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TEACHING ABOUT VICTIMIZATION IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT: TRANSLATING IN PERSON EMPATHY AND SUPPORT TO THE INTERNET

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Abstract

With the significant increase in online education, particularly in the field of criminal justice, guidance on migrating instruction from a face-to-face format to online is needed. This is especially the case for courses focused on topics with the potential to elicit a strong emotional reaction from students, such as victimology. This article presents a framework for teaching a victimology course that allows for the full discussion of ideas in a manner that is supportive of victims of crime and does not inflict additional harm. It shares tips on what to include on a syllabus, guiding discussion, and responding to student disclosures of victimization. In doing so, this contributes to the emerging pedagogy on teaching about trauma and victimization.

Keywords: Victimology, Teaching Online, Criminal Justice Pedagogy, Criminal Justice Education, Victimization

Victimology courses and courses focused on victimization (e.g., a course on intimate partner violence) are a crucial part of a criminal justice education. It is vital that course content be presented in a manner that allows for free and open discussion while maintaining a course climate that is supportive of victims and causes no additional harm. How can this be accomplished in an online environment, which lacks the benefit of in-person interaction? This article presents a model for teaching online courses on victimization, supplemented by detailed teaching tips, such as how to respond when a student shares an experience of victimization.

TEACHING ABOUT VICTIMIZATION ONLINE

In 2012, there were over 26 million violent victimizations in the U.S. (Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013).Victimization rates are particularly high among college-aged students (ages 18-24; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013). Every college course likely includes students who have experienced their own victimizations or the victimization of someone close to them (e.g., family member, partner, friend, roommate). This means the content of a victimology course has the potential to elicit strong emotional reactions from such students, as well as other students (Cunningham, 2004), and those who have experienced other trauma, such as war veterans. A victimology course also holds the potential to produce a secondary victimization, which is when victims receive a negative response from others, such as fellow students, to their victimization experience. That may exacerbate some of the harmful consequences of the primary victimization, such as self-blame, fear, anxiety, and depression (Kilpatrick &Acierno, 2003; Norris & Kaniasty, 1994). Victimization is also linked to lower academic achievement in college (Jordan, Combs, & Smith, 2014).

Recognition of these concerns, has resulted in increased attention on how to appropriately teach about victimization (e.g., Branch, Hayes-Smith, & Richards, 2011; Cares, 2013; Cares, Williams, & Hirschel, 2013; Zurbriggen, 2011). Most of this attention has focused on the face-to-face classroom. With millions of students enrolled in online courses each semester (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Ginder & Stearns, 2014), and at least 80 criminal justice departments offering online courses (Hummer, Sims, Wooditch, & Salley, 2010), there is a need to transfer to the online environment what is known about teaching sensitive topics. This is particularly important in the pedagogy of victimology, given the ready availability of online undergraduate and master's criminal justice degrees, many of which offer victimology courses. This need is only likely to be amplified over time. Although many faculty are reluctant to migrate courses online (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Haas & Senjo, 2004), it appears the current and future college generation is increasingly comfortable in a fully online environment with sensitive topics. This movement to an online world has led to new resources, such as the National Sexual Assault Online Hotline, crisis line support via texting (e.g., Crisis Text Line, crisistextline.org), and online trainings for service providers (e.g. the federal Office for Victims of Crime Victim Assistant Training *Online*). Consequently, this article focuses on teaching sensitive topics in a fully online course (i.e., not a blended course with face-to-face and online elements).

Much of the challenge inherent in teaching online is related to the nature of student and faculty interaction and the presentation of educational content. Online interaction and content presentation take place predominantly electronically and asynchronously. Asynchronous electronic communication is designed to benefit students across time zones and presents the advantage of all parties being afforded the time to think carefully before crafting and posting comments, instead of having to provide immediate responses as in face-to-face courses. This

may reduce students' victim-blaming comments. Electronic interaction and online course content also present the advantage of permanency – students do not have to remember all that an instructor or peer said, or what a multimedia presentation included or even rely on their own notes. In the case of emotionally powerful material, this allows students the ability to titrate the material, so they work through it at a pace they can control (Black, 2006). When students have issues, they may be more likely to send individual electronic messages to the faculty member. This allows for more privacy in handling the issue than afforded queuing up at the end of an in class meeting. Online sections of courses often have lower enrollments (e.g., Maki, Maki, Patterson, & Whitaker, 2000; Mayzer & Dejong, 2003), which may allow for better quality and higher quantity of faculty student interaction (Snell & Penn, 2005). This may enable faculty to better support students, including those struggling with sensitive subject matter like victimization, and students who feel more supported evidence greater satisfaction with the course (Lee, Srinivasan, Trail, Lewis, & Lopez, 2011).

