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The Longest Walk: Rape, Drugs, and Racial Aggression at Trinity College

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The Longest Walk: Rape, Drugs, and Racial Aggression at Trinity College



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American Studies Thesis
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clear, honest, and often heartbreaking words served as a constant reminder that this work has always been much bigger than me.

Introduction

In the early hours of one Saturday morning in late September 2013, Trinity College's campus was teeming with life. There was a palpable buzz of excitement: a cacophony of voices and movements merging into a collective whirr of sound and energy. The air was filled with the scent of crisp leaves. A slight breeze hinted at the changing season, but the lingering sweetness of summer was still in the air. Large groups of students walked huddled together and quickened their paces as they heard the growing sound of booming music from the nearby fraternity houses on Vernon Street. On that early Saturday morning in 2013, I mistakenly entered the cramped upstairs bedroom of a fraternity house on Vernon Street and witnessed a handful of white students gathered around a long brown table. They were salivating over white powder cut into a series of thin, neat lines like fresh white snowflakes on a dark road. In the back of the room, one white male student was lying down on the bed with a box of tissues and a bloodstained pastel button down shirt draped over his limp body.

In 2015, at another fraternity, a black male student stood with a group of white students waiting to enter a party. When the black student approached the front of the line, a white fraternity brother guarding the entrance allowed only the white students to enter. The black student hopelessly explained to the white student that the other white students were his friends, in fact they were his teammates on Trinity's football team, and that they had all come together. The white student put his hands on the black student's chest and forcefully pushed him back as he said, "Okay, but *you* are not getting in."¹

After the doors of the fraternities close and the beckoning dusk paints the sky a hazy purple-gray; female students cannot step more than a few feet off of Vernon Street

before they are again confronted with the pervasive culture of student sexual assault at Trinity. One female student reported being cornered by a white male student behind the library while walking back to her dormitory late at night. The male student was a classmate and friend and one seemingly innocent conversation suddenly turned into a case of sexual assault.² The incidents described above are a microcosm of the extensive student crime that permeates Trinity College's campus. This thesis explores the racial discrepancies in Trinity's policing, punishment, and prosecution of criminal actions at the college. "The Longest Walk" highlights the ways in which negative racialized perceptions of Hartford, along with Trinity-specific institutional structures, and policing practices ultimately result in what I am calling *criminal amnesty* for white students. Each of the three chapters of my work will examine the formation of a particular kind of white racial entitlement in Trinity students through the lens of student perpetuated sexual violence, drug abuse, and racial aggression.³

There is no question that colleges and universities nationwide are faced with combatting student crime, including rape and sexual assault, drug use, and racial aggression. However, Trinity is positioned in a specific racial geography that confers an added layer of complexity not seen on most campuses. Trinity's position as a predominantly white elite college in a poor brown city heavily informs the college's attitudes toward the policing and prosecution of crime. Most associate crime with the largely African American, Latino, and poor population that reside just beyond the Trinity campus walls. Therefore, very few speak about the predominantly white and wealthy campus itself as an axis for criminal activity. In the space between assumptions about the purity of the campus and speculation about the dangers of the city, largely white students

at an elite urban liberal arts college are given a race-specific stamp of permission to take part in illegal criminal activity.

On any given weekend night on Vernon Street, Trinity students perpetuate acts of sexual assault, drug abuse, and racial aggression. And while many of the illegal actions described above took place at Trinity's fraternity houses, the reality of rampant campus crime is not a fraternity specific problem. Many students utilize the spaces on Vernon Street for enjoyment, but for some the atmosphere of perceived uninhibitedness and invincibility on "fraternity row" serves as the perfect "safe-space" to engage in hateful and even criminal actions. But to be sure, illegal acts of rape, drug abuse, and racial aggression occur throughout Trinity's campus.

We must also acknowledge that individual students are most responsible for their own criminal actions. But it is Trinity College's policies and leniency towards student criminal activity, specifically white student criminal activity, that creates a so-called "safe space" or "free zone" for such behavior. The administration may not have been physically present with me when I entered that bedroom in Psi U and witnessed white students snorting cocaine. But the college's focus on perceived threats outside the campus walls and near silence around illegal student activity allow for such crime scenes to even exist. Through its prosecutorial acquiescence, Trinity is effectively standing over the shoulders of these students in pinstripe pants and pastel colored shirts, and acting willfully oblivious, telling one another that the white lines are actually snow and the blood trickling from the boys' nose is just a common bleed.

To be clear, Trinity does not deem these criminal actions legal. But by operating on a system that gauges criminal activity on a scale of *white* to wrong, Trinity gives its

consent for illicit and illegal actions to take place with little reproach. By decriminalizing what is normally understood as illegal activity, the college situates those that do not benefit from this system at a significant disadvantage. More specifically, non-majority students are not only subjected to the unpunished actions of their white peers, but they are unjustifiably reprimanded when they attempt to speak up. The failure to police and punish the majority of white student criminal activity is not only an act of acquiescence by the college, it is effectively placing an official blue and yellow Trinity stamp of approval on every act of unpunished rape, drug abuse, and racial aggression on Trinity's campus.

In the chapters that follow I highlight three critical areas of student crime—sexual assault, drug abuse, and racial aggression. Trinity's long walk passageway has become the showpiece architectural jewel in college brochures; meant to signify New England tradition, academic excellence, and the intimate attention of a liberal arts experience. However in each chapter, I take readers on the "longest walk" through the dark and dangerous underside of campus life with the voices of student victims, illicit retailers, and college officials. This thesis does not offer solutions but it does expose the need to interrupt the silence about the clear break between the racially informed discrepancies where Trinity focuses its attention for security as compared to the source of criminal danger that actually threatens the campus. In this venture of critical self-reflection, the college certainly has a much longer walk to endure.

Literature Review

I am placing this work in the two major scholarly fields of urban crime policing and higher educational studies. The scholarship on institutions of higher education and its management of student crime focuses primarily on campus peer sexual assault on college campuses but largely fails to recognize other types of student-perpetuated crime. With the notable exception of A. Rafik Mohamed and Erik Fritsvold's, *Dorm Room Drug Dealers: Drugs and the Privileges of Race and Class*, there exists little scholarship on urban crime policing that give specific attention to spaces of higher education. The scholarship on urban crime policing and its attention to spaces of higher education focuses mostly on incidents of minor crimes on college campuses and their surrounding urban environments. There exists little scholarly literature on the policing of more serious illegal criminal activity, such as sexual violence or drug abuse within the study of urban crime. By bringing these two fields of research together I hope to bridge the gap of study between urban crime and student crime on college campuses, thus creating a new subfield of academic inquiry and intellectual pursuit: the policing and punishment of student crime on urban college campuses. Further, my work incorporates the critical aspects of gender and race by examining sexual assault and racial aggression within this greater context of student crime and punishment.⁴

Methodology

Primary source documents, ethnographic research, and secondary scholarly literature serve as the foundation for this work. I used a qualitative approach to gather primary information in order to weave together this untold story. Over the course of my research I conducted a total of twenty-seven in-depth one-on-one interviews with Trinity

students, Trinity College administrators, and other college officials. I would later find that these individuals' contributions were invaluable to this paper; their professional opinions and personal stories and experiences were vital in directing this study.

I conducted all of the interviews with Trinity students in person. The majority of the interviews with college officials were also in person, with the exception of one interview with a former college administrator. I contacted this administrator and provided him with the interview questions over email. Before conducting interviews with college officials I sent an email in which I communicated to them the topic of my thesis and the subjects we would discuss in the interview. All of those interviewed were encouraged to stop and ask questions if they were unclear regarding a question or if they did not feel comfortable answering. Given the extremely sensitive nature of this work, all of those interviewed will remain anonymous.

My hope for this thesis is to offer a new avenue of academic work in understanding and analyzing student crime on urban college campuses. My goal is for this research to have the versatility and depth to be applicable in understanding and studying student crime across urban college campuses nationwide.

Beyond that, I hope that my work serves as a shock to Trinity's core. I want my work to shake the very foundations that make it possible for perpetrators of criminal activity to walk alongside their victims everyday. For the students of Trinity College, past, current, and future, it is my hope that my work unmasks the injustices created by the college's own administration and its sanctioning of criminal activity. I hope that this work will incite conversation and critique of the structure of Trinity College's student disciplinary system.

Chapter One: *The Boys on Bikes*

On Thursday, March 24, 2016, Trinity College students and faculty received a campus-wide email from the Campus Safety Office about an incident involving two female students and a “large group of youths.”⁵ According to the email, students reported that one of the boys “attempted to slap one of the girls in her buttocks.”⁶ The perceived gravity of the situation was made clear in the last lines of the memo where Campus Safety pledged to work diligently with the Hartford Police Department to resolve the matter. Below is an excerpt from the email:

Campus Safety is investigating and the Hartford Police Department has been notified. Campus Safety would like to thank those involved for quickly notifying the department and bringing these incidents to our attention. As a general reminder, please walk in groups, use pathways that are well lit, and utilize the Campus Safety shuttle or contact Campus Safety for a walking escort.⁷

The language in this email offers a sharp contrast between “youth” and “girls.” Given the racial demographic surrounding the campus, the term “youth” is meant to stand in for a description of what all assume to be African American or Latino boys. And while almost every young woman on Trinity’s campus is of age, calling them “girls” emphasized a desired sentiment of vulnerability; highlighting the unspoken anxiety of menace in a sexually charged interracial encounter. Trinity makes the specter of danger clear: our white girls are not safe in a city of African American and Latino boys.

Email alerts almost identical to the one described above overflow student and faculty mailboxes, continually warning the Trinity community about “boys on bikes” roaming the campus in search of female students. On its surface, the notice about young boys assaulting women on a college campus is a legitimate and necessary warning. But at the same time the repeated trope of the “boys on bikes” works to establish the threat of

sexual violence as non-white and outside the walls of the college. In March 2016 Campus Safety issued three emails in an eleven- day period about the “boys on bikes,” utilizing almost the same language as the email described above. On March 24, the email sent from Campus Safety detailed a student’s report of “male youths”: “The student reported that a group of approximately six or seven male youths approached her and one of the youths attempted to slap her buttocks but her backpack interfered with the attempt.”⁸ Just one day later Campus Safety issued another email: “The student reported that as she attempted to open the door, a youth, described as 7-10 years of age, grabbed her buttocks and then ran off toward the stairway...”⁹ A little over one week later, Campus Safety sent yet another email; this time reassuring the campus that the incidents described above had not been forgotten, and that Hartford police were conducting an investigation into the incidents.¹⁰

However, the same month Campus Safety issued their reports about a group of youth on bikes, NBC Connecticut detailed three incidents of student perpetuated sexual assault in the span of two weeks on Trinity’s campus.¹¹ One of the incidents was cited as an act of “forcible rape.”¹² In a statement to NBC about the public documentation of these crimes, Kathy Andrews, the interim director of Campus Safety at the time said, “We care about the safety of all members of our campus community and we care about their rights to privacy. In cases where the circumstances of an alleged incident of sexual misconduct suggest that the safety of the Trinity community is at risk, we work swiftly to notify the community.”¹³ Yet, sources informed NBC reporters that the school did not notify the campus community of these assaults.¹⁴ To be sure, there was no campus-wide email alerts sent about white male students committing sexual assault. The racial

disparity in the college reportage is staggering.

