The Complex Dynamics of Victimization:

Understanding Differential Vulnerability without Blaming the Victim

Sherry Hamby

Sewanee, the University of the South

John Grych

Marquette University

A perpetrator lurks in a mall parking lot scanning for a "mark"—a victim who he (90% of robbers are male) intends to rob. Just as it is likely that this perpetrator has engaged in other forms of violence in other contexts, there is a good chance that the person he eventually picks will have a prior history of victimization. What is it about the environment the robber has chosen or the characteristics of his victim that leads him to re-victimize someone? Understanding the dynamics of victimization and why multiple victimizations are common for many people will be the focus of this chapter. We will describe a conceptual framework for the possible patterns of interconnection among victimizations and other violence, discuss ways to acknowledge interconnections among victimization without blaming the victim, and explain the various mechanisms that are thought to produce these interconnections. We will close with a few implications of these interconnections for research and clinical work. Before we begin, we would like to offer a note of caution in understanding these patterns. The interconnections

among all forms of violence are strong and reliable, but they do not describe every person who has experienced violence. Some incidents of violence are isolated events.

Types of Interconnections

Psychologists and other social scientists are famous for their jargon, and a great many terms have been developed to refer to patterns of interconnection (for a review, see Hamby & Grych, 2013). Although many phenomena need new terms in order to promote precise definitions, the use of multiple terms for a single concept is a barrier to scientific progress and scientific communication. We have developed an internally consistent set of terms to designate multiple patterns of co-occurrence that can be used to describe victimization as well as perpetration, used with adults as well as children, and applied to all major forms of violence across the lifespan (Hamby & Grych, 2013). Similarly to Finkelhor, Turner, and Ormrod (2007), we use the prefix "poly" to refer to the co-occurrence of different forms of violence. For example, a child bullied at school and abused at home is experiencing poly-victimization. This emphasis on the importance of experiencing different forms of violence is also seen in work on concepts such as "multi-type maltreatment" (Higgins & McCabe, 2001). We use "re" or "repeat" for the occurrence of the same type of violence over time. "Re-victimization" refers to repeated experiencing of one victimization type (such as multiple incidents of physical abuse). To draw a sharper contrast with these patterns, the prefix "mono," as in "mono-victimization," can indicate an isolated incident. Poly-perpetration, re-perpetration, and mono-perpetration are the parallel terms for committing aggression. Finally, we use the term "perpetrator-victim" to refer to anyone who has been involved in violence in both roles, which includes commonly studied patterns such as bully-victims, delinquent-victims, and mutual intimate partner violence, but can also include other combinations of perpetration and victimization in the life of a single

individual. Understanding the dynamics of victimization requires also understanding that some victims are involved in violence in multiple roles.

The Extent of Poly-victimization and Re-victimization

Results from national surveys indicate that there is significant overlap across all major victimization categories, including physical assault, sexual victimization, maltreatment, property crime, and exposure to violence (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2009; Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2005; Hamby & Grych, 2013). For example, a child who is abused in the home also is more likely to be bullied at school, and to witness violence in their neighborhood. In the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, the strongest link was between physical victimization and sexual victimization. The risk of sexual victimization was 620% higher for youth who had sustained at least one physical assault. For most types of violence, the experience of sustaining one form of victimization is associated with a doubling or tripling of the risk of any other form of victimization (Finkelhor, Turner, et al., 2009).   These sorts of interconnections affect adults too (Hamby, Grych, & Banyard, 2014). For example, a nationally representative survey of Latina women found that nearly 2/3 (63%) of victimized women reported more than one type of victimization (Cuevas, Sabina, & Picard, 2010). Although re-victimization can involve many types of violence, repeated sexual victimization has received the most attention (Noll & Grych, 2011). Females who were sexually abused in childhood are two to three times more likely to be sexually assaulted in adulthood, compared to women with no childhood sexual abuse history (Barnes, Noll, Putnam, & Trickett, 2009).

Involvement in violence as both victim and perpetrator. Understanding the dynamics of victimization requires recognizing that victimization can also be linked to perpetration. This type of co-occurrence has been most frequently examined in the fields of delinquency, bullying, and

intimate partner violence (Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002; Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, & Saltzman, 2007). The intergenerational transmission of violence, which involves childhood victims of family violence growing up to be violent adults, is another link between victimization and perpetration. Although this pattern exists, not all victims go on to be perpetrators. Among samples of batterers or child abusers, most report abuse in their families of origin (e.g., Murphy, Meyer, & O'Leary, 1993). However, looked at from the other point of view—the number of victimized children—only a minority go on to become perpetrators themselves (Widom, 1989). As with most concepts in psychology, few patterns apply to all people.

