

Understanding male sexual violence victims' reporting and prosecution decisions: presenting a methodology.

Laura Scurlock-Evans, Bere Mahoney, Psychological Sciences, University of Worcester.

Context

- Sexual assault is a common problem in society and has been found to have adverse consequences for victims' mental health (Darves-Bornoz et al., 2008).

- Although there is a growing body of research exploring the experience of female sexual assault victims, less exists for male victims (Pino & Meier, 1999).

- The available research provides different prevalence estimates of male sexual victimisation (Coxell, King, Mezey, & Gordon, 1999; King, Coxell, & Mezey, 2002; Stern, 2010; Walby & Allen, 2004), due in part to the plethora of definitions used (e.g. rape, non-consensual sex, sexual assault, sexual victimisation), making comparisons difficult.

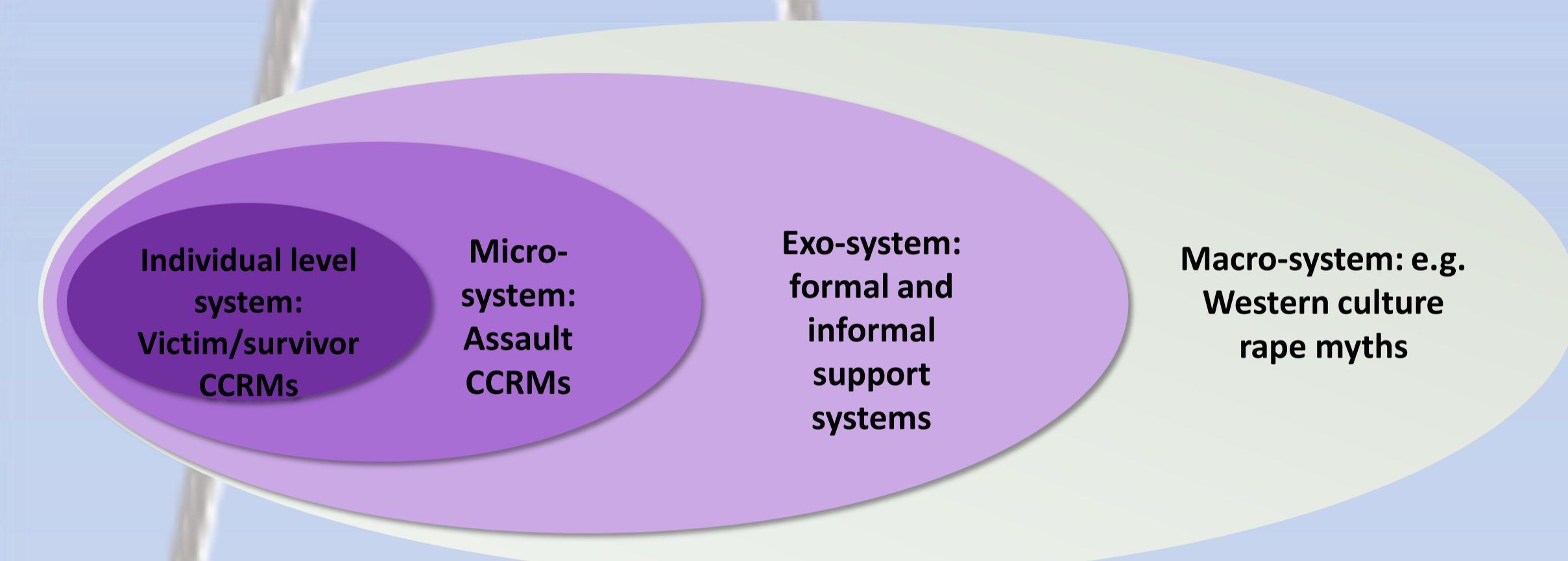
- Few large-scale studies have been conducted exploring male sexual victimisation in the UK since the 1990s (Coxell et al., 1999; King et al., 2002), therefore existing published research is unlikely to reflect changes in law, attitudes and reporting procedures.

- Many studies are descriptive, atheoretical and report only univariable analyses (Coxell et al., 1999; King et al., 2002).

Critical framework

- This research will follow a socioecological approach adapted from that developed by Belsky (1980) to explore how social-ecologies interact to facilitate child maltreatment.

- The socioecological model adopted contains four systems within which an individual is embedded (Grauerholz, 2000; Anders, 2007): individual level (victim/survivor characteristics), Microsystem (assault characteristics), Exosystem (social support) and Macrosystem (cultural values and belief systems).



- Anders (2007) used this revised model to explore factors influencing female sexual assault victims' prosecution decisions.

- Anders (2007) used the Feminist Rape Mythology Hypothesis (FRMH; Anders, 2007), which proposes that cultures are imbued with rape myths (i.e. what constitutes a "true" rape), to identify Characteristics Congruent with Rape Mythology (CCRM) for both Survivors and their assaults.

- The FRMH suggests that the more CCRMs exhibited by an individual/assault, the more likely they are to be believed and supported (Anders, 2007).

- Anders (2007) and Grauerholz (2000) modelled the Individual-level and Microsystems using Survivor and Assault CCRMs, and explored their interaction with the exosystem to affect behaviour. Neither study modelled the Macrosystem, owing to the scale of research this would require.

Research questions

- What factors contribute to adult male sexual violence victims' decisions to report their experiences to the police?
- If male victims do report their experiences to the police, what factors contribute to their decision to pursue with the prosecution of their case?

Research objectives

- Integrate the available research on adult male sexual assault
- Provide an estimate of its prevalence in England and Wales
- Develop a socioecological model of adult male victims' reporting decisions (Study 1)
- Develop a socioecological model of adult male victims' prosecution decisions (study 2)
- Explore, using qualitative methods, how different social-ecologies interact to influence adult male victims' reporting and prosecution decisions (study 3)

Methodology

- This research will follow the methodology outlined above using the FRMH to model the Individual-level, micro-system and exo-system, to explore factors predicting adult male victims' reporting and prosecution decisions.

Study 1 & 2

- Will use British Crime Survey (BCS) data, collected between 2004 and 2012.
- This is collected annually by the government in England and Wales, and records people's experiences and perceptions of crime in the previous year.
- The BCS provides the level of detail, and access to a large number of cases, required to develop the required models and is believed to reflect the experience of crime more accurately because it does not rely on reported crime. This is invaluable because only a small percentage of people are believed to report their experiences to police (Stern, 2010).

It is anticipated that data from these studies will be analysed using structural equation modelling (a statistical technique which allows relationships between variables to be tested).

Challenges

- Key potential issues include: identifying an appropriate method of combining BCS datasets, defining "sexual victimisation", identifying male rape mythology to adapt the FRMH, identifying relevant indicators of CCRMs within the BCS, effectively conceptualising and operationalising the required socioecological systems and avoiding over-interpretation of relationships between variables (i.e. causality).

Study 3

- Approximately 30 semi-structured interviews will be conducted with volunteer support-workers of male sexual violence victims, and analysed using the abbreviated Grounded Theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
- Volunteer support-workers have a wealth of experience with interagency work and have supported people from a range of situations.
- This will also avoid some ethical and practical issues (Jamel, 2008) involved with recruiting male sexual assault victims.

Challenges

- The key issues anticipated with study 3 include: participant recruitment, effectively operationalising the mechanisms identified by the previous studies and over-interpretation of findings (i.e. an "explanation" of studies 1 and 2).

Conclusion

- Ultimately, this research aims to bring together quantitative and qualitative research, to better understand the factors contributing to male sexual assault victims' reporting and prosecution decisions.

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