

Chapter 13

Male Violence Against Girls and Women

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Chapter Summary

Anita wants to take a class at a local community college but it's scheduled at night in a neighborhood with which she is unfamiliar and which would require a long bus ride. She calls her friends to see if she can recruit someone to take the class with her, but no one is both available and interested. She decides to take something different (based on Riger & Gordon, 1981).

Barbara was on the subway the other day and a man kept making insulting remarks to her, calling her a snobbish Black slut. He didn't touch her, but Barbara left the train feeling sick, fearful, and disgusted (adapted from Kelly & Radford, 1996, p. 24).

Mary was a first year science major at a large university. She took a student assistant position in a science department to support herself financially. One of her professors began stopping by her desk, leaning over and touching her breasts "accidentally" while talking about her course work. Fearing for her grade and her job, she remained silent. At the end of the semester she filed a letter of complaint and quietly left school (Quina & Carlson, 1989, p. 8).

Irene recalled, "While I was a little girl of nine, my mom went into the hospital, and it became up to me to run the household. My father drank for the two weeks Mom was away. During this time, my father first began to sexually abuse me. He told me that if I did Mom's work, I had to sleep in her place. This continued until I finally left the house at age eighteen. I tried several times to tell my mom but she never believed me" (Quina & Carlson, 1989, p. 6).

Carol was seventeen and a virgin. She had dated Andrew for two years when he was drafted into military service. The night before he left, she visited his home. Although she didn't normally drink, he persuaded her to share a "toast." Soon she felt dizzy and had to lie down. With his sister and mother in another part of the house, Andrew raped her (Quina & Carlson, 1989, p. 4).

Elaine married a man she had dated for 7 months. He had been rough physically on occasion before they were married, but now he seemed more aggressive. One night, he hid in the house when she came home from work and viciously attacked her. He held a gun while he raped her, saying he "performed better." The next day he was gentle and sweet. This assault was to be repeated every few months until Elaine left him (Quina & Carlson, 1989, p. 4).

A man fired eight bullets at two women backpacking on the Appalachian Trail in south central Pennsylvania in 1988. The lone survivor describes the murderer: "He shot from where he was hidden in the woods 85 feet away, after he stalked us, hunted us, spied on us. . . He shot us because he identified us as lesbians. He was a stranger with whom we had no connection. He shot us and left us for dead" (Brenner, 1992, p. 12).

On December 6, 1989, a 25-year-old man carrying a hunting rifle burst into an engineering school at the University of Montreal. In some classes, he forced women to line up against one wall; men against another. He clearly expressed his intent to kill feminists. He left a three-page statement blaming feminists for his problems and targeting 15 women, none of whom he found at the school. In the end, he left 14 women dead before he killed himself (Stato, 1993).

Each of the examples above can be subsumed under the working definition of male violence against women used by a task force formed by the American Psychological Association in 1991: “physical, visual, verbal, or sexual acts that are experienced by a woman or girl as a threat, invasion, or assault and that have the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or taking away her ability to control contact (intimate and otherwise) with another individual” (Koss, Goodman et al., 1994). Each involves increasing physical harm, ranging from restricted activity for Anita because of fear of violence to the outright murder of women for being lesbian and/or women. In between, we find women victimized by other forms of abuse: Barbara by sexist and racist verbal abuse; Mary by sexual harassment at school and work; Irene by childhood sexual abuse; Carol by acquaintance rape; and Elaine by intimate partner abuse and rape.

Although each experience is unique to the woman who undergoes it, each type of violence against women is linked by common threads that weave a broader tapestry of violence and its consequences for all women. Thus, violence is not a singular experience; rather, it connects all women through their universal vulnerability (Griffin, 1971). This theme of *interconnections*—among these different forms of violence, among women as targets and potential targets of violence, and between violence and societal-wide male dominance over women—will be echoed throughout this chapter.

We will examine four forms of male violence against women: sexual harassment, rape, male intimate partner abuse, and childhood sexual abuse.¹ We shall see that these are linked by four general themes: (1) problems with defining and talking about male violence against women; (2) debates about incidence and prevalence; (3) invisibility resulting in claims of invalidation; and (4) serious physical and psychological consequences, not only for victims themselves but for women in general.

By limiting our focus to male violence against women, I do not invalidate violence directed at men or perpetrated by women. However, violence by women against men or women in general is not sustained by societal power differences (White & Kowalski, 1998); indeed, college students regard male-on-female violence as the most frightening form (Hamby & Jackson, 2010). What happens to individual men does not seep over into men’s awareness; it doesn’t create general fears of violence and thus restrict their behaviors. Many more women can relate to Anita’s experience at the start of this chapter than can men. As for men’s victimization of other men, both the targeting of vulnerable men (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004) and use of de-masculinizing tactics (Pino & Meier, 1999) highlight the connection between the power and gender themes we’ll emphasize here. All of this directly links such violence with misogyny (woman-hating) as well as homophobia.

DEFINING AND TALKING ABOUT VIOLENCE

All forms of male violence against women share some definitional ambiguities that blur the cutoff between acceptable and abusive behaviors. These ambiguities carry over into discussions of how often violence occurs because, without consensus about what constitutes each form of violence, measurement gets bogged down in a quagmire of competing defini-

¹A more comprehensive, global perspective might include bride burnings, genital mutilation, forced prostitution and trafficking, skewed birth patterns resulting from aborted female fetuses and infanticide, forced sterilization, rape in war, and so on (United Nations Population Fund, 2000). For example, there would be over 60 million more women in the world if demographic trends in birth rates were followed without intervention.

tions. Sexual harassment, rape, and male intimate partner violence provide good examples of this process. For all, psychologists' thinking has shifted from an initial emphasis on measuring behavioral indicators to looking at how each is *experienced* by those involved.

Definitions of Violence as Experienced

Sexual harassment is a violation of Sec. 703 of Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2011a), sexual harassment can include unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature when submission is made, implicitly or explicitly, a condition of employment; when submission or rejection affects employment decisions; and when such conduct interferes unreasonably with work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. It does not have to be sexual in nature, extending to offensive comments made about a person's sex.

This legal definition sets up two distinct types of **sexual harassment**: **quid pro quo**, which is characterized by the dominant power position occupied by the perpetrator who can reward or punish the target, and **hostile work environment**, which involves unwanted behavior that creates a chilling work or educational climate. The most commonly used survey measure of exposure to sexually harassing behaviors is the *Sexual Experiences Questionnaire* (SEQ) developed by Louise Fitzgerald and her colleagues (1988; 1995). The SEQ documents *sexual coercion* (being treated badly by a coworker or supervisor for refusing sexual advances, paralleling quid pro quo harassment), *unwanted sexual attention* (staring and leering), and **gender harassment** (offensive sexual and sexist remarks). Gender harassment can take on qualitatively unique forms for African American women that draw on racial stereotyping and racially specific physical features (Mecca & Rubin, 1999) and can combine with racial harassment (Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2008).

Definitions of rape have changed over time (Hengehold, 2000). The traditional common-law definition of rape is: "carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will" (cited in Koss, Goodman et al., 1994, p. 159). The definition of **rape** used by the APA Task Force on Male Violence Against Women is: "nonconsensual oral, anal, or vaginal penetration, obtained by force, by threat of bodily harm, or when the victim is incapable of giving consent" (Koss, 1993). All definitions include some notion that the sexual acts are nonconsensual (Muehlenhard et al., 1992).

Finally, measures of male intimate partner violence (IPV) often simply count up incidents. Counting behaviors alone draws our attention to events (not people) ignores their meaning to the victim and perpetrator, and takes them out of the **social context** in which they occurred (Smith et al., 1999). In contrast, by bringing the people involved into consideration, by understanding the fundamental role of gendered relations, and by viewing battering as a repeated cycle, measurement moves away from behavior to look at both how battering is *experienced* and the *gendered context* in which it occurs. To understand male IPV, then, we must understand how it is lived in the everyday lives of everyday people.

Perceptions of Violence

The inclusion of "unwanted" and "nonconsensual" elements in all conceptualizations of violence also moves our discussion beyond behaviors themselves. This takes us into the

realm of *perceptions* asking questions about (1) the criteria for establishing nonconsent, (2) the relationship of the victim to the assailant, and (3) who decides whether or not sexual assault has occurred (Muehlenhard et al., 1992).

Regarding criteria for establishing consent in sexual relations, college students generally supported a definition that assumes “yes” until “no” is stated and that when nonconsent is verbalized, “no” means “no,” not “maybe” (Gross et al., 1998; Livingston et al., 2004). Women generally prefer a more cautious approach to establishing consent; yet some college students continue to assume consent as the default (Humphreys & Herold, 2007); and some men appear insensitive to verbal and nonverbal cues of nonconsent that are not clear (as opposed to actually saying “no”) and forceful (O’Byrne et al., 2006). Other factors can render consent questionable (intoxication), meaningless (consent given under duress), or impossible (a drugged victim).² The meaning of consent becomes even more blurred by findings that women who fear that their partner will lose interest in them are most willing to consent to unwanted sexual behaviors (Impett & Peplau, 2002).

Turning to the relationship between victim and perpetrator, since 1976 (when marital rape was expressly exempted from some legal definitions of rape), every U.S. state has made marital rape illegal (Wellesley Centers for Women, 1998). Still, some college students persist in believing that the same offense committed by a husband is less troubling than by a stranger (Simonson & Subich, 1999). Acknowledgement of rape can become clouded when the perpetrator is an intimate or even an acquaintance of the victim.

The third point focuses on who decides whether or not sexual harassment or rape has occurred. Fears of false reporting fuel arguments against relying on victims’ claims alone; however, objective evidence concludes that false accusations are relatively rare,³ especially when compared to much higher levels of legitimate under-reporting. How others respond also makes a difference; when people are exposed to negative reactions toward a rape victim by others, they too make less supportive judgments (Brown & Testa, 2008). Additionally, what happens when the views of victims and perpetrators conflict? Let’s explore how psychologists have addressed each of these three still unresolved issues.

Victims know. As surprising as it may seem on first blush, sometimes victims of violence fail to acknowledge their victimization. Some women check off behavioral indicators of sexual harassment but deny having ever been harassed (Saunders, 1992, cited in Koss, Goodman et al., 1994). Because some battered women don’t feel helpless, or they hit back, or they are ambivalent about their lover and their relationship, they don’t fit their own stereotyping about IPV. Although these women might even admit to being physically harmed, some still won’t label themselves as “battered women” (Fine, 1993).

