or dangerous, I chose not to address my concerns. Such a challenge could have come across as questioning the truth of the participant's experiences and thus felt like an infliction of violence. I could have addressed the topic in my

final write up, but that may lead to a sense of betrayal, as Kirsch discussed, should the participant read my findings later on, so I have chosen not to do that as well and instead presented participants' words as is. In not addressing participants' prejudices, I may be countering my role as an educator, but this was a decision I made to maintain the relationship and trust with participants.

For these potential ethical dilemmas that emerged from feminist collaborative approaches, Kirsch (1999) provided suggestions of how to address them, citing Newkirk. This included being transparent with participants about the nature of the researcher-participant relationship and what is kept confidential and what I must report, which I included in the informed consent document (see Appendix B). In an effort to improve transparency, during the first interview, I also shared with participants my original research questions. During the second interview, I checked my assumption about intersectionality with participants. After the interviews, I gave choices to participants about whether or not they want to read and revise transcripts. Kirsch also suggested renegotiating consent throughout the process or confirming consent at the end; this resulted in one participant removing herself from the study after reading her transcripts. Kirsch also suggested that as a researcher, I set realistic expectations for how much a participant can contribute to my study. One change I made was to decrease from three to two interviews to reduce a potential burden on participants.

Representation

Additional issues of ethics and power emerged with representation and writing research. One issue involved misrepresentation of participants in my writing. As Kirsch (1999) explained, misrepresentation "is not a question of whether, but how much" (p. 63). In conducting analyses of participants' words with my chosen lens, I risked misrepresenting what participants told me.

Given that only including participants' transcripts in my final dissertation is not an option, there is inevitably some misrepresentation in my interpretation and writing. To minimize misrepresentation, I checked for understanding and asked clarifying questions throughout the interviews, sent participants transcripts afterwards, and chose not to write on participants' ideas that I was not sure I understood or would represent correctly.

An additional concern was how I represent myself as the researcher within the write up. Specifically, Fine et al. (2000) raised the issue of reflexivity: "In the hands of relatively privileged researchers studying those whose experiences have been marginalized, the reflexive mode's potential to silence subjects is of particular concern" (p. 109). As I mentioned above, I am in a relatively privileged space as a domestic student and as the researcher in comparison with participants who are international students. One of my major concerns in conducting the research was inflicting violence upon those who may have experienced violence, specifically racialized gender violence and epistemic violence. As one means of epistemic violence is silencing, I was concerned about silencing participants through the research, either while interviewing or while writing. Fine et al. (2000) explained that inserting too much of oneself into the research about the less privileged Other can reaffirm silencing of subjects who have historically been silenced. This silencing through research in turn undercuts purposes of the research to empower participants.

I recognize that ultimately, the writing is in my voice as the researcher (Fine et al., 2000). At the same time, to be a critical researcher, I recognized my responsibilities in representing myself and others so as to not overshadow the voices of participants and to represent their voices as fairly as possible. The reader will notice a heavy use of block quotations in the findings chapters. In addition, I included all of participants' responses to some questions to fully show the

complexity and thought within their answers. Furthermore, I have preserved participants' words as much as possible, keeping in what might be perceived as grammatical incorrectness. Filler words such as "um" are generally not included, however, for readability.

Minimizing Violence in Research

Going into this research, I was concerned about the ways in which I would unintentionally make research centering women of color international graduate students dehumanizing and violent. I did not want to reaffirm violent power dynamics with those whose bodies, minds, and spirits have been colonized. Greater clarity on this point came particularly through the work of Tuck (2009) and Tuck and Yang (2014). Tuck and Yang (2014) explained the risks of research approaching voyeurism: "Academe's demonstrated fascination with telling and retelling narratives of pain is troubling, both for its voyeurism and for its consumptive implacability" (p. 227). Tuck (2009) warned against damage-centered research:

[T]he danger in damage-centered research is that it is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community ... damage centered research [is] research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation. (p. 413)

I worried that my research was damage-centered and would perpetuate pain narratives by focusing on the negative experiences of violence among international students. At the same time, I thought this research is necessary to uncover otherwise silenced stories. I have come to understand that it is possible to acknowledge stories of pain and violence while simultaneously recognizing wholeness of individuals, and that the research can be a mechanism of healing and a counter to damage-centered research (D. Paris, personal communication, December 9, 2015).

One way I tried to address the concern of damage-centered research and violence in the research was to give room for participants to tell me the positive along with the negative and ask them what they thought universities should do to improve safety for them and their peers. I also checked in with participants at the end of each interview, and I asked participants at the end of the second interview about their experience with the interviews. Most had positive experiences with the interviews although some said the interviews were emotionally draining.

Settler Colonial Locations

A final consideration may be more of an acknowledgment. It was important for me to acknowledge that while I conducted research with women of color international graduate students in the United States, I and this research are embedded within a settler colonial state, which has perpetuated violence against indigenous people for centuries, and within institutions that are on indigenous land that have simultaneously used the labor of people of color and excluded them. As I researched, I kept this complexity in mind, though I do not have any solutions for it.

Chapter 3 Summary So Far

To answer the research questions, I conducted a qualitative interview study using a critical feminist methodology. I relied on the work of several scholars (e.g., Falcón, 2016; Kirsch, 1999; Roshanravan, 2014; Shields, 2012) to construct a methodology that is consistent with my framework of intersectionality and transnational feminism. Next, I discussed my positionality, including my identities as a South Asian American, woman of color domestic graduate student in the United States with a conflicted relationship with the academy; my past experiences working with women of color international graduate students; and my experience of an abusive relationship in graduate school. I also discussed my role as a researcher connected to

my positionality. I described my methods, which included two interviews, my timeline of research, and data analysis. Finally, I discussed how I considered my ethical responsibilities as a researcher, including how I thought about collaboration, representation, and minimizing violence. Below, I end this chapter with an introduction to participants.

Participants

Brief participant profiles are presented below, in alphabetical order by the pseudonym chosen by the participant, followed by a table of participants. Ages are given as of each participant's second interview. Regions are given rather than specific countries, noting that these regions are named and determined by colonization. These brief introductions to participants are written in present tense, to give the reader an idea of their identities and locations during the second interview, during Spring 2020.

Participants ranged 18 years of age from early 20s to early 40s with an average age of 28, when I asked their age during the second interview during Spring 2020. In terms of their year in their doctoral program, participants ranged from their second to their fifth year in their respective programs during the 2019-2020 academic year. Some participants came into their doctoral program directly from their bachelor's while many had at least a master's degree before starting their PhD program. One participant already had a doctorate from her home country before starting her second doctorate in the United States. Participants had varying years of work experience, outside of their educational experience, from none to 14 years.

I did not ask participants explicitly about identities such as their relationship, marriage, or parenthood status, although some participants disclosed that information to me. I also did not ask participants about their social identities, including sexual orientation, specific racial and ethnic

identities, or religious identities, although, again, some participants disclosed their religious identities as part of their stories, which I followed up on.

Participant Profiles

Ceres is in her mid 20s and from a country in the Middle East affected by the first travel ban. She is a fourth-year doctoral student in a sciences program at Green University. She is currently a research assistant but had worked as a teaching assistant in the past. She completed her bachelor's degree in her home country before coming to the United States.

Emma is in her late 20s and from a country in the Middle East affected by the first travel ban. She is a second-year doctoral student in a humanities program at Blue University. She is currently a teaching assistant. She completed her bachelor's in her home country and her master's at a different institution in a large city in the United States.

Jasmine is in her mid 30s and from a country in East Asia. She is a fifth-year doctoral student in a humanities program at Blue University and currently working as a teaching assistant. She completed her previous degrees in her home country before coming to her current institution. During a previous degree, she visited a university in the United Kingdom for one year.

Kate is in her late 20s and from an East Asian country. She is in her fourth year of doctoral studies in a social sciences program at Blue University. She works as a teaching assistant and research assistant. She completed her previous degrees in her home country. She lived in the United States for two years as a child with her parents, but otherwise grew up in her home country.

Labrador is in her mid 20s and from a country in South Asia. She is a second-year doctoral student in a social sciences program at Blue University. She works as a teaching

assistant. She completed her bachelor's degree at a different institution in a large U.S. city, her master's degree from an institution in the United Kingdom, and returned to the United States for her doctoral studies. At the completion of the Spring 2020 semester, after the second interview, she decided to leave her program and the United States.

Lyly is in her early 40s and from a country in Southeast Asia. She is a second-year doctoral student in an applied sciences program at Green University. She is currently on an international scholarship and is thus not working an additional position. She completed her bachelor's degree in her home country and her master's degree in the United States in a different state. She returned to her home country for some time before coming to the United States again for her doctoral studies.

Matt is in her mid 20s and from a country in South Asia. She is a third-year doctoral student in a social sciences program at Blue University. She currently works as a research assistant but previously worked as a teaching assistant. She completed her previous degrees in her home country.

Ms. W is in her early 20s and from an East Asian country. She is a second-year doctoral student in a sciences program at Green University. She works as a teaching assistant. She completed her bachelor's degree in her home country before coming to the United States for her PhD.

Nila is in her late 20s and from a South Asian country. She is a fourth-year doctoral student in a social sciences program at Blue University. She works as a research assistant but had worked as a TA previously. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from institutions in her home country.

Sara is in her mid 20s and from a South Asian country. She is in her third year of doctoral studies in a social sciences program at Blue University. She works as a teaching assistant. She completed her previous degrees in her home country before coming to the United States for her doctoral studies.

Sofia is in her late 20s and from a country in East Africa. She is in her third year of a doctoral program in applied sciences at Green University. She currently works as a research assistant. She completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in her home country before moving to the United States for her doctorate.

Table 1: Participants Organized by Institution and Alphabetically

Participant	Institution	Program area	Year	Home country region
Ceres	Green	Sciences	4	Middle East
Lyly	Green	Applied Sciences	2	Southeast Asia
Ms. W	Green	Sciences	2	East Asia
Sofia	Green	Applied Sciences	3	East Africa
Emma	Blue	Humanities	2	Middle East
Jasmine	Blue	Humanities	5	East Asia
Kate	Blue	Social Sciences	4	East Asia
Labrador	Blue	Social Sciences	2	South Asia
Matt	Blue	Social Sciences	3	South Asia
Nila	Blue	Social Sciences	4	South Asia
Sara	Blue	Social Sciences	3	South Asia

Introduction to Findings Chapters

Findings are divided into six chapters that follow. Chapter 4 addresses participants' conceptualizations of safety and violence in response to the first research question. As will be explained in Chapter 4, participants' explanations determined the organization of the subsequent two chapters. Chapter 5 focuses on participants' experiences and perceptions of safety and violence in terms of "physical" safety and violence and "mental" safety and violence. In Chapter 6, I focus on participants' experiences and perceptions of security and insecurity. Chapters 5 and

6 address the second research question. Chapter 7, in response to the subquestion of the second research question, illuminates the influences of events and policies on participants' perceptions and experiences, namely those of gun violence and campus carry, sexual harassment, and the coronavirus. Chapter 8 is on the influences of participants' experiences and perceptions on their lives, in response to the third research question. Chapter 9 focuses on participants' thoughts about institutional responsibilities of safety and violence. Chapter 9 is not in response to a research question but instead helps to inform implications for practice presented in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SAFETY AND VIOLENCE

My first research question was, "How do women of color international graduate students studying in the United States conceptualize violence and safety?" The purpose of getting participants to talk about their definitions or conceptualizations of safety and violence was to better understand how they framed their experiences and perceptions. The first research question and resulting interview questions ended up being a very valuable tool and shaped the rest of the findings chapters. While I had particular understandings of safety and violence informed by definitions and the framework presented in Chapter 1, participants had very different conceptualizations of safety and violence that I interpreted to be divided into physical and non-physical elements and security. This division of physical, non-physical, and security eventually shaped my organization of Chapters 5 and 6. Furthermore, participants' conceptualizations do not neatly map onto those in scholarly literature or in higher education practice but instead complicate both as I will discuss in the final chapter.

I use the terms definitions, explanations, and conceptualizations interchangeably, but most participants did not have clear-cut one phrases or definitions, but rather more complex explanations of the concepts of safety and violence, often illuminated by examples. This chapter is divided into four major sections, ordered chronologically during the interviews: initial conceptualizations, at the end of the first interview, at the beginning of the second interview, and at the end of the second interview. The chronological factor was important to me as there was a shift in several participants' conceptualizations about safety and violence, which seemed to be in part influenced by the interview questions, participants' answers, and our resulting dialogues. I begin with initial conceptualizations, although I did not ask right at the beginning of the first interview about their definitions of safety and violence.

Initial Conceptualizations

During the first interview, after getting to know each participant, their educational history, and overall experiences in the United States, I asked them how they defined safety and violence. The order in which I asked these and their placement in the interview varied slightly. Of course, the explanations could have been influenced by an experience a participant had just talked about. In the sections below, I first talk about participants' definitions of safety, then violence. I present their definitions mostly as a whole as the participants stated them during the interview so as to keep their thought process intact. In addition, I include all participants' initial conceptualizations for each term. I do this because their conceptualizations help contextualize their answers and give insight into the way each participant answered other questions.

In addition, the reader will notice the affective dimensions and emotion-laden terms used in participants' definitions. Feeling came up throughout participants conceptualizations, as will be presented in this chapter, and subsequently in the following findings chapters. I will refer to these emotions throughout the findings chapters (e.g., feeling unsafe, being scared, fear and fright), and I used the language of "feel" and "felt" frequently when reporting participants' quotes. Emotion, thus, became an important part of participants' conceptualizations, experiences, and perceptions.

Safety

I asked most participants the question, "What does safety mean to you?" Some I instead asked, "How do you define safety?" I did not have an explicit reason for asking one or the other. I tried to ask about safety before violence, but in a few instances, I asked the participant about violence first. Most participants had some element of physicality in their definitions. Feelings or emotional safety were also in many participants' conceptions of safety. Some defined safety in

terms of crime, such as property crime or gun violence. Financial and job security also factored into some participants' definitions. After reading their definitions collectively, participants' conceptualizations of safety could be divided into physical, non-physical, and security, although not every definition had all three of these elements. Each participant's nuanced answers follow.

Some participants' definitions or explanations of safety were relatively short and perhaps more abstract than naming specifics. Matt, for example, said, "That feeling when you know that nothing bad will happen, that you are taken care of. That you have something to fall back on."

Lyly said, "Safety is like, I can go anywhere at any times."

Ceres, who did not want her interviews recorded, framed safety in terms of physical safety and that nothing will happen, no injuries will happen, and the feeling that one is not in danger. Nila named physical and emotional spaces in her explanation:

Safety means not having to worry or be anxious about my physical, maybe also emotional space, not feeling like there's nothing in that space that is going to ... that feeling protected and feeling like nothing in that space is going to affect me or harm me. Emma included several elements in her explanation about what safety meant to her, including physical elements, absence of fear, and job security:

Safety? I think it's both physical and I think at the beginning it brings me a physical meaning. In terms of just not being attacked in the street and this kind of things. But like with these newer... So, I feel like there is this side of both emotional and also the feeling of like you are safe, if you are not in the fear of losing something, and I think there's also another word for that, that I don't remember. So, for instance, if I don't feel like I can continue, it's just about the expectation, the expectation of future. If the future is kind of expectable and if you're not in the fear of unexpected things happening, then you are

relatively safe. And I'm guessing, yeah, I'm not sure about that? But there's also job safety or there's another word for that. Because that would be the word in [native language], that if you are safe in your job, if you can stay in your job basically. But I think it also applies for if we can find jobs later. So, I think it could be very broad or very narrow.

Labrador also included several elements, namely safety in relationships, safety on the street, and financial security. When I asked about what safety meant to her, she replied with the following:

I think it depends on the context. Safety in a relationship with someone you're close to, so with a friend or with a lover would be... I guess more so from based on trust. So, safety from getting hurt. Of course, again that's where I'm in a position of privilege, I've never been in a partnership or any kind of relationship where I felt physically that I was in any harm's way. Emotionally I guess we can never tell when we get into a relationship whether or not we're safe, in that sense. And then, well out on the streets. I feel safe when I'm in footwear that I know I can run across the corner to, and I feel safe knowing that I have taken self-defense classes, that I grew up in [home country] and lived in [large U.S. city] as a young adult so that I can handle myself and handle other people. And in terms of stability or security I think I am extremely privileged to always feel safe in the sense of financial stability and having a really great support system in my parents and in friends.

In her answer above, Labrador reflected on the lessons learned from her undergraduate institution in a large city in the United States as well as from her home country in South Asia.

Several other participants talked about how their previous or home environments affected their explanations of safety in a different way. Sara, for example, talked about not feeling safe in her current environment in the city of Blue University, even though there were higher crime and

violence rates in her home country in South Asia, and even though there were measures like university police here:

I think safety is both related to actual physical measures around you and also how you personally feel. And I think there are a lot of physical measures around us here, but I don't think I feel as safe compared to these measures maybe because I'm just used to feeling very vulnerable on the streets.

Sofia, on the other hand, felt much safer in her current location because of her lack of safety in her home country in East Africa. Sofia's explanation about safety seemed to be heavily influenced by her conceptions of safety back home. She focused mainly on security of property and relating to other people:

Safety is something that's very wide, it can mean security, like being in a secure place, no theft, no robbers. Or it could mean the way I relate with people, when I feel safe around someone, I can easily open up and speak to them, tell them the way I feel. But when I don't feel safe being around someone, I tend to withdraw because I have this fear in me that this person may not understand me at all. I may say something, and they will completely take it the opposite, so I withdraw. So, safety can mean my security, are there robbers, theft, and all that? Or it could mean the way I relate to different people, how I feel safe with them.

I followed up about Sofia's sense of safety around people in her home country and in the United States, which I will discuss further in Chapter 5. Later in the first interview, when I asked about what would make her feel safe, Sofia explicitly pointed out how her past experiences have influenced her feelings of safety in her current location:

Sincerely, you know when I was coming here to the United States, due to my past

experience in other African countries that are not safe, especially security-wise, I came with an alarmed lock, the locks for the ... We have these metallic doors back home in Africa that, for example, an apartment you have a metallic door. So, I came with that alarmed lock because I was expecting the situation may be like the way it is back home. But then from the time I brought it here I've never used it. So, yeah, that showed that ... Actually, I'm taking it back home. I'll be taking it back home because I don't have its use for it here. There is nothing like theft. I'm not worried that my things will be stolen. Sometimes I forget to lock my apartment, then I come back, but everything the way you leave it is how you find it.

Sofia's focus on security of property showed up in many of her answers and helped me understand her perspectives about safety, which will be discussed later.

A few participants brought up concerns about guns on campus in their assessments of safety, which I will go into more detail about later in Chapter 7. Two participants, Kate and Jasmine, explicitly brought up guns in their answer to my question about their definitions of safety. Kate admitted that she had not thought about safety much, in part because of her previous experiences in her home country in East Asia, but she did mention gun violence:

Well, I guess I haven't really thought about that topic that much because, A, so where I'm from is really safe, I guess. And I'm from there. I know a lot of places there. I know my neighborhood very well, so I wasn't really concerned about safety issue anyways when I was growing up and living there. And [city of Blue University] is also pretty safe, I guess, compared to any other major cities in the U.S. So, it wasn't a big deal to me that much, but I see from time to time, there is gun violence all the way, everywhere in the

United States. And there's some random crimes in [city of Blue University], as well. So, I mean, I'm concerned but not too much, I guess.

Kate's mention of gun violence and "random" crimes comes up again in her definition of violence as will be noted below.

Jasmine, however, as will become evident later, thought about safety quite a bit. She framed safety in terms of risk: "I think it can be easy as low risk. Like not many risks, but it should be low. Like people carrying guns around are definitely not lowering the risk." Jasmine continued by bringing racism into her understanding of safety:

Like I'm always afraid of racism, like white people. Some white people tend to be very aggressive when they see different races, because I'm obviously not white. But I think people from other countries that are perceived as white, they seem to feel pretty comfortable, so yeah.

These connections between safety and comfort, racism, and guns, among other specifics, will be discussed in further detail later in Chapters 5 and 7.

Ms. W challenged my question, "How do you define safety?" She responded, "Do you mean the feeling of safety or the actual safety?" When I replied, "both," she said, "I think they are quite different." She went on to define each:

Safety, I think safety is to say like how many percentage of people are killed by some car accidents or some robbery or something, or they're not killed but just injured, or they got scared by someone, this is all related to safety. And I think how to judge if some place is safer than the other, maybe how many percent of people are getting involved in such bad experiences. ... I think maybe less people affected by such things. ... I think the feeling of safety, it's more like you're... because some people, they are optimistic to think the

world around them are safe, but some people they just feel really unsafe. And that's just a kind of feeling, it is hard to tell, I think. I always feel unsafe, but I know the place I stay is kind of safe. But I still feel unsafe. I think some slightly mental problems.

Ms. W laughed after saying this. She had pointed out that feeling safe or unsafe can be completely different for two people, even in similar locations. She also indicated that she "always" felt unsafe. She nuanced her answers further, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Violence

I asked most participants about their definition of violence after asking about safety.

Varying the phrasing between, "How do you define violence?" and "What does violence mean to you?" Like with safety, their definitions and meanings of violence varied. However, also similar to safety, participants' conceptualizations collectively included physical and non-physical elements as well as insecurity. Within these conceptualizations, participants also named specific forms of violence and gave examples, including hate crimes, sexual assault, verbal assault, gun violence, emotional abuse, and structural violence.

Kate's response, although not an explicit definition, indicated she thought of violence in terms of hate crimes and random acts of violence. She focused on her fear of random violence:

So, I'm not really afraid of hate crimes, because I don't think I'll be a victim of hate crime. I didn't really do anything really bad to anybody, I guess, I feel like. So, I'm not really worried about that. What I'm worried about is what if random person comes and shoot me without any reason? And that kind of things happen a lot in the U.S. And what I'm really afraid is those random violence.

I will return to the topic of gun violence later in Chapter 7. Ms. W focused on the physical aspect of violence, including the threat of physical violence:

I think violence is a method that you make other people physically injured to some level.

I mean, maybe high or just low level like you just hit someone once, or you are making someone so scared by creating some atmosphere that you will make them think you have some tendency to make some physically attacked.

Many other participants' conceptualizations, however, included physical and non-physical elements. Ceres explained that violence has two aspects: physical and verbal. She defined physical in terms of harm and gave the example of touching or something the receiver does not agree with. She defined verbal as saying mean things, talking angrily, or racist comments.

Jasmine's initial response was to the point: "Verbal abuse, physical attack." When I asked her why she defined violence in this way, she replied as follows:

Physical attacks are definitely violence. That's harm to your body and it's pretty obvious, but verbal abuse, I mean, it can terrify people without any physical harm, or like without leaving a trace of some evidence you can use in courts, I guess, but it's pretty terrifying. Especially if you're in a foreign country, and when you meet racist people, and they yell something like, "Go back to your country," something like that. That would be very terrifying. Then you have no idea what they're going to do next.

Jasmine's response shared a similarity with Ms. W's in that they both considered the anticipation or threat of violence, along with the emotional response of being scared or terrified.

Some participants, when defining violence initially, had difficulty in calling certain things violence, almost debating with themselves. Nila, for example, said the following in her initial response:

Well, I think violence is something that either physically or sexually harms someone. Maybe, I don't know, maybe emotional violence is a thing. I don't know if emotional abuse is violence. I'm not sure about that, but I generally think of physical harm and sexual harm.

I will share other participants' internal debates about the definitions of violence later in this chapter.

Some participants considered violence to be related to the impact upon the receiver of that violence. When I asked Matt what violence meant to her, she replied, "I think physical or mental abuse. That's what I think of when I think of violence, where it's like, damaging to a person." I asked her, "What do you consider to be damage?" Matt replied as follows:

Anything that's like permanently... Not permanently but anything that seriously affects that person. I think in physical violence you get hurt, you have an injury. I think in the case of mental abuse it would be a seriously impacted confidence or self esteem. But also feelings of depression caused because of the mental abuse.

Asking Matt what she considered to be mental abuse, she said, "Withdrawing or not giving affection. Not taking what you said seriously. Then also like actively putting someone down. Saying that their ideas are not valued." Later in the interview, I followed up about mental abuse and asked if she felt like she experienced mental abuse while in the United States. I will discuss more about what she said in Chapter 5, but of note here is how this related to her conceptualization of violence. She replied, "Yeah. I have but like I don't want to associate it with violence per se. ... I don't think any of it was intended." I asked whether intention separated violence from not. Matt's reply, like Nila's, indicated some internal debate of what to name her experience, including discrimination and mental abuse. Her complete answer is presented in

Chapter 5 under a section about mental abuse. Naming and labeling came up with other participants in the second interviews as well, discussed later in this chapter and in later findings chapters.

Lyly framed violence in terms of verbal elements or the words that people use because of its impact upon the receiver, initially defining violence as follows:

It's not like about mentally, physically touched. But, violence also when you... It's about the... For me, violence more to like wording. It will hurt me a lot when you say something like, it's a bad word, instead of physical touch. Violence more like use the word that use to say to others, not really like physical touch.

I asked Lyly why she considered violence to be bullying or the words that people use. She replied in terms of lasting impact:

Because for me, it's like when you hit someone, in two or three days, any sign that you got on your body, say it's something like bruising or whatsoever, it would be gone. But, the words that you say to people will last forever.

In addition to impact upon the receiver of violence, Labrador made an explicit connection to safety in her response about how she defined violence:

So, I think there's different forms of violence and only physical violence is sort of important if you think what is more long lasting is probably emotional violence and abuse I guess, and I think that's less spoken of. And there's also sort of less proof of it, so it's harder to get people to pay for what they've done. So, I guess I would... Yeah, I would categorize violence to either physical or I mean it's emotional and psychological. I would think violence is sort of any situation where someone is made to feel unsafe.

Emma also made a connection to feeling unsafe when she explained her definition of violence and a specific roommate situation in her past institution that she later characterized as domestic violence and repeated threats from that roommate. Using this example, Emma defined violence in terms of degree: "I think it's the degree... It should be a very... it's some form of maybe... I mean it's either at one time, very catastrophic event, or maybe lower-level events that happen on a continuous basis." She continued, "I think from that time, kind of my definition of violence became broader, that it can include things that they're not really catastrophic in nature, but they become catastrophic as they repeat themselves." Emma also explained her understanding of violence in terms of power:

The typical example of violence would be just someone hurting someone in the street. I feel it's kind of in our minds. We usually see violence as something physical. So, it's harder to imagine. It depends in terms of non-physical stuff. Well, I think it's related to power. Violence, the people involved in it, of course they don't have similar levels of power usually because that's why the person can do the violence. That defines it. There would be inequality of power, yeah.

Although not explicitly naming power, Sara's definition went beyond the interpersonal:

I always picture something combusting when I think of violence, the word violence. There's something very visceral about the word. It doesn't even have to be physical violence, it can be any kind of violence. As a literature student, we learned a lot about violence through works of art and works of literature and suppression of different cultures, the British colonizing [home country]. There's violence in many kinds of ways. So, I think anything that really harms or obstructs or hinders progress of whatever person, people, culture, anything, with the intent to harm, I would say is violence.

My follow up to Sara was, "So you mentioned not just physical violence but other types of violence. What would you name as some of those other types of violence?" She replied as follows:

I think the way you behave with people, communicate with them. Again, you don't have to scream or shout but there are ways that you can make people feel undermined, make people feel pressured, worried, anxious that I feel constitutes some form of violence.

Structural violence is also a thing. The way institutes and government and big corporations that are often structured to suppress certain people, certain ways of life, and that's also violence.

Though they used different words to explain the concepts, Emma's concept of power being used for violence and Sara's structural violence seemed to be similar.

Responses to My Definitions of Violence at the End of the First Interview

Towards the end of the first interview, I shared some definitions of violence drawn from my original proposal, including Q. Green and Shahjahan (2013), Young (1990), Falcón and Philipose (2017), along with Spivak's (1988) and Dotson's (2011) explanations of epistemic violence. These definitions are in Chapter 1, along with additional definitions. For the four participants I met with in person, I read and shared a paper copy of printed definitions; for the remaining participants I met with over Zoom, I read some of the definitions. I did not read all definitions for every participant. I then asked for participants' feedback to the definitions I shared.

For some participants, hearing or seeing these definitions confirmed their own perspectives about violence. Sara, for example, said, "I agree with those, much more well-articulated than what I was trying to convey. But it is what I feel violence is." I thought Sara did

a wonderful job articulating her explanation of violence, as was shown above. For other participants, the definitions I shared expanded their definition or encouraged them to consider things that would have not before considered as violence. Jasmine said, "I think those are great. Some of them I never thought about, but I think yeah, they make sense. Like just by ignoring people, that's also a kind of violence."

Other aspects of the definitions resonated with Jasmine and several other participants. They expanded by sharing some of their own experiences. Here I will briefly introduce those experiences, but I will go into more detail in later chapters. Jasmine, for example, said that the concept of microaggressions resonated with her: "like staring, some body language, and facial expressions that would make you very uncomfortable. Most time I just talk to myself, that you are being oversensitive, you know." Matt, who I interviewed in person, looked at the sheet of definitions and reflected upon them along with her own experiences:

I actually really like the first definition. [Matt read from the sheet] "Misrepresentation, invisibility, lack of resources, forced assimilation, invalidation of one's history." That's so true because I came in with a master's in [adjacent field]. It just didn't matter. Even though I had these [field] perspectives, even though I knew what I was talking about, it just felt like it didn't matter. "You came in with a master's in [adjacent field]? Okay." Anything that's not from the U.S. or anything that they don't recognize as cool or nice is invalidated.

Matt went on to reflect upon some of the other words in that definition, including microaggressions and forced assimilation. Nila, too, reflected upon her own experiences in academia of her experiences being dismissed or not nuanced by others. Though they did not

necessarily label their experiences as such, epistemic and academic violence from the definitions resonated with Matt and Nila.

Emma further complicated how she thought about the definitions and thought she might have defined violence differently for herself and more broadly, as well as considering the source of violence. She also indicated the difficulty when trying to apply these definitions to herself.

She commented that labeling may have made the experience feel more catastrophic or that it was dramatizing her experience.

For Labrador, the definitions I shared did not resonate with her personally because as she explained, "I think I am coming from a significant position of privilege. Yeah. I've never been quite made to feel like a minority." She did, however, see how violence, especially as a result of lack of representation of women, manifests itself in the United States:

So, I think that in the way that you described or define violence, I think representation is a big part of the reason why the fact that Hillary Clinton didn't win the presidential election really affected me. And I think probably would have been much nicer to have female faculty throughout the rest of my career as well, goes in similar reason. [...] Yeah, so even if I don't feel discrimination personally because of... as I've mentioned the level of privilege, I am very strongly shaken by laws that are closing down abortion access and things like that, and I feel if they had female representation in their houses and senates and courts that things would change for the women I think.

Labrador indicated her perception of violence as a lack of representation of women was influenced by her feminist lens. Labrador did not, however, perceive lack of representation of people from her home country as constituting violence as she did not expect to see many people from her home country in the United States.

Ceres and Ms. W disagreed with the expanded nature of the definitions I shared with them. Ceres framed violence in terms of intent, saying that when someone says something that is not good but it is not mean, she does not see it as violence. Ms. W pushed back, too:

Because I think everyone has his or her own way to define a word. People have different ideas that is... For me, personally, I think violence, I would agree with you that violence is not just physical. But, personally I think it should be related to some physical stuff, like if I threaten you that if you do not do something I will do something. I may not really hurt you, but I am threatening you with hurting you. I think this is also violence but some other things, I do not think they are violence. They are bad things but not all bad things should be violence.

Beginning of the Second Interview

Towards the beginning of the second interview, I asked participants if they had any thoughts about violence or safety since our last interview. Most participants said they had not. Some participants did, however, and some of those thoughts related to their conceptualizations of violence. Many also reflected on our discussion about definitions of violence at the end of the first interview.

When I asked Matt if she had thoughts about violence or safety since our last interview, she reflected upon her discomfort about labeling experiences "violence":

A little bit. I think what struck me as odd was like how we were going over the definition and the terms, and how I was hesitant to call it violence, to some extent, I think. But I also, I was defining it, but I didn't want to coin that term to it. So, I think ... I thought about it a lot. I wasn't able to come to some sort of resolution on why I was having that, but I think it was mostly just that. Yeah.

As can be seen earlier in this chapter, Matt wanted to call some of her experiences "discrimination" instead of violence. Emma, too, thought about whether discrimination was violence as can be seen in the exchange below.

Sapna:

Okay. Have you had any thoughts about violence or safety since our last interview? Emma:

Not that much. I think the only time was ... I was thinking about things like discrimination a lot, because these things came up a lot, but I didn't think of these things in terms of violence side of them. Yeah. I was thinking about, maybe like more the soft versions of violence.

Sapna:

Soft versions, is that what you said?

Emma:

Yeah, like in terms of discrimination and stuff like that, and the fact that you are basically, ... I think the only time, also a few days ago, that I came to this conclusion that I have to sort of accept that we are basically nothing, and if I accept that then... or maybe that's the hope they are giving you, that if you accept that you have no power then it's going to be easier for you, the rest of you. But, not fun. I mean in terms of the fact that you are so bottom on the levels of power, that people can just do whatever they want and it's kind of institutionalized.

As will be discussed later in the findings, Emma was referring to her experiences as a graduate student. In her response above, she again brought up the concept of power, which she had used in her original definition of violence.

Jasmine reflected on the definitions of violence we discussed toward the end of the first interview, as is illuminated in the following exchange.

Sapna:

Have you had any thoughts about violence or safety since our last interview? Jasmine:

Yes. I think most violence I may have encountered were not that obvious, not physical, but some verbal or nonverbal even, some expressions on their faces, something like that. It's really important to know that that sort of things count as a violence. That's new to me.

Sapna:

You said that's new to you?

Jasmine:

I didn't know that before.

Sapna:

How does that changing understanding, how does that change how you think about yourself or your own experiences?

Jasmine:

That actually made me think I may have suffered more violence than I thought. Maybe other people also.

Jasmine went on to discuss specific experiences, which I will share in later chapters.

Like Jasmine, Kate felt the expanded definitions of violence could enable her to think of more of experiences as violence, as is seen in the following exchange.

Sapna:

Okay, so, since we last spoke, have you had any thoughts about our discussion about violence and safety?