Understanding Dynamics versus Blaming the Victim

Discussing the dynamics of victimization is challenging because it can be perceived as victim-blaming. As we discuss below, research has established that some of the long term effects of child maltreatment, exposure to violence, and other forms of victimization act as risk factors for further victimization (e.g., emotional dysregulation, insecure attachment). However, acknowledging that there are behavioral, cognitive, and emotional processes that increase individuals' vulnerability for later victimization is not the same as blaming them for being victimized. Attribution of blame hinges on the intentionality of an action: to be held responsible for an act, the person must freely choose the behavior and intend it to result in the outcome that ultimately occurs (Hart, 1968; Shaver, 1985). A person who is beaten or raped is the victim of an act of violence, not its author, and responsibility for the violent act can lie only with the perpetrator. Victims also are blamed at times for doing something to invite the violence or not doing enough to avoid it, but this does not meet the standard for attributing blame for the violent act either. Many factors, both personal and environmental, typically play a role in creating a

situation that ends in violence – i.e., they are contributory causes – but they do not result in moral or legal culpability. So, if blaming victims of violence fails tests based on logic and reason, why is this belief so common?

We believe that there are three primary forces at work. First, the tendency to blame victims is strong in American and other wealthy, individualistic cultures where "just world" beliefs are common (Lerner, 1980). Those who hold these beliefs tend to think that people get the life they deserve and consequently must have done something to cause the bad things that happened to them. Contrast this belief to more fatalistic cultures or to settings where poverty or war teaches almost everyone that sometimes bad things—very bad things—happen to good and innocent people. Further, people tend to systematically underestimate the influence of situational factors in relation to intrapersonal ones. This is such a common phenomenon in American and other individualistic cultures that it has been referred to as the "fundamental attribution error" (Ross, 1977). Famously, people also are much more likely to make this error about others than they are about themselves—the so-called "actor-observer bias" (Jones & Nisbett, 1971). When explaining one's own actions, the full context of the circumstances and the many situational demands that shape behavior become more apparent. The fundamental attribution error, actor-observer bias, and just-world beliefs are well-known social psychological processes that affect many attributions and can be powerful sources of victim-blaming tendencies. Awareness of these common cognitive biases, however, can help reduce them.

Second, American culture places a high premium on risk reduction and sometimes values extreme steps to minimize risk even if they come with only marginal increases in safety, at best. For example, interest in homeschooling jumps after school shootings (Berry, 2012; Chen, 2012a, 2012b), presumably because schools are viewed as dangerous places and the avoidance of danger

is prioritized over children's educational and social needs. This "better safe than sorry" attitude may well reflect more deeply held desires to seek control in the face of uncontrollable threats and to protect ourselves and our loved ones from danger. Despite the fact – or perhaps, *because* of the fact -- that many acts of violence are unpredictable, the belief remains strong that victims could or should know when their behavior increases their vulnerability to violence and consequently are to blame if they did not do enough to stop or avoid it. This kind of thinking is reflected in a court decision regarding the 1993 World Trade Center bombing: a jury assigned only 32% of the blame to the terrorists who actually planted and blew up the bomb while ascribing 68% of the blame to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey because their security was perceived to be negligent (Bublick, 2009).

Third, gender attitudes may often play a role in attributing blame to the victims of violence, especially sexual violence. The idea that some women "ask for" sexual assault by the way they dress or act remains perversely prevalent and reflects persistent beliefs about male privilege, sexuality, and gender stereotypes. This tangle of beliefs is so pervasive that it is woven into the functioning of the legal institutions charged with investigating and prosecuting sexual violence; research has long shown that victim characteristics—not perpetrator characteristics or details of the assault—have undue influence on the handling of cases and few sexual assaults are ever prosecuted (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). A closely related set of perceptions that can lead to victim blaming is the belief that perpetrators are not in control of their actions, whereas victims are or should be in control. However, the belief that perpetrators are not in control is false. Perpetrators of all types of violence tend to carefully choose the time and place for their offenses. Individuals who would never lash out at their bosses or their mothers, for example, may be all too willing to attack their children. Evidence also is accumulating that in most cases date rape

reflects a pattern of ongoing sexual predation rather than a lack of impulse control in the moment. For example, one study identified 120 rapists who were responsible for more than 1200 rapes, an average of more than 10 per perpetrator (Lisak & Miller, 2002). Many perpetrators are experienced recidivists who perpetrate in a variety of situations against numerous targets.

For many professionals who are invested in reducing violence through research, intervention, and public policy, the prevalence of victim blaming in the United States raises the concern that identifying or addressing individual risk factors for victimization will promote further victim blaming. This fear is understandable but unfortunate because it can prevent research that could help potential victims exert greater control over their safety. Existing data clearly indicate that victimization is not randomly distributed (e.g., Card, 2011; Messman-Moore & Long, 2003), and increasing knowledge about the sources of vulnerabilities across individuals is critical for crafting effective prevention and intervention programs to reduce poly-victimization and interrupt cycles of poly- and re-victimization.

