

Chapter 4

Polyvictimization in the Lives of North American Female University/College Students: The Contribution of Technology-Facilitated Abuse


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Abstract

Polyvictimization means looking at multiple victimizations of different kinds that one person has experienced. Virtually, all of the work in this field focuses on the effects of childhood trauma and victimization on currently distressed children, and empirical and theoretical work on the intertwining of adult female offline and online abuse experiences is in short supply. Recently, however, some scholars are starting to fill these research gaps by generating data showing that technology-facilitated violence and abuse are part and parcel of women's polyvictimization experiences at institutions of higher education. This chapter provides an in-depth review of the extant social scientific literature on the role technology-facilitated violence and abuse plays in the polyvictimization of female college/university students. In addition to proposing new ways of knowing, we suggest progressive policies and practices aimed at preventing polyvictimization on the college campus.

Keywords: Polyvictimization; Technology-facilitated abuse; gender-based violence; sexual violence on campus; sexual assault; online/offline overlap

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Introduction

Male-to-female abuse on North American university/college campuses is not a new social problem. This field of study started almost 65 years ago when Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) found that 20% of women in one US institution of higher education experienced attempted or completed rape in a one-year time period. At that juncture, their data garnered little, if any, attention from the academic community, policy makers, journalists, and the general public. It was not until the late 1980s that a new wave of feminist survey researchers uncovered similar alarmingly high rates of male physical and sexual assaults on female undergraduate students (e.g., DeKeseredy, 1988; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987), and the issue of abuse against women on campuses started to get extensive publicity (DeKeseredy, 2017). Even so, despite the compelling results of two North American national surveys (see DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Koss et al., 1987), the legacy of university/college administrators ignoring the plight of survivors continued, and there was a major antifeminist backlash effort in the late 1980s and throughout the following decade (Schwartz, 2015).

The backlash continues today (see DeKeseredy, 2019), but some progressive tectonic shifts occurred in the early and middle part of the last decade in relation to woman abuse on campus. In the United States, due to the ongoing work of feminist coalitions, the formation of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault in 2014, the widespread viewing of Kirby Dick's 2015 documentary *The Hunting Ground*, and the passage of the federal Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE) in 2013, many people now view sexual assault and other crimes against female students as the "current problem of the day" on university/college campuses and their immediate surroundings (DeKeseredy, 2018a, p. 204). The same recognition of the issue can be seen in some parts of Canada. For instance, on October 28, 2016, the Quebec government announced spending \$200 million (CAD) on a five-year strategy to prevent sexual violence and \$500,000 of that amount went to resources and campaigns on postsecondary school campuses.

The antifeminist backlash against feminist empirical, theoretical, and policy work on male assaults on female postsecondary students will persevere. So will innovative, progressive scholarly contributions to the field; one of which is the study of how technology-facilitated abuse contributes to *polyvictimization* in the lives of North American female university/college students. This concept simply means looking at multiple victimizations of different kinds that one person has experienced (Mitchell, Segura, Jones, & Turner, 2018). There is a large literature on polyvictimization, but it focuses mainly on the extent to which multiple childhood victimizations can predict various problems in functioning in later childhood or adolescence (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, Nolan, Mastron, & Hall-Sanchez, 2019a; Dierkhising, Ford, Branson, Grasso, & Lee, 2019; Ford & Delker, 2019). Dozens of studies found that multiple victimizations can result in a variety of poor outcomes, be it youth crime, school failure, or any other psychological disturbance (Hamby et al., 2018; Musicaro et al., 2019; Wolfe, 2018). This can be the result of repeated episodes of the same behavior, such as sexual abuse or physical violence, or numerous victimizations, as some children are subject to a broad array of damaging behaviors.

Rigorous empirical and theoretical work on the intertwining of North American female university/college students' offline and online abusive experiences are scarce, but a small group of scholars are starting to address this research gap by uncovering data showing that technology-facilitated abuse is part and parcel of women's polyvictimization experiences at institutions of higher education. Following the approach taken by the contributors to [White, Koss, and Kazdin's \(2011\)](#) anthology *Violence Against Women and Children: Mapping the Terrain*, this chapter answers what [White et al. \(2011\)](#) refer to as "three seemingly simple questions": what do we know? how do we know it? and what are the next steps? (p. xx). In other words, the chapter provides an in-depth review of the extant empirical and theoretical literature on the role technology-facilitated abuse plays in the polyvictimization of female university/college students and suggests new avenues of inquiry. The first section reviews the work done by researchers in this field. The second section examines new directions in research, and the third section proposes a multipronged method of targeting the relationship between offline and online victimization.

