

**INTIMATE VIOLENCE AGAINST RURAL WOMEN:  
THE CURRENT STATE OF SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

Sociological research on violence against rural women quickly exploded on the scene in the latter part of the last decade. There is now strong international empirical evidence showing that rural women are at greater risk of experiencing various types of intimate violence than are their urban and suburban counterparts. Nevertheless, more sociological empirical and theoretical contributions are necessary. The main objective of this paper is to describe the current state of sociological knowledge about intimate violence against rural women and to suggest new directions in understanding this problem.

**Keywords:** violence against women, patriarchy, comparative, criminological theory



## Introduction

Compared to social scientific work on other violations of social and legal norms, such as juvenile delinquency, the sociological study of intimate violence against women is a relatively new field of inquiry. We know that violence against wives has existed for at least as long as we have had written records. However, the academic research literature before the 1970s is particularly meager (DeKeseredy, Dragiewicz, & Schwartz, 2017). For example, the important scholarly publication *Journal of Marriage and the Family*'s 1971 special issue on family violence was the first time since this periodical's inception in 1939 that the word "violence" appeared in the title of an article. It was not uncommon for discussions of "conflict" to be published, but "apparently violence, as such, was either assumed to be too touchy an issue for research or else thought to be so idiosyncratic as to be unimportant as a feature in 'normal' families" (O'Brien, 1971, p. 692).

After that 1971 special issue, research on violence against women mushroomed in the 1970s (Gelles, 1980). Since then, it is difficult to keep track of all the new journals in the field, let alone the thousands of articles published across a broad swath of the literature. Just as one isolated but powerful example of the proliferation of theoretical, empirical, and policy work, the peer-reviewed journal *Violence Against Women* is now published 14 times annually, when the norm for journals is three or four issues, or occasionally six. There is also competition. Articles on a broad range of harms experienced by women now routinely appear in a large and growing variety of journals dedicated to this problem, such as the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, and *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. Certainly, we know now much more about intimate violence against women than we did over forty years ago.

Intimate violence against women is endemic to most, if not all societies. However, some categories of women are much more likely than others to be subjected to lethal and non-lethal acts of violence committed by their current or former partners. Rural women constitute one high risk group, but historically have been given short shrift by the social scientific community. For example, now in its third edition, even Renzetti, Edleson, and Kennedy Bergen's (2018) widely read and cited *Sourcebook on Violence Against Women* barely touches upon the plight of rural women. That the word "rural" is only listed three times in the index is powerful statement on the selective inattention still given to abused women in rural communities. This is not surprising because, as made explicit throughout Donnermeyer's (2016) *Routledge International Handbook of Rural Criminology* and elsewhere (e.g., Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2014), criminology is generally urban-biased. Yet, the empirical and theoretical literature on intimate murder, sexual assault, physical violence, and other hurtful behaviors experienced by rural women has rapidly grown since the latter part of the last decade (DeKeseredy, Hall-Sanchez, Dragiewicz, & Rennison, 2016). This article chronicles sociological developments in the field and suggests new directions in research and theorizing. Following the approach taken by the contributors to the

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anthology *Violence Against Women and Children: Mapping the Terrain* (White, Koss, & Kazdin, 2011), answers to these three “seemingly simple questions” are provided: What do we know? How do we know it? What are the next steps?

### **Looking Back: A Brief History of the Sociological Study of Intimate Violence Against Rural Women**

There is a growing international literature on violence against rural women, but the bulk of the sociological offerings were, and still are, produced in the United States. As well, rural woman abuse studies started on a different path than the one taken by their urban and suburban counterparts. For example, the bulk of the studies of the intimate victimization of non-rural women done since the 1970s are quantitative and informed by mainstream theoretical perspectives, such as social learning theory. Increasingly, though, sociological research on violence against women in general is becoming a-theoretical and there is much less sociological empirical work than there was 20 years ago (DeKeseredy, 2016). Jordan’s (2009) bibliometric analysis, although slightly dated, shows that the most cited violence against women authors for 2003 to 2007 are based in psychology, psychiatry, nursing, and medicine. These disciplines tend to focus more on individuals and lose sight of the ways in which broader social, cultural, political, and economic forces shape violence against women, and of societal reactions to its many shapes and forms.