A victim-sensitive approach to research on victimization is well-accepted in criminology, which uses the metaphor of "hardening the target" to identify ways that people can reduce their risk of being victimized. For example, using outdoor lights can reduce home burglaries and walking in pairs can reduce the risk of mugging. This perspective also recognizes that no amount of "hardening" can prevent all violence and does not hold mugging victims responsible for being mugging if they happened to be alone at the time or victims of burglaries if they did not use enough wattage.

A question that arises with the examination of risks associated with victimization is how to balance the costs and difficulty of particular steps in proportion to the benefits they offer.

Digging a moat around one's home might reduce the risk of a home invasion but is unlikely to be worth the investment. Speaking more psychologically, rebuffing all overtures for friendship and intimacy might be reduce victimization risk too, but is unlikely to be worth the psychological costs. In fact, some of the characteristics that make individuals more vulnerable to violence also represent esteemed values, attempts to meet legitimate social and personal goals, or psychological defenses that were adaptive for coping in other contexts. For example, Nurius et al (2000) have shown that in certain circumstances, women who prioritize relationship maintenance over conflict may be at greater risk of sexual victimization. This does not mean that relationship maintenance skills are bad; in most situations, keeping relationships intact and social interactions pleasant is advantageous, not dangerous. It is perpetrators' actions that intentionally harm another human being that are blameworthy, not victims' behavior or judgment. Guidance on the appropriate amount of investment to make in "hardening" ourselves from violence is sorely lacking. Hamby (2013) has recently offered one approach to this question, using multiple criteria decision making framework as a guide for weighing costs and benefits in cases of domestic violence, including costs and benefits that are not easily reduced to dollars and cents. Of course, no amount of planning or hardening will make one completely safe from violence. Many violent acts are unpredictable, especially many stranger-perpetrated acts, and their victims suffer simply because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Better specification of the vulnerabilities to victimization is one important step toward helping individuals avoid re- and poly-victimization. Most research on the causes of violence has focused on perpetration, not victimization, and most research on victimization has focused on social address markers such as race, income, or gender, that can identify group differences but do not explain how these differences come about. Studying psychological characteristics can

provide insights about large individual differences in frequency and type of victimization even among groups of people with similar sociodemographic characteristics, such as majority culture (European American), middle class American women. Psychological characteristics also are important for prevention and intervention, because they are more readily malleable than risk factors such as race, gender, socio-economic class, and community of residence. Although we believe the field would benefit from more attention to systemic changes that can affect the risk of violence for large vulnerable groups, such as children living in poverty, systemic interventions can also be informed by an understanding of how some individuals, even in these highly vulnerable groups, sustain less violence over time and across settings than others. We have recently synthesized this literature elsewhere (Hamby & Grych, 2013), and here we focus more specifically on what our existing knowledge about the causes of violence, despite the emphasis on causes of perpetration, can tell us about the dynamics of poly-victimization and re-victimization.

Connections versus mechanisms

Several conceptual frameworks emphasize prior violence exposure as a causal mechanism. These include models such as the "spillover hypothesis," "intergenerational cycle of violence," and the concept of "boosts," or event dependence, which is one of two main mechanisms in the boosts and "flags" model (Baron, Straus, & Jaffee, 2006; Tseloni & Pease, 2003; Widom, 1989). A prior history of violence is probably the single most commonly mentioned risk factor for later victimization (Hamby & Koss, 2003). Many of these concepts, however, focus more on the interrelatedness of violent experiences and less on how past experiences are carried by an individual into future situations or how one act of violence can

create immediate risks of future violence. A comprehensive theory of violence needs to go beyond simple documenting of associations to understanding why the interconnections occur.

As we will discuss in more detail below, causal models of violence need not necessarily invoke long-lasting psychological processes but rather can often be explained by acute situational vulnerabilities. When poly-victimization and re-victimization occurs across situations or over time, however, more complex causal mechanisms are needed. Something about the experience of victimization or perpetration changes a child or an adult in ways that are carried into future settings and future relationships, and causal models need to be able to specify how past experiences influence future events. Several such theories have been developed, as we describe in more detail below, and they indicate that linkages among forms of violence are typically mediated by various cognitive, emotional, physiological and social processes. These processes may directly increase the likelihood of engaging in violent behavior or increase the likelihood that a person encounters situations in which violence is more likely to occur.

We have integrated research on factors associated with vulnerability to victimization, theoretical models of aggression (usually focused on perpetration), and models of development into a Portfolio Resilience Model (Grych, Hamby, & Banyard, 2014). This model identifies a number of factors as important mechanisms of victimization risk, including proximal situational factors and a variety of more distal, long-acting factors. Distal factors include characteristics of the individual but also characteristics of broader levels of the social ecology, including families, relationships and communities. We elaborate briefly on these various causal mechanisms below.

Proximal Causes of Poly-victimization and Re-victimization

It is perhaps easiest to see how situational factors can increase the risk of multiple forms of victimization or lead to incidents involving both perpetration and victimization for a single

individual. These are typically proximal causes, or those that are present just before or during the victimization. Aspects of the situations in which violence occurs can have powerful effects on behavior and on co-occurrence of different forms of violence.