There are a number of challenges the online environment poses for teaching sensitive topics. Electronic communication lacks the audial (e.g., tone of voice, intonation) and visual (e.g., body language, facial expression) cues that help us interpret language. This can lead to more misconstruing of messages versus in-person communication. The asynchronous nature of communication (such as discussion boards) means that the course is "live" all the time, but since the instructor cannot be constantly present (in spite of student expectations to the contrary, see Young, 2002), students may be exposed to hurtful discussion before the instructor has a chance to intervene. If such an experience causes a student to draw back from class discussion, her/his satisfaction with the course is likely to decline, as student level of participation predicts student satisfaction in online courses (Eom, Wen, & Ashill, 2006). Face-to-face courses are largely

synchronous discussion in the presence of a faculty member, with harmful interactions potentially minimized, and it may be easier to draw a student back into discussion.

This article draws on research on teaching on sensitive topics, teaching online, and trauma-informed care to guide developing of online courses that teach about victims of crime. The ensuing model is based on three guiding principles. First, that the instructor models how to discuss victimization in a way that poses no additional harm (e.g., avoids secondary victimization and victim-blaming) and allows all voices to take part (no silencing of victims or others; Konradi, 1993) without compromising educational quality. Second, that the course is supportive of students who may have emotional reactions to the material so they remain able to engage in the course and learn effectively. Third, while the course is designed to be supportive of victims, and the instructor is prepared to respond appropriately if a student shares a victimization experience, the course is not structured in a way that encourages disclosures.

SETTING THE TONE

Creating a supportive class environment begins with setting that tone. Learning requires creating a safe space for all students free of judgment where knowledge and ideas can be freely shared. It is important to cover criminal victimization because crime causes considerable harm to individuals, families, and communities and avoiding and responding to crime and the harm it inflicts is the basis of major social institutions, such as the criminal justice system. Discussion of harm needs to be done in a way that does not cause additional harm. It is important to have conversations about victimization without questioning the experiences of victims in a way that

holds them responsible for the harmful actions of others. The following steps are recommended for achieving this objective:

1. Modeling appropriate language and behavior as the instructor. This can include intervening to reword or redirect a student question or statement. 2. Setting guidelines for appropriate discussion. This can include emphasizing the need to be respectful of diverse experiences and sensitive to the feelings of others (O'Halloran & O'Halloran, 2001), and setting ground rules regarding the expectations of and limitations to confidentiality (Agglias, 2012; Barlow & Becker-Blease, 2012), including faculty reporting requirements. 3. Alerting students at the beginning of the semester that the course will include material with the potential to elicit strong reactions for many students, including those who have experienced victimization or other trauma (Miller, 2001; Newman, 1999), and include examples of the content that may do so. 4. In anticipation of such reactions, providing guidelines and support for students so that they can create a self-care plan to use if needed (Agglias, 2012, Jones, 2002).

To emphasize the importance of setting the tone, consider including this material in the syllabus (Gore & Black, 2009). The syllabus is often available to students online in advance of the first day of the course and in some programs, is available all the time to aid students in selecting courses. This allows students to decide if they are ready to engage with the course material, preventing the need to withdraw. A recent student movement to include sexual assault resources in all syllabi underscores the importance of the syllabus as a resource for students (Barnes, 2014). In addition to the syllabus, the first communication from the instructor, often via an introductory email or first lecture notes, sets the tone for the course. This provides an additional opportunity to model how to talk about victimization and to set out course expectations related to discussions and how to handle potentially challenging material.

RECOGNIZING AND DEALING WITH POTENTIALLY DIFFICULT MATERIAL

Despite a current conversation questioning the appropriateness of trigger warnings (Essig, 2014; McMillan Cottom, 2014), in a victimology course these are essential. Although an instructor cannot know what material may trigger a strong emotional response for a student, some materials (such as first person narratives/memoirs) may be more likely to do so. A preview of what material will be included in upcoming lectures, readings, multi-media sources, guest speakers, and assignments recognizes that victimization may have a negative impact on individuals by undermining their sense of control (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983), and allows students some control, over how they engage with course material (Black, 2006; Newman, 1999). Here is a sample statement:

> This week's unit includes a video clip of an offender describing how he targeted rape victims and perpetrated the rape. This is powerful footage that many students find upsetting. Please be aware of this before viewing the clip. It is not a good idea to watch it in a public venue. You may want to watch it with others whom you find to be supportive or have someone you trust to talk to afterwards. Please remember that if you need additional support, there are resources available, which are listed below, on the course syllabus, and in the resources section on the course website.