Polyvictimization in the Lives of Female Postsecondary School Students: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?

To date, polyvictimization researchers have not turned extensive attention to the abusive experiences of adults in general. Even when university/college-aged adults were studied, the main concern was the effect of childhood multiple victimizations on current behavior. For example, [Alexander, Amerigo, and Harrelson \(2018\)](#) found that polyvictimization was the best predictor of what they termed "risky sexual behavior" among postsecondary school women (p. 345), whereas [Espelage, Hong, and Mebane \(2016\)](#) and [Holt et al. \(2017\)](#) found childhood polyvictimization related to current psychological functioning among such students.

A major exception in the polyvictimization literature is elder abuse, where [Hamby, Smith, Mitchell, and Turner \(2016\)](#) recommend that new studies use the concept of polyvictimization to develop a broader understanding of the abused elderly. [DeKeseredy et al. \(2019a\)](#) also show that polyvictimization can be used to study adult problems. Using data derived from the Campus Quality of Life Survey (CQLS) recently administered at a large residential university in the South Atlantic region of the United States, the authors found that a variety of abusive behaviors touch many female students' lives and that many of these students suffer these victimizations multiple times. However, it is unclear from their findings whether offline assaults intertwine with those that are online because their composite measures of stalking and sexual harassment conflate in-person and electronic forms of victimization. In other words, they created two variables (one for stalking and one for sexual harassment) that combined offline and online forms of these two types of abuse.

This does not mean that CQLS data cannot be used to determine such intertwining. For example, [DeKeseredy et al. \(2019b\)](#) found that 21% ($n = 633$) of the total CQLS female sample ($n = 3,271$) received unwanted electronic sexual messages/images, including pornography. They also found that 18.2% ($n = 551$)

experienced at least one of eight types of intimate physical violence, and 34% ($n = 1,041$) were targets of at least one of five variants of offline sexual assault. Moreover, female CQLS respondents who reported receiving these unwanted electronic sexual messages/images were 3.4 times more likely to state that they had been sexually assaulted offline than women who did not receive them. Additionally, women who reported getting these messages/images were twice more likely to report offline intimate physical violence as respondents who were not sent these media.

Thirty-four percent ($n = 1,041$) of the CQLS female respondents reported being targets of technology-facilitated stalking. Those respondents were 2.3 times more likely to report an offline sexual assault than women who were not victimized. As well, participants who reported electronic forms of stalking were 2.6 times more likely to report intimate physical violence than women who did not report stalking.

These findings are not surprising given the small but expanding base of university/college-based research which shows that female students' cyber victimization and in-person experiences of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse are related (Marganski & Melander, 2018; Marganski, Melander, & DeKeseredy, 2020; Reed, Tolman, & Ward, 2016; Sargent, Krauss, Jouriles, & McDonald, 2016). Nonetheless, except for studies done by DeKeseredy et al. (2019a) and DeKeseredy et al. (2019b), all the data on the linkage between cyber violence and the in-person victimization of college students come from surveys administered to convenience samples, and, thus, the data are not generalizable (Dragiewicz et al., 2019; Marganski & Melander, 2018). Another major limitation, one shared by the above two studies done by DeKeseredy and his colleagues, is that it is unclear which victimization (i.e., offline or online) occurred first (DeKeseredy & Rennison, 2019). Some researchers and practitioners contend that effective policy and program development requires knowing if technology-facilitated abusive behaviors are precursors to face-to-face abusive acts or if they occurred with or after them (Marganski & Melander, 2018).

What are the key determinants of the polyvictimization described here? So far, there are very few answers to this question. DeKeseredy et al. (2019a) found that one of the most powerful predictors is *negative peer support*, which is also strongly associated with image-based sexual abuse (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016), another harm examined by those who study technology-facilitated violence and abuse. There are various definitions of negative peer support, but for the purpose of their study, DeKeseredy et al. (2019b) operationalized a revised rendition of DeKeseredy's (1988) definition of *male peer support* to refer to attachments to peers and the resources they provide that encourage and justify violence against women. DeKeseredy et al. (2019a) also used the same definition and operationalized it the same way in their study of polyvictimization.