On the other hand, most of the research on violence against rural women is “resolutely sociological in orientation” (Carrington & Hogg, 2008), informed mainly by feminist ways of knowing, and relies primarily on qualitative methods like rich, in-depth interviews. Gagne’s (1992, 1996) ethnographic feminist work on rural woman abuse played an important role in sparking contemporary sociological research. Shortly after came Websdale’s (1998) Kentucky-based ethnography. Nevertheless, the flames did not emerge until the latter part of the last decade with the publication of a spate of scholarly books, journal articles, and chapters based on qualitative studies.<sup>2</sup> Note, too, that there has recently been an increase in quantitative sociological research on rural woman abuse, especially that involving secondary analyses of the National Crime Victimization Survey (e.g., Rennison & DeKeseredy, 2017; Rennison, DeKeseredy, & Dragiewicz, 2012, 2013).

Many researchers, practitioners, and policy makers doubted claims made by DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009), among others (McDonnell, Ott, & Mitchell, 2010), that rural communities have higher rates of violence against women compared to urban and suburban places (Edwards, 2014). We now know that rural American women are at higher risk than those living in the other two areas. As well, the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women found that the highest amount of overall intimate violence against women in the Global South occurs in rural locales (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005).

Following Carrington, Hogg, and Sozzo (2015), a key difference between the Global North and the Global South is “the divide between the metropolitan states of Western Europe and North America, on the one hand, and the countries of Latin America, Asia, and Oceania, on the other” (p. 2).

Theoretical developments are keeping pace with the burgeoning empirical literature and again, the bulk of the relevant theoretical work draws heavily from various strands of feminism and prioritizes the gendered nature of intimate violence. For instance, Wendt’s (2009, 2016) theoretical approach focuses mainly on rural Australian culture and women’s experiences of male violence, while Websdale’s (1998) contribution focuses primarily on the rural Kentucky criminal justice system’s response to woman battering. Other contemporary developments include integrated theories of separation/divorce sexual assault that emphasize both the influence of broader patriarchal forces and sexist male subcultural dynamics, otherwise known as *male peer support*.<sup>1</sup> Also, DeKeseredy, Muzzatti, and Donnermeyer (2014) developed an integrated perspective on the horridification and pornification of rural culture, one that merges cultural criminological and radical feminist modes of thought.

Some Australian theoretical work is like that being done in North America on male peer support, with a strong emphasis on how male drinking practices shape and escalate violence (Carrington, McIntosh, & Scott, 2010; Tomsen, 2007). The relationship between frontier masculinities, mining and gendered violence is another major focal point of theoretical attention in Australian (Hogg & Carrington, 2016).

The theories briefly mentioned here constitute a refreshing change from social disorganization perspectives, which are the offerings most frequently adopted by rural criminologists (DeKeseredy & Donnermeyer, 2013; Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2014). Jakobsen (2016a), too, challenges the “long-assumed association of violent crime with disorder, disruption, and deviance from social norms” (p. 3). Instead, she found that violence against women in Tanzania is “socially legitimate.” As she correctly points out in her other work in Tanzania (Jakobsen, 2016b), “violence against women there can it itself be a form of community law enforcement, in that it enforces community norms with the permission of the state to maintain a specific social order” (p. 415). The theoretical and empirical work on violence against women done by Jakobsen, DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009), and Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2014) confirms that what may appear to outsiders as social disorganization is often “simply a different form of social organization if one takes the trouble to look closely” (Wacquant, 1997, p. 346).

In sum, then, the study of intimate violence against rural women has come a long way since Gagne’s (1992, 1996) path-breaking research. In addition to briefly chronicling the history of

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sociological work in the field, this section provided a few answers to the questions “What do we know?” and “How do we know it?” It is to more answers that I now turn.

### **Violence Against Rural Women: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?**

Based on reviews of a large body of international qualitative and quantitative research (DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, in press; DeKeseredy et al., 2016; Edwards, 2014), we know for sure that non-lethal violence against women (e.g., beatings, sexual assaults, stalking) happens regularly in rural communities around the world and that rural women are at higher risk of experiencing this problem than are those in more populated places. What about the risk of *femicide*? This is the “killing of females by male partners with whom they have had, or want to have a sexual and/or emotional relationship” (Ellis & DeKeseredy, 1997, p. 592). There are many homicide studies, but there is a limited amount of research on murders in rural communities (DeKeseredy et al., 2016). Of the few U.S. studies done so far, five out of six reveal that the proportion of rural females murdered by intimate partners is higher than the percentages of women killed in other geographic areas.<sup>3</sup> Rural femicide is not limited to the U.S. and annually between 5,000 and 12,000 women and girls and women lose their lives to honor killings, primarily in Asia and the Middle East (Gill, 2014). Many such killings occur in rural, patriarchal towns and villages (Sev’er, 2013).