The implicit racial understanding of sexual assault as a threat from Hartford, allows for an almost complete evasion of the enemy within, the sexual predators among Trinity's student body. Campus Safety has instituted a series of practices from increased police patrols and night walking protocols that focus almost exclusively on the external threats that seem to lurk in the dark alleyways and streets of Hartford. In 2012 the college went so far as to hire an outside security agency to supplement its own Campus Safety officers. When I asked one Campus Safety official where these additional workers patrolled, I learned that in fact they do not patrol the campus at all: "We stick them on the periphery of campus...Allen Street, Summit Street, and Vernon Street."¹⁵ Even more importantly, these officers patrol the areas surrounding campus between the hours of 7 p.m. and 3 a.m.¹⁶ These patrols guard the perimeter at the times, especially on the weekends, when the fraternity houses have closed and instances of student perpetuated sexual violence are more likely to occur on campus.

While Trinity's policing and surveillance systems establish and reinforce the narrative that female students should fear the danger emanating from outside the walls of the college, they fail to properly recognize and address the reality of sexual violence committed by male students on campus, the majority of who are white. Through its policing policies, Trinity's administration shapes the conversation about sexual assault on campus by presenting those outside the walls of the college as the majority of the perpetrators of sexual violence, which allows male Trinity students, specifically white male students, to commit acts of sexual violence with little to no punishment. Campus Safety is quick to send out an email alert if a black or brown Hartford citizen so much as

looks at a female Trinity student the wrong way. Such a racially polarizing approach actually privileges, or more accurately justifies, the largely white male culture of sexual assault and violence that has become an open secret on Trinity's campus. The criminalization of the boys on the bikes lurking in the shadows allows a woman's classmates in khakis and button downs to not only go unprosecuted but their acts of sexual violence and assault are not even marked as criminal.

"Boys on Bikes" will examine the ways in which racialized perceptions of Hartford and threats of sexual danger, together with the management of Trinity's financial struggles, support an embarrassing level of leniency in the policing, punishment, and prosecution of sexual assault and rape instigated by students on Trinity's largely wealthy, white campus.

Campus Peer Sexual Violence

Sexual violence, including rape and other forms of sexual assault, is a widespread problem faced by colleges and universities across the United States. Research suggests that one in every five women is likely to be raped or sexually assaulted during her college years, and most often by someone she knows.¹⁷ Moreover, around 90% of sexual assault victims do not report the violence, which presents serious issues with regards to reporting protocol and victim support systems.¹⁸ Most importantly, patterns of non-reporting indicate that even more women are sexually assaulted and raped than standard research suggests. Given the enormity of this problem, it is critical to first understand the legal responsibilities of institutions of higher education concerning campus peer sexual violence, followed by an analysis of Trinity College's response in the context of the law.

There are relatively few comprehensive studies that focus on the issue of peer

sexual violence on college campuses. However, amongst the research that has been conducted, the findings are mostly consistent and ultimately come to the same conclusion: rape is the most common violent crime on American college campuses today.¹⁹ The picture that these statistics paint is one of epidemic levels of gender-based campus violence that overwhelmingly does not reach any systems of disciplinary or criminal control. The consequences of such violence and the silence surrounding it have serious and extensive implications, both for the victims and the rest of the college community.

Since their development in the 1960's and 1970's, the laws concerning the rights of those accused of sexual assault have not greatly expanded, and they are in fact quite minimal. However, laws related to the rights of the accusing or assaulted students have experienced more recent expansion. The laws that protect survivors of campus peer sexual violence include Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Clery Act, and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).²⁰ Most commonly known for promoting equality in sports participation, Title IX prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational program or activity that receives federal funds. According to the law, student-on-student sexual harassment constitutes as a form of sex-based discrimination.²¹ The Clery Act, which originally focused singularly on the disclosure of campus crime statistics, was amended in 1992 to add "The Campus Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights" (CSAVBR).²² Similarly, campus grants to fund programs that address peer sexual violence were added to the Violence Against Women Act in 2000.²³

Under Title IX jurisprudence, colleges may be held liable for peer sexual harassment in two ways: through administrative enforcement by the Department of

Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and through private suits. Schools agree to comply with Title IX to receive federal funds, and a school risks a loss of federal funding if OCR investigates and finds a violation of Title IX.²⁴

The legal schemes described above have undoubtedly improved protections for survivors against the institutional mishandling of sexual violence incidents. Yet college action or rather inaction affecting *other* students, including alleged perpetrators, has remained at a fairly low level of liability.²⁵ One of the major issues these laws have responded to is the lack of reporting by victims of sexual assault on college campuses. Despite the emergence of various laws in the last decade intended to protect victims of sexual assault many women, specifically college-aged women, still refuse to report their assaults. Non-reporting is due in large part to a college's culture of victim blaming, a victim's fear of hostile treatment, and fear of disbelief by legal and medical authorities. Thus, a vicious cycle between the non-reporting of campus peer sexual violence and the failure to prevent it become clear. Georgetown University law professor and sexual assault law expert Nancy Chi Cantalupo pinpoints the consequences of such a cycle, writing, "Perpetrators rape because they think they will not get caught or because they actually have not been caught, and, because survivors do not report the violence, perpetrators are not caught, continue to believe they will not get caught, and continue the violence."²⁶ Studies of peer sexual violence on college campuses confirm this assertion, showing that male college students say that they would rape if they could be assured of not getting caught. Additional studies show that it is a small group of serial offenders that account for the overwhelming majority of incidents of sexual violence and it is the failure of institutions to treat such violence seriously that may cause perpetrators to continue

committing acts of sexual assault and rape.²⁷

While Trinity's administration presents non-white residents outside the college as perpetrators of crime, specifically sexual assault, research indicates that it is actually those *within* college campuses that commit the majority of criminal acts of sexual violence. To be clear, Trinity College is not alone in its struggles with extensive campus peer sexual violence, nor does the college deny the reality of sexual assault and rape by students on the campus.²⁸ However, one Trinity administrator differentiated Trinity's rampant sexual assault culture and the silence surrounding peer sexual violence: "Despite years of educational programming, bystander training, policy and adjudication changes, the pervasiveness of victim blaming or shaming, a code of silence, and overall disrespect for women and non-majority students on Trinity's campus is ubiquitous."²⁹ Still, it is the administration's exaggerated over-reporting of non-white activity that is just *perceived* as criminal, and potentially sexually dangerous, which establishes and reinforces a narrative that aligns non-white Hartford and threats of sexual violence. Alongside racialized perceptions of crime, Trinity's largely white male dominated social culture, and the lenient punishment of sexual violence helps to create a rather unique Trinity campus environment where white male students are free to engage in criminal acts of rape and sexual assault and the greater racial landscape helps to grant criminal amnesty for their illegal actions.

The Enemy Within

Trinity College buzzed with excitement as the campus prepared for the college's 190th commencement ceremony. The main quad appeared perfectly manicured with neat uniformed rows of white folding chairs that faced an elevated stage. The picturesque

Long Walk, Trinity's most distinguishing and historical architectural pillar of collegiate tradition, served as the perfect backdrop. On the stage there was a large banner emblazoned with the blue and gold Trinity College seal. As the ceremony began, the graduates beamed as they crossed the stage. One by one, they eagerly reached for their diplomas and shook the president of the college's hand.

In a strange turn of events however, one female student crossed the stage, but unlike all her other classmates, she walked swiftly past the president, without shaking her hand. She exited the stage as quickly as she entered. Her black gown and gold tassel swung sharply in her wake.

I later learned from a former sexual response coordinator at Trinity that the female student was a victim of sexual assault. The perpetrator was a white male Trinity student.³⁰ The female student was so disappointed and disgusted in the way Trinity's administration and the college's disciplinary board handled her case, that in a final radical act of defiance - in front of her entire graduating class, friends, family, and Trinity faculty and administration - she refused to even touch the president's hand. Without uttering a word, the student returned the disrespect and disregard she felt the administration had shown her.

This story and the experiences of this individual student serve as a microcosm of the systematic failure of Trinity College's administrative and disciplinary systems to police and punish the college's student body for criminal acts of sexual assault and rape. This incident offers a clear window into the widespread sexual assault culture on Trinity's campus and the failure of the college to accurately and equally police and prosecute incidents of sexual assault and rape when committed by primarily white

wealthy students on the campus. Still, as serious and extreme as this specific case might be, it is just the tip of the iceberg.

According to the Trinity College Campus Safety Annual Fire Safety Report for 2014, the college defines sexual assault as “any intentional sexual contact without consent, whether such contact directly touches skin or is through clothing...and also includes attempted non-consensual sexual intercourse.”³¹ The annual crime statistics section of the report states that in 2012 there were 7 reported incidents of “forcible sex offenses” on Trinity’s campus.³² Just one year later in 2013 that number tripled. An astounding 21 cases of sexual assault were reported.³³ In 2014 another 21 cases of sexual assault were reported. That same year, twelve incidents of rape were also reported.³⁴ Accounting for breaks in the calendar year for winter and spring recesses, the academic year is about seven months, from September to May. This means that according to 2014 reports male students at Trinity raped female students at the staggering rate of nearly two incidents per month.

“I’m more worried about the boys sitting next to me in class than some kids on bikes”

It is widely understood amongst Trinity students that though the college’s address may read “Hartford, CT,” Trinity College exists as an entity onto itself, separate and unconnected from the city. This isolationist attitude stems from the college’s history of intentional and extensive distancing from the city and such ideas are continually fed by the administration’s constant redrawing of the hard line between white Trinity and brown Hartford. The sexual assault landscape at Trinity College is undoubtedly shaped and conditioned by the unequal attention given to the perceived threat of criminality that

exists beyond the college's iron gates instead of the very real offenses that occur in any given dormitory room or dark corner on Trinity's campus. While Trinity's administration is worried about the threat of young brown boys on bicycles, white male students continue to engage in very real and illegal acts of rape and sexual assault with little to no punishment. One female student quickly dismissed Trinity's outward facing approach to campus safety, exclaiming, "I am more worried about the guys sitting in class next to me than a few kids on bikes."³⁵ It is clear that the administration perceives perpetrators of sexual violence as originating from outside the college, despite facts that prove otherwise.