Victimization as a proximal cause of further victimization

One salient factor is the occurrence of violence itself. Sometimes multiple types of violence co-occur because one act of violence creates opportunities for other acts to occur or other perpetrators to become involved. For example, an injured or unconscious victim of assault could get robbed, and gang rapes often involve one male incapacitating a victim followed by other males sexually assaulting her. Perpetration and victimization can co-occur in the same situation when the initial target of aggression fights back. This can happen when aggression escalates between intimate partners and explains why gang members and criminals often experience greater victimization and exposure to violence than the rest of the population. On a broader social level, wars, riots, and ethnic strife can lead to multiple forms of perpetration, victimization, and witnessed violence by creating environments where violence is so pervasive that it is hard for anyone to escape it.

Other temporary situational factors

Other situational factors also can increase the risk that multiple types of violence may occur. For example, alcohol and drug use can increase perpetration, particularly in those more prone to aggression, by elevating physiological arousal, reducing behavioral inhibition, and impairing judgment. Substance use is also a risk for victimization as it can reduce a person's ability to identify risky situations and protect oneself from potential attacks (Kilpatrick, Acierno, Resnick, Saunders, & Best, 1997). Aversive circumstances that produce irritability, frustration, rejection and other negative mood states also increase the risk of diverse forms of violence

(Berkowitz, 1989; Bushman & Huesmann, 2010). These can include environmental conditions such as temperature and crowding (DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1993). The ready availability of weapons, alcohol, and drugs can both increase the level of threat and danger present in an environment and affect how individuals respond to perceived threats. To the extent that neither perpetrators nor victims (nor perpetrator-victims) can escape these conditions these situational factors can explain the risks of poly-victimization and re-victimization as well as they explain perpetration.

The blurry lines between proximal and distal effects

Sometimes dangerous circumstances are infrequent. A person who seldom goes out may just happen to be at a bar or a sports match when a brawl breaks out, for example. Other times they are unpredictable, such as terrorist attacks and random shootings. To the extent that there are consistencies in the kinds of situations that people encounter, however, these proximal causes start to develop into patterns and tendencies that contribute to the risk of experiencing multiple forms of violence. The recognition that some people habitually place themselves in risky situations is the basis of routine activities theory (Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 2000). Certain types of activities, such as frequently going to bars at night, will likely bring individuals into contact with more perpetrators or potential perpetrators and are associated with higher victimization risk (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1993).

Social and economic factors can also result in repeated exposure to settings in which violence is more likely to occur (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1993). For example, low-income individuals often live in more dangerous neighborhoods where crime is more likely to occur. As can be seen from these examples, direct exposure to risky situations can be caused by pre-existing tendencies (habitual versus occasional drinker) and chronic social conditions, blurring

the line between proximal and distal effects. As circumstances turn into habits, these factors also blur the lines between situational factors and psychological characteristics.

Distal Causes of Poly-Victimization and Re-Victimization

Numerous experiences, including but hardly limited to violence, can produce cognitive, emotional, biological, relational, or other processes that create persistent increases in the risk of violence. Distal causes are those factors that have an impact over longer periods of time, sometimes even decades. Most often, these processes have been identified as pre-cursors to perpetration. In the cognitive domain, for example, being raised in a community or family that promotes rigid ideas about honor and identity can produce cognitive schemas regarding self-worth or social status that lead to violence. Graham and colleagues' work on violence in bars indicates that issues of honor, identity, and "saving face" were the most common precursors to violent acts (Graham et al., in press). Malamuth's well-known confluence model identifies hostile and denigrating attitudes towards women and impersonal and callous attitudes towards sex as two of the main risk factors for perpetrating sexual aggression, even though the content of these cognitions is not specific to violence (Malamuth, Heavey, & Linz, 1996). Certain key processes probably influence many different situations and can contribute to multiple forms of violence. For example, denigrating attitudes towards women can increase the risk of both physical intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Thus, these indirect factors also contribute to the co-occurrence among forms of violence.

Theoretical work has focused on explaining distal effects and the disturbing findings that conditions even from early childhood can create ongoing conditions of risk and vulnerability across the lifespan (e.g., Felitti et al., 1998). Our framework (Hamby & Grych, 2013) integrates common personal and situational factors identified in prior theoretical work on violence. We

have found particularly useful models that emphasize the interaction of personal and situational

characteristics lead to aggressive behavior, especially the General Aggression Model (GAM;

Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and the I[3] model (Finkel, 2007, 2008). Other models have been

proposed that also can shed light on different types of causal processes. Most of these models

have focused more on perpetration than victimization. In this chapter we will consider how these

models might also be able to inform victimization.

The Relationship Context

The relationship context refers to the type of relationship in which violence occurs

(parent-child, peer, intimate partner) and its status (how close or committed the relationship is).

