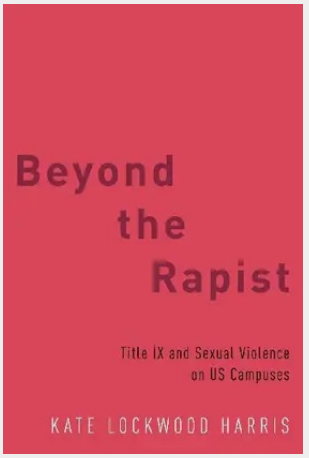
Harris

Beyond the Rapist

Title IX and Sexual Violence on US Campuses



In the United States, approximately one in five women experiences rape during college, and LGBTQ students experience sexual violence at even higher rates. An increasing number of interested parties, from activists and students to legislators and university administrators, are re-evaluating the role that universities and colleges play in the incidence of sexual violence on their campuses. To this end, the number of U.S. universities under investigation for mishandling sexual assaults has recently grown to the highest count to date. Many more universities, guided by federal laws such as Title IX and the Clery Act, are working to better prevent and address various forms of assault on their campuses by implementing new policies, reporting procedures, and investigative processes. Now that such measures have been implemented for several years, however, the question arises of whether these institutional changes are actually combatting the issue of campus sexual assault or whether they might in practice be reproducing that violence in other forms. In Beyond the Rapist, Kate Lockwood Harris considers this question and how the relationships among organization, communication, and violence inform how we understand the ways in which universities talk about and respond to sexual violence. Drawing upon theoretical insights from feminist new materialism, Harris explores how complex physical and symbolic components of violence are embedded in organizations and applies this thinking to the policies and practices of a university known for its Title IX processes. In doing so, she suggests that combatting the epidemic of sexual violence on college campus involves both recognizing that sexual violence is part of larger systems of injustice and refining our definition of violence to encompass far more than individual moments of physical injury.

In Beyond the Rapist, Kate Lockwood Harris demonstrates how universities and colleges fighting against sexual violence on their campuses may simply be reproducing that violence in other forms. She uses feminist new materialist theory to analyze how a particular college deals with rape and other sexual assaults while complying with federal laws. Ultimately, she shows why universities should broaden their concern beyond individual perpetrators to organizational processes.

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