It is difficult, if not impossible, to get accurate rural murder data from the Global South. An unknown number of femicides, dowry murders, or any other type of male-to-female homicide that occur there are improperly dealt with by criminal justice officials or medical personnel and are recorded as “accidents” (Carrington, 2015; Krug et al., 2002; True, 2012). The same can be said about an unknown amount of murders that occur in the Global North (DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, in press). Indeed, there are major methodological challenges in studying some types of violence against women around the world. In the words of the late pioneering woman abuse researcher, Michael D. Smith (1987), “Obtaining accurate estimates of the extent of woman abuse in the population at large remains perhaps the biggest methodological challenge in ... research on this topic” (p. 185).

It is unclear why rural women are at higher risk of being killed than are urban and suburban women. Regrettably, government statistics on intimate femicide are “bone dry” and are bereft of rich sociological information (DeKeseredy et al., 2017; Jones, 1980). As stated by the World Health Organization (2012), “police and medical data-collection systems that document cases of homicide often do not have the necessary information or do not report the victim-perpetrator relationship or the motives for homicide, let alone gender-related motivations for murder” (p. 63). Still, it is fair to presume that guns play a role in the higher rural rates of femicide (DeKeseredy et al., 2016). For example, Canada and the U.S. consistently have the highest

homicide rates among the most advanced industrial nations (Currie, 2015; Dobash & Dobash, 2015), and rural places in these countries have higher rates of gun ownership than metropolitan places (Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2014). What is more, in Canada, nearly 50 percent of domestic homicides involving firearms occurred in rural communities, though rural homes account for less than 20 percent of Canada's population (DeKeseredy et al., 2016).

Another indicator of the role of guns is Hall-Sanchez's (2014) recent qualitative study of a rural southeast Ohio hunting subculture. She notes:

Regardless of why these men participated in the hunting subculture, the excruciatingly imperative reality is that it allowed them access to a legal and justifiable weapon that could be (and often times was) used to intimidate, threaten, control, and hurt their female partners. This fact alone has a profound impact on the lives of rural women experiencing violence in their intimate relationships, especially when they are expressing a desire to or actually separating from their abusive male partners (p. 502).

Guns were used in similar ways as uncovered by DeKeseredy and Schwartz's (2009) rural southeast Ohio study of separation/divorce sexual assault. And, Websdale's (1998) earlier rural Kentucky study supports the above observation made by Hall-Sanchez (2014). He argues:

Rural culture, with its acceptance of firearms for hunting and self-protection, may include a code among certain men that accepts the casual use of firearms to intimidate wives and intimate partners. In urban areas it is more difficult for abusers to discharge their weapons and go undetected. People in the country are more familiar with the sound of gunshots and often attribute the sound to legitimate uses such as hunting (p. 10).

Though we know little about the reasons for higher rates of rural femicide, we do know much about why rural women are at higher risk of experiencing non-lethal violence and the bulk of the data on risk factors are derived from North American and Australian researchers. The extant literature points to the following major determinants:<sup>2</sup>

- violent rural men are protected by a “good o’ boys” network consisting of criminal justice officials;<sup>4</sup>
- geographic and social isolation;
- a strong “rural patriarchy” (Websdale, 1998);
- widespread acceptance of woman abuse and community norms prohibiting women from seeking social support;

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- rural women, by comparison, have fewer social support services than urban and suburban women;
- high rates of male pornography consumption;
- inadequate (if any) public transportation; and
- high levels of *collective efficacy* that promote violence against women and discourage victims from seeking help.

Collective efficacy is commonly defined as “mutual trust among neighbors combined with a willingness to act on behalf of the common good, specifically to supervise children and to maintain public order” (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1998, p. 1). Jakobson’s (2016a, 2016b) Tanzanian research is one of a growing number of scholarly reminders that criminologists should reconceptualize collective efficacy as a form of social organization that enables crimes like violence against women. The same can be said about DeKeseredy and Schwartz’s (2009) study. Sixty-seven percent of the rural Ohio women they interviewed reported on a variety of ways in which their ex-partners’ male peers perpetuated and legitimated separation/divorce sexual assault. Forms of hegemonic patriarchy are not sustained in a socio-cultural vacuum of individuals acting mostly on their own, but in networks of similar-minded males. It is not social disorganization that frees up a few so-called deviants to commit crime, but forms of collective efficacy or social organization that allows individuals to learn about and behave in ways that sustain and reinforce their offending (Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2014).

