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Woman Abuse in Canada: Sociological Reflections on the Past, Suggestions for the Future

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Abstract
Woman abuse in Canada started receiving much sociological attention in the mid-1980s. This article describes past scholarly achievements, assesses current contributions, and suggests progressive ways of responding to future challenges. Special attention is given to how broader political economic forces help shape and constrain research on a variety of highly injurious male-to-female assaults that occur in private settings.

Keywords
backlash, Canada, feminism, sociology, woman abuse

Since 1980, sociologists have made important empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of a variety of male assaults on current or former intimate female partners in Canada. Developments in the Canadian research have been shaped by outside forces. This is not surprising because Canada's economy, culture, and scholarship have been molded by foreign influences, especially from the United States, since its colonial beginnings (DeKeseredy, 2012a; Grabb, 2004). Yet, Canadian sociological work has also had a major impact on research in other countries. For example, Statistics Canada's Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS) was the world's first national survey specifically designed to investigate multiple types of male-to-female violence (Jacquier, Johnson, & Fisher, 2011). As a result, the VAWS yielded much higher rates

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of violence and abuse than earlier surveys designed to measure either crime or family conflict (Dobash & Dobash, 1995).[1] The impact of the path-breaking methodological developments made in this study is still felt today. The VAWS has been replicated in national studies in countries such as Australia, Finland, and Iceland (Walby & Myhill, 2001), as well as regional studies such as the Chicago Women's Health Risk Study (Block et al., 2000).

The Canadian national survey (CNS) of woman abuse in university/college dating was also the first countrywide study of its kind (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998), expanding on the scope of earlier studies of sexual assault on campus (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). In addition, Canadian scholars such as Brownridge (2009) have been at the forefront of the examination of violence against women during and after separation and divorce.

This article chronicles Canadian sociological developments in the field that occurred since 1980 and suggests new directions in research, theorizing, and policy development. Many "highs" and "lows" emerged in the sociological journey that started over 30 years ago and more will come. Feminist sociologists, in particular, face significant challenges in the current neo-liberal political economic era characterized by a "well-oiled" counter-movement to degender the naming and framing of woman abuse (Bumiller, 2008; Johnson & Dawson, 2011). What will the future bring? According to historians, to answer this question, "We all need past knowledge . . . It is all we have to guide us to the future" (Stearns, 2011, p.1).

Looking Back[2]

There has been episodic concern with women's experiences with sexual assault, beatings, and the like in Canadian history, but such harms were not of major interest until recently to social scientists, practitioners, politicians, and the general public. It was, after all, only 40 years ago than an exhaustive bibliography on wife beating could be written on an index card (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2009). As Denham and Gillespie (1999) remind us, "Prior to the 1970s, there was no name for violence against women by their husbands or partners" (p. 6). Since then, mainly because of feminist efforts, many Canadians pay considerable attention to woman abuse during and after intimate relationships. Feminists also influenced the development of a spate of large- and small-scale studies, as well as the construction of several theories.

Empirical work specifically designed to determine the extent of woman abuse in Canada began with MacLeod and Cadieux's (1980) examination of transition house and divorce-petition data. Their study was "methodologically unsound" (Ellis, 1987), but these researchers concluded, "Every year, one in ten Canadian women who are married or in a relationship with a live-in lover are battered" (p. 17). Although not derived from a representative sample of the general population, this conclusion was not that far off the mark as demonstrated by subsequent studies, most of which showed that between 11% and 24% of Canadian women in marital/cohabiting relationships are physically assaulted at least once annually (Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1988; Kennedy & Dutton, 1989; Smith, 1987). High rates of physical violence in university/college

dating have also been uncovered. For example, of the 1,835 women who participated in the CNS, 22.3% indicated that they had been physically victimized by their dating partners in the past year. In addition, roughly 25% of the female respondents reported experiencing some type of sexual assault in the past 12 months (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998).

During the late 1980s and into the 90s, there were also studies of "post-separation woman abuse" and "intimate femicide" (e.g., Crawford & Gartner, 1992; Ellis, 1990; Ellis & Stuckless, 1993, 1996; Ellis & Wight, 1987; Sev'er, 1997). The results of this work supported "the widespread apprehension that wives often experience elevated risk when deserting a violently proprietary husband" (Wilson, Johnson, & Daly, 1995, pp. 340-341). This observation still holds true in Canada (Brownridge, 2009; Johnson & Dawson, 2011). In fact, throughout Canada, compared with women living with their male partners, separated women continue to run a sixfold risk of being killed (DeKeseredy, 2011a).