²The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) describes three “club drugs” that are reportedly being used in sexual assault incidents: rohypnol, ketamine, and gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB). All are central nervous system depressants that have a sedative effect, including amnesia, muscle relaxation, and slowing of psychomotor performance. Because they are virtually colorless, tasteless, and odorless, they can be slipped into the target’s beverage. Some universities are warning students not to drink from open beverages, and this is a reasonable self-protective strategy to heed. For more information, contact your local Women’s Center or try NIDA at <http://www.nida.nih.gov/> (Retrieved October 2011).

³David Lisak and his colleagues (2010), combining their data across a 10-year period with findings from other studies, conclude that false allegations of sexual assault fall between 2-10% of reported cases. These fears may be fueled by the media; for example, the more women watched TV, the more likely they were to believe that rape allegations were false (Kahlor & Morrison, 2007).

It is not uncommon for victims of rape by known assailants not to name their experiences as rape (Warshaw, 1994). Stereotyping of rape includes images of strangers using excessive aggression and force—features that often do not characterize acquaintance rape (Parrot & Bechhofer, 1991). Still these atypical rape scripts continue to be generated by college women (Clark & Carroll, 2008) and other women (Littleton et al., 2007), and they affect their willingness to report a rape (Turchik et al., 2009). In one sample of college students, for example, fully 43% of women who met the behavioral criteria for rape did not label their own experience as such (Koss, 1985). In a vignette study describing physical resistance and intercourse, fully 47% of college students did not label the date's aggressive behavior as rape (Hannon et al., 1996). In a survey with over 3,000 employed women, rates of unacknowledged rape or attempted rape ran as high as 59% of the cases meeting these definitions (Koss et al., 1996).

Comparing acknowledged and unacknowledged rape victims, no differences were found in dating behaviors, different aspects of their rape experience, victims' personality, attitudes about rape (Koss, 1985), resistance strategies (Levine-MacCombie & Koss, 1986), or recovery (McMullin & White, 2006). The key difference is that unacknowledged rape victims were more likely to possess more violent, stranger-perpetrated, "blitz" rape scripts (Kahn et al., 1994) that emphasized extreme force (Bondurant, 2001). They also were more likely to accept rape myths that unless women fight back it isn't rape, and they have restricted definitions of what constitutes "sex" (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Given this stereotyping, it is not surprising that unacknowledged rape victims were younger than women who named their experiences as rape, knew their assailant better, reported less force, and had weaker emotional reactions (Kahn et al., 2003). All this points to the power of rape stereotyping in framing even victims' own perceptions of rape. Extending this logic to marital rape, attitudes about sexuality in marriage that stress husbands' sexual rights and domination compromise women's acknowledgment of marital rape (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991).

Victim-perpetrator discrepancies. Generally there is consensus among women and men about harassment that involves severe behaviors and is perpetrated by an authority with power over the victim (*quid pro quo* harassment) (Gutek & O'Connor, 1995), and penalties here tend to be harsh (Wayne, 2000). However, definitional ambiguities arise in the murky area of hostile work environment harassment and with milder behaviors. There are **intragroup differences** among women and among men regarding how they evaluate specific incidents. For example, sexist attitudes predict less sensitivity to "seeing" both sexual harassment (Ohse & Stockdale, 2008) and childhood sexual abuse (Cromer & Freyd, 2007), and college-aged samples are less likely to "see" sexual harassment than are older-aged samples (Ohse & Stockdale, 2008).

Turning to **intergroup differences** between women and men, men overall tend to hold a narrower definition of what constitutes bona fide harassment (Burian, et al., 1998; Rotundo et al., 2001) and may even regard some mild forms of harassment (e.g., offensive email) as somewhat enjoyable (Khoo & Senn, 2004). Women are more likely to attend to power relations between a target and perpetrator in contrast to men, who focus on the sexual aspects of interchanges (Perry et al., 1998).

Barbara Gutek and Maureen O'Connor (1995) describe three conditions that reduce agreement among observers. First, the gender composition of one's work group matters. In male-dominated occupations where the harassment of women is more commonplace, women and men are similarly sensitive to harassment; but women in female-dominated

occupations are more likely to label an (unexpected) event as harassing than their male co-workers are (Maeder et al., 2007). Second, the *perceived* complicity of the victim decreases consensus. Third, when evaluators aren't **primed** to think about harassment, more disagreement between women and men arises.

All these conditions point to contextual cues that make people more or less sensitive to the possibility of harassment (Fiske & Glick, 1995). Although these contextual cues are likely to distinguish women's from men's perceptions, they certainly do not need to do so. If men are sensitized to what women consider harassing, these contextually created differences could well disappear. Indeed, an educational intervention designed to sensitize participants to incidents of sexual harassment evened out initial gender differences (Bonate & Jessell, 1996), and workers become less skeptical about claims of harassment when they were encouraged to empathetically take the complainant's point of view (Wiener & Hurt, 2000).

The line between sexual seduction and date rape readily blurs around what constitutes women's sexual interest and men's coercion (see Box 13.1). Generally, men perceive more sexual intent in others than do women (Abbey, 1991), and individual men who reported engaging in sexually aggressive behavior misperceived women's sexual intent more than other men (Bondurant & Donat, 1999). These ambiguities often are used by convicted rapists to justify their actions (Lea & Auburn, 2001). Although Box 13.1 does suggest that the difference between seduction and rape can be vague, it also identifies areas in which the difference is clear (using violent tactics). Indeed, in 40 scenarios of coercive sexuality described by college women and men, no gender differences in their perceptions emerged (McCaw & Senn, 1998). Thus, miscommunication is not as valid a rationale for perpetrating violence as some assailants might like us to believe.

Box 13. 1

Heather Littleton and Danny Axsom (2003) asked 42 women and 8 men college students to "write a description of what happens before, during, and after a typical rape (or seduction)." Below are examples of the separate rape scripts (left) and seduction scripts (right) they described. Systematically content analyzing and comparing these scripts, they differed in that in rape scripts the man more often felt powerful and in control as well as used violent tactics, and the woman felt negative emotions and resisted. However, they also shared some chilling commonalties: in both, men used manipulative and coercive tactics (complimenting, stalking, and persuading) and women displayed behaviors suggesting sexual interest (e.g., going on a date, dressing provocatively, flirting, and consensual kissing/petting). The line between seduction and rape blurs.

Rape

The man would probably pick out a female who is either drunk or drinking. Their victim is probably someone they think is vulnerable.... The man would end up coaxing the girl away from the crowd. During the rape, the rapist is feeling control and sexual pleasure as he rapes his victim. Eventually, she will give up hope and just let it happen without fighting back. She is probably tied up or held by her attacker with ripped or torn clothing.

Seduction

A person who is going to seduce someone also knows that the other person is vulnerable and lonely.... You try to say "no" but the person persists and keeps giving you a disappointed look and keeps saying how beautiful you are.... You finally give in even though you feel really uncomfortable.... The more you try to say no to his requests, you can't seem to say no to him, ending up doing things you don't want to do.

Naming Violence

Without the right words to describe what has happened, victims can be left without a way to talk, or even think, about their victimization, and research is compromised by lack of conceptual clarity (Cook & Parrott, 2009). The terms “battered woman,” “sexual harassment,” “marital rape,” and “date rape” were all coined in the past 30 or so years to help women label their experiences (McHugh et al., 1993).

Of key concern to feminists working in this area is how to think about women who are targeted for violence (Koss, Goodman et al., 1994). The term “victim” rightfully places responsibility for violence on the perpetrator and captures the severity of the violence that has occurred. However, it also implies that the recipient is passive and irreparably damaged by the violation. The term “survivor” overcomes the latter problem, but implies that the violence has passed, ignoring the repetition of violence in some women’s lives (e.g., women who are chronically terrorized by their partners) and the long-term consequences of violence. Furthermore, people survive acts of nature as well as acts of violence, but only violent acts are purposively perpetrated. First, I acknowledge these shortcomings with the terminology. Second, in terms of women’s coping with violence, self-labeling that moves from victim to survivor may be an important step toward recovery (Quina & Carlson, 1989). I will keep this second point in mind throughout the present chapter in my use of these terms.

How we talk about the physical abuse of women by male intimates offers a case in point. Overall, two different approaches to male IPV have dominated this literature (Kurz, 1989): the family violence perspective offered by Murray Straus, Richard Gelles, and Suzanne Steinmetz (1980) and a feminist approach (for example, see Stanko, 1985; Yllö & Bograd, 1988; L.E.A. Walker, 1994).

Family violence theorists consider what they call “spouse abuse” or “family violence” to be part of a general pattern involving violence among all family members. Central to their thesis are data suggesting equivalent amounts of violence committed by heterosexual partners against each other and toward their children, by children against parents, and among siblings (Straus, 1997). This approach focuses on the family as the central unit of analysis; highlights stresses faced by contemporary families; regards the family as accepting of violence as a means for solving conflict; and cites the power of men over women in the family, as well as in society at large, as a cause of violence. Furthermore, they believe that power in the family can be shared equally by women and men. In support of their proposed relationship between egalitarianism and nonviolence, they cite evidence that abuse occurs least frequently in democratic households. The policy recommendations they offer concentrate on changing societal norms that legitimate and glorify violence—a generally laudable goal.

Feminist refinements to family violence theory have challenged their basic assumptions (Berns, 2001). Central to this challenge are interpretations of data suggesting equal rates of violence by heterosexual partners (Archer, 2000). These findings largely rely on surveys of participation rates and measurement of violence using the Conflict Tactics Scale, which simply counts violent acts ranging from swearing to brandishing a gun. Given this framework, a woman who pushes is labeled as violent, just as a man who chokes. Nothing is recorded about intent to harm, amount of harm inflicted, who initiated the exchange, what was done in self-defense, and how much risk was perceived by each party (Koss, Goodman et al., 1994; Kurz, 1997; Gordon, 2000).

When these qualifiers are factored in, men engage in more severe forms of violence and are more likely to perpetrate multiple aggressive acts; in contrast, women sustain more injuries (Frieze, 2000) and often feel more threatened. Although much of women's violence (e.g., self-defense, escape, and retaliation) responds to men's physical violence and verbal abuse, some (e.g., anger expression and alcohol-induced violence) does not (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010). Still, a feminist reconceptualization of the full context of violence reframes it from a gender-neutral view to put male-female power relations front and center in our analyses, consistent with what we have done throughout this book.

