

*Companion Reader on*  
**VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
WOMEN**



EDITORS

Claire M. Renzetti

Jeffrey L. Edleson

Raquel Kennedy Bergen



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EDITORS

Claire M. Renzetti

*University of Kentucky*

Jeffrey L. Edleson

*University of Minnesota*

Raquel Kennedy Bergen

*Saint Joseph's University*



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi  
Singapore | Washington DC



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi  
Singapore | Washington DC

FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.  
2455 Teller Road  
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E-mail: [order@sagepub.com](mailto:order@sagepub.com)

SAGE Publications Ltd.  
1 Oliver's Yard  
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United Kingdom

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# Introduction

*Claire M. Renzetti, Jeffrey L. Edleson, & Raquel Kennedy Bergen*

**T**he second edition of the *Sourcebook on Violence Against Women* is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the major concepts, theories, and methodologies in this ever-growing field, along with a discussion of some of the controversies and challenges confronting violence against women researchers and practitioners and the cutting-edge work being undertaken to address them. As we note in the Preface to that volume, however, given the vast amount of work that has been done and that is currently under way, it is impossible to cover all the topics from all competing perspectives and still keep the book manageable in size. In offering this companion reader, we hope to address some of the issues that are not included in the *Sourcebook*. Indeed, one of our goals here is to draw on the expansive literature in the violence against women field published by Sage Publications in recent years, to expose students, researchers, practitioners, and instructors to research on issues and problems not often covered in standard textbooks and which we could not include, for various reasons, in the *Sourcebook*, or which were covered in only a cursory way. In this volume, readers will find, for example, articles on same-sex intimate partner violence (McClennen) and services for LGBT victims of sexual violence (Todahl et al.), human trafficking (Logan, Walker, & Hunt), international parental child abductions in which domestic violence is a central factor (Shetty & Edleson), wartime violence against women (Borer), and violence against women during natural disasters (Fisher).

Many of these articles also encompass our second goal in compiling this reader: to draw further attention to the global dimensions of violence against women and the importance of taking into account political, economic, and cultural differences across diverse groups of people, especially those who are marginalized in some way. Consequently, readers will find articles based on research conducted in Asia (Andersson et al.; Fisher; Rani & Bonu), South Africa (Borer), and Latin America (Cole & Phillips). As well, several articles look at the impact of intersecting inequalities such as race/ethnicity (Ferraro) and poverty (Goodman et al.), while others focus on such marginalized groups as immigrant women (Erez, Adelman, & Gregory), incarcerated women (McDaniels-Wilson & Belknap), and street-level sex workers (Dalla, Xia, & Kennedy).

The *Sourcebook* gives a broad overview of research and programming in the field of violence against women, but we also wanted to provide more specific applications of some of the concepts and ideas presented in those chapters. In this volume, for example, Campbell, Dworkin, and Cabral apply the ecological model, discussed in Chapter 1 of the *Sourcebook*, to the study of sexual assault. Adams and her colleagues discuss the development of a measure of one type of intimate partner violence, economic abuse. Andersson et al. demonstrate how to collect reliable data on a highly sensitive topic from a population not used to participating in research, while simultaneously ensuring both the research participants' and the researchers' safety. And Bloom et al. illustrate the mutual benefits that accrue when researchers and practitioners engage in partnerships and collaborations.

In short, the 21 articles included in this reader are designed as companion pieces to the chapters in the second edition of the *Sourcebook*. But the volume may also be used as a stand-alone text by those who are researching specific topics, conducting trainings—for instance, on diversity issues—or teaching advanced courses (e.g., international social work) that require a more concentrated focus on particular topics and less breadth than the *Sourcebook* provides. In any case, we hope that this book advances knowledge about the many facets of violence against women and serves as inspiration to those working in the field or contemplating such work, as they undertake research, study, or practice.