In the case of potentially triggering material, instructors need to decide whether to offer alternate materials or assignments to students and what those will be. This involves balancing issues of insuring that the learning goal of the particular material is still met with an alternate assignment, avoiding secondary victimization, determining how much "skipped" material or

alternate assignment is allowable to still have experienced the course for a grade, and fairness to others students. Options may include granting due date extensions (which allows a student to deal with material in smaller pieces, making it more manageable), allowing a student not to complete the assignment and adjusting the weight of other assignments accordingly, or providing an alternate assignment. As an example, if a first person memoir is assigned to help students understand how a person might react to victimization, a suitable substitute might be a research paper on reactions to victimization. The more detached style of writing found in journal articles may be less likely to evoke a psychological reaction and the assignment would still develop an understanding of reactions to victimization. As another example, if an online class includes guest speakers in live chat forums, due to the nature of online education attendance is often not required. In place of attendance, students can submit questions ahead of time and view the chat afterwards, allowing them to engage with the material at their own pace.

FACILITATING SENSITIVE DISCUSSION

One of the trickiest aspects of teaching online is facilitating discussion, when it is electronic and typically asynchronous. .The goal is to structure discussion so students do not feel inhibited, but can express ideas and ask questions without causing further harm to victims or implying that they were responsible for what happened to them.

A start is to remind students that much of the interaction in an online course is asynchronous. Instructors should encourage students to review their comments before sharing them with the class and to think about how what they are writing might impact a victim of crime or someone who cares about a victim. If students are unsure of how to ask a question or express

an idea, they should contact the instructor for assistance. It is helpful to provide specific examples in the syllabus of language that is respectful and not victim-blaming and of framing academically-oriented questions (Seegmiller, 1995). Guidance may also be provided by intervening in discussions to reframe a comment or question. For example, reacting to a description of victimization by saying what happened to a victim is "gross" or "disgusting" can reinforce negative feelings about oneself in the wake of an assault. A more appropriate reaction might be: "I had never thought much before about what is involved in an assault. It made me realize why it might have really negative consequences for victims." As another example, a comment that being a victim of burglary is no big deal can be reframed as: "Do we see differences in consequences of victimization depending on the type of victimization?"

Modeling appropriate language in discussions as the instructor helps to set the tone for student participation. Unfortunately, even well-intentioned faculty members may talk about victim issues in a way that is victim blaming or may cause additional harm to victims. As an illustration, in trying to raise student empathy, faculty may paint a tragic picture of what it is to be a victim, including how the victim is damaged and will never be the same. It is important to raise empathy in students, and it is true that some victims experience very severe consequences for the rest of their lives, but emphasizing this subset of victims in this way presents victims in a helpless and hopeless manner. It robs them of their agency and control, much like the victimization did. It is more appropriate to remark that reactions to victimization vary widely, with some people experiencing no discernible negative consequences, many people returning to pre-victimization levels of functioning, and a minority experiencing persistent effects that decrease the quality of their life long term (Norris & Kaniasty, 1994).

As mentioned earlier, confidentiality of discussion is a major issue. Students are often eager to share their own experiences. Students should be reminded that while the instructor has set confidentiality guidelines, the electronic nature of online discussion makes information easily sharable, so students should not share in course discussion anything they would not want shared beyond the confines of the class (Woodley & Silvestri, 2014). Guidelines can include limiting information about an example to material that is relevant to the class, noting that personal or identifying details are unlikely to be relevant. Examples of information that can compromise confidentiality include details of the victimization that would identify the individual or incident (such as where and when it happened); describing an experience of a client when others in the class know where a student works; and talking about what "the others on the team" have done.

