



**Book Review -- *Unsafe In The Ivory Tower: The Sexual
Victimization Of College Women*
(B. Fisher, L. Daigle, and F. Cullen)**

Reviewed by: **Catherine D. Marcum**

Abstract

A book review of *Unsafe in the Ivory Tower: The Sexual Victimization of College Women* (B. Fisher, L. Daigle, and F. Cullen) by Catherine D. Marcum.

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B. Fisher, L. Daigle, and F. Cullen
Unsafe in the Ivory Tower: The Sexual Victimization of College Women
Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2010. pp. xiv, 230. \$36.95.
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In their book, *Unsafe in the Ivory Tower: The Sexual Victimization of Women*, Fisher, Daigle, and Cullen make a valuable addition to the existing literature on victimization of college-aged females. According to the authors, the main purpose of the text was to not just present statistics and information on the rate of sexual victimization of college women but more so to give an accurate portrayal of the risks that female students encounter and how they choose to respond if they are sexually victimized. Utilizing findings from previous studies on sexual victimization, as well as their own research involving 8,000 randomly selected female college students, the authors attempt to better explain the social intricacies associated with being at risk of sexual victimization, as well as the aftermath of the act. The book is organized into eight chapters, each dedicated to different facts of sexual victimization and its repercussions for the victims.

Chapter 1 contextualizes sexual victimization in the university setting and its cultural acceptance. This chapter introduces Koss's Sexual Experiences Survey, which uncovers evidence of the prevalence of rape in the college community and the misperception of what actually happened by offenders and victims. Conversely, Gilbert's alternative view of sexual victimization research and his perceived intent of feminists to spread fear is addressed. Chapter 2 provides coverage of well-known measurement tools of sexual victimization, including the National Crime Victimization Survey, National Women's Study, National Violence Against Women Survey, and the National College Women Sexual Victimization Survey. The most important contribution of this chapter is not only does it provide the findings of each of these studies, but it also provides comparisons of how each study measures the act of rape. The varied conceptualizations of rape can and do affect the rate of rape reported by each study. Chapter 3 specifically examines the occurrence of sexual victimization on college campuses and how these violations affects victims while living and attending classes on campus. Moreover, the role of drugs and alcohol in victimization is reviewed, utilizing several studies (including Koss) that include the influence of these substances to fully understand their effect on rape.

The next three chapters provide the reader with an in-depth examination of the intricacies of rape and sexual victimization. Possibly unknown to the reader, the legal definition of rape is the unwanted vaginal penetration by a penis; therefore, an act is only considered rape if it is the violation of a woman by a man. Chapter 4 explores other forms of sexual victimization by discussing forms of unwanted sexual contact and abuse with various victim and offender combinations. This chapter also provides an interesting examination of the tactics of sexual coercion used by offenders. Chapter 5 examines the topic of revictimization, on general terms as well as specifically in regard to sexual revictimization. The text provides information on the extent of sexual re-victimization and the likelihood of this occurring based on the period of the victim's life (i.e., life course) and other lifestyle choices. Findings from the National College

Women Sexual Victimization Study (NCWSV) are presented to support explanations of revictimization. As a follow-up, Chapter 6 discusses the consequences of acknowledging and reporting rape and sexual victimization. There are individual and situational factors that are related to the likelihood of reporting victimization, including the victim and offender characteristics and the context of the incident. Studies on reporting and lack thereof, such as the NCWSV, are discussed and the policy implications of the gap between victimization rate and reporting are reviewed.

Chapter 7 discusses a criminal behavior that can lead to sexual victimization of females, a “gateway crime” if you will: stalking. Females who live in a campus setting are particularly at risk of stalking based on the routine of their daily activities. The extent and nature of stalking of college females are discussed, as well as techniques used by the offender and interactions between the offender and the victim. Finally, Chapter 8 provides information to the reader on methods of preventing sexual victimization. These policy implications are based on different theoretical and technical approaches, including situational crime prevention and the feminist approach to protecting oneself.

While there is not a lack of books and articles available that discuss sexual victimization, this particular text provides a valuable contribution to the literature as it focuses on an often ignored victim of this offense. College students are stereotyped for their promiscuity, partying behaviors, and impulsive life choices. Moreover, females who may choose to dress a certain way or drink too much at campus bars receive a reputation. Koss’ work is highlighted throughout the text as it brought to light the misperception of a college female of what truly constituted rape and sexual victimization, rather than just “fooling around” and holding dates accountable for their behavior. Finally, the use-fulness of this book is not limited to the upper level academic classroom, although it holds value for many criminology and sociology classes to encourage discussion and debate. The statistics, studies and prevention techniques discussed and supported in this book indicates its value for university officials when making decisions regarding improvement of student safety and education.