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## Sexual Violence on Campus: Power- Conscious Approaches to Awareness, Prevention, and Response (Great Debates in Higher Education)

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**Sexual Violence on Campus:  
Power-Conscious Approaches to Awareness, Prevention, and Response (Great  
Debates in Higher Education)**

By: Chris Linder. 2018, Paperback Edition, 180 pages. ISBN 1787432297

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Efforts to address sexual violence on college campuses are becoming more common, but not always more effective. In *Sexual Violence on Campus: Power-Conscious Approaches to Awareness, Prevention, and Response*, Chris Linder draws attention to the need for institutions to address sexual violence using a “power-conscious framework” (p.19) that builds on the works of Paulo Freire and Kimberlé Crenshaw. Outlining the “awareness-response-prevention trifecta” (p. 33) that reflects the work of many college campuses surrounding sexual assault, Linder provides specific examples currently popularized in higher education, followed by suggestions for future practice. Stated most succinctly by the author, this book aims “to advocate a power-conscious lens to challenge student activists, administrators, educators, and policy makers to develop more nuanced approaches to sexual-violence awareness, response, and prevention on college campuses” (p. 5).

Introducing the reader to a power-conscious framework constitutes the first chapter in *Sexual Violence on Campus*. Beginning with a discussion on power, Linder provides readers with important terminology that is critical to the book’s foundation. According to Linder, conflating verbal sexual harassment with physical sexual assault may be contributing to the increased backlash against reporting and movements such as #MeToo. This specificity of language can be seen woven throughout the chapters as Linder draws attention to the importance of language used in offices, policies, trainings, and programs. Additionally, as the power-conscious framework is built on historical scholarship, brief overviews are given of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2000) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) that provide important context. This chapter provides an important foundation of social justice that the rest of the text is built on. Linder’s subject expertise is evident and allows the reader to immediately engage with the text.

Recognizing the important work done by community organizations, student activists, and especially women of color, Linder begins chapter two by taking readers through a brief history of campus organizing around sexual assault. Shining a light on websites, campaign slogans, and other forms of information sharing, an important critique of language and focus is provided. For example, Linder points out that many organizers and institutions use the 1 in 4 statistic (1 in 4 women experiences a completed or attempted sexual assault during their time at college) as an important talking point; however, it is often used without context, which is problematic. Using the power-conscious framework, Linder unpacks pervasive myths that go unchecked when 1 in 4 is thrown out as a complete statement.

Moving from campaigns to programming, Linder provides a proverbial mirror for institutions to view themselves in by directly addressing campus orientations and popular events like Walk a Mile in Her Shoes and Take Back the Night. The power-conscious

framework illuminates the often glossed-over inaccuracies and problems of minimization, sexism, and homophobia that can be common at these events. Suggestions for salvageable events are provided, as are questions that would be valuable for planning committees to review.

Additionally, Linder provides a critical discussion on the invisibility of perpetrators of sexual violence on campus. Presenting the idea that statistics on perpetrators of sexual violence should be widely available, Linder advocates against the current practice of only providing statistics on victims. As framed by this book, a focus on perpetrators may provide incentive for institutions to address perpetrator behavior, in contrast to consistently attempting to teach people how not to be victims.

Chapter three explores several components of responding to sexual violence: policy, adjudication, and survivor supports. Readers are given insight into the processes that campus administrators and students may engage with after an assault has occurred. Title IX, The Clery Act, and The Office of Civil Rights are mentioned, along with intricacies and concerns of the criminal justice system and campus adjudication. Linder provides important insight into survivor supports, and how many campuses are turning away from a survivor centered support system, which has historically been provided by Women's Centers, to a more clinical model where services are provided by or through campus health care centers. With mixed feelings, Linder discusses how some institutions are creating centers on campus that specifically focus on relationship and sexual violence prevention and response. While these centers may symbolize a recognition of the importance of the topic by institutions, the housing of response and prevention together, according to the author, is problematic.

With a focus on prevention, chapter four may be especially important for college administrators to digest. Linder addresses the most common types of sexual violence education programs, which she has separated into five categories:

- (1) single-gender programs directed at women as potential victims;
- (2) single-gender programs directed at men as potential allies and bystanders;
- (3) mixed-gender programs focused on defining sexual violence and dispelling rape myths;
- (4) bystander intervention programs directed at men or mixed-gender groups; and
- (5) programs designed to reduce the risk of sexual violence by teaching students about the role of alcohol in sexual violence. (p. 87)

In this chapter readers will recognize one of the threads Linder has woven throughout the book, the continued lack of focus on perpetrators and their behavior. Prevention models, along with awareness models, frequently focus on telling (women) victims how not to become victims instead of changing the behavior of potential perpetrators. Acknowledging that program evaluations are important, Linder states, "it is nearly impossible to connect one-time educational programs with changes in behavior, especially sexually-violent behavior" (p. 105). A deeper look into sexual violence program assessment and evaluation is important, but largely absent, and perhaps outside the scope of this text.

In the final chapter, Linder speaks directly to campus personnel with potential strategies to address campus sexual violence. She begins by re-introducing the foundation of the power-conscious framework, along with the conceptual model. This chapter is rich in action items, and provides detailed suggestions for campuses in each of the awareness, prevention, and response areas, through the power-conscious framework. The entire book

is accessible, but this chapter in particular lays out clear, supported ideas which will provide important building blocks for new and experienced advocates and administrators looking to create or improve upon an environment that supports students and victims while also addressing problematic behavior and potential perpetrators.

Building on her significant professional experience working with victims and survivors of sexual assault in higher education, and her continued academic contributions to the field of higher education surrounding sexual assault, power and oppression, and identity work, Linder has authored a foundational book. This book is imperative for any individual involved in addressing sexual violence in higher education, specifically advocates, administrators, direct-service professionals, and program staff. *Sexual Violence on Campus* would be a great book for an entire program, department, or committee to read and discuss, as it provides opportunities to reflect on individual campus practices. Linder illuminates important social justice issues in the field of sexual violence on campus, and provides practical suggestions for program implementation.

### Author Notes

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