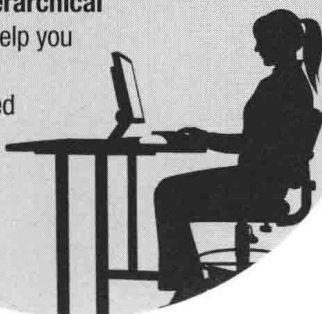
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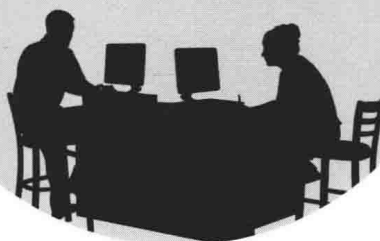
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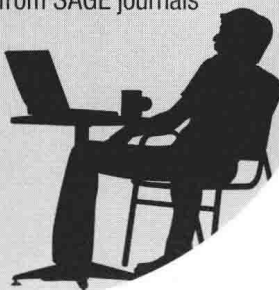


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## **PART I**

# **Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Researching Violence Against Women**



## CHAPTER 1

# An Ecological Model of the Impact of Sexual Assault on Women's Mental Health

*Rebecca Campbell, Emily Dworkin, and Giannina Cabral*

**T**he impact of sexual assault on women's mental health has been extensively studied and has been the subject of multiple prior reviews (Briere & Jordan, 2004; Chivers-Wilson, 2006; Ellis, 1983; Goodman, Koss, & Russo, 1993; Koss, 1993; Koss, Bailey, Yuan, Herrera, & Lichter, 2003; Koss et al., 1994; Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003; Kilpatrick, Amstadter, Resnick, & Ruggiero, 2007; Resick, 1993; Rogers & Gruener, 1997). The reviews from the early 1990s are remarkably consistent with more recent syntheses of the literature: rape is one of the most severe of all traumas, causing multiple, long-term negative outcomes. Between 17% and 65% of women with a lifetime history of sexual assault develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Clum, Calhoun, & Kimerling, 2000; Kilpatrick et al., 1989; Kilpatrick & Resnick, 1993; Kilpatrick, Saunders, Veronen, Best, & Von, 1987; Rothbaum, Foa, Riggs, Murdock, & Walsh, 1992). Many

(13%–51%) meet diagnostic criteria for depression (Acierno et al., 2002; Becker, Skinner, Abel, Axelrod, & Treacy, 1984; Burnam et al., 1988; Clum et al., 2000; Dickinson, deGruy, Dickinson, & Candib, 1999; Frank & Anderson, 1987; Golding, 1996; Kilpatrick et al., 1987; Winfield, George, Swartz, & Blazer, 1990). Most sexual assault victims develop fear and/or anxiety (73%–82%; Frank & Anderson, 1987; Ullman & Siegel, 1993), and 12% to 40% experience generalized anxiety (Siegel, Golding, Stein, Burnam, & Sorenson, 1990; Winfield et al., 1990). Approximately 13% to 49% of survivors become dependent on alcohol, whereas 28% to 61% may use other illicit substances (Frank & Anderson, 1987; Ullman, 2007; Ullman & Brecklin, 2002a). It is not uncommon for victims to experience suicidal ideation (23%–44%; Frank & Stewart, 1984; Frank, Turner, Stewart, Jacob, & West, 1981; Kilpatrick et al., 1985; Petrak, Doyle,

Williams, Buchan, & Forster, 1997), and 2% to 19% may attempt suicide (Davidson, Hughes, George, & Blazer, 1996; Frank et al., 1981; Kilpatrick et al., 1985).

### KEY POINTS OF THE RESEARCH REVIEW

- The negative mental health sequelae of sexual assault stems from multiple factors, not just characteristics of the victim. Aspects of the assault itself, postassault disclosures and help seeking, and socio-cultural norms help shape the way in which this trauma affects women's psychological well-being.
- Women's victimization is cumulative, and the response from the social world is cumulative, both of which affect how any one incident of sexual violence will affect women's mental health.
- Self-blame has been studied from both individual-level and extra-individual perspectives, and we conceptualize it as a meta-construct that develops from and is shaped by multiple levels in the ecological system.