Kate:

Yeah, a little bit. Not the physical violence part that we talked about in the first part but I think toward the end you talked about something more psychological and more abstract and if I define that as violence, I was thinking that yeah, sometimes I feel like I don't belong here and I will never be able to belong here fully, and if I consider that as violence, then I am exposed to violence almost every day, I guess.

Sapna:

What prompted you to think about that?

Kate:

Well honestly I haven't really thought that much, it was almost right after we were done with the interview, it was on the way back, I was going home. But I just thought the feelings that I have here is because I'm struggling at work, and I'm struggling as being here alone, and I'm struggling with almost all kind of human relationships that I'm having here, and I never thought that as a word "violence" because you gave me the broad definition of violence, it just get into me. The word violence has some kind of power that if you define some negative feelings as violence then you start to feel that, oh my god this is something that can be a problem. I just thought that it's just because I'm certainly in unfamiliar environment, and I just thought that it's just coming from adjusting me into that environment, but I sometimes think that I will never be able to fully adjust, get adjusted. And those thoughts got into me, and because I live alone, I have a lot of time to think and when I go back home it's either watching TV or think about something really randomly so that's why.

Kate specifically commented upon the power of defining certain experiences as violence. Nila also commented on the power of labeling experiences as violence, focusing on sexual assault.

Unlike Kate, however, Nila's thoughts were not grounded in her own experiences. When I asked Nila if she had any thoughts about violence or safety since our last interview, she replied as follows:

Not particularly. Yeah, I think I went back a little bit. At the end of the interview, we talked a little about definitions, and I think your definition was more elaborate, or more comprehensive, I guess, than how I had thought of violence before. And I just go back and think about that every once in a while, because I think we commonly write off a lot of things as just, I don't know, "They just don't know," or stuff like that. You kind of make excuses for other people, and don't really label it as violence. And the other reason why I think about it is I wonder this in general, theoretically about sexual assault and stuff. I think I read a paper somewhere that said that people who label their experiences as being abuse or assault, they're affected more than people who don't. So sometimes I wonder about is it that the people who don't label it, maybe their experience was less painful, and that's why they don't label it, or is there something about the labeling itself which can be painful because it gives you something to hold onto? But yeah, just in general, I think about these things. Not... I can't think of anything right now that connects to my life, basically.

When I asked Nila what prompted her to think about the definitions of violence again, she replied she had recently attended a Title IX training. I will discuss her and other participants' thoughts about Title IX and sexual harassment in Chapter 7.

End of the Second Interview

At the end of the second interview, I asked participants about their experience in the interviews, including some version of the question, "Has participating in these interviews shifted your perspectives in any way?" Most participants said participating did not shift their perspective, but a few discussed the ways in which it did. Relevant here is how they perceived the interviews influenced their conceptualizations of safety and violence. Emma replied to the question with thoughts about how participating in the interviews gave her more vocabulary to ascribe to experiences:

To some extent, yes. I'm not sure how far but... Or I think this participating in the interview it gives you maybe more vocabulary to describe what's happening. So, the feeling is pretty much the same. It's just how you frame it and how you talk about it that changes. And I think maybe that you start to think of it in terms that other people also use rather than some of vague feelings.

A few participants reiterated what they had said earlier in the interview. Nila, for example, thought about the discussion of violence we had during the first interview:

Well, the one thing, like I was saying, I think about a lot, and I don't know how much it has affected how I see violence itself, but I really took away from our last interview, your more comprehensive definition of violence. I think about that a lot. I don't know yet if that has changed what I feel about different things. Whenever I see something that I wouldn't have used the word violence for in the past, it crosses my mind that there is another way to look at it, which would count this as violence. That's for sure.

Matt reiterated her thoughts about how talking about definitions and what counts as violence made her think more deeply about her perspectives about violence.

For Jasmine, the interviews changed the ways in which she thought about her own experiences, particularly discussions of non-physical forms of violence:

Yeah. I guess I feel like I experienced more violence than I have noticed because if you count those microaggression and the nonverbal, yeah, it's actually sad. It's a good thing that I've never experienced any physical violence so far, so that's really good.

Jasmine's and other participants' responses in the above sections become more clear as I continue to the next findings chapters.

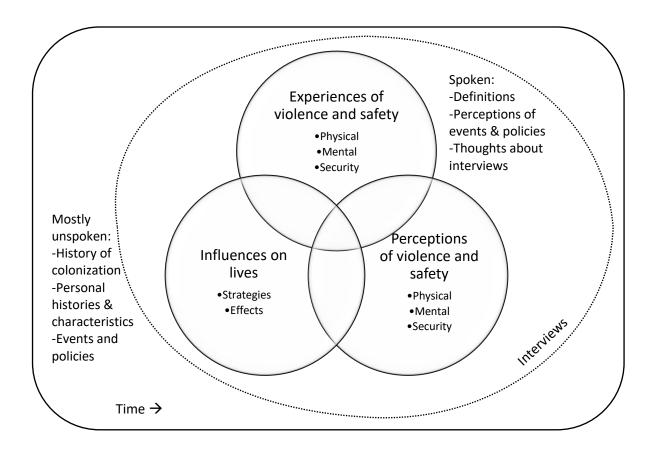
Chapter 4 Summary

In this first findings chapter, I presented participants' conceptualizations of violence and safety in response to the first research question, "How do women of color international graduate students studying in the United States conceptualize violence and safety?" Participants' initial conceptualizations are presented, followed by additional thoughts throughout the first and second interviews. Some participants' conceptualizations shifted slightly through the interviews. I learned participants' conceptualizations were not consistent with how I had thought about violence and safety, namely in terms of categories like sexual violence and epistemic violence. Instead, participants' conceptualizations of safety and violence both took on physical, nonphysical, and security dimensions. This findings in this chapter informed the way I have chosen to organize the next two chapter on participants' experiences and perceptions of safety and violence. Specifically, in Chapter 5, I first discuss participants' experiences of physical elements of safety and violence, then non-physical elements. Although this was not necessarily a clear-cut way to divide safety and violence, it aligned well with participants' conceptualizations of safety and violence in terms of "physical" and non-physical. In Chapter 6, I present participants' experiences and perceptions of security and insecurity. As I had not asked participants' their

definitions of security and insecurity, Chapter 6 is organized in terms of different types of security and insecurity as presented by participants.

In addition to participants' conceptualizations of violence and safety informing Chapters 5 and 6, participants' explanations of physical and mental aspects, along with security, informed the organization of influences in Chapter 8. Specifically, participants shared strategies they adopted, implicitly and explicitly, to prevent physical and mental violence and to maintain physical and mental safety, which I perceived as a type of influence on their lives. These are discussed in Chapter 8, but this conceptualization was informed by my drawing out my interpretation of findings. Experiences of violence and safety often, but not always, inform or overlap with perceptions. In addition, influences and strategies are often, but not always, tied to experiences and perceptions. Rather than organizing findings by experience, perceptions, and influences, however, it eventually made more sense to me to organize by physical, mental, and security because participants talked about their experiences and perceptions in these ways. In addition, I recognize that participants' whole stories are much more complex than what was shared in interviews, indicated by the interview bubble in the figure. Finally, I recognize a time dimension and changing context, discussed in Chapter 3.

Figure 3: Formative Diagram of Findings



Note. This drawing represents a mid-point in the formation of my ideas around the findings. I came to an understanding that I had to organize my findings according to participants' conceptualizations of safety and violence rather than by my conceptualizations or the framework.

CHAPTER 5: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND VIOLENCE

The second research question guiding my study was, "How do women of color international graduate students perceive and experience violence and safety while studying in the United States?" As stated in Chapter 4, the organization of this chapter was informed by participants' conceptualizations of safety and violence. Their perceptions and experiences represented here were derived from a variety of questions throughout the interviews, including those that referred specifically to violence and safety as well as those about experiences and perceptions more broadly. Rather than discussing perceptions and experiences of safety first then those of violence, I found participants' conceptualizations of safety and violence in terms of physical and non-physical forms and security and insecurity was a better way to organize the findings, though, of course, not perfect.

Chapter 5 includes physical and non-physical forms whereas Chapter 6 is on security and insecurity. Furthermore, dividing perceptions and experiences was not possible as these heavily influenced one another. As a result, in this chapter, I begin with participants' perceptions and experiences of physical forms of safety and violence, followed by participants' perceptions and experiences of non-physical forms of safety and violence. Rather than naming the section "non-physical," however, I have chosen to use the term "mental" as shorthand for the terms participants used, which included mental, psychological, emotional, and verbal. The decisions of whether to include thoughts under physical or mental was difficult, too, because experiences related to physical safety and violence often also had mental elements and vice-versa. My strategy was to include that which had to do with the physical body in the section on physical and mental, emotional, psychological, and verbal in the latter section, which included some assumptions on my part based on participants' answers.

Physical Safety and Violence

In this first section of the chapter, I start with physical safety then focus on physical violence. I found it challenging to divide participants' thoughts between whether experiences and perceptions fell under the section on safety or violence, particularly in the section on whether experiences fit into the category of feeling unsafe or constituting violence. It is important to note participants did not necessarily ascribe the term "violence" to their experiences, as explained in Chapter 4. I divided their thoughts based on whether the violence or threat of violence was directed toward the participant or to someone else, although there is overlap.

Physical Safety

After asking participants how they defined safety, I asked a variety of questions to gauge what factors made participants feel safe or unsafe. In some cases, I asked, "What makes you feel safe?" In others, I asked more specifically about where, with who, and when they felt safe or unsafe. The way I asked the question may have changed the ways in which participants answered; however, I chose to ask certain questions based on the flow of the conversation and what they may have said previously. In this section on physical safety, I have first included participants' comparisons of safety between their current location and their home countries. This discussion helped me to understand other perceptions and experiences. Then I discuss factors contributing to participants feeling physically safe followed by those contributing to participants feeling physically unsafe.

Comparison Between the United States and Home Country

When talking about their experiences in the United States, participants often, without prompting, brought in their perceptions and experiences from their home country environment as well as previous environments they had been in. For those who did not, I often asked them to

compare their previous geographical locations, including their home country and other locations they were in before, and their current location of the cities of Blue University and Green University. The ways in which they compared or identified previous experiences manifested differently among the eleven participants.

Three participants, Kate, Ms. W, and Jasmine, overall felt safer in their home countries or previous environments than they did in their current environment. Notably, all three participants were from countries in East Asia. The remaining eight participants, however, overall felt safer in the United States than in their home country. These participants were from countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Africa, and the Middle East. There are some exceptions to this, with guns and gun violence being a notable reason why participants did not feel safer in the United States than in their home country. Many of these eight participants named being a woman as contributing to their not feeling safe in their home country. Most participants were not ethnically minoritized in their home country. I did not include questions in the interview that directly addressed class, religion, and other factors which may have made them minoritized or vulnerable to violence in their home country, for example, on the street or out in public, they named being in their homes or with their families as where they felt safest.

Feeling Physically Safe

After asking participants about their definitions of safety or what safety meant to them, I asked them about what made them feel safe, or sometimes more specifically where, when, and with whom they felt most safe. Many participants said they felt safest at home. Matt felt safest at home, but she clarified that meant at her home in her home country: "At home. And that's not here. I feel the safest when I'm at home." Other participants, including Ceres, said they felt safest

at home, meaning their apartment. Although Sara mentioned her department as where she felt most safe, she also said she felt safe in her apartment: "I don't think anyone really makes me feel safe in my apartment, it's just the fact that it's my space," and because "families live there so I think that's always a good thing." Nila, too, felt safest in her room and office:

I don't feel unsafe a lot, so when I say I feel safest in my room, it's just because I like my space. So, on campus I feel pretty safe in my office. Where else do I feel safe? So, because I don't feel that or at least feeling not safe is not common, it's pretty rare. I can think of instances but still pretty rare. So, I'm just answering your question in a "Where do I feel most comfortable?" kind of way.

I return to the concept of comfort and safety later in this chapter.

Jasmine felt safer in university housing than her private apartments she lived in before. She pointed to being surrounded by students, and mostly PhD students, as an element that made her feel safe. She also noted a specific incident that made her feel unsafe in her private apartments:

Because I think something happened and the police knocked on our door at 5:00 in the morning, and they said that someone reported that there was a fight. I think it's a domestic abuse, I think, but they got the wrong address, and they insisted that we open the door. We were afraid because you don't really know if they are real police. That's one incident, and I think there were several others. Police showed up and there was like a criminal thing, investigation, something like that. I think they were examining some evidence, I guess. Yeah. Something bad happened.

As I will discuss later, Jasmine still felt safe around the police.

Most participants also named their offices and department buildings as places they felt

safe on campus. On campus, Ceres felt safest in her office and her building; she mentioned that after 6:00 p.m., when the doors are closed, only graduate students and professors would be in the building. Matt also said that she felt safe in her office. Sara explained why her department felt safe: "Because I know the people there and I know that it's on campus. There's always going to be people here and a familiar setting as well." She also explained that felt safe at a Starbucks: "It's not technically on campus but it's close enough and I think it's always full of people. I think having people around makes a place a lot safer for me."

Nila and I met in her office in her department for both interviews, on the weekends. In addition to her office, she generally felt safe on campus:

There are times when I work here until late and just wait at the bus stop for like half hour. I mean I did that two days back. I waited at the bus stop at 11:30 in the night or maybe 12:00, for like 20 minutes. I didn't even think about safety. I felt really safe. Yeah, I feel pretty safe most of the time, so it's hard to think of specific instances.

Jasmine explained that most of the time she felt safe on campus. In particular, she felt safer in the library and in her office. As will be discussed later, however, she engaged in strategies to avoid walking alone at night, even on campus. Kate also cited her office and building as safe locations on campus. She continued on about her perceptions of safety of her campus:

But I don't think the campus is real dangerous, because also it's a little bit weird. Because even campus and the coffee shops and somewhere else, people tend to leave their laptops and phones while they're going to restrooms. And that is actually same in [home country]. People don't really care about their possessions that much when they're... And we have a social belief that people will not steal in public at least. [City of Blue University] is a little bit similar, which was really surprising, because I did exchange

student program in undergrad in [West Coast city]. I don't think [West Coast city] is super dangerous, but my phone was stolen in Halloween, on Halloween day. And I was really upset anyways. I didn't really live in a lot of cities, but I experienced a few American cities. And I felt like it's weird that [City of Blue University] people are also acting like [people of home country], because American in general is not safer than [home country].

When I asked her if she leaves her laptop alone in coffee shops, she replied, "Yeah, I do. But sometimes, I talk to the person sitting next to me. 'Can you just look after this stuff?' And they'll probably just say yes. It's only three, four minutes to the restroom." Sofia also cited things not being stolen as a metric of safety on campus, saying theft does happen on campus in her home country: "On campus back home, still you cannot leave your bag on the veranda. Okay, in campus it may be more secure than out of campus, but still, you cannot risk, you know? You cannot risk."

In contrast to other participants, Sofia and Lyly felt totally safe on their campus of Green University. Sofia said she felt safe on all parts of the campus she had visited:

[Green University] is a very, very big university. Actually, I think there are some parts in [Green University] where I haven't even reached because it's very huge. But then the ones that I have been in so far, they are safe. I can't say there is a place here in [Green University] which is unsafe. It's a safe place.

When I asked if her if she ever felt unsafe on campus, she said no. In addition, Sofia felt safe traveling on the bus, even at night. She contrasted this to her lack of safety on public transportation in her home country:

Here is different from home, you know back home, there is so much robbery. For

example, one time we were traveling at night, and that was the last time I took a bus when I was in my home country. We almost ran into robbers, it was the first bus that was in front of us that signaled to us that, "Hey, don't go in front, there is the blockage in front." And so unfortunately, they tried to signal to a taxi but it wasn't able to stop. It just went straight into the robbers, and they stole everything that people had. So, comparing the security here, I really feel safe.

Since that experience in her home county, Sofia used private means to travel there, but continued to use public transportation in the United States.

Lyly also said she felt safe, even if she had to take Uber, and also said there was never a time she felt unsafe, including at night:

No, no, no. I never had that feeling so far. Even when I have to leave my own lab at 8:00 or 9:00, or I have to leave my meeting with my [home country] student association late at night at 10:00, I feel okay. I feel safe.

Unlike Lyly, however, many participants felt unsafe on their campus at night.

When assessing safety off of campus, many participants considered people and neighborhoods. For Jasmine, the neighborhood where she was contributed to her feelings of safety, which was determined by the people there: "Like if they're good people. Like a college students, PhD students, I think most of them are well educated and maybe reasonable, less aggressive. People who aren't cruel, don't drink and don't use drugs. But you cannot really tell." For other participants, certain people signaled a lack of safety of an area, which will be discussed more in the next section.

Ms. W only really felt safe when she was with her parents, no matter where that was.

When I asked her where else she felt safe, she said she would not feel completely safe, except

maybe in a police office. Although she had not been in a police office in the United States, she mentioned she had been in one in her home country, and they helped her. Jasmine also said she would feel safe around police, even though, referring to the incident at her previous apartment above, "my door was knocked at violently by police, like a very early morning. I think they were doing a good thing; they just got the wrong address." She recognized, however, "I think maybe it would be different for a Black person, but for me, I feel safe. I feel safer."

In contrast to many of the participants who said they felt safe in their department buildings when others were around, Emma explained she felt unsafe in those same situations. As will be noted in the next section, Emma also felt safe in situations where others may feel unsafe:

It's kind of weird. I think it's not about where, it's more about when. So, I think it's actually in my office right now, but usually when people are not around. So, if I come at a time that there are other people around, I don't feel safe. I mean I would hang out, but I mean safe in the way that you don't have to be worried for some conversation that you don't want to have, maybe, I don't know. But the most unsafe place would be the fifth floor of the same building, which is the building of the department and all the formal stuff going on. And that we are now in the basement, and it's kind of cozy, maybe that's part of it. But it's also kind of weird, but I'm a kind of a night person and I might just walk outside in the middle of the night, and many times I just sit around the campus and I don't feel unsafe. I even enjoy that, I even feel safe, especially if maybe known people are not around... I think the un-safety comes when you... It's just like when you're out walking and then you feel like someone's chasing you, that way you feel unsafe. Or if you're not sure about that person's reaction. But otherwise, if I don't see anyone in the streets, I feel very safe. Yeah, I think outside is also one of these safe places for me, just

sitting outside in the nature, like outside the building basically, or many times, my office is also, because you're not under supervision basically, no one really sees you.

The reasons for Emma's perspectives become clearer in Chapter 6 on security.

Feeling Physically Unsafe

I also asked participants what made them feel unsafe. Participants answered with some combination of at night, where there is lack of light, in empty or too crowded spaces, in certain neighborhoods, and in unfamiliar places. Labrador felt uncertainty contributed to her feeling unsafe:

Sort of uncertainty of... and it could be anything sort of... uncertainty of when the next bus is going to arrive, if I'm not in my day-to-day life, where this is when I'm traveling. Unsafe when I don't know the language in the place I'm in well enough to sort of handle it if something happens. Unsafe living in a country where terrorists can have access to guns.

In Chapter 7, I will describe more in detail about participants' feelings about safety and lack of safety related to guns in the United States.

Although most participants generally felt safe on campus, with some feeling totally safe on their campus, some participants named specific situations and places where they felt unsafe on campus. Matt said she sometimes felt unsafe at night working in her department building, "because there's nobody in the building, I'm working late. There's just this sense of insecurity but otherwise it's fine." Ceres said she did not go to places aside from her department building much. Once she felt unsafe on the way to the bus, and in places that were very dark. She also felt less safe in parking lots, because in most of the movies she had seen, bad things happened in parking lots, like someone grabbing a person and putting them in their car. Sara named a specific

street adjacent to her campus that felt unsafe to her:

I think walking along [busy street adjacent to campus] later during the day, that can be around 8:00 or 9:00, it's a little more empty and a lot of ... There are a lot of people, I wouldn't say homeless people but there are people who are under the influence. And there have always been multiple incidents that we get notified about where the [Blue University] PD have been called because someone who's walking along [aforementioned street] and they were harassed or attacked. So, I think I just try to avoid walking alone at later hours.

Ms. W also said she felt unsafe when she was on campus when a man was asking her for money, adding, "That made me feel really unsafe because I really didn't have money. I'm afraid he will attack me." Jasmine did not feel safe walking alone even on campus, especially when it was dark and there were no people around. She said she tried really hard to avoid that, and although there was a campus walking service, she had not used it; she cited a murder on campus her first year on the road to her bus as a reason for the service's existence. Jasmine explained that incident "just proves my point. Like it's not safe to walk alone. Especially, yeah, when it's dark."

Many participants felt less safe off campus and around town than on campus. Ceres said she did not feel safe walking around in her city, especially when it was dark, because she did not see people walking. Jasmine did not feel safe on city buses, in part because there were "weird people," the smell of "alcohol and weed," and the bus went through "bad neighborhoods." Kate's association with danger in her a particular area of her city also had to do with people: "it could be a little bit dangerous at night, because there are a lot of, not a lot but a few, homeless." Sara explained when she felt unsafe at a bus stop at around 11:00 a.m.:

I was waiting for a bus and there was this homeless person who came up to me and was

asking for change to ride the bus. And I don't carry any change plus as students at [Blue University], we ride the bus for free. So, I was a little scared when he approached me and then when I said that I didn't have change, he wouldn't believe me. He's like, "What do you mean you don't have change? You're going to ride the bus, aren't you?" So, I said, "Yeah." And then I walked off and came back when the bus pulled up.

I asked her how that experience affected her, and she responded, "I stopped using that bus route." Sara started using a different route even though the bus stop was further from her apartment.

Nila shared a negative experience on a bus at night. She explained that at the bus stop she noticed a man staring at people, then once they boarded the bus, he yelled at a young man on the bus who started crying. Although the yelling was not directed towards her, she was scared, did not know what to do, and wanted to tell the bus driver but did not want to get near the man, and told me, "I didn't know how to tell him to stop. I didn't know if I could be like, 'Hey, stop,' if he'd, I don't know, hit me or do something."

Experiences of Physical Violence

Participants relayed specific violent experiences they had in their home country, or in some cases in other countries outside of the United States. I also asked about specific experiences in the United States including in other cities outside of their current location. In some cases, participants shared these experiences in response to a question in which I asked them if they had experienced violence generally or specific types of violence in their home country or previously in the United States. This section is organized as follows: sexual harassment or sexual violence, followed by perceptions of threats of physical violence.

Sexual Harassment or Sexual Violence Experiences in Home Country, the United States, or Elsewhere

Several participants mentioned safety in relation to being a woman both in their home countries and in the United States. Matt, when telling me where she felt safe, explained that she generally felt safer in the United States than in her home country. She named being a woman, especially on the streets or at night, as a reason why she felt unsafe in her home country. She continued:

Just as a woman I just... People stare at you there all the time. It's so... Have you heard of the term Eve teasing? It's so common. I had this weird experience where someone flashed me once on a road just outside where I was staying. I was really young. I was maybe like eight or nine years old. I went out to get some chart paper or something. I was coming home and the guy just like flashes me. It was so scary. I feel like just that happening... It's so common for girls to have had these experiences. Either something like this or someone feeling you up on a bus or someone touching you while they walk. I think those experiences. Also, I felt like no matter what I wear I would always get stared at just because I'm a woman. That's why I never felt very safe. I've never felt that way here. I feel like a little unsafe when I have to take the public transport late in the night or walk somewhere unfamiliar late in the night. But generally, I feel pretty safe.

Nila, also from South Asia, shared similar feelings about her sense of safety in the United States versus back home:

I do think I feel a lot safer here. That sucks. I mean it sucks to say that, but I think that's true. I feel a lot safer here in the sense that, even though sometimes when I walk, like that one time I walked late in the night, and it was mildly scary, but I would still walk at that

time. And I know that almost nothing is going to happen, but I would be way more nervous to walk back in [home country]. Yeah, I do think it's way safer here. And, also in [home country], I would definitely be very careful about what I wear. I would sometimes be like I don't care about the norm. I'll on purpose do the opposite thing, but I will do that in a situation where I can be ... I'm with someone, or I can be sure that I'll feel safe still. But in most other situations, I would make sure that I would think about my clothes and stuff, which I really don't here.

When I asked her if she had experiences in her home country that made her feel unsafe, Nila immediately responded, "Oh yeah." Although she did not give specifics, she continued:

Yeah, I mean not like terrible. They're not uncommon there, just because there are so many people everywhere. It's so crowded, and there are so many people living on the roads. And yeah, these norms aren't really ... Nobody talks about these things. Not that much relative to my friends in [home country], I think it's pretty common there, but to some extent, yeah, for sure, more than here, for sure.

Nila's definition of violence included emotional abuse or emotional harm. When I asked her if she had experienced that, she told me about an emotionally abusive relationship she was in for three years. She, at first, was not sure "if it counts." She said it had affected her a lot, and she became relationship averse and not trusting. She also became more sensitive to and aware of problematic behaviors and subsequently confronted or avoided those people. She told me she had not fully made sense of the experience and its effects on her.

When I asked Ceres if she had experienced violence in her home country, she shared that once when she was taking a taxi when she was 17 or 18, the taxi driver touched her hand.

Although she felt safer getting into taxis in the United States, she did so much less than she used

to. One participant shared she experienced a sexual assault in another country before coming to the United States. While she said the experience had some long-term influence on her, she was still trying to figure it out, and she did not want to talk about it further.

Labrador shared her experiences of sexual harassment, via rude comments and being followed, in a large U.S. city she previously lived in. Labrador was not sure if she would call those experiences violence, saying, "It could be construed as violence. If in the way that I characterized what I felt violence was. That I didn't feel. I don't remember feeling unsafe, I'm sure I did at the beginning." Although Labrador had those experiences, she said she felt more angry than unsafe. This feeling of safety versus feeling unsafe did depend on where she was, however:

The degree to which people might think about following through on some of the things they were saying will depend on sort of where I am. And I also would impact how safe or not I feel in a situation, so I think, one time when I was... I can't remember where in Spain, but or maybe it was Italy, actually I think it was Italy... I think I felt quite unsafe at some of the lewd comments. And at least for the most part when I was in [previous U.S. city] it was harmless in the sense that it wouldn't... I was pretty certain that it wouldn't be anything other than verbal.

When I asked Labrador what made her feel pretty certain, she replied, "You know years of living there. But again, I mean there, there was no certainty, it's just based on optimistic judgment."

Emma also shared experiences of sexual harassment on the streets of the same U.S. city as Labrador:

In [large U.S. city] I had all of those experiences in the subway, but those are again with these physical things more than, or even verbal. They just say, "Hey, bitch." I think at some point I was just walking from home to subway at the metro station. It's just a six-minute walk, and in that time, I heard it three things from people. I was amused at how can I hear three things just in six minutes? That was stuff like, "Hey, beautiful." There was just this kind of things.

Emma, despite those types of experiences, was not afraid of being alone at night in her current city. Emma's focus regarding violent experiences had more to do with insecurity as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Perceptions of Threats of Physical Violence

In addition to the experiences described above, participants also explained instances in which they felt threatened. Nila shared an experience that she had a few years earlier in her current city when looking for a new apartment:

So, there was this day when my roommate and I had lived together for three years. At some point we were considering moving to a cheaper apartment or something. And she wasn't here, so I went with some agent to just look at some apartment. I can't really remember the specifics, but I kind of freaked out. We went to see an apartment. It was just this older guy and me, and so we entered the apartment, because that was the apartment I could potentially live in. So, we went to see it. I don't remember what about him made me feel that way, but I think I was generally ... I had my guards up generally, but then when we entered the apartment, he closed the door, and it freaked me out. I was scared to even go, and he kept being like, "Go look in the bedroom. Go look, go look, go look." And it's not a big apartment, so if you go into that little hallway that goes into the bedroom, there isn't a lot of space to get out. And he was fine. He didn't do anything, but I was scared to even enter that place or go into a room where I would be stuck there. And

I think it was because he just closed the door, and he kind of didn't ... And maybe he said something or maybe was just an intuition. I don't know but I started interpreting each of these little things. So, when I entered that, because he bugged me so much, he was like, "There is so much storage space. Look at the storage space," and stuff like that. And he was behind me. He wasn't inside the bedroom. If he was, then I would still be closer to the door, but he was behind me. So, I was kind of scared to enter or do anything, and I think I just stood by the door of each room and looked quickly and got out of there as soon as possible. But that's one instance when I definitely freaked out.

Nila also shared another instance when she was walking home from a coffee shop late at night nearby her house and a big car stopped nearby her. She said she felt scared, walked fast, and then almost ran. Ceres shared a similar experience when she was biking home in the afternoon and she saw someone following her. She was scared as she was living alone and tried to go faster to get away. She was scared for a few days afterwards but soon forgot about it.

When I asked Sara to share any negative experiences she had in the United States, she shared an experience when she was taking a Lyft at 9:00 a.m.:

I think some of the negative experiences have usually always been around when I'm walking on the streets because public transport isn't that great here. I mean, it's not nonexistent but it's still ... I would like it to be a little more robust. But I think I was taking a Lyft to campus one day and I had the lady who was driving, she was really nice, but there was a car that started following us for whatever reason and I was very frightened, she wasn't. She was quite calm, but she said, "It's going to be fine. I have their number plate in case anything unusual happens." But the car basically followed us all the way to campus, and I was just very scared of what is going to happen. And I asked

her to drop me off in front of a very busy area so that ... Because we didn't know why they were following us. It could be they were following us because of her or me. So, that was a very frightening experience.

Sara said, as a result, she became "even more cautious about her surroundings," not only because of that incident but from growing up in her home country where "it's not super safe." This strategy of caution will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

Mental Safety and Violence

As a reminder, this section on mental safety and violence includes those experiences and perceptions participants shared related to mental, emotional, psychological, and verbal safety and violence. In addition, I have included experiences and perceptions related to the concepts of violence and epistemic violence described in Chapter 1. Again, I used my judgment in ascribing perceptions and experiences to the following sections on safety versus violence, again noting participants did not necessarily use the term "violence" to describe their experiences.

Mental Safety

As explained in the definitions, participants defined safety not only in terms of physical safety but also by non-physical or mental safety, using different terms to describe this feeling. Participants seemed to focus on safety around particular people. In addition, comfort and safety were discussed as related, which is explained more below.

People

Participants frequently described people with whom they felt safe. Ms. W's feelings of safety were not necessarily associated with a location but with specific people. She said she felt unsafe when she was not with her parents. She felt safe with her parents no matter where she was. When I asked what about being with her parents made her feel safe, she responded, "I think

this is a natural feeling. You think they will never hurt you." Aside from her parents, she felt safe with, "my boyfriend and... one or two of my best friends. But, they're not as... it's not the same feeling as with my family. Because my family just make me feel so good, so safe." When I asked Matt what made her feel safe, she responded, "Having close family and friends around."

Sara felt safe around her parents, some of her teachers back home, her friends from back home, and people in her department. When I asked what made all of these people feel safe to her, she explained:

I think it's different for the different groups. My parents, of course, because they're my parents. I think over here it's a sense of community. I feel that we're all from the same department, we're doing the same thing, look out for each other, that kind of feeling. My friends because I've known them many, many years, grew to trust them and it's [the feeling of trust is] just something that develops organically.

Sofia noted that she felt very safe around her advisor, saying, "he is my mentor, then professor, then a friend, then a father." Sofia did, however, feel unsafe around some people back in her home country:

There are some people that are negative in nature, and it's human to feel unsafe around such people. They try to put you down in almost every situation. Even when you are trying to lift your spirit, they try to just put you down. You know, sadists, those are the ones that we call sadists. Now, such types of sadists really, you can't feel safe around the sadists because you have to calculate the number of word you say, you have to avoid talking about achievements in your life because they'll always bring something negative.

Sofia said she did not have that kind of experience in the United States.

Comfort and Safety

Participants also brought in the concept of comfort when discussing safety around people and in certain spaces. The concepts seemed related, but not necessarily the same. When Ceres was around family and close friends, she was more comfortable, but not exactly safe. Her department in her home country was always crowded, and she would always see friends, which made her feel safe. At Green University, sometimes at night and on holidays, she said, there were less people around. At parties, however, where there were a lot of people around, she said she did not feel unsafe, but she did feel uncomfortable.

Nila explained safety and comfort had some relationship because of how she felt as a result:

I would say that comfort also ... I feel more comfortable in my room or here [in her office] also, because I don't have to deal with interactions or social things that I don't want to deal with. I don't have to, I don't know, stick to norms that I don't like. I'm just by myself in a world where ... And even at home, my roommate and I get along really well, so in that space I can be myself. Maybe that's what it is. I can really be myself, and that makes me feel very comfortable.

Emma described feeling safe around friends both in the United States and with some friends back home with whom she felt safe talking. She continued:

But I think these two things are just places that I don't feel uncomfortable talking about, or I don't feel unsafe talking about things that happen. My advisor at some point came... especially with the times that he starts asking questions about your experience, I suddenly start feeling safe, and that's the time that I start talking about what's happening. And at other times I feel unsafe. So, it's kind of in between. So sometimes I feel really safe

talking to him. I can trust him that he doesn't... I could trust him actually that he doesn't... at least he doesn't share the information that would hurt you. At least I could trust that. And then there are also times that I'm not really sure. But there were times that I felt safe talking to him. And maybe same goes with my classmates, to some of them. I think I can generally believe that they don't want to hurt me, but at some point, now I wasn't sure if they might try to help and because they want to help, they might share it with some people, and it might end up the opposite instead of helping with my interest.

When I asked Sofia if she felt unsafe around anyone at her university, she said, "Not really, not really. Because also the community at [Green University], they are very friendly. Yeah, they are very friendly people. You feel comfortable with them."

Mental Violence

Mental violence was difficult to identify, especially as participants' definitions of non-physical forms of violence differed, and in some cases, they did not want to ascribe the label of violence to their experiences. As a result, I am including here what participants described as mental, psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse along with experiences that related to the definitions of violence, including microaggressions and discrimination, and epistemic violence, including silencing, described in Chapter 1. This section is organized as follows: discrimination and microaggressions, mental abuse, silencing, and violent rhetoric and policy.

Discrimination and Microaggressions

I asked participants if they felt they had been discriminated against in the United States. Several felt they had. Although many participants did not name their experiences as specific types of discrimination, they often described them as race-based discrimination along with nationality-based and gender-based discrimination. As noted above, I included experiences of

discrimination as a part of this section on violence by carrying definitions of violence as described in Chapter 1, which go beyond physical forms of violence. In addition, discrimination can escalate into racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression as well as physical violence. This section is organized by discrimination and microaggressions on campus and off campus, followed by participants' sharing the ways in which they have not experienced discrimination or felt welcomed.