Two types of negative peer support predicted digital victimization and both violence committed by an intimate partner and sexual assault: (1) *proabuse informational support* and (2) *attachments to abusive peers*. The former refers to guidance and advice that influence people to sexually, physically, and psychologically abuse their dating partners, and the latter is defined as having friends who sexually, physically, and psychologically victimize dating partners (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998).

DeKeseredy et al. (2019b) found that female CQLS respondents who reported having both types of negative peer support were more than twice as likely to reveal that they had received unwanted sexual messages/images as those who did not report negative peer associations. Respondents who reported receiving proabuse informational support were 50% more likely to state that an intimate partner physically assaulted them. What is more, participants who reported attachments to abusive peers were 2.7 times more likely to report such violence.

Respondents who reported receiving proabuse informational support were two times more likely to report technology-facilitated stalking than female respondents who did not receive such support (DeKeseredy et al., 2019b). Respondents with attachment to abusive peers were nearly three times as likely to report technology-facilitated stalking than those who did not have these associations. Furthermore, respondents who reported receiving proabuse informational support were 50% more likely to state having been targeted by intimate physical violence. Similarly, participants who reported attachments to abusive peers were 2.7 times more likely to report such violence. The two types of negative peer support are key predictors of offline sexual assault. Still, the relationships reported here should not be interpreted as causal because it is unknown whether victimization or peer support came first.

More recently, Marganski et al.'s (2020) convenience sample data show that the following factors are significantly related to intimate partner polyvictimization (e.g., psychological, physical, sexual, and cyber): friends' and family members' perceptions of respondents' intimate relationships; family connectedness (e.g., dimensions of respondents' relationships with their families); respondents' attitudes about sex with their current intimate partner; and being in an exclusive relationship (e.g., neither partner is romantically pursuing other partners). DeKeseredy et al.'s (2019b) and Marganski et al.'s (2020) studies of technology-facilitated abuse in the contexts of offline types reveal that there is extensive polyvictimization among US university/college students, at least at two institutions of higher education. British radical feminist Liz Kelly (1987, 1988) would likely argue that the multiple abusive behaviors that these students experienced exist on a *continuum of sexual violence*, ranging from nonphysical acts like sexual harassment to physical acts such as rape. Although the idea of the continuum is often used to portray movement from least serious to most serious, for Kelly (1988), and those who follow in her footsteps (e.g., DeKeseredy et al., 2019a), all of these behaviors are serious and have a "basic common character" (p. 76). No behavior on the continuum is automatically considered more harmful than another, and, as Kelly (1988) states, women's experiences

...shade into and out of a given category, such as sexual harassment, which includes looks, gestures and remarks as well as acts which may be defined as assault or rape. (p. 48)

In sum, the concepts of polyvictimization and the continuum of sexual violence help us focus attention on the cumulative effects of a broad range of highly injurious interrelated behaviors that women experience, many of which are both exempt from the coverage or scope of criminal law and simultaneously trivialized or minimized by the general public and the media (DeKeseredy & Rennison, 2019; McGlynn, Rackley, & Houghton, 2017). Researchers have devoted extensive energy to analyzing the long-term effects of specific instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, physical assault, and other harms, or have analyzed repeated patterns of one of these, such as violence against a partner. Still, for many women, these forms of abuse “seep into one another” (DeKeseredy et al., 2019a; Ptacek, 2016; Wolfe, 2018).

Next Steps in Research

Six years ago, Henry and Powell (2015) noted that “as a result of the gender-blindness within studies of virtual or cyber criminality, the conceptualization of technology-mediated ‘harm’ against women remains significantly underdeveloped” (p. 764). At that time, there was a conspicuous absence of feminist empirical and theoretical work on technology-facilitated abuse. Documented by DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2016), researchers mainly examined the explanatory value of gender-blind perspectives (Reyns, Henson, & Holt, 2016), such as Cohen and Felson’s (1979) routine activity theory and Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) general theory of crime. Now, a growing international cadre of scholars produces ample evidence of a strong relationship between gender and women’s risk of being targeted by technology-facilitated abuse that cannot be adequately accounted for through the use of “male-stream” theories. Consider that one of the two polyvictimization studies reviewed here statistically supports Powell and Henry’s (2017) claim that “peer support for sexual violence against women emerges as a particularly challenging and troubling feature of sexual violence in the digital age” (p. 5).

