

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Douglas A. Brownridge. *Violence against Women: Vulnerable Populations.* Contemporary Sociological Perspectives. New York: Routledge, 2009, 320 pp. \$US 39.95 paper (978-0-415-99608-2), \$US 135.00 hardcover (978-0-415-99607-5)

In *Violence against Women: Vulnerable Populations*, Douglas A. Brownridge focuses on populations of women particularly vulnerable to violent victimization from an intimate male partner. It is an original and unique investigation, as little has been written on violence against women in vulnerable populations using quantitative data. He defines vulnerable populations “as groups of individuals who share common characteristics not held by the rest of the population and who are uniquely vulnerable with respect to risk and/or experiences surrounding violence” (p. 1). By definition every woman victim of violence is at some point in her life trajectory in a vulnerable situation and therefore part of a vulnerable group. Brownridge does not deny women’s vulnerability when living in an abusive relationship, but he considers vulnerability in light of risks for women being victims of violent crime.

Although Brownridge suggests that the reader can choose to read chapters in any sequence, two chapters are essential reading. In Chapter 2, he discusses diverse theoretical perspectives and his rationale for using the intersectionality approach to explain decisions made regarding vulnerable populations. An intersectionality approach recognizes multiple oppressions as shaping women’s experiences: how different structures intersect in women lives and impact women victims of violence. For researchers well versed on the intersectionality approach the discussion can seem simplistic, but for others Brownridge explains clearly what “interesectionality” encompasses. Chapter 3 also needs to be read to understand the quantitative material Brownridge uses and its limitations.

From Chapters 4 to 11, Brownridge investigates some risk factors of violence against women in vulnerable populations. These include cohabitation and marital status, homeownership status, post-separation situation, rural and urban settings, and colonization in violence against aboriginal women. Each chapter provides contextual information, an explanation of the specific risk factor, theoretical background, presentation and analysis of the data, discussion and conclusion. In sum, each chapter

contains all the ingredients to clearly understand a specific risk factor in violence against women.

While it is worthwhile to break down diverse vulnerable population groups and examine individual risk factors, vulnerable populations are not mutually exclusive and may share more than one “vulnerable” characteristic. An intersectionality approach commands an analysis of intersecting dimensions in peoples’ lives. For example, it would have been interesting to consider the intersections of aboriginal women living in rural versus urban settings, cohabiting status and other risk factors. Yet, Brownridge reminds the reader that his study is but a first step in studying vulnerable populations and violence against women and that “the data on which it was based possessed several limitations that need to be overcome in future research ...” (p. 270). Overall, the book is an important work on violence against women.

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