

Box 1.1 Polyvictimization

Most books on the topic of intimate violence are organized similarly. After an introductory chapter and a theory/methods chapter, subsequent chapters are arranged by topic: child physical abuse, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and so on. It is hard to imagine another organizational strategy, and we have ourselves organized this book in a similar way. The problem with compartmentalizing the various forms of interpersonal violence in this way, however, is that it masks a very important empirical reality: the various forms of violence and maltreatment that comprise these chapters do not typically occur independent of one another. That is, many victims, arguably most victims, are victimized in more than one way.

Polyvictimization is the term we use to describe the empirical reality that victims are often exposed to multiple forms of violence and maltreatment. One child, for example, might be physically abused, sexually abused, psychologically abused, neglected, and exposed to other violence as well (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007). He might witness his parents fighting. He might live in a violent neighborhood. He might be bullied at school. Senior citizens might be at the same time physically abused and neglected, financially exploited, and abandoned. Intimate partners, as well, may be abused psychologically, physically, and sexually (Sabina & Straus, 2008).

Yale psychologist Alan Kazdin (2011) maintains that *all* forms of interpersonal violence—child, intimate partner, and elder—are interconnected. Because their causes and effects intersect, studying them together has the potential to produce interventions that could potentially impact multiple forms of intimate violence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), acknowledging the interconnectedness of all forms of interpersonal violence, recently introduced a five-year vision plan to prevent violence, summarized in the document *Preventing Multiple Forms of Violence: A Strategic Vision for Connecting the Dots* (CDC, 2016b). This vision is based on the mounting empirical evidence that (1) victims of one form of violence are likely to experience other forms, (2) those who are violent in one context are likely to be violent in another context, (3) different forms of violence share similar consequences, and (4) different forms of violence share common risk and protective factors (CDC, 2016b).