Discrimination on Campus in the United States. When I asked Emma if she had experienced discrimination in the United States, she referred to an experience at her previous institution: "Yes, I think at one point. Sometimes they're so subtle that you can't even prove that, but there was some time." She went on to explain that she was asked if she could tutor another student in a language, but the job went to an American student instead. Emma needed the job because she did not have a job at the time. She concluded, "That was one of the big events that I felt really discriminated against." Emma also felt she was passed up for a TA job in her specific area. She was assigned another teaching assistantship not directly in her area of expertise, while an American student was assigned the teaching assistantship in her concentration. Because these experiences related to what Emma thought might be related to her experience as an international graduate student, I will talk about them in more depth in Chapter 6 on security and insecurity.

Other participants also felt discrimination in the context of academic settings. Ceres explained in a class she was working on a project with three other male graduate students with two male advisors. They interrupted her. She said after a few months it got better as she was patient with them and tried to show them what she was saying was correct. In some classes, where she was the only woman, she felt she was given special treatment because she was a woman, which she did not appreciate. Aside from those experiences, Ceres said she could not

remember other experiences of discrimination.

Matt, too, felt discriminated against in the context of class and lab meetings. In class, she explained:

Sometimes I've felt like my ideas are not taken very seriously because I don't have the American perspective, or I don't talk about it as how normally an American student would. Maybe my communication is different but for example, if I stammer a lot or if I use different sets of words, I feel like sometimes they just don't take you seriously. I feel like I've felt that. I also feel like sometimes people talk to you differently because you look like a person of color and you don't talk the same way. Very subtle but I've felt it. In lab meetings, too, Matt said she felt her ideas were not taken seriously.

When I asked Kate if she felt discriminated against in the United States, she explained that she had as an Asian person, although since she was mostly around PhD students, "they are educated enough to at least hide their feelings or emotions." She then relayed she had felt discriminated against by a professor she was TAing for who did not learn her and other Asian TAs' names:

The professor never remembered our names, even though we were there all the time. She only remembered the two Western names. And I just felt that could be a discrimination. That's just less caring, but I was assigned to that professor one more time. And I just talked to my coordinator that I don't really want to work with her, because she doesn't respect us. And she doesn't care enough to remember our names.

I later asked her how that made her feel, and she said "that was really annoying and pissed me off" especially because she saw that professor every day.

Jasmine felt discriminated against as an international student TA as well, but from the

students:

Sometimes students act differently. Like I think some of them treat modesty as weakness. I'm not sure it's a culture thing or anything, but I do feel like they're not as respectful as they would be if it's not an international student.

She explained students paid attention to domestic graduate student TAs more when they talked, and students were more disobedient towards her.

Discrimination and Microaggressions Off Campus in the United States. When I asked Jasmine if she felt discriminated against, she responded, "Yeah, definitely." She went on to explain a particular incident:

I think one time in a supermarket, I really don't recall I did anything inappropriate, but somehow this lady just stared at me like angrily. I didn't know what I did wrong, so I just walked away. Yeah. It's like I'm always polite and not ... I don't know. I always think about what I do wrong. Yeah, but sometimes I just can't think of anything that I did wrong. She didn't say anything though, but she just stared at me like with that look.

Jasmine also explained, on and off campus, she noticed people try to talk to her husband, who is also from her home country and not a student, instead of her. She continued:

I think they just assume that he's the one who can speak English fluently, but he can't. They tend to say hi to him, and they tend to talk to him about things, and they tend to ignore me, but I'm the one who can speak English and he can't. So, is that some kind of a discrimination, I'm not sure, but it happens a lot.

When I asked if that happened on campus as well, she said she thought people assumed he was a student, not her.

During the second interview, Jasmine had returned to this experience. She told me her

husband was worried about discrimination because of the spreading coronavirus in China, even though he did not experience discrimination himself. She reminded me of the story she had told me during the first interview and made a connection to violence as is seen in the following exchange:

Sapna:

Can I ask, how does it make you feel whenever people talk to him rather than you? Jasmine:

I'm not really sure, but I think people like to stick to some stereotype. A woman is less likely to be a PhD student than a man. The man in the family is someone who pursues a career instead of this woman. The woman should be staying home at home with children. I think I understand that, but it does make me feel uncomfortable. Especially after I talk to them, it clearly shows that my English is way better than my husband's. They still tend to talk to my husband. I really don't understand why. Why is it so hard for you to just talk to me, for you to admit that I'm the more capable person as far as a language is concerned? I think that counts as some sort of violence according to the definitions you talked about last time.

Sapna:

By adding that label of violence to that experience, does it change anything about the way that you think about the experience?

Jasmine:

It makes me think that maybe I'm wrong. Maybe next time I should do something, but I'm not really sure. It's way worse than I thought before, I think, if it's a kind of violence.

Although Sara said she had not experienced discrimination in the United States, she had experienced microaggressions when I asked her, naming an old roommate who made her life very difficult. Nila could not think of examples of discrimination, but said, "in little ways, there are definitely microaggressions everywhere."

Sapna:

Can you think of examples of microaggressions that you've experienced? Nila:

Yeah, there's a lot of little language stuff, like assuming that American English is the only way of ... like American pronunciations or the American accent is the standard and that kind of stuff. I think that used to initially bother me, but it doesn't anymore, or it's kind of amusing now. That's one. I don't find most of this offensive, but then I got this scholarship kind of thing, which was run by just a bunch of rich, white women in [state of Blue University]. So, they invited me to one of their events, and they're all very well meaning, but then they would say just really funny things. Like one person just came to me, and she was like, "Are you from [home country]? Like really? Wow." Or like one

person, I was being introduced to people, and one woman was like, "I saw you at yoga yesterday." And I was like, no.

Sapna:

That wasn't you, was it?

Nila:

And that's the thing. They don't feel embarrassed, or they don't mean it, so it's just that, like a lot of that kind of silly things. I'm sure there is more, but I can't think of good examples. Yeah, I'll maybe say more if they come to mind, but I can't think of any.

Airports. A few participants relayed incidents at airports in the United States they were not sure they could call discrimination. Kate explained when returning to the United States in January 2020, at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, she was not sure if she had experienced discrimination:

I was coughing a little bit because I was drinking coffee and it got in my throat. They were like staring me with a bad look. And I was like, "is it because I'm coughing, or is it because I'm Asian and coughing?" And that was a little bit weird.

When I asked Labrador if she had been discriminated against, she replied, "Maybe. I think it was just someone who was having a bad day though." She went on to explain that she was at an airline check in desk with her family, and the person working the desk did not explain an issue with a family member's passport. Although Labrador was able to resolve the issue, she said she was not sure if the incident was "discrimination or she [the worker] was having a bad day."

Emma, too, told me about an experience at an airport when passengers were asked to volunteer to change their flights in which she perceived discrimination. She explained:

I volunteered and they took my information and she asked me, "Do you have an American email?" And, I was like, "What?" "Do you have a U.S. email?" And I was like, "What's the U.S. email?" Anyway, I gave him my email at [institution]. It's just [institution].edu. Just the question itself, that, "Do you have an U.S. email?"

Emma explained that she was told they did not need volunteers anymore, and she ended up at the back of the line, then was not allowed on the plane. She said, "that was one of the moments that I felt that if I was an American, she would have never done these things to me." She continued:

Many times there are these things that happen and then you're not really sure how much of it is related to your nationality. It could be related to many things. It could be related to, you sound not very respectable for whatever definition they might have, or you sound poor or whatever.

The sense among Kate, Emma, and Labrador that they were not sure if their airport incidents reflected discrimination was salient in other participants' stories as well. This self-questioning will be discussed more in Chapter 8.

Not Experienced Discrimination. It is important to note, when I asked participants if they had experienced discrimination in the United States, several participants answered they did not, including Sara, Sofia, and Lyly. Lyly explained, "No, no. I'm so fortunate because I'm a Muslim, and I'm wearing a big hijab, like long one, hijab. But, yes. People, like... It's not they don't care. But, they don't see me like different." When I asked her if she knew other people who had felt discriminated against, she said, "no." Later in the first interview, however, she relayed she and a friend had talked about safety and discrimination: "She works at [large grocery store], and she recently felt that her... What is? Her supervisor treated her differently, and she doesn't know why. But, she felt that way. And she's wearing hijab, too."

Labrador explained, other than the experience in the airport, she had not experienced discrimination in her education in the United States:

No. If anything I feel like being a [person from home country] helps. I'm the first [person from home country] here in this program, I think. Think it's exotic in a way that these

Caucasian countries are not, just because there's not as many of us. But again, yeah, so, I've noticed that some of my [another South Asian country] friends probably get a little more. It's not quite discrimination, but that is maybe a difference in the way that some people would approach them than they do to me. And I think it's worse depending on the thickness of your accent.

Sofia not only did not feel discrimination but felt welcomed in the United States, even though she had heard of warnings of racism and anti-Blackness before arriving:

I come with a fear because, initially, how I had explained to you, people had made me scared that I'm going to find racial segregation because I'm Black. [...] But then when I came here, I found the environment completely different, people welcomed me, people accept me in society. There was no, any way that made me feel like, hey, you don't belong here. I felt at home when I came here. Yeah, I did feel at home.

In addition, Sofia felt welcomed particularly by Black people in her state:

Actually, the thing that I noticed here in [state of Green University], even when you're walking and a Black person sees you across the street, they will greet you. There is that sort of brotherhood that is too much, actually more than even when you are in Africa.

There is this certain brotherhood that I had not yet met before.

It is also important to note, Sofia was the only Black participant in this study.

Mental Abuse

When I asked Matt if she experienced violence while studying in the United States, she said, "I wouldn't say violence. I would just say some level of being ignored." When I asked, "being ignored by who?" she replied, "Professors or some graduate students because they feel like what you say doesn't matter. Or like with my ex-advisor, kind of just didn't feel like his

students need more support or more guidance." Although she did not name her experiences as violence, I referenced her definition of violence, which included mental abuse, as is seen in the following exchange:

Sapna:

Going back to your definition of violence including mental abuse, do you feel like you've experienced mental abuse while in the U.S.?

Matt

Yeah. I have but like I don't want to associate it with violence per se. I do feel like... I'm feeling so depressed right now. It is a result of all of these experiences that I've had with my ex-advisor and how difficult things are with my new advisor. But I don't think any of it was intended. It was more because they just didn't understand. They really are so incapable of understanding anyone from another culture.

Sapna:

So do you think what separates violence from not is the intention? Or is there anything else that prevents you from calling what you've experienced violence?

Matt:

I wouldn't say intention is the only thing that separates it because a lot of times, even if it's not intended it causes harm to the other person. Can I call it like discrimination because with that one professor who's always been very hard with my talks and with my ex-advisor, my current advisor, really not being able to understand... Put me in a very tough spot. I guess there is some form of violence. I don't know. Yeah. I don't want to associate it with violence but at the same time I want to call it something where I want to blame them. But I don't want to blame them for something for violence but more like... Maybe I could say I want to blame them for the mental abuse that I've felt. Yeah.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Matt told me later she thought a lot about ascribing the term violence to these experiences, though she had not settled on a conclusion.

Silencing

When I asked participants if they had had ever felt not heard or silenced in classes, participants had a range of answers, including some who simply said, "No," while others had experienced feeling silenced. When I asked Jasmine about epistemic violence after she commented on it during our discussion of definitions, she said while she did not experience that, at least consciously, she did recognize her fear in talking in a white male dominated environment:

I myself am not personally experiencing any of that. Maybe not consciously, however. Yeah. But I do always feel like I'm always afraid to say, what if I say something stupid? In [Jasmine's field], I think, it's dominated by white men, so they would think that the way you know, the way you are rational is that way, that specific way they think is the right way, but not other ways. Like they would, if you become emotional, they would say you are not rational, but that's not true.

As a follow up, I asked Jasmine if she ever felt silenced by other students or faculty members. She replied, "Not here, not in my program." She explained she had that experience in her home country though:

It's like you have to respect the authority. Even you want to question them, you never do that. It's different. That's one of the many reasons I want to be here. Like you feel more equal with your professors instead of just like being a subordinate only or anything.

Matt, however, did have the experience of feeling silenced by peers. She relayed a negative classroom experience when she felt shut down by another student:

I am so mad because I'm just like, you take on international students, but you have no value for their perspective so why do you even have these classes? Why do you ask us for ideas when you don't really want to listen to them?

She said that this happened in discussion-based classes generally. Matt also had a negative experience with her advisor asking questions, as is seen in the following exchange:

Matt: I feel like my current advisor is really pushing me. Although I think for him, he just feels like he's helping me by asking me a lot of questions, but I feel like I'm being pushed. We had a meeting recently where he just kept asking me, "Why are you in this program? What do you want to do in five years? Why did you get into social psychology? Why psychology?" He expected me to have clear answers for these. Even though I do, it's like at knife point sometimes. If you're asked a question you might not be able to answer. Even if you just know the answers to these questions. It was really threatening to me. I feel like I was this close to crying.

Sapna:

What made that feel like you were at knife point?

Matt:

Just how he kept asking and expecting an answer, despite me saying I don't know. I feel like at that point someone should ideally back off, but he was not. He was just like, "Okay let me figure out another way to ask you the same question." But if I don't know the answer, I'm just going to say, "I don't know." It's really threatening because it felt like these were answers that were so private. When you're still thinking it over and you're not comfortable talking to other people about it, I think he was trying to get into that space. That's why it was so threatening. I was just like, "I don't know." I couldn't say, "Don't ask me this." But I was just giving very basic answers. That cultural insensitivity and just, "I'm going to ask you this question because I can and because I want an answer."

Matt's above experience was one that contributed to her saying she felt mental abuse, although, as noted in Chapter 4 and above, she did not necessarily want to call this violence.

Kate felt she was judged by her language ability not her skill. She also explained after moving to the United States for her PhD, she "really wanted to be perfectly Americanized" listening to only American songs and watching only American TV shows and movies. She realized that she could not ever be American and was "trying to figure out my identity here as a foreigner." She continued:

And I don't think it really changed my way to relate or react with people, but I'm pretty sure I became a little bit less confident whenever I talk to people. So, I don't really have that much accent compared to other international students. So, at first when we were making easy conversation, they think that I grew up here. Whenever it gets a little bit more complicated, they realize that I'm not from here. And I was kind of afraid. Whenever they notice that I'm a foreigner, what if they have a little bit of prejudice toward me? It could be either good or bad, because first they will probably understand I'm a foreigner. So, they will be nicer to me or they will be more... what should I say? They will be just prejudice and make a, I don't know, rash conclusion on me, like that.

So, yeah. At first, I was afraid. What if he noticed that I'm not from here? But I don't think I'm afraid of that anymore, but I still keep thinking about it, I guess.

I asked if those feelings were influenced by a particular experience. She replied:

So, I guess in presentations in class, they frowned at me, because they just don't understand when I was talking. It could be either my language problem or I'm just really bad explaining abstract concepts, because I have to be really detailed to make them understand, even if they're really smart and experts. But I might be bad at that, not my language itself.

She was not sure whether she was experiencing prejudice in those instances. Later when I read my definitions of violence to her, Kate reflected on "forced assimilation." She relayed an experience when a man asked her if she had an English name. She found that to be offensive. Although she did not name it as such, her initial desire to be Americanized was potentially a strategy for her to assimilate, which will be discussed more in Chapter 8.

Violent Political Rhetoric and Policy

I argue political rhetoric and national policy could be considered violence themselves and lead to more overt forms of violence. When talking with participants about changing visa policies and the travel ban, Nila said she had not had to think about the visa policies personally, because she was on a student visa, but she had thought about it in relation to friends at other institutions. She instead brought up that the way people talk about some countries were in part influenced by U.S. policies, as well as the effects those comments can have on people from those countries:

One thing I was thinking about a couple of days back is that I feel like in passing, people make all these ... even the people that mean well, even the people that critique Trump or

these policies or whatever. In passing, they would say these things about Saudi Arabia or, "Wow, that's not a country that I want to go to." And they mean it based on, I don't know, it could even be based on war, like I don't know, "Don't want to go to Libya now." [...] it's not that common that people say these things about [home country]. It's more of the countries that are thought to be like ... where people have some kind of a moral angst against. It tends to be Saudi Arabia, because of gender, or some other countries in the Middle East because it's dangerous to be there, and violence, and authoritarianism and whatever else. But I sometimes wonder if you're just in the group, and you're from that country, even if some of these comments, they're logical, or they're said based on some context of whatever you're talking about, it could just break a little bit.

This was consistent with a story Nila told me during the first interview:

A different professor once told my friend, he was like, "I don't know if I would ever want to live in [Nila's home country], because it seems like a horrific place. I wouldn't want to worry about random men just touching my daughter or my wife." And I was like, "Who asked you to come to [home country]? Nobody asked."

She explained she came to expect such an attitude from people in United States, although she did not excuse it. These types of language seemed to affect participants, even though they shrugged them off in some cases.

Other participants talked about how U.S. policies made them feel unwanted or like they did not belong. Matt explained how these types of policies made her feel, following a discussion about policies in her home country:

I feel like we're wanted nowhere, not in your country, where like, you would start out

thinking that you can do something, make a difference. And not even this country, where you would think that, as long as you work hard, you can reach your dreams, and whatever. So, you're just like, "Wow. What do we do now? Where do we go?" It's like how I kind of lost faith in the [home country] government, also losing a little faith each day in the American government. But at the same time, dealing with my own feelings of being an international student here, and not being sure how I belong in this whole thing. And then also my confusion was like how I'm supposed to feel about these things, because I'm like, "Wait. I'm an international student, and I'm not even a citizen here. So, should I even be mad about these things?"

Emma, when talking about a friend whose visa was not getting approved, which caused her education to be delayed: "So, I feel like, this is like one of the other manifestations of 'you're nothing.' It's just that, 'We just don't want you.""

While Sara did not say she felt unwanted herself, she saw a connection between the U.S. policies and policies in her home country, naming them both discriminatory:

I think they're discriminatory, fundamentally discriminatory, and it's kind of the same thing that is happening in [home country] with the [specific policies] which is basically discriminating against groups of people on the basis of their religion, which is what these [U.S.] policies are also doing because those are Muslim majority countries. It's just fostering a spirit of hate and division in a world that doesn't need it.

About the travel ban, Jasmine said, "I think his [Trump's] decision and these policies are not grounded. ... And I think he made a terrible generalization like all Muslims are terrorists. That's really bad." I include participants' thoughts about policy and rhetoric in this section on mental

violence because while this type of language is violent in and of itself, this rhetoric leads to physical violence as well.

It is important to note, however, the two Muslim participants from countries not affected by the travel bans did not feel the discrimination as a result of the travel bans or generally. In fact, Lyly said she did not know anyone who was affected, although she had shared in the first interview, she had a friend who felt discriminated against by her manager at work. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, Lyly generally did not engage politically and did not talk with others about political issues. While Lyly said she wore hijab, Sofia said she did not. Sofia seemed to feel more accepted as a Muslim in the United States than she did in her home country, which is not a Muslim majority country. She contrasted her positive experiences with feeling heard and respected in the United States with her experiences back home as a Muslim:

Muslims, we have different sects, and also, we have our own cultures, like the African culture. So, you find sometimes your culture may outweigh your religion in a way that maybe not to veil. But then since may culture we really don't veil, African culture do not veil. So, I grew up in that setting whereby, yes, I'm Muslim, I pray, I believe in God, but then I may not dress like veiling myself and everything. And so, since I don't do that, the ones that veil themselves, they'll be like, "You, there is nothing you can say that we can listen to." So that made me feel like, I mean, you're not supposed to judge me according to the way I dress. You're supposed to judge me to the person in me. So that made me, kind of, feel ... Like when you try to speak out, "Shut up." That really made me feel so bad. Even when you greet the person, like, "I can't greet you because you're not dressed that way."

In contrast, when I asked whether she had that experience in the United States, Sofia said, "Actually that's why I like being here because they will listen to you. Whatsoever opinion you say, they will listen to you."

Chapter 5 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed participants' experiences and perceptions around physical safety and violence and mental safety and violence. Through these experiences and perceptions, participants provided nuanced discussions of the factors contributing to their physical safety, including being in certain spaces, like their home or department offices, as well as those contributing to feeling physically unsafe, such as being alone at night, around aggressive men at bus stops, and in unfamiliar neighborhoods. In addition, participants shared experiences of physical violence, such as sexual harassment, and times when they felt a threat of physical violence, such as being followed. Next, I discussed participants' experiences and perceptions of mental safety, including with whom they felt safe, and mental violence. Mental violence included a range of experiences, including discrimination on campus and off campus, experiences of mental abuse and silencing, often in academic settings, and perspectives about violent political rhetoric and policies. I also included participants' experiences and perceptions that contrasted with the above experiences. In the next chapter, I focus on participants' perceptions and experiences related to security and insecurity.

CHAPTER 6: SECURITY AND INSECURITY

In a continuation of answering the second research question, this chapter focuses on participants' experiences and perceptions of security and insecurity. I had originally debated whether to include security as part of my original research questions, naming violence, safety, and security. I decided to not include security because I thought it would have made the scope of the study too large. I settled on safety and violence in my research questions. As a result, going into the first interview, I did not have any questions explicitly about security.

Security came up, though, starting from the very first interview with Kate. I asked Kate, "What makes you feel safe?" She responded, "I'm not sure if this is the right answer, but definitely if I have some savings, I feel a little safe," and went on to discuss other things that made her feel safe. Although she did not name "security," the relationship between safety and financial security seemed to be worth exploring as a result of other participants' discussions about their jobs and financial security and insecurity during the first interview. I decided to include more questions about security in the second interview. Specifically, I asked participants some version of the questions, "How secure do you feel in your finances? Your housing? Your ability to get food?" What follows is my organization of participants' answers to those questions along with security-related answers to other questions throughout the first and second interviews.

In this chapter, I conceptualized security as a form of safety and insecurity as a form of violence. I based the connection between security and safety on answers like Kate's, above. Sara articulated the connection between insecurity and violence:

I think being an international student, I don't think I would ever say that I've felt any kind of racist undertones anywhere. But there are just some ways in which the system is structured to... not to our advantage, that if taken to extremes I think would definitely be

classified as violence. But I don't think I've faced anything like that yet.

In contrast to Chapter 5, where I had separated safety and violence within each of the larger categories, in Chapter 6, I have discussed security and insecurity together in two larger categories of financial and visa status. Within financial security and insecurity are sections on jobs and funding; food, housing, and basic needs; other factors; and perceptions of financial insecurity. Within the section on security and insecurity related to visa status is a discussion of the travel ban. I end with Emma's experiences with insecurity as violence, cutting across several of the aforementioned areas.

It is important to note two relevant points here. First, the cost of living in the city of Blue University is higher than that of the city of Green University. Second, as noted earlier, all participants at Green University were in the sciences or applied sciences, whereas all participants at Blue University were in the social sciences or humanities. Generally, as stipends in sciences and applied sciences are higher than stipends in social sciences and humanities, this may account for some of the differences in answers that follow. I did not, however, ask participants their exact stipend or salary amounts but rather about their feelings of financial security or insecurity.

Financial Security and Insecurity

When I asked, a few participants indicated they felt secure in their finances. Lyly, specifically, said she felt secure. It is important to note, one aspect that separated Lyly from the rest of the participants in the study was she was funded by an international scholarship program, not by a graduate assistantship through the university. I asked her if she felt the program provided enough funding to take care of her needs, and she said it did. Although Sofia was funded by the institution as a graduate assistant, she too felt secure in her finances, replying, "Right now I feel content. I don't get a big salary, but I feel content because I can be able to pay

my rent and pay all my bills, then make a small saving." Neither Lyly nor Sofia indicated they received any financial support from home.

Labrador also felt secure financially, saying during the first interview, "in terms of stability or security I think I am extremely privileged to always feel safe in the sense of financial stability and having a really great support system in my parents and in friends." During the second interview, when I asked specifically about financial security, she explained further:

So, I'm in a position of privilege because my parents can support me. And so, I feel very secure. That doesn't really have to do with how much the stipend is or how much we're getting paid, because they really don't pay people enough. So, I think for a lot of people, it's quite a big issue and quite a big burden to have. And there is such a big difference between if you went to the business school, if you went to different departments, and that is not great either.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Labrador had also referred to her position of privilege in regards to, in general, not experiencing discrimination. The inadequacy of graduate student stipends in Labrador's answer came up in other participants' answers in the next section.

Job and Funding Security and Insecurity

Ten of the 11 participants were funded as research assistants or teaching assistants. Many discussed the benefits and struggles of being funded through their work. Common themes included participants not being funded through the summers, lack of guaranteed year-to-year funding, not being allowed to work outside of the university or as much as domestic students, and differences between domestic students and international students in accessing funding opportunities.

Nila felt okay with her finances given her stipend and advisor supplementing her stipend.

She explained the department's stipend alone was inadequate when she started in the program, but the department's stipend was raised in the past year. The supplemental income from her advisor for her from the beginning of her program had made her life easier and allowed her to get a car and afford insurance, but "all of that could have been really tight with [Blue University]'s basic stipend."

Other participants felt less secure given their stipend, particularly because of the lack of stipend during the summer. Jasmine did have additional financial support coming in from her home country in the form of apartments she and her family rented, in addition to savings. She also knew they could sell those apartments if needed. She felt less than secure, however, because of the graduate student stipends:

Our TA stipends haven't been raised for 10 years, and the rent is expensive. We are kind of struggling here, and as international students and their dependents, we cannot work legally, and I don't have stipends in the summer. That's three months without any income, so yeah, a bit struggling. For the long run, I think we are pretty secure, as long as I can get a job here, finish this program.

When I asked, she said she could not imagine being able to live on her graduate student income alone, especially as her and her husband, who could not work, were raising a baby.

Matt discussed this further, when I asked her how secure she felt in getting basic needs, including food:

Sort of secure, but not very secure. I say that more because during the semesters, it's fine, because we get our stipend from month to month. But it's actually pretty messed up in the summer, because they don't guarantee anything. And I remember my first summer here was so bad. Not when I joined, but the year after. Because we get this lump sum to

TA in the summer, which is a lot less than what we would get if we were paid month to month. So, each month, I would be paying rent. There's so much money going out of my account, but there's like no money coming in. And I felt that ... I really felt that, and I was just like, "How do I do this? And how do I do this year after year, where I just don't know what's going to happen to me over the summer?" Much of that is because of shitty advisors who don't care if their students are funded or not. They just put them on departmental funding and then don't give a shit.

Matt said her advisor had suggested his students get internships over the summer, but as she explained, internships were not guaranteed.

Matt also discussed the lack of guaranteed and stable funding semester to semester, due to a changing stipend structure in her department. The type of funding also mattered to Matt, because with teaching assistantships, the funding came from the department, but, she said, "that also means that 20 hours of your week, you are doing work that is just not related to research."

As a fourth-year student at the time of the interviews, Kate worried about when and how she would complete her degree with funding given her struggle in the past year with coming up with a topic for her dissertation:

I was thinking, "What if I fail? What if I do worse than [a peer who struggled]? What if I can't come up with a decent paper until end of my fourth year and I have to pay one more year?" And one more year might be okay. What if I have to take two more years, which is really rare in my department at least. And the department was also threatening people that we are running out of funds, so you need to graduate in five years, because there's no guarantee of funding in your sixth year. You have to get out and find your funding on your own, which is really stressful. And I was freaking out last semester.

Kate and other participants as described above felt stressed with their funding situations, although those situations differed.

In addition to funding, or lack thereof, participants also discussed the limitations of working as an international graduate student. While Sara said she had not experienced violence as an international student, quoted earlier in this chapter, she explained the structural inequities she had experienced, as can be seen in the following exchange in the first interview:

Sapna:

You mentioned earlier that as an international student in the U.S., there are some structural things that work against you. What would you say some of those structural things are?

Sara:

I think we have a limitation on our visa that we can only work for a fixed amount of hours, which I feel that given a choice, maybe a lot of people would have wanted to work more. We did internships maybe just to be a little bit more financially stable and that's I think the first thing that comes to mind.

Sapna:

Would you have wanted to work more?

Sara:

Maybe once my coursework is over. I don't know if I would have been able to manage but yeah, I would. It was something that I would have considered.

Sapna

What would have been your motivation to work more if you were given that opportunity to do so?

Sara:

Definitely to be more financially stable.

Sapna:

How secure do you feel in your finances now?

Sara:

Moderately secure because my parents don't provide for any of my expenses here because they just wouldn't be able to. It's very expensive so I rely completely on what the university gives me. So, I have to be very careful and managing finances can get very stressful.

I followed up with her answer in the second interview, asking if she still felt the opportunity to get another job would make her feel more secure. She made a comparison to her domestic counterparts:

I still think that maybe if the restrictions weren't ... A visa didn't have the working hour

restriction, it might have been better. We were just having a conversation with my colleagues today. Two are from America. So, they also have a restriction. I think as students they can't work more for than 30 hours, but that's still 10 hours more than us.

Emma, too, made a comparison to domestic graduate students, and she was not sure if the reasons she was not getting funding was because she was an international student:

I think here they're just these things that you're never sure, and that's the annoying part, that you never know if it's discrimination or if it's institutionalized discrimination. Right now, there are so many fundings that you can't even apply because you're not American. And really limits what you can get. For instance, last year when I was talking to my advisor and he told me that, "Your funding is not guaranteed," I wasn't sure that it's not guaranteed because I'm not... For instance, right now my other cohort, they have funding that are governmental funding, and I wasn't sure that... He said it in a way that, "This is something that has been decided on during the admission and you don't have guaranteed funding." The way he framed it, it was as if I wasn't qualified enough to have guaranteed funding. But I wasn't sure if it's because I wasn't qualified for or it's because I was just not American and they don't have so many things for Americans. And that's why they say, "Oh, it's not guaranteed. If we don't have enough funding, you're going to be the first person who are not going to get it."

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the extensive thought process about whether an experience constitutes discrimination, like Emma's above, will be discussed further in Chapter 8. Later in the first interview, Emma said, "There're always these institutional things that I count discrimination, but it's never counted as discrimination legally, 'you can't do just too many things just because you're [from Emma's home country]. You can't even go out of the country,'

basically." Emma's home country was listed in the first travel ban, the effects of which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Food, Housing, and Basic Needs

Most participants felt secure in their ability to get food and basic needs. Nila explained her frugality when it came to food: "I feel fine. With food, I don't eat out that much, I mostly cook. Yeah. But yeah, I can afford food and most basic things." As mentioned above, cost of living, including rent, was higher in the city of Blue University than in the city of Green University. Predictably, then, participants at Green University did not mention their housing costs or situations unless I prompted them. Even then, they generally felt secure in their ability to afford housing.

Regarding housing security, participants had multiple meanings, including their feelings of safety within their apartments, ability to pay, and security of their property within their apartments. I generally asked for their ability to pay and how safe they felt. Jasmine, for example, felt secure in both ways:

I'm pretty secure. I think I'm going to be able to pay the rent. And it's pretty safe in my complex. There are lots of children there. Every time I see a lot of children in some place, I automatically think, oh, it's a safe place because parents will let their children play there and it's really beautiful. Also, my colleague once told me that if you saw women running alone in some park, it's always indicator that this place is safe.

Jasmine and Kate, both at Blue University, lived in student housing after having lived in private housing for the first few years of their respective graduate programs. They both told me there was a long, two-year wait list for university housing. In their previous apartments, they had concerns which were eased after moving into student housing. Jasmine told me about an

experience with police coming to her door due to an incident at another apartment, as described in Chapter 5. She felt safer in her university-owned housing than she did in her previous private apartment. Kate did not like having to interact with the private housing staff, as an international student, and much preferred having only to interact with university staff. Other Blue University participants lived in private housing and expressed some concerns, including with roommates and neighbors.

In her university housing, I asked Kate how secure she felt in her ability to afford rent. She said, "I pay a little bit less than half of my stipend to rent. It's affordable I guess." As mentioned above, though, while she could afford her expenses in the US, she did not have extra left to pay for her return tickets home. Nila, too, said she was able to afford rent, reiterating her frugality: "Yeah. I mean, I have to live a relatively frugal life, but yeah."

While participants were technically able to afford their housing, it did not mean the same level of comfort and safety for all. Emma, for example, shared while she was in an affordable graduate student co-op when we talked, during the previous year, she had a difficult housing situation. She lived with three other roommates and was trying to get into the co-op, but she also received pressure from the landlord to renew her lease. In that apartment, though, she found roaches in her bed, but she "also didn't have money to move to a better place." She said her new housing situation in the co-op was much better.

Matt, during her second interview, relayed an experience with her neighbors: "I think something that affected my sense of safety was that there is store right next to where I stay." She went on to explain the store has loudspeakers outside and plays music late into the night. She had made repeated noise complaints, but the music would inevitably resume days later. Matt noted how her identity affected the situation:

There's a noise helpline that I've tried, and even when I would make a complaint on the noise helpline, I would always want to be anonymous, because I didn't want the officer calling me back and reporting it to me. For two reasons: One, that I didn't want my identity compromised. And two, that I didn't feel very comfortable being an [person from her home country] female student here, talking to an American male officer.

She eventually went to the store to talk with the store manager. While the store manager seemed to understand, Matt was still afraid even walking by and of being harassed as of our second interview. When I asked her if this made her consider moving, she nodded and explained:

For two reasons: One, that I don't feel as safe anymore. Also, I've noticed that my building has had a change of management. And I see people changing their apartments a lot, so, basically, I see new people all the time. Because of that, I don't feel very safe. Because I'm just like, "These are new people every month or so." I notice that when they take their pets out to walk and stuff, they're just not familiar. It's things like that. It's just how the area's become, it's the kind of people who are either working here or staying here ... and the noise. And I'm just like, better to move out than live here and deal with this stuff.

In a follow up email in July, I asked Matt how the coronavirus was affecting her. The noise problem with the business next door resumed, and since police were not making visits for noise complaints due to safety in the pandemic, the noise continued. She explained the problems in her reply:

But because I was forced to stay home and the noise wouldn't stop, I was really angry and hating my situation here (an intl [sic] grad student with no rights, living in a relatively poor area and unable to change this until my program is over). [...] I have

decided to move out of this place now and I have been both angry and sad that a store next door drove me away from my home.