Different types of relationships involve different levels of commitment, are meant to fulfill

different needs, and differ in the costs associated with decisions about termination or escape

(Hamby &Grych, 2013). It is well-established that some relationship characteristics are

associated with greater perpetration, including high levels of closeness and high levels of conflict

(Bentley, Galliher, & Ferguson, 2007; Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, & Kupper, 2001;

O'Keefe, 1997; O'Keefe & Treister, 1998). Relationships can increase the risk of multiple

victimizations because they can provide power and access for perpetrators. Relationships can

confer power through role authority that can provide a perpetrator with advantages that are just

as important as the ability to physically overwhelm a victim. Parents, bosses, teachers, and

religious leaders are examples of roles that come with authority that can be misused. Many

relationships, ranging from family relationships to classmates to comrades in arms, confer

frequent if not daily or near constant access. Minor children living with parents, schoolchildren,

and soldiers have limited choices about their relationships and with whom they spend much of

their day. It is commonly perceived that intimate partners have more choices but the financial,

social, and legal costs of terminating intimate relationships can present formidable obstacles

(Hamby, 2013). Many people with other vulnerabilities, which can include everything from

physical disabilities to undocumented immigrant status, also may have fewer relationship

choices. For example, some people with physical disabilities may not be able to live alone and

some people without documentation may not be able to turn to authorities for help without

risking deportation.

Much in the same way that poverty or chronic substance abuse can create enduring

vulnerabilities, some relationships and the difficulties of disentangling from some relationships

can create long-lasting vulnerability to victimization. Many of these relationships are supposed

to meet legitimate and nearly universal social needs. When close relationships do not function as

they are intended, some individuals will find themselves at high risk of re-victimization and

poly-victimization. Poly-victimization can occur, for example, when dysfunctional families do

not sufficiently monitor their children's safety, making them more vulnerable to victimization at

school or in the community (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Holt, 2009). Obligatory proximity to

a dysfunctional family, classroom, or workplace can also explain links between perpetration and

victimization.

Biological factors

Genetic and biological factors are now widely recognized to be linked to perpetration

(Miles & Carey, 1997; Moffitt, 2005), but biological factors can also inform victimization risk.

Biological factors can explain distal connections among forms of violence and victimization

without victim-blaming, because they show how the experiences of past violence can be carried

into future settings and future relationships without the victim's awareness or conscious control.

Biological processes are not static; they change over time, interact in complex ways with the

environment, respond to a variety of therapeutic techniques, and, for a host of reasons which are not fully understood, manifest themselves in different ways in different people. It is important to avoid simplistic formulas or assume that everyone with similar experiences had similar physiological responses. Biological processes represent one of the few domains in which similar processes have been identified to account for victimization and perpetration and thus can also explain links between perpetration and victimization (Hamby & Grych, 2013).

One such process is dysregulation in the biological stress response, which can undermine adaptive responses to events and interactions, especially those that lead to high physiological arousal (e.g., Susman, 2006). The behavioral manifestation of this process may be in the form of poor emotion and self-regulation in threatening or stressful situations, which could increase the likelihood not only of perpetration but also victimization. Research on child maltreatment and exposure to violence suggests that they may have common effects on the functioning of the human stress response (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2001; Saltzman, Holden, & Holahan, 2005), which involves the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, neurotransmitters, and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis (De Bellis, 2001; Watts-English, Fortson, Gibler, Hooper, & De Bellis, 2006). When exposed to chronic or repeated stress, this system may fail to return to baseline and become dysregulated when the individuals are faced with later stressors (Susman, 2006). Noll and Grych (2011) developed a model of sexual revictimization that centers on this process. They proposed that sexual abuse in childhood leads to hyperarousal of the HPA axis, which in turn dysregulates the cognitive, physiological, and emotional processes needed to engage in effective responses to sexual threats. Over time, the stress response becomes attenuated, impairing individuals' ability to mobilize assertive resistance behavior. The effects of early childhood neglect can also affect brain development in long-lasting ways (Kendall-Tackett,

2000). The physiological effects of early victimization are probably even more widespread than current research has shown, however. The resulting dysregulation and impaired stress responses can increase risk of other types of exposure to violence in childhood and to perpetration of violence as well as victimization (Roberts, McLaughlin, Conron, & Koenen, 2011).

Cognitive processes

Cognitive theorists have identified several cognitive processes that are associated with violence, especially perpetration. We have described these and their role in the interconnections among forms of violence in detail elsewhere (Hamby & Grych, 2013) and review their proposed role in perpetration briefly here. Social learning theory has been the dominant psychological theory applied to the perpetration of interpersonal violence, and the mechanisms that it proposes primarily are cognitive. Social learning theory proposes that children learn to be aggressive by observing powerful and valued individuals (such as parents and peers) engage in aggression, particularly if the child sees that the aggressive behavior is reinforced (Bandura, 1986). Exposure to violence (as a victim or witness) is proposed to lead to beliefs that violence is normative, justifiable, and effective, and these beliefs in turn increase the likelihood of aggression toward others. Documented associations between aggressive beliefs and violent perpetration in several relationship contexts support the existence of this kind of modeling of others' behavior (e.g., Foshee, Bauman, & Linder, 1999; Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004).