The reality is that Trinity is situated at the center of what one college administrator characterized as a "dire sexual assault landscape."³⁶ They went on to attribute an intense code of silence surrounding campus sexual violence and a general disrespect for women and non-majority students to Trinity's rape culture saying, "These latter issues protect and enable perpetrators and stunt reporting thus creating the 'dire' landscape."³⁷ Female students, at a more rapid rate than ever, confer with each other in hushed tones about which dark corners of campus to avoid late at night or which male students are known to be particularly "physical." All of this networking is in the desperate hope of escaping the outreached claws of the imminent threat of sexual violence at the hands of their own male peers. College administrators and students agree that Trinity's social culture heavily contributes to the frequency and normalization of sexual violence on campus.

At Trinity, there is also a widespread culture of binge drinking, a phenomenon where people drink in extreme excess, beyond the point of inebriation, and often into medical need. Binge drinking is perceived as a regular activity at Trinity, and as one

student said, “Everyone drinks a lot...it would almost be not normal to just have a couple of drinks.”³⁸ At Trinity, social activities are centered on the consumption of alcohol. In general, students mostly consume alcohol on the weekend, usually at parties at fraternity houses on Vernon Street, which is the social center of campus. Greek life at Trinity, which is almost exclusively white, dominates the college’s social scene. Yet, in my research I did not find that fraternities were the cause of Trinity’s pervasive rape culture. However, fraternity houses may present a more opportune environment for these actions to take place and social lubricants such as alcohol that foster inhibition makes these actions more visible. But to be sure, illegal acts of rape and sexual assault are prevalent throughout Trinity’s campus and it is the individual student that is responsible for his or her own criminal actions. Still, binge drinking, partying and pushing social limits are behaviors that are accepted and reinforced at Trinity. One senior college administrator said, “The culture of binge drinking is a huge problem at Trinity. Students go out with the intention of drinking themselves into medical need.”³⁹ After all, if students really wanted to be more in control, then binge drinking would not be so popular. But to be clear, this is not to say that drinking directly leads to sexual assault, because it does not. However, when binge drinking is accepted and even encouraged, it creates an environment where no one can claim control over their actions, a typical argument made by those accused of rape.

Students use alcohol as a social lubricant; to both numb any social anxieties and as a method of non-verbal communication. Perpetrators also intentionally use alcohol and other intoxicants to target potential victims. People are much less inhibited when drunk and what would normally be recognized as questionable behavior, at the very least, is

chalked up to the effects of alcohol. But it is exactly this culture of binge drinking and the attached attitude of normalization that also masks rapists' intentions; when a male student offers a female student multiple drinks his actions are understood as normal, and even generous, not as a precursor to sexual assault or rape. One female student illustrated how exactly this works to the advantage of male perpetrators: "Because I was drunk, I didn't notice how close this guy was dancing to me, or where my friends were. I did not think twice when he asked me to come with him to the other room to talk."⁴⁰ This encounter ended in yet another case of sexual assault. On a campus where drinking in excess is normalized and encouraged amongst students it is much easier to engage in acts of sexual violence. More specifically, it is considerably easier to have non-consensual sex, for example a drunk hook-up, which is the very definition of rape. One former sexual assault response coordinator at the college described Trinity's campus peer sexual violence culture as such: "Suffice it to say, the landscape feels unsupportive if you're a survivor, and I would imagine it feels accessible if you're an assailant."⁴¹

"I get what I want"

At Trinity there exists a dominant culture where male students determine what is and what is not socially accepted. I have witnessed several instances in which white male students have ordered female students to change into more revealing clothing, to which the female students obliged, in order to gain access to a party. When I asked one former administrator at the college to identify what separates the sexual assault culture at Trinity from that of other colleges they said simply, "Male students' influence and access."⁴² If white male students have the power to make female students wear shorter skirts in order to be allowed access to a party, it should not be surprising that they also feel empowered

and entitled to view female students' bodies as vehicles for their own utility. Moreover, one senior college official connected the sense of entitlement experienced by white male students to the sexual assault culture at Trinity saying, "Sexual assault is about power. There is a general attitude of 'I get what I want.' This translates to white male students feeling entitled to use bodies as they wish."⁴³ Further, Trinity College President Joanne Berger-Sweeney in an interview with NPR made a direct link between the culture of privilege in Trinity students and sexual violence on campus. President Berger-Sweeney directly attributed illicit activity at the college, specifically substance abuse and sexual misconduct, to the largely homogenous student body. She hopes that by diversifying the student body Trinity can: "break the culture of privilege on our campus..."⁴⁴

When students, specifically white male students, are not held responsible by the college, or are handed lenient punishment for such actions as sexual assault or rape, their criminal actions are deemed normal. Such an understanding creates an attitude of entitlement in white male students that is predicated on the notion that their criminal acts of sexual violence will not be seriously policed, punished, or prosecuted by the college. In reflecting on the culture of peer sexual assault at Trinity one female student described the entitled attitudes of white males students. She said, "They understand the weight of their actions and still do it."⁴⁵ Ultimately, white male students feel that they are entitled to use women's bodies and therefore the subsequent criminal amnesty for their illegal actions becomes a critical element in the formation of their white racial identity.

The lack of policing and punishment for the majority of sexual violence perpetrated by largely white male students at Trinity unquestionably works to shape the ways in which these students understand their status at the college. But over the course of

my research I also discovered that some students had cultivated a sense of entitlement before coming to Trinity; some male students were accepted into the college even when administrators understood that these students had known reputations for sexual violence.

Rapists Accepted!

Trinity's financial troubles have long been an open secret amongst faculty, administrators, and students on campus. Over the last two years Trinity College operated at a budget deficit and the college has faced serious financial issues for the past four years.⁴⁶ Under former Trinity president Jimmy Jones, the college employed various schemes to increase revenue such as raising tuition, increasing class size, and increasing the number of full-tuition paying students. During this time, according to one senior admissions administrator at Trinity, the college lowered their admissions standards in order to accept more full paying, though less qualified applicants. Describing the college's admissions values at the time they said, "Trinity really prized tuition paying students."⁴⁷ They went on to note that often times potential applicants were ranked at the bottom of their class at large preparatory and boarding schools in New England, all of which hold student bodies that are predominantly wealthy and white. Confirming this point, two senior college administrators described the demographics at Trinity during this time as "very white, very wealthy, and very male."⁴⁸ When I asked the same admissions administrator how exactly the college lowered admissions standards they said, "We handed out acceptances to students with serious disciplinary problems."⁴⁹ I then queried whether sexual assault or rape was among these "serious disciplinary problems." They reluctantly replied, "Yes."⁵⁰ With an ability to pay full tuition, Trinity College knowingly admitted male students that were previously held under suspicion or found guilty of

criminal acts of sexual violence. Trinity not only purposefully placed known perpetrators of sexual violence on the college's campus, once these students arrived there were no systems of surveillance in place to police these students and prevent future crimes from taking place.⁵¹ Thus every single day, countless innocent and oblivious female students encountered perpetrators of sexual violence, walking side by side known assailants on the way to class or accepting a drink from them late at night in a dark corner of some party. One college administrator perfectly articulated the sexual assault atmosphere at Trinity during that time: "It was like walking in a war-zone."⁵²

"I remember too much"

Despite the intense code of silence that permeates Trinity's campus concerning sexual assault and rape, I found that some survivors of sexual violence were open to talking with me about their experiences. One female student who fell victim to the so-called Trinity "war-zone," communicated to me the details of her rape.

The female student, who I will refer to as Jane, was raped during her freshman year at Trinity in 2011. Her assailant was a white male student, who I will refer to as John. According to Jane, on the night of the incident, the two students attended Psi Upsilon's annual start of the year party called Tropical. The two students were friends and they had talked earlier in the day and decided to meet at the fraternity party. Tropical is one of the most blatant representations of the binge drinking culture that exists on Trinity's campus and on this particular night there was an abundance of alcohol present at the fraternity house. At the party both students were heavily inebriated. Jane recalled telling John that she felt sick and he offered to walk her back to her dormitory room; she agreed.⁵³ However, when they arrived to the dormitory room John refused to leave. Jane

recounted the events that followed: “He pushed me on the bed and I remember him on top of me. I kept struggling and repeatedly saying no.”⁵⁴ Although parts of the night are blurry, Jane stated that she clearly remembered her assailant forcing himself on top of her and seeing and feeling his bare genitals.⁵⁵

When Jane woke up the next morning her skirt was pulled up to her chest, her underwear was pushed down to her ankles, and there was one single used condom on the floor next to her bed.⁵⁶ In the weeks and months that followed Jane struggled to accept the reality of her rape and lived in denial, which made it impossible to collect forensic evidence. Jane was so traumatized by the rape that she developed a severe conversion disorder. She ultimately lost the ability to walk; meanwhile her rapist walked the college campus freely. Jane experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms such as panic attacks, flashbacks, and night terrors and as a result she did not bring a case to Trinity until the summer preceding her junior year. During a conversation about her case with one Trinity dean, Jane recalled feeling extremely invalidated by the college. She said, “They blamed my alcohol use for not being able to remember explicit step-by-step details, although in my mind, I remember too much.”⁵⁷

“Trinity betrayed me”

Jane was scheduled to go abroad in the fall of 2013 and therefore the disciplinary case was very fast paced and conducted during the summer. Trinity explicitly instructed Jane to not hire a lawyer. She was told that instead she was allowed the support of a mentor of her choosing. Yet, when Jane arrived on the day of the hearing she was devastated to see that her rapist had hired a lawyer. The entitlement evidenced in this incident is painfully obvious: “My rapist’s family was white and rich and they spent all

the money to avoid a scandal. Trinity told me many times over not to hire a lawyer but failed to ever mention that he had.”⁵⁸ During the trial, the members of the disciplinary board treated Jane like a suspect and culprit instead of a victim. Again, alcohol was blamed for, what they called, her irresponsibility. Ultimately, the college ruled that there was insufficient evidence to suggest rape. The decided punishment was a no contact order. Jane recalled her Trinity experience after the case was closed: “My rapist still roamed free on campus and terrorized me. I was scared to go anywhere without my friends and I looked for him everywhere I went.”⁵⁹ She further expressed her disdain towards the administration’s mishandling of her case. She said, “Trinity betrayed me. While [my mentor] and my professors were very understanding as to when I had panic attacks and had to be excused, the administration was awful.”⁶⁰ In her senior year at Trinity, Jane learned from a close friend of her rapist that his family made an anonymous donation of \$500,000 to the school during the same time of the hearing. Later the victim also learned that her assailant proceeded to rape another student at Trinity.⁶¹

One college official clearly articulated the politics of punishment and the criminal landscape at Trinity when they said, “Even if you do get caught, with the amount of infractions happening at the college, cocaine use for example, the chances of you suffering any major consequences are unlikely.”⁶² The campus climate of criminal amnesty has set the tone for a racialized sense of entitlement that expresses itself in Trinity’s white students through a range of practices both illicit and illegal.