More research is required, including the collection of data that clarifies the temporal order of key variables. Again, it is unclear whether certain abusive behaviors are precursors to others or if they occurred with or after them (Marganski & Melander, 2018). More research on polyvictimization experiences is also necessary in other country contexts, as well as an international comparative study that includes students and members of the general public. We know there is extensive polyvictimization among US college students, but we do not know whether female members of the general population are likewise at higher or lower risk. As studies of adult polyvictimization are rare, these new empirical directions will help fill a major research gap.

The vast majority of quantitative studies conducted on campus are climate surveys that measure the victimization experiences of both men and women. As such, research on male perpetrators of woman abuse on and off campuses is scarce (DeKeseredy, 2020a; Wendt, 2016), and this type of work has, thus, provided “little context in which acts take place” (Dragiewicz et al., 2019, p. 11). As Foubert, Clark-Taylor, and Wall (2020) observe

...the literature lacks a recent, clear understanding of the number of college men who commit... assault, the number of... assaults each perpetrator commits, and the relationship to traditional all male-campus groups such as fraternities and athletic groups. (p. 297)

If numerous female students experience polyvictimization, it is likely that many men engage in multiple assaults of different kinds, but there is no conclusive evidence to support this hypothesis at this juncture. Yet, Foubert et al.'s (2020) research reveals that many men enrolled at institutions of higher education in a Midwestern part of the United States committed multiple alcohol-related sexual assaults, which polyvictimization literature suggests is an indicator that they may also have committed multiple types of other assaults (i.e., physical, mental) on women.

Statistics on men not only give us data on the extent and distribution of *polyperpetration* but also shed light on causal factors, such as male peer support. Male peer support for various types of violence against women is ubiquitous and has a long history (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013). Quantitative and qualitative research done to date is highly informative, but there is still much we do not know about the connection between proabuse peer dynamics and the intertwining of offline and online means of abusing women (DeKeseredy et al., 2019b). For instance, some men victimize women but do not communicate with abusive friends on a face-to-face basis (DeKeseredy & Olsson, 2011; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016), and there may be other environments or places in which their peers influence them to abuse women, such as patriarchal online communities with members who never meet in person but often exchange written, audio, and visual communication with their peers (DeKeseredy & Corsianos, 2016; Dragiewicz, 2011; Kimmel, 2008; Salter, 2017). Hence, another essential question is whether peer support for polyperpetration is mainly offline, online, or a combination of both (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016).

There are other major gaps in our knowledge of the polyvictimization of female postsecondary students. Besides additional quantitative work, in-depth interviews with women are needed to understand the impact of their repeated victimization. Interviews with male polyperpetrators are also sorely needed and will provide answers to the question "Why does he do that?" (Bancroft, 2002). Another understudied area is whether the concepts of polyvictimization and polyperpetration are relevant specifically to the lives of LGBTQI university/college students.

Goodmark (2011) reminds us that, "When the first domestic violence and stalking laws were passed, no one could have foreseen how technology would facilitate abuse, stalking, and harassment" (p. 195). Documented by a growing number of studies, the co-occurrence of technology-facilitated abuse, in-person assaults, and other types of woman abuse is now in its endemic phase, possibly even worse than the widespread consumption of opioids and methamphetamine in West Virginia (DeKeseredy & Rennison, 2019). What is to be done? Most important of all are the responses by universities/colleges to this problem. Next, we turn to how these institutions of higher learning can enhance female students' health and safety.

Preventing and Responding to University/College Campus Polyvictimization

After many years of developing campus programming, responses to woman abuse remain “widely varied” (Wooten & Mitchell, 2016, p. 1), even though bystander intervention is now the “centerpiece” of violence against women prevention strategies at most North American institutions of higher education (Henson, Fisher, & Reyns, 2020, p. 506). Bystander intervention refers to people who

...by their very presence, have the potential to do nothing, to step in and diffuse a high-risk situation... or to make the situation worse by condoning a perpetrator’s behavior... or being unsupportive in responding to a victim. (Banyard, 2011, p. 216)

In the United States, bystander intervention became the “gold standard” due to federal requirements to implement them as part of a broader sexual assault prevention strategy (Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). Bystander intervention programs attempt to increase the campus community’s knowledge of various types of woman abuse, change students’ acceptance of sexual assault and other types of violence, decrease rape myth acceptance, increase bystander intervention, and ultimately reduce the amount of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and other such harms on college campuses (Henriksen, Mattick, & Fisher, 2016). Keep in mind, however, that bystander intervention in North American institutions of higher education prioritizes the prevention of offline rather than online abuse. Furthermore, as noted by Henson et al. (2020), “bystander intervention behaviors directed at online contexts are absent from both the online victimization and bystander intervention research” (p. 505).