Even with guidelines in place, discussion may go awry, which is a concern for faculty (Hayes-Smith, Richards, & Branch, 2010). What is an instructor's responsibility when a student is inappropriate in online class discussion? First, approach the student privately (via email, phone, or in person, but if by phone or in person, it is best to follow up with an email re-enforcing what was discussed) to point out what is problematic, suggest how to fix it, and remind the student what could happen if the behavior does not stop (referring back to the syllabus). Depending on the circumstances, it may help to be deferential and give the student the benefit of the doubt about the intention of her/his comments. Second, address the offending comment within the online discussion (or another part of the course, such as a "week in review" email) in a way that is not a personal attack, but indicates what was problematic and models an appropriate way to make the same point. For example, "In some posts the issue was raised about the role of victim alcohol use in sexual assault. This highlights that focusing prevention efforts on getting college women not to drink makes it seem like if a victim drinks it is her fault that she was hurt,

which is victim blaming, and does nothing to reduce the motivation of the offenders." However, in extreme cases a very problematic posting may need to be removed.

While most online course discussion is asynchronous, some discussion may occur in real time, such as chat sessions. In chat students and instructors have less time to think about what they contribute. There are some solutions to address this. One is to require students to submit questions ahead of time. This gives the instructor an opportunity to screen the students' wording and, if needed, work with the student to reword – a teachable moment. Even if students do not submit ahead of time, announcing the topic ahead of time may encourage them to think about their questions carefully in advance of chat. Even with this planning, unexpected events may require an immediate instructor response. An example from one of the authors' online courses is instructive here. A student started asking inappropriate questions during a chat with a guest speaker from a victim services agency. The student posed graphic questions about sexual assault and what the student termed provocative victim behavior and sexual arousal. The instructor disabled the student's ability to post and texted the speaker with instructions not to address the question. At the end, the instructor, as usual, closed the chat with a post summarizing what had been covered, reminded everyone of ground rules (including that the instructor reserves the right to limit participation in the event of questions that are inappropriate or may be misconstrued), thanked everyone for their participation, and reminded students that the instructor is always available to answer additional questions or talk to students about issues that were raised in the chat. After the chat, the instructor sent an email to the student to explain why the instructor took this action and in what ways the question was inappropriate. This scenario underscores the need to be prepared to send explanatory emails and regularly monitor course discussion to mimic instructor oversight during an in-person class.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE OF VICTIMIZATION

In a victimology course student disclosures of victimization are likely to occur (Branch, Hayes-Smith & Richards, 2011). Developing appropriate responses involves thinking about under what circumstances disclosures may occur, becoming familiar with faculty reporting requirements, and setting guidelines for disclosures. There is not a consensus among those who teach courses on victimization regarding guidelines for personal disclosures, particularly those that are shared publicly (via introductory posts, discussion threads, assignments shared in peer review or other activities, group projects, and chats). Common approaches are to actively discourage public disclosures or neither encourage nor discourage disclosures. We favor the latter (detailed below) because, while some public disclosures are inappropriate, actively discouraging disclosures may communicate that it is not acceptable to talk about personal experiences with victimization, which may reinforce the silence of many victims and deprive the course of a potentially fruitful discussion.

In crafting the course policy regarding disclosures, faculty must be aware of reporting guidelines to which they are subject. Under the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (20 USC § 1092 (f)), faculty are often designated as "Campus Security Authorities" and thereby required to report knowledge of crimes on and around campus to campus law enforcement, but are not required to divulge personally identifying information. Under Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 (20 USC § 1681-1688), faculty are typically considered "responsible employees" and required to report incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence, including personally identifying information, to the campus Title IX coordinator. Faculty may also be subject to state mandated reporting

laws, which require reporting, including personally identifying information, for child abuse. This is not a complete detailing of faculty reporting requirement, so faculty should consult their campus authorities, including their Title IX coordinator, for guidance.

Responding to disclosures starts by including a statement in the syllabus (e.g., Durfee & Rosenberg, 2009; Gore & Black, 2009) and an early email or post to the class, such as:

> Due to the difficult nature of the material addressed in this course, you may experience a need or desire to ventilate about the topic or process some of your own personal experiences with victimization. This is a completely normal response. Some students find they want to discuss these feelings or experiences with a supportive friend or other adult. While the discussion boards and chats are not the appropriate venue for this processing to take place, I am available to provide referrals and offer course-related support as necessary. If you share with me, please be aware that under state and federal reporting guidelines, I cannot be a confidential resource and may have to inform others of what you have told me. For your reference, additional support resources are included on this syllabus and the course webpage.