Chapter Two: *DOA - Dead On Arrival*

The dispatcher on the other end of the line relayed the message: Someone on the sixth floor of Trinity College's High Rise dormitory is "unresponsive."⁶³ Senior Maria Campos, a licensed emergency medical technician, looked at the clock, puzzled. It was 1:15 p.m. on a Friday afternoon- much too early to party. She quickly grabbed her medical bag and ran across campus to High Rise room 601. One Hartford police officer and a few Trinity Campus Safety officers were already at the scene. Maria opened the door and slowly surveyed the room. She had been in dorm rooms in High Rise countless times before but she had never seen one that looked like this. There were clothes strewn about, furniture toppled over, cushions and pillows on the floor, and beer bottles everywhere. Her eyes stopped at the corner of the room- and there, on the sofa, in a green t-shirt and khakis was 22-year-old Trinity senior Nick Kaupp. His bare feet were dangling off the side of the couch, his tongue was flipped back, and his chest was heaving. Maria pulled an oxygen mask from her kit and placed it over his mouth and nose. She pulled back his eyelids and her own pulse quickened as the hazy whites of Kaupp's eyeballs, rolled back in his head, stared at her. One of the Campus Safety officers informed her that a student was already taken from the room and pronounced DOA, dead on arrival.⁶⁴ Minutes later, a team of paramedics rushed in and injected Kaupp with naloxone, a drug used to counter the effects of heroin.⁶⁵ There was no response.

The story above was a description of a real event that occurred at Trinity College in March 2000.⁶⁶ This scene represents just one of the all too common episodes of illegal and excessive drug use by students at Trinity College. Almost twenty years have passed

since the story took place and many of the senior members of the administration that handled this case have since left the college. Yet that same tale of illegal narcotics and bad decisions could be told today. Drug fueled celebrations at parties in dark dorm rooms, or in the middle of a school day, followed by frantic 911 telephone calls and Campus Safety shuttles to Hartford Hospital, are common occurrences at Trinity. Most in Hartford would tie drug use to the largely African American, Latino, and poor neighborhoods surrounding Trinity. Hence, very few speak about the largely white and wealthy campus itself as a hotbed of criminal activity, including drug use and sales. Trinity College works hard to control the narrative surrounding campus crime by painting an image of drug use and distribution as existing exclusively among those that reside outside the campus walls. To be sure, higher education administrators are faced with combating illegal drug use at colleges and universities all across the country. However, Trinity is situated within a particular racial dynamic that contributes an added layer of complexity not seen on most campuses. Silence around student drug use at Trinity is largely shaped by the association of illegal activity, including drug use and sales, with non-whites off campus and desires to protect the Trinity brand in what many perceive as a dangerous, poor, and non-white city. In the gap between assumptions about the purity of the campus and speculation about the dangers of the city, predominantly white students at an elite urban liberal arts college have been given a race-specific kind of license to engage in illegal drug activity. The ways in which white students have been granted what I am calling *criminal amnesty* for drug offenses further highlights how whiteness becomes an identity of de-criminalization.

In “DOA” I will explore how racialized perceptions of Hartford and drug use, alongside the brand management of Trinity College, contribute to the relative absolution of drug use and sales on this majority white and wealthy campus. This chapter makes clear that the focus of Trinity College’s surveillance efforts leans heavily if not completely outside of its own walls and are directed toward the city, which is primarily poor and brown, rather than on its own students, the majority of who are wealthy and white. Through a deep investigation of student drug use, sales, and abuse on Trinity’s campus and the administration’s response, it will become evident that the disciplinary eye of Trinity College’s administration narrows suspiciously at black and brown Hartford “locals” but seems to grow blurry and even blind at its own white Trinity students.

Punishment and Pigmentation

The strong public association of criminality with blackness has long served to adversely affect the lives of people of color in the United States. The War on Drugs in the 1980’s was a powerful contributor to the identification and surveillance of black and brown citizens as criminals. Under the Regan administration Congress passed strict laws to police the use and sale of crack cocaine.⁶⁷ Crack was generally recognized as a relatively inexpensive drug largely used by poor racial minorities, specifically black citizens.⁶⁸ The government attack on crack cocaine had an immediate and significant impact on communities of color, with a large portion of blacks being funneled through the criminal justice system. The dominant narrative regarding the new laws conveyed the message to the public that the problem of crack cocaine, previously thought to be common only to minority communities, was suddenly spreading to a very anxious white America.⁶⁹

Yet, Americans were already familiar with cocaine before the War on Drugs. Prior to the so-called “crack epidemic,” powder cocaine was prevalent in primarily affluent white communities, with little acknowledgement from law enforcement or national media.⁷⁰ It was only when this drug was transformed into a relatively affordable and accessible variant that began to circulate in predominantly blacks areas that drug use became a prioritized target of policy makers and the criminal justice system. Urban black Americans have undoubtedly borne the brunt of the War on Drugs. They have been arrested, prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned at steadily increasing rates since the 1980’s and at rates which are grossly out of proportion to their numbers in the general population or among drug users.⁷¹ In the War on Drugs the threat was not drug use, it was a racially defined group of people. Still, there existed a strong public perception that drugs were and remain an activity exclusive to African Americans, and more specifically poor, urban blacks. To be clear, blacks participate in drug use and sales. But it is the over-policing and over-reporting of black illegal drug activity that creates the assumption that they are the only group of people involved in drugs, even when the facts clearly prove otherwise. In 2000, the Human Rights Watch reported that in seven states, African Americans constitute 80 to 90 percent of all drug offenders sent to prison.⁷² In at least fifteen states, blacks were admitted to prison on drug charges at a rate from twenty to fifty-seven times greater than that of white men.⁷³ To be sure, whites have been admitted to prison for drug offenses at increased rates as well, but their relative numbers pale in comparison to black and Latino citizens. Despite the fact that the majority of illegal drug users and dealers nationwide are white, three-fourths of all people imprisoned for drug offenses have been black or brown.⁷⁴

The truth is that drug crime rates do not explain the extreme racial disparities found in our criminal justice system. Black and Latino citizens experience increased police surveillance, punishment, and prosecution for drug crimes, which works to establish a narrative that aligns non-whites with illegal drug activity. Official crime rates are consistent with the dominant and publicized racial narratives surrounding crime, which are constantly reinforced in print media, on television, the Internet, and video games; shaping public views of and attitudes toward people of color. Media representations of blacks as criminals not only help create barriers between racial groups, but they also make the linkage between blackness and crime seem natural and inevitable. Research shows that people of all races use and sell illegal drugs at remarkably similar rates.⁷⁵ Moreover, studies frequently suggest that whites, particularly white youth, are more likely to engage in illegal drug sales than people of color. For example, one study published in 2000 by the National Institute on Drug Abuse reported that white students use powder cocaine at seven times the rate of black students, they use crack cocaine at eight times the rate of black students, and use heroin at seven times the rate of black students.⁷⁶ Thus, the very same year the Human Rights Watch reported that blacks were arrested and imprisoned at unprecedented rates, government data revealed that blacks were no more likely to be guilty of drug crimes than whites and that white youth were actually the most likely of any racial group to be guilty of illegal drug possession and sales.

The notion that whites comprise the vast majority of drug users and dealers may seem implausible to some, considering the media imagery we are fed on a daily basis and the racial composition of our prisons and jails. Upon reflection however, the prevalence

of white drug crime should not be surprising. Studies consistently indicate that drug markets reflect our nation's racial and socioeconomic boundaries.⁷⁷ Whites sell to whites; blacks to blacks. College students tend to sell to each other. The idea that most illegal drug use and sales happen in the ghetto is pure fiction. Yet it is the prevalence of over-policing and over-reporting of specifically non-white drug crimes that allows such fictions to exist.

At Trinity - a predominantly white and wealthy college in a poor and non-white city - drug activity is perceived as a behavior that is closely associated with the surrounding non-white community. Trinity's location, in Hartford's Frog Hollow neighborhood, which is largely black and brown and very poor serves as the perfect foil when the college seeks to craft an image of drug use and criminal activity. One only needs to cross Trinity's gated border to experience the socioeconomic and racial disparities between the two communities. Through the use of several persuasive tactics, the administration utilizes the college's location as a method of exploitation, constructing an alternate reality in which drug use and sales run rampant in the community but are nonexistent on the college campus.

"They call them 'locals'"

One hot August day I was giving a campus tour to a small group of families as part of my responsibilities as a mentor for international first-year students. The accompanying parents asked a few general questions about housing as we passed the first-year dormitories and one mother questioned the food at the dining halls as we walked past Mather Hall. Then, as I led the group down the Upper Long Walk, we all retreated to the quad and paused under the shade of an Elm tree. One particularly anxious

mother cautiously approached me. She was dressed in a light pink shift and her hair, which had been perfectly pressed at the beginning of the day, was now curling at the roots and stuffed into a tight bun at the top of her head. Her eyes whizzed back and forth and she squinted through the sun and looked up at me to ask, "So, is it safe here?" After she registered my quizzical expression she quickly backtracked saying, "No, you know, I know the *campus* is safe, obviously." Before I could respond another mother standing nearby extended her arm and patted her on the small of her back. She looked at the quizzical mother with a knowing smile and assured, "I had the same question. I talked to someone in admissions and they said as long as the kids stay on campus they will be more than okay." As the group returned to the Long Walk the two mothers walked arm in arm and one said quietly to the other, "The people that live over there, they call them 'locals'." These two women were certainly not the first to utter the word "locals" when referring to Hartford residents and in fact most on campus do so with much more hostility and aggression. Many Trinity students and administrators perceive Hartford as a city laden with crime and Trinity as a campus of refuge. It is understood amongst many students, particularly white students that crime, specifically drug crime originates from Hartford. One white female student remarked, "Everyone knows that a lot of people do drugs and sell drugs in Hartford. I've definitely seen people on drugs on Broad Street. Trinity people get drugs from dealers on Broad."⁷⁸ I asked her if she could back up her claim that "everyone" knows Hartford residents actively use and distribute drugs. She laughed off my question saying, "It's Hartford. Like, come on."⁷⁹ She went on to reference an incident in which she was walking down Broad Street and saw a needle on the ground. Despite my incessant questioning, the female student failed to establish a

direct correlation between the *appearance* of drug use and sales in Hartford and the actual reality of criminal drug activity in the city. Even more important, she could never prove that drug use on campus stems from a drug trade in Hartford.