Though bystander intervention was found to be an effective means of preventing both offline and online victimization (Henson et al., 2020), some cautionary notes are necessary. First, there is evidence of short-term effectiveness, but we know little about its long-term effects. Second, for bystander intervention to work during an online or offline attack, there must be a witness to the assault. Most acts of male-to-female abuse occur behind closed doors and not in public places. It is highly unlikely, then, that those physically victimized in private contexts and those who do not have online witnesses to their technology-facilitated abuse experiences will receive any type of intervention (DeKeseredy, 2018a; Henriksen et al., 2016; Hewitt & Beauregard, 2014).

Bystander intervention programs and most other campus-based prevention and intervention strategies are also “extremely heteronormative” (Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). Initiatives that meet the needs of sexual minorities are in short supply (DeKeseredy, 2018a; Ford & Soco-Marquez, 2016). What is more, violent and other types of assaults on members of the campus LGBTQI community must be addressed in the contexts in which LGBTQI lives are situated. Numerous LGBTQI survivors and offenders have experienced childhood abuse, partner violence, traumatic coming-out experiences, isolation, mental health problems, internalized homophobia, substance abuse, and a host of other problems (Ball, 2013; Guadalupe-Diaz, 2019; Messinger, 2017; Meyer, 2015).

This is not to say that bystander intervention training (both online and offline) should be abandoned. Rather, it should be used in conjunction with other strategies briefly discussed here, one of which is teaching students what [White and Carmody \(2018\)](#) refer to as *online citizenship*. This could entail senior students serving as mentors for junior students to model respectful and safe online communication. Of course, this type of mentoring should also be used to foster such communication in offline contexts. Senior campus administrators, too, need to contribute to this type of mentorship, and [White and Carmody \(2018\)](#) contend that this can be achieved by them rewarding students “who watch out for one another by telling their stories, awarding them honors and providing them with opportunities to develop and lead prevention programs” (p. 2304).

Training and education should always be major parts of any campus-based prevention strategy, and, in fact, the most widely supported intervention is some form of educational campaign. Not only does every researcher who has studied woman abuse in institutions of higher learning end up recommending educational interventions, but student and community groups who intensely study the harms covered in this chapter virtually always come to the conclusion that the first stop on the “road of change” is education. Generally, the argument goes, education campaigns are essential because without them, students will learn their “facts” from either gossip or the uninformed media ([Bohmer & Parrot, 1993](#); [Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997](#)).

Since technology is constantly changing, university/college personnel responsible for education and program creation must constantly receive in-person training about new developments and trainers could “walk them through settings on their own devices, allowing them to ask questions in real time” ([Dragiewicz et al., 2019](#), p. 37). It should also be noted that [White and Carmody \(2018\)](#) found that students prefer face-to-face education about preventing online victimization, but they want to be taught by their senior peers instead of university employees. As one of their respondents put it:

I think too a lot of administration sometimes doesn’t get that... no matter how we make it, the facts are still the facts and they waste a lot of money going and making brochures and pamphlets when they have all these students who have been here who could actually have these real conversations with the freshmen as soon as they get here. ([White & Carmody, 2018](#), p. 2301)

Antipornography education is also essential for the following reasons. Every day, thousands of North American undergraduate and graduate students consume violent and racist internet pornography ([DeKeseredy, 2020b](#)). Nearly nine out of every ten men and one out of every three women aged 18–26 in the United States report accessing online porn ([Lim, Carotte, & Hellard, 2016](#)). As well, by age 17, 93% of boys and 62% of girls have been exposed to porn ([Sabina, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2008](#); [Sun, Bridges, Johnson, & Ezzell, 2016](#)). There are many harms associated with pornography, but violence against women is one of the most common ([DeKeseredy, 2020b](#)). Based on their own rich research

experience and their review of the extant literature, [Sun et al. \(2016\)](#) note that “Research on pornography and violence against women in particular is long-standing, robust, and generally points to a positive association between the two....” (p. 1).