This highlighting of gendered relationships raises questions about power dynamics and the use of violence as a means for establishing and maintaining control and dominance. It also questions why women are the more frequent targets of domestic abuse. This reframing moves the discourse about adult abuse by intimates from the family (where violence against women is thought of as just another example of family violence), into discussions of other forms of male violence against women. Such refocusing paves the way for inclusion of male IPV in discussions such as the present one focused on rape, sexual harassment, and other forms of social control and male dominance (Kurz, 1989).

The language we use to describe psychological, physical, and sexual abuse in intimate relationships must reflect the basic assumptions of the feminist perspective outlined above. Such a perspective dismisses gender-neutral terms such as "spousal abuse" and "family violence." An improved (but still far from satisfactory) compromise has been to use the term "wife abuse" to capture both the gendered nature of the violence and its harm. The obvious difficulty with this terminology is that it doesn't include nonmarital abuse in heterosexual cohabiting and dating relationships. This suggests the term "partner abuse." Aggression among lesbian couples is far from nonexistent; estimates as high as 40% have been offered (Bologna et al., 1987). However, lesbian relationships are free of gendered cultural differences in power that characterize the types of violence reviewed in this chapter so that violence within lesbian relationships does not produce generalized fears among women (Koss, Goodman et al., 1994).⁴ Women do not restrict their behaviors from fear of being attacked by lesbians. For all these reasons, throughout this chapter I selected the terminology most representative of the research or ideas being presented, using the term "male intimate partner violence" or male IPV.

Language also can be used to sanitize, and hence minimize, violence that is inflicted against women when it relies on the passive voice (she was beaten) or suggests shared responsibility (domestic violence) (Lamb & Koen, 1995). Such language covers up the psychological and physical harm delivered by pushing, shoving, slapping, kicking, hitting, beating, choking, stabbing, brandishing guns and knives, and so on, as well as the fact that another person is responsible for these behaviors.

Section Summary

One common thread that runs through different forms of male violence against women is definitional ambiguity—what exactly defines sexual harassment, rape, and male intimate partner violence and who decides that such abuse has occurred? Behaviors alone are insufficient to make these determinations. At an individual level, these uncertainties may

⁴For reviews of abuse in lesbian relationships, see Stahly and Lie (1995) and Renzetti (1997) as well as research (Bernhard, 2000).

interfere with women's ability to name and recover from victimization. They also may be used by perpetrators to excuse their behavior, as in "I didn't sexually harass her; can't she take a joke?" and "I didn't rape her; she liked it." A key to reducing victim-perpetrator misperceptions is to educate and sensitize men and boys about what women and girls regard as sexually threatening behavior and how they react to it. At a societal level, definitional ambiguities cloud discussions and disrupt research on male violence against women, starting with fundamental debates about how widespread each of these forms of violence is—the topic to which we next turn.

INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE

There are two measures of scope that are important not to confuse: incidence and prevalence. **Incidence** refers to the number of victimizations that occur within a given time period, typically one year. **Prevalence** captures an individual's exposure to at least one assault any time during her lifetime. Extrapolating one from the other can lead to gross mis-estimates (Muehlenhard et al., 1997).

Although we talk about different forms of male violence against women as conceptually distinct phenomena, they often overlap in women's lives. Many women who are raped also are viciously physically assaulted; beaten women may be raped by their male partners; sexually harassed women may be physically threatened, assaulted, and raped; and so on (Campbell et al., 2008). In real life, different forms of violence co-occur, succeed one another, and blend together to create a pervasive culture of male violence against women. Such *co-occurrences* thus challenge classification schema that try to sort individuals into discrete, non-overlapping categories.

Sexual Harassment

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2011b) reported that 11,717 sexual harassment cases were filed and resolved under Title VII in 2010, with fully 83.6% of these incidents being filed by women. We know that filing and experiencing are not the same, yet despite definitional challenges and variations in measures, studies with different populations of women give us some sense of the overall **prevalence** of sexual harassment. Overall, Louise Fitzgerald (1993; Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1993) estimates that *one of every two women will be subjected to some form of sexual harassment during her academic or working life*.

For example, a large-scale phone survey that asked SEQ questions about sexual harassment experiences in the workplace across the past year recorded that over 50% of women reported at least one incident of being treated differently because of her gender, of unwanted sexual attention, or of sexual coercion (Rospenda et al., 2009). Women's retrospective reports of their service in the U.S. military reserves recounted over 10 incidents of sexual harassment experiences—over 5 times the rate recalled by men (Street et al., 2007). Gender harassment extends to behaviors by clients and customers (Gettman & Gelfand, 2007) and by strangers (Wesselmann & Kely, 2010). It also expands to racial and ethnic harassment (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Raver & Niskii, 2010) and to the heterosexist harassment of sexual minorities (Silverschanz et al., 2008).

Rape and Sexual Assault

Two major sources of federal statistics on rape **incidence** are the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, which compile crimes reported to local authorities, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which conducts a nationwide household poll (Koss, 1993). The former is heavily jeopardized by the underreporting of rape, considered the most underreported crime of personal violence (Koss, Goodman et al., 1994). The latter relied on an ambiguous question about general attacks and threats to elicit reports of rape and asked questions in front of other family members, violating confidentiality (Koss, 1992). In 1992–93, NCVS changed their format and instead privately asked direct questions about rape and sexual assault, following up with questions about whether or not the assailant was known to the victim. The one-year incidence of reported rape doubled from the previous survey to 310,000 cases, fully 80% of which were committed by someone known to the victim (Schafran, 1995). In comparison, this figure for 2010 was 188,380 cases, representing a steady decline in victimizations since 2001, with 169,370 (90%) involving women victims, and of these, 73% perpetrated by a non-stranger (Truman, 2011).

Turning to **prevalence**, *estimates of rape or sexual assault among adult women typically settle around 15%* (Kolivas & Gross, 2007). One survey found that up to eight of every ten rape victims reported that the attack occurred before they were 30 years old (National Victims Center, 1992), and fully 13% of 834 college women surveyed reported being raped between the ages of 14 and 18 (Humphrey & White, cited in White et al., 2001). The prevalence of sexual assault appears to be equivalent among African American and White women (Wyatt et al., 1992) and lower among Latinas (Sorenson & Siegel, 1992). Rape is reported disproportionately by unemployed, poor, and unmarried women (Avakame, 1999).

Not surprisingly, a gap exists between women's reports of victimization and men's reports of perpetration, ranging between two-thirds to three-quarters less (Kolivas & Gross, 2007). Men are more forthcoming on anonymous self-administered scales than in interviews, which arouse social anxiety (Ouimette et al., 2000; Rubenzahl & Corcoran, 1998). Men's admission of acquaintance rape jumps substantially under disinhibiting reporting conditions (e.g., a male experimenter, exposure to a sexually explicit story, or private testing room) such that gap between perpetration and victimization rates closes. This convergence strengthens the validity of women-based estimates of prevalence.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Integrating data from a variety of prominent studies of **prevalence**, *it is estimated that between 21% and 34% of women in the United States will be physically assaulted*—slapped, kicked, beaten, choked, or threatened or attacked with a weapon—by an intimate adult partner (Browne, 1993; Coker et al., 2002; Randall & Haskell, 1995). These rates are consistent with nationwide surveys in nine other developed countries, which estimate prevalence rates of 17 to 38% (United Nations, 1995); these country-wide rates extend to over 70% at the highest extreme (Alhabib et al., 2010). The World Health Organization (reported in Alhabib et al., 2010) further estimates that 15-to-44-year-old women globally lose 5 to 20% of the healthy years of their lives to IPV. The U.S. **incidence** of IPV reported by women in 2010 was 407,700 cases, representing a rate of 3.1 women for every 1,000 women over age 12—four times the number of cases reported by male victims (101,530) (Truman, 2011).

Reviewing studies of prevalence rates by race and ethnicity, Casey Taft and her colleagues (2009) concluded that higher and more violent prevalence rates among African American women level out to levels comparable for White Americans when income is controlled. Rates of male IPV appear lower among Latina women (Sorenson & Siegel, 1992), and Christine Ho (1990) warns that low reporting rates by Asian American women may reflect cultural prohibitions against reporting rather than truly lower prevalence rates. Only anecdotal evidence is available for Native American women (Allen, 1990). Intimate abuse occurs across social classes (Sheffield, 1989), may be intensified for women with disabilities (Curry et al., 2001), and as the photo shows, has horrifying consequences.

Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA)

A meta analysis of **prevalence** rates using 65 articles and covering 22 countries concluded that women are 3 times more likely than men to have been sexually abused as children (Pereda et al., 2009). Across 19 U.S. studies, the mean prevalence rate for women was 25.3% (with 95% of estimates falling between 19.7% to 31.8%); 7.5% (5.1% to 11.1%) for men. These rates become even more stunning for sexual minorities: 76% for lesbian and bisexual women; over 59% for gay and bisexual men (Rothman et al., 2011). One survey established the median age of onset for girls (9.6 years) and boys (9.9 years), and it noted that the perpetrator was more likely to be a family member for girls and a stranger for boys (Boney-McCoy & Finkelhor, 1995). Given that CSA is reported retrospectively by adults, there are no incidence rates available.

Sexually abusive families commonly share three distinguishing features (Draucker, 1996). First, family members often are emotionally distant, limiting displays of affection. Second, these families generally are traditionally hierarchical, with fathers as the undisputed head of household, mothers subordinated to fathers, and children subordinated to both parents. Obedience and control permeate these parent-child relationships. Finally, many of these families are marked by frequent open conflict, most typically between parents.

INVISIBILITY AND INVALIDATION

These estimates become numbing, but despite attempts to dismiss them as “advocacy numbers” (Gilbert, 1997), the numbers hold (Muehlenhard et al., 1997). At a personal level, it is tempting to ask incredulously, like then-graduate student Katie Roiphe (1993, p. 52): “If 25 percent of my female friends were really being raped,⁵ wouldn’t I know it?” This asks a question about invisibility and validation—if we don’t see something, does it mean it isn’t there? It also raises concerns about **positivity bias**; that is, women’s tendency to *underestimate* their own vulnerability relative to other women (Norris et al., 1999).

We already have seen that even victims themselves may not define their experiences as sexual harassment, rape, male IPV, or CSA, although their experiences meet the criteria for defining them. In addition to having experiences that don’t fit with abuse stereotyping, women may fail to name their victimization because of concern for the perpetrator, self-

⁵This 25% figure comes from a highly publicized and well done study of 3000 college women across 32 campuses that reported that 15.4% of women experienced rape and an additional 12.1% attempted rape (Koss et al., 1987).

blame and shame, and desires not to think about the events (Parrot & Bechhofer, 1991)—processes that are reinforced by sociocultural myths. Finally, women themselves, having internalized societal disregard for their hurt, may come to minimize the severity of their own abuse (Kelly & Radford, 1996). We'll review each of these processes and use different forms of violence to highlight the general point that *invisibility does not invalidate* the prevalence and incidence estimates we just documented.