College administrators also maintain this notion that criminal drug activity is exclusive to Hartford. I asked one senior college administrator to comment on the illegal drug trade at Trinity and they responded in disbelief and claimed that they were unaware that narcotics were even circulated on Trinity's campus.⁸⁰ But when I proceeded to recount a mere rumor about a drug deal between Hartford "locals" that had gone awry, that same administrator nodded knowingly, stating, "Yes, that happens."⁸¹ By contrast, when I asked one student to describe the accessibility of illegal drugs from student dealers on campus, the student explained "I could buy drugs about as easily as I could go and buy candy in the Cave. It's that easy."⁸² Another student commented, "I could get drugs at 2 p.m. on a Monday or 3 a.m. on a Thursday, and I would never even have to leave my dorm room."⁸³ The dominant narrative connecting drug crimes with non-whiteness draws on Trinity students' and the administration's negative perceptions of non-white Hartford. Still, another major reason exists behind Trinity's association between drug crimes and non-whites: the college's steadily declining status and its desires to appeal to an elite, wealthy, and white public.

The (Neighbor) Hood

Trinity College has long been considered one of the nation's top liberal arts colleges, as much of the literature distributed by the college makes abundantly clear. Trinity relishes in its reputation as a "Little Ivy," a moniker that has more to do with social and economic elitism than academic exceptionalism. But the statistics regarding

Trinity's status amongst other New England liberal arts colleges and universities across the U.S. tell a divergent story of a college in crisis. In 2014 the college fell in the rankings from 36th place to 45th place and for the past four years Trinity College has been operating at a budget deficit largely due to alumni withholding contributions following former president Jimmy Jones' attempts to diversify student life.⁸⁴ Due to Trinity's budget crisis the only feasible way for the college to increase revenue is to raise tuition and accept more applicants that are willing and able to pay full tuition. Wealth and income trends amongst Trinity students' mirror socioeconomic scales across the country; whites are more likely to be wealthy, upper-middle class or middle class while blacks and Latinos are more likely to be less wealthy, middle class or poor. Therefore, by raising tuition to an amount that is only realistically affordable for wealthy applicants, the majority of who are white, Trinity reinforces its profile as an institution accessible almost exclusively to white and wealthy students.

Trinity College's marketing strategies confirm the notion that the college brands itself to white, wealthy applicants. In efforts to assure prospective parents that their children will be safe in a poor non-white Hartford, Trinity constructs and reinforces a reality where danger and crime exists only outside the walls of the college. Trinity paints itself as a lush oasis in the midst of a crude and criminal jungle. One student tour guide for the Office of Admissions stated, "There are a few parents on almost every tour that ask questions about safety in Hartford."⁸⁵ The student went on to say that the Office of Admissions prepares its tour guides specifically for these kinds of questions. According to the student the office instructs tour guides to focus on the "good" parts of Hartford: "Admissions tells us to talk about new restaurants and stores, even though they are often

actually in West Hartford, not in the city of Hartford and definitely not in Frog Hollow.”⁸⁶ This same student also affirmed that the Office of Admissions instructs student tour guides to emphasize the college’s Campus Safety efforts.⁸⁷ When I asked one senior admissions officer how exactly the office communicates safety efforts on campus to prospective parents they stated, “We try to emphasize the academic aspect of Hartford and the liberal arts in the city. We also talk a lot about Campus Safety and the officers always being out and around campus keeping things safe.”⁸⁸ He went on to admit, “Things happen. You know, you hear the stories about those kids on bikes.”⁸⁹ While the senior admissions officer pointed to non-white Hartford residents and their simple threat of criminality, they failed to acknowledge the reality of criminal activity on Trinity’s campus, the majority of which is perpetuated by the college’s own white students. Thus, Trinity’s Office of Admissions, the leg of the college responsible for selling Trinity to the public, conveys the message that Trinity’s safety efforts are singularly focused on protecting students from Hartford and its perception of danger. The use of commonly deployed language situates Hartford and its “locals” versus Trinity Campus Safety as opposing forces. Thus, Trinity’s branding strategy becomes clear: White wealthy parents are more comfortable sending their children to Trinity if criminal activity, specifically illegal drug activity, emanates from *outside* instead of *inside* the campus. It is against this backdrop of associating criminal threats with non-whites and desires to protect the Trinity brand, where illegal drug use and distribution by white Trinity students occurs with little disciplinary or criminal action.

The college’s perception of Hartford as a mecca for drug activity creates an environment in which surveillance and safety efforts are so heavily focused on non-white

Hartford that if a drug user or dealer does not match the stereotypical profile of a young urban minority from the city, trafficking and using illegal drugs on campus become a significantly less risky enterprise. This racialized understanding of drug activity provides Trinity's white students with a kind of free pass to engage in drug sales and use. The close association of drugs with non-whites, a construction that is embedded within the college's approach to policing, allows for the majority of Trinity's students to understand criminal amnesty as a key function in the formation of their white racial identity. But in the space between racialized understandings of drug crime in Hartford and the resulting lack of policing of white Trinity students, the truth is that the college stands at the center of a lucrative and illicit drug market economy.

“Do you trust me?”

Imagine this scene: ten to fifteen people, some friends, but most strangers to each other, are standing around two large tables when one person in the crowd turns to another and asks one single question, “Do you trust me?”⁹⁰

Could anything be simpler? One innocent question and its answer. The two white male students stand facing each other and stare deeply and intensely into one another's eyes. The Christmas lights that hang over the dormitory's glass windows create a glistening kaleidoscope of colors that dance in their dark and enlarged pupils. Without breaking eye contact, the other student simply replies, “Yes.”⁹¹ In one fluid motion he bends over the table and puts his right index finger against one nostril and inhales strongly through the other. Grain by grain, gram by gram, a line of white powder ascends off the table and into his body.

I have witnessed exchanges similar to this one evoke unexpectedly powerful feelings. There is a heightened sense of emotion that comes with placing your life in another person's hands. The single most dominating sentiment is trust. When the male student asked the other, "Do you trust me?" the question was multifaceted, layered with context, and coated with meaning. He was asking if his fellow partygoer trusted that he was being offered clean cocaine and not a mixture of different substances. More importantly he was asking if he trusted that the other student would not relay his deviances beyond the ivy covered walls of that Jarvis dormitory suite. This exchange represents just one of the all too common instances of illegal drug use and distribution by white students at Trinity College. To be clear, black and Latino students engage in drug use and sales but I have found that the overwhelming majority of drug crime on campus is at the hands of white users, dealers, and suppliers. Neither of the two students referenced above ever suffered punishment or prosecution for their illicit drug use.

Criminal amnesty is due in large part to the understood code of silence and protection that is synonymous with drug use and distribution on Trinity's campus. Because students sell to each other and largely use drugs together there is an unspoken veil of confidentiality and protection, or trust that is often conveyed with lingering eye contact; pacts cemented over clean white lines and crushed up pink and blue pills. Combined with the administration's focus on the exterior, this code of silence allows for illegal drug activity to go largely undetected or most certainly unprosecuted. This environment creates a sense of racialized entitlement in white Trinity students that is built on the presumption that the efforts of the administration and campus police surveillance are focused exclusively on non-whites and the so-called "outside" threat of criminality.

The racialized policing of student crime manifests as a unique brand of entitlement, heavily informed by Trinity's unique urban location; an entitlement painted in navy and gold and plastered on ivory skin. Ultimately, the end result of such silence and the institution's focus on the exterior is a vibrant social and economic network grounded in the supply and demand of illegal drugs that exists in plain view but nonetheless remains unnoticed by all institutions of disciplinary and criminal control.

Despite the intense code of silence that permeates drug activity on campus, in my research I found that once students were assured of their anonymity and that I had no interest in turning them in to the college, many were eager to discuss the use and sales of drugs at Trinity. I have discovered that there are actually two major markets serving the drug-use demands of Trinity students. The primary market involves the use and sales of mainstream substances such as marijuana and cocaine. The second market revolves around the use and trafficking of prescription drugs, such as Xanax, Adderall, and Valium, among others. The next section will focus on the primary market, one that specifically caters to the street-drug needs and demands of Trinity's predominantly white and wealthy student body. As I began to identify dealers in this primary market, and more importantly gained their trust, I discovered what specific drugs they sold, whom they were selling to, the price of their product, and where they obtained their supply of illegal drugs. I also gained a valuable understanding about how this market functioned as a powerful social network and highly profitable economic enterprise. Despite unspoken presumptions that white users get their supply from a brown Hartford, the racial routes of the Trinity drug trade may surprise many but in fact reinforce my argument about the decriminalization of whiteness.

“Leave me with a pot and a stove and I could make \$1,000”

Identifying the student drug dealers who serve as the backbone of Trinity’s primary drug network was a fairly simple feat. Narcotics culture at Trinity is so ubiquitous that it only takes one or two conversations to distinguish who runs the drug game on campus. Additionally, with the exception of one dealer, a number of drug workers willingly and some almost eagerly, agreed to sit for interviews with me. In fact, one dealer was open to allowing my presence while he was conducting his business. In my research I have found that marijuana and cocaine dominate Trinity’s primary drug market. This is not surprising given that marijuana is frequently used nationwide and it has lost much of its stigma due to its recent legalization in many states. Moreover, marijuana is a drug that is relatively cost-effective, for both users and dealers. Users can experience a significant high for a relatively low cost, when compared to other illicit drugs. I found that marijuana is the only drug that transcends Trinity’s socioeconomic and racial categories and thus a cross-section of the student population uses it. I also found that this racial transcendence extended to the marijuana dealers, who are both black and white. Marijuana dealers also enjoy a sizeable profit margin from their sales because they can sell marijuana to other students at a significantly higher price than the cost of the original supply.

There are roughly a dozen or more student dealers, but still the majority of dealers that service the campus with marijuana are white. But there is one dealer that traffics the drug at a higher rate than the rest. This dealer, whom I will refer to as Mr. Big, is black.

Mr. Big became one of my most trusted informants. He began selling marijuana during his freshmen year at Trinity after identifying an opening in the market when a white upperclassman dealer decided that he was no longer interested in selling.⁹² While Mr. Big sells marijuana in the common bud form, he attributes the bulk of his profit to edibles; a form that he claims is highly profitable because it is more easily consumed. He sells a single edible for \$10 to \$15, depending on how much marijuana he uses in the baking process.⁹³ Aside from the obvious criminality of his activities, Mr. Big is extremely business savvy and by all accounts, he is the founder and CEO of a flourishing business.

Mr. Big outlined to me the specific economics of his business.