For Matt, coronavirus and the subsequent complications exacerbated her already difficult housing situation.

Other Factors Contributing to Financial Insecurity

Several participants felt financially insecure for reasons in addition to their jobs and funding. Emma told me about an experience she named as feeling unsafe that was also related to financial insecurity. Specifically, when I asked her about a time she felt unsafe, she told me just an hour before our interview, she had gone to the store and her credit card was denied. She recalled an experience while she was at her previous institution, when she went to a store and her card was denied. She explained how she felt in both instances:

I guess I felt just like, "Okay, I didn't have money now." So, I think that was the feeling that I had right now, was related to that previous experience, that they just randomly do what they like. They're just some institution that can just randomly scare you.

In the previous incident, she found out her bank had closed her accounts, because they had needed identification to prove she was legally in the country. Even though her visa was not expired, the bank would not accept it. The denial of her card in the more recent incident made her feel unsafe and reminded her of her legal status.

Ceres and Kate felt financially insecure because of the possibility of emergencies. Specifically, Ceres said she did not feel really secure, because although she had some savings, she worried about medical problems. She had an experience, even with insurance, of an MRI costing \$800, whereas in her home country, it would have cost the equivalent of \$2 to \$3. As a result, she worried if anything unexpected happened, she would not be able to cover it. Similarly,

Kate explained she could not cover all of her expenses now and worried about an emergency:

Well, honestly, I don't really make that much money, so I am stressful. I can't really cover all of my expenses on my own. I can cover my living expenses here, my grocery, my auto insurance, some stuff that I have to buy but I can't really cover my travel back and forth to home, so my parents pay for that. And whenever there's some emergency, fortunately that never happened. I don't think I can stay on my foot and deal with that if it's a medical emergency or whatever emergency I have. [...] what if I have a really dreadful accident here and I have to pay thousands of dollars at the hospital and I have no money, I can't do anything about it. I just think of, is there any way that I can get a charity or something?

Although she had enough to cover her living expenses, she could not, for example, afford tickets back home, and worried about medical emergencies.

During the second interview in January 2020, Ms. W worried about broader financial disaster, as can be seen in the following exchange:

Sapna:

Okay. And so how secure do you feel in your finances?

Ms. W:

Not that much, I'm kind of afraid of financial disorder because this society like 1999, 20... 2009, and now it should be another one.

Sapna:

It should be another?

Ms. W:

How to say, like decrease of the financial of the whole society-

Sapna:

Oh okay.

Ms. W:

... and people will get job lost, something like that. Everything would become expensive.

Sapna:

Okay.

Ms. W:

Yeah. Okay. Economic crisis.

Sapna:

Okay. Okay. So, do you feel like you can afford the things that you need? Ms. W:

I don't know. I think so. I think I should be okay if most Americans are okay. If the government only give the citizens food when everyone are starving, but instead of giving everyone maybe all us foreigners will starve. If it doesn't become bad to that level, I think we will be fine.

She was, as we now know, correct in assuming another economic crisis would be coming. In February and March 2020, markets in the United States took steep dives along with massive job loss. In a follow up email in May, when I had asked about coronavirus and sense of safety, however, Ms. W did not mention the economic downturn. I have included her response in the section on the coronavirus in Chapter 7.

When I asked Matt about how secure she felt in her finances, she did not feel very secure and described some factors contributing to that feeling, as is seen in the following response:

Not very. It's constantly on my mind. I constantly worry about my finances. I am always trying to save and not spend too much money, and I do spend money. It's just, it's as bad as a heartbreak. Because I'm just like, "I've spent \$35.00 on something like this. Why did I have to spend this much money on it?" Yeah. Also, not having too much flexibility in what I can do and cannot do, and stuff. And seeing that other students who are citizens have a lot more flexibility because they've been here longer. They can take odd jobs to supplement their income, something that I cannot do. They probably have families here who can support them a little bit. But it's also like I've noticed that it's stuff that gets handed down. [...] I can't have the kind of apartment that I'd really like to have. I can't really get a pet. I would love to get a pet, but it's way too expensive for me to do that. I feel like in a PhD that is one thing that we should be able to afford, because it just helps with how depressed we are sometimes. But if I were to leave my pet alone, I couldn't

afford boarding them someplace. Or having a pet sitter come, or dropping them at a pet sitter's, or something.

For Matt, worry about finances and relative lack of quality of life contributed to her sense of financial insecurity. Her and other participants' stories highlighted the financial precarity associated with being an international graduate student.

Perceptions of Financial Insecurity

During the second interview, I asked participants why they thought there was a decrease in numbers of applications and enrollment among international graduate students. While most participants' answers did not have to do with safety or violence, some participants' answers reflected a growing insecurity among international graduate students in the United States. Sofia mentioned the stipend in comparison to the cost of living in the United States, with a small stipend not covering even a month of living. Sofia, however, did not cite this as a personal issue. Emma talked about international students having fewer funding sources available to them, drawing on her own experience. She said, however, U.S. institutions often did have more funding opportunities than other countries, which could have lead international students to make a choice:

So many people don't have a choice, but if you have a choice, over where you can live as an international student, then maybe people try to prioritize their life basically, rather than the quality of academic studies. Because you first want to be a human.

Emma's sentiment is further reflected in her experiences of insecurity, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Kate, Nila, Matt, and Labrador reflected on the lack of job security post-graduation as a reason for decreased applications and enrollment. Labrador articulated prospective international students' challenges:

I think for a lot of people, coming to America is kind of about opportunities being normally education. The opportunity to work here and live here after. And if they think that those opportunities are less, I think it's very likely that they're not willing to make the investment to come here.

Nila had a similar explanation, saying to have to pay back a U.S. education on a salary from her home country would be a daunting prospect.

Visa Status Security and Insecurity

Most participants felt secure in their visa status, feeling they could renew when they needed to. Jasmine, however, worried about her visa after Trump came into office and began changing visa policies:

I haven't traveled back to [home country]. I think last time was '17. I'm worried that... so, my visa will expire this May. So, I will not travel back to [home country] even if there is no coronavirus because I am worried that I will not be able to get a new visa. It's likely than not. That's why. Also, my husband's visa.

Jasmine worried about the possibility her and her husband's visas would not be renewed, which effectively meant she also could not leave the United States.

When I asked participants their thoughts about why international graduate student applications and enrollments had decreased, several participants named visa difficulties, citing anecdotes of people they knew getting their visa applications rejected even after receiving admission or those who could not return to the United States after leaving.

Insecurity as a Result of the Travel Ban

I specifically asked participants about their perspectives about policies implemented by the Trump administration starting in January 2017, including the first travel ban for people from several Muslim-majority countries and changing migration and refugee policies. Most participants were not directly affected by the travel ban and instead commented on the rhetoric of the travel ban, as was shared in Chapter 5. Ceres and Emma, however, were affected by the initial travel ban announced in January 2017. Both entered the United States and started their PhD programs before the travel ban started in 2017 and had not returned to their home countries since. Ceres explained her family could visit when she first started her program, but that it was not possible anymore. She also explained she could not go back to her home country. Ceres did not notice a difference in how people talked about her home country, however, indicating that most people she came into contact with were really nice.

Emma, too, could not leave the United States or return to her home country because she would have had to apply for a visa again, which was not guaranteed. She thought of historical instances of mass registration and deportations. She felt like the policies were arbitrary and unpredictable:

Yeah, so these policies, it sometimes makes people feel like it's not really the end, of what would happen, it's just... because it's basically shows that, there is no rule, or limitations, of what they can do. Even there are courts, and then the courts says, "You cannot deport that person." Then they do it. So, it's a policy, they're kind of legalizing discrimination, but at the same time, they're legalizing no-laws-state. In the sense that, arbitrary... it's just the happening of arbitrary things, and decisions. And arbitrary decision making, it's kind of becoming normalized, with these kind of policies, and the

kind of approach that we can see in the airports, or in the embassies. And other places that arbitrariness is just the norm, yeah.

In addition, both Emma and Ceres cited the travel ban and difficulties associated with it as the most salient reason why there was a decrease in applications and enrollments among international graduate students. Ceres said the travel ban had made the United States not the best choice for people from her country. She also cited difficulties of international students from her country re-entering the United States, including those getting deported from the airport, even with a valid visa. Ceres said she would not have come to the United States had the travel ban already been in place when she was to start her program.

For both Ceres and Emma, the travel ban had also directly affected their research and possibilities for their research, but for different reasons. Ceres could not go to national laboratories because of her country of origin, despite the fact that her research was not related to national security. Emma's original research plans for her dissertation included returning to her home country to do research. As a result, she said she would have to change her research topic or how she collected information, which she noted would be a stressful endeavor.

Due to the travel ban and the subsequent need to change her research, Emma said she felt stuck:

There are different things that have resulted, to my current feeling, that I'm stuck, in a situation. I'm kind of isolated, from my environment. Even since the time when I came here in 2015, whenever I was traveling back to [home country], it was such a refreshing time, in terms of, I could talk to people, I could talk to friends, I could see family, and now all of this is just imagination. And I could go to the places, that I'm familiar with, and also changing the place of work, also increases productivity, and especially when you

know, when you have easier access to material, it kind of makes things faster. It's good, really in many instances, but you're kind of stuck. I feel like I'm stuck, not only... I think there are different things involved, for me. There are different things that have resulted, to my current feeling, that I'm stuck, in a situation. But yes, part of it is that, I'm also limited in where I can go, and what I can think of, all of this. I mean, sometimes I was thinking that, hey I'm going to just leave school, for at least a year, or try to get a break from school, something like that. And then I realized that, no it's not going to be a break, in this current situation. If you are going to be worried about what will happen next. I think it's more a feeling of being stuck.

Emma's feelings of being stuck, as well as precarity associated with work and her visa, will be discussed more in the next section.

Insecurity as Violence: Emma's Experiences and Perceptions

Of all participants, Emma discussed her experiences of insecurity as an international graduate student the most. She used strong language, which I will quote below, some of which I do not necessarily endorse. During the semesters of our interviews, Emma was employed as a TA for a class that required a lot of work, especially grading. The position took her more than the allotted 20 hours per week. She characterized the work as follows:

But in general, it's just the slavery of work. It doesn't matter where you are. It's much worse right now than last year. The way they see TA-ing is not really about part of your education. Even though they say, "We are training TAs. We are training you for your future professional life." In reality, it's just how we can get you funded somewhere, somehow. Or how we can really, how we can get rid of you, in terms of the time availabilities. What benefits you is really not even the last thing to consider.

In a previous semester, she was a TA for a class that was within her expertise and did not require the same level of work. She explained the attitude that her advisor and others had conveyed to her in response to her concerns about levels of work: "he said, 'that's academia.' Academia is a very individual place, and you have to deal with real problems, individuals, stuff like that." Emma further explained her assignment to her current TA position was through a letter, rescinding a previous verbal offer, without any conversation with the department, and how that made her feel: "So that's how they treat us, as like trash. Taking trash from one place to another." Emma conveyed she felt disposable as a graduate student TA.

Emma also received a formal letter just a few days before our first interview ranking her poorly in professionalism and noting she was too stressed. She later found out other students and staff had reported concern about her level of stress. Because of the letter, she felt criminalized: "You might be discussing it, but I don't expect it to come in a formal letter. And I felt a criminalization of stress that hey, graduate student, you shouldn't be stressed. That's also one of your crimes." After learning more about the letter, she also explained she felt she was not fitting into American norms:

I mean the discussion even came up with my advisor, there is only one type of lifestyle that is acceptable, you know like this kind of American ... maybe American lifestyle, but I'm not even sure, that you kind of work until 6:00 p.m. and then go to a bar or something, and that's how you are counted normal. And anything beyond that, hey there is a red sign or something, and that's where the rhetoric of mental health also helps, you know, to kind of have to use a kind of rhetoric to intervene in personal affairs.

She also felt unsafe around her peers because she was not sure who told staff about her stress and the way she works, noting that someone commented on her working until late at night in the department building. This experience helped explain her at times not feeling safe in her department building particularly when others were around as described in Chapter 5.

The letter, she said, also made her feel insecure in her funding, as her funding through a graduate assistantship was decided on a yearly basis:

I felt very unsafe that maybe they are going to take my job, and with that it means that I can't continue my PhD basically. Because without that you even have to pay tuition, and I don't have any money basically, beyond what they're paying me.

Emma was not ready to call her experiences within the department and as a graduate student violence, however:

Even departmental stuff, there are of course unequal power things. It's kind of more subtle. It needs really to be repeated over time. [...] I don't feel like they're called violence. I don't even know what they are called but I see consequences of unequal power in the department, or the fact that even sometimes you feel like they are just doing things because they just don't like you and that they don't like you might or might not be related to because you are just not like them.

During the second interview, Emma had time to think further about her experiences during the previous semester. As discussed in Chapter 4, when I asked if she had thought about safety or violence since our last interview, she explained she thought about "soft versions of violence," which she clarified she meant as discrimination and institutionalized power differentials she experienced in her department. She commented she felt as graduate students, "we are basically nothing." She later said she could not say anything unfair was going on, because she had no proof, and at times she even felt paranoid.

Emma identified a few impacts of all of these experiences on herself. First, she said as an international student, she felt bound to her work and the university:

But there were different instances that I felt like ... being international is having your own, I don't know cultural and political and everything. Especially because they know that you don't have a way out. You can't just say, "hey, goodbye." We have a classmate who just, in their second semester, they just left school and they can easily just go and work somewhere else. Just find some other ... but international students are usually bound to the school, they cannot be working outside. So, they can easily torture them, because they know that they have to accept whatever kind of thing.

This boundedness also allowed for negative treatment of international students by the university. Second, she disengaged from her work as a coping mechanism:

I'm just kind of trying to disengage and separate myself from school and studies and just find some other thing, and stick to that. [...] I think the general effect is that it's moving me towards 'I don't care' to protect myself from what's happening around.

Other participants also shared the ways in which they disengaged due to experiences and perceptions of violence, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6 Summary

In this chapter, I presented participants' experiences and perceptions of security, which I relate to safety, and insecurity, which I relate to violence, in two main areas of financial and visa status. While many participants generally felt secure, both financially and in terms of their visa status, several participants shared ways in which they felt insecure, particularly financially. Financial insecurity was created by a variety of factors, including job and funding insecurity. A few participants also shared the precarity of their visa status, especially Emma and Ceres, who

were affected directly by the travel ban. I ended this chapter with Emma's visceral discussion about her insecurity as an international graduate student. In the next chapter, I discuss additional specific factors contributing to participants' perceptions of safety and violence, including gun violence, sexual harassment, and the coronavirus.

CHAPTER 7: PERCEPTIONS OF EVENTS AND POLICIES

The subquestion of the second research question was as follows: "How do events and policies influence women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety?" I entered this research with an assumption that current events and policies would have or had an influence on women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety. This assumption was based, in part, on continuously changing political contexts and news articles indicating initial consequences, as discussed in Chapter 1, as well as the ways in which events and policies affected my own sense of safety. During the second interview, then, I asked participants about various federal policies and national events as well as what I perceived to be outcomes of those policies.

The U.S. policies and events and their outcomes I asked about in the second set of interviews were as follows: the travel ban policies for several Muslim majority countries starting in January 2017, hate crimes and bias-related incidents, decreased applications and enrollments among international graduate students, sexual harassment from faculty members towards graduate students, and guns and mass shootings. After the second set of interviews in late spring 2020, in email follow ups, I asked participants about the coronavirus pandemic, from which I received a few responses. Although I did not ask participants explicitly how these events and policies affected their sense of safety or experiences of violence, I have made connections to safety and violence based on participants' answers.

I decided to ask about guns and mass shootings because this topic came up organically in the first set of interviews among several participants as related to safety. The other topics, however, were not brought up by participants, but I had assumed they may be linked to participants' assessments of safety. The travel ban and sexual harassment did have some

connections to senses of safety, though not among all participants. Specifically, the travel ban affected the sense of security of two participants who were from countries directly affected by the first travel ban announced in January 2017, which was discussed in the visa status section of Chapter 6. Sexual harassment was not necessarily something most participants thought about so had a less direct influence on participants' sense of safety. A discussion is included below. I have integrated answers to the question about hate crimes into Chapter 5 as their answers fit well with perceptions of safety and violence. In addition, I was surprised to find participants did not make a strong connection between safety and decreased applications and enrollment among international graduate students. Those that did make the connection thought about gun violence, discrimination, and insecurity, so those answers are included in their respective sections. The coronavirus did have some connections to safety, thus that is the last section of this chapter. The sections included in this chapter match with topics most relevant to participants' assessments of safety, violence, and security, namely gun violence and campus carry, sexual harassment from faculty members, and the coronavirus.

Gun Violence and Campus Carry

I had not included any questions about guns, mass shootings, or campus carry in my original interview protocols. After several participants brought up guns and mass shootings in the first interviews, however, I decided to add a question about guns and mass shootings to the second interview protocol. For some participants, the presence of guns and mass shootings in the United States and campus carry in the state of Green University and Blue University factored into their assessments of safety and strategies. Kate, Ceres, Labrador, Jasmine, and Sara mentioned guns or shootings unprompted during their first interview. I interviewed Kate first, and her mention of guns immediately forced me to think about the topic's absence from my

questions and thinking. As a result of Kate's interview, I did ask some participants about the presence of guns, mass shootings, or campus carry, including Nila, whose interview was the same day as and just a few hours after Kate's, and Ms. W. I did not ask Sofia, Matt, Emma, or Lyly during the first interview about guns or mass shootings, and they did not bring it up.

In the following paragraphs, I share how participants thought about guns, campus carry, and mass shootings in terms of their surprise, comparisons to their home countries, assessments of safety, changing behaviors and teaching, not changing behaviors, perspectives on campus carry, and decision making of being in the United States. I close this section with perspectives I found surprising and a summary. It is important to note participants' thoughts and my questions presented in this section have to do with guns as related to campus carry and mass shootings rather than police shootings, which I did not ask participants about.

Surprise at Presence of Guns, Campus Carry, or Mass Shootings

One of the more common perspectives participants expressed during interviews was the surprise at the prevalence of guns in the United States. Most participants had not mentioned seeing a civilian carrying a gun in the United States, but Ceres and Emma both did. Both had experiences between the first and second interviews they shared with me during the second interview. Emma told me she went to a protest in the city of Blue University two days prior. The last speaker was from another city and was talking about injustices against working classes. She continued:

And all the time he was talking, he had a gun and there was, it was not concealed, you know? And you could see it. But there was kind of okay, is it a real gun? Is there something in it? And in the end, it was true there was a gun and everything, and then at some point he was getting very emotional, and it was kind of, I'm worried for him, what

if he just totally loses control or something like that? Another story or something. But in general, I'm not really used to seeing guns around, especially not ... you see police having guns, but I'm not really used to seeing... I mean, I don't think of people having concealed guns, but even when I see one that is not concealed, it kind of grabs my attention, that he talks all the time about violence, and then he had the gun on him.

Ceres told me she saw someone, who was alone, carrying a gun and a big knife at a restaurant. She noted that the weapons were being displayed and not concealed. She did not understand why someone would need a gun, when everything was fine. Especially given mass shootings, she did not understand why anyone could have a gun. During her first interview, she had mentioned she thought it strange there were mass shootings in schools.

While most participants had not shared experiences of seeing someone with a gun in the United States, they were still surprised at their prevalence, including the possibility of people carrying guns on campus. Lyly said, "My thought is, how come they're allowed to carry guns to school? I don't know what is on their mind." Nila also did not understand the logic:

And I think I still don't get the campus carry logic, the gun... Maybe if I grew up here, or if I had a family or somebody who got that logic, you'd have that around you growing up. Even if you don't agree with it, maybe somewhere it makes sense to me. It's like a story from a book or something. It just makes no sense to me that idea of why people cling to this gun stuff.

Nila explained, although she does not agree with the ruling political party in her country, she understood their perspectives having grown up there. She continued, "But the gun thing, I don't even get it. It's just some weird thing to me."

Matt spoke more specifically about the training she received as a TA when I asked her about campus carry:

It just seems ridiculous to me, to be honest. I think that was one of the first things that struck me when I came to [Blue University]. Because I was just like, "What is this talk about guns on campus?" So, as soon as I came in, I was on a TA-ship, so I had to undergo trainings to be a TA. And during one of these trainings, there was a big chunk of time given to talking about carrying guns on campus. And what a TA's duty is like, if you find out that someone's carrying a gun, if someone tells you that someone's carrying a gun ... what do you do in these situations. And I'm just like, "This is ridiculous. This is a university. Why is there so much talk about carrying guns?" So, I think it was just, it was bad. It just seems so odd that it's something that people feel like they need to consider. They need to talk and debate over. When for me, like where I come from, it's just like, you do not carry guns whatsoever.

Comparison to Home Country

In addition to the comparison Matt made between her home country and the United States in contributing to her surprise at the presence of guns, Ceres and Jasmine also made comparisons to their home countries and indicated that difference as one reason they felt safer in their home country. When I asked Ceres if there were any ways in which she feels less safe in the United States than in her home country, she said she did not like guns, and if there was one thing that made her feel safer in her home country than in the United States, it was that they were mass shootings in the United States, which did not happen in her home country. She had not known about the prevalence of mass shootings in the United States before coming here.

Jasmine had not visited the United States before coming to study here. I asked her what she expected before she came. She almost immediately mentioned guns:

What I have seen on TV, watching TV shows. I know they can have guns. There are mass shootings and like some criminal activities, so it's not like as safe as in [home country], because we don't allow people to carry guns around.

Jasmine also mentioned the presence of racism and sexism in the United States, but overall, she expected the United States to "be a better place to live" than her home country.

Assessments of Safety

While I did not explicitly ask during the first interview of several participants how they thought safety and the presence of guns were related, Jasmine, Kate, and Labrador discussed the connection. As mentioned in her definition of safety in Chapter 4, Jasmine said that safety meant lowering risk and "people carrying guns around are definitely not lowering the risk." Kate brought up "random violence" a few times during her first interview. When I asked how random violence affected her, she shared an experience of a stabbing that took place on campus a few years earlier in a location close to where she was at the time, which she noted was "scary." She continued:

At the same time, I was thinking, oh gosh, it was stabbing. That is better than shooting. Because if it was a shooting, maybe 20, 30 people might have died. So, yeah. What makes me really worried about here in the U.S. is that, because everybody, not everybody but practically all U.S. citizens, can have firearms. And that is such a unique thing in the U.S. And I've never actually seen, or touched, or associated with any firearms. So, I don't really know how it would feel like if I see a gun in person but, yeah, that's really scary, I guess.

Kate felt worried that everyone can have firearms in the United States. Labrador felt infuriated in addition to feeling unsafe: "I think what I'm most infuriated about... infuriated about in America is, the incidents of gun violence in the news, every day it seems sometimes. That infuriates me, that makes me feel unsafe." Labrador went on to say she grew up with violence and the threat of bombs. As a child, she learned drills, like going under a desk. She continued:

And it infuriates me in a country that claims it is developed, that they're having kids in primary and secondary school learning to do the things that I needed to do. [...] Here they're making children do that because they've been bought off by people making guns. So, it is beyond frustrating that nothing is being done about something so simple. I could get guns before I could get alcohol here.

In contrast to Jasmine, Kate, and Labrador, guns and mass shootings did not factor into Sara's assessment of safety: "I mean, I don't think it makes me feel any more or less safe. It's just in this country in general, it's just something that could happen at any time, and you can't really do anything about it."

Changing Behaviors in Response to Perceptions

Some participants shared how they had changed their behaviors in response to the presence of guns or mass shootings. Labrador, for example, said she would "be much, much less likely to get into a political discussion or a conversation here with someone than I was in" her previous U.S. city. When I asked her why, she explained as is seen in the following exchange:

Labrador:

Because the person you're talking to is more likely to have a gun. And also, it is significantly more likely that the person you talk to here in [state of Blue University] doesn't agree with what you have to say. At least for me coming, I'm 100% a liberal, I mean socialist, but definitely for the rights of women and minorities and that... [this state] has some of the worst laws in terms of taking care of its women. I don't know if I'd even want to find out about someone's political affiliation.

Sapna:

So do you feel like you ever censor yourself as a result of the presence of... or the chance that someone could have a gun?

Labrador:

No. I don't think I censor myself, but I just wouldn't...

Sapna:

You wouldn't engage in the first place?

Labrador:

Yeah. So, in [previous U.S. city] my friends were always late, so I would be the first one at a bar, and then I'm just talking to the person who's sitting next to me in the bar. I think I'd just probably be on my phone here in [city of Blue University]. Yeah.

Because of the increased likelihood someone could be carrying a gun in the state and city of Blue University, Labrador was less likely to talk to people in places like bars, particularly about politics. Though she did not name it as self-censoring, she had changed her behavior, not unlike silencing discussed in Chapter 5, which will be discussed further as a strategy in Chapter 8.

Ceres and Jasmine explained their behavioral changes of avoidance and caution. Ceres said she avoided big events after learning of mass shootings in the United States. When I asked Jasmine about how her experience in the United States has met or not met her expectations, she explained several of her overall strategies, naming specifically those to avoid mass shootings:

I don't go to like big events all the time, never. To avoid things like mass shooting or a bomb or whatever. I don't go to supermarket during weekends, because I expect there are a lot of people and a lot of mass shootings seem to happen on Sunday. Yeah. Never went to a church, something like that.

Of all participants, Jasmine seemed to think about mass shootings the most and made conscious effort to avoid situations where mass shootings tend to happen.

Changing Teaching in Response to Perceptions

In addition to her overall behavior changes, Jasmine changed the ways in which she taught as a TA, as can be seen in the following exchange during her first interview.

Sapna:

Have you ever felt unsafe in your classroom, in any of your classes? Jasmine:

I think some classes for which I TA, so one, there's certain students, sometimes they don't get a very good grade, so they may be upset for that. Sometimes I don't feel safe. Like I'm afraid of retribution or something. Especially they can carry guns on campus at [Blue University].

Sapna:

Do you feel like the way that you interacted with students has changed since the campus carry came into effect?

Jasmine:

Yeah, I think so. I'm like super cautious, not upsetting students and explain everything. Sapna:

When you say you're super cautious and you explain everything, what do you feel like you're explaining more than you would have before?

Jasmine:

Oh okay. Why I give students the grades they have. It's like, it's not about you teach something to the students, instead it's just lots of explanations as to why they get this or that grade. It's like, it feels like I spend lots of time on that. I don't think it's productive, but that's a way to avoid something bad happening.

When I asked her if she ever thought about the presence of guns in the classroom as a TA during the second interview, she said, "yes, of course," and reiterated what she had told me in the first interview about what she called her "generous" grading policy: "I became a more generous grader just to avoid any bad things to happen. Sometimes you're supposed to feel very safe on campus. It makes you think whether it's really safe here on campus." During the semester of the second interview, however, she was teaching but not a grader. Given the content of the course, she explained her strategy:

I'm going to be super cautious because the course is [content] and [content] are very controversial. So, I'm going to be very cautious to not express my personal opinions, just stick to the arguments, the readings, and try to not upset any students who hold very strong beliefs about some issues.

She shared an experience where she was cautious with a student who had strong beliefs in a previous semester. Although she was not really worried the student would become physically

violent, she was still cautious to avoid confrontation. In contrast to Jasmine, however, Ceres did not think about the possibility of students having guns when she was a TA.

Not Changing Behaviors

Some participants talked about not thinking about guns and mass shootings, and in some cases, if they did think about it, it did not change their behaviors. Lyly did not think about gun violence citing her relative safety in her environment:

So actually, it is scary, but okay, let me be a bit selfish, it's not happening here. So, I try my best to be as safe as possible and focus on my study because I know this building, this environment, my department and my lab people, and around me, we are so far only students, so I think I'm safe for now.

Similarly, Kate noted she does not think about guns "because I wasn't raised in that environment, and as I said, I think [city of Blue University] is fairly safe."

Nila chose not to think about guns in general and specifically on campus as a strategy to preserve herself. When I asked Nila if she thought about gun violence, she replied, "I think about it only when I see it in the news." In general, though, she did not think about it. When I asked her what made her not think about it, she replied:

Two things. One is I think I'm generally ... I don't know, I feel like I'm not necessarily in the moment. I think I'm in my head a lot, thinking about something else while walking down the road and stuff. I don't know if that might be it, but even in general, I don't think about threats that much on an everyday basis. The only thing I probably do, like I said, maybe when it's really late in the night, and I'm walking, maybe I'm more aware than I usually am. But otherwise, I'm not that super aware of my surroundings. And to be honest, I don't mind that I don't think about it, because I don't see the point of it. I don't

think it's a good thing in the world, but then I don't see the point of it in the moment, because it'll just make me more anxious. So, in a way, kind of being oblivious is probably good for my mental health.

Nila recognized that others may think about and change their behaviors as a result of mass shootings. She also felt they were scary, but she did not think about mass shootings before going to crowded events, like her roommate did.

Sara and Matt also did not change their behaviors, and there seemed to be a resignation to the inevitability and lack of agency in a mass shooting event. Sara said, "I don't think [gun violence has] really changed my behavior in any way because I don't really know what I could do to really combat that." Similarly, when I asked Matt if the possible presence of guns affected her decision to go to public places, she said, "No. It's more like, 'Well, if I'm going to die, I'm going to die.' So, I'm just like, 'If it happens, it happens.' I'm just going to go and do my thing."

Perspectives on Campus Carry

In addition to resignation about gun violence and mass shootings, some participants also expressed resignation over campus carry laws. I asked some participants explicitly about campus carry as the state of Blue and Green Universities passed a law allowing concealed carry of guns on campuses. There was a sense of resignation among participants around campus carry, but participants also said they did not have to think about guns when they did not see them. When I asked Kate if she thought about concealed carry, she replied:

Not really, because it's concealed carry. I don't really see the difference before and after that law came in, because it's concealed. And that means that even before the law, people probably would have, like, carrying guns if they want to.

Similarly, when I asked Labrador if she thought about concealed carry on campus, she replied:

No. Just because I've never thought of it being a sort of... an imminent threat. I don't think the fact that the campus is concealed carry or not would affect it I mean. People take guns everywhere in this country it seems and have no real regard for whether or not they're allowed to. So, I don't know that it would make me feel significantly safer living in [state of Blue University], going to a campus that was concealed carry or not concealed carry. I don't know. I would love if nationwide gun laws changed, but if it wasn't more overall legislation, I don't know if it would change it.

Regarding campus policy, however, Labrador mentioned a professor said, "I can't stop you from bringing in a gun into the classroom, but I can stop you from bringing a gun into my office," during the first lecture. On reading disclaimers in emails and campus office policies about guns, Emma said, "I was reading these kind of things, and I knew that the campus, kind of terrible in that regard."

Being in the United States

The presence of guns and mass shootings in the United States obviously did not prevent any participants from entering the United States, despite some thinking about it. In some cases, participants did not know about the prevalence of guns in the United States before coming. Even for Jasmine, who was most concerned about guns and whose behavior was most affected, said guns and mass shootings were a concern but did not deter her from wanting to come, noting they were chance events. Ceres, who did not know about the prevalence of guns before coming, said knowing would not have affected her decision to come to the United States because she did not go many places, adding that maybe if she had a child, it might have affected her decision. When considering applying to the U.S. higher education institutions, Matt did not think about mass shootings, citing her need to study and apply for U.S. universities. She recalled hearing and

being surprised about a non-gun related violent incident at Blue University a few months before she came. She relied on knowing someone in the program, who was not emotionally affected, saying, "I think that was part of the reason why I didn't process it too much."

Labrador did not change her behavior and avoid crowded places, but she did reflect on guns influence on her as reflected in the following exchange:

Labrador:

It is also not lost on me that in [city of Blue University], and I think [state of Blue University] in general, people can bring guns as I mentioned to you on the campus. And that's a little scary, so whenever I'm in the kind of public areas, I am still thinking about "Where could I duck? Where could I hide under?" And it's just... I don't want to be feeling this way.

Sapna:

Does that feeling ever factor in your decision to go into crowded places, for example? Labrador:

No. Because, I think, like you can get shot up regardless of where you are. It does factor into the decision of wanting to leave this country though.

It is of note here, that while guns and mass shootings were not the only factor, Labrador did choose to leave her program and the country at the end of the spring semester.

While no participants were deterred from coming to the United States because of the presence of guns, gun violence, or mass shootings, a few participants speculated guns could be a reason why some international students chose not to apply or enroll at institutions in the United States. Specifically, I asked participants during the second interview their perspectives of why they thought there were decreased applications and enrollments among international graduate students in the United States. Jasmine's first reason was gun violence:

One cause, I think, could be the violence like mass shootings, gun violence across country here. I think, for example, [home country] parents would be so worried about their children being shot here, about their children's safety, so they would choose to send their children to U.K., to Australia, to Canada instead to avoid these kind of incidents.

Matt's last reason as to why there were fewer international graduate student applications and enrollments was shootings: "And a lot of people thought that shootings happen all the time in the U.S., so it's probably not as safe anymore." Although other participants had talked about their concerns about guns, it did not come up as a salient reason for decreased international graduate students in the United States for other participants.

Other Perspectives

Also of note are the two participants who have thus far not been mentioned in this section. They had views on guns and mass shootings that did not fit into any of the above categories. First, Ms. W's perspective on the presence of guns and campus carry surprised me:

I think it is good, because if some sexual assaults or because we are women, we are naturally weaker than males, so if you allow everyone have a gun, it will make everyone almost equal to each other. So, I think that is a good thing for us.

During the second interview, I asked Ms. W about her perspectives about gun violence. She replied:

I think the shooting is just one thing. It is the method. We cannot say there are a lot of shootings, so it is really dangerous, but in some countries, people cannot have guns. They do not shoot each other, but they still kill each other with many other styles. So... I think shooting is dangerous, but for sure it is bad. But I think this is just in our society, this bad things happens, because of here people have guns so they shoot. Somewhere people do not have guns and they have knives, a lot fighting and, yeah.

When I asked her if she felt scared when she heard about mass shootings, she said generally, "I think, yes, people will feel bad. This is a normal feeling. People they're innocent but they're killed by some crazy ones."