Though there is little disagreement that sexual assault is highly detrimental to women's mental health, how to conceptualize that harm has been the subject of debate. A trauma response theoretical model has been proposed as a useful conceptual framework for guiding research and intervention (Goodman et al., 1993; Herman, 1992), though concerns have been raised that the clinical diagnosis of PTSD risks pathologizing victims (Berg, 2002; Gilfus, 1999) as well as perpetuating ethnocultural biases (Marsella, Friedman, & Spain, 1999; Wasco, 2003). Framing the impact of sexual assault solely within a PTSD framework would indeed be limiting, and hence, violence

against women scholars have advocated for ecologically informed trauma models of rape recovery (Koss & Harvey, 1991; Neville & Heppner, 1999). Sexual assault does not occur in social and cultural isolation: we live in a rape-prone culture that propagates messages that victims are to blame for the assault, that they caused it and, indeed, deserve it (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993; Burt, 1998; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Sandy, 1998). Victims are faced with negotiating postassault help seeking and, ultimately, their pathway to recovery within multiple hostile environments. If survivors turn to their family and friends for social support, how will they react, as they, too, have been inundated with these cultural messages? If victims turn to formal systems, such as the legal, medical, and mental health systems, they may face disbelief, blame, and refusals of help instead of assistance. The trauma of rape extends far beyond the actual assault, and society's response to this crime can also affect women's well-being.

The purpose of this review is to examine the psychological impact of adult sexual assault through an ecological theoretical perspective to understand how factors at multiple levels of the social ecology contribute to the deleterious mental health effects that have been so consistently reported in the literature. The utility of an ecological framework is that it can suggest multiple strategies, at multiple levels of analysis, for alleviating the psychological harm caused by sexual assault. We will begin with a brief discussion of the different ecological theories that have been utilized in violence against women research. Since Koss and Harvey (1991) and Neville and Heppner (1999) first called for more ecologically informed research on psychological sequelae and recovery, numerous studies have been conducted on the relationships between extraindividual level factors and mental health outcomes. Our review will synthesize this developing literature to identify positive, negative, and still inconclusive findings regarding the relationships between individual, assault, and ecological factors and survivors' psychological distress.

## Ecological Theories in Violence Against Women Research

There are multiple ecological theories evolving in the social sciences, and it is beyond the scope of this article to explore each one (see McLaren & Hawe, 2005 for a review). In violence against women scholarship, two specific approaches have been drawn on to inform research, prevention, and treatment. First, from community psychology, Kelly's (1966, 1968, 1971) ecological theory posits that the functions of individuals and community organizations are interdependent and that individuals have differential patterns of experiences given different ecological settings. Ecological settings consist of person constructs, which are individual characteristics such as race/ethnicity, gender, and beliefs and attitudes; events, which refer to the specific problem(s) that prompts an individual to need assistance and/or seek help and instigates a community help-system network to respond; and environments, which include structural features of a community (e.g., resources), functional features (e.g., service delivery processes), as well as the attitudes and values of the community as a whole (Kelly, Ryan, Altman, & Stelzner, 2000). Koss and Harvey (1991) and Harvey (1996) adapted these ideas to propose an ecological model of rape recovery, and Campbell and colleagues have used this model in empirical research to evaluate how the legal, medical, and mental health systems respond to victims' needs and how those system experiences affect victims' psychological, physical, and sexual health outcomes (Campbell, 1998; Campbell et al., 1999; Campbell et al., 2001; Campbell, Sefl, & Ahrens, 2004).

Second, from developmental psychology, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 1995) ecological theory of human development has similar conceptual foundations in its premise that human development occurs through constantly evolving interactions between individuals and their multiple, interconnected environmental contexts. Bronfenbrenner's model subdivides environmental influences into multiple levels reflecting

the relative size, immediacy of interaction, and degree of formality/informality of the environmental setting. The individual level comprises bio-psycho-social characteristics of the person; the microsystem focuses on direct interpersonal interactions between individuals and members of their immediate environment such as families, friends, and peers; the mesosystem reflects interconnections and linkages between individuals and between individuals and systems; the exosystem includes organizations and social systems (e.g., legal, medical, and mental health); the macrosystem includes societal norms, expectations, and beliefs that form the broader social environment; and the chronosystem encompasses the changes that occur over time between persons and their multiple environments. Bronfenbrenner's conceptualization shaped the theoretical models created by Heise (1998) and White and Kowalski (1998) to explain the underlying causes of violence against women and risk factors for perpetration. Similarly, Grauerholz's (2000) model of sexual revictimization examines how personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors contribute to child sexual abuse survivors' increased risk for subsequent sexual victimization later in life. Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; 2004) and the World Health Organization (WHO; Jewkes, Sen, & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002) have adapted this approach to develop multilevel models for the prevention of gender-based violence.