“I pay the supplier \$180 or so. Then I go through my process, I extract the [marijuana] oil and then bake it into the brownie mix or Rice Krispy mix or whatever I’m making that week. So from that initial \$180, I can make upwards of \$800. That’s a \$620 profit that goes directly to me. I challenge you to name a better business. All I need is a pot and a stove and I could make \$1000.”⁹⁴

Mr. Big credits Trinity’s pervasive drug culture and a continuously demanding clientele for much of his profit. In fact, students use drugs so frequently that Mr. Big is able to steadily maintain these high profit margins with only fifteen to twenty regular buyers, almost all of who are white.⁹⁵ Of those regular buyers, some, Mr. Big says, purchase drugs every single day.⁹⁶ Mr. Big also noted that many of his regular buyers purchase marijuana from him in bulk amounts and later sell or distribute the drug to their friends, which makes Mr. Big’s sphere of influence much larger and more pervasive than it seems. Many dealers are also acquaintances, or even friends. After all, they do attend the same school. At a different college this could potentially create competition among dealers for clients. But at Trinity, drug use among students is so extensive and students

buy drugs so frequently that often times dealers are forced to actually turn away buyers, at least until the next supply comes.

Although Mr. Big started buying marijuana from a supplier in his hometown, very few Trinity dealers purchase drugs from outside suppliers, and soon Mr. Big followed suit. The main supplier of drugs on Trinity's campus is in fact a white male student.⁹⁷ This student, whom I will refer to as Big White, plays an integral but largely inconspicuous role in Trinity's drug trade. In large part Big White controls the flow of drugs on campus because ultimately he is the one that decides how much pure product he wants to buy and when. At any given moment, drugs from his supply can be found traveling across campus in the side pocket of a dealer's backpack, inhaled in a dormitory room or snorted at a weekend party. Further, Big White transcends Trinity's parallel drug markets because he supplies both street-drugs and prescription pills.⁹⁸ The following section will focus on the use and sale of cocaine, which along with marijuana, makes up the primary drug market at Trinity.

“They say crack kills, I say my crack sells”

Coincidentally, in the midst of my research, Mr. Big decided to foray into the cocaine trade. Mr. Big's expanding market allowed me to gain firsthand in-depth knowledge of Trinity's cocaine culture from the eyes of the dealer. Unlike marijuana, cocaine is expensive and more addictive. Of all the cocaine dealers that I interviewed, they all reported an all-white clientele. Mr. Big cited cocaine as a lucrative trade due to a culmination of several snowballing factors: an elite and almost exclusively white clientele, with a high disposable income, and burgeoning drug addiction. Dealers are able to sell cocaine at an inflated price (one gram/\$65 versus one gram/\$50-\$55) because

Trinity students are wealthy and willing to pay.⁹⁹ Additionally most buyers are experienced cocaine users, which means that they are already in the beginning stages of addiction, so they require more cocaine to experience a high. Addiction creates a perfect cycle of demand for dealers. Unlike the marijuana trade, in which black and white students participate in distribution and use, I found that the cocaine market at Trinity is made up of almost all white students, from users to dealers and suppliers. For this reason, Mr. Big experienced some major difficulties when he tried to break into the cocaine market. Because of his status as both an African American male and a drug dealer, he was forced to navigate the complicated racial dynamics of Trinity's cocaine trade. For the most part white students buy and sell from each other within an extremely tight social network, which is almost impossible to penetrate. Mr. Big was formally introduced to his first client, a white female student, by another white male student. This first white student acted as a kind of racial proxy that gave Mr. Big his initial entrée into the cocaine market.

For Trinity students and even those not associated with the college, it is impossible to consider Trinity's social atmosphere without giving attention to cocaine use and distribution on campus. When one student was asked what drug she most associated with Trinity, without hesitation she stated, "When I think of Trinity, I think of cocaine."¹⁰⁰ She even went so far to say, "It's cocaine that pops in my head, not the Long Walk or the quad."¹⁰¹ Many students also pointed out that they saw cocaine for the first time at Trinity, and of those admitted cocaine users interviewed, all who were white; every one started using cocaine once they arrived at Trinity. To be sure, students are responsible for their own behavior. But cocaine's presence at Trinity is near omnipresent; and with the administration's disciplinary efforts focused on non-white criminal activity,

Trinity's largely white student body is able to buy and sell drugs with little to no consequence. One white Trinity student, a long-term cocaine user, adoringly described the drug almost like a significant other, listing off pet names with a hazy glaze in his eyes: "Coke, sugar, snowflake, the white lady, bump, nose candy," and with a devilish smile, "Cocaina."¹⁰² When I presented Mr. Big with the health dangers related with cocaine use and the potential risk of getting caught, he replied, "You say crack kills, I say my crack sells. Who is going to stop me?"¹⁰³ I found that Mr. Big was not alone in his feeling of invincibility. A number of other dealers I interviewed agreed with Mr. Big's assertion that selling drugs on campus does not come with a significant risk. One drug worker laughed off my suggestion that perhaps campus police would find and seize his stash of product: "You think Campus Safety is going to stop me? How? When has that ever happened before?"¹⁰⁴ This drug worker was not completely wrong in their claim; in my research I found did not find any publicized cases in which drugs were found and seized from students on campus. This further strengthens my argument that through its policing and security systems, Trinity College largely fails to recognize and police white student drug crime.

"It's like the Wild West out here."

On one early September afternoon in 2016 Trinity College's main quad was filled with a sea of parents and students sitting in neatly arranged white folding chairs for the president's 193rd convocation, an event that officially starts the new academic year. President Berger-Sweeney addressed the crowd of first-year students, parents and faculty. During his presentation to the Class of 2020, Angel B. Pérez, vice president for enrollment and student success, called the students a class of many firsts: "This class has

the highest number of students who are first in their family to go to college. You are the most geographically diverse class in our history. And for the first time in our history, there are more women than men represented.”¹⁰⁵ But the class of first-year students still represented more of the same. Just moments after President Berger-Sweeney left the stage, Campus Safety arrived at the quad and emergency medical services transported two students to Hartford Hospital for illegal substance use.¹⁰⁶ According to one senior Campus Safety official the students were not reported to Hartford police for possession of illegal substances and it is unclear as to whether they suffered any disciplinary punishment by the college.¹⁰⁷ However, it is the Campus Safety officers’ role in this incident that is particularly telling of the function policing serves in Trinity’s perceived danger/safety schema. At any given time Campus Safety officers can be found quietly handing off belligerent students under the influence of illegal drugs to Hartford Hospital, acting as silent clean up men, removing the mess before anyone even notices that it existed. One Campus Safety officer described to me the drug climate on campus saying, “It’s like the Wild West out here.”¹⁰⁸

The Jeanne Clery Act, a consumer protection law passed in 1990, is a federal statute that requires colleges and universities participating in federal financial aid programs to maintain and disclose campus crime statistics. Trinity College actively participates in federal financial aid programs but records do not show compliance with Clery Act reporting until 2011. According to the college’s Annual Campus Security and Fire Safety Report in 2011 there were fifty-two counts of disciplinary actions taken against students for drug offenses on Trinity’s campus.¹⁰⁹ Of those fifty-two counts against students for drug offenses, only three arrests were made.¹¹⁰ The following year in

2012, the counts of disciplinary actions against student drug offenders skyrocketed to 149 with only one arrest made.¹¹¹ In 2013 there were fifty-eight counts with zero arrests.¹¹² While it is unclear the degree to which these student drug offenders were disciplined by the college, drug possession and distribution is a crime, but the above evidence proves that the college does not treat campus drugs as such.

“Unless something goes wrong, we don’t know what’s going on.”

Senior Campus Safety officials reported that the most common drug officers encounter on a regular basis is marijuana.¹¹³ The officials concede that marijuana detection is largely due to the drug’s obvious nature; the odor and marijuana paraphernalia are an easy tip-off. Still, the officials acknowledge that officers have witnessed cocaine and prescription pill use and distribution by students on campus.¹¹⁴ When I asked the senior Campus Safety official to explain standard protocol when encountering illegal drugs he responded that the students involved are generally handled by the Office of the Deans, in most cases.¹¹⁵ It is not within the protocol for Trinity College’s Campus Safety to confiscate or seize illegal drugs.¹¹⁶ Officers generate a report outlining the basic details of the incident, the students involved, and depending on the discretion of the officer, the illegal substance present will also be identified.¹¹⁷ I presented Campus Safety officials with my research results: there is a lively and growing drug market on Trinity’s campus that exists despite the numerous Campus Safety officers patrolling the college grounds. To this point the official responded, “Well, unless something goes wrong, we don’t know.”¹¹⁸ Of course, Trinity’s Campus Safety officers cannot do room sweeps looking for illegal drugs. But I was surprised that there is not

even increased surveillance on known repeat drug users. In fact, according to the Campus Safety official, the office does not even keep a record of repeat drug users.¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, emergency medical services are called to Trinity's campus at a staggering rate of three to five times a week to transport students to a hospital for substance abuse.¹²⁰ While Campus Safety makes sure to send out a campus-wide email every single time a young brown boy from Hartford rides his bike on campus, they are completely silent when Trinity's own students are carted off to the hospital for the excessive use of illegal drugs. One does not need to read between the lines to understand the message; Trinity does not recognize white drug crime and it has embedded in its disciplinary policies and security systems criminal amnesty for its white students to freely distribute and use illegal drugs. The criminal amnesty provided to white students at Trinity also imparts on them a sense of entitlement and power that often manifests in hateful actions against other students, specifically non-white students, at the college.

Chapter Three: *Not For Your Entertainment*

One Saturday night in 2015 three black female Trinity students shivered as they stood outside the basement door of Alpha Delta Phi (AD), a predominantly white fraternity at Trinity College. Usually one fraternity member is positioned at the door of the fraternity house as a kind of gatekeeper, determining who gains entrance to the party and who does not. On this particular night, the fraternity was throwing a ticketed party, which meant that students needed wristbands in order to enter the fraternity house. After a number of white students passed the black students and were allowed to enter the party without waiting, the white male student guarding the door finally produced three wristbands for the group of black female students. As the gatekeeper secured a wristband on one of the black female students, a white woman approached the fraternity house. As soon as the male student saw this woman, he immediately removed the wristband from the black student and placed it on the white female student. Then he turned to the group of black female students and said, “We’re full.”¹²¹

That very same night a black male student was returning to his dormitory on Vernon Street. As he approached North dormitory, he saw a white Trinity Campus Safety officer in the near distance, the officer’s neon yellow jacket was offset by the dark surroundings. The student dug his hands deep in the pockets of his jeans and tightly wrapped his fingers around his Trinity College student identification card. As groups of white students passed by, the Campus Safety officer beckoned the black student to him and under the glaring yellow light of a nearby lamppost he spat, “Show me your ID.”¹²²

The black student obediently obliged and produced his Trinity identification card from his pocket. The Campus Safety officer pulled a flashlight from his waistband and shined the harsh white light onto the card. As the black student shielded his eyes from the intense light, he squinted through his fingers, looked up at the officer and asked, “Why didn’t you stop any of the other people that walked by? Why me?” The Campus Safety officer clicked off his flashlight and replied, “That’s not your worry. Protocol.”¹²³

The incidents described above depict just some of the countless instances of racial aggression at Trinity. Non-white students are constantly confronted with expressions of racial aggression by their white peers; whether it is outside the door of a fraternity house or inside a residence hall or locker room on Trinity’s campus. Moreover, as evidenced in the story above, the college’s own safety and security systems, which claim to protect all Trinity students, reinforce the acts and sentiments of racial aggression held by many white students. More specifically, non-white students report that their experience of racial aggression by white students is neither isolated nor uncommon. In the popular discourse, there is a lot of talk about college campuses as “safe spaces,” yet various forms of racial aggression, as depicted above, confirm the reality that college campuses might be safe for some, but not all. More specifically, at Trinity the phenomenon of so-called safe spaces actually provides an enclosed environment, or more accurately an ethnic enclave, which insulates majority white students and allows them license to engage in racial aggressions with little reproach.