This statement normalizes emotional reactions to the material (Jones, 2002; Miller, 2001), guides students to appropriate resources to process that reaction, and makes them aware of confidentiality issues, so they can make informed choices about what to share. This approach can be mirrored in individual assignments, ensuring that students are clearly informed not to expect that in shared class assignments , only the faculty member will learn about any victimizations they disclose (e.g., Hollander, 2000; Marshall, 2013). Some faculty take an approach of sharing the pros and cons of disclosure with students (e.g., Agllias, 2012; Jones,

2002), which can include reminding students that something shared in electronic form is no longer under their control.

The list of resources referenced should be verified and updated each semester (Phillips, 1988). In many programs, online students are widely geographically dispersed, so the list should include national resources in addition to campus and local community resources. Resources lists can include hyperlinks to web-based resources so students can access resources directly, such as the National Sexual Assault Online Hotline, the National Domestic Violence Hotline live chat service, or the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime online directory of victim assistance programs by state. Potential community based resources include rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, Survivors of Homicide or Parents of Murdered Children chapters, chapters of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), suicide hotlines, local police, and criminal justice system based advocates. Common campus based resources include counseling centers, chaplains and faith community groups, residence life, health services, Dean of Students, campus police, campus women's center, campus based victim advocate, judicial affairs, and the Title IX coordinator. Since students may be in need of support but not willing to formally report, it is helpful to clearly indicate which sources are confidential. If a faculty member senses a student may be about to disclose, it is important to quickly remind her/him that you are supportive, but cannot always be a confidential resource. If a student discloses victimization, faculty need to respond sensitively and appropriately. This includes using language that provides a positive response (Durfee & Rosenberg, 2009) – highlighting that the student was not to blame for what happened, and the faculty member recognizes the trust it took to share this experience. Appropriate response include: "This was not your fault," "You are not to blame for what happened," "Thank you for being willing to share that with me" (or with us, if this happened in a

public forum), and “I appreciate that you chose to share this with me.” If this is handled via email, phrasing may be even more crucial than in face-to-face interactions.

There are also approaches to avoid, even if they are well-intentioned. Phrases such as ‘That sounds horrible” may communicate that others do not want to be exposed to unpleasant information, and sharing is not welcome. “You should…” disempowers a victim and undermines her/his control over decisions, particularly because faculty are in a position of power vis-à-vis students, so what is meant by the instructor as a suggestion may be taken as a demand by a student. “I know how you feel” is problematic because even if a faculty member experienced a similar act, it is not safe to assume the feelings of another, and because of the imbalance in power, this may communicate to the student how she/he is “supposed” to feel. Writing “It could have been worse” minimizes a victim’s experiences and communicates that an instructor does not take her/his experience seriously. Although common practice in the U.S. to apologize (e.g., “I am so sorry that happened to you”) when hearing about negative occurrences, this puts victims in an awkward position, because the culturally accepted answer is “It’s OK” when it may not be (Inabinet, 2013). Instructors should take care in asking questions. For example, questions, such as “Why did you…?” can be interpreted as implying that the victim was at least somewhat responsible for what happened due to her/his decision-making. In this case, instructors have no need to ask questions about the victimization experience. The only questions needed are those related to helping the student be successful in the course. Failure to follow these suggestions may discourage students from corresponding more about their course-related needs.

After the initial faculty response validating the student’s decision to share, the next steps are to remind the student that faculty cannot operate as a confidential resource and to refer to

appropriate resources. The faculty member should remind the student that resources can be accessed on the syllabus and course webpage and offer to make a referral if desired. It is the role of faculty to impart knowledge and evaluate student learning, not to be a therapist (even if trained as one; Durfee & Rosenberg, 2009; Miller, 2001), and therefore faculty refer students to other resources for support (Agllias, 2012). The faculty member should also advise the student to contact the police if she/he feels in any danger or does not have a safe place to go.

Once referrals have been made, the focus can shift to addressing options for course-related help. Student difficulty handling the course due to the subject matter may manifest in a number of ways. Warning signs include a sudden and noticeable change in behavior in, or engagement with, the course (e.g., fewer posts, logging on less frequently or for less time), late or missing assignments and exams, decreased work quality (including disjointed or incoherent writing), declining grades, and otherwise erratic behavior (e.g., arranging an extension, missing the date the student selected, and not contacting the instructor about it or responding to efforts at contact). If a student feels she/he cannot go on in the course, or it is clear that the student has missed too much of the experience to warrant a grade, the instructor might respond as follows: "You have indicated that you have a lot to handle this semester. I would be happy to discuss your options and assist you in thinking about your next steps." Faculty should always consult their institution's policies before proposing extensions or other accommodations to a student, and seek the guidance of department chairs or program directors as needed.

