

Robert J. Cramer and Matt Nobles

## Introduction to the special issue on campus sexual violence

Welcome to Issue 9.4 of the *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*. This issue presents a special initiative addressing contemporary issues concerning sexual violence on college campuses. Critically important campus sexual violence topics covered in this issue include: nuanced patterns of risk factors, contemporary empirically informed perspectives on measurement and reporting, and the diverse nature of attitudes and social norms on campus. These themes are each represented by several articles.

First, a clear theme emerged concerning the significance of examining nuanced patterns of risk factors for campus sexual violence. Silverstein and colleagues depict intricate mediating and moderating pathways from sexual victimization history to risky sexual behavior; identifying moderators or mediators within their sample including alcohol use, masculinity, and sexual sensation seeking. Jennings and co-authors also contribute new knowledge to nuanced patterns of risk factors in that they report data showing sexual abuse victimization history as a risk factor for experiencing intimate partner violence, especially among college women. Overall, these studies highlight that, when trying to understand pathways or contingent risk for campus sexual violence, there is need to consider theoretically grounded risk factors in complex, nuanced models beyond straightforward main effects.

A second theme within this special issue addresses measurement and reporting of sexual violence and aggression. Bouffard and Goodson' share measurement findings suggesting potential for differing research results based on selected sexual aggression definitions, as reflected by measures or proxy variables. Spohn and colleagues provide a critical comparison of college and non-college students reporting of victimization to law enforcement. Among their key findings is that non-college women were more likely to report to law enforcement, and yet contact with a helping agency and considering one's assault a rape were facilitators for reporting differentially across college and non-college victims. Collectively, these studies point to the need for consistency in both the manner in which sexual aggression is measured and for practical approaches to support reporting of victimization across young adult populations.

From a public health perspective, the last theme in this issue concerns attitudes and social norms about campus sexual violence. Rosenthal *et al.* articulate findings concerning an understudied topic: employees' responses to how their campus handles reports of sexual violence. The authors report several negative reactions, such as high levels of institutional betrayal. Hackman and colleagues demonstrate overall high frequency of student misperceptions of sexual violence rates, as well as factors associated with misperceptions such as perpetrators holding more inaccurate perceptions. Reitz-Kruger and co-authors demonstrate gender differences in the experience of sexual violence victimization subtypes, and add to the literature regarding the importance of gender disparities in rape myth acceptance. This set of studies holds the potential to inform evidence-based multi-level prevention programs aimed at improving campus norms regarding sexual violence.

The current issue of the *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* offers invaluable new research advancing knowledge in campus sexual violence. We hope this series of articles helps spur further research and design of evidence-based prevention and intervention programs.

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