Social learning theory focused on how violence changes witnesses in ways that can beget later violence and the cognitive mechanisms by which this takes place, and it has been expanded and elaborated by other theorists. Huesmann (1998) emphasized the role of schemas and scripts in guiding behavior. More complex than beliefs, schemas are organized "clusters" of information, attitudes, and expectations regarding situations; scripts are similar but include a

general likely sequence of events (much like a movie script). Internal working models, a construct rooted in attachment theory, share many features with schemas (see Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). Like schemas, working models are mental representations built from experience, but have broader relevance for understanding how individuals view the self and others in close relationships. For example, individuals with secure attachment styles have positive images of themselves as loveable and others as trustworthy and responsive. In contrast, those with insecure attachment view the self as inadequate or unlovable and others as unreliable, indifferent, or rejecting (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Diverse forms of perpetration, including child abuse, exposure to family violence, teen dating violence, and adult intimate partner violence can disrupt the formation of secure attachments. Attachment insecurity, which can manifest in adults as exaggerated fears of abandonment or irrational jealousy, in turn has been linked to both perpetration and victimization in a variety of different relationship contexts (Grych & Kinsfogel, 2010).

Dodge and colleagues' social information processing model (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994) adds to the understanding of the role cognition in aggression by describing cognitive processes proposed to occur during aggressive interactions. According to social information processing, aggressive children tend to encode ambiguous social cues as threatening, attribute hostile intent to others, more easily access aggressive responses and view aggressive responses more positively. This model was developed to understand aggressive peer interactions in childhood, but can be applied to interpersonal violence more generally (DeWall et al., 2011). Information processing offers another theoretical mechanism for explaining how early exposure to abuse and violence leads to later aggressive behavior. For example, children who were physically abused may develop the belief that other people often engage in hurtful behavior, and subsequently are

more likely than non-abused children to perceive ambiguous behavior as threatening and view others as intending to cause them harm when no threat is actually apparent.

Cognition and victimization. Victimization, unlike aggressive behavior, is not intentional or desired. We certainly do not want to imply that people "think wrong" about violent experiences, but considering whether there are cognitive factors that elevate vulnerability to violence is important for understanding the risk of poly-victimization and re-victimization. In the search for factors that are carried from one violent incident to another, the influence of cognitions warrants consideration. One could hypothesize that memories of past victimization would make people especially avoidant of future victimization. Hyper-vigilance and hyper-avoidant behavior are common sequelae of victimization. Nonetheless, high rates of poly-victimization and re-victimization are also common, suggesting vigilance and avoidance are not the whole picture.

Not all cognitive frameworks seem equally likely candidates for illuminating poly-victimization and re-victimization. Social learning theory is by far the most widely cited cognitive model, but its relevance for victimization is unclear. In the classic social learning framework, a child can become aggressive because they see a powerful figure get reinforced for acting aggressively (Bandura, 1973). Victimization is not "reinforced" in the witnessed incident and in some studies (perhaps most notably the famous Bobo doll in Bandura's original studies), the target is not even a person. One could argue that whatever behavior immediately preceded the victimization is punished and thus the same experiences that increase aggression might lead to avoidance of potentially victimizing situations. This does not appear to be the case, however. Exposure to violence increases both the risk of later perpetration and victimization.

Schemas, internal working models, or similar formulations appear to hold more promise

for explaining how early exposure to violence can increase the risk of later victimization. For

example, a person who believes that violence is a normative in relationships may view

aggressive behavior as a cost of being in an intimate relationship and be less likely to see it as a

significant problem that needs to change (Heise, 1998).   Self-representations also may be related

to victimization. For example, children who are bullied tend to report lower self-efficacy for

assertive behavior and to believe that seeking help from teachers will make their situation worse

rather than better (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Egan & Perry, 1998). Consequently, they may

be perceived by others as an "easy target" because they are unlikely to defend themselves or do

something that will lead to negative consequences for the aggressor. In the domain of sexual

violence, it has been proposed that cognitive appraisals and emotions influence women's

behavioral responses to attempted sexual assault (P. Nurius & Norris, 1996). Nurius and

colleagues have shown that several types of cognitions, including the desire to preserve the

relationship and concerns about being judged negatively by the male, predicted how assertively

women responded to attempted sexual assaults (Macy, Nurius, & Norris, 2006; P. Nurius, Norris,

Macy, & Huang, 2004).

Emotional Processes

Emotions are an important and understudied component situations and relationships.

Interpersonal relationships are a primary context for meeting essential human needs for

affiliation, self-esteem, and nurturance. Threats to these needs can generate powerful emotional

responses. As with cognition, more theoretical attention has been given to the association of

emotion and aggression. Anger is usually conceptualized as a natural (i.e., unlearned) response

to the perception that someone or something is blocking an important goal, threatening one's

well-being, or violating a valued moral principle (Stein & Levine, 1987; Stein & Liwag, 1997).