At Trinity, the racial politics of the campus are heavily informed and dictated by the college’s student body, the majority of who are white, and the college’s own unequal policies surrounding the punishment and prosecution of white student crime. While

scholarship on campus safe spaces identify specific places on a college campus as “safe,” Trinity’s entire campus exists as a so-called “safe space” or “free-zone” for white students to engage in acts of racial aggression. Through its racialized campus policing and surveillance policies, and certain institutional structures that exclusively support white students, Trinity College operates as a safe space for white students who in fact engage in the majority of racial assaults. Incidents of racial aggression, whether it is a black student being denied entry to an all-white fraternity or one of Trinity’s own Campus Safety officers demanding non-white students to provide identification, remain largely undocumented, underreported, and unpunished.

In “Not for Your Entertainment” I will push past the most sensational incidents of racial assault to explore the range of ways that white students are allowed to engage in racial aggression towards students of color. For some, the incidents presented in this chapter may seem mundane. However, racial aggressions, from micro to macro, represent the all too common episodes of race-based verbal and physical assault expressed by white students at Trinity. This chapter will explore the experiences of non-white students at Trinity College in order to weave together this largely untold narrative. But to be clear, this chapter is not about racism at Trinity. By looking at acts of unprosecuted racial aggression, I will build on previous discussions of sexual assault and drug abuse to examine how Trinity’s campus climate shapes a particular white racial identity of entitlement. Subsequently, the privileges that stem from this campus entitlement disadvantage the college experience of the majority student’s non-white peers. Further, I will unpack how Trinity’s specific admissions policies, and the racialized surveillance and policing of non-white students by the college, creates a social climate on the campus

in which white students understand non-white students as an extension of their larger identity of entitlement and self-service. Through an analysis of the college's admissions policies, campus social climate, and racialized policing and surveillance systems, it will be clear that Trinity functions to create a campus environment that serves as a safe space for white students, which leads white students to feel protected in their expressions of racial aggression.

The Myth of Safe Spaces and the Reality of Racial Aggression on College Campuses

The meaning of a “safe space” on college campuses has shifted dramatically over time. Until quite recently, a safe space generally referred to a room or place where people- often LGBTQ or transgender students- could discuss shared problems without the fear of confronting epithets or other attacks. In our current political climate, what had once been a refuge for marginal students, the idea of a safe space is now satirized by right-wing pundits as a “racist” call for self-imposed segregation and as an obstacle to free speech and diverse viewpoints. College students today are often referred to as the “Snowflake Generation,” because of what is now caricatured as their sensitive attitudes towards difficult conversations on issues such as race relations. The original safe space motive — to explore issues in an inclusive environment — has quickly been misrepresented as an impulse to quarantine oneself and create self-serving spaces of retreat for the weak-kneed.

Institutions of higher education are at a critical turning point and colleges and universities nationwide will soon be forced to confront changing notions of safe spaces. Many agree that maintaining safe spaces on college campuses is vital to the wellbeing

and security of non-majority students. However, in surveying the current political climate, not everyone agrees that institutions of higher education are headed in the right direction, particularly when conversations surrounding safe spaces turn to race. Those critical of safe spaces on college campuses quickly dismiss marginalized students as self-infantilizing and spoiled, and believe that by responding to their complaints, often of racial aggressions, and taking them seriously, colleges and universities fail in their mission as a space that fosters a free exchange of ideas. In this context, the notion of a safe space is too easily mocked and thus too easily undone. Still, setting aside the mockeries and the critiques, most argue that there is a sound reason to support a more comprehensive notion of safety: “Something that might be pushed to the very boundaries of our campuses: the world is sometimes breathtakingly, violently, terrifyingly precarious for precisely the sorts of students whom we are now actively recruiting.”¹²⁴

However, in all of this debate and rancor around the “safe space” concept as a bastion for politically correct marginal students, we have never fully explored the degree to which maintaining the dominant traditions, social networks, and racial demographic of colleges creates a safe space for majority students; especially at New England liberal arts colleges with a long history of elitism and exclusion. Studies on college campuses as contested spaces largely focus on the experiences of students of color. Much less common are examinations of how white students see and experience race in a college campus setting. In majority white and elite settings, ignoring differences contributes to feelings of safety, the ability to predict events, and respond to them in familiar and tested ways. But the construct of white privilege is threatened if someone draws attention to non-dominant or “othered” identities and the dominant group’s choice to ignore them.

This threat may be experienced as a suspension of safety, inciting a defensive response. In fact, in the face of a threat to privilege and a suspension of safety, many white students defensively reclaim their white privilege.

Confirming the point that college safe spaces in fact work to benefit the dominant group on predominantly white college campuses, one study examined the racial views and experiences of 12 white male students at a majority white college. The research concluded that safe spaces on campus could be more accurately defined as ethnic enclaves, which insulated white students from racial antagonism and a lack of overt racial conflict. This in turn led to skepticism regarding minority claims of racial discrimination. Such an understanding works to perpetuate a cycle of racial privilege begetting racial privilege. Ultimately, the consequences of such an environment become clear: “White students seek social comfort in the form of racial segregation, which leads to an increased sense of victimization, which in turn justifies the persistence of racial segregation, and white supremacy is cyclically entrenched on the college campus.”¹²⁵

All around Trinity’s campus, stapled on bulletin boards and posted next to faculty names on office doors in Seabury Hall there are posters and stickers that communicate the same message: “This is a safe space.” The pink triangles and rainbow flags hint at a change in the historically white and privileged campus culture at Trinity. While safe spaces on college campuses denote sentiments of *inclusivity*, at Trinity we must look at the less embattled culture of “school tradition” by which the college creates a campus environment in which its student body, the majority of who are white, experience the whole campus as their own *exclusive* safe space. Such an understanding allows white students at Trinity to engage in acts of racial aggression with little to no policing or

punishment by the administration. Nowhere is this expression more visible than in the social climate on campus.

“No Minorities Allowed!”

In the late hours of one Friday night in 2015, a group black female students walked across Trinity’s campus to a fraternity house on Vernon Street. One of the female students in the group received a personal invitation to the party from one of the white members at the fraternity and despite the other students’ hesitancy at entering an almost all white party, the female student was not deterred. The sound of booming music and laughter grew louder as the group of women approached the fraternity house. The female students looked around curiously as they waited in line to enter the party. Then the female students felt what they thought were raindrops on their heads. Yet, when they turned their gaze upward and towards the upstairs bedrooms of the fraternity house they could see a white male student unclothed and leaning out the window. The raindrops they had felt were in fact the white male student’s urine. As he grasped the black rafters of the fraternity house he yelled, “No minorities allowed!”¹²⁶

To be sure, the incident described above is an extreme expression of racial aggression. Yet the silence and normalization surrounding the incident, particularly by other white students who also witnessed the scene, reaffirms my argument that Trinity’s campus environment exists as a safe space for the majority white student body. The turbulent racial dynamics at Trinity are greatly influenced by the college’s Greek life culture, which dominates social life at Trinity and also holds an overwhelmingly white student membership. Because all of the Greek organizations on campus are predominantly white, this means that white students directly dictate the social scene for

all of the college's students. White students understand that they control and command the social workings at Trinity and often times abuse this privilege to disadvantage their non-white peers. Still, some might argue that the reason that Trinity's Greek life is largely white is due to non-white students not attempting to join. While it is true that few non-white students seek admission to the college's Greek organizations, their hesitancy is not unfounded. In my research I have found that when non-white Trinity students attempt to enter the tight-knit social network that fraternities and sororities on campus enjoy during the pledging process and even thereafter non-white members in Trinity's Greek organizations are treated with disrespect and are often subject to racial aggressions from their white "brothers" and "sisters."

Moreover, when I spoke with a group of ten non-white students, both male and female, almost all reported some degree of racial aggression by white students at Greek houses during their time at Trinity. One black female student recalled an incident where she was denied admission to a fraternity house. The black female student was standing in line at one fraternity house and the white fraternity brother guarding the door refused to let her into the house. She recalls the white male student incessantly monitoring his cell phone and initially she could not understand why. She said, "I was standing close enough to him that I could see his phone screen," and when a new text message popped up, she could see that it read, "'No more black girls tonight.'"¹²⁷ Two black male students also communicated to me two separate incidents in which white fraternity brothers displayed near identical behaviors of racial aggression, physical assault, and racial entitlement. In both the incidents the black male students reported that the white fraternity brothers not only denied them entrance to the fraternity house, the white gatekeepers physically

moved the black male students away from the entrance to the house. One black male student recounted this experience: “He grabbed me by the front of my shirt and held me right up to his face.”¹²⁸ The white student looked deep in the black students eyes before he shoved the student to the ground and said, “Don’t you get it? You’re black. You are not getting in.”¹²⁹ At one fraternity house Halloween party in 2013 I witnessed one black male student, a pledge for the fraternity, and a white male student, a member of the fraternity, wearing a matching costume: the black male student was dressed as a slave and white male student was dressed as his owner. The black male student was dressed in white rags and he had long silver chains linked to his wrists and ankles. The other student was dressed in a suit and top hat and he held the chain around the black male students wrist, dragging him along as he circulated around the party. I have also seen white students question black students’ status and claim that they are Hartford “locals” and not actually Trinity students. When I asked one black female student about the connection between the phrase “Hartford local” and the misidentification of black Trinity students, she said, “When white students say ‘locals,’ that is equal to saying nigger. To them it is the same. ‘Locals’ is their Trinity version of nigger. You can feel the disgust in their voice.”¹³⁰

“It’s like the college is segregated”

One afternoon in November I escorted a group of administrators from different colleges from the Smith House on the north side of campus to the college library. The group was attending a conference for New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) college administrators and officials. I led the group across campus and as we passed the Trinity Chapel arch, one college official approached me. He hesitated

nervously before he quietly asked, “Trinity has a very interesting dynamic amongst its students, doesn’t it?” I was unsure as to what exactly he was referring to and so I vaguely replied, “Yes, Trinity is certainly a very unique place.” The college official quickened his pace and soon we were a few steps ahead of the rest of the group. He elaborated on his earlier question: “I have been on this campus for almost 24 hours and I have not seen one mixed race group of students,” he looked around in bewilderment and asked, “Do you all separate yourselves on purpose? It’s like the college is segregated.” I was floored by his observations and the direct manner in which he delivered them. But this college official was not wrong in his reflection on the racial dynamics of Trinity’s campus and in fact one Trinity administrator reiterated this notion when they said, “Other than athletic teams, mixed-race friend groups do not exist, at least to my knowledge. I haven’t seen one.”¹³¹ While some may counter that non-white and white students choose not to socially interact with each other and it is true that many people feel more comfortable with other members of their own race, that is simply not the case at Trinity. When I asked one non-white student to explain this phenomenon of social segregation at Trinity they said, “It’s not about who is going to what parties and where. It’s bigger than that, at least for us [non-white students]. It’s safety and it’s survival.”¹³² The same student went on to note that although Trinity’s administration might publically acknowledge the campus incidents of racial assault that are highly visible - for example a racial slur written on a door - non-white students experience instances of racial aggression by their white peers on a much more regular basis.