Sofia's answer also surprised me. When I asked her about her perspectives on guns, specifically mentioning concealed carry, she focused on the illegality of mass shootings. She overall did not seem to like the possibility of people owning guns and believed owning a gun on campus was not accepted. When I asked her if she felt scared when hearing about mass shootings, she said, "Funnily enough, I've never felt scared." Sofia also told me she felt safer as Green University, like many other U.S. universities, had a visible presence of undergraduate students in military training programs (e.g., ROTC), and she thought they would be ready should anything happen at the university.

Section Summary

The salience of guns in several participants' considerations of safety during the first interviews surprised me. Even though I become upset at each instance of mass shootings in the United States, including those that have taken place as I write and revise this chapter in spring 2021, I had not thought to include it as a topic as I focused on identity-based violence initially and because it is not something I am surprised about as I was born and raised in Texas. As it quickly became apparent that guns were a concern among some participants, particularly due to their surprise at the prevalence of guns in the United States, I asked all participants about guns during the second interviews. As expected, perspectives varied widely, with most participants not considering guns on a daily basis. Some participants, however, did heavily factor guns into their assessments of safety in the United States, including avoiding public events and changing teaching practices.

Sexual Harassment in Academic Settings

During the first set of interviews, the topic of sexual harassment from strangers did come up in participants' answers, but sexual harassment from known perpetrators or within academic

settings did not. During the second set of interviews, given discussions in news articles cited in Chapter 1 and in literature cited in Chapter 2, I specifically asked participants about their thoughts or perspectives about sexual harassment from faculty members towards graduate students. Although I did not ask how these incidents affected their sense of safety, the discussions in this section reflect what I perceived as related to safety and violence. None of the participants said they experienced sexual harassment from faculty members themselves, but several participants addressed sexual harassment in comparison to their home countries, laws, reporting, and effects on interactions with faculty.

Comparison to Home Countries

Several participants answered my question about sexual harassment from faculty towards graduate students with comparisons to their home countries. Ms. W perceived the United States better protected women students than her home country:

Personally, I haven't experienced anything like that or heard of any of my friends suffer this in United States, but I do hear some friends suffered this in [home country]. I think the United States is quite protective for the female students. Faculties, normally, they do not close their door if female students are inside their room, they open the door and show everyone who pass that I'm not doing anything.

Sara explained she was not very surprised about the incidents of sexual harassment in the United States because there were incidents of sexual harassment at her university in her home country followed by student protests. Kate, on the other hand, was at first surprised about of the incidents in the United States, because she expected it to be quite different here, but reflected on the similarities and differences between institutions here and in her home country:

That could happen in the environment when faculty and grad students is really close. I don't think that will happen in my department because we are not really, really close as in lab-based departments. It's not like I don't feel bad, but that kind of stuff happened a lot in [home country] and I know a lot about it, and I'm just kind of surprised, okay that kind of thing happens all around the world, it's no surprise at all. I thought it might be better in the U.S. because it seems like their relationships are a little bit more professional. At least I thought that the professors won't ask for very personal favors. In [home country], it was really often to ask, can you pick up my kid, like that, and they were thinking this is not a thing that a grad student will do but they were like, "okay, I can do that for you," like that. So, in that environment sexual harassment can happen all the time, and I wasn't really... I mean I felt really bad whenever that happened, but I wasn't really surprised at all, but here in the U.S., I thought it would be a little bit more professional, and even in the U.S., it happens a lot of times actually. I just thought humans are very similar everywhere.

While Kate was not worried about sexual harassment in her department, but she reflected on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the United States. At the same time, as will be seen below, she believed U.S. laws were beneficial in comparison to her home country.

Presence of Laws

A few participants focused on the presence of laws against sexual harassment. Kate, for example, found solace in U.S. laws, continuing her comparison to her home country:

So as a foreigner, I envied that you guys have that system, at least in the law. And the law doesn't mean that it's not happening, and the law doesn't prevent anything maybe, but it at least means that you are taking into account that graduate students and any students

could be subjective to these kinds of situations, and there's some laws to protect that.

Sofia also focused on sexual harassment being against the law and saw the value in laws. She also had more trust in those laws to prevent or address sexual harassment than did most other participants:

Sexual harassment is completely against the law. And any precautions that are taken to avoid sexual harassment are really critical in preserving people's lives. Because through sexual harassments, and the victim can get ... how can I call it? An indefinite psychological trauma. [...] So, as [Green University], there are really stringent rules and also there was a mandatory course you are supposed to take and it's about sexual harassment, Title IX. So, everyone, every student enrolled has to take that course, they describe all the different types of sexual harassment and what you are supposed to do or where you are supposed to report in case of any threats. Because actually there are always ... there is always 24/7 transportation other than the bus on campus. If at all you are stranded at campus you are supposed to call those offices, they will be able to take care of you so that they protect you from any sort of ... how can I call it? I don't know how I can call it. So, they can protect you, so that you don't get hurt in any way. So, it really takes the initiative to avoid sexual harassment here at campus. And also, they avoid relations between graduate students and undergraduate students even with consent. If you are a graduate student, you have to write a formal letter to the department that you are dating an undergraduate. It's only acceptable if you are married, if a graduate student is married to an undergraduate that's okay. But then any form of relationship is not acceptable, even with tutors and professors, no.

As will be seen in Chapter 9, Sofia and other participants trusted existing trainings, laws, and

university policies would work to protect students or at least hold people accountable for breaking them.

Reporting

Most participants were familiar with mandatory reporting rules as teaching assistants as they had participated in Title IX training. While Sofia put her faith in rules to work, others did not, especially when it came to reporting. When discussing these rules, Nila worried mandatory reporting rules might prevent someone one from talking, even to friends: "it might isolate people and get people to not even talk about it." When I asked her if she thought if mandatory reporting differently affected international students, she replied as follows:

Yeah, I think so because I think people who are not international students are more likely to have friends who don't go to [Blue University], who don't have the same... So, I don't know. If for example, if my roommate goes to [Blue University], my office mate is here. I can't even think of friends in [city of Blue University], well I can think of one friend in [city], who doesn't go to [Blue University], but that's by chance. Most people don't have that type of a circle especially immediately after they move. And so, if every person you confide in has some kind of a legal obligation, then you'll need to talk to people who live elsewhere, who may not get this context or whatever else. Because there's also the context of being here, which is different from being in [home country], wherever people are from. So, I think it can be extra isolating because there isn't enough of a network beyond this network.

Nila's concern for reporting for international students was international students may not even have someone to talk to or disclose to given most of their network was within the university, thus may not get help they need.

Kate, too, discussed reporting sexual harassment and its implications on international students' education:

[W]hen it comes to sexual harassment, for international students it's a little bit hard to come forward because it might mean that you are going to lose your position as a grad student because if there's a problem with the faculty, your lab could collapse. It's really hard for an international student to deal with that because it could mean that you have to actually stop and abandon your project and go back to your country and that could mean the time and research that you invested for three, four years could go nowhere.

For Kate, an unintended consequence of reporting was upon a student's progress to degree.

Another unintended consequence participants discussed was on their interactions.

Interactions with Faculty

I asked some participants whether the knowledge of sexual harassment affected their interactions; most said that it did not. Nila, for example, said it did not affect the way she interacted with professors because she had been in her program for more than three years, built trust within her department, and did not interact with many men. Matt, however, explained she was always on guard, as is seen in the following interaction:

Sapna:

Is that something that you actively think about, being on guard? Or has it just become part of how you interact with people?

Matt

That's a good question. I don't think I actively think about it. It's kind of there on the back of my mind, when I'm just like, "Is this normal conduct? Is this anything I should ... Is this suspicious?" But I've always thought that that is more because of the anxious side in me, more than what's happening around me.

Emma focused on the less considered effects of faculty harassing graduate students in that these incidents and the solutions to them may lessen women students' opportunities:

I was asking about what times I can have office hours, and then the professor was a male

professor, and I was a TA. Then he said, "Yeah, I don't put ..." I was asking if I could have it after 5:00 or anything like that, and then he was saying, "It should be okay for you, but for me it's, I don't want to be alone with a female student at 6:00 p.m.," when people are not around. I think at that time, I was feeling that, okay, why it's not a problem for me, how do you know that? Who is going to be in trouble right now that if a student comes to me, if a male student comes to me, is he going to be threatened or ...? I don't know how. And also, I was thinking of how, whether the less seen effects of the incidents, that it's kind of ... being a female, maybe it's a problem, I shouldn't be thinking about it this way, but as a female sometimes I think what are other people's worries when they are dealing with me? Or ... I don't know, it's just a lot of ... yeah, because it's ... yeah, I mean I haven't come across things in a sexual sense with the faculty I was dealing with, but I was worried that are they going to be worried about these kind of things, and how does it affect what I can talk about? And how does it affect in general everything?

A few participants mentioned they heard there were professors to avoid. One participant, whose name I will not disclose here, responded right away when I asked about the incidents of sexual harassment from faculty members towards graduate students:

About that, I definitely have something to say. I think the university and every department should be more transparent about things. My personal ... I have this personal experience last semester. Last summer, I needed to decide who was going to be on my prospectus committee. I TA-ed for this brilliant professor. I think he's great, and his area was related to my area. So, I asked him to be on my committee. After that, I found out, I was told by a colleague, another student, graduate student here, that he's a sexual predator. There were allegations, but he only, I think, committed one of them. It did not

happen in my department. It happened in another department. He had positions in two departments. And I was shocked. I did my own research. I found out it actually was true. Then I didn't know what to do. I successfully defended my prospectus, but then it put me in a very awkward position. I surely don't want anyone like that to be on my committee to have a personal association with me. But then he was already my committee, and I cannot do anything. He's pretty enthusiastic about being on my dissertation committee. I was like, what should I do? I'm like ... Yeah. But if my department or the university had sent out some kind of notice or anything to let us know then I would not be in this kind of awkward situation. Even now, I don't know how to talk to him about I don't want him to be on my committee, on my dissertation committee. It's very awkward every time I saw him, you know?

Her advisor recommended she say nothing. She feared retribution if she did not have that professor on her committee, particularly when going on the job market. When I asked if she could speak with other graduate students, she replied:

Not really. I don't think it can be openly discussed. I feel like everyone knows but no one will say anything. I feel it's not what I expected here in the States. I thought people were going to talk openly about things, but actually it's not.

Other participants also mentioned the secrecy, with one participant saying, "a lot of the times everyone knows, it's an unsaid truth that people know to stay away from a certain person." Another participant said she was surprised there were no discussions about sexual harassment incidents at the university outside of official university emails. Labrador, however, wanted to create a safe space for women and nonbinary students, so she created a group within her PhD program, which will be discussed more in Chapter 8.

Section Summary

Overall, sexual harassment from faculty members towards graduate students were not at the forefront of most participants' minds when considering safety. The exceptions were the participant who found out a committee member was a known sexual harasser, and Matt, who explained she had internalized being on guard. In addition, Nila and Kate thought about the effects of reporting laws on international student disclosure, and Emma thought about the potential for affected interactions between her and faculty members.

Coronavirus

When I started interviews in November 2020, coronavirus was unknown. By the end of the second interviews, however, coronavirus has shut down much of the United States. Ten of the 11 second interviews took place after the first travel-related case of coronavirus was reported in the United States but before the first community-spread case and first deaths from coronavirus were originally reported in the United States (Schumaker, 2020). During the course of the second set of interviews, coronavirus became more widespread in China then across the world. Although I did not include a question about coronavirus in my second interview protocol, the topic came up in relation to safety and discrimination. The last interview, conducted in early April 2020 with Ceres, was after lockdowns began and colleges and universities went remote in the United States. During summer of 2020, after universities went remote and lockdowns started all over the country, I emailed participants about their perspectives about how coronavirus and lockdowns had influenced their sense of safety. In this section, I have included participants' thoughts discussing the coronavirus during the second interview as well as responses I received from some participants to my email.

Towards the beginning of the second interview, when I had asked Kate if she had any

thoughts about violence or safety since our last interview, she began with her considerations about psychological violence. When I asked if she had thoughts about violence and safety in any other context, she replied, "No, not really. It could be a totally different thing right now but since the coronavirus is so viral in Asia I feel a little bit discriminated sometimes." Kate continued that she felt discriminated against when she was returning in the airport in the city of Blue University, as quoted in Chapter 5.

Jasmine, too, had thoughts about coronavirus after the winter break when I interviewed her in early February. She said students coming back from their home countries may spread the disease unknowingly. As a result, she said, "I did not go to the library anymore. I stayed in my office, and I tried to avoid public events." She acknowledged, at the time of our interview, there were no confirmed cases in the state of Blue University. Nonetheless, her husband had warned her to be careful given the stories of discrimination in the news against Asians in the United States.

In April, when I interviewed Ceres for the second time, universities had gone remote, and cities had been in lockdown for several weeks. When answering a question about perceptions about hate crimes and bias related incidents, Ceres brought up that coronavirus had resulted in Asians being discriminated against in the United States. Personally, she was not affected by the coronavirus and shut downs that much because she could do her work from home, but she found it stressful and difficult to adapt to the new lifestyle and isolated from friends. She was worried about family and friends back home, too.

In her response to my follow up email, Jasmine said, "I definitely feel very unsafe" because of discrimination against Asians due to the coronavirus. Ms. W, also from an East Asian country, explained her cautiousness in her email:

During the time of the coronavirus I do feel things are going harder. For the safety part, I have heard more local news about gun shooting and some other kind of fighting or robbery that made people injured. In some other cities Asians were killed while grocery shopping... I am mostly working at home now, afraid of both the virus and some people. But at least I think staying more inside should keep me safe 99.9%.

This strategy of staying home was consistent with Ms. W's overall strategy of being careful, which will be discussed more in Chapter 8.

For other participants who responded, coronavirus was subsumed by or exacerbated existing worries and fears. In her email, Sara noted her isolation, but her overall safety concerns were related to ongoing concerns that existed before the pandemic:

I think I feel particularly isolated and helpless during this situation - especially since I live far away from my family and friends. However, the difference in feelings of safety have not really changed considering the root cause is still the same. Rather than being concerned about my safety because of the pandemic, my reasons for fearing for my safety are still rooted in systemic violence and discrimmination [sic] towards women and POC.

Kate, who was in her home country at the time she responded to my email, was concerned, but her overall stress was about the job market:

While I feel very concerned about the pandemic, honestly, the thing that concerns me the most is the job market next year. It is stressful that I would be in the market this year (or next) and the market is shrinking and shrinking, and no one knows when this will be over. I guess this is true for everybody, though. I do not think I experienced any discrimination since the stay home order. Fortunately, [city of Blue University] people are very nice and gentle. People I met in supermarkets and parks were all friendly and

nice. I guess I do not know because I was really staying at home except for couple grocery runs.

Kate explained she did not go out much and did not feel discriminated against. Matt, as discussed in Chapter 6, explained in her email how the coronavirus exacerbated her existing safety and security concerns regarding her noisy business neighbor.

Coronavirus and the resulting implications were not strictly within the scope of my study, given its emergence during the study. I think it is important to recognize, however, the beginnings of implications on participants' sense of safety and security. As will be discussed in the final chapter, coronavirus and its implications could be an area of exploration for future research and a topic of concern for practice.

Chapter 7 Summary

In this chapter, I focused on specific U.S. policies and events and the extent to which they factored into participants' assessments of safety, namely gun violence and campus carry, sexual harassment from faculty members, and the coronavirus and its implications. I found participants' perspectives varied with some considered one or more of these topics in their assessments of safety in the United States. As introduced in this chapter, some of these policies and events resulted in participants adapting their behaviors or adopting strategies, such as avoiding public places. These strategies, along with other strategies and influences on participants' lives, will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8: HOW PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND VIOLENCE INFLUENCED THEIR LIVES

The third research question was "How do women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety influence their lives?" The first major section is on strategies participants adopted consciously and unconsciously. Some of these strategies have been introduced in Chapters 5 through 7 but are presented in this chapter in more detail. Second, I discuss what I perceived were influences of participants' perceptions and experiences of safety and violence on their lives based on responses throughout the interviews. Finally, I share participants' perceptions about the effects of their perceptions and experiences of safety and violence on their lives based on their answers to a question asked toward the end of the second interviews.

Strategies

An important way in which participants' lives were influenced by their experiences and perceptions of safety and violence was through their creation and adoption of strategies to maintain their physical and mental safety. During the interviews, I was interested in behavioral changes, such as not speaking up in class, but I did not ask participants explicitly what they did to maintain their safety or avoid violence, particularly physically, because that would have assumed the onus is on women of color international graduate students to maintain their own safety. Many participants, however, did share the ways in which they maintained their safety and avoided potential violence, which I call strategies. The choice of the word "strategies" was influenced by Jasmine, who called her behaviors strategies. I start with those strategies that have been adopted to maintain physical safety followed by those to maintain mental safety.

Strategies to Maintain Physical Safety

strategy. She responded:

Strategies participants adopted to maintain their physical safety were most apparent throughout the interviews. In some cases, these strategies were in direct response to an incident that happened in which a participant felt their safety was threatened, such as avoiding a particular bus stop where they were asked for money aggressively. Strategies were also more implicit and not necessarily thought of consciously, such as not walking alone at night. I have categorized their strategies in the following categories below: avoidance, preparation, and strategies at night. *Avoiding Places, Situations, and People*

As introduced in Chapter 5, several participants changed behaviors in response to experiences they found threatening. Sara, for example, mentioned she stopped using a particular bus route because of a negative experience and generally avoided walking at night. Other participants also discussed avoiding walking at night or alone. Jasmine, however, was most explicit about calling what she did a "strategy." When I asked her if she had experienced any kind of violence in the United States, she said no, instead citing incidents she had heard about including a murder and stabbing on campus. She continued, "I feel like my strategy actually works. Like it may save me from experience those things." I asked her what she meant by her

I mean, avoid going to places where there are many people, like not walking alone in the dark. Actually, not walking alone everywhere, and having a car does help. If you don't need to take buses, common buses not school buses, you don't have an opportunity to be around those dangerous people.

Further, she explained that she did not take courses after 6:00 p.m., even though she wanted to take them, because it was too late. In addition to avoiding public events due to the potential for

mass shootings as discussed in Chapter 7, Jasmine also generally avoided doing things on her own:

I have been very super cautious. I think I never walked alone. I have a car, so I drive myself, and my husband is living with me. And so, we do things together mostly, and then I take bus to school, so there are always a lot of people around me. That's what I do to protect myself.

Jasmine shared she simultaneously avoided events with a lot of people and felt safer as a result of buses with a lot of people. The difference, it seemed, was she felt safer when the people around her were familiar students rather than strangers in a crowd.

Jasmine again brought up her strategy during the second interview when I asked her about her reactions and thoughts regarding hate crimes towards people of color in the United States. She responded, "My strategy is the same. Avoid public key event. Avoid being in contact with ... Avoid confronting other people, those racist people. If it were to happen to me, I would just walk away." I asked her if she felt her strategy prevented her from doing things she wanted to do. She responded right away, saying, "Yes, of course. I want to walk in a park. I want to do a lot of things that I currently am not doing because of this fear. Maybe irrational, maybe rational. It does limit my freedom, I guess." The concept of limiting freedom will be revisited later in this chapter.

Jasmine only used these strategies of avoidance in the United States, however. She lived in England for a year and did not use the same strategies there. She would walk alone in the dark and to bus stations and did not feel unsafe doing so. In her home country, she said she could not avoid crowded places because of the population size, adding, "I think in [home country], the difference maybe if you're in a very crowded place, you're relatively sure that you are safer than

if you are alone in a not crowded place." She also felt safe and did not avoid walking around at night in her home country on her college and graduate school campuses, in part because she "didn't know bad things happened."

I asked some participants explicitly if they avoided places because of safety. Ceres said she did not go anywhere alone. She went with someone or to places where there were other people, such as parks. She also did not walk around alone because there was more of a car culture rather than a walking culture in her area. At the same time, she avoided driving around on weekends and during football games, because she said, people drove poorly and could have been drunk.

When I asked Labrador if she avoided anything because of the potential of feeling unsafe, she explained that she stopped drinking about three years earlier. Even when she did drink, she "would never sort of drink beyond my capacity to, I guess make good judgements," and if she did, she was with her friends and was not worried. Aside from that, she was "not worried about getting into public transport in the night, for example."

Preparation

When they could not avoid particular places, some participants prepared ahead of time. For example, over the winter break between our interviews, Jasmine and her family had to go to another U.S. city. When I asked her if she thought about her safety in the other city, she replied as follows:

Of course. I researched a lot about which areas are relatively safe, which areas are not? I avoid to go out after it's getting dark. Traffic in [other city] is crazy because they drive like crazy. I think I had to be super cautious while driving to avoid an accident.

Although Labrador mostly did not avoid places or situations, she explained different ways in

which she prepared herself. When I asked her what made her feel safe in general, she responded, "Network on my phone. Someone knowing where I am. Having a plan. I guess having a companion." Labrador attributed this and other behaviors in part to being a woman:

I think generally walking around in the streets of [large U.S. city of previous institution] you have rude comments or have had people follow me, but again I'm always very aware of where the closest CVS is or the [geographic-specific drug store] or... I don't know. I call someone and have them on speaker and start talking to them about what exactly what street I'm on. All of these kind of things you learn how to do as a woman.

Those experiences had not prevented her from taking public transportation at night, but Labrador adopted measures to feel safe in addition to those listed above:

I feel safe when I'm in footwear that I know I can run across the corner to, and I feel safe knowing that I have taken self-defense classes, that I grew up in [home country] and lived in [large city] as a young adult so that I can handle myself and handle other people.

When I asked Labrador where she learned those behaviors, she said she was not sure, but perhaps from friends. She also told me that during orientation week at her previous institution in a large U.S. city, "they make that very clear to you that you need to understand that you're living in a city, and so everything that comes with living in a city you need to think about." Labrador felt that this was something she understood the first night walking back home alone. When I asked her if she was afraid, she replied:

There were moments when I was more on guard than others. I don't remember any particular moment I was more afraid... I mean after a while you just... again one of the sort of calamities of being a woman, but you get used to the harassment a little bit and so you are less afraid.

While Labrador thought about her safety in the ways in which she prepared herself, she also seemed to implicitly adopt strategies, as she said, as a woman, based on what she had gotten used to and messages received from others.

Nighttime Strategies

Other participants adopted specific behaviors and strategies, especially at night, in public, and on public transportation. I asked Matt if not feeling safe at night or when taking public transportation would change what she did. She replied:

Yeah. I feel like it's just so ingrained because I grew up watching out all the time in [home country]. You just didn't go to certain places. You just didn't walk late in the night. You would always take a friend with you if you were out late in the night. I feel like I do that here too. I feel so scared to even do a lot of things on my own just normally like, trying out a restaurant or going to the movies or anything. Yeah, so, a lot of these things, if I'm going to go somewhere, I'm usually going to take a friend with me and go. Typically, don't travel late in the night through public transport. Also, kind of apprehensive when I'm... Even if I have to take a Lyft or an Uber, I'm still pretty apprehensive. I go to a coffee shop to work out from sometimes, work out of sometimes. If I'm working late and if I get done by maybe 12:00 or 1:00 and I have to walk back home. It's pretty close but I can walk it. It takes me maybe 10 minutes. I usually call my boyfriend while I'm walking because I'm a little scared. I have to cross a few streets to get here. I always have him on the phone when I'm doing that. Pretty much never go through dark streets. Try to go anywhere where there's light. Just these things where I tend to watch out.

In her response, Matt talked about the multiple considerations she made when traveling,

including whether to take public transportation, Lyft, or Uber; walking home at night and being on the phone; and staying in well-lit areas. Other participants factored in these considerations as well.

Sara, for example, avoided walking at night, noting a similar reason that Ceres did, that people often did not walk on the streets:

If I'm walking on the street, and this is always in the daytime. I try not to walk after dark. And I'm at the bus stop or something and the car passes by and I feel like they're seeing something that they're not used to seeing someone walking in the streets, which is why they roll down their window and they just look out, staring at you, maybe pause for a bit, slow down for a bit and then try to walk again. It's just very unnerving so ...

Sara also pointed to incidents on campus that she received notifications about. I asked if fear of incidents on campus, like the ones that she was notified about by the university police, prevented her from doing things. She responded:

Yeah. I think that's always been the case. Not just here, back home as well. It's always better safe than sorry outlook for me. So, maybe I would have gone to more places, to friends' houses or to a place to eat late at night, but that constant worry is always there, so I have to sort of miss out on some fun to feel safe.

Sara, and others, talked about the feeling of missing out, which will be revisited in Jasmine's experience toward the end of the chapter.

Nila adopted strategies, even if not consciously, because of her use of strategies in her home country:

I think I'm pretty careful. Even I'm used to... and places in [home country] aren't...

There are some places that aren't necessarily safe. Or if I walked somewhere pretty late

in the night, I would be careful, and I would always kind of watch my back or have my phone in my hand, do stuff like that. So, I'd probably do that out of habit anyway, so I don't know if that's really changed that much.

Because Nila felt safer in the United than she did back home, she had not carried over all of her previous strategies, specifically in the way she dressed:

And I know that almost nothing is going to happen, but I would be way more nervous to walk back in [home country]. Yeah, I do think it's way safer here. And also, in [home country], I would definitely be very careful about what I wear. I would sometimes be like I don't care about the norm. I'll on purpose do the opposite thing, but I will do that in a situation where I can be ... I'm with someone, or I can be sure that I'll feel safe still. But in most other situations, I would make sure that I would think about my clothes and stuff, which I really don't here.

Ms. W felt scared to walk alone when there were not very many people on the street. She also said, "if it is kind of dirty, poor people living around, it is also very dangerous." Ms. W did walk at night by herself on campus and where she lived, when she had to. She lived near a big supermarket with lots of lights and people, so she felt it was safer than elsewhere.

At first, Kate did not feel violence or crimes stopped or prevented her from doing anything. She continued: "But when I was in [home country], I was never afraid of walking around after in dark. But right now, after moving here, I feel like it's unsafe to walk in the dark even in [city of Blue University]." I asked her if that feeling prevented her from walking around at night, and she responded that it did:

Yeah, I guess. So, I live quite close to downtown, so it's totally walkable. If this was [home country], I would probably walk back home even at 12:00 in the morning or 1:00

in the morning, but I always take Uber or just not to walk alone at least. And I don't like to travel. I don't want to travel long distance after maybe 10:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m. And I'm not really sure how Uber is safe, because there's also a lot of violence associated with Uber and Lyft. But there's nothing else I can do. I don't want to drive drunk. And the drivers here are quite, I wouldn't say aggressive, because they're really nice. But at the same time, there are a lot of drivers that are not skilled enough, I guess. And a lot of teenagers are also driving here. So, driving is also pretty scary here when I first came here.

Although she did not avoid going out at night, she consciously chose to take Uber or Lyft as the safest option for her, despite the risks. Lyly, in contrast to other participants, said she did not avoid places:

No. I never heard that there are places here that you have to be very careful if you want to go there, or I never heard my friends say like, "Don't go to this place." No, never. I never heard such of places that you don't need to go, or you don't have to go there. No.

Lyly did not feel safe walking around at night in her home country. She attributed this to crime and being a woman:

You know in Asian country, including [home country], I don't want to say that criminal rate, but we have a culture that woman should not go alone at night. So, that's make I shouldn't cross that line. So, whenever I have to go outside at night, I have to be with someone else. And that's it. Maybe that give us a thought that, "Okay. I am not safe if I have to go outside at night by myself."

Although she did not name it as a strategy, in the United States, Lyly still was always with someone, at night and during the day. She traveled to campus with her housemate and asked to

go to the grocery store with her landlord. This did not seem to be an inconvenience to Lyly.

Strategies for Mental Safety

Whereas strategies to maintain physical safety or avoid physical violence were more straightforward and easier to identify, strategies to maintain mental safety and avoid mental violence were less clear and more difficult to identify. Again, participants did not necessarily call these strategies, but rather this is a word that I am ascribing to behavioral and cognitive adaptations of participants. These adaptations are presented in the following categories: self-silencing in classrooms, research meetings, and teaching; adapting and assimilating; rationalizing; engaging or not engaging politically; and joining or creating student groups.

Self-Silencing in Classrooms, Research Meetings, and Teaching

I asked participants during the first interview some version of the question, "Have you ever felt like you were not heard or listened to in class?" Most participants answered right away they had not had that experience. In fact, some participants felt encouraged to speak up in class. Lyly, for example, replied, "No. I never had that experience. Because I consider myself the most talkative one in class, so they have to listen to me." Sofia also said she generally felt more respected and freer to speak in the United States than in her home country. When I asked Labrador, she simply said, "No." Jasmine explained she felt more free to speak in her classes than she did in her classes in her home country.

Not all participants shared this experience, however. Most notably, Matt and Nila reflected on how they felt heard or not heard particularly in classroom and research settings. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 5, Matt had an experience in a class a few weeks prior to our first interview in which she was shut down by another student. Regarding that experience and others in discussion-based classes, in which she brought her home country's context into her ideas, she

said, "I just feel like they're not received very well." When I asked what the effect was on her, Matt replied:

I've stopped talking, you know like contributing as much. Because you feel like there's no value for what you have to say. It's not going to matter anyway. Then why even bother saying anything? I've actually really stopped contributing. I feel like I changed. I used to talk a lot more and have more ideas, but I've just got this feeling over and over that what you say doesn't matter. So just not say anything.

When we discussed definitions later in the first interview, the idea of invalidation resonated with Matt.

Similarly, Nila discussed how she brought her home country into class discussions, because that was the context she knows. She continued:

And I'm not really trying to say that people don't listen or anything, but it's kind of hard, because whenever I explain something, each time I would have to be like, "Back in [home country]," and then say this, which somehow makes it always sound like an exception to the dominant conversation, which makes it less like a, it's different there kind of a thing rather than that's a thing we're interested in studying too. I think sometimes I would myself kind of censor myself by being like I don't want to say another back in [home country] story, so I would just maybe not say it. But I think I've thought about that, which is why I got reminded of it now. Yeah, and I don't know if that's necessarily me perceiving that to be weird or me not wanting to bring this exception sounding story or if that's necessarily people's ... I think it could be both. It could be people's response to it too, and I don't know if their response is them not knowing that world. Or I don't know, I guess I'm trying to say that I don't know if I am the one who

thinks everyone is perceiving it as an exception or if that's really occurring, and it's hard to know.

Through her answer, she grappled with not knowing whether it was her perception or some response she was receiving from others in the class that caused her to censor herself. This kind of thinking and questioning of oneself comes up again in other participants' answers below.

In research settings, Nila also talked about her reluctance to speak. She had one incident a few days prior to our first interview in which her advisor did not engage with something she brought up during the research meeting. When I asked her if that contributed to her reluctance to speak up, she said, "Yeah, to some extent. I mean I think independent of that, I'm still generally reluctant." She often thought about whether what she was saying made sense. Of that particular situation, she was upset at the lack of engagement, saying, "Why do you have a lab meeting, if you don't want to engage with everyone who's here?"

Jasmine also had a complex relationship with speaking up, saying she felt freer to speak in her classes and was respected by professors as a colleague than she did in her home country. She still sometimes felt she was not heard or listened to in classes because students in her classes "all want to say something, and sometimes I just don't get the opportunity to speak up. Sometimes I think it's because of... English is my second language, so I may not express myself very clearly." Kate, although she answered, "No, no," when I asked her if she felt like she was not heard or listened to, told me she felt judged by her language ability. When I asked if that feeling was influenced by something, she replied as follows:

So, I guess in presentations in class, they frowned at me, because they just don't understand when I was talking. It could be either my language problem or I'm just really bad explaining abstract concepts, because I have to be really detailed to make them

understand, even if they're really smart and experts. But I might be bad at that, not my language itself. But the thing is, if I was talking in [native language], I would be clear that maybe I'm really bad at explaining things. But right now, I can't really judge what my problem is. I can ask my friends, but I guess I'm too proud to ask.

Both Jasmine and Kate questioned their language ability particularly when discussing topics in class. Even though this is not really a strategy, these considerations seemed to play a role in whether Jasmine and Kate spoke in certain situations. Kate for example, said sometimes she does not bother to talk because she could not find the right word, and overall, she felt less confident to speak.

To be clear, the reason why participants did not speak was not always due to being silenced or epistemic violence; in some cases, they did not want to speak up. Most participants did not feel like they were silenced in classroom or research settings, and as mentioned above, some felt freer or encouraged to speak up than they did in their previous environments.

Teaching. Several participants served as teaching assistants prior to or during the semesters of our interviews. Safety considerations did not come up for most participants in their teaching. Ceres, for example, did not think about the presence of guns while teaching. While Ms. W said she sometimes felt disrespected by students in classes she taught or that she was not listened to by students, she said it did not affect her much because, she said, "No matter if they are listening, I need to teach."

Jasmine, however, explicitly talked about the ways in which she considered her safety while teaching. As discussed in Chapter 7, Jasmine thought a lot about guns and adapted her teaching accordingly. Specifically, she said she sometimes did not feel safe and was afraid of retribution as a TA if students did not get a good grade. As a result, she said, "I'm like super

cautious, not upsetting students and explain everything." She called herself a generous grader, and said as a TA, it was not about teaching students but explanations as to why they get certain grades. She said, "I don't think it's productive, but that's a way to avoid something bad happening." She felt threatened by students once or twice, although she was not afraid of being physically hurt. She added a gendered component to it as well: "Most times I think students don't respect female instructors or TAs the same way as they do for male instructors or TAs. Mostly male students." For Jasmine, considerations of safety and avoiding confrontations changed the ways she taught and engaged with students.

Adapting and Assimilating

An adopted strategy a few participants took on when they came to the United States was to adapt and assimilate. Specifically, Kate talked about trying to Americanize when she first arrived. Kate showed how she struggled with this strategy and the need to fit in because of fear of prejudice:

At first when I came here, I really wanted to be perfectly Americanized. But right now, I realize I can't, never. For two years, I only listened to American songs. I only watched American TV shows, movies, not just because I wanted to be Americanized, just because it's easier for me to get those things here. But right now, I acknowledge that I can't be American at all. I mean, partly, but not entirely. So, I'm trying to figure out my identity here as a foreigner. And I don't think it really changed my way to relate or react with people, but I'm pretty sure I became a little bit less confident whenever I talk to people. So, I don't really have that much accent compared to other international students. So, at first when we were making easy conversation, they think that I grew up here. Whenever it gets a little bit more complicated, they realize that I'm not from here. And I was kind of

afraid. Whenever they notice that I'm a foreigner, what if they have a little bit of prejudice toward me? It could be either good or bad, because first they will probably understand I'm a foreigner. So, they will be nicer to me or they will be more... what should I say? They will be just prejudice and make a, I don't know, rash conclusion on me, like that. So, yeah. At first, I was afraid. What if he noticed that I'm not from here? But I don't think I'm afraid of that anymore, but I still keep thinking about it, I guess.