No review of Canadian woman abuse research done in the past is complete without mentioning another "key milestone" (Denham & Gillespie, 1999). In 1992, the Department of National Health (now called Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC]) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded the creation of five research centers on family violence and violence against women in response to the murder of 14 female students at the University of Montreal on December 6, 1989. This 5-year funding initiative ended in 1997, but the centers carried on with money from other sources. They also enhanced Canadians' awareness of woman abuse and generated useful information for policy makers and practitioners (Kettani, 2009). It should also be noted in passing that under yet another name (Health Canada), PHAC funded the CNS, VAWS, and Randall and Haskell's (1995) Toronto community-based survey of sexual and physical assault throughout women's lives.

Canadian theoretical developments did not keep pace with the expanding empirical literature. From 1980 until now, especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, woman abuse research was guided mainly by "practical objectives" (Gelles, 1980). Most of the above mentioned surveys were primarily concerned with answering two important questions: (a) "how many women are abused by their current or former male partners?" and (b) "what are the correlates of woman abuse" (DeKeseredy & Hinch, 1991, p. 28)? This is not to say that all of this work constituted "abstracted empiricism" (e.g., research divorced from theory; Mills, 1959). For example, using data from his Toronto woman abuse survey, Smith (1990) tested the feminist hypothesis that wife beating results from men's adherence to the ideology of familial patriarchy. Furthermore, Statistics Canada's VAWS and the CNS were heavily influenced by feminist theory (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Johnson, 1996). Still, few original theories were crafted and tested by Canadian scholars. These include DeKeseredy's (1988) male peer support model, which has been revised and expanded over the past 24 years[3]; Ellis and DeKeseredy's (1989) dependency, availability, deterrence (DAD) model; and a sociological theory of separation/divorce femicide (Ellis & DeKeseredy, 1997). Furthermore, variations of feminist thought have always guided Canadian woman abuse research and still do today.

In sum, in approximately one decade, woman abuse emerged from a vacuum of silence to become a major issue for Canadian researchers. Today, however, it is no longer a priority for most politicians. In addition, while the empirical and theoretical work done since the mid-1980s provide an increasingly detailed picture of beatings, sexual assault, and the like, representative sample surveys such as the VAWS and CNS have provoked an anti-feminist backlash among those opposed to the findings (Crocker, 2010; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2003). Patriarchy is now being reasserted by conservative fathers' rights groups and other anti-feminist organizations (Dragiewicz, 2008). Increasingly, the Canadian federal government is sympathetic to anti-feminist initiatives.

The Current State of Affairs

A major shift in Canadian federal government responses to woman abuse started in the late 1990s, which, in turn, had a major impact on the research community. Statistics Canada moved away from developing feminist-informed surveys of woman abuse and is currently being influenced by political forces guided by anti-feminist groups and others with a vested interest in minimizing the pain and suffering caused by male-to-female violence (DeKeseredy, 2011a). Statistics Canada (2002, 2005, 2011) now uses less sophisticated measurement tools that fail to discern the differing contexts, meanings, and motives of male and female intimate violence. Government reports on the data now downplay significant differences in women's and men's experiences by aggregating data across sex categories and highlighting similar prevalence rates rather than dissimilar frequency, severity, and dynamics of violence (DeKeseredy, 2011a). In addition, on October 3, 2006, Bev Oda, then federal minister for the Status of Women Canada (SWC), announced that women's organizations would no longer be eligible for funding for advocacy, government lobbying, or research projects. SWC was also required to remove the word *equality* from its list of goals (Carastathis, 2006). To make matters worse, in early September 2007, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper supported the anti-feminist agenda by cutting funds to the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL), a non-profit women's group that tackles violence against women and other forms of female victimization.

On top of the above transitions, some prominent Canadian politicians, journalists, activists, and researchers minimize the alarming rates of woman abuse generated by surveys described in the previous section and launch biting critiques of feminist interpretations of these figures. For example, Dutton (2010) states that only a "minority of men are violent either outside or within relationships. There is no norm for wife assault—this is a sociological fiction and contradicted by surveys" (p. 8).