What we also know from the current state of sociological knowledge on violence against rural women is that theorizing is alive and well. Prior to the middle of the last decade, rural crime research had not yet developed a theoretical framework that could synthesize the extant scholarly literature on what Hogg and Carrington (2006) refer to as “gendered violence and the architecture of rural life” (p. 171). Further, the limited theoretical work that did exist on the topic ignored separation/divorce sexual assault. Of course, the neglect on the part of scholars to examine this problem applies to woman abuse research in general (DeKeseredy et al., 2017). In response to these two gaps in the violence against rural women theoretical literature, DeKeseredy, Rogness, and Schwartz (2004) and DeKeseredy and colleagues (2007) crafted research-driven theories of separation/divorce sexual assault in rural places that allow for a simultaneous consideration of broader macro-level forces and micro-gender relations of central concern to feminist scholars. Though too detailed to describe here, these two offerings move well beyond answering the problematic question “Why doesn’t she leave?” to “What happens when she leaves or tries to leave?” and “Why do men do that?” (Bancroft, 2002; Hardesty, 2002; Stark, 2007). The “Why doesn’t she leave” question blames females for the abuse they endure in intimate relationships, rather than the person committing the criminal acts. As well, as Stark

(2007) notes, “It is men who stay, not their partners”; undeniably, “there is no greater challenge in the abuse field than getting men to exit abusive relationships” (p. 130). To be sure, feminists are at the forefront of theoretical work on separation/divorce woman abuse in rural places.

## **What are the Next Steps?**

Intimate violence against rural women no longer remains at the sociological / criminological margins, but there is still “a lot of work to do” (Jensen, 2007). Though it may seem painfully obvious, it is necessary to again state that more research is necessary. Cross-cultural surveys are in short-supply and thus far, to the best of my knowledge, only one such major study has been conducted that included rural women (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). Moreover, this WHO project is now dated, and it is devoid of theory testing (DeKesseredy & Hall-Sanchez, in press), which can also be said about the bulk of the quantitative studies of rural woman abuse that have been administered to date. What is more, the extant quantitative work tends to focus solely on rural, urban, and suburban variations, which, as Edwards (2014) reminds us, “obscures a number of important contextual features, and future research would benefit from moving away from examining rurality or urbanicity as undifferentiated categories.” She is also correct to note that future quantitative work “would benefit from the inclusion of explanatory variables to help contextualize differences detected... across and within locales” (p. 9). Edwards further observes that though there is sound research documenting the risk factors for non-lethal violence noted in the previous section, the extent to which these determinants are “differentially related” to violence against women in rural and other places has yet to be studied.

Also needed are prospective and longitudinal studies because most of the survey work done so far is cross-sectional, which makes it difficult to identify risk and protective factors related to perpetration and victimization (Edwards, 2014). To be added to the “wish list” are more smaller-scale studies of individual countries. Generally, large-scale, international surveys, such as the WHO multi-country study, tend to report prevalence rates lower than those found in smaller studies. Language barriers, fear of revealing the abuse, distrust of authorities, and cultural secrecy norms contribute to underreporting and “suggest the need for more culturally sensitive research” (Machado, Dias, & Coelho, 2010, p. 651).

Regardless of whether they are qualitative or quantitative, sorely needed are data derived from rural male perpetrators (Wendt, 2016). There are less than a handful of studies on male offenders and all them to date only include men who were arrested (Edwards, 2014). One notable exception is Jakobsen’s (2016a) focus group study of how violence against women contributes to social order in Tanzania. This is not enough. The research community is now at the point where it can confidently state that substantial number of rural women experience various types of woman abuse. Therefore, it is time to use different techniques to determine what drives rural

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men to be abusive and this will enable researchers to test some of the theories covered in this article, which have yet to be tested using quantitative techniques (DeKeseredy et al., 2017).<sup>5</sup>

Members of the LGBTQ community experience equal or higher rates of intimate violence compared to heterosexuals (Messinger, 2017; Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013; Walters & Pippy, 2016). Are the victimization and perpetration experiences of LGBTQ people different or similar across geographic regions? This question has yet to be answered empirically (Edwards, 2014). As Messinger (2017) puts it, intimate violence against rural LGBTQ people living in rural places is “greatly understudied” (p. 57). Perhaps this is because researchers incorrectly assume that LGBTQ people are more comfortable in urban settings and thus it would be difficult, if not impossible, to generate a reasonable sample size. Recent research on the lives of rural LGBTQ people may be limited, but what does exist shows that many LGBTQ people now live in rural areas and enjoy doing so (Baker, 2016). Hence, “We need to think twice, then, before acceding to the notion that rural life necessarily involves isolation from broader national and international trends” (Johnson, Gilley, & Gray, 2016, p. 3).