While she does not maintain her strategy of being Americanized, she still thought about it and felt conspicuous.

Nila, too, talked about how she adapted by changing her pronunciation, including of her name, and accent:

This is not my complete [native country] accent. I sound a little different here. I could sound a lot more [from home country], which I changed. I think I used to do that a lot more when I moved here. I do that much less now. I think I used to change the pronunciations more before, and then I was like I'm not going to do it. So that's I don't think another way, where I'm trying to make life easy for people around me to understand me, which is kind of stupid.

Again, although Nila, like Kate, adapted less than she first did, she still maintained some level of adaptation.

Rationalizing

Some participants employed rationalizing while thinking about experiences they had, such as participants not being sure whether what they said did not make sense or if they were receiving some negative feedback, in the form of frowns or lack of engagement, from those around them as discussed above. In some ways, it seemed when participants excused others'

behavior as them being at fault by not making sense, it was a protective mechanism, so they did not feel they were being discriminated against. When discussing the definitions of violence during the first interview, Jasmine said this another way, when telling me the concept of microaggressions resonated with her, as is seen in the following exchange:

Jasmine:

Like microaggression, not really like ... like staring, some body language, and facial expressions that would make you very uncomfortable. Most time I just talk to myself, that you are being oversensitive, you know.

Sapna:

What causes you to do that? To tell yourself that you're being oversensitive?

I think it's a strategy to like soothe myself, calm myself down. To be able to continue to live here with less fear, I guess.

Sapna:

Can you think of an instance when you've had to do that recently?

Jasmine:

Recently ... not really. Sometimes it's just people's way of looking at me, and I'll ask my husband, like sometimes in a shopping mall. I'm not sure that it's oversensitive or not, but I feel like their way of looking at you is suggesting that you're not supposed to be here. Especially, we have a baby. She just turned one, and you know people always say babies, like they react differently to babies. But sometimes I feel like people are not reacting to my family, my baby, the same way as they do like a white baby.

Sapna: How do you feel like people react to white babies?

Jasmine:

Like with a smile, they would be very kind, nice, but sometimes they just stare at us, with that look.

As discussed in Chapter 5, several participants excused others' behaviors and words. Nila and Matt, in particular, talked about the ways in which they were not sure if someone was being ignorant, meant well and said the wrong thing, or if they were discriminating against them.

Labrador did this when explaining her negative experience in an airport, saying she was not sure if the other person was having a bad day. This concept of rationalizing and questioning one's experiences will be discussed more later in this chapter.

Engaging with Political and Other Difficult Topics

Some participants tried to avoid thinking about certain topics to preserve their mental health. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Nila said she tried not to think about guns and the possibility of gun violence, saying, "kind of being oblivious is probably good for my mental health."

Labrador and Emma tried to disengage from political issues in the United States to preserve their own mental health. When I asked Labrador about her reactions to policies changes since 2017 such as the travel ban, she explained she did not always react for her own mental health: "It is kind of, not good for our sanity to react every time this administration or this president does something essentially psychotic." Emma also explained that the disengagement from politics as a means to protect herself:

I think the general effect of all of this on me has been that I became sort of isolated from world of politics, as well. I mean, in one way, it could be one way that I protect myself. Or even when you read news, especially in those days, after the plane stuff, I feel like I have become unable to think about these things, in as broad as I'd like to be able to think. Because I see that so many personal cases, that I can't really... I see human, individual, effects more than the broader political, social, or this thing. And I feel that's one sort of effect, that these kind of policies can have, that they make you feel like you're... I just don't know how to formulate that. It's just that, when it's close, it's harder to stay away from it, and look at it, in why these kind of things happens? Or how they happen, in the general sense, because it's just too close, to be able to detach from it.

Ultimately, despite their efforts to disengage, both Labrador and Emma were the most politically engaged participants, as will be discussed further below.

Participants varied widely in their levels of political engagement in the United States.

While some participants did not feel they had the right to talk about politics, others got involved in protests. I found participants did make some considerations on whether to become politically engaged based on safety. Among those who did not comment on politics, Ms. W did not feel like she had the right to comment on the travel ban or migration and refugee policies when I asked her about her perspectives. Specifically, Ms. W's response was as follows:

Normally I do not pay much attention on this politic stuff. Because I am a foreigner in the United States. So, in my point of view, I do not think I have the right to get into the American politics things. I think it should be their citizens' right. Yeah.

I was most surprised by the perspectives of Lyly and Sofia because they both identified as Muslim, and Lyly came from a Muslim-majority country, although not one implicated in any version of the travel ban. In response to my question about her reactions to Trump administration policies including the travel ban, Sofia responded, "First of all, I'm not too much into politics." She went on, however, to say the United States had the right to prioritize citizens over non-citizens. She also said she would not find it unfair if she was asked to return to her country. Similar to Sofia, Lyly responded, "To be honest, Sapna, first, I don't read news a lot, sorry." Lyly personally did not worry about her visa status and she had support as an international scholarship recipient. Lyly also did not know anyone who was affected by the travel ban, even though she was involved with the Muslim community at Green University. As will be noted below, this may have been because Lyly generally did not ask others about difficult topics.

Most participants commented on policies in the interviews but did not necessarily get involved politically in the United States. Matt paid attention to political issues, both in her home country and in the United States, but generally did not participate in protests, though not necessarily because of safety concerns. She would have wanted to go with someone if she did go

to a protest though. Matt was engaged in other ways, however, such as through social work. Nila did not always get involved in political protests, citing safety as one concern, but adding a caveat: "Although I won't say that if someone promised me for sure that I'm going to be safe, I don't think I would still be there, but safety is definitely something." She also wanted to be well-informed before participating in a protest. Sara did attend a protest in the city of Blue University in response to a policy in her home country. She noted the recent peaceful protests in her home country, which she did not attend, were met with police violence. In comparison, Sara said the protest she attended in the United States "didn't really seem like a protest" and seemed "more symbolic than anything else." Although I did not ask directly, Sara did not seem to worry about safety while attending the protest in the United States. She was, however, worried about friends who had attended protests in her home country, citing a friend who got arbitrarily arrested. She also recalled protests at her university in her home country several years ago, which were also met with police violence.

As mentioned above, although they tried not to, Labrador and Emma did think about political issues in the United States and talked more explicitly about political engagement during our interviews. Labrador, for example, volunteered with Planned Parenthood and had considered phone banking for Elizabeth Warren. In these instances, her safety was not a consideration of whether to participate. Her safety was a consideration, however, when Labrador decided whether to engage individually with someone on politics as discussed in Chapter 7 and further below. Emma was likely most politically engaged of the participants. She participated in protests in her home country several years ago. She also participated in protests in the United States in response to the travel ban when she was living in a different city. During all of those instances, she did consider safety in multiple ways. In the United States, she thought about the number of people at

the protests and whether there were Americans to act as a buffer. She recalled receiving emails from her master's institution telling international students they could get deported if they participated, which she said impacted her. She also recalled receiving insight about where to go to protest, for example the airport or the court and whether to take cash.

A few days prior to our interview, Emma told me she thought about whether to attend a protest in the city of Blue University. More specifically, she grappled with whether to "like" the protest event page on Facebook, because professors in the department could see and because she had heard of incidents of border agents checking international students' Facebook pages. She also debated whether to cover her face during the protest and whether to wear a particular article of clothing that would have marked her as attending the protest and coming to her department right after. On the latter, she explained the ways in which she was thinking about safety as related to political engagement:

But this safety ... you know sometimes it's safety in the protest, and sometimes it's safety of expression, if you can really express your thoughts. [...] you are just at the very bottom of the power [as a graduate student], and it sort of ... I was thinking if it's going to make them [department faculty] more mad than what they already are. If it's going to make them more hostile. At the same time, I couldn't even think of not doing it because of this, because you have to have your own personal, you don't want to feel like you are forced to do or not do something, if it has a terrible feeling.

Emma was conflicted about whether to participate in the protest as a graduate student but also wanted to engage in something important to her.

In addition to political engagement, participants also reflected on safety when engaging in difficult topics. As discussed in Chapter 7, Jasmine in particular thought about engaging with

a student about controversial topics in a class she was teaching because of safety. Although
Ceres did not think about guns in a teaching context, she did say she would think about whether
someone had a gun if she ever got into an argument. Labrador, too, said she would not engage in
discussion with someone in a bar because of the possibility they could have a gun. Labrador also
thought about safety when speaking up in a particular situation. She gave one example in which
she engaged with an Uber driver about not assuming her nationality. When I asked her what she
considered when deciding when to speak up, she answered as follows:

Sort of based on the previous conversation with either the person or the people, kind of, what is my read on them, and how will they react? If I've misread the situation and they somehow react violently, am I able to leave? What else, do I have support? Usually the conversation about language, that's with Uber drivers, and I probably wouldn't bring up the conversation if we're kind of on a lonely road for example.

Nila, too, sometimes engaged people she thought did not have nuanced perspectives, saying, "I think I do sometimes. Yeah, sometimes I just rant in my head and don't say anything."

Although Lyly may not have explained it as a strategy or as a means to maintain her safety, she generally did not engage with others about difficult topics. When I asked her whether any of the definitions of violence resonated with her, she said they did not. As a follow up, I asked if she had heard from others about their experiences. She replied, "No. Because I never asked. I never talk about that. We mostly have chit chat during our lunch, like small talk, like, 'How are you? How's your classes?' And that's it."

Joining or Creating Student Groups

A few participants talked about groups of students they created or relied upon. Although not naming them as strategies to maintain safety, it seemed participants' purposes in the creation and use of these groups was for community building, a safe space, and support. Matt created a group for international graduate students at her university. Labrador created a group for women and non-binary individuals in her program to create a safe space she felt was missing. She modeled it off of a safe space at a feminist camp she had previously attended. Through the group, they talked about stress, mental health, and prejudices they felt.

Emma was part of a music group in which she said she felt safe. Lyly was part of the Islamic community at her university. She said she consulted this group before she even came to ask what it was like to be a Muslim student at Green University. She had consulted the Islamic community at her previous institution in the United States as well. She continued to be involved with the Islamic community at Green University at the time of our interviews.

Section Summary

In this section, I shared what I called participants' strategies, based on Jasmine's word choice, to maintain their safety and avoid violence. Strategies are divided into two main sections, physical and mental, consistent with the organization in Chapter 5 and based on participants' conceptualizations of safety and violence. Physical strategies included avoiding places, situations, and people, such as avoiding going places on one's own and avoiding places that were too crowded; preparing before going out, such as researching places and knowing self-defense; and strategies specific to nighttime, from avoiding going out at night all together to knowing what transportation to use. These strategies were often informed by experiences and strategies used in participants' home countries. Mental strategies included silencing oneself in classroom settings, adapting one's accent, rationalizing the discriminatory words of others, avoiding political confrontation, and joining student groups. In the next two sections, I discuss my

interpretations of influences on participants' lives based on findings presented so far, then I present participants' perspectives of the effects on their lives.

Influences on Participants' Lives

In addition to the strategies presented above, participants shared the ways in which their experiences and perceptions about safety and violence influenced them. In this section, I summarize what I am calling influences on their lives as a result of participants' experiences and perceptions of safety and violence discussed in Chapters 5 through 7 and as a result of the strategies discussed above. These influences on their lives included strong emotional responses and mental health, questioning experiences, and limits on freedom and opportunity. I end with positive influences on participants' lives.

Emotional Responses and Mental Health

While telling me about experiences that affected their sense of safety, participants shared their emotional responses. Immediate emotional responses included being scared or afraid. Sara, for example, told me she felt scared and frightened when she was in a Lyft going to class in the morning and the car was being followed by another car. Nila shared she was scared when she was looking at an apartment with an insistent realtor. Ceres was scared when she felt she was being followed returning home. Several participants felt scared when waiting at a bus stop and being approached by a man for money. Labrador shared she did not necessarily feel scared but angry when thinking about her experiences of sexual and street harassment. She was infuriated thinking about gun violence in the United States. Other participants shared they felt sad when thinking about mass shootings. When thinking about racism and discrimination, some participants felt sad, upset, or annoyed. For example, Kate was annoyed when a professor did not

get her name correct. Matt and Emma both felt unwanted as a result of some policies in the United States.

While some of these emotional responses were immediate or short term, some participants also talked about more long-term emotional effects. For example, Matt talked about her overall depressed feelings as a result of negative interactions with her previous advisor. Ms. W, when defining safety, said she almost always felt unsafe in contrast to people who "are optimistic to think the world around them is safe." A few participants also mentioned carrying a sense of always being on guard, particularly in public places.

Mental Health Effects of Xenophobia and Racism

Participants shared the mental health effects as a result of xenophobic and racist language they heard along with the experiences of others. I asked participants during the second interview specifically about their reactions and thoughts to an increase in hate crimes and bias related incidents in the previous few years, including those targeting international students. Sara said, "I always imagine the worst, this could happen to me as well." Emma said it affected her mental health:

It enters how you can imagine yourself and your environment. You can imagine someone angry, who just wants to get rid of [people from her home country], or get rid of people of color, or whatever. But it's kind of more... because I'm usually around university, you try to think not in these terms, but in... for me it's just that it affects my mental health, maybe, that you can imagine incidents for yourself, basically.

As was discussed in Chapter 5 and 7 and above, some participants specifically tried not to think about certain incidents to protect their mental health. Labrador, for example, tried not to think too much about then-President Trump's policies, and Jasmine tried to not to pay attention to the

way people looked at her. Some participants tried not to think about gun violence. In addition, as discussed in the strategies section above, some participants disengaged from their environment to protect their mental health.

Questioning Experiences

Although participants did not necessarily name it as an influence on their lives, participants talked about questioning their experiences and their thinking processes around safety and violence. Specifically, several participants discussed not knowing whether something was discrimination or not as discussed in Chapter 5. Jasmine, for example, talked about not being sure whether the ways people looked at her reflected discrimination. Matt and Nila talked about not being sure about some of their experiences and excused some people's behavior, including professors, for what might be considered discrimination as ignorance. Kate, Emma, and Labrador shared experiences in the airport they were not sure was discrimination. Some participants spent time in the interviews rationalizing others' behaviors or comments and explaining they were not sure the person intended what they said or did as discussed in the strategies section above.

In addition, participants showed they thought a lot about safety, in the ways they negotiated whether it was worth saying something in certain instances, for example, if there could be a gun present; the ways they interacted with strangers on the street or with neighbors; and the ways they thought about their financial security. Throughout the interviews, I got the sense that thinking about safety and violence among many of the participants took up a lot of brain space and energy. I noted the amount of emotional labor several participants expended in relation to their experiences and perceptions of safety and violence. In addition, this mental labor could have been spent on other activities like having fun, being a student, and participating in research.

Decreased Freedom and Opportunities

Several participants shared how their perceptions and experiences of violence and safety resulted in decreased freedom and opportunity. Jasmine, most strongly, shared about the ways in which she organized her life around avoiding violence and maintaining her and her family's safety, in ways that meant she could not experience things like concerts, large events, or even going out on her own. She framed these strategies as resulting in a loss of her freedom as described in the strategies section above and will be revisited in the last section of this chapter. Sara also talked about missing out on fun. Other participants also shared their decreased opportunity. For example, while Lyly was overall satisfied with her experiences, she wanted the buses to run 24/7. At her previous institution, she would stay in her lab late; at her current institution, she generally left early but would stay later if the buses ran later. Lyly did not indicate the inability to stay late affected her research, however.

For some, participants explicitly talked about how their perceptions and experiences of violence and safety influenced their opportunities as students and researchers. Most notably, visa restrictions and the travel ban affected Ceres's and Emma's abilities to travel back to their home countries, to see their families, and to do certain types of research as discussed in Chapter 6. Furthermore, due to work restrictions, many participants shared they could not work additional jobs or hours and felt financially insecure on their stipends and during summers. In another way, as discussed in the strategies section above, participants did not necessarily participate fully as students, such as not talking in classes or in meetings, or as teachers, to protect themselves from potential violence or maintain their sense of safety.

Positive Influences

Thus far, I have considered and included what may be considered negative influences on participants' lives. In an effort, however, to give a more complete and complex picture of the influences of experiences and perceptions of safety and violence, it is important that I acknowledge and include positive influences on participants' lives. The positive influences have been included throughout the findings thus far and are summarized here. First, many participants overall felt safer in the United States than they did in their home countries. While I focus here on the mental labor spent on assessing safety in the United States above, it is of course possible that the mental labor is less than it was in their home countries. Second, some participants felt freer to live and speak up, namely Lyly and Sofia, who felt they could speak freely in class and without judgment. They also talked about how they felt freer out in public without the threats in their home countries as a woman, as Lyly said, or in terms of violations of security of property or as a Muslim, as Sofia discussed. Jasmine overall felt academically freer, in that she felt respected by professors as colleagues, something she did not experience in her home country. Third, a few participants discussed their development of greater agency and resistance to norms. Specifically, Kate learned not to Americanize and assimilate, and Matt and Nila talked about not caring or subscribing to gender norms learned in their home countries. Participants also shared the positive ways in which they were influenced by their perspectives and experiences of safety and violence in the United States, which will be discussed in the next section.

Participants' Perceptions of Effects

The sections so far in this chapter included participants' strategies along with how I thought participants' lives were influenced by their perceptions and experiences of safety and violence. I also wanted to hear directly from them what they thought, so I asked participants

towards the end of the second set of interviews, "How have your perceptions and experiences about violence and safety affected you, if it all?" Their answers were often unique, and sometimes unexpected, even though there was some overlap throughout the interviews. I am including all of their answers here to give the reader a better idea of how participants perceived the effects on their own lives, to complicate my interpretations above.

Consistent with their overall experiences in the United States, Sofia and Lyly had positive thoughts about how their perspectives and experiences affected them. Sofia's perspectives were informed in part by a comparison between her experiences in her home country versus the United States. She felt more respected by people and more secure in terms of her property in the United States than her home country:

For me now, considering what I've experienced through this country, I only give bonus points. Because first of all, the quality of people here, I can say it's high quality, these people here. It's like when you go to a shop and you are buying a cloth and you find high quality clothes. So, I can say that people here, the ones I've met here in the United States have been high quality people. They've made me feel ... as in, they've made me feel respected compared to when I'm at home and the politeness of the society. Then the security system also, because moving with this perception that, "Hey, I'm not going to be robbed. I'm okay. I'm secure. I can leave this thing here and find it." That has also really ... it has really affected me positively. I can't say from my experiences that I've been affected in a negative way, no. Everything here for me is a bonus point.

Lyly, too, had positive experiences, which was reflected in her attitude. She responded to my question about effects as follows:

Yeah, I think so, because I always keep saying to myself, "Be positive, be active, be

productive." And I'm always doing that. So, I believe that a good thought will attract good thought. Good people will attract good people. Positive thinking will bring something positive. And then, just don't be afraid to speak up. Something happened, something really bothering you, say it.

As discussed in previous sections and chapters, Lyly luckily did not have anything happen to her that bothered her.

For Matt, who discussed some negative experiences, particularly academically as well as with her loud neighbors, talked about one way those experiences have affected her to make her feel more empowered:

Have affected me? For some reason, I feel a lot more empowered now than I used to be. I feel like I'm not going to take shit from someone. I'm just going to yell if something happens. And by yell, I mean just make a lot of noise and just let people know. I've been feeling more and more strongly about gender differences and keeping things equal between men and women. And I feel like that's why with these things, I just have no patience. So, if I feel like something's not okay, I'm just going to make a lot of noise about it.

This answer reminded me of one of her previous comments about not caring if someone told her to, for example, go back home.

Labrador also felt empowered, though she did not use those words, to take matters into her own hands by learning self-defense. When answering my question, Labrador first reflected on her past and privilege, noting that while she grew up in a country with violent conflict, she realized how lucky she had been in comparison to others. She continued by talking about self-defense as a woman:

But there's a reality that everyone as a woman faces in the world, that's unfortunately the case, and because of that I would always tell people to learn, to go to at least a few self-defense classes, just know what to do. I kind of played in my head what different scenarios of, if I was being sexually assaulted how would you get away from it, what would you do, what would be the best way to get someone to feel like they're powerful and get away. Those kind of things. And I feel like that's pretty common, when you're a woman. And that doesn't have anything to do with being international or anything, it just has to do with hearing what happens to the women, hearing what's happened to friends and colleagues and... Not that I know of, not relatives that I know of but, just sort of knowing what the reality is like. Yeah. So, it's always in my head that, I want to be as safe as I possibly can, but not allow that to guide whether I'm going to take on an adventure or go somewhere.

Labrador told me why she promoted self-defense as is seen in the following exchange:

Labrador:

It helps to know that you'd be able to, well hopefully be able to deal with something. You'd have some of the tools in case someone attacks you. It kind of adds to the feeling of being independent. I think safety and violence and that issue mostly, well, not just women but currently in the climate just people of color or immigrants, it takes away the independence of doing what you want to do, of being free. Sapna:

Wait, what takes away the independence?

Labrador:

The... Not feeling safe. Like you could attract violence by doing something or being a certain way. And I think things like taking self-defense classes or knowing there's someone you can call at any time of the night to come get you, all of that I think, helps to increase your sense of independence because you're able to do things and you know that you're going to be okay.

Jasmine, too, felt the loss of independence. She generally took an approach of avoiding situations that might be unsafe. As stated earlier in this chapter, Jasmine told me her strategies

limited her freedom. She reiterated this point in response to my question about effects, saying she, as a result of avoiding situations, had less freedom:

I guess I have less freedom. Before I came here, I imagine I would be able to experience lots of things like going to watch a game like a basketball game or some Super Bowl and going to a concert, going to some famous Gun and Rose concert, music festivals, but actually I think it's better if I don't go to those events.

Jasmine's answer was not surprising, given her discussion throughout both interviews about the extent to which she had organized her life around maintaining her safety and avoiding violence, including not going anywhere on her own to avoiding grocery stores on weekends because shootings happen in crowded places.

Sara talked about a similar effect on her: "Definitely makes me more cautious in every way, my day-to-day life and in everything actually. In every aspect of my life, I'm just much more cautious." In addition to things like not going out at night, she also did not talk to strangers, even though that was culturally accepted in the United States, because she did not grow up with that norm. When I asked her if her cautiousness was something she actively thought about or if it was ingrained, she replied, "I think it's become ingrained."

Ceres started to realize she thought more about safety than she did before. She said when she heard news, she would consider safety. The awareness that guns were legal in the United States, which was a surprise to her, made her feel unsafe. She also said that if she ever got into an argument, which never happened, she would think about whether the other person had a gun.

For Kate, her experiences affected her in that she felt she became more prejudiced. She reminded me of an accident she had soon after she started at Blue University:

...and the driver was a Latino driver, and he didn't really speak English so I couldn't

communicate with him. I had to communicate with the person who was on the passenger seat and her English was almost perfect, but she didn't really know the situation that well because she wasn't really paying attention because she wasn't driving. And it gave me some prejudice that Hispanic drivers could be dangerous. And I know it's bad, but I couldn't really help.

She had referred to feeling like she was more prejudiced during other points in the interview as well. Kate had also alluded to other effects on her throughout the interviews, but she chose to focus on this particular point when I asked the question about effects.

For Ms. W, her perceptions and experiences meant she wanted to become more knowledgeable about the United States and its laws:

I think it's... It is hard to tell because back in my country, I know a lot of laws, but here I know less so I cannot feel I need more knowledge about what will be allowed and what, which are not allowed, if happens, how much will this person be punished. I think I should know more about this. That will make me feel better.

Ms. W's answer was consistent with her definitions during the first interview. She framed her definition of safety around statistics and probability.

In contrast, Emma reflected inward when I asked about the effects of her experiences and perceptions:

At one level it makes life harder. Because you come to understand that it makes you sort of hopeless in finding ways to deal with it and to fight it. Because the more hidden it becomes the harder it gets to fight. Because if you can't really prove that this is violence then how are you going to fight it? On the other hand, maybe I don't know, sometimes you tend to understand yourself but then you're kind of, be more compassionate with

yourself, in the self. Or you don't really beat up yourself that much because you know in what kind of situation you are living.

It seemed at the end of the interview, Emma was still grappling with the definitions of violence and the effects of naming her own experiences as violence.

When I asked Nila, she thought about two main effects. First, she thought about how her experiences and perceptions had shaped the kind of academic she wanted to be:

Well, one thing I think about a lot is about I really want to be in academia, so the kind of person I want to be. So, one of my advisors is pretty great, and he's, I think, a very good teacher at heart. And no one knows what happens in other cultures or whatever, but I think he shows a certain kind of curiosity and openness that makes it comfortable for you to talk about your experience from a very different world, and he'd be engaged and actually interested. So, I think that's the biggest thing. It makes me think about what I want to do, and the ways in which ... I want to be in academia, but generally, more broadly be in the education world. So, think about the kinds of inequality we don't talk about within school settings. Yeah, stuff like that. Another thing is how a lot of the norms are [...] in terms of how there are so many unsaid norms for any setting, and they're largely dictated by the dominant group. And you need to be really adaptive as an outsider to learn them, and mimic them, and show that you're adept at them to be able to navigate the system. But they're very unsaid, so most people don't know what those norms are. Like even simple things like when you want to go to grad school, email a professor. No one tells you to email a professor, no one tells you what to say in that email, but then what you say in that email, they'll judge you based on that. And stuff like that. So, I think I look out for the things that different universities are doing to accommodate people. And the people who generally don't know what to say tend to be people whose, I don't know, families aren't very well connected, or who are new to ... who are first-gen students, or I don't know, disadvantaged in different ways, or from very different cultures. So, I look out to see what people do to address these things, what can be done, stuff like that. So, that's a little bit of an idealistic view in terms of what I want to do.

Second, Nila said, while she realized that faculty could help students, including international students, adapt and navigate the U.S. system, she herself did not need to adapt in ways that made her inauthentic:

There's another thing I think about a lot, and I was actually talking this even yesterday. About how when I initially moved here, I think I was way more normative ... I adapted much more than now. Now I'm kind of like, "I don't care that much." But then at that point, I needed to make some friends, I didn't know anybody here. So, in terms of even how I would pronounce words, what I would say. I think my motivation to learn and mimic was really high. And after a while, it feels fake, because it doesn't feel authentic, I'm not saying things the way I would say it. And slowly, I went back, not entirely, but to some extent to my baseline, and found a place where I'm comfortable, and I can still to some extent, express my own norms, do my own thing, and feel okay.

Nila's second point reiterated what she had told me earlier about not needed to adapt as much as she did when she started her program.

Chapter 8 Summary

This chapter was in response to the third research question about how women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of safety and violence influenced their lives. One major way in which their lives were influenced was through the creation and

adoption of strategies to maintain physical and mental safety and avoid violence. These strategies were not necessarily conscious and included avoiding places and self-silencing. Strategies were often informed by participants' previous experiences in the United States, in their home countries, and in other locations. In addition to strategies, I perceived several other influences on participants' lives including negative influences on their mental health, the tendency to question their experiences, and decreased freedom and opportunities as well as positive influences including feeling freer and developing greater agency. Finally, I presented participants' perspectives about effects on their lives in their own words. These perspectives complicated my previous section, including forcing me to think about the positive influences and ways in which participants felt empowered. As can be seen in this chapter, participants' lives are influenced by their perceptions and experiences of safety and violence in a variety of ways and extend beyond academic realms into all facets of their lives. In the next chapter, I present participants' perspectives about what their universities should do to maintain safety and prevent violence.

CHAPTER 9: PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Sara Ahmed (2017), *Living a Feminist Life*:

A question can be out of place: words too. One response might be to aim to reside as well as we can in the spaces that are not intended for us. We might even identify with the universal of the university by agreeing to put our particulars to one side. There is disruption, even invention, in that, of that I have no doubt. But think of this: those of us who arrive in an academy that was not shaped by or for us bring knowledges, as well as worlds, that otherwise would not be here. Think of this: how we learn about worlds when they do not accommodate us. Think of the kinds of experiences you have when you are not expected to be here. These experiences are a resource to generate knowledge. To bring feminist theory home is to make feminism work in the places we live, the places we work. When we think of feminist theory as homework, the university too becomes something we work on as well as at. We use our particulars to challenge the universal. (pp. 9-10)

In an effort to bring participants' knowledges into the university, I explicitly asked participants toward the end of the second interview what responsibilities the university had to make participants and their peers feel safer and to prevent and address violence. This chapter comes from participants' answers to that question and follow up questions, such as what participants thought their university could do better, along with comments they made throughout the interviews. In the first section on assumption of responsibility, I found some participants did not necessarily share the belief that universities had responsibilities to keep them safe or felt their university was doing enough through resources and rules. Most participants had suggestions for what their university's responsibilities were and what the universities could do better. In the second major section, I share these suggestions, which included improving transparency, training members of the campus community, and providing opportunities for feedback. In addition, participants had thoughts about changing campus policies and increasing policing and

surveillance. Finally, I include a discussion on participants' perspectives on transportation in their respective locations.

Assumption of University Responsibility

The question I asked participants assumed that the university *has* responsibility to its students in terms of safety, an assumption I hold, but one that was not necessarily shared by all participants. Kate, for example, replied as follows, showing her grappling with the question:

I'm not sure if university has that responsibility. The university is of course responsible for any kind of physical violence. They should ensure students that at least campus is really safe. In that way they are responsible, but in terms of something more psychological and subtle, I don't think the university has a lot to do with it.

Kate, however, did tell me how she thought the university could do better, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Ceres, toward the end of the second interview, discussed how her perception of safety changed through the interviews. Before the interviews, she told me, she felt that safety meant she should be careful so she was safe; in other words, she assumed it was her responsibility to keep herself safe. At the end of the second interview, however, she began to think about the university's responsibility as well as the government's. She told me had not really thought about that before.

Labrador, while she did not explicitly mention she felt it was her responsibility to keep herself safe, talked throughout the interviews about, for example, learning self-defense and knowing where the nearest convenience store was when she was walking at night, implicitly assuming responsibility for her safety. When I asked if there was anything the university could do better to make her feel safer, she replied as follows:

No. No, but... Yeah again, I don't... I'm sure there are tons of things they could do that I'm missing. I think I've kind of gotten used to this. There's this sort of level of unsafety that I'm willing to accept. And so, the main issue would be the guns, but beyond that it's kind of like... Yeah. I know how to defend myself, if I was assaulted...

She went on to reiterate her knowledge of self-defense. Notably, she also mentioned she felt safer in the city of Blue University than she did at her undergraduate institution in a larger U.S. city.

Satisfaction

After hearing many participants' perspectives of feeling unsafe and because of my own perspectives on university responsibility, I was surprised by the idea that participants were satisfied with the university or could not think of what the university could do to make them feel safer. Sara, who shared some concerns about transparency elsewhere in the interview, was generally satisfied as can be seen in the following exchange:

Sapna:

What do you think that the university can do better to make you feel more safe?

Sara:

Safe in terms of physically safe or?

Sapna:

It could include physically safe, emotionally safe, or mentally safe or however you are thinking about it.

Sara:

I don't know. I think it's doing an okay job now. And I personally can't think of anything that could make this better, because I'm satisfied. It's adequate.

A few participants also talked about the resources that already existed. Kate and Labrador both mentioned the existence of workshops and other resources available to them at Blue University. Specifically, Kate said, "There are a bunch of workshops and focus groups that you can actually join. But I think the university already has a lot of resources. It's just a matter of actually use it or not." Labrador also said, "they have a lot of sexual harassment workshops, the

women's health center is really quite good," and continued by discussing the university police, which will be discussed more later in this chapter. She also mentioned that while she had not needed to use these resources or know others who did directly, she imagined they were "probably good" given the large size of the university and "they've probably now gotten used to handling reports of things." Labrador admitted, however, she did not know as much about the university and its resources than she did when she was in her undergraduate institution.

It is important to note, however, participants may have not thought about their university's responsibilities because many of their experiences related to feeling unsafe and violence were not necessarily on campus. From their perspective, they may have thought the university was not responsible for, or could not control, what happened off campus. As mentioned, I came into the study with the assumption that because a university is responsible for bringing students to the United States, universities also have responsibilities for those students' safety.

Trust in Rules

When I asked Lyly and Sofia about what they thought the university could do to make them feel safer, they focused on existing rules and laws. Their assumption, I would argue, is that rules and laws work. They trusted the systems in place at the university. Lyly's trust can be seen in the following exchange:

Lyly:

I don't know. Maybe in general, as long as they stick with the rules. We had, say, Title IX, we are all adults here, right? Just be on the track. Okay, sure that the university, they are really wise people, so they know what to do. So, I don't want to put any comment about it. It's their job; they know what to do.

Sapna:

Okay. Is there anything that you feel that the university can do better to make you feel more safe or to make other people feel more safe?

Lyly:

I think for now they're doing really good. [...] I can say that I'm proud of them.

Lyly also put trust in existing reporting structures for experiences of violence, presumably regarding sexual harassment and other physical violence:

There's a rule too, if you have that experience you have to... You can report that, you can go to some places and get protection or advice or whatever you need. So, we have that system. So, I hope it will never happen with me and people around me.

Sofia felt the university had a strong role in safety and security of students but also put trust in the university, comparing it to a governmental body, as can be seen in the following exchange:

Sofia:

The university has a very, very, very, very strong role or very, very strong say in the security of the students and the employees and the staff. Because remember the university is the bigger picture. And so, it's the body that sets the rules, just like how you see a country can have a government, and it's the government that is setting the rules which the people have to follow. So, it's the university actually that is in charge of these people. And if there is any weakness in the rule, it is the university that will face charge of whatsoever goes wrong to the students. Because the students have to feel they are secure and safe and also, they are gaining a good education that was the main aim for them to come here.

Sapna:

What do you think ... so if it happens that there is a weakness in those rules and something goes wrong, then what should the university do or what should happen as a result of any problems that take place?

Sofia:

Being a public institution, it should be able to use the rules that have been set to set right whatsoever has been done and also to include ... because every university has also the police section. So, I believe that police section is there for security and also to make sure that the rules are followed. And also, if there is any violence it takes charge of the violence. So as a university it should use that section of the police to make sure that any rule that is bent or any violence that is made, they can be able to take control of that situation, calm it down and also ensure that the people in the area are secure and they are not in a state of insecurity.