The PHAC used to prioritize violence against women, but now publishes "Family Violence Prevention E-Bulletins" such as the July 2011 issue,[4] which repeatedly reinforces the erroneous notions that women and girls are equally as violent as males and that rates of female violence are increasing. Moreover, gender-neutral terms, such as "intimate partner violence," "domestic violence," and "spousal violence" are rapidly replacing gender-specific ones (e.g., woman abuse) in federal government publications

and in some academic circles. Many people who use such language selectively cite research that misleadingly characterizes violence as bi-directional, mutual, or sex symmetrical (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2009).

In this current era, many, if not most, people who attack feminist inquiry do not understand feminism. As Stanko (1997) puts it, "Those who make such accusations have not been reading the research carefully . . . or not reading the research at all" (p. 79). Even so, it is the voice of anti-feminists, rather than that of feminists or abused women, that is the loudest. Ironically, this has a positive consequence on the social scientific community as feminists' studies are generally very rigorous because they know that they will be subject to heightened scrutiny and criticism for being "political" instead of scientific (Romito, 2008).

Often criticized, ignored, or even silenced, Canadian feminist sociological work on woman abuse persists. However, much of the recent research has been focused outside Canada. For example, University of Ottawa criminologist Holly Johnson helped conduct the International Violence Against Women Survey (Johnson, Ollus, & Nevala, 2008), and some Canadians continue to do collaborative research with U.S. colleagues on separation/divorce assault in urban and rural parts of the United States (e.g., DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009; Rennison, DeKeseredy, & Dragiewicz, 2013). It is also somewhat paradoxical that Molly Dragiewicz went to Canada from the United States to become one of the few feminist scholars there who studied Canadian fathers' rights groups, the anti-feminist backlash, and the experiences of abused Ontario women lacking legal representation in the family courts.[5]

Statistics Canada's recent renditions of the General Social Survey (GSS) are highly problematic and are used by anti-feminists to claim that women are as violent as men in intimate relationships. Brownridge (2009), however, has examined the woman abuse data from the 1999 and 2004 GSS and produced some valuable information on violence against women at the margins, such as those who are immigrants, disabled, or Aboriginal. Unfortunately, his analyses of GSS data receive much less public attention than GSS data showing sex symmetry. The same can be said about Fong's (2010) feminist anthology on woman abuse in ethnic, immigrant, and Aboriginal communities.

Some feminists are doing intersectional analyses of violence in the lives of girls (Berman & Jiwani, 2002; Jiwani, 2006; Pajot, 2009). Intersectionality is also directly relevant to Canadian feminist interpretations of Internet pornography, which has become more violent and racist (Dines, 2010). DeKeseredy and Olsson (2011) show that cyberporn is also strongly associated with various types of woman abuse in intimate heterosexual relationships. Unfortunately, there is a giant market for hurtful sexual images, and the negative effects of pornography are being felt around the globe (Bridges & Jensen, 2011).

It may seem obvious, but worth stating nonetheless: Much more Canadian sociological empirical and theoretical work is necessary. The good news is that there are prolific researchers scattered across Canada and they will continue to make interesting and policy-relevant scholarly contributions in the near future. Nonetheless, they face numerous challenges over the next few years as Canada continues to move to the right of the political economic spectrum.

Future Challenges

At the end of the 1990s, based on interviews with roughly 50 Canadian people who worked on the issue of woman abuse since 1989, Denham and Gillespie (1999) stated that "this is a critical point in the evolution of our understanding of woman abuse" (p. 47). The same can be said today, but the circumstances are different. There was an anti-feminist backlash then, but it has become more deeply entrenched and mainstreamed (DeKeseredy, 2011a; Dragiewicz, 2008, 2011). For example, Springer Publishing Company now publishes the journal *Partner Abuse*. As stated on the journal's website,

> *Partner Abuse* seeks to advance research, treatment and policy on partner abuse in new directions. A basic premise of the journal is that partner abuse and family violence is a human problem, and that the particular role of gender in the etiology, perpetration and consequences of emotional and physical partner abuse cannot be assumed, but rather must be subjected to the same empirical scrutiny as any other factor. Just as treatment decisions ought to be based on sound assessment protocols, policies on partner abuse ought to be based on an understanding of the full range of available research, without regard to political considerations. (*Partner Abuse*, n.d.)