Research shows that the tendency to experience and express high levels of anger consistently

predicts perpetration in adult (Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005; O'Leary, Slep, & O'Leary, 2007) and

adolescent intimate relationships (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; Wolfe, Wekerle, Reitzel-Jaffe, &

Lefebvre, 1998). Threats to the self or important goals can elicit other emotions as well (e.g.,

fear) and may give rise to responses other than aggression; thus, the relations between emotions

and the perpetration of violence can be complex. Emotional expression is also a function of

individuals' capacity to regulate affect. Individuals with emotion regulation problems are more

likely to become upset and act on aggressive impulses in a variety of interpersonal situations

(Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, & Haworth, 2002; Fosco, DeBoard, & Grych, 2007; Stuewig

& McCloskey, 2005). Emotion regulation capacities undoubtedly have a biological basis, but

experience can affect them as well. For example, child maltreatment and exposure to

interparental aggression are associated with poor emotion regulation (Davies & Cummings,

1998; Fosco & Grych, 2008; Gratz, Paulson, Jakupcak, & Tull, 2009; Maughan & Cicchetti,

2002).

　　　Emotion and victimization. Emotion constructs have received less theoretical attention in

models of victimization. The sexual victimization model developed by Nurius and Norris (1996)

described above is one exception. Consistent with the idea that aggression can be an adaptive

response to threat, they found that women experiencing anger during attempted sexual assaults

were more likely to engage in assertive behavior (P. Nurius et al., 2004). High levels of fear, in

contrast, could be immobilizing and interfere with effective behavioral responses. Recently,

Jouriles and colleagues (in press), using a virtual reality design, have shown that previously

victimized women express less annoyance and anger to unwanted sexual advances than non-

victimized women. Emotional numbing is one well-documented consequence of victimization (Kerig, Bennett, Thompson, & Becker, 2012). This is another consequence of prior victimization that can be carried into many future settings and may leave individuals vulnerable because they may recognize fewer emotional cues in those around them. Kerig and colleagues have shown that emotional numbing can increase risk for later perpetration as well, helping to elucidate the links between victimization and perpetration. For example, a longitudinal study of youth showed that psychological distress was associated with increased risk of later victimization, even when controlling for prior victimization (Cuevas, Finkelhor, Clifford, Ormrod, & Turner, 2010).

Self-Regulation

Emotion regulation reflects one facet of self-regulation, which can be defined as management of behavior in the service of a goal. Self-regulation involves maintaining an adaptive level of arousal, modulating affect, and inhibiting impulses that interfere with goal-directed behavior. These processes are hypothesized to have their basis in neuropsychological processes involved in executive functioning. Self-regulation has had a prominent role in theories of perpetration. Self-control theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) identifies the lack of inhibition of aggressive impulses as a key factor in violent crime (for a meta-analytic review see Pratt & Cullen, 2000). The inverse of self-control, impulsivity, is associated with aggressive and violent behavior (e.g., Frick & Hare, 2001). Self-regulation is the centerpiece of the I^3 model. Finkel and colleagues showed that adults could better inhibit aggressive impulses during conflict when they exhibited higher levels of dispositional self-control, were not under time pressure to respond, and received training designed to bolster self-regulation (Finkel, DeWall, Slotter, Oaten, & Foshee, 2009). Thus, although self-regulatory capacity has trait-like characteristics that evidence stability from childhood through adolescence (Hay & Forrest, 2006), it also varies

across situations. Whereas consistently poor self-regulation can help explain co-occurrence of perpetration across relationships, even characteristically strong self-regulatory skills can be undermined under certain conditions.

Self-regulation and victimization. Self-regulation has received much less attention in research on victimization, but some research shows that women with a victimization history may have more difficulties in engaging in goal-directed behavior when upset (Walsh, DiLillo, & Messman-Moore, 2012), suggesting one possible contribution to poly-victimization and re-victimization. Lack of knowledge about social conventions for displaying sadness was associated with peer victimization and poor emotional regulation was associated with the bully-victim pattern in another study (Garner & Hinton, 2010). A variety of forms of impulse control and emotional competence may be associated with victimization risk.