Sapna:

What do you think your university can do better to make you feel even more safe? Sofia:

Most of the precautions have already been taken because there is the university police. And also, it's prohibited to have a gun on campus. And also, if there is anything that comes up there is quick intervention by the authorities. So, I think it has done its best to

make me feel that I'm secure.

It is important for me to note that although open carry is not allowed on campus and gun possession is restricted on some parts of campus, it is not prohibited to have a gun on the Green University campus because of the state-wide campus carry law at public universities. I did not, however, correct Sofia during the interview. Overall, Sofia felt the existence of the rules and the university's ability to enforce them was enough. This is consistent with Sofia's answer to questions about sexual harassment as discussed in Chapter 7. In addition, she put a lot of trust in the police at the university, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Institutional Changes

Although some participants were generally satisfied with how the university handled its responsibility, many of the participants, including those in the previous section above, had suggestions and ideas of where they thought the university could improve its efforts. These included being more transparent; offering training for faculty, other members of the campus community, and international students themselves; improving Title IX and diversity training; asking questions and offering opportunities for feedback from international students; standardizing systems; changing regulations and advocating for legal changes; and increasing policing and surveillance.

Transparency

For Sara, the university's responsibility was largely in being transparent and keeping its students aware of situations that affected them:

I think keeping us aware of different kinds of situations, threats. Any kind of negative situation that could impact us negatively. Because awareness is a big part of it. A lot of times international students may just not be aware of certain things. And after awareness

there is of course providing solutions. What do you do when you face such and such situation, because we students are here almost under your protection.

When I asked Sara for an example of when she felt the university did a good job of keeping students aware, she shared it was in an instance of a natural disaster in the state a few semesters prior:

We got emails and all the administrative staff in the department, they actually came over to our cubicles and told us that, "Don't worry, just stay at home. It's probably not going to be very bad in [city of Blue University]. But maybe stock up on some food and everything and we'll send out an email anyway." So, I think they paid a little more attention to us because we were international students.

One participant, however, did not feel there was enough transparency. In Chapter 7, I shared her experiences of finding out about a professor known for sexual harassment. One of her recommendations was transparency:

They should tell us what has happened. They should let us know. That's a good way because then we don't rely on rumors and our own online search. Internet is not a very reliable source for information. If there is a way to report things, we did have that. You can report anyone who's discriminating as far as gender, age, or race is concerned. I think it depends on every professor, every other graduate students' support. That's very important on a personal level, not just this big institution.

In addition, some participants desired more transparency and information about policies directly affecting international students. During the course of the second set of interviews, in Spring 2020, another travel ban was announced limiting travel from several additional countries. Kate said she would have wanted the international office to "be more upfront and more informative"

because I haven't really heard of the travel ban that happened" the day before our interview.

Training

In addition to transparency, many participants focused on training the university should provide for different populations, including professors, other members of the campus community, and for international students directly. In addition, participants discussed the efficacy of existing trainings, including those on Title IX. Participants saw these trainings as beginning to address safety and security concerns, particularly those shared in Chapter 5 and 6.

Training for Faculty Members

Several participants wanted to see improved training for their professors particularly about international graduate students' experiences. Although Emma did not explicitly name training, she illuminated the problems that might make this type training for professors beneficial. Namely, she talked about professors forgetting what it was like to be a graduate student: "many times it's very, sometimes very surprising for me, that even people who had similar experiences they tend to forget the differences when they come to a position of power, this kind of thing." Her advisor, she told me, was American but was originally from her home country. In a few instances, Emma's advisor tried to compare his experience with hers, but failed to remember the struggles she had specifically as an international graduate student:

He had to be reminded that, "Hey, I cannot work outside the university." And then there's even no place within university that can give you any kind of anything comparable to a TA income and TA benefits like tuition stuff and insurance and all of this. And there's nothing comparable. And he just consider it as something normal that I have to fight for. He doesn't understand that they need support. And, of course, I need additional support at

this time. And he doesn't even give the support. The equal support that everyone needs as just a student of him.

Matt also commented on professors not understanding what it meant to be an international student. She, however, was must more direct about the need for training:

They need to train advisors. They need to train mentors. I think that's the first really big step that they need to take. Because oh my god, like these professors, they take on international students without having the slightest clue about what it is to be an international student. Like what it is to learn in a completely different academic system, come here and learn a new system, learn to do research in a program that is so ambiguous, without family or friends or anything. Starting from scratch, essentially. So, I think a big thing that the university has to do is give these professors some managerial training. And then on top of that also, how to deal with international students. Because they have no training and they are so tone-deaf about so many things. I know professors who mean well, but sometimes they say these things that are absolutely tone-deaf.

Nila thought there was a lack of incentive for professors to do better, particularly after getting tenure. Although she advocated for training, she thought the existing trainings were inadequate. Instead, training, or something else, for professors had to make some culture change and improve understanding about international students' experiences and differences:

I think professors, they very rarely have to undergo trainings, and all trainings are like, "Whatever, just watch this video, and say next, next, next." Or you go to some room and sit there, and really just spend a half hour there and get out. I don't think anyone really thinks about these things on a personal level or cares. And even when they do, it's at that meeting, which might be about diversity or something, but not as an everyday way of

thinking. So, I don't there's a culture of thinking about differences, and trying to find ways to allow differences to thrive. I don't think most people even know what I was saying earlier about some voices could easily get silenced because they're not expressed in the way that is clear, rather than because the content of what they're saying is stupid. But I don't think most people get that, because that idea that this is how competence is, or this is how it looks, or this is how it's expressed, I think those associations are so strong. I don't think people account for the many cultural differences, and norms, and ways in which people do different things. So, I would say that there needs to be ... and I don't even know if it makes sense, that there should be training, because I know how these trainings happen. They're so stupid, and nobody cares. But something that really creates this culture and goes beyond it.

When discussing with me her perspectives on U.S. policies, Nila also made connections to the implications for faculty working with international students, referring to events in Iran in December 2019 and January 2020:

I think with all that was going on in Iran and everything, there were all these internet shutdowns. And I saw on Twitter, I know this professor who's Iranian, and he was posting about how people should extend their deadlines, college application deadlines because there's an internet shut down there, which means how will they submit. And that's the thing that I would have never thought about. So, I think even when people talk about all of this, we think of racism, violence, all these abstract concepts, but not the everyday ... Because for most kids, if you can't go to college this year and you have to wait till next year, that's a big thing. But I think we don't accommodate imaginations of everyday experiences for people who are possibly affected by these things.

Thus, as participants explained, training for faculty members could include the specifics of what international graduate students face while studying in the United States.

Training for Other Members of the Campus Community

Some participants also wanted to see education for other members of the campus community so they, too, understood the experiences of international students. Ms. W, for example, said, "Educate those, the United States students and the outside students, about treat everybody evenly and respect and be kind to people." She went on to acknowledge that student organizations on campus, including "Black people organizations, Asian people organization" that already "raise some attention to people to know that there are us who are not treated evenly."

Nila continued with her theme of culture change, arguing there should be a culture of asking questions and not assuming everyone is the same:

And I think part of it is also just little things, like listening, and paying attention, asking questions. I get it, I didn't know a lot of the norms here before I moved, and it's okay if you don't know how people in Peru live. I don't know how people in Peru live, but I think just creating a culture where people feel comfortable asking questions. And I think the easy thing many people do to ... people who are woke and trying to be accepting or whatever, I think what people do is they don't acknowledge the ... they try to act like you're not different, or you're not from a different place. But I don't think that helps because you are different, that's the truth, and it's more about being okay with it, and accepting it, rather than being blind to it. [...] But I think the focus that comes on such things and what you're supposed to say or whatever, and not really being curious about where anybody's from, or what their norms are, or anything like that. And I think that unless they create that kind of a culture here, it's hard.

Training for International Students

In addition to education about international students for members of the campus community, participants thought there should be education, or training, for international students. Matt noted the need for training related to different academic systems, saying, "they need to have some sort of a scaffold for international students. Because at least, compared to the American system, the [home country] academic system is just completely different. It's the opposite sometimes." Matt's suggestions reflected some of her experiences shared in previous chapters.

Ms. W and Sara talked about the need for education around things like laws, taxes, and unspoken laws and rules. Ms. W said, "teach the international students more about like American laws, restricts, and something not written in law, but people should know." When I asked Sara about where she felt her university did not meet its responsibility to its students, she explained as follows:

I think something that we would never understand or be aware of and actually experience it, is all the paperwork and all the ... What should I say? All the work that we have to do to get our funding and to get our TA stipend and everything, because it's all given in a document to us. But if we had mandatory sessions about these things where you were required to attend these sessions, and not just optional. You can go to this if you want more information about insurance. It should be mandatory. Taxes, insurance, these things, because at the time of filing taxes or asking for insurance waivers, there's always panic. People run around like headless chickens every time we do this. And we figure out this is what we're supposed to do and the next time we're supposed to do it, everyone automatically forgets. Because we're just figuring it out every time.

I asked Sara how she felt these types of trainings would have changed her experience. She said, "I think that would reduce a lot of anxiety I felt in my first year, which I didn't know I could experience because I wasn't even aware. Honestly." Emma also wanted to see more support when it came to things like taxes and legal matters:

Or, I don't know, at least they could provide more legal support and international advising support. But they just don't know. I was trying to ask if my mom could apply for a visa and then they were just like, "Oh sorry, we just don't know." They basically know nothing about visa, they know nothing about taxes. All of these things they refer outside. And all of these needs money and they just don't understand that. And you have to do all of that. You can't live without, I don't know, you have to do your taxes. And they just provide these random things. And they're not specialized. It's just everyone's pray. I think university could do something but they're just, it's nothing to benefit right now.

Like Nila above, Emma did not see there was an incentive for the university to do better and provide these trainings.

Title IX Training

As mentioned above, participants felt existing trainings were inadequate. Some participants also felt the sexual harassment and Title IX trainings were not done well. When I asked Matt about those trainings, she replied with her skepticism if she was the target audience:

I don't think they help in any way. It's just ... I'm a TA, and you're training you to do this, but I'm this poor student who's just trying to do research and attend class and make ends meet. And then also, about sexual harassment and stuff, where I'm way down on the hierarchy. And I'm going to be more the victim than the perpetrator. So, you're giving

me these trainings, all right, but am I really who you're targeting? Am I really the core of the problem? I'm not. I'm just a poor PhD student that you're scaring about these things. So, I actually think these trainings are a bit ineffective.

Nila also thought the trainings were inadequate, as they focused on technicalities and there was no good means of evaluation:

Even the sexual harassment training is really obvious things or whatever. It's not about ... for example, they're not real-world dilemmas, they're not about the number of times it actually happens at [Blue University], the number of students who report all of this. That's in some data, they'll do some survey, and they'll find out all these and send it in one email. But the training won't connect to [Blue University] or any kind of reality here. It'll be about some abstract person. So, I don't think it feels real or anything. For example, that Title IX training we had that day, I think that felt more real. Although it was more somehow ... I don't know if it was because of the trainer or the questions people were asking, it became a little ... Or maybe that was the point. It was less about sexual harassment and stuff, and more about the technicalities around what needs to be reported and what doesn't. Because that started with this kind of ominous thing of, I guess, there is some new thing where if professors don't report something, they can be terminated. And it was all about that. So, it was all questions of, "If you're in a room, and someone is reporting to someone there, and you hear it, should you still report it?" These kind of technical questions of what may or may not get you kicked out of your job, that kind of stuff. But I think maybe we need more, I don't know, more personal things, or something. Or maybe there needs to be some way in which you're evaluated in a more real way, or you are able to take a real test even if the results of it don't go to the

university or whatever. Where, somehow, you're able to see what your real awareness is that's beyond these stupid obvious things like, "Is it okay to touch someone?" or I don't know, this kind of obvious stuff that everyone knows.

Nila's suggested improvements included making trainings more specific and real and creating a better way to evaluate training participants for knowledge gained.

Feedback and Institutional Consistency

A few participants noted the lack of opportunities for feedback to the university and inconsistency across the university, particularly among those participants who knew graduate students in other departments. When I asked Nila what other things the university could do make her feel safer, she replied with the need for members within the university to ask these questions and be open to feedback:

I think that one thing could be that ... for example, no one has ever asked me this question at the university. I think just creating that conversation. I don't think anyone asked anyone how their experience as an international student is, or what the department can do, or anything like that. I think even just collecting those perspectives in a bottom-up way, rather than just doing something to signal something may be useful. [...] And I think that would just start with conversation like the grad coordinator, or even your advisor. Like even with my advisor or anybody, there's no way of me giving them feedback about whether they're a good mentor, how they can mentor me better, or that kind of stuff. It's very one way, and there's no systematic way to do that kind of stuff.

Matt, too, noted the lack of consistency across the university. Matt interacted with other international graduate students in a student organization. I had asked her earlier in the second interview about whether they talked about financial security among international graduate

students in the organization. She said they did a little bit:

...but it's just that these are so different, from department to department. Engineering departments usually don't have these issues because the professors are really wellfunded. For them, the problem is more about workload and burnout and stuff. Because they have, professors sometimes have unrealistic demands. And for them, their issues are more about, like, "My professor will not let me go home for the next two years." They have those demands. I'm not kidding. Like 100% honest about this. I have a friend in chemistry, and she went through the same thing. Her advisor didn't let her go home, even though her father was really, really sick, and she thought that she might lose him. But her advisor didn't let her go to India until maybe her second year, or something like that. We've talked about this generally with other students in the department, because we all struggle with this. And rent and bills are a real thing, and everyone's concerned. But again, there are variations in how advisors support their students. So, the department's trying, so the stipend structure, they kind of raised our stipends because there was an external review that they did with my department, and it was so bad that the department was just like, "To keep our status, we'll have to change this." And that's why they made these very immediate changes in our stipend structure. But again, it's so new that we still don't know how it's going to work out.

Nila, too, talked about a student in another department who did not have funding, did not have an advisor, and did not know where to turn for help. She lamented this and other students' situations:

There is, I think, no systemic effort to deal with these issues, and especially they're harder if you're an international student, because if you don't have funding, how do you

afford living here? Your family earns ... even if they were to support you, they probably earn ... like in [home country currency], it's nothing relative to dollars. And it doesn't make sense for you to not pay tuition and be here. Should you go back, there's ... I think a lot of these questions get way more complicated if you're an international student because of all the money and visa things involved, and there is just no ... It's not obvious where to go. You kind of look around to see who's helpful. So, it's very ad hoc. But I think the main thing is that they don't make you think that they're trying, or they don't show you that they're trying, and maybe they're not, but that would be my biggest thing.

I asked Nila to clarify who she meant by "they." She replied that she had thought of the department's administration because that was who she interacts with most. She also could see there being a need for this to be addressed at higher levels. Nila considered herself lucky but noted that if things did not work out for her or others, "there's no grievance addressal system. Then you're in a bad place, and you're just looking around for help." Nila also thought the situation at Blue University was likely better than at smaller universities and admitted she did not see all of the advantages of being at a large university.

Changing University Regulations

As discussed in Chapter 7, several participants were surprised at the prevalence of guns and gun violence in the United States. Still, only a few participants mentioned banning or restricting guns as something the university could change to make them feel safer. Jasmine, for example, started her answer to my question with, "I think if they don't allow people to carry guns on campus or in classroom." Ceres said that maybe banning guns in the university would be nice.

Other participants may have realized, however, and Labrador articulated, the university was not able to do anything about guns, given concealed carry was a state law. When I asked Labrador what the university could do, she replied, "Unfortunately, because it's a public university, I think their hands are tied a little bit. The biggest thing, I think that keeps me from feeling safe are the guns. And unfortunately, [Blue University] can't actually do anything about that."

In addition, although universities also cannot change federal visa laws, Emma saw opportunities for universities to change their support and internal structures:

At least they could eliminate the structural barriers. Sometimes because everything becomes economic, and they don't understand that it's actually about being international, not just economic. And then you are searching for a job over the summer, and then some of them require you... Or some of the good ones require you to have coursework at university. And having coursework means that you have to pay tuition and that's not what you can do as an international student especially because you're... I mean you can't pay it but even if you could pay it could be double tuition. [...] If there are less stupid rules like having 80 students or like giving 80 students one TA, this kind of things.

She was referring to being dropped as a TA from a class because the enrollment cap was so high to justify a TA. Emma wanted these types of university regulations to change and for the university administrators who make those rules to understand what it means to be an international student.

Police Presence and Surveillance

As discussed above, some participants thought their university was doing enough through the rules they had in place and trusted their universities to follow them. Some participants also put trust in the police. In fact, some participants wanted more police and surveillance mechanisms in place at their university. When I asked Ms. W what she thought the university was already doing to maintain her safety, she said, "I think they're doing well about arranging the university police officers. They're really helpful." Based on her answer in a previous interview question, she had not directly interacted with police in the United States, however. When I asked her what else the university could do to make her feel safer, she discussed surveillance technology, recognizing that it would not make everyone feel safer:

Like the video recording on some public areas like the department, not inside people's office, but outside. I think it will make safe. And it may cause some people to be uncomfortable who said it's their own right to make this not public. Sometimes safety and personal space, personal right, these two are kind of opposite to each other.

She also said, "If there are more police officers walking around, it will make me feel better."

Ceres also wanted more surveillance, including increasing security cameras, police officers driving around, and putting more lights in places, for example, at and to get to bus stops.

Although other participants did not mention lighting in response to this question, several mentioned lack of lighting in their experiences of walking at night and feeling unsafe.

Interestingly, all participants mentioned thus far in this section on police and surveillance were from Green University. Most Blue University participants did not mention police or surveillance. The one exception was Labrador, who did mention police visibility:

There's [Blue University] police, and you occasionally see them around. I think maybe they could be more visible. That would probably kind of be it, or if not [Blue University] police, kind of volunteers. So, we do have something called [name of walking service], so you can have someone walk you if you live close enough, sort of anywhere on campus or

outside, they also give us Lyft credit from campus and various regions. [...] Yeah so, they're doing pretty well.

Labrador compared the presence of these walking and Lyft services to her previous institution, which did not have these types of services and she perceived to be less safe than Blue University.

I was honestly surprised to hear several participants saying they wanted more police presence. It is important to note that these interviews took place in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, before the most recent iteration of national attention on police violence in the United States during summer of 2020, particularly towards Black people. I did not explicitly ask participants about their thoughts about police violence or shootings in the United States. A few participants, including Jasmine and Ms. W did recognize that while police and surveillance made them feel safer, it would not make everyone feel safer.

Transportation

Because transportation came up as sites for feeling unsafe, I asked participants about transportation as well. While most participants relied on public transportation systems, some thought they could be better. Nila, for example, explained the stress of relying on the public transportation systems:

I don't think it's the best. It's good to get to campus if you find an apartment, considering the bus route. And the campus, I guess, is just decently well connected to many places, but then other than that, it's pretty bad. It's slow, and I think life is hard if you don't have a car here. It's not very pedestrian friendly, everything is so spread out, and not that well connected. And so even grocery shopping and stuff can be really stressful if you don't have a car. Before I bought my car only six months back, and I was still fine, because my roommate and I get along really well. And so, she would ... whenever she went grocery

shopping, I would go with her. But not everyone has ... that's a luxury, not everyone has that, which I think is really stressful, even the little things. But yeah, in general, I really think public transport is pretty bad in the U.S., in most places, but in [the city of Blue University] for sure.

Sara, also at Blue University, thought, "something like a metro or a subway system would be great. But also increasing buses, bus routes and things like that would also be very helpful."

Jasmine, too, wanted more buses, especially public buses which often took a long time.

At Green University, there were university buses available but no public transportation system. The buses also stopped running in the evenings and only worked half days on the weekends. Lyly wanted 24/7 buses available. Ms. W also mentioned very few people walked around, making the streets feel unsafe, so she wanted more people to walk than drive. Some participants, like Sofia, were generally satisfied with the transportation options, noting their relative safety in comparison public transportation in her home country.

Chapter 9 Summary

In this chapter, I summarized participants' responses to my questions about their university's responsibility for their safety and what they thought the university could do better. While a few participants questioned or did not know what the university could do or were satisfied with existing structures, including rules and resources, most agreed their university had some responsibility for their safety and made suggestions. Participants wanted transparency from university administrators and training for professors, other members of the campus community, themselves and their peers, and changes to existing trainings, including Title IX. In addition, participants wanted opportunities to give feedback and systems in place across the university and made suggestions for changing existing regulations. A few participants wanted more police

presence and surveillance. Finally, several participants wanted expanded public transportation availability.

It was an important part of my study and methodology to ask participants what they wanted to see rather than come up with my own recommendations from scratch or based on my interpretations of their perceptions and experiences. That said, I do not plan to advocate for some of their requests in my recommendations, namely, expanded police presence and surveillance. While these measures may make some of the participants in my study feel safer, I know it simultaneously will make many students of color on campus less safe.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

I wrote a draft of this chapter in the wake of the murders of eight people, including six Asian women, in Atlanta on March 16, 2021. I thought of several of the participants in this study, many of whom are Asian women in the United States, and what they must be thinking. Multiple times throughout the process of writing this dissertation, events continued to happen, that I perceived might have affected participants. I did not have an opportunity to ask participants about all of them, as many events took place after the interviews concluded, though I emailed participants occasionally. That said, I think the topic of this dissertation unfortunately continues to be relevant. Ongoing events generate the need for continued research on perceptions and experiences of safety and violence in the higher education context in the United States, as well as, at the very least, adapting practices and policies in higher education institutions, and listening to women of color international graduate students about their own experiences. In this chapter, I begin with a reminder of my research questions and methods, followed by summaries and discussions of each of the findings chapters. I will then discuss implications for practice, policy, theory, research, and methods.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study focused on women of color international graduate students' conceptions, perceptions and experiences, and influences of those perceptions and experiences of violence and safety upon their lives. The research questions are as follows:

- 1. How do women of color international graduate students studying in the United States conceptualize violence and safety?
- 2. How do women of color international graduate students perceive and experience violence and safety while studying in the United States?

- a. How do events and policies influence women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety?
- 3. How do women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety influence their lives?

Methods

Using transnational feminist methodology and framework made up of intersectionality and transnational feminism and informed by postcolonialism and concepts of epistemic violence and racialized gendered violence, I conducted a qualitative interview study to answer the above research questions. Participants in this study were 11 self-identified women of color international graduate students from two large public universities in a southern U.S. state, Blue University and Green University. I interviewed each participant twice. The first set of interviews took place during November and December of 2019, during the Fall semester. The second set of interviews took place mostly in January and February of 2020 during the Spring semester, with one interview taking place in April 2020. Most interviews took place over Zoom, with a few inperson interviews. Interviews were semi-structured in that I prepared and brought protocols but adjusted and added questions during the interviews as the conversations progressed. Between interview sets, I added and adjusted questions for the second interview based on the first set of interviews. Consistent with my methodology, I also asked questions that helped me understand how participants were receiving the interview process as well as to check my assumptions. During the course of the interviews, several national and international events happened, which influenced the questions I asked as well. After the completion of the interviews, COVID spread widely in the United States, resulting in university operations across the country going remote. I emailed participants during summer to ask if they would answer a question about how COVID

affected their sense of safety, to which some participants replied. I transcribed interviews using Rev.com, sent transcriptions to participants to check and revise if they wanted to, and coded and analyzed by hand and using NVivo using inductive coding. Findings were presented in six chapters and are summarized below.

Summaries and Discussions of Findings

Research Question 1 and Chapter 4: Participants' Conceptualizations of Safety and Violence

The first question was, "How do women of color international graduate students studying in the United States conceptualize violence and safety?" This research question was not in my original proposal. Through discussion and with the encouragement of the committee, I added it, and it ended up being a very important part of the research. The ways in which participants conceptualized safety and violence shaped the ways I framed the remaining findings chapters. In Chapter 4, I included quotes from all participants for both concepts, safety and violence. It was important to me to show the variety and nuance within their explanations.

I found participants conceptualized safety and violence in terms of physical violence and safety as well as non-physical forms, including mental, psychological, emotional, or verbal violence and safety. Specifically, many participants categorized safety into physical or bodily safety, mental or emotional safety, and security. For example, Emma discussed physical aspects, as in not being attacked; mental or emotional aspects, including feeling safe and lack of fear; and job security. Similarly, participants discussed the concept of violence as physical, mental, and structural. For physical or bodily violence, several participants included threat of assault, and sexual assault. Under mental, emotional, psychological, or verbal violence, participants included things like discrimination and emotional abuse, though a few participants, like Matt, were unsure

of labeling them violence. Sara and Emma also included structural violence and abuse of power. The schema of safety seemed to map well onto that of violence, which guided my organization of Chapter 5 into physical safety and violence and mental safety and violence, and of Chapter 6 about security.

In addition to asking participants for their conceptualizations of safety and violence, I presented participants with a few definitions that I had included in my proposal. Many participants liked these definitions, finding pieces that resonated with their own experiences. A few participants also talked about the definitions expanding their own conceptualization of violence in particular, and some even talked about how those definitions changed the ways in which they thought about their own experiences. Jasmine and Emma, for example, said the act of naming their experiences "violence," such as being ignored, made them feel like they had experienced more violence than they had previous thought.

In addition, their conceptualizations complicated existing definitions in the scholarly and higher education literature. Specifically, the ways in which participants described violence and safety did not neatly map onto definitions in scholarly literature (e.g., Q. Green & Shahjahan, 2013; Young, 1990), those coming from governmental and non-governmental sources (e.g., as cited in True, 2012), or those in higher education practice (e.g., ACPA, 2015). Instead, participants' conceptualizations complicated showed me they thought about violence and safety in much more complex ways. An important implication of this is higher education institutions and their constituents must better understand how different populations see violence and safety as a starting point to addressing these issues. This will be discussed more in the implications section of this chapter.

Research Question 2 and Chapters 5 and 6: Experiences and Perceptions of Safety, Violence, and Security

The second question was, "How do women of color international graduate students perceive and experience violence and safety while studying in the United States?" I organized Chapters 5 and 6 based on participants' conceptualizations of violence and safety. In short, participants perceived and experienced violence and safety in complex and varied ways, which were often influenced by their experiences from their home countries. Many people and situations factored into their feelings of safety, and participants highlighted the intersectional nature of violence.

In Chapter 5, I began with more physical forms of safety and violence. Participants made comparisons between previous and current locations in their perceptions of activities like being at home and walking around in public. Some participants felt safer in the United States than their home country, whereas some participants generally felt safer in their home country, echoing Marginson et al.'s (2010) study in Australia. Participants also talked about sexual harassment and threats of physical violence. While less well defined, participants also talked about their experiences and perceptions related to non-physical forms of safety and violence, including feeling safe or unsafe around certain people. Some participants also talked about feeling discriminated against or silenced in academic settings. For instance, Matt and Nila talked about feeling silenced or self-silencing as a result of not being heard by faculty or other students. These findings extend existing studies on microaggressions (S. Kim & R. Kim, 2010), being ignored (Yan & Pei, 2018), and silencing (Mayuzumi et al., 2007).

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the topics of security and insecurity. Participants, particularly at Blue University, talked about the connections between their feelings of safety and being secure,

financially, in their housing, and with their jobs. Several participants commented on the inadequacy of their stipends and that they could not work outside of the university. Ceres and Kate worried about their inability to afford catastrophic events, such as medical emergencies. Visa security also came up with a few participants, including Jasmine, who felt insecure in her ability to renew her visa. Two participants in this study, Emma and Ceres, were directly affected by the first travel ban, which resulted in their inability to travel to their home countries or have family visit them and affected their research. Emma made strong connections between violence and the precarity of being an international graduate student, confirming sentiments of participants feeling exploited in Cantwell et al. (2018). In addition, while not using the language of academic violence (Falcón & Philipose, 2017), participants shared experiences consistent with the concept, including power differentials as well as not feeling free to speak up about their conditions.

Research Question 2a and Chapter 7: Influence of Events and Policies

The subquestion to the second question was, "How do events and policies influence women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety?" Before starting the interviews, I had assumed local, national, and international policies and events would influence women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of safety and violence. As a result, I asked about Trump-era policies, including the travel ban and changing visa requirements, subsequent increases in hate crimes in the United States, and sexual harassment on college campuses in the United States.

A topic that I did not originally plan to ask about but came up starting in the first interview was the presence of guns, gun violence, and campus carry in the United States. As a result, I did ask about this topic during the second interview as well. Guns and gun violence,

participants' sense of safety. Specifically, many participants were surprised to learn about the prevalence of gun carrying and mass shootings in the United States, given their home countries did not have such phenomena. In addition, some participants discussed how guns affected their sense of safety and even changed some of their behaviors like going to crowded places. One participant discussed how guns changed her teaching practices, extending Cradit's (2017) findings. For others, however, gun violence seemed like an inevitability they could not avoid and as a result did not change their behaviors. To my surprise, one participant thought women owning guns would be a means to protect against sexual assault. Overall, guns did factor into participants' thinking about safety more than I had expected.

Given the increased attention on sexual harassment from faculty members towards graduate students in the United States, I asked participants about their perspectives. I was surprised to learn that sexual harassment from faculty members did not greatly influence most participants' sense of safety or affect the ways in which they interacted with others. A few participants did bring up concerns, however, including how faculty members might use the potential for sexual harassment to change how they interact with students. Another participant described how having a known harasser on her committee put her in a difficult situation. Though she did not experience harassment from the faculty member herself, she felt uncomfortable with his presence and was scared of removing him from the committee as she would soon be on the job market. While participants in this study did not share their own experiences of sexual harassment from faculty members, as in studies such as Rosenthal et al. (2016) and Cantalupo & Kidder (2018), a few participants talked about the potential barriers to reporting for international graduate students.

Coronavirus was unknown at the beginning of the study, but by the second set of interviews, coronavirus began to spread around the world. After most of the second set of interviews were completed, coronavirus spread rapidly in the United States, resulting in inperson closures of universities as well as anti-Asian violence. I asked participants via email during summer of 2020 how this situation affected their sense of safety. Some participants replied with varying levels of concern, including anti-Asian violence and feeling isolated.

Participants' concern expressed to me via email was months before the organization

StopAAPIHate released their report indicating 3,795 incidents were reported to them between March 2020 and February 2021 (Jeung et al., 2021), and the March 2021 shooting of eight people including six Asian women in Atlanta.

Research Question 3 and Chapter 8: Influences on Participants' Lives

The final research question was, "How do women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety influence their lives?" In Chapter 8, I shared strategies they adopted, consciously and unconsciously, to maintain safety and avoid violence, followed by what I perceived the influences on participants' lives to be based on the previous findings chapters. I ended the chapter with participants' words about the effects they perceived.

I found participants adopted several strategies such as most participants avoiding going out at night or to crowded spaces, and several changing the ways in which they interacted with people, including in academic and non-academic contexts, such as self-silencing in classroom settings. In addition, participants were influenced emotionally, in the short and long term. This finding extends knowledge on graduate student mental health (e.g., Barreira et al. 2018; Evans et al., 2018). Some participants questioned their experiences such as discrimination, and

educational opportunities were influenced. Participants' perceptions of the effects varied, including Sofia and Lyly feeling generally positive about their experiences. Jasmine and Sara talked about a loss of freedom, while Matt and Nila talked about being empowered and influenced in the ways they wanted to interact with others.

Chapter 9: Participants' Recommendations

Though not a formal research question, I asked participants what they thought their university's responsibilities were and what they thought the university could do better. Because transportation came up in the context of safety throughout the interviews, I also asked participants about what they wanted to see with transportation. As expected, based on their answers to previous questions, participants' answers varied greatly in terms of their satisfaction and wishes for their university responsibilities. Many participants were overall content with their university's responsibility and responses. Some participants wanted increased transparency, including about sexual harassers; additional training, including for professors about the realities of international students, and for themselves on legal and financial matters; and opportunities to provide feedback to the university. Finally, most participants mentioned they wanted increased availability of public transportation in and around their campuses.

Participants' answers also surprised me. While guns were a big point of discussion in interviews, only three participants mentioned them as something the university could change.

Two participants realized the limitations of what the university could do given campus carry was a state law, but reiterated guns affected their sense of safety. A few participants thought their university's rules and laws did enough and had the mechanisms to maintain their safety. A few participants also wanted increased surveillance mechanisms and police presence on their campus.

Overall, participants' responses in Chapter 9 inform my recommendations and implications in the remainder of this chapter.

Implications for Practice, Policy, Theory, Research, and Methods

From this study, I offer several implications. Implications for practice include those influenced by participants' recommendations as well as some of my own. Implications for policy are at the institutional, state, and national levels. In implications for theory, I suggest the use of an intersectional and internationalized framework is helpful in illuminating the experiences of women of color international graduate students. Implications for research include several ideas for future research, including with different groups within women of color international graduate students, in different settings, and during different time periods. Finally, in implications for methods, I offer suggestions to researchers studying with similarly marginalized populations.

Implications for Practice

In this section, I present six implications for practice, in part influenced by participants' explanations presented in Chapter 9. Higher education institutions can do several things to better serve the safety needs of students, including women of color international graduate students. First, higher education institutions must have mechanisms for students to be able to provide feedback, in informal and formal ways, at multiple levels from individual advisor-advisees to departments to university-wide. Nila, for example, mentioned that no one at the university had asked her what she thought the university's responsibilities were with regard to keeping her and her peers safe. Mechanisms for doing so can include advisors and department chairs asking these types of questions of students in the departments, to more formal methods, such as campus climate surveys. With those surveys, however, must come changes to departments and university practices.

Second, several participants recommended education, in the form of training, for faculty members and other members of the campus community, about international students. Specifically, as many expressed they did not feel their advisors and other faculties understood the complexities of being an international graduate student, they would have wanted their advisors and others on campus to be educated about these topics. For instance, international graduate students cannot work outside of the university and are often not funded during the summer, adding to their financial insecurity. Education should also include sensitivity training, such as pronouncing names and not making assumptions about international students. At the same time, participants and I recognize the limitations of training, as training sessions are sometimes too short or, in the case of online versions, do not require much attention. While adding training to a slate of mandatory training would be difficult, this type of training and education about international students has the potential to benefit the overall experiences of international students and institutions' commitments to internationalization. In addition, participants wanted changes to Title IX training so that it is cognizant of the specific challenges international students face in reporting. Mandatory reporting can make participants feel vulnerable and as though it can jeopardize their jobs. As one participant discussed, known sexual harassers within universities can create additional challenges for all students if not addressed.