Excusing Perpetrators

Sexual harassment may be trivialized by outside observers. For example, the media adopted a boys-will-be-boys attitude toward the harassment of U.S. Navy women at the Tailhook convention until female Congressional representatives became involved (Kasinsky, 1998). Gender harassment is trivialized in television situation comedies (Montemurro, 2003) and more in collectivist cultures (Sigal et al., 2005). Male perpetrators typically are judged more harshly than are women (Cummings & Armenta, 2002); attractive (Golden et al., 2001; LaRocca & Kromrey, 1999) or wealthy (Black & Gold, 2003) perpetrators are excused more readily; and **in-group** assailants are judged less harshly (Harrison et al., 2008). Sexual harassment between Black men and Black women is minimized compared to similar behavior enacted between White men and Black women (Shelton & Chavous, 1999). At least in the military, sexual harassment is most likely to be tolerated by male soldiers who express hostility toward women, exhibit negative masculinity, and reject women as equals (Rosen & Martin, 1998). Among psychology faculty, weak ethical perceptions were related to more frequent occurrences (Rubin et al., 1997).

It is hard to imagine excusing perpetrators of the severest forms of physical and sexual abuse. However, we may be more tolerant of some forms of male IPV than others; for example, when the perpetrator is an African American husband (Locke & Richman, 1999). Additionally, both myths and researched data have focused on biological and personality characteristics of individual men who perpetrate these abuses. They paint images of men out of control and responding to their own victimization.

A long-standing myth about male perpetrators of violence against women is that these men are psychopathic. Indeed, a handful of killers are, such as Ted Bundy, who targeted attractive, middle-class women, and the less publicized serial killers who brutally murder unprotected and less socially valued women (prostitutes) (Caputi, 1993). The stereotype of disordered men originated in early studies of convicted rapists who, in reality, represent a very select and small subset of all rapists (Sorenson & White, 1992). It also was fostered by erroneous beliefs that rape is sexually motivated, rather than an expression of male dominance and control (Brownmiller, 1975). It is perpetuated by film (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000) and television (Cavender et al., 1999) depictions and remains active in some women's images of criminals (Madriz, 1997).

This stereotyping of psychopathic rapists is challenged by admissions from some men that they would rape a woman if they were assured they wouldn't be caught (studies reviewed by Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). In one of these studies (Koss et al., 1987), 69% of 371 male college students reported they would never, under any circumstances, force someone to engage in a sexual act, even if they were guaranteed to be free from reprisals. This leaves fully 31%—that's almost one of every three—to contemplate such an act with or without reprisals! Looked at more behaviorally, of the more than 2,900 men who

responded to Koss's survey of college students nationwide, 4.4% admitted to behaviors fulfilling the legal definition of rape, an additional 3.3% attempted these behaviors, 7.2% acknowledged using sexual coercion, and 10.2% admitted to forced or coerced sexual contact such as kissing and touching.

Further data suggest a great deal of heterogeneity among rapists (Prentky & Knight, 1991), with only a handful manifesting deviant arousal patterns and personality disorders (Sorenson & White, 1992). Among college students, men who heavily use alcohol (or none at all; Abbey et al., 2002), who have an athletic connection (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007), affiliate with a fraternity (Lackie & deMan, 1997; Robinson et al., 2004), and who are sexually predatory (Kanin, 1985) are more likely to engage in sexual aggression against women and endorse rape-supportive statements (Boeringer, 1999), but aggressors certainly are not limited to heavy drinkers, jocks, "frat boys," and flagrant "wolves" (just as all men are not sexually aggressive). In sum, *many rapists appear normal* (White et al., 2001).

The gap between cultural mythology and research reality about rapists undermines women's readiness to label their assailant as a rapist. Given this logic, it is no surprise that far more rapes by strangers (estimated at 21%) are reported than are the more common acquaintance rapes (2%) (Koss et al., 1988; also see Pino & Meier, 1999). Complement this pattern with the onset of abuse toward women intimates, which is most likely to begin when the couple becomes committed to each other (for 75 to 85% of abused wives, the abuse didn't start until after they were married), and women often care about the perpetrators of their victimization (Koss, Goodman et al., 1994). In an experiment where women's responses to sexual coercion in a hypothetical relationship vignette were measured, women took longer to terminate the relationship when it was described as long-term (Faulker et al., 2008). Indeed, it is greater perceived investment that distinguishes women in sexually coercive relationships from women in other relationships (Katz et al., 2006) so that shifting perceptions of a woman's partner from good to bad is an important part of being able to leave him (Enander, 2011).

Other research focuses on the victimization of abusers themselves. Extensive research finds higher rates of witnessing domestic violence or being targeted for childhood abuse among abusive men as compared to non-abusive men (Lichter & McCloskey, 2004; Whitaker et al., 2008). However, a distinction needs to be made between being socialized toward violence and excusing responsibility for perpetrating violence (Ptacek, 1988). Not all abusers were socialized toward abuse, and not all of those reared in abusive families grow up to be abusers themselves (Widom, 1989). Although male drunkenness is associated with battering by men (Hutchison, 1999), excusing perpetrators because they "lack impulse control" ignores the intended use of violence by many perpetrators as a means for controlling women's behavior (Dutton & Goodman, 2005).

Rather than regarding individual male abusers as rare, obviously pathological, and ultimately unlovable, some researchers focus on the pathology of exaggerations of the male gender role. Looking across societies, **hypermasculinity** was found to be related to higher rape rates across states (Jaffe & Straus, 1987) and across cultures (Sanday, 1981b). On an individual level, there is a growing body of evidence relating male sexual aggressiveness to exaggerations of the masculine gender role (Driscoll et al., 1998; Franchina et al., 2001; Weisbuch et al., 1999), re-asserting masculinity (Eisler et al., 2000; Messerschmidt, 2000), and the masculine ideal of control and dominance (Anderson & Umberston, 2001; Reitz, 1999).

For example, violent husbands tend to control what the couple does, whose friends they see, and what major household purchases they make (Frieze & McHugh, 1981, cited in McHugh et al., 1993). Similarly, violent dates ascribe to more traditional, controlling **dating scripts**—initiating the date, paying all expenses, driving the car (Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). Fascinating research establishes a link between masculinity and rape-related attitudes through **entitlement**—both men’s general expectation that they should have their needs met and their specific expectations about having sexual urges fulfilled (Hill & Fischer, 2001). This paints a picture of some men who believe that sexual coercion is justifiable because they deserve to have their needs fulfilled. Combine this belief with rape myths that promote the image of uncontrollable, animalistic sexual urges in men, and men’s responsibility for their actions is even more excused to a point whereby some evolution theorists even justify rape as men’s adaptive mandate for reproduction (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000).

Self-Blame and Shame

Sexual harassment, male IPV, and rape all share an aura of misunderstanding arising from the misogynous belief that, because of characterological deficiencies, women bring such abuse on themselves and contribute to its continuation. In no other crime do we heap such blame on the victim (see Box 13.4). Both characterological and behavioral self-blame are associated with heightened symptomatology in victims of non-stranger sexual assault (Arata & Burkhart, 1998), and self-blame remains evident even in women who prosecute sexual harassment charges (Wright & Fitzgerald, 2007).

“*The Rape*” of Mr. Smith (Box 13.4) was first published in April 1975 in the *American Bar Association Journal* to expose legal bias against rape victims based in rape myths. Students still can report the contents of these myths but confine their personal beliefs to victims’ reactions to rape (Buddie & Miller, 2001). Given what we know about contemporary stereotyping, we shouldn’t expect to find much blatant endorsement of rape myths; instead, we might expect these myths to linger in more subtle and harder to detect forms. For example, a content analysis of media coverage of a high profile rape case found that fully 10% of the headlines subtly endorsed rape myths, and that male readers exposed to these myths were more likely to think the accused was innocent (Franiuk et al., 2008). Research designed to uncover such potentially subtle stereotyping has used mock juries or has randomly assigned research participants to react to a single vignette describing an incident and then compared these responses across systematically varied vignettes.

Given what we already know about the subtlety of modern **sexism**, we shouldn’t be surprised to find that the subtle stereotyping that reinforces rape myths persists. Like Mr. Smith’s “deservingness,” women’s suggestive attire remains linked to perceived sexual intent (Farris et al., 2008; Maurer & Robinson, 2008), and knowing one’s attacker is still associated with more victim blame (Grubb & Harrower, 2008). Respondents high in **benevolent sexism** who believe in protecting “good women” were more likely to blame women for marital rape (Dum et al., 2010) and for bringing on date rape by inviting the relationship with the man (thus violating heterosexual dating scripts that assign women a passive role) (Abrams et al., 2003) and by not being a stereotypic victim (Masser et al., 2010). Mock jurors viewed complainants who had prior sexual intercourse with the defendant as less credible (Schuller & Hastings, 2002), and a woman who experienced acquaintance rape

Box 13.4. “The Rape” of Mr. Smith

“Mr. Smith, you were held up at gunpoint on the corner of 16th and Locust?”

Yes.”

“Did you struggle with the robber?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“He was armed.”

“Then you made a conscious decision to comply with his demands rather than to resist?”

“Yes.”

“Did you scream? Cry out?”

“No. I was afraid.”

“I see. Have you ever been held up before?”

“No.”

“Have you ever given money away?”

“Yes, of course—”

“And did you do so willingly?”

“What are you getting at?”

“Well, let’s put it like this, Mr. Smith. You’ve given away money in the past—in fact, you have quite a reputation for philanthropy. How can we be sure that you weren’t contriving to have your money taken from you by force?”

“Listen, if I wanted—”

“Never mind. What time did this holdup take place, Mr. Smith?”

“About 11 p.m.”

“You were out on the streets at 11 p.m.? Doing what?”

“Just walking.”

“Just walking? You know that it’s dangerous being out on the street that late at night. Weren’t you aware that you could have been held up?”

“I hadn’t thought about it.”

“What were you wearing at the time, Mr. Smith?”

“Let’s see. A suit. Yes, a suit.”

“An expensive suit?”

“Well—yes.”

“In other words, Mr. Smith, you were walking around the streets late at night in a suit that practically advertised the fact that you might be a good target for some easy money, isn’t that so? I mean, if we didn’t know better, Mr. Smith, we might even think you were asking for this to happen, mightn’t we?”