Research Implications

The high rate of poly-victimization, the extensive interconnections of perpetration and victimization of all types, and the similar dynamics across most forms of violence call for a more integrated approach to research. It is essential that research on poly-victimization and re-victimization conscientiously avoid tendencies towards victim blaming. Table 1 presents some guidelines for research, prevention and intervention. A co-occurrence framework also points to several new areas of study, including more research on types of interconnection. An effort to identify which are the most important dynamics leading to poly-victimization and re-victimization and what factors explain why one form occurs versus another are needed. This is needed at the theoretical level too. A comprehensive model of interpersonal violence needs to explain why one type of violence occurs rather than another, and common processes are insufficient for doing so. Intentionally or not, however, most research and theory have so far

primarily identified factors, ranging from poverty to dysregulation of the stress response, which can be applied to almost every form of victimization. To date, there has also been a considerable focus on how violence begets violence and research needs to give more attention to the role of other factors in creating risks and vulnerabilities for poly-victimization and re-victimization. Widening the range of risk factors that are studied could be beneficial, especially broadening to outer levels of the social ecology, such as family, peer and community factors. Regarding community factors, for example, there have been few studies beyond the groundbreaking work on collective efficacy (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997), but many other characteristics of communities could be studied, such as the availability of services for youth. Although longitudinal research is challenging, even "micro-longitudinal" studies that use daily diaries or other methods of experience sampling could improve our understanding of cause and effect, which is so essential especially for teasing out antecedents and consequences of victimization and perpetrator-victim cycles.

Prevention and Intervention Implications

The dynamics contributing to the interconnections among forms of victimization call for a more integrated approach to services of all kinds. Probably the most important implications for prevention and implication is that there needs to be much more attention to the links among victimization. For prevention, prevention programs should do more to incorporate coping with prior victimization and trauma into prevention curricula. Prevention programming often assumes, albeit usually implicitly, that no one in the program has been victimized. Most likely the opposite is true. By the time youth reach middle school or high school when many prevention programs are delivered, it is likely that a majority will have been exposed to peer violence, family violence, or community violence. Regrettably, many will have already been

exposed to all three. Teaching young people how to cope with victimization could be an important piece of breaking cycles of poly-victimization and re-victimization. Many prevention programs only address a single topic, such as bullying or sexual violence, but many of these risks co-occur and a more integrated approach could be more effective and also more efficient.

Regarding intervention, more widespread implementation of principles associated with trauma-informed care (or what we prefer to call "victimization-informed care" (Hamby & Grych, 2013)) are called for. Too many of our services, notably but not limited to the criminal justice and emergency health care systems, are organized around the idea that violence occurs in rare and isolated incidents. Others, such as domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers, focus on just one type of violence. This is not even close to the patterns of violence that are found in the real world. For intervention, the ultimate goal of promoting safety for all could be better advanced by conducting broader assessments of violence at all system entry points, instead of the focus on specific presenting problems and narrow mandates that are still common in many institutional settings, including child protection services, domestic violence advocacy programs, health care, law enforcement, and other settings. Finally, understanding these dynamics also calls attention to the need for providers and advocates of all types to avoid the fundamental attribution error and to make sure that assessments of victims fully take into account situational aspects. There is some evidence that conscious awareness of these biases can reduce them and that should be more formally incorporated into the training of those who work with victims.

Conclusion

Victims are not responsible for the violent acts of other people. However, other people's bad behavior is a fact of life that most of us will have to deal with at one point or another (Hamby 2013). The high rates of poly-victimization and re-victimization are strong evidence

that victimization is not randomly or evenly distributed among the population, but that some people experience chronic elevated vulnerability to violence across settings and across relationships. A large body of research indicates that there are numerous mechanisms that contribute to the risk of poly-victimization and re-victimization. The Lifespan Model of Risk and Resilience (Grych et al., 2014) identifies a range of causal factors, including situational, individual, family and community factors, that operate to increase individuals' vulnerability. Working to reduce these factors and thereby reducing chronic vulnerability and increasing resilience is an avenue worth exploring in the ongoing quest to reduce the incidence of interpersonal violence.

It is still a priority to address the reasons that some people are also at chronic elevated risk of perpetration, over time, across settings, and across relationships. In the campaign to reduce violence, however, we should not hesitate to try every possible solution. The challenge is to craft ways to discuss chronic vulnerability without blaming victims for other people's violent behavior or describing their poly-victimization and re-victimization in terms that seem to imply victims have failed in some way to respond appropriately. Instead, we can focus on interrupting the cascade of adversities that befall too many people in families, neighborhoods, and communities.

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Table 1

Steps to Avoid Victim Blaming for Research, Prevention, and Intervention on Poly-Victimization

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1) Be aware of cognitive biases that can lead to over-attribution of dispositional versus situational characteristics, including the fundamental attribution error, just-world beliefs, and actor-observer biases. Know that in most individualistic cultures we do a better job of understanding the context of our own actions than those of others and make a conscious effort to avoid these biases.

2) Be sure to fully assess situational factors.

3) Be sure to fully assess relationship, financial, legal, and institutional constraints that affect how well any one individual can minimize their risk of victimization.

4) Recognize that many factors that can increase victimization risk also represent legitimate social and psychological needs. For example, the need for intimacy and the establishment of close relationships could increase the risk of violence compared to a more socially isolated person but that does not mean that social isolation is, on balance, better than having close relationships.

5) Recognize that some factors that increase risk of victimization are fairly static and immutable personal characteristics such as gender and race.