If there is a dearth of research on rural LGBTQ victimization and perpetration in the Global North, there is even less in the Global South (DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, in press). Even so, same-sex research is beginning to emerge there, including in the African continent. The research done to date strongly suggests that gathering data on the various forms of oppression that southern women experience requires breaking away from the canons of mainstream research and doing case studies, collecting stories and narratives, and obtaining visual representations (Currier & Migraine-George, 2016; Morgan & Wieringa, 2005). Additionally, some African lesbian activists are working to prevent violence in lesbian relationships, as well as developing initiatives to prevent homophobic and transphobic violence (Currier, 2012; Matebeni, 2009; Theron, 2013).

In Tanzania, there is what Jakobsen (2016a) defines a “recent mushrooming of research” on violence against women in heterosexual relationships. Maybe this is a sign that woman abuse researchers in Africa might be open to broaden their research agendas to include the experiences of women in same-sex relationships.

Ethnographic work is also necessary to help fill the research gap on violence in Global South lesbian relationships. One useful model is the research presented in Stevenson Allen’s (2015) book *Violence and Desire in Brazilian Relationships*. She provides much hope for other researchers seeking to capture rich qualitative data on violence in Brazilian lesbian relationships. For instance, Stevenson Allen (2015) states:

‘God wanted me to conduct research about lesbian women in Brazil.’ I have often made this statement of the years because ‘luck’ and ‘chance’ inadequately describe my experiences conducting fieldwork. I do not exaggerate when I state that it has

been with relative ease that I have been able to encounter lesbian women throughout my travels in Brazil. More important, they embraced my research project and were willing to share their lives with me. Thus, I am forever grateful for these lesbian and *entendida* women who gave me the privilege of hearing their stories and experiencing life alongside them. Conducting ethnography was an intense, emotional, and ultimately extraordinary experience for me because of the friendships that I developed in Salvador. My gratitude also extends to the LGBT organizations in Salvador because their leaders generously gave me permission to attend meetings, granted me access to their members, and personally met with me on numerous occasions. Additionally, I was able to draw on the support of lesbian activists and organizations in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (p. xi).

The data gathering techniques recommended for use in the Global South are also appropriate for studies of LGBTQ people's violent experiences in the Global North. Some rural Northern rural communities are more likely to be homophobic and transphobic than others and so the methods suggested above could help researchers deal with the challenges of "silence, repression, and uncertainty" (Currier & Migraine-George, 2016, p. 1).

Until recently, the bulk of the research on the "dark side" of the Internet and other new technologies either ignored or overlooked the fact that various technologies are now tools used by many men to exert control and power over their current or former female partners (DeKeseredy et al, 2017; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016; Navarro, Clevenger, & Marcum, 2016). Global communication technologies are not limited to urban areas or to the Global North, but we do not know the exact extent of the online victimization of women in rural areas and those living in the Global South (DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, in press). However, given that research on image-based sexual abuse and other electronic means of victimization (e.g., stalking) is in its infancy, we also do not have accurate estimates of these problems in more densely populated areas in the Global North (DeKeseredy et al., 2017).

A problem plaguing much of the research on intimate violence against women in general is the use of narrow operational definitions of abusive experiences, such as those that are limited only to physically injurious behaviors (DeKeseredy, 2016). Demonstrated by some rural studies (e.g., DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009; DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, 2017), violence against women, though, is multidimensional in nature and includes a broad range of brutal acts that do not cause physical harm, but still hurt women (and often their children) economically, psychologically, and spiritually.

Acts not involving physical force should be considered as serious in future rural research as those involving beatings and forced penetration. Just as an example, it is possible to create a terroristic household thought threats and fear, but without engaging in physical violence. The

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people trapped in such households can be completely terrorized and suffer extreme trauma but have no bruises or cuts. Consider what happened to this rural Ohio woman interviewed by DeKeseredy & Schwartz (2009). After her partner discovered that she wanted to leave him:

He was very emotionally abusive. He like to put me down. He used to tell me...that I was a horrible mother, that he was going to take the kids away from me, that I was, you know, a horrible person, that I was stupid (p. 64).