“Look, can’t we talk about the past history of the guy who did this to me?”

“I’m afraid not, Mr. Smith. I don’t think you would want to violate his rights, now, would you?”

From Unknown, 1975.

during an act of infidelity was blamed more than a similar victim whose marital status was unknown (Viki & Abrams, 2002).

Students were most favorably inclined toward victims who reported immediately and espoused an altruistic motive (“so he doesn’t do it to someone else”) (Balogh et al., 2003). Both Black and White women who were victims of *interracial* rape were blamed more than victims of *intra*racial rape (George & Martinez, 2002). Gay men and heterosexual women were blamed more for being raped by a man, presuming sexual attraction on the part of the victim, than lesbian and heterosexual men (Wakelin & Long, 2003).

Cultural expectations about the influences of alcohol—as a disinhibitor for the man, as an excuse for his behavior, and as a strategy for reducing victims’ resistance—also contextually support violence (Koss, Goodman et al., 1994). They send the double messages that “he’s *not* responsible, *he was drinking*” and “she *is* responsible, *she was drinking*.” College students associated more blame and derogated a victim of male IPV if she drank before the assault (Harrison & Esqueda, 2000); student mock jurors considered an alleged victim of acquaintance rape as more credible if she was sober at the time of the rape (Wenger & Bornstein, 2006); and police were less likely to arrest when victims were drunk (Stewart & Maddren, 1997). All of these factors combine to set up a **social context** that both reflects and reinforces male violence against women.

Blame for victimization. The tendency to blame women for bringing on their abuse runs through common *myths* about sexual harassment (e.g., she was seductive), male IPV (e.g., she must have provoked him), rape (e.g., all women want to be raped), and CSA (e.g., the child imagined it) (Sheffield, 1989). Acceptance of these myths has not disappeared fully (Cowan, 2000a; Hinck & Thomas, 1999; Johnson et al., 1997). A meta analysis of 72 studies of beliefs in rape myths found more acceptance among men, older people, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and among those espousing traditional gender role attitudes, adversarial sexual beliefs, needs for power, dominance, aggressiveness and anger, and conservative political beliefs (Anderson et al., 1997). Beliefs about sexual aggression are shared in families (Quinones et al., 1999). Latina women perceive the most victim-blaming for rape in their communities, White women, the least (Lefley et al., 1993).

Looking across a wide range of rape myths, researchers uncover four distinct themes underlying them: disbelief of rape claims, victim responsibility for rape, rape reports as manipulation of a man by a woman, and the belief that rape happens only to deserving women (Briere et al., 1985). All of these undermine the truthfulness and victimization of the recipient. For those of us who dismiss these myths for the hogwash they are, we may think that we wouldn’t blame ourselves if we were so victimized. Indeed, people who read cases of sexual harassment and then are asked to describe what they would do in those situations (analog studies) rarely relate that they would blame themselves (Fitzgerald, 1990). Yet, reports from actual victims provide evidence to the contrary:

I was ashamed, thought it was my fault, and was worried that the school would take action against me (for “unearned” grades) if they found out about it. . . .

When I came to, I wanted to die, the guilt and depression were so bad. Your whole sense of worth is tied up with being a successful wife and having a happy marriage. If your husband beats you, then your marriage is a failure, and you’re a failure. It’s so horribly the opposite of how it is supposed to be (Sheffield, 1989, p. 15).

I felt guilty. I felt it was my fault because I had been drinking. I felt angry at myself for not having fought or screamed louder (Hanmer & Saunders, 1984, p. 37).

Knowing of this inconsistency between what we think we’d do and what others actually do raises serious questions about what each of us really would do if confronted with these kinds of abuse.

Furthermore, these myths, regardless of their veracity, help to sustain violence. There is well established evidence linking acceptance of rape myths with the men who perpetrate these acts (Anderson et al., 1997). Additionally, some women help perpetuate rape myths through their own distrust of and hostility toward other women (Cowan, 2000b). Surveying various professionals, Colleen Ward (1995) concluded that many doctors, police, and lawyers were misinformed; they accepted these faulty myths, including beliefs that women provoke rape by their dress, that women cannot be believed and that men are not responsible (also see Lea, 2007). **Priming** viewers with the promiscuous female stereotype (by simply having them watch a talk-show television segment) led to perceptions of less trauma and more responsibility attributed to a victim of sexual harassment (Ferguson et al., 2005).

Male violence against women does not take place in a vacuum. Rather, it occurs within a sociocultural context that subtly promotes violence or turns away from it. We have seen that exaggerations of the masculine gender role and male-dominant dating scripts help support violence. So does sexualized media violence. When exposed to both X-rated and R-rated materials that portrayed violence directed at women in sexualized contexts, college men expressed callous attitudes toward husband-perpetrated sexual abusiveness and were themselves more aggressive in the laboratory (Donnerstein et al., 1987). Similarly, men who watched slasher films showed less sensitivity toward rape victims (Linz, 1989). Media violence affects women as well, making college women feel disempowered (Reid & Finchilescu, 1995). In general, depictions of sexual violence can promote antisocial attitudes and behavior (Linz et al., 1992) and can desensitize both women and men (Krafka et al., 1997).

Blame for “inappropriate” responding. We tend to think of male violence against women as a one-time event. How many women confidently have claimed: “If a man ever hit me, it would be over between us”? But much of male violence against women is cyclic. Sexual harassment typically encompasses a long-term barrage of offensive behaviors (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Once the cycle of partner abuse begins, it tends to spiral upward, becoming increasingly dangerous for the victim (Short et al., 2000). CSA usually cycles as well (Stanko, 1985).

We have stereotypic images about how women should respond to violence, and this often erroneous stereotyping affects how we react toward victims. The courts have sent a message that a victim’s behavior will be closely scrutinized in sexual harassment cases and that a “real” victim will speak out against her harassment, both publicly and privately, when it is happening (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Women themselves tend to think hypothetically that if they confronted sexual harassment, they should and *would* respond assertively to make it stop (Fitzgerald, 1993). Not surprisingly, consistent and persistent assertiveness is believed to be most effective toward thwarting unwanted sexual attention (Yagil et al., 2006), and college students evaluate victims who confront their harasser as most effective and appropriate (Sigal et al., 2003). In fact, students are most likely to “see” harassment if the target resists and the perpetrator subsequently persists (Osman, 2007). Similarly, we expect abused women to leave their relationships, implying that their failure to do so is indicative of some inexplicable characterological shortcoming. In sum, we stereotype how victims *should* respond, and we evaluate the genuineness of victimization against this stereotype.

Louise Fitzgerald and her colleagues (1995) described how real-life victims of sexual harassment actually did respond. *Internally focused responses* include endurance (ignoring the situation, pretending it is not happening, not caring), denial (of information, threat, vulnerability, or negative feelings), reattribution (reinterpreting the events as non-harassment, such as, “he was just joking”), illusory control, and detachment. Thus, seemingly “doing nothing” is a form of responding—one that is used quite frequently by some women, especially if the harassment is less severe (Chan et al., 1999; Cochran et al., 1997).

Externally focused responses include avoidance, appeasement, assertiveness, looking for social support, and seeking institutional or organizational relief. Of these, avoidance is the most common, followed by appeasement (an attempt to put off the harasser without direct confrontation). Avoidance coping is negatively related to reporting sexual harassment (Goldberg, 2007), and it is used most often by rape survivors who blame themselves and received negative reactions from others (Littleton & Breitkopf, 2006), which in turn predicts PTSD symptoms (Ullman et al., 2007).

The *most infrequent* response, seeking institutional relief, is probably *most* effective in terminating sexual harassment, but unless strong organizational supports exist (e.g., an effective union; Bulger, 2001), targets are fearful of doing this—fearing retaliation, disbelief, harm to one’s career, shame, and humiliation.⁶ Reviewing the literature, there is substantial evidence to verify that all of these fears are real (Campbell & Raja, 2005). A large-scale study with federal employees found that both women and men who experienced frequent sexual harassment and used confrontational coping experienced worse job outcomes than others (Stockdale, 1998). Although reporting women are regarded by others as assertive, they also are considered less feminine and trustworthy (Marin & Guadagno, 1999)—reminiscent of the competence versus warmth quandary we explored for women in Chapter 7.

Note how what we think a harassment victim should do (that is, be assertive or report him) differs from what victims really do. Are being a silent tolerator or an instigator-in-kind (someone who appeases harassers by “playing along”) forms of consent or forms of coping (Fitzgerald et al., 1995)? Compared to what we stereotypically think victims should do, these typical responses look like consent. But in light of what we have presented here, these responses look more like coping. Furthermore, the **coping perspective** suggests that, rather than concentrate on what victims do and don’t do to make their dissent known, women would be better served if the burden of demonstrating that sexual overtures were welcomed by a woman in the workplace was put squarely on the shoulders of the initiator. Additionally, organizations can be proactive by taking steps to address harassment, such as setting strong and clear policies (Gruber, 1998).

Turning to male IPV, few women fail to seek some form of help (Hutchison & Hirschel, 1998), although battered women have mixed views about the effectiveness of the criminal justice system (Barata, 2007). For example, 44% of women murdered by their intimate partner had visited an emergency room within the past 2 years (NCIPC, 2005). Because battering is an extreme attempt to exert control and is associated with men’s fears of abandonment (Conrad & Morrow, 2000), a woman’s escape is often thwarted by threats of escalated violence (extending even to pets; Flynn, 2000) and homicide/suicide should she try to leave (NCIPC, 2005). These threats often are credible; fully one-third of 135 women

⁶Reporting is less likely when the proportion of women in a woman’s overall occupation or specific job is small (Goldberg, 2001).

were abused by former partners within 2 years of leaving a shelter (Fleury et al., 2000).⁷ Overall, laws and social norms limit women's power to leave abuse relationships (Pratto & Walker, 2004).

Although this may make entrapment understandable, how can we understand a woman who escapes and then returns? One study that followed a group of beaten women across 2.5 years found that 23% were in an abusive relationship at the start and at the end of the study (Campbell et al., 1994). (The average duration of an abusive marriage is 6 years—the same as the average marriage [L.E.A. Walker, 1994.]) Reviewing data from a variety of sources, Michael Strube (1988, p. 238) concludes that “about half of all women who seek some form of aid for spouse abuse can be expected to return to their partners.” This pattern holds across different races, social classes, marital statuses, educational levels, and the presence of children in the home.