As noted previously, Neville and Heppner (1999) also extended Bronfenbrenner's model to explain how sexual assault affects women's well-being and recovery processes, which they termed CIEMSAR: culturally inclusive ecological model of sexual assault recovery. The fundamental premise of their model is that sexual assault survivors' mental health is shaped by many factors, not just the assault itself or preexisting individual characteristics. With each disclosure and interaction with the social world, victims are given explicit and implicit messages about how they are to make sense of this crime and

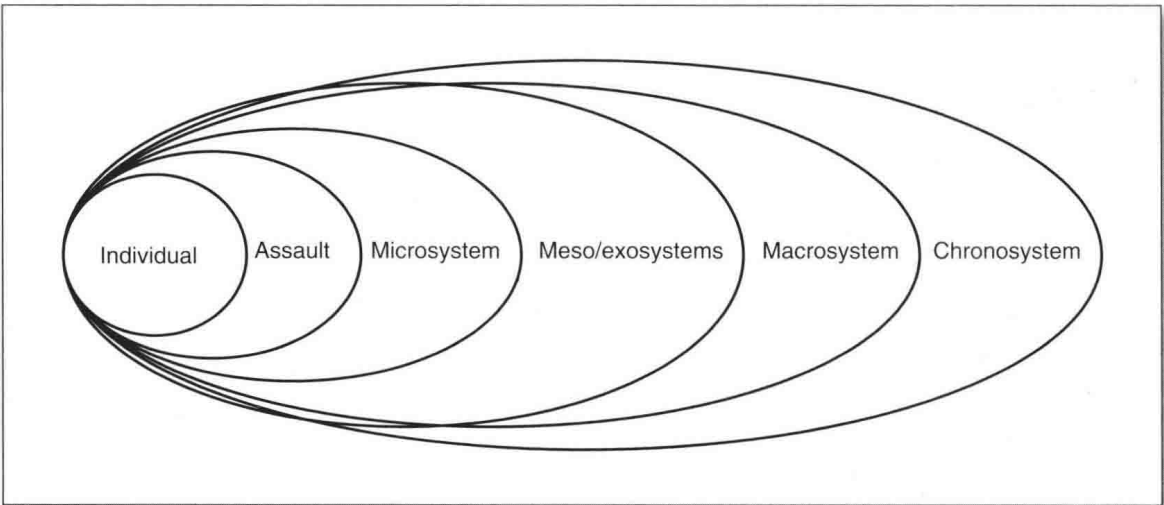
apportion blame. We, too, have chosen to adapt Bronfenbrenner’s model. To set the stage for our empirical review, we will describe Neville and Heppner’s model in detail, highlighting similarities and differences to the model we developed from our analysis of the literature (Figure 1.1).

First, at the individual level of analysis, characteristics of the victim could certainly influence the recovery process. Neville and Heppner’s (1999) model examined age, race/ethnicity, and social class as sociodemographic correlates of postassault psychological distress; to that base, our model includes additional demographic features recently examined in the literature such as education, marital status, employment status, and income. Neville and Heppner noted race/ethnicity can be conceptualized at multiple levels of the social ecology, but that most research on postassault sequelae has not conceptualized race/ethnicity from a sociocultural perspective. In other words, racial differences have been examined without a full exploration of cultural identity. We concur with this analysis and followed the convention established by Neville and Heppner to discuss race/ethnicity at both the individual level of analysis and the macrolevel of

analysis, depending on the way in which this construct was conceptualized in the particular study. Also at the individual level, our model considers the role of personality characteristics, preexisting mental health conditions, and biological/genetic factors in victims’ postassault distress, which were not examined in Neville and Heppner’s model. Finally, victims’ coping processes are also influential in recovery, although it is unclear at which level of analysis this construct best fits (e.g., coping by mobilizing social support reflects an interaction of individual and microsystem processes). We follow Neville and Heppner’s precedent and place this construct at the individual level, as it reflects the choices and propensities of the survivors, but explore it “last” in the individual processes as a way of symbolizing its interconnections to the higher levels in the model (i.e., microsystems).

