

# Intimate Violence: Examining Betrayal and Posttrauma Outcomes

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## Background: Sexual Assault and Revictimization

Women are at high risk for revictimization following sexual assault. Ecological theory points to potential predictors of revictimization, while betrayal trauma theory suggests aspects of ecologies that may be particularly relevant.

**Ecological models of revictimization** (e.g., Messman-Moore & Long, 2003) emphasize looking at micro- and macro-system factors. The microsystem includes individual difference variables, such as risky behaviors (e.g., alcohol use), interpersonal connectedness (e.g., social support), psychological distress (e.g., dissociation), and emotions (e.g., self-blame). The macro-system includes social context variables, such as victim blaming.

Research derived from **betrayal trauma theory** (e.g., DePrince, 2005) suggests that dissociation, closeness of the victim-offender relationship, unawareness of betrayal in the original assault, and perception that an institution failed to prevent or effectively respond to the assault (i.e., institutional betrayal) may contribute to revictimization risk.

Following recent sexual assault, **we tested predictors derived from ecological and betrayal trauma theories of revictimization** over a 9-month period.

Betrayal trauma variables significantly contributed to the prediction of revictimization when added to ecological variables. When examining individual predictors, revictimization was significantly predicted by greater symptoms of dissociation.

This pattern of findings is consistent with the concept of “unawareness” introduced by betrayal trauma theory. That is, having decreased awareness of the original sexual assault increases risk for later assaults. For example, unawareness may lead to impaired risk detection, which could increase revictimization risk (see DePrince et al., 2015).

## Discussion

Limitations: Dissociation was not measured at baseline, though all other predictors were.

Note that these findings do not discount the importance of non-betrayal-related ecological factors as potential contributors to revictimization. However, this study highlights that social betrayal and related unawareness may be a particularly important dynamic to identify and address for survivors of sexual assault.

## Method: Women’s Health Project

Procedure:

- Consent process and initial Time 1 (T1) interview
- Follow-up Time 2 (3 month), 3 (6 month) and 4 (9 month) interviews
- Female interviewer administered survey and interview (Dissociation measure not administered at T1)

Inclusion Criteria:

- Woman (self-identified female gender identity)
- Age 18+
- English speaker
- Unwanted sexual experience in last year that was disclosed to a formal support person (e.g., police)

## Materials

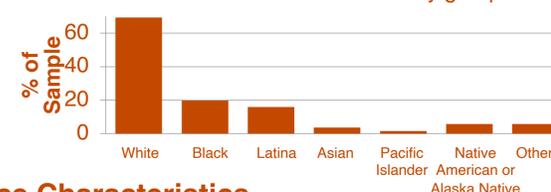
Variable	Measurement
<b>Ecological Theory Predictors</b>	
Alcohol Use	Participant responses on the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT).
Self-Blame	Participant appraisals of self-blame related to the original sexual assault, as measured by the TAQ.
Social Support	Participant perceptions of social support, as measured by the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL).
Victim Blame (family, friends, legal system, community agency)	Participant perceptions of victim blaming reactions received from informal supports, as measured by the Social Reactions Questionnaire (SRQ).
<b>Betrayal Trauma Predictors</b>	
Relationship to the Offender	Participant rating of closeness (not close, some association, close) of offender, identified during administration of the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES).
Betrayal	Participant appraisals of betrayal related to the original sexual assault, as measured by the Trauma Appraisal Questionnaire (TAQ).
Dissociation	Participant responses on the Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES).
Institutional Betrayal	Sum of items endorsed on the Institutional Betrayal Questionnaire (IBQ).

## Participants (n = 124) Subsample of women who participated in T2 DES administration

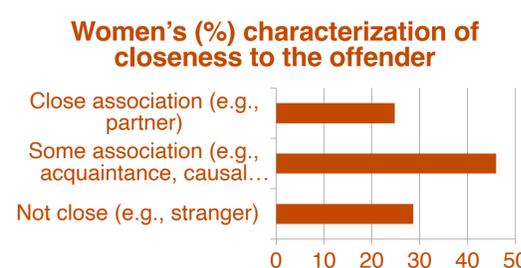
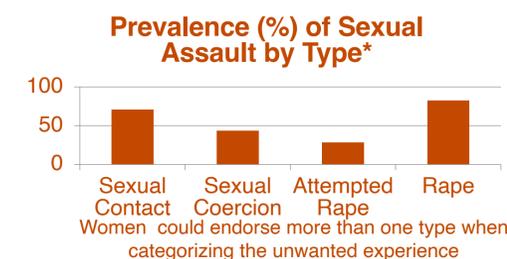
**Age**  
Average = 33.5 (SD= 11.27)  
Range = 18 – 62

**Sexual Orientation**  
18% identified as lesbian, bisexual, asexual, or other

**Race/Ethnicity**  
39% identified with ≥ 1 ethnic/racial minority groups



## Unwanted Sexual Experience Characteristics



## Zero-Order Correlations among Predictors

	Self-Blame	Social Support	Victim Blame	Relation to Offender	Betrayal	Dissociation	Institutional Betrayal
Alcohol Use	.05	.06	.08	-.13	-.15	-.06	.06
Self-Blame		-.29**	.20*	.08	.26**	.27**	.09
Social Support			-.22**	-.07	-.25**	-.30**	.12
Victim Blame				-.10	.15	.32**	.21*
Relation to Offender					.45**	.13	-.03
Betrayal						.35**	-.07
Dissociation							-.05

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.001

## Results

### Revictimization

41% of women reported ≥1 new instance of sexual assault within 9 months.

### Binary Logistic Regression Model Predicting Revictimization (no = 0, yes = 1)

	Model 1 (Ecological)				Model 2 (Betrayal Trauma)			
	B	SE	Wald	Odds	B	SE	Wald	Odds
Alcohol Use	.01	.02	.08	1.01	.01	.02	.04	1.01
Self-Blame	.12	.19	.38	1.13	.14	.22	.44	1.15
Social Support	-.01	.02	.36	.99	-.01	.03	.18	.99
Victim Blame	.52*	.25	4.33	1.67	.53	.29	3.32	1.69
Relation to Offender					-.25	.31	.64	.78
Interpersonal Betrayal					-.35	.25	1.93	.71
<b>Dissociation</b>					<b>.03*</b>	<b>.01</b>	<b>5.05</b>	<b>1.03</b>
Institutional Betrayal					-.13	.10	1.78	.88
χ <sup>2</sup> block	7.31				9.8*			
χ <sup>2</sup> model	7.31				17.16*			
% correct classification								
Overall					62%			67%
Not revictimized					85%			87%
Revictimized					28%			40%

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