What does seem to distinguish women who don't return from those who do is that the former are more likely to be employed (and thus can afford to leave,)⁸ are in shorter-term relationships (less invested?), think of themselves as better off financially, are less in love, are less likely to be White (and possibly have wider kinship networks to take them in) and feel they have somewhere to go (Strube & Barbour, 1984). The absence of these facilitators fits with a psychological profile of a returner who feels entrapped; the presence of these facilitators describes women who have less to lose by leaving. In sum, for a woman to leave an abusive relationship she has to answer two questions affirmatively: “Will I be better off?” and “Can I do it?” (Choice & Lamke, 1997).

Understanding the cycle of partner abuse also helps frame women's apparent choices to stay and even return. Lenore Walker (1979) describes a three-stage **cycle of battering**. In the first phase, *tension builds* as minor battering incidents are seemingly controlled and rationalized by the woman, who does her best to avoid “provoking” an outburst. (It is during this first phase that Walker [1989] reports women are most likely to kill their abusers.)

In the second phase, *the acute battering incident*, violence escalates and the woman feels that she has lost control and cannot predict her partner's behavior. The trigger is rarely something the battered woman does, although Walker describes how some women may move things toward this outburst as a way to relieve the intolerable pressure mounting during the tension-building phase. The second phase typically lasts between 2 to 24 hours, after which most women tend to stay isolated for several days before seeking any help.

Phase three can be the hook for many women—after the explosion, the batterer exudes *kindness and contrite, loving behavior*. At the exact time when we would expect the woman to be most motivated to leave, he stops the abuse and steps up the charm. The pressure to stay at this point also is bolstered by societal valuation of “standing by one's man,” a common component of descriptions of “perfect love” (Townes & Adams, 2000). When things return to “normal,” tension building begins anew and the cycle continues. Walker describes these women as *survivors* who learn to control inevitable violent out-

⁷One possible counter-offensive to threats of retaliation is to file assault charges. One study of 90 women found that filing charges was an effective deterrent to future violence, even though only 37% resulted in a successful arrest (McFarlane et al., 2000).

⁸A trap of financial dependency may disrupt women's ability to leave. For example, extremely poor women who had experienced partner violence in the past 12 months also had trouble maintaining their own employment (Browne et al., 1999; also see Riger et al., 2004).

bursts so as to survive the violence, not as passive victims helplessly out of control (also see Bergen, 1995).

Control is a repeated theme throughout descriptions of battering (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1999). In contrast to the control exerted by women, noted above by Walker, to cope with violence, men describe how they paradoxically lose control in order to reassert their control, wanting ultimately to be Bigger, Better, and Winning over their partner (Reitz, 1999). Nine men described the acute battering incident as one in which they lost control—failing to remember what they did and feeling out-of-body as they did it. The aftermath of contrite, loving behavior reflects their attempt to live up to their ideal of being Big, Good, and Winning, but pressure to achieve these ideals rebuilds anew. Thus from both the women's and men's sides of this pattern, *the cycle perpetrates itself*.

In sum, both myths about what brings on male violence against women (e.g., women who are “asking for it”) and stereotyping of how “genuine” victims should react differ from reality for many women. Until we let go of these false and misleading myths and stereotyping, we will fail to understand many women's victimization and ultimately will contribute to their second victimization as they struggle to cope and survive.⁹ At a societal level, these myths and this stereotyping keep alive a culture that largely ignores, and ultimately accepts, violence.

Cognitive Coping Strategies

First writing this chapter revived memories for me of being sexually harassed in my first job. I can recall many of the details of the 3-hour session that took place in my office at a deserted university on a Sunday afternoon. However, I am struck by the fact that I'd have to review a roster of the faculty to remember the name of the senior professor who threatened me—and the idea of doing this is quite unnerving. My feelings parallel those of other women asked to reconstruct their experiences with sexual harassment (Kidder et al., 1995). Denial, avoidance, and numbing are adaptive, especially when the event in question involves a betrayal of trust (Freyd, 1997). Many women have vague, sketchy memories of actual abusive incidents by male partners (Kelly, 1988). Although women certainly remember a past rape experience, their descriptions are characterized by less detail and a numbing of emotion common to memories of other unpleasant experiences—but very different from pleasant memories (Koss et al., 1996).

One of the most controversial areas to explore memories of trauma focuses on recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse (see Pope & Brown, 1996). On the one side, the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, founded in 1992 by accused parents and independent of any recognized organization of mental health professionals, coined a “syndrome” they believe befits DSM-IV as a personality disorder (described in Pope, 1996). People afflicted with this presumed disorder obsess about a false, implanted memory so much that their entire life revolves around it. They argue that this memory is the product of suggestive psychotherapists who, through naiveté, greed, incompetence, or zealotry, convince the client that she (usually a woman) has been sexually abused by a family member (although subsequent research disputes these charges of therapists' implantation; Sullins, 1998).

⁹Support services for victims of all forms of violence vary by locales. Good resources on college campuses for these services or referrals for services include women's centers, women's studies offices, psychology clinics, and health facilities. Be clear that you are looking for feminist-oriented services.

These assertions resonate with a general distrust of children's reports of sexual abuse within Western society (Scott, 1997) and serve to silence women and children who are struggling to be believed (Saraga & MacLeod, 1997). The scientific foundation for these claims rests on a series of studies in which a presumably untrue "memory" is suggested by an older family member to research participants, who eventually report that they believe the implanted event actually happened. The original procedure created a "memory" of being lost in a shopping mall (Loftus & Ketcham, 1994). Other suggestions tested by researchers have included earaches, trips to the hospital at night, and words that did not appear in a list.

Ken Pope (1996) points to some compelling shortcomings in this research. Being lost in a mall is offered as analogous to being sexually abused in that both are arguably traumatic. However, being lost is a more common experience than abuse, contains no sexual content, seems less stressful, and is a singular incident. It also fails to capture the betrayal that is so central to understanding the trauma of CSA (Freyd, 1997). These differences raise serious questions about the relevance of everyday memory processes toward our understanding of the traumatic memories of childhood abuse (Kristiansen et al., 1996).

A somewhat closer analog may be having a mother give her child an enema. When researchers tried to implant this memory, they were successful with *none* of their participants (Pezdek, 1995, 1996). Also, having an older family member suggest the false "memory" in these studies is a lot different from having a therapist do so, in that only the relative is presumed to have first-hand experience, making her or him more credible. (I know I tell my children lots of stories about their childhood that they don't recall on their own.) Contrary to the false memory agenda, these studies suggest that if family members can alter their children's memories, then abusers feasibly might convince their victims that "nothing really happened"—or at least insure that they keep events hidden.

We might think of traumas as life-altering events (which indeed they are) that are too powerful to be put aside. However, an approach focused on "recovered" memories asks us to reframe our thinking around the concept of coping. Taking a **coping perspective**, our expectations change—we expect victims to remember but to do so in ways that let them go on with their lives. Such *cognitive adaptation* might include talking less about these events, numbing the emotions they engender, and letting go of disturbing details (Koss et al., 1996). Adopting this orientation, Laura Brown and Erica Burman (1997) ask us to reframe our point of view by thinking in terms of "delayed," instead of "recovered," memories. There is provocative evidence to support such rethinking. For example, follow-up studies with women known to have been sexually abused as children (because they were treated in emergency rooms) found that 38% (almost 200 women) were unable to vividly recall the index event. Paralleling these findings, studies of crime victims show that some seem to report hazy memories of even fairly serious attacks (Block & Block, 1984).

Minimization of Violence

Again, if we take a coping perspective, it is understandable that some survivors will seek to minimize their abuse (Kelly, 1988). Combine this with the well-documented tendency for abusive men to underreport their violent actions and their impact (reviewed by McHugh et al., 1993) and for harassers in court cases to try to minimize outrage (McDonald et al., 2010), and abuse may be reported by those directly involved as being not as bad as a

third-party observer might document. Note the italicized contradictions in the following examples from British women:

I was molested by a man who grabbed hold of me and pushed himself against me in the tube when it was crowded. I screamed as loudly as I could. He *slapped my face*, but then got off as we got to a station. I suppose I was lucky that *nothing actually happened*....

The men in the office are forever having a go—sort of half joke/half propositioning me. They know I don't like it, but they never give up. It's *nothing really*. I can handle it, or I have so far, but it pisses me off. I'm *exhausted by the end of the day*....

I've been attacked in the library—young White boys fooling around in a threatening and racist way. *Nothing's actually happened* to me, but I've had to *call the police* to have them removed... (Kelly & Radford, 1996, p. 26; italics added).

As Liz Kelly and Jill Radford (1996) point out, although these women insist that nothing really happened, something really did. That “something” has more to do with women's feelings than with any documented physical hurt per se. The evidence is minimized not only by these women in parts of their stories (and contradicted in other parts), but probably by outsiders as well. Furthermore, these stories illustrate how, when women say nothing really happened, they may be considering a much worse scenario than what they experienced, such as he slapped but didn't rape me. In contrast, when the law says nothing really happened, violation is invalidated.

Section Summary

We have seen that there are many factors that conspire to keep male violence against women hidden, even at times from victims themselves. It is noteworthy that some critics who wish to invalidate women's experiences require that victims appropriately label their abuse before it can be characterized as abuse. Must clients come to therapy calling themselves survivors of childhood abuse to be legitimately treated for its aftermath? Or may conscientious therapists pursue diagnostic leads based on observed signs and testing that may be indicative of abuse?

Most advocates of a recovered memory model note that clients don't come to therapy without showing any signs of abuse and then spontaneously report it during the course of therapy, as false memory advocates suppose (Polusny & Follette, 1996). Most fundamentally, psychologists are in the habit of assigning labels to people based on their adherence to established criteria, without requiring that they self-report the label given. For example, how many diagnosed alcoholics would we miss if we required self-identification? Similarly, why should a researcher give research participants the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory if she or he could simply ask them to classify themselves? Such demands are immediately absurd; yet we seem to accept parallel demands as legitimate for women survivors of abuse.

Even knowing in the abstract why abuse is invisible, at some basic level I admit to being overwhelmed by these prevalence rates—it's just too depressing to be true. While

taking a break from first writing this chapter, I bumped into a retired friend, and she asked about my progress with this book. I shared how gut-wrenching this topic was, and she proceeded to tell me about her own experience with attempted date rape—her date ripped her brand new dress and then called her the next day, oblivious to why she was “acting funny.” I was stunned. This nice, White-haired woman recalled vivid images of an attempted date rape that happened over 40 years ago. Somehow this made these prevalence rates more concrete for me. As students and as caring human beings, I urge you to be open to women’s experiences. Sexually assaulted women cope better if they are believed and listened to by others (Ullman et al., 2007).