Not for Your Entertainment

The racial politics at Trinity is informed by the college's admissions practices, more specifically its practices concerning black male students. The overwhelming majority of Trinity's non-white male population are also members of the college's various athletics teams. This heavily influences interracial exchanges on campus and further leads white students to understand black students in terms of entertainment value. One black male student and former athlete recalled multiple instances where white students have identified him as a "local" and thus denied him access to a party. He explained to me the details of one incident: "I am a former athlete so I try to wear something that says 'Trinity Athletics' when I go out, just so there is no question. This particular night I wasn't wearing athletic clothes. The fraternity brother at the door turned me away because he said I was probably a local."¹³³ Many black male students I interviewed also practiced this student's routine of wearing Trinity gear while out on Vernon Street.

Still, the expressions of racial aggression by white students are not limited to weekend nights on Vernon Street. White students perpetuate hateful acts of racial aggression throughout Trinity's campus every day. Classrooms and athletic locker rooms, supposed "safe spaces," are actually the sites of many incidents of racial aggression at Trinity. One black female student athlete recalled an incident in which she confronted one of her white teammates. She said, "One of my white teammates was talking about Hartford residents and referring to them as niggers."¹³⁴ When the black female student asked the other student not to use this racial slur, the white student looked at her and laughed, "Come on, don't be *that* black person."¹³⁵ Moreover, Trinity's policing and security systems affirm many white students attitudes of racial aggression, which further

allows white students to feel protected in their hateful behaviors. Many non-white students and all of the black male students I interviewed reported experiencing increased surveillance by Trinity's Campus Safety officers. More specifically, black male students reported multiple incidents where Campus Safety officers have singled them out and ignored other white students. Over the course of my research I found that in the class of 2017, every single black student on Trinity's football team during their freshman year were stopped at a rate of three times or more by Campus Safety and asked to produce their college student identification cards. Describing the repetitiveness of these "stop and identify" incidents, one black male student said, "Campus Safety stopped be so many times that I switched from carrying my ID in my backpack, like everyone else, and I just started just carrying it in my hand."¹³⁶

Further, many non-white students report that they do not feel protected by Campus Safety. One black male student said, "I see and feel Campus Safety's presence. But I don't feel protected. I feel targeted."¹³⁷ When I asked one Campus Safety official to comment on the sentiments expressed by non-white students on campus, they said, "This certainly isn't unique...people being marginalized..."¹³⁸

In the early hours of a brisk April morning in 2011, Trinity College sophomore Juan Hernandez was dropping off a friend at a dormitory on campus. Hernandez waited until his friend was safely inside the dormitory to leave. In a strange turn of events, a white male student approached Hernandez and threw a beer can at his car. The student proceeded to verbally attack Hernandez, shouting that he was not a Trinity student and was most likely a Hartford local. After Hernandez exited his car and told the student that he actually was a Trinity student, the white male student shouted, "Sure you are,

nigger.”¹³⁹ This was the third in a string of racially motivated incidents perpetrated by Trinity students on the college’s campus that year.¹⁴⁰ The college administration responded to the incident described above sympathetically but there was no action taken to change the culture of silence and acceptance surrounding the white expression of racial aggression that is pervasive and normalized on Trinity’s campus.

One year later in March 2012, another Trinity student was assaulted. Chris Kenney, a white male Trinity sophomore, was returning from a party on the outskirts of the college’s campus when he was physically assaulted by a small group of assailants.¹⁴¹ In the days following the event Trinity’s administration put forth the story that the assailants came from outside the campus walls.¹⁴² Witness testimonies that were at the disposal of both Campus Safety and Hartford Police indicated that the assailants might have, in fact, come from *inside* Trinity’s walls. In the days and weeks following the attack white students, backed by the college administration, rallied in support of Kenney and against his alleged non-white assailants. The sentiment held amongst most students was that it was inconceivable that the assailants could be Trinity students. One student expressed the sense of impossibility surrounding this alternative story, one that was actually supported by facts, saying, “It could never be one of us.”

The very same month that Chris Kenney was attacked by allegedly non-white Hartford “locals” Trinity’s administration acted to make the college’s campus safer than it had ever been before; Hartford police increased patrols around campus and ten new Campus Safety officers were hired, all with the specific task of patrolling the campus’ exterior streets. In 2012 Campus Safety overhauled their officer protocols and patrol routes. The college hired a private security agency to provide additional support to

Trinity officers. I asked the Campus Safety official to outline Trinity officer's surveillance routes: "We have Trinity Campus Safety officers inside the campus. They work in three main clusters: academic buildings, athletic fields, and residence halls."¹⁴³ While Trinity officers patrol the interior of campus, the hired agency workers exclusively police the exterior of the campus. Between the hours of 7pm-3am there are seven workers on the periphery of campus.

Through the administration's actions it is clear that the college has no qualms expending resources to ensure the safety of their students when the targeted enemy resides in non-white Hartford. However, the college is much more forgiving and even demonstrates a level of disciplinary acquiescence when those wrongdoings are perpetrated by Trinity students, specifically white students.

The exaggerated efforts of Trinity's administration to protect students from the perceived danger originating in a black, brown and poor Hartford sharply contrasts with the complete lack of awareness and often times disregard for both hateful and even criminal actions perpetrated by white Trinity students. The incidents described above were both allegedly committed by white Trinity students. Yet in the aftermath of Chris Kenney's attack, an assault of one white student most likely at the hands of another white student, the college responded efficiently and effectively with concrete changes to embed in its safety policies the security of Trinity students and the identification of minority Hartford residents as criminals. The contrast in the two events above serves as a microcosm of the unequal understanding and regulation of student crime at Trinity College.

Epilogue

Just as I finished writing “The Longest Walk” I received an email informing the campus community that the college administration had placed the Trinity men’s ice hockey team on probation. In an email to the college, Trinity Dean Joe DiChristina informed students and faculty that Trinity’s administration had found the men’s hockey team to exhibit a culture of sexual misconduct toward female students.¹⁴⁴ Dean DiChristina stated that these findings were a result of an independent investigation conducted by the college. The email states the specifics of the probation sentencing as follows: members of Trinity College’s men’s ice hockey team are barred from hosting, sponsoring, and co-sponsoring social events, both on and off campus, throughout the 2017-2018 academic year and over breaks.¹⁴⁵

While I was disturbed by the college’s findings, unfortunately, I was not surprised. Female students have been warning each other against the dangers of the hockey team for some time. In fact, over the course of my research for “Boys on Bikes” several female students recounted to me a number of instances where they felt uncomfortable or sexually pressured around current members of the men’s hockey team. I have also heard several other female students reference members of the team’s alcohol abuse, their display of excessive physicality in sexual encounters, and their prejudiced attitudes. Because news of the probation was just recently announced, there is little public evidence available regarding the details of the college’s investigation or the scope of the “alcohol abuse” and “culture of sexual misconduct” Dean DiChristina referenced. However, given the sexual assault landscape at Trinity and the criminal amnesty granted to many white male students for criminal acts of sexual violence, as evidenced in “Boys

on Bikes,” it seems that the institutional handling, or rather mishandling, of this incident thus far is consistent with the college’s record of lenient prosecution of sexual violence by white male students.

To be clear, other than the email sent by the college administration, there is little concrete evidence surrounding this case. However, there is significant circumstantial evidence about this case that points to the institutional negligence of rampant and continuous sexual violence at the hands of white male students. First, it would be remiss not to note the timing of the college’s announcement. To most, the timing of Dean DiChristina’s email might not seem consequential but it does not seem to be a coincidence that the team was placed on probation just three days after they lost in the NCAA Division III National Championships. I am sure that the college did not conveniently receive the findings of their “independent fact-finding inquiry” only after the team was knocked out of competition. Moreover, one female student who was previously involved in a romantic relationship with one member of the men’s hockey team communicated to me that she was not surprised at all when she received the email. In fact, she said, she was surprised it had taken the college this long: “This is a long, long time coming. There have been rumblings around campus and on the team about this for years.”¹⁴⁶

To be sure, the “rumblings” this female student references are not to be confused with hard evidence of sexual violence. However, it is extremely unlikely that Trinity would even inform the campus community of the investigation or place the team on probation if they were not almost certain that there is some truth to the allegations. Over the course of my research for this thesis I have learned that in most cases of criminal

activity on campus, whether it is sexual violence or drug abuse, students often possess more knowledge than the college officials who are responsible for making sure these incidents do not exist. After all, it is students and not college administrators that are forced to navigate Trinity's sexual assault minefield of unwelcomed ogling, uninvited groping, and even unrequited acts of forced penetration. Thus, the networks female students create on campus are critical in avoiding male students with known reputations of sexual violence. Female students at Trinity are starkly aware of the sexual assault climate and the campus social environment that lends itself to assailants. Therefore, when one female student warned me about one white male student on the hockey team who allegedly raped a female student last semester, as a scholar, I questioned the source of her information. But as a woman on Trinity's campus, I took her warning seriously.

While some may think the punishment of a year long probation may suffice for systemic sexual misconduct and alcohol abuse, many seem to forget that acts of sexual violence, drug use and sales, and even many acts of racial aggression are in fact criminal and punishable within the law. In this case and many others like it, the college operates on assumptions of innocence based on whiteness. By understanding this case in the larger landscape of elite white male privilege on Trinity's campus, the college's unequal approach to the policing, punishment, and prosecution of white student crime becomes clear. Consequently, such an understanding of student crime leads to white students identifying criminal amnesty as key in their white racial entitlement.

Notes

1. Interviewee 1, interview by Chiarra Davis, Trinity College,
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