Violent and racist porn is definitely a component of the abuse of female university/college students (see [DeKeseredy, 2020b](#)), and many male students are graduates of what [Bancroft \(2002\)](#) coins as “the pornography school of sexuality” (p. 231). As [Sun et al. \(2016\)](#) recently discovered in their study of 487 male undergraduate students

...the more pornography a man watches, the more likely he is to use it during sex, request particular pornographic sex acts of his partner, deliberately conjure images of pornography during sex to maintain arousal, and have concerns over his own sexual performance. (p. 983) (see also Keene, this volume)

Based on the above data, one would think that reducing and preventing pornography consumption would be a major goal of contemporary campus antiviolence programs. Yet, the harms done by porn are seldom addressed in these programs ([DeKeseredy, 2018b](#)). For campus educators and administrators, it is, then, essential to recognize that student consumption of porn is a widespread problem and will only get worse due to easy and free access to internet pornography. It is now time to demonstrate some progressive leadership by offering programs on gender issues that address porn in their schools. Many things can also be done on a personal level ([Katz, 2006](#)), such as talking to male students and male faculty in assemblies, classes, at sporting events, in faculty and staff training, and in private conversations. Additionally, university/college staff should employ the following strategies informed by the work of [Thorne-Finch \(1992, pp. 236–237\)](#) and [Warshaw \(1988, pp. 161–164\)](#): confront students, instructors, and athletic staff who speak positively about violent and dehumanizing pornography; confront students and staff who perpetuate rape myths; take every opportunity to speak out against porn and other symptoms of gender inequality; and create social media sites about the harms of pornography and how men and boys can work together to reduce the consumption, production, and distribution of hurtful sexual imagery.

The interventions proposed here constitute just the tip of the iceberg, and many more could be suggested. Regardless of which strategies are selected, faculty, staff, administrators, and students must be prepared to meet new challenges and develop new initiatives because woman abuse on campus is a “never ending and constantly evolving issue” ([Ledwitz-Rigby, 1993, p. 93](#)). This is particularly so in relation to digital technologies, as perpetrators are now “weaving technology into patterns of abuse” ([Dragiewicz et al., 2019, p. 5](#)). Undoubtedly, by the time you finish reading this chapter, there will be new electronic means of inflicting pain on people, and it is vital that university/college employees and students keep pace with the rapid spread of cyber harms such as those identified in this book.

The academic community still has much to learn about responding to and preventing polyvictimization, especially in the online contexts. No doubt, mistakes will be made, and there will be considerable resistance to change from “reinforcers of the status quo” (DeKeseredy, 2019). Nevertheless, again, one of the most important points to consider here is to avoid oversimplified solutions. Often, they do more harm than good and fail to address the many and complex sources of woman abuse in institutions of higher learning (Stark-Adamec, 1996a). What is required is a multiagency approach, one that involves the joint efforts of students, faculty, administrators, campus security, and many other members of the campus community. Woman abuse on campus, as well as other major expressions of gender inequality, cannot be stopped unless universities/colleges develop a collective responsibility to prevent it from occurring (Stark-Adamec, 1996b).

Conclusion

Many North Americans share a vision of universities/colleges as peaceful sanctuaries from the “real world.” Institutions of higher education, too, are commonly seen as places where students, faculty, administrators, and support staff strive constantly to provide “practical solutions to the problems of the day” (Strong-Boag, 1996, p. 105). To some extent, these perceptions are correct. Yet, North American universities/colleges are also “hot spots” of male-to-female abuse as documented by decades of sound research. The burgeoning social scientific literature on the co-occurrence of offline and online victimization shows that things are getting worse. The research reported here, in fact, reveals that for many women “acts of abuse and violence are rarely singular, isolated events” (Wolfe, 2018, p. 833).

More studies of polyvictimization in the lives of female university/college students are sure to come, but it is also necessary to develop new, effective prevention and intervention initiatives. Experts on woman abuse collectively emphasize the importance of avoiding simplistic solutions and the value of a multipronged approach involving feminist digital activism, legal reforms, education and awareness programs, survivor support services, perpetrator re-education, and corporate efforts (Clevenger, 2016; DeKeseredy, Dragiewicz, & Schwartz, 2017; Hall & Hearn, 2018; Powell & Henry, 2017; Powell & Sugiura, 2019). There are other useful strategies to consider, but it is essential to always keep in mind that

Ending abuse is not only about specialized services delivered by trained individuals. It is perhaps more importantly about “humdrum” cultural change in which everyone does things a little differently every day. (Klein, 2012, p. 127)

All members of university/college communities can play a key role in reducing women’s experiences of polyvictimization.

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