Despite the avowed commitment to recognizing "the full range of available research," the categorical dismissal of research that acknowledges the importance of gender to violence is a staple of the journal's content. The flagship article was a full-frontal attack on feminism, which claimed, "The gender paradigm is a closed system, unresponsive to major disconfirming data sets, and takes an antiscience stance consistent with a cult" (Dutton, 2010, p. 5). Indeed, the idea that a commitment to rigorous empirical research on violence is a "new direction" appears to indicate a lack of familiarity with the large extant literature, including multiple dedicated, selective, and widely read scholarly journals devoted to violence and abuse.

Certainly, major steps need to be taken to resist the degendering of one of Canada's most compelling social problems. One effective way of doing so is through social media such as Facebook and Twitter (DeKeseredy, 2011b). Launched in November 2009 by United Nations (UN) Women, Say No—Unite to End Violence Against Women is one example of a progressive global coalition that effectively uses social media to reach thousands of people around the world. Indeed, many people find it easier to join a social media group to make a political point than to protest in the streets. As well, it is much easier to get a few thousand people to join a Facebook group than to get a few hundred to show up at Canada's Parliament Hill with banners (Walker Rettberg, 2009). For instance, with the help of new electronic technologies, Say No—Unite managed to get 5,066,549 people to sign a call to make ending violence against women a top priority worldwide during its first phase (Say No—Unite, n.d.). Say No—Unite also engages in online media outreach and offers a range of useful web-based resources at www.saynotoviolence.org.

This initiative is a positive feature of information technologies, but there are also negative elements that contribute to patriarchal discourses and practices, including

woman abuse (DeKeseredy, in press). For example, there are thousands of websites explicitly featuring adult women being degraded and abused in horrible ways. Actually, a common feature of new pornographic videos is painful anal penetration, as well as men slapping/strangling women and/or pulling hair while they penetrate them orally, vaginally, and anally (Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, Sun, & Liberman, 2010; Dines, 2010).

Effectively responding to hurtful media images of women constitutes a major challenge, given that there are over four million pornography sites on the Internet (Dines, 2010), with as many as 10,000 added every week (DeKeseredy & Olsson, 2011; Funk, 2006). Nevertheless, there are some effective initiatives that can be borrowed from activists in the United States. One novel method is the Clean Hotel Initiative developed by the Minnesota Men's Action Network: Alliance to Prevent Sexual and Domestic Violence. This involves strongly encouraging businesses, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and professional associations to only hold conferences and meetings in hotels that do not offer in-room pay-per-view pornography. Profit is a business' "bottom line" and boycotting is a tried and true way of influencing capitalist enterprises to stop using sexist and other harmful means of making money (DeKeseredy, 2011b).

Researchers and activists also need to target the mainstream media and engage in what Barak (2007) refers to as "newsmaking criminology." This involves constantly sharing information about progressive research, grassroots efforts, and policy work with newspaper and television journalists. That articles and letters written by feminists are periodically published by the mainstream press, and that some feminist scholars have been on television serves as evidence that the mainstream media do not totally dismiss or ignore progressive interpretations of gender violence (Caringella-MacDonald & Humphries, 1998; DeKeseredy, 2011b). For example, pioneering feminist Gloria Steinem's critique of the NBC series *The Playboy Club* recently appeared in the popular Canadian newspaper the *Toronto Star* (see Salem, 2011). Perhaps her statements had an impact because the series was terminated shortly after her remarks.

Canadian funding for academic woman abuse research is at an all time low and will not improve soon. Under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's leadership, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), which is the main funder of Canadian social science research, prioritizes business-related doctoral research (DeKeseredy, 2012a). Moreover, it is likely that the federal government will continue to influence Statistics Canada to produce data supporting the sexual symmetry of violence thesis. However, feminist projects funded by local community groups and provincial government agencies can be done, as demonstrated by scholars across the country. For example, we have developed a meaningful partnership with Luke's Place Support and Resource Center for Women and Children in Oshawa, Ontario, and jointly conducted studies of the needs of local battered women with funding from the Ontario Women's Directorate, Canadian Women's Foundation, and the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General (Dragiewicz & DeKeseredy, 2008).