The final step in responding to a disclosure is to follow up. A short email is typically sufficient, including thanking the student for sharing, reviewing any agreements made related to the course, and reminding the student of available resources.

This process is more complicated if a student discloses victimization in an assignment or arena open to others in the class, such as a discussion post or chat. For example, personal introductions are a common early assignment in online courses. In a victimology course (or similar courses, like a course focused on intimate partner violence, child maltreatment, or sexual assault), it is common for some students to disclose their past victimization experiences in this venue. Indeed, this experience is often a motivator to take a victimology course.

How to respond follows two avenues (see Newman, 1999, for a parallel face-to-face class model). One is to follow up with an individual email to the student as soon as possible. In this email, instructors can let the student know that whenever students in a course disclose an experience they or someone they care about had with victimization, the instructor you always reach out with a follow up email. The email can then thank the student for sharing and communicate your appreciation that she/he felt comfortable enough in the course to do that. If information has been shared that you are required to report, the student should be informed of this and what the ensuing process will be, along with reassurance that this will not impact her/his standing in the course. This may be an appropriate time to suggest the student contact you if there is anything in the class that she/he is going to need support on, and end with a reminder that resources are listed in the syllabus. The second avenue is to model appropriate behavior by posting a response as soon as possible that all students see. For example, "Thank you to Sara for sharing. What her post eloquently did was highlight a point we have been making in this course." It may even be possible to tie it back to research: "I'd like to expand on what researchers have found on that point." (e.g., Graziano, 2001).

Even if a course is structured well, a student may use the class discussion boards or chats to process her or his experiences inappropriately. As soon as an instructor feels this is the case,

she/he can send an individual email that, as above, validates the experience, but tries to redirect the student to a more appropriate venue. For example: "This is obviously a very important issue, and I appreciate that you are willing to share on the discussion boards. It is important to find an outlet to talk about these experiences, but on the discussion boards I'd like to see you refocus more directly on answering the question by drawing on the assigned materials from the course. This helps everyone gain a better understanding of the material." In some cases, this may mean referring to resources: "You may want to explore the experience you had more, which I think is very important. It is not appropriate for me as your faculty to do that, so I am providing you with some possible resources in case you want to do that." If none of these efforts work, it may be helpful to consult with campus counseling services for tips and support.

DISCUSSION

This article presents a general blueprint for online instructors of victimology courses that includes how to structure the course and respond to disclosures by students of victimization experiences. This blueprint is designed to be helpful to anyone who teaching such a course, recognizing that many online courses are taught by adjunct faculty who, like full-time faculty, may or may not have a practice background that helps them respond and refer appropriately. While this model cannot guarantee that all students will react positively (Newman, 1999), the model builds on research on the impact of victimization and on the pedagogy of teaching about violence and trauma, so it hopefully maximizes the number of students who feel supported. Future research should consider the differing characteristics of online learners, such as the higher proportion of older students, and the implications that may have for their victimization experiences, how they interact with the course content, and what are appropriate resources for

support. It is vital that instructors in criminal justice programs teach victimology courses and teach them in a supportive manner, as these courses have the potential to help reduce students' victim-blaming and other problematic attitudes (Currier & Carlson, 2009; Fox & Cook, 2011), which in turn may improve our society's response to victims of crime, as many of these students are current and future criminal justice professionals. This approach also opens up victim services as an area for criminal justice students to consider in their future research and professional work.

While disclosures should not be encouraged, faculty should not be afraid if they occur. It may be a sign that an instructor created a safe space where people feel comfortable talking about victimization without shame, and that the appropriate response the faculty modeled supported the student. Still, these situations can be stressful for faculty (Hayes-Smith, Richards, & Branch, 2010). As mentioned above for students, faculty may want to engage in self-care (Jones, 2002).

The next step in the pedagogy of teaching victimology online should be to conduct a systematic evaluation of these pedagogical approaches to insure that they are working not only from the perspective of faculty but for students – those who have experiences with victimization (e.g., Lee, 2008) and those who do not. Such research should investigate how courses that include content on victimization impact students, including whether students with victimization histories feel adequately supported and able to care for themselves in the course and whether all students feel they could have an open and full discussion of victimization issues, and that such discussions were handled appropriately. This research can then be used to help advance the pedagogy of teaching victimology online.

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