We have reviewed different strategies used to invalidate women’s experiences—strategies that are simultaneously fueled by the hiddenness of violence as well as ultimately maintaining this invisibility. By excusing perpetrators, we place the burden for establishing nonconsent squarely on the shoulders of women victims alone, and we ultimately come to blame victims for bringing about their own victimization. One theme that runs through this section is a call for men to assume responsibility for establishing consent before engaging in sexual relations. At the root of this call is the need to respect and listen to women—a fundamental ingredient that could reduce other forms of violence, like physical assault, as well. A second theme challenges us to replace a victim-blaming perspective with a coping approach to better understand women’s responses to violence, including appearing to play along with sexual harassment; staying and even returning to abusive intimates; denying, avoiding, and numbing; and abuse minimizations.

CONSEQUENCES

Consistent with the previous sections of this chapter, common threads run through what we know about the consequences for women of sexual harassment, rape, male IPV, and CSA. Here we will explore some immediate and long-term physical and psychological consequences for individual women (Ullman & Brecklin, 2003). The patterns we will review argue that the pervasive threat of male violence against women serves to unite all women, differentiates women from men, and is used to maintain social control in a male-dominated, **patriarchal** society.

Physical Sequelae

Both immediate and long-term physical harm results from all forms of male violence against women. For women coping with sexual harassment, common responses include anxiety attacks, headaches, sleep disturbances, disordered eating, gastrointestinal disorders, nausea, weight loss or gain, and crying spells (Crull, 1982; Gutek, 1985). A meta-analysis established the predicted associations between sexual harassment and health dissatisfaction ($r = .26$) and negative health symptoms ($r = .29$) (Chan et al., 2008). Sophisticated statistical modeling argues that body dissatisfaction and eating disturbances are results of, not antecedents to, harassment (Harned, 2000).

One-half to two-thirds of rape survivors escape without physical trauma (Koss & Hestlet, 1992), and only half of the injured receive formal medical treatment (Koss et al., 1991). Survivors are more likely to contact a physician than a mental health professional, and

gross underfunding of rape crisis intervention programs has limited their utility (Koss, 1993). The U.S. National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC, 2005) reported a national study finding that only 13% of rape victims receiving emergency room treatment were both screened and received medication for sexually transmitted diseases. Physical problems persist for a disproportionate number of women beyond the immediate aftermath. Survivors report more physical health problems, perceive their health less favorably, and visit physicians twice as often as women in general (Koss, 1993).

The most obvious consequences of male IPV are physical, yet the range of violent acts is stunning. Lenore Walker (1979) sums up the stories of 120 women:

Major physical assaults included: slaps and punches to the face and head; kicking, stomping, and punching all over the body; choking to the point of consciousness loss; pushing and throwing across a room, down the stairs, or against objects; severe shaking; arms twisted or broken; burns from irons, cigarettes, and scalding liquids; injuries from thrown objects; forced shaving of pubic hair; forced violent sexual acts; stabbing and mutilation with a variety of objects, including knives and hatchets; and gunshot wounds. The most common physical injuries reported are those inflicted by the man's hands and feet to the head, face, back, and rib areas. Broken ribs and broken arms, resulting from the woman's raising her arm to defend herself, are the most common broken bones.

Several women in this sample have suffered broken necks and backs, one after being flung against objects in the room. One woman suffered the loss of a kidney and severe injury to her second kidney when she was thrown against a kitchen stove. Others suffered serious internal bleeding and bruises. Swollen eyes and nose, lost teeth, and concussions were all reported. Surgery was required in a large number of cases. Women were often knocked unconscious by these blows. Many others were choked nearly unconscious (pp. 79–80).

About 17% of all violence-related injuries treated in emergency rooms resulted from IPV (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997). Whereas it is typical for adults to make one injury visit to an emergency service in their lifetime, abused wives average more than one such visit each year (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996). In a clinical study of 691 pregnant women, 17% reported physical and sexual abuse during their pregnancy (MacFarlane et al., 1992), and 25% of women using a community-based family practice reported injuries inflicted by an intimate (Hamberger et al., 1992).

Psychological Sequelae

Given our premise that different forms of male violence against women are linked, it comes as no surprise that survivors' reactions to these victimizations share much in common—but with a few noteworthy exceptions. All violence poses threats to normal psychological well-being and challenges survivors' fundamental beliefs about the world.

Disrupted psychological well-being. Throughout these explorations, what is cause and what is effect often have been confused. For example, low self-esteem characterizes

victims of male IPV. For those who assume that women's low self-esteem predated their abuse, presumed helplessness has been cited as a preexisting characterological flaw in women that makes them more vulnerable to battering. However, researchers who have questioned this causal chain have concluded instead that low self-esteem, like other signs of helplessness and entrapment, results from the abuse itself (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Margolin, 1988). The psychological aftermath we will describe here is more accurately conceptualized as a result of the trauma these women experienced, rather than as something that was germinating in these survivors prior to their assault.

College women who have experienced sexual harassment show signs of posttraumatic stress, clinical psychological symptoms, and reduced satisfaction with life (Rederstorff et al., 2007). The consequences of sexual harassment in high school may carry over into college as general doubts about romantic relationships (Duffy et al., 2004) and are more severe than the effects of being bullied (Gruber & Fineran, 2008). Among women taking part in a class-action suit, their degree of psychological distress was most related to the severity of the harassment and how much they blamed themselves (Collinsworth et al., 2009).

As for the psychological consequences of rape survival, women's responses generally change over time (Koss & Figuredo, 2004). For many survivors, distress levels are severely elevated during the first week, and then peak in severity by about 3 weeks. For an average of 12 days after a rape, fully 94% of survivors meet the criteria for **posttraumatic stress disorder** (PTSD). This continues at an elevated level for about the next month, and then begins to diminish. By 2 to 3 months post-assault, many differences between survivors and women in general disappear, with the exceptions of persistent reports of fear, anxiety, self-esteem problems, and sexual dysfunction among survivors. Fully 46% still meet the criteria for PTSD 3 months afterwards. These patterns cut across Latina, African American, and White women (Wyatt et al., 1992) for whom issues of race, ethnicity, and class must enter into effective counseling (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009).

When does a rape survivor go back to her pre-assault self? Possibly never. Even years after a rape, survivors are more likely to be diagnosed for major depression, alcohol and drug abuse and dependence, generalized anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and PTSD (Koss, 1993), and they often have difficulties in relationships, especially around nurturing and trust (McMullin et al., 2007). Looking across a wide array of post-assault consequences, the most important overall factor appears to be *self-blame*: the more women blame themselves, the worse their recovery (Campbell et al., 2009).

Women raped by an acquaintance typically delay disclosing their experience and often experience more negative reactions than those attacked by a stranger (Sudderth, 1998). Alcohol consumption may increase women's vulnerability to assault (Davis et al., 2004). College women raped when intoxicated are just as emotionally affected and engage in more self-blame than those raped by force (Schwartz & Leggett, 1999). Anti-lesbian rape, which targets lesbians and is designed to degrade lesbian sexuality, often threatens women's general sense of safety, independence, and well-being (Garnets et al., 1993).

For women survivors of male IPV, common reactions include shock, denial, withdrawal, confusion, psychological numbing, fear (Browne, 1987; D.G. Dutton, 1992), depression, anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem (Haj-Yahia, 2000). These survivors frequently are characterized by high levels of negative health symptoms, gynecological problems, and risk of homicide (Campbell & Soeken, 1999). Chronic fatigue and tension, intense startle

reactions, disturbed sleep and eating patterns, and nightmares also may result (Goodman et al., 1993; Herman, 1992). More severe symptomatology is likely for women who experience more violent forms of abuse (Abbey et al., 2004) and for victims of both physical and sexual aggression (Browne, 1987).

The psychological effects of CSA may be long-term for survivors. Given the hidden nature of this form of victimization, it is hard to gauge its consequences. For example, a highly controversial article attributed more problems to dysfunctional family environments than abuse per se (Rind et al., 1998), but subsequent commentaries called into question the merits of this conclusion (Dallam et al., 2001; Ondersma et al., 2001). In contrast, it is estimated that fully 40% of survivors will need therapy some time during their adulthood (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Documented sequelae include depression, self-destructive behavior, feelings of isolation and stigma, poor self-esteem, sexual maladjustment, difficulty trusting others, PTSD symptoms, and symptoms of dissociation (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Lemieux & Byers, 2008; Roesler & McKenzie, 1994).

Disrupted world views. We all possess views of how the world works—who can be trusted, what’s fair, and who deserves what, as well as hopes expressed by “it just can’t happen to me” (Janoff-Blumen & Frieze, 1983). A woman’s fundamental beliefs about the world, including feelings of safety, power or efficacy, trust, esteem, and intimacy (McEwan et al., 2002), may be challenged by experiencing rape (Koss, 1993). Even those of us not immediately affected by sexual violence may suffer just-world consequences. In the United States, conviction rates for sexual assault are persistently low. If the world is just, we might begin to question the veracity or severity of these charges. Indeed, H. Colleen Sinclair and Lylce Bourne (1998) found that after reading a summary of a rape trial in which a verdict of “not guilty” was handed down, both women and men exhibited greater acceptance of rape myths than others randomly assigned to read the same case but with a “guilty” verdict.

Diagnosis. A common diagnosis for victims/survivors of sexual and male IPV is **post-traumatic stress disorder** (PTSD). As we saw in Chapter 12, PTSD has advantages over characterological diagnoses like borderline and histrionic personality disorders, because PTSD focuses diagnosis and hence treatment on traumatic events outside the individual. However, PTSD was developed for war survivors and, as such, has several noteworthy limitations (Koss, Goodman et al., 1994). First, responses to sexual assault go beyond PTSD’s focus on fear and anxiety, missing common violence after-effects, such as relational disturbances, isolation, and sexual dysfunction. Second, PTSD ignores the cognitive disruptions we examined above to survivors’ views of the world, as well as the chronic and seemingly inescapable risks inherent in many women’s daily lives (e.g., living in violent neighborhoods or with abusive partners). Third, PTSD responds better to single traumatic events rather than the recurrent ones that tend to characterize male IPV and CSA. Finally, one might philosophically ponder why the DSM-IV considers victimization a mental disorder whereas perpetrating such violence, except in egregious “sociopathic” cases, goes undiagnosed.