Third, participants thought they, as international graduate students, could use more education and training. Specifically, some participants mentioned they would want to learn more about laws and administrative procedures such as paperwork and taxes that would make them feel more secure, without having to seek outside and paid resources. In addition, as Matt mentioned, since academic systems vary widely across countries, and additional scaffolding and

education to help international graduate students learn the U.S. academic system would be helpful.

Fourth, several participants mentioned the need for transparency from the institution. One example was with regard to sexual harassers, in which a participant would have wanted to have warned so as to not have that person on her committee. Another area of transparency was making sure international students were aware of situations, such as natural disasters and policies.

Fifth, many participants had difficulties with their housing, particularly at Blue University. Some participants lived in private off-campus housing and were unsatisfied, before being able to move to on-campus graduate student subsidized housing, because there was a two-year waitlist. Those that lived in off-campus private housing often had to deal with difficult landlords as well as difficult neighbor situations. Improved access to subsidized on-campus graduate student housing would be beneficial. In addition, although a university cannot control private housing, offering education to international students along with advocating on their behalf in the community would improve housing conditions for all students.

Sixth, as transportation was a big topic of discussion in interviews, universities could improve their internal transportation options as well as advocate for students in community public transportation. This could include advocating for increased hours, even during breaks when undergraduate students may leave campus, but international graduate students must stay. In addition, increased bus routes and times would benefit all students as well.

It is important to note, that while these recommendations for practice come from and are geared towards improving conditions for women of color international graduate students, these suggestions have the potential to help other people within the university. Higher education institutions are responsible for bringing students from near and far to their campuses and into

their local communities. Institutions therefore have a duty to ensure their safety, regardless of where students are from. Given safety and violence are related to more than attacks from strangers at night, safety practices must include, but also go beyond, improving lighting on campus.

What's Not Included Here

While some participants wanted their universities to increase police presence and surveillance mechanisms, I have not included those as recommended practices. I have come to learn what is safe for some is not safe for others. Increased police presence and surveillance technologies would be to the detriment of many people of color on university campuses, may increase incidences of police violence, and make many students feel less safe (Thomas & Russell, 2019). As a result, I cannot advocate for these types of changes, even if it could make some participants in this study feel safer. I do not believe increased policing will contribute to being safer for women of color international graduate students or their peers. Instead, though, some current functions of police and surveillance could be taken up by other members of the community. For example, at my undergraduate institution, students were escorted at night by other students, rather than by police officers. Other community-based and student-led programs could improve students' feelings of safety without increasing policing. Education such as bystander intervention and restorative and transformative justice programs could improve accountability without increasing punitive measures.

Implications for Policy

In addition to changing practices, higher education institutions have opportunities to change policies within their university and to influence those outside of the university. First, higher education institutions can modify funding policies for international graduate students to

ensure mechanisms for funding, particularly over the summer. As many participants mentioned their current programs do not provide for funding over the summer, a policy of funding through work or stipends would be helpful for many international graduate students. In addition, universities could provide resources to students to be able to find positions throughout the year across the institution, particularly those that will benefit their education (e.g., research assistant positions rather than teaching assistant positions not related to their field), or mandate departments only admit students for whom they have funding. Changing institutional policy may also include changing policies such as lowering minimum enrollment for teaching assistants to be assigned to particular classes.

Second, I would argue access to graduate student employee unions and mechanisms for organizing is essential for the safety and security of women of color international graduate students. Participants did talk about student organizations as a means for commiserating with and finding solutions to problems. Unionization and collective bargaining in the state of Blue University and Green University would be difficult; however, institutions that do have unions for graduate students benefit international graduate students (Chatterjee, 2019). Participants at Blue University discussed inequitable funding policies across the university, but they did not have any formal recourse; collective bargaining could allow for students to advocate on behalf of themselves and other graduate students to improve their funding conditions. As a right to work state, however, the state in which Blue University resides currently prevents collective bargaining.

Finally, universities can advocate on behalf of their international graduate students with state and federal governments. Many topics came up throughout the interviews that higher education institutions cannot directly change but do have influence over. As large public research

institutions, Blue and Green Universities have opportunities to influence public policy at the state and national level. These included state policies, including gun policies and reporting laws, and at the federal level, including Title IX and visa policies.

Higher education institutions can advocate on behalf of their students in state legislatures on state laws such as campus carry and mandatory reporting. The current study adds to the evidence against these laws. First, the state of Blue and Green Universities has campus carry laws, allowing for concealed carry of guns on permitted areas of campuses. While students and faculty have advocated for the removal of campus carry, including in court, institutions can further play a part in bringing concerns about the presence of guns to state legislators by continuing to show the effects on teaching. Admittedly, existing efforts have failed, and institutional push back is unlikely to change state lawmakers' minds about the issue of campus carry. The current study, however, adds to the research showing how guns can affect teaching. Mandatory reporting laws, regarding sexual violence, in the state of Green and Blue Universities may influence international graduate students differently than other populations on campus. Specifically, as Nila discussed, mandatory reporting meant she would not feel comfortable talking with friends, who were mostly affiliated with the university, should something happen, because they would be required to report. She mentioned as an international student, she does not have many connections to people outside of the university. While mandatory reporting laws are meant to protect students, it could chill overall disclosure with international students and prevent them from getting support they need, like it does with many marginalized populations.

In addition to state laws, higher education institutions can advocate at the federal level, including on Title IX and visa policies. In recent years, guidance coming from the Department of Education around Title IX has changed, including rules that would enable accused persons to

cross-examine accusers. Although the Biden administration is reexamining Title IX rules brought in during the Trump administration, adding the voices of international students would be helpful. In this study, one participant talked about fear of retaliation in response to asking a known harasser to be on her committee, and others talked about worries related to the inflexibility of being an international graduate student and not having an option to drop out of their program and look for work as some domestic students have.

Furthermore, universities can influence visa policy. For example, during the summer of 2020 the Trump administration brought changing visa requirements, which did have an open comment period. During that time, students, staff, faculty, and administrators rallied in support of not implementing visa limits, a minimum in-person course load to qualify for visas, and other visa changes that would negatively affect international students. While a driving factor may have been institutions' bottom lines, many universities had a positive influence on preventing such rules from going into effect. The interaction between Title IX and visa policy can also be an area of policy universities could influence. Specifically, an accommodation of reducing hours of enrollment may be a possibility for domestic students who have experienced sexual violence, but international students cannot drop below a certain number of credits and stay in the country. Taking into account the realities of international students when developing these policies would be helpful, and universities can bring those concerns to the attention of legislators.

Implications for Theory

I used several theories to inform and develop the current study, including intersectionality, transnational feminism, women of color feminisms, decolonial feminism, and postcolonialism. I thought none of these on their own would be sufficient in framing a study of the experiences of women of color international graduate students. I was cautious about using

intersectionality as it is often misused in higher education, and I was worried about continuing that trend. In addition, intersectionality was developed in a U.S. context to help understand the oppression and violence Black women in the United States face. As a result, I added internationally derived and focused theories to aid my framing of the experiences of women of color international graduate students. With these theories, I chose to focus on certain experiences of participants in this study, namely racialized, gendered, and internationalized experiences as well as those of being a graduate student. At the same time, I left out experiences interacting with participants' other identities, including religion, sexual orientation, and class. As with any framework, then, the framework I chose to use highlighted particular experiences while leaving out others.

As discussed in Chapter 4, participants' conceptualizations of violence and safety were different than what I had expected. While writing my proposal, I thought of violence in terms of types of violence based on theories and literature I drew from, including sexual violence, racialized gendered violence, epistemic violence, and academic violence. While the findings could be organized via this categorization, I chose to use participants' conceptualizations to organize findings instead. Specifically, participants talked about violence in terms of physical and non-physical elements. I was surprised by this division of physical and non-physical, which I refer to by shorthand as "mental," because it seemed to me to be a dualistic understanding of mind and body, which I assumed was more of a Western concept that participants would not hold. In addition, I had thought of violence in terms of categories listed above. In addition, participants did not necessarily categorize their experiences in terms of their identities (such as racialized, gendered, internationalized, and as graduate students). In fact, participants did not ascribe the word "violence" to many of their experiences, and when they did, it was not

separated by racialized, gendered, or other identity-based aspects. Sometimes they questioned their experiences and were not sure why, for example, they were being discriminated against or even if they were being discriminated against. Intersectionality thus showed to be an appropriate way to theorize and guide the study; I did not choose to ask participants explicitly if they felt sexism, for example, though it came out. I also did not include in the protocol questions directly about racism and xenophobia, although these came out, but often inseparable in their experiences. A lot of experiences discussed, however, included international elements, again inseparable from their other experiences. For example, Matt discussed not being heard in class, specifically by another woman of color, who discounted her thoughts as not applicable to the U.S. context because Matt was talking about a topic in the context of her home country. Several participants also talked about feelings of safety as a woman in their home country versus the United States. Furthermore, participants' experiences were tied to being a graduate student. More specifically, participants in this study were doctoral students, institutionally funded through their graduate assistantships, with the exception of one participant who was funded by an international scholarship. Many participants' experiences were heavily influenced by being a precarious worker in the academy, including feeling financially insecure and the knowledge they could not just drop out if something happened to them, given their visa status.

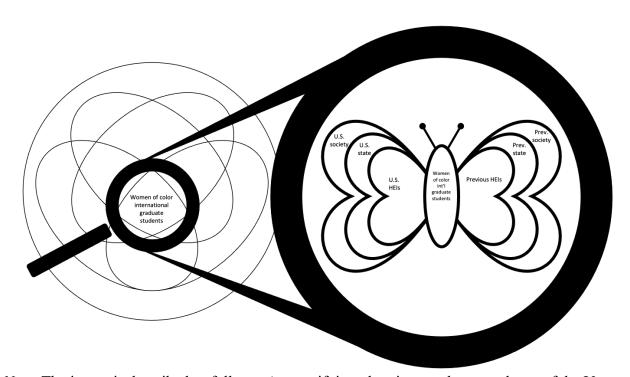
Based on the findings from my study, I contend a useful lens to understand international graduate students in the United States, would be to add internationalized and precarious labor in higher education lenses to a racialized gendered lens. These lenses allowed me to see, for example, participants' concerns about reporting sexual harassment as a woman of color international graduate student as their position at the university may be at risk. In addition, these lenses allowed me to better understand their complex interpretations of, for example, coughing at

the airport or how someone looked at them in the grocery store. Had I used only racialized or only internationalized lenses or precarity as a graduate student worker, I may have missed the complexity of those experiences.

I recognize, however, that all participants did not necessarily hold an intersectional framework, although most agreed with my assumption of intersectionality when I articulated it. Many participants' answers reflected identities that were salient to them; for instance, Labrador suggested her perspectives on safety and violence were largely influenced by her feminist lens. In addition, an intersectional framework informs my decision to not include increased policing and surveillance as recommendations for practice, despite being suggested by participants, because I know these practices would be detrimental to racialized students on U.S. campuses.

As a result of the findings in this study, I revisit and adjusted my initial figures in Chapter 1. Specifically, while I thought women of color international graduate students were embedded within a U.S. higher education institution, state, and society, as seen in Figure 2, I failed to include how participants brought in experiences and perceptions from previous higher education institutions, states, and societies and the ways in which those informed their present experiences and perceptions of safety and violence. Instead, women of color international graduate students may experience violence as a result of being members of that group because they are physically embedded within the U.S. state, U.S. society, and U.S. higher education institutions, but they also carry with them experiences from a previous state, society, and higher education institutions. As a result, I propose a new set of figures that helped me make sense of the findings, as seen in Figure 4 below. Namely, women of color international graduate students' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety are intersectional and influenced by multiple locations.

Figure 4: A Revised Image of Women of Color International Graduate Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Safety and Violence



Note. The image is described as follows. A magnifying glass is over the central part of the Venn diagram image depicted in Figure 1, labeled "Women of color international graduate students. The magnification of the image shows a depiction of a butterfly, in lieu of the concentric circle image depicted in Figure 2, with the body labeled, "Women of color international graduate students." The left wing is labeled with the U.S.-based contexts of U.S. HEIs, U.S. state, and U.S. society. The other wing is labeled with previous contexts, namely Previous HEIs, Previous state, and Previous society.

Implications for Research

By the nature of qualitative research and the limited timespan of the study, many things were missing from this study in scope and population. As a result, future research could approach the topics of violence and safety with different populations, on different types of campuses, across a longer period of time, and using different lenses. In addition, given

continuously changing political contexts, research done now and in the future could turn up very different results from my study, even if it were to be with the same 11 participants. Future research could also focus more heavily on security, insecurity, and precarity.

In terms of populations, participants in this study came mostly from South Asia (4 participants), East Asia (3 participants), and the Middle East (2 participants). One participant came from Southeast Asia, and one participant was from East Africa. Participants from Latin America as well as from across regions in Africa will be necessary to get a more complex view of women of color international graduate students, especially given participants in the current study sharing how their home country experiences influenced their perceptions in the United States. In addition, participants from Latin America and additional regions across Africa, as well as more Black participants from anywhere in the world, may allow for further discussion of the intersections with anti-Black racism in the United States and increased scrutiny of migration from Central America especially in border states in the United States.

In addition, I focused on participants who were funded by graduate assistantships, as research assistants or teaching assistants. One participant was funded by an international fellowship. Including participants who are funded by their home countries, other scholarships or fellowships, and self-funded could illuminate different challenges around safety, violence, and, in particular, security. In the current study, no participants were part of engineering programs, due to my recruitment method and the lack of access to graduate student email addresses on program websites. Engineering programs have dynamics worth exploring including that they are often male dominated and often have high proportions of international students (Okahana & Zhou, 2018b). Programs in which PIs hire graduate students from their same country may also yield different findings around work and security. Furthermore, I focused on doctoral students,

but other research could look at the experiences of shorter-term graduate students, including those in master's level and professional programs.

Another avenue of future research could identify campuses that have different profiles than the ones included in this study. This study was conducted with students from two large public research institutions, one more urban and the other more rural or suburban. Future research could be conducted with students from rural, suburban, and urban campuses; private institutions; smaller institutions; institutions with collective bargaining rights; in many different states in the United States with different demographic makeups; and institutions with larger or smaller numbers and percentages of international students. All of these factors may provide insight into women of color international graduate students' experiences.

The present study involved two interviews with each participant, one during the Fall 2019 semester and the second during the Spring 2020 semester. Future research could follow participants for a longer period of time to show changes in perceptions and experiences of violence and safety among participants. Another possibility is to interview participants before they begin their programs in the United States and again once they get to the United States to better understand how expectations and experiences interact. A longitudinal study could also allow a better understanding of how changing policies and events influence women of color international graduate students.

I chose to highlight participants' gender, race, graduate student status, and international student status in this study. Had I made salient other identities in the recruitment process or during the interviews, findings may have been different. Future research, however, could choose to look at experiences and perceptions of safety and violence taking into account other identities, such as religion, sexual orientation, gender expression, and socioeconomic status. I focused on

using a racialized, gendered, and internationalized lens, but other lenses could illuminate other aspects of participants' experiences as discussed in the implications for theory section above.

As mentioned a few times, several events and changing policies in a changing political context happened during the course of the interviews and after the interviews were completed but before my dissertation was complete. These included a changing U.S. presidential administration, from President Trump to President Biden, which was not exactly peaceful. As a result of the changing administration, several policies also changed. For example, the travel ban was rescinded soon after Biden took office via executive action and the Department of Education began reviewing Title IX guidance put into place by the previous administration.

Not everything changed with the new administration, however, including the continuation of Confucius Institute closures at higher education institutions (Kyaw, 2021). In addition, racialized gendered violence and hate crimes continued to take place, with an increase in anti-Asian violence, or at least an increase in attention to, before and after the changing administration tied to the previous president's rhetoric around the coronavirus (Redden, 2021). In addition, during the summer of 2020, renewed attention was brought upon police violence particularly toward Black people in the United States and continues as I revise this chapter. With that discussion came increased protest activity and discussions about defunding the police and abolition, including on campuses of higher education institutions (StudentNation, 2021). During the second interviews with participants, COVID spread across the world, resulting in deaths and illness, along with campus closures across the country. University activities shifted to online formats, and travel was limited. The landscape of higher education has been changed for the foreseeable future as a result of COVID. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, anti-Asian violence intersected with white supremacy, racism, sexism, and class in the mass shooting

and murder of eight people in Atlanta in March 2021. All of these topics are areas for future research in relation to experiences and perceptions of safety, violence, and security of students, staff, and faculty at higher education institutions in the United States.

Implications for Methods

Through the process of conceptualizing, conducting, and representing the study through writing, I thought a great deal about the ethics of researching with marginalized students. I attempted to make consistent my framework and methodology and continued to think about ethics of research throughout. A few things I learned in my process, that I hope may help another researcher, are as follows.

The first concern I came across was institutional gatekeeping, which makes sense given requests for researching marginalized populations on college campuses come all the time. I first tried to recruit participants indirectly by sending calls for participants to directors and assistant directors of international student offices. One person declined to send the information out to their students; another recommended I submit a request for it to be posted to their newsletter, which would have compromised anonymity of the institution; and the third did not answer. I do not know exactly why my initial process for recruitment of participants did not work, but as a result, my advisor and I talked about changes, which included decreasing the number of interviews for each participant from three to two and recruiting participants directly using publicly available email addresses on program websites. This method worked as potential participants replied to my email. From a perspective of ethics, I felt strange gathering emails from institutional websites, but the method allowed potential participants to reply directly to me if they were interested in participating.

Second, participant choice became an important aspect of my study. Most participants in my study preferred meeting over Zoom rather than in person, even though they were given the option for either. I am glad I gave the option, however, because some participants did choose to meet in person, at a location of their choosing. For Zoom participants, having Zoom as an option allowed them to be wherever and with whom they chose. Some participants also chose to have video on while others had it off. One participant turned off her video when I recorded but had it on before and after the interview. This choice was essential for allowing participants to enact what felt safe for them. In addition, choice came in the form of approving transcripts emailed after interviews as well as the option to withdraw from the study afterwards, consistent with Falcón's (2016) suggestions.

Third, I attempted to engage in refusal as per Tuck and Yang (2014). I grappled with ways to ensure that I was not "serving up pain stories on a silver platter for the settler colonial academy" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 814). Though the study was about experiences and perceptions of safety and violence, I wanted to ask participants about and include positive experiences, including where and with whom they felt safe. In addition, as a part of refusal, I chose not to include some details of what participants told me as well as anonymized specific stories. In addition, I still grapple with what to do with my dissertation after completion.

Fourth, in an attempt to be transparent to the reader and to show the messiness of the process, I have chosen to include what Paris and Winn (2014) called that which "ends up on the cutting room floor" (p. xix). Specifically, I attempted to show in my positionality statement the deep connection I have to this study and its personal importance to me. I also restate questions I asked participants, as well as places where I did not ask what I realize later I should have.

Furthermore, for any readers working on their dissertation, the temptation to fit things into boxes

and categories made this process so much harder for me. I organized and reorganized the findings several times. The whole process of this dissertation from starting the proposal to defending will have taken about five years. I hope what I learned in the process may help someone else.

Conclusion

As I continued to write and revise my dissertation in early 2021, within the month since I wrote the introduction to this chapter, additional mass shootings, nearly every day, took place all over the United States. More police murders took place, including those of children, in addition to the trial and conviction of former police officer Derek Chauvin in the murder of George Floyd. All of these events and the responses to them have caused me to think about the safety of the 11 women of color international graduate students who lent their voices to this study. I also continue to think about the safety of my family, friends, mentors, colleagues, students, and me, and that of countless people I do not know. Part of me wanted my study to become irrelevant by the end of it, given that I spent so long on it, and its conceptualization was in part due to growing awareness of sexual violence on college campuses, increased reports of hate crimes in the United States, and what I perceived to be violent and hateful policies on the part of the previous presidential administration.

Unfortunately, I believe this study is still relevant. Violence against minoritized people continues in the United States and all over the world, including on higher education institution campuses. The implications of policies from the previous presidential administration have lasted. I continue to believe colleges and universities bear some responsibility for students' safety, especially should those students come to the United States specifically for an education in one of its higher education institutions. I continue to believe in institutional responsibility, even if

threats to safety are outside of the institutions' physical borders, because every part of that students' experience affects their lives and education. I know from my own experiences how much threats of violence and lack of safety can affect every day of one's life, including progress towards a long dreamed of doctoral degree. I also know the opportunities and freedoms feelings of safety can allow.

In this dissertation, I wanted to study the experiences and perceptions of violence and safety of one specific group of students studying in the United States, that is, women of color international graduate students. Women of color international graduate students experience the intersection of multiple oppressions, which I perceived to be heightened during the political era beginning in 2016. In this study, I interviewed 11 women of color international graduate students, each twice, during the 2019-2020 academic year. I found participants had complex conceptualizations of violence and safety, often complicating conceptualizations in scholarly literature and higher education practice. Their conceptualizations of violence and safety often had physical and non-physical components and included security. Participants' experiences of violence and safety also varied. Many participants indicated their safety was in their own spaces and around familiar people; safety was threatened by strangers, often men, and in public. Experiences of violence included sexual harassment from strangers and threats of physical violence. As the study continued, some participants also shifted the ways in which they thought about violence, and some included experiences of discrimination and mental abuse within their experiences. Security and insecurity became a salient factor in participants' overall assessments of safety, especially financial insecurity due to inadequate stipends. Overall, I found participants' experiences and perceptions of violence and safety were influenced by media representations and people, including family, friends, colleagues, and strangers. In addition, participants often made

comparisons between their experiences and perceptions in their home countries and the United States, with some feeling overall safer in the United States and others feeling safer in their home countries.

Many participants, including those who otherwise felt safer in the United States, thought about the threats of gun violence due to the frequency of mass shootings, the presence of guns in the United States, and concealed carry policies in their state. Fewer participants felt threatened by sexual harassment from faculty members. As coronavirus emerged around the world and in the United States, a new threat to safety emerged, namely discrimination towards Asian people, and shutdowns exacerbated existing problems. Participants' experiences and perceptions of safety and violence influenced their lives in complex ways. One such way was through the creation and adoption of strategies to maintain safety, including avoiding people and situations, preparing, and self-silencing. In addition, participants' mental health and educational experiences were influenced. I also asked participants their perspectives on the effects on their lives; these ranged from loss of freedom to a sense of empowerment.

Finally, I asked participants their perspectives on their institutions' responsibility. While some did not agree that their institutions had much responsibility for their safety, most participants had ideas for improvement including better training, transparency, and policy changes. I have included in this final chapter my own implications for practice, policy, theory, research, and methods. I only hope my study will bring some changes that in turn improve the sense of safety for students.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Recruitment Email Template

Hello,

I am writing to recruit potential participants for my dissertation study. I found your email address on your departmental page at [institution]. If you identify as a woman of color international graduate student, please continue reading. If not, please consider forwarding this email to friends and colleagues who may be eligible to participate.

The study is on the experiences and perceptions of violence and safety among women of color international graduate students. The study will consist of a series of two interviews with each participant. Participant information will be kept confidential, and the study has been approved by my institution's IRB.

Please let me know if I can answer any questions or concerns you may have about the study or if you would be interested in participating in the study yourself. I can be reached at naiksapn@msu.edu.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely, Sapna

Sapna Naik
[she/her/hers]
Doctoral candidate
Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education (HALE)
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education, Michigan State University
naiksapn@msu.edu

I am seeking participants for a research study of women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety while studying in the United States.

Study Title: Women of Color International Graduate Students' Perceptions and Experiences of

Violence and Safety While Studying in the United States

Researcher: Sapna Naik, Doctoral candidate

Department, Institution: Department of Educational Administration, Michigan State University

Email Address: naiksapn@msu.edu

Some details about participation:

• Your participation will involve two 60 to 90 minute interviews across the span of approximately three months.

- You will be asked to meet with the researcher in person to engage in a dialogue about your understanding of violence and safety, your perceptions and experiences of violence and safety, and how those perceptions and experiences have affected you.
- You may decide to withdraw participation in the study at any time, including during and between interviews.
- Although not anticipated, the most likely risks of participating in this study may be emotional distress or discomfort, as we will be discussing topics of violence and safety.
- You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of women of color international graduate students' conceptions of violence and safety while studying in the United States and to a greater understanding of violence and safety within higher education institutions in the United States.
- As a token of my appreciation for your participation, you will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card electronically after the first interview and a \$30 Amazon gift card electronically after the second interview.

To qualify to be a participant, you must self-identify as a woman of color international graduate student. More specifically, you should be able to identify with the following:

- Woman of color you should identify with this label, even if you do not use it to describe
 yourself to others. Also, you may not have identified as a woman of color in your
 home country, but you could see yourself identifying with that label in the United
 States.
- International you should be on a student visa (F-1 or J-1).
- Graduate student For the purposes of this study, I am seeking participants who are currently enrolled in a largely in-person doctoral program (meaning most of your classes are in person and you are living near the campus you are attending), and you are funded by a graduate assistantship, research assistantship, or teaching assistantship.

For more information or to express interest in participating, please email me at naiksapn@msu.edu.

This study has been approved by Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program [STUDY00003179]. Questions or concerns can be directed to Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or email irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

APPENDIX B: Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Study Title: Women of Color International Graduate Students' Perceptions and Experiences of Violence While Studying in the United States

Researcher and Title: Sapna Naik, Doctoral candidate

Department and Institution: Department of Educational Administration, Michigan State

University

Contact Information: naiksapn@msu.edu

Principal Investigator and Title: Dr. Kristen Renn, Professor

Department and Institution: Department of Educational Administration, Michigan State

University

Contact Information: renn@msu.edu

BRIEF SUMMARY

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation including why you might or might not want to participate, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to discuss and ask the researchers any questions you may have.

You are being asked to participate in a research study of women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety while studying in the United States. Your participation in this study will include two interviews across approximately three months. The total time commitment will range from 2 to 3 hours, with the interviews lasting 60 to 90 minutes each. You will be asked to meet with the researcher in person or via video chat to engage in a dialogue about your understanding of violence and safety, your perceptions and experiences of violence and safety, and how those perceptions and experiences have affected you. You may decide to withdraw participation in the study at any time, including during and between interviews, with no consequences.

While there are no known risks for participating, due to the topics of violence and safety, the most likely risks of participating in this study are emotional distress or discomfort.

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of women of color international graduate students' conceptions of violence and safety while studying in the United States and to a greater understanding of violence and safety within higher education institutions in the United States.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

• You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you have self-identified as a woman of color international graduate student studying in the United States, and have volunteered to be included as a participant.

• From this study, the researcher hopes to learn about women of color international graduate students' perceptions and experiences of violence and safety while studying in the United States.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO

- Participants will be asked to participate in two face-to-face or video chat interviews with the
 researcher in locations of the participant's choosing. Each interview will last approximately
 60 to 90 minutes. Interviews will be spaced throughout the course of approximately three
 months, depending on participant and researcher availability. Interviews will be audio
 recorded with your consent. In between and after interviews, the researcher will transcribe
 interviews and may ask for clarifications.
- Questions may be sensitive in nature. The researcher will ask about your past and present experiences related to violence and safety, including personal experiences or times you may have witnessed violence or lack of safety. The researcher may ask you to reflect on negative experience or memories.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your
participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of women of color
international graduate students' conceptions of violence and safety while studying in the
United States and to a greater understanding of violence and safety within higher education
institutions in the United States.

POTENTIAL RISKS

- The potential risks of participating in this study are emotional distress or discomfort due the nature of the questions. Questions may include asking you to disclose times you witnessed and/or experienced violence and times you did not feel safe. You may also be asked to share difficult or negative experiences or memories. There is also a small risk of a breach of confidentiality, exposing your information.
- The researcher will make every effort to keep your information confidential. All codes will be kept separate from your information and pseudonym. All transcripts, audio recordings, and my notes will be stored securely and will not be identified with you.
- You will be provided with a list of resources in your area, including university resources and community resources related to mental health, violence, and safety, as well as national hotlines.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- Your interviews with the researcher will be kept private. If possible, please choose private locations for interviews to take place.
- The data for this project will be kept confidential.
 - All data, including interview audio recordings, notes, and transcripts, will be only identified with a code. The key will be kept separate, and all materials will be secured on a password-protected computer.
 - The data will only be available to the researcher, the researcher's advisor, and the Institutional Review Board. Audio files will be sent to a third-party for transcription. Your name will not be associated with the file when it is sent.

- Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law.
- The data, including any electronic files, will be kept confidential by storing on a password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected cloud drive. Any paper notes or transcripts will be kept in a secure location.
 - The data will be identified with a code, and the key will be kept separately.
 - Once the researcher leaves MSU, the researcher will take the data with her.
- In addition to the researcher, the data will be available to the researcher's advisor and the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
- If, as a result of our interactions, I have cause to believe that child abuse or neglect has taken place or will take place, I legally must report it to local or state law enforcement.
- The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You have the right to say no.
- You may change your mind at any time and withdraw.
- You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.
- You will be told of any significant findings that develop during the course of the study that may influence your willingness to continue to participate in the research.
- You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw at any time with no consequence.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

- There is no cost to participate in the study.
- As a token of appreciation for your participation, you will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card via email after the first interview is complete, and a \$30 Amazon gift card via email after the second interview is complete.

RESEARCH RESULTS

• Throughout the course of the study, the researcher will share with you any preliminary findings, with your consent. In addition, the researcher may ask for feedback on your interview answers or analyses of those answers. The researcher will provide the completed written study to you after it is complete if you would like to receive it. Should there be any future research studies coming from the data, the researcher will make that information available to you.

FUTURE RESEARCH

• Information that identifies you will be removed from the interview transcripts, notes, and audio files. After such removal, the interview transcripts, notes, and audio files could be used for future research studies without additional informed consent from you.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher: Sapna Naik; [Contact Information]. Alternatively, you may contact the Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Kristen Renn; renn@msu.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

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Your signature below means	that you volunta	arily agree to participate in this research study.
Signature		Date
You will be given a copy of t	this form to keep).
 I agree to allow as □ Yes Audio files with computer. Audio 	udiotaping of the No ill be kept secure dio files will be sed to the file pride	diotape all of our interviews. e interview. Initials ely on the researcher's password-protected sent a third-party for transcription, but your name or to being sent. Audio files will be erased at the

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocols

First Interview Protocol

Before recording, provide introduction to me and study, discuss informed consent and audio recording, ask for pseudonym, and start recording

- 1. Country of birth and nationality
- 2. Before moving to the U.S., in which countries did you live?
- 3. Educational background
- 4. Previous degrees, subject areas, countries
- 5. Previous professional positions
- 6. Current institution, degree, program, year in program
- 7. Are you funded by the university? If so, how? (e.g., GA, TA, RA)
- 8. Why did you come to your current institution and program?
- 9. What were your previous educational experiences like?
- 10. What did you expect before coming to the U.S.?
- 11. How have your experiences met or not met your expectations?
- 12. What are your classes like?
- 13. Tell me about a positive experience you have had since you have been in the U.S.
- 14. What made this a positive experience?
- 15. Tell me about a negative experience you have had since you have been in the U.S.
- 16. What made this a negative experience?
- 17. What did you do during or after the experience?
- 18. What does violence mean to you? Or How do you define violence?
- 19. What does safety mean to you? Or How do you define safety?
- 20. Tell me about a time, if there is one, when you felt unsafe on campus.
- 21. What or who made you feel unsafe?
- 22. What did you do about it?
- 23. Tell me about a time, if there is one, when you felt safe on campus.
- 24. What made you feel safe?
- 25. Have you ever felt discriminated against? If so, please describe that time.
- 26. Have you ever felt like you were not heard or listened to in class? If so, please describe that time.
- 27. Have you ever felt like you experienced violence of any kind while on or off campus while studying in the U.S.?
- 28. What makes you feel unsafe in general? How or why?
- 29. What makes you feel safe in general? How or why?
- 30. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience so far or any points you would like to clarify?

After ending the recording, discuss resource page, sending Amazon gift card via email, sending transcript, and scheduling next interview.

Second Interview Protocol

Before recording, check pseudonym, ask for questions about informed consent, ask for permission to audio record, and start recording.

- 1. How old are you (age)?
- 2. What do you hope to do after completing your degree? Do you plan to stay in the United States?
- 3. <Follow up questions>
- 4. Have you had any thoughts about violence or safety since our last interview?
- 5. The Trump administration has implemented or suggested many policy changes since he has been in office (e.g., changing visa requirements, the travel ban for several Muslim majority countries, migration and refugee policies). What are your reactions to current policies by the Trump administration? (If participant arrived before election of President Trump, ask what changes they have noticed.)
- 6. There have also been recent bias related incidents towards people of color, immigrants, and international students, including hate crimes as reported by the Southern Poverty Law Center. What are your reactions to news about bias related incidents and hate crimes increasing, particularly towards minoritized groups?
- 7. Since 2017, there has been a decrease in applications coming from international graduate students to the US as well as decreased enrollment in international graduate students in the US. What are your reactions to decreases in international graduate students applying to and coming to the US recently? What do you think is causing this decrease?
- 8. There have been several mass shootings in the recent past, including on college campuses. What are your perspectives on gun violence in the US, including mass shootings and concealed carry on your campus (if not already discussed in first interview)?
- 9. There have been reports of sexual harassment from faculty members toward graduate students. What are your perspectives about gendered violence, #MeTooPhD, and harassment from faculty members?
- 10. What are your perspectives on transportation in the US (if not already discussed in the first interview)?
- 11. How secure do you feel in your finances? Your housing? Your ability to get food?
- 12. I entered this research with the assumption that women of color international graduate students have qualitatively different experiences and perceptions of violence and safety compared to women of color students, graduate students, or international students more broadly. What do you think about this assumption?
- 13. What responsibility does the university have to you and your peers in terms of making you feel safe and preventing and addressing violence? Why?
- 14. What can the university do better to make you feel safe?
- 15. How have your perspectives about violence and safety changed over time?
- 16. How have your perspectives and experiences about violence and safety affected you, if at all?
- 17. Has participating in these interviews shifted your perspectives in any way?
- 18. How was the experience of participating in the interviews?
- 19. Is there anything from this interview that you would like to add or clarify?

After recording, confirm email for Amazon gift card, discuss sending transcript and follow up.

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