BOOK REVIEWS


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This edited volume is a thought-provoking work on conducting research in the area of sexual violence against women. The chapters in this book are organized into three major sections. In this review, I provide a brief overview, along with what I consider to be particular strengths and weaknesses, of each section. Finally, I offer some general comments on the book as a whole.

The first section is entitled “Introduction: Research on Sexual Assault on College Campuses.” The common feature among the five chapters in this section is the focus on sexual violence among college populations. Koss and Cleveland (Chap. 1) advance the position that acquaintance rape is intractable due to the fact that our current social and political climate is rape-supportive. The strength of this chapter is its comprehensiveness. The authors have synthesized a large body of literature on the known correlates of sexually aggressive behavior among men and sexual victimization among women in order to support their argument.

White and Humphrey (Chap. 2) describe a methodologically sophisticated, prospective study of the precursors and consequences of sexual violence among college students. In order to provide a rationale for their design, White and Humphrey describe many common methodological weaknesses of research on precursors of sexual violence and the way in which they overcame such weaknesses in their study. White and Humphrey’s design is exemplary and can serve as a model for other researchers in this area. My only disappointment with this chapter is that White and Humphrey did not provide any preliminary results from their ongoing investigation utilizing the model described in the chapter.

The remaining three chapters in the first section are descriptions of empirical investigations. DeKeseredy (Chap. 3) describes a well-designed, national study

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suggesting that the prevalence of sexual assault among Canadian college students is similar to that documented among U.S. college students (e.g., Koss et al., 1987). Frazier and Seals (Chap. 4) respond to criticisms made by Roiphe (1993; see O’Donohue, 1994) and others, who argue that acquaintance rape is not “real rape” by describing research illustrating that survivors of acquaintance rape are as traumatized by their experiences as survivors of stranger rape. Pitts and Schwartz (Chap. 5) address the controversy surrounding the role of self-blame in acquaintance rape. Pitts and Schwartz describe research illustrating that self-blame is associated with detrimental effects, including not seeking help and not reporting the assault to authorities. Although Pitts and Schwartz’s chapter addresses a very important issue, generalization of their findings is limited by the small sample sizes (N = 16) used in some of their analyses.

The second section is entitled “Emotion in Researching Sexual Violence Against Women” and contains an eclectic combination of four chapters that, in some way, focus on emotion and sexual violence research. Stanko (Chap. 6) describes her emotional reactions (anger, anxiety, sadness) to her teaching and research in the area of sexual assault. This chapter will no doubt be useful to sexual violence educators and researchers seeking validation of their emotional responses, as well as strategies for handling such responses.

Hippensteele (Chap. 7) describes the conflict that she experiences between her roles as campus ethnoviolence (including sexual violence) advocate and ethnoviolence researcher. One strength of this chapter is that Hippensteele does an excellent job of illustrating the extent to which sexual violence is intertwined with other forms of violence (such as racial violence) and the way in which ethnoviolence is institutionalized on many college campuses. Although I was intrigued by Hippensteele’s promise to describe her struggles to balance the role of advocate with that of researcher, I finished the chapter with the feeling that Hippensteele had raised a very important question without providing a definitive answer.

Mattley (Chap. 8) describes her research on the “emotion-work” of phone sex workers. Although Mattley had originally intended to study the way that phone sex workers manage the emotional responses of their callers, as well as their own emotional responses to such work, she ended up broadening her focus to include her own emotional responses to her experiences conducting field research and those of her colleagues who were aware of her research project. It is the latter aspect of the chapter that I found the most interesting. Specifically, Mattley describes the “discourtesy stigma” (p. 101) that was applied to her by her co-workers by virtue of her research on a marginalized, stigmatized group of individuals. In addition, she reported that male co-workers interacted with her in a manner that suggested that they had begun to perceive her as a sexual object. This chapter struck a chord with me because I must confess that I have at times wondered what