Unique Consequences

lthough there are many commonalities across women’s responses to violence, some consequences are unique to specific types of violence. For example, sexual harassment produces

specific education- or work-related consequences not directly attributable to other forms of violence, such as decreased academic satisfaction (Huerta et al., 2006), lowered job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, and withdrawal from work (Willness et al., 2007).

There is a myth unique to IPV: once a victim, always a victim. As we've seen, 23% of abused wives at the start of a study were still in abusive relationships over 2 years later (Campbell et al., 1994), and we examined the factors that mediated such persistence. However, these data also highlight the majority who successfully changed their lives. The myth that battered women simply will trade one abusive relationship for another was discredited many years ago (Walker, 1979).

A different pattern emerges for survivors of rape and CSA whose histories appear to make these women more vulnerable to re-victimization. For example, sexual assault survivors were less likely to project responding to a hypothetical sexually aggressive man with effective resistance, and CSA survivors were more likely to anticipate responding with ineffective passivity (Stoner et al., 2007). College women actually victimized over an 8-month follow-up period were more likely both to have been victimized previously and to delay leaving a potentially risky situation than non-victimized women (Messman-Moore & Brown, 2006). Additionally, women with a history of CSA conveyed more nonverbal vulnerability in a videotaped session in which they interacted with a man they just met in a laboratory "bar" that served alcohol (Parks et al., 2008), and prior victimization predicted women's own aggressiveness in dating relationships (Edwards et al., 2009). In sum, a woman's history of adult and childhood sexual assault can combine with subsequent risky behaviors to sustain a continuing cycle of victimization.

Consequences for All Women

The consequences of male violence against women are not limited to the women who survive these attacks. All women are affected, every day of their lives, by the threat of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse (Hollander, 2001). Every time a woman restricts her activities because of fear, sits in a locked car in sweltering heat, feels her heart beat faster as someone runs up behind her, wears clothes that restrict her means of escape, drops a course when a professor points her out as the only woman in the class..., she is reacting to her fear of attack and vulnerability created by the simple fact that she is a woman in a **patriarchal** culture. These consequences are what distinguish male violence against women from women-perpetrated violence, and what link some forms of male violence against men, as well as homophobic violence against lesbians, to our discussion here.

Fully one-third of urban women reported fear of physical harm, especially rape, as their most common concern (Gordon & Riger, 1989). Although women are less likely than men to be victimized by violent crime overall, more than half of the women surveyed admit to using self-isolation as a form of protection—in stark contrast to only 10% of men in the same neighborhoods who admitted to taking steps to reduce their vulnerability to crime. *Living with the burden of threat of physical and sexual violation unites all women and is limited to them* (Thompson & Norris, 1992).

One of the strongest forms of social control is not force itself, but rather the threat of it (Wrong, 1979, p. 43). In this way, every example we read at the beginning of this chapter, from fear of rape through femicide, is a form of *social control*. This intent to control is made clear in a clever laboratory experiment. Elena Dall'Ara and Anne Maass (1999)

gave 120 male Italian university students an opportunity to send pornographic material over the computer to a female stranger; that is, a chance to engage in gender harassment. The alleged recipient was described to the male sender as either traditional or egalitarian. These materials were sent more often to the egalitarian woman, especially by men with a high propensity to sexually harass, with sexist attitudes, with a strong masculine identity, and with low self-monitoring. Parallel findings were confirmed among American college men sending sexist jokes (Siebler et al., 2008), and they fit with findings that highly agentic women in male-dominated professions experience high levels of harassment (Berdahl, 2007). In sum, gender harassment was used as a tool by some men to punish undesirable (egalitarian, feminist, agentic) women.

CHALLENGING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Before we conclude this chapter, let's step back to look at a point that permeates this chapter so fully that it can be largely taken for granted—gender. "*Gender shapes the meaning of violent acts ...*" (Russo & Pirlott, 2006, p. 179; italics added). What is your automatic image of an incident of sexual harassment, rape, or partner abuse? You might argue, as I have done here, that each most commonly involves a male perpetrator and female target so that your images are simply statistically normative. But this response begs the question of why these prevalence rates tip against women, why we take for granted that they do, and, most important, why we "accept" that they do?

My last point takes us back to the first chapter of this text where we talked about a system of inequality, and it leads us to ask whether gender-based violence reflects and helps to maintain this interlocking system of male privilege and female oppression. Simply put, would there be more outrage if we saw a spike in female-perpetrated violence against men? Or is violence less jarring when it harms the less powerful? There are two ways to approach this last question: by looking at (1) how power is involved in perpetration of violence and (2) how disempowerment is part of victimization.

A fascinating series of two experiments by John Bargh and his colleagues (1995) begins to address the first of these points. In their first study, they showed that college men who self-reported an above average likelihood to either sexually harass or behave sexually aggressively toward women demonstrated an unconscious link between sexuality and power on a task similar to the **Implicit Associations Task**. In their second experiment, they exposed college men (who scored either above or below average in sexual aggressiveness) to primes that were either about power or were neutral. For example, authority-power primes consisted of completing word fragments like BO_S (boss); physical-power primes such as STRO__ (strong). Sexually aggressive men exposed to the power primes found one of two female **confederates** much more attractive than similarly aggressive men exposed to the neutral primes. Thus, their first study established a link between power and sexuality for some men, and their second study put this association into practice (also see Hitlan et al., 2009). The long-held feminist contention (Brownmiller, 1975) that gender-based violence against women is about men's power and its link to sexuality, not about sexuality per se, is supported by this experimental evidence.

One of the most powerful ways to morally justify violence toward other human beings is to dehumanize them by denying them human attributes (thus making them animal-like) and/or by denying them human nature (thinking of them as objects) (Haslam, 2006). Wom-

en's bodies are not uncommonly portrayed as disgustingly animal-like (Citrin et al., 2004; Chrisler, 2011). Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) **objectification** theory described how women can be treated as objects (including by sexual harassment and violence; see Chapter 10 and Figure 10.2), as well as can come to internalize that objectification into their own self-image. Such objectification includes treating others as tools and commodities, regarding them as without autonomy and agency, seeing people as interchangeable and with fluid boundaries that can be violated, and believing that their experiences and feelings don't matter (Nussbaum, 1999).

Although the role of dehumanization in gender-based violence calls for more research evidence, their conceptual connection seems intuitively defensible. More intriguing for us here and now are the connections between dehumanization and everyday psychological processes. For example, Nck Haslam (2006) points out that objectification may reflect not seeing a connection between one's self and others; that is, regarding some other people as "not like me." When we put this point into the context of what we have reviewed in this book, we are talking about **gender polarization** (the idea that women and men are fundamentally different and with little in common). Additionally, **social categorization** includes seeing **out-group** members as all alike and with one member as good as any other (**out-group homogeneity**).

It may be easy to walk away from this chapter safe in the conviction that as a man, I'd never be violent toward a woman, or that as a woman, I don't perpetrate these forms of violence. However, these linkages of violence to some of the ordinary processes we have repeatedly considered in this text (power, objectification, and gender polarization) suggest otherwise. They suggest that power inequities, objectification of others and ourselves, and gender polarization work together to make gender-based violence possible, normalized (tolerated), and largely invisible (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). Understanding these interconnections makes us all part of the ultimate solution to ending gender-based violence by building empathy in place of objectifying others and agency in place of objectifying ourselves; by challenging essentialism, hypermasculinity, gender stereotyping and rigid role prescriptions, and sexism (gender polarization); and by exposing the linkage between gender and power.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The major point I have argued throughout this chapter is that the threat of male violence against women and its various realized forms are connected so that each reinforces the others. As we have seen, sexual harassment, rape, male intimate partner violence, and childhood sexual abuse all are linked by definitional ambiguities, language that masks their severity, high prevalence rates, invisibility and efforts to invalidate women's experiences so that they remain hidden, and serious immediate and long-term consequences that extend beyond direct victims to all women.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Kristof, N. D., & WuDunn, S. (2009). *Half the sky: Turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide*. New York: Knopf.

This haunting, but ultimately inspiring, book detailing cases and statistics about women's lives (including sex trafficking and forced prostitution, IPV, and rape) and fills in large gaps in this chapter by exploring male violence against women globally and by pragmatically directing readers to "make a difference."

Walton, M. D., Harris, A. R., & Davidson, A. J. (2009). "It makes me a man from the beating I took": Gender and aggression in children's narratives about conflict. *Sex Roles, 61*, 383–398.

Marsha Walton and her colleagues coded stories about aggression written by 364 4th to 6th graders from two U.S. poor inner-city schools according to type and severity of violence, explanations, and mental and emotional states. They conclude that children's aggression is gendered, with boys' aggression being seen as more normative and requiring less explanation. Beyond their findings, their analysis raises critical issues about how research questions are framed and the power of social contexts in creating gender differences.

Kurth, S. B., Spiller, B. B., & Travis, C. B. (2000). Consent, power, and sexual scripts: Deconstructing sexual harassment. In C. B. Travis & J. W. White (Eds.), *Sexuality, society, and feminism* (pp. 323–354). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Suzanne Kurth, Bethany Spiller, and Cheryl Travis sagely deconstruct issues surrounding consent and the misuse of power in sexual harassment.

Hamby, S. L., & Koss, M. P. (2003). Shades of gray: A qualitative study of terms used in the measurement of sexual victimization. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 27*, 243–255.

Sherry Hamby and Mary Koss examine the meaning of coercion with an ethnically diverse sample of women in focus groups, finding that "unwanted," "nonvoluntary," and "forced" have distinct meanings that can cloud our research and thus our understanding of sexual victimization.

Jackson, S. (2001). Happily ever after: Young women's stories of abuse in heterosexual love relationships. *Feminism & Psychology, 11*, 305–321.

Sue Jackson relates the stories of dating abuse told by 23 16 to 18-year-old women and explores how these relate to cultural narratives of romance as well as feminist alternatives.

Kahn, A. S., Jackson, J., Kully, C., Badget, K., & Halvorsen, J. (2003). Calling it rape: Differences in experiences of women who do or do not label their sexual assault as rape. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 27*, 233–242.

Arnie Kahn and his associates provide insights into rape stereotyping and how rape can go unacknowledged by victims.

Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J. (2010). Controversies involving gender and intimate partner violence in the United States. *Sex Roles, 62*(3–4), 179–193.

Jennifer Langhinrichsen-Rohling considers five controversies that surround the "domestic violence" and feminist approaches to IPV that we touched on here, concluding that IPV is based in relationships, bidirectional, and dynamic and offering a more detailed and nuanced analysis likely to spark discussion (as it did in this issue of *Sex Roles*).