Second, characteristics of the assault itself affect women’s psychological well-being. Neville and Heppner (1999) examined how the victim-offender relationship and the severity of injury differentially affect victims’ distress. In addition to those factors, our model explores the roles of threats to kill the victim, weapon use, assault

**Figure 1.1**    An Ecological Model of the Impact of Sexual Assault on Women’s Mental Health





force or violence, and substance use at the time of the assault in relation to victims' postassault psychological sequelae, which has been a growing area of inquiry in recent years.

Third, at the microsystem level, our model explores the impact of disclosures to informal sources of support (e.g., family and friends) on victims' postassault psychological distress. Neville and Heppner (1999) conceptualized social support as the mesosystem level, but we have elected to reframe this construct as a microsystem process (when that support is specifically from family, friends, or peers). Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the microsystem as the face-to-face interactions and interrelations between individuals and others in their immediate setting; because the provision of (or denial of) social support occurs through direct interactions with family, friends, or peers, we conceptualized this as a microsystem process. Since Neville and Heppner's model was developed, research on social support has flourished, and we can now refine the model in light of this new empirical knowledge base.

Fourth, although Bronfenbrenner's original model separates mesosystems (i.e., processes that contribute to linkages between systems and/or other individuals in the ecological environment) from exosystems (i.e., formal systems with which individuals may or may not have contact), our analysis of the extant literature on postassault sequelae suggests that empirically based distinctions between these levels are not yet warranted, which is consistent with Neville and Heppner's (1999) model. For example, victims may seek assistance from a rape crisis center (RCC), which could be conceptualized as a formal help resource (i.e., exosystem) and in the process of helping the survivors, RCC staff may help establish connections with other formal systems (such as the legal or medical systems) and/or work with survivors to help them access more informal supports in their lives (i.e., mesosystems). Therefore, we distinguish our combined meso/exosystem level from the prior microsystem level by whether the interactions take place between informal

supports (microsystem) versus formalized supports (meso/exosystem).

Fifth, as noted previously, race/ethnicity can be conceptualized at the macrolevel of analysis when explored from a sociocultural perspective to understand the cultural identity and its role in rape recovery. Victims' postassault distress is also influenced by the rape-prone culture in which we live, which remains highly acceptant of rape myths and stereotypes that women are to blame for their own victimization (Roze & Koss, 2001).

Sixth, the chronosystem was not included in Neville and Heppner's (1999) original model, but we have incorporated it to reflect Bronfenbrenner's idea that person-environment interactions are reciprocal and change over time. There are normative transitional events (e.g., school changes) and nonnormative events (e.g., sexual assault) that shape how individuals interact with their environments and how their environments respond to them. The chronosystem examines the cumulative effects of multiple sequences of developmental transitions over the life course. Therefore, a history of sexual assault and other victimizations across the lifespan would influence the recovery process at each victimization (if more than one is experienced). Neville and Heppner conceptualized sexual revictimization as an individual-level variable, but we view it as an historical lifespan factor that shapes how other levels in the model affect a recent victimization.

Finally, Neville and Heppner (1999) conceptualized self-blame as a macrolevel phenomenon, informed by Ward's (1995) analysis that women internalize societal rape myths, which leads to negative self-appraisals. We concur that societal rape myths contribute to internalized self-blame, but since the development of Neville and Heppner's original model, multiple empirical studies have established that survivors encounter a great deal of victim blaming in their interactions with both formal and informal systems (e.g., Filipas & Ullman, 2006). In addition, some victims, particularly racial/ethnic minorities, are more likely to be subjected to victim-blaming