Another interviewee said, “He was constantly degrading me, telling me that I did a terrible job at sex, and I am thinking, then why don’t you go away and find somebody else?” (p. 65). These two women are not, by most definitions currently in use, battered women because they were never touched, but the consequences of their experiences of psychological abuse can last forever, as is the case with this woman interviewed by DeKeseredy and Schwartz:

And years ago, when I still only had one child, he told me he knew that I wanted out of the relationship and he said, “If I can’t have you, I’m gonna make it so nobody can have you.” And I didn’t understand what he was talking about. And it was many, many years later that I realized he meant psychologically. He was going to destroy me psychologically so I wouldn’t be fit to enter into another relationship. And it’s basically true; I have not had any other relationship. I’m afraid to go into a relationship. I don’t trust men in general. So basically I live a solitary life, not by choice, but because I’m afraid I’m going to end up in a relationship like that again (p. 84).

There are some other problems with narrow definitions of violence. They exacerbate the problem of underreporting and trivialize women’s feelings and experiences. Moreover, narrow conceptualizations restrain victimized women from seeking social support. If a female survivor’s male partner’s brutal conduct does not coincide with what researchers, criminal justice officials, politicians, or the general public refer to abuse or violence, she may be left in a psychological zone where she knows that she has been abused, but cannot define it in a way that can help her (DeKeseredy et al., 2017).

## **Conclusions**

This piece describes, from a sociological standpoint, what we know and what we do not know about intimate violence against women in rural communities. Again, there is much more work to be done, especially considering that sociological research on violence against women in general has leveled off or declined (DeKeseredy, 2016; Jordan, 2009). It is well beyond the scope of this article to theorize this transition; however, two factors that should be briefly considered are – (1) the powerful influence of the ongoing and ever-changing anti-feminist

backlash; and (2) the proliferation of criminological work aimed at producing evidence-based practice, much of which assumes that the importance of gender needs to be proved, rather than disproved (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2013).

Despite the above and other challenges from defenders of the patriarchal status quo, there is no sign that feminist sociological work on rural violence against women will end in this current neo-liberal era. This is because researchers in the field are, in the words of Currie (2016), building “stronger international networks of scholars who are committed to that kind of criminology” (p. 27). Due, in large part, to the “bright side” of new technologies, rural violence against women scholars routinely communicate electronically, meet at conferences, and develop collaborative studies. The connections between Australian and U.S. scholars in the field are particularly strong and are facilitating the development of more global perspectives on rural woman abuse and violence against women in other contexts.

Donnermeyer (2017) recently stated, “There are simply too many rural issues to squeeze into a single journal article about a global criminology of the South and rural criminology” (p. 129). Likewise, many readers will assert that there are too many rural issues to squeeze into a single review of the extant sociological literature on rural woman abuse. If this is case, and I strongly believe it is, then it is best fitting to quote Raymond J. Michalowski (1996): “This is all to the good. I increasingly suspect that we can best arrive a useful truth by telling and hearing multiple versions of the same story” (p. 9). This review article is a story about sociological ways of knowing about rural violence against women and as it ends, it is apparent in some ways, the story is just beginning. Violence against women in rural places as a social issue is constantly evolving and never-ending (Ledwitz-Rigby, 1993).

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank Joseph Donnermeyer for his comments on previous drafts of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> See DeKeseredy et al. (2016) and Wendt (2016) for reviews of contemporary studies of violence against rural women.

<sup>3</sup> See DeKeseredy et al. (2017) and DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2013) for reviews of these integrated theories.

<sup>4</sup> See DeKeseredy et al. (2016) and Edwards (2014) for reviews of these studies.

<sup>5</sup> See DeKeseredy and Hall-Sanchez (in press), DeKeseredy et al. (2016), and Edwards (2014) for reviews of studies that identify these factors that put rural women at higher risk of experiencing non-lethal forms of violence.

<sup>6</sup>This is referred to as “mateship” in Australia (Wendt, 2009, 2016).

<sup>7</sup>See DeKeseredy and Hall-Sanchez (in press) and DeKeseredy and Rennison (2013) for more information on how to test the theories of rural separation/divorce sexual assault developed by DeKeseredy, Rogness, and Schwartz (2004) and DeKeseredy et al. (2007).

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