There will be even more intense competition for scarce grant money as governments at all levels downsize their budgets. Hence, researchers based at different institutions need to start thinking seriously about collaborating instead of competing with each other. Collaborations not only help "spread the wealth," but as Denham and

Gillespie (1999) correctly point out, "They can create new opportunities for solutions that could not exist if groups worked in isolation" (p. 45).

Even though Canada is a bilingual country, an ongoing problem is the marginalization of Francophone social science, regardless of whether it is mainstream or feminist (Doyle & Moore, 2011; Dupont, 2011). Obviously, stronger relations between French- and English-Canadian scholars and activists need to be developed. In addition, more attention needs to be given to woman abuse in Aboriginal communities. And ethnic minorities' experiences, as well as those of immigrants and refugees, need to be an integral component of sociological work on woman abuse.

Theoretical work is just as, important as empirical projects, and there is a need for new multivariate perspectives. As Kurt Lewin (1951), the founder of modern social psychology, stated, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory" (p. 169). The same can be said about good theories of woman abuse. Equally important is constructing and testing theories that focus on the broader social, political, cultural, and economic contexts in which woman abuse occurs, as this is a widespread problem. Although feminist scholars pay attention to the gendered dynamics of violence, more could be done to investigate and explain what we mean when we talk about gender and patriarchy. Theorizing these concepts continues to be important. Many criminologists still do not take gender into account and continue to develop putatively universal theories based on men's behavior. If there is anything the burgeoning literature on violence against women has decisively demonstrated, it is that context matters.

"Gender" is not simply a stand-in for "sex" or for "women." Women's and men's behavior and experiences are deeply gendered, and we need to do more to investigate how gender shapes violence and abuse. Sociologists cannot skirt the politics involved in talking about violence against women or patriarchy by using degendered language. Not only does this feed into incorrect assumptions about the nature of violence, as noted above, it impedes rather than enhances our understanding. Gender-inclusive theories of violence, that is to say theories that include and account for gender rather than obscuring it via gender-blind language, are still needed (Dragiewicz, 2009).

More than ever, crime control laws and policies transferred from the United States heavily influence some of Canada's modes of governance, as they do in the United Kingdom. Still, ironically, at a time when crime discussion is dominated by calls for harsher punishment and "what about the victim?," a market remains for belittling crime victims when they are women abused by current or former male partners (DeKeseredy, 2009). To make matters worse, victim blaming is very much alive and well. Note that in January 2011, metropolitan Toronto police officer Michael Sanguinetti told a personal security class at York University that "women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized" (CBC, 2011). No wonder many sexual assault survivors still lack faith in the criminal justice system. Nevertheless, this officer's remark had an international effect and spawned a series of "slut walks" around the world in which scores of women marched to protest revictimization discourses and practices.

Protesting, lobbying, awareness campaigns, and other methods are constantly needed to make the criminal justice system more accountable and sensitive to the plight of abused women. Even so, prison and other punitive approaches cannot truly

prevent woman abuse. Thus, it is time to contemplate progressive alternatives to reliance on traditional formal means of social control (Meloy & Miller, 2011). There are other reasons for doing so, including that the criminal justice system cannot deal with highly injurious behaviors that are not physically violent (e.g., coercive control and psychological abuse). Also, criminal justice policies and practices may prioritize the state's objectives over those of the targets of woman abuse (Bumiller, 2008; Goodmark, 2012).

Canada is taking a more punitive response to street crimes such as mugging (DeKeseredy, 2011a), but the Canadian Criminal Code (1985) lists "alternative measures" as a priority and recommends that all alternatives to imprisonment be contemplated. This advice is partially grounded in the long Canadian history of restorative justice practices, starting with Aboriginal/First Nations traditions and more recently with Mennonite strategies in the 1970s (Goel, 2000; Yantzi, 1998). Here, following Ptacek (2010a), restorative justice is defined as an approach that seeks "to decrease the role of the state in responding to crime and increase the involvement of personal, familial, and community networks in repairing the harms caused by crime" (p. ix). Restorative justice programs are subject to much debate in feminist communities and with good reason, given the harms caused by coercive mediation programs. Consider what happened to 34 abused Nova Scotia women:

> Abused women reported intimidation and revictimization in mediation regardless of the form of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or financial. Women reported that their mediator or conciliator minimized emotional, psychological, or financial abuse, or simply did not recognize certain behaviors as abusive. When women brought up the fact that their ex-partner was harassing, stalking, or otherwise continuing to abuse them during their mediation, their mediators did not terminate mediation. (Rubin, 2000, p. 8)

Unfortunately, experiences like this are not unique, highlighting the need to address issues for abused women beyond the criminal justice system. Although family court diversion programs are very widespread, there has been very little research on what actually happens to abused mothers in family court. Sociological research on every aspect of abused women's experiences in the family courts, as well as the outcomes for them and their children, is sorely needed.

Highly aware of the above and other problems with diversionary restorative justice practices, some feminists call for post-conviction restorative justice measures, such as the Victims' Voices Heard program examined by Susan L. Miller (2011). Best described by her, programs like this one:

> involve some kind of encounter between the victim and offender, a meeting that occurs only after extensive preparation. Sometimes letters are exchanged in preparation for a face-to-face meeting, and often victims and offenders select a support person to accompany them to such a meeting. Trained facilitators oversee these dialogues and use their skills to balance the concerns of all parties involved. Face-to-face meetings, letter exchanges, and other practices provide the opportunity for participants to explore what happened, for victims to receive answers to questions and assurances of safety to tell their

> stories and express their feelings, and for offenders to tell their stories, take responsibility for their actions, and display genuine remorse. Restorative justice provides a context for forgiveness, but there is no pressure to choose this path. (p. 8)

Evaluations of this and other feminist restorative justice programs that address woman abuse, such as RESTORE (Responsibility and Equity for Sexual Transgressions Offering a Restorative Experience) in Pima County, Arizona (Koss, 2010), found success in offender rehabilitation, as well as in survivor healing, satisfaction, and empowerment (Meloy & Miller, 2011). But, as is often said in social scientific circles, more research is necessary, which is why there is a call for a moratorium on new restorative justice programs for woman abuse in Canada (Johnson & Dawson, 2011).

Reforms within and outside the criminal justice system must accompany the ongoing quest for broader social transformation, and this involves emphasizing the role of prevention (Meloy & Miller, 2011; Ptacek, 2010b). A long list of empirically informed suggestions could easily be provided here, including bystander intervention approaches, women's safety audits, and public education programs (Johnson & Dawson, 2011). Men, too, need to play a stronger role in the struggle to end all forms of woman abuse. It has been repeatedly stated over the past 20 years that more time and effort is needed to influence men and boys to join the feminist men's movement heavily guided by the internationally renowned White Ribbon Campaign. The December 6, 1989 murder of 14 women at the University of Montreal spawned the creation of the Campaign and similar organizations (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Alvi, 2000; Luxton, 1993), which, like other progressive collectives, face new challenges in the future.

Some earlier challenges, however, persist. For example, still today, most Canadian feminist men's groups mainly consist of males who are White, middle-class, and heterosexual (DeKeseredy, 2012b). This problem needs to be quickly resolved for several reasons, including that Canada is becoming more ethnically diverse, especially in metropolitan areas. By 2031, close to 28% of the country's population could be foreign-born. Moreover, more than 71% of the entire visible minority population will likely live in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal (Statistics Canada, 2010). Universities and colleges, too, will become more diverse in the near future. Consider that in March 2010, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty stated that his province's goal is to increase the number of foreign students by 50% in the following 5 years to 55,000 (Cohn, 2010). Needless to say, people from historically marginalized ethnic/cultural backgrounds, as well as other men and women at the margins, have much insight to offer feminist men's organizations. The same can be said about any movement aimed at ending woman abuse in Canada and around the world. We should always be conscious of who is absent from our gatherings and that we are not hearing their voices (Gilfus et al., 1999).

Conclusions

This article offers a brief history of sociological empirical and theoretical work on woman abuse in Canada. To be included in other chronicles will be contributions made by psychologists, anthropologists, social workers, and scholars from other disciplines.

Their work is just as significant as sociological projects, and the intent of this article was not to try to elevate sociological offerings to a higher level of importance. Even so, to some extent, woman abuse as a social issue compels us all to become sociologists and to look at our whole society through the lens of a critical analyst. The challenge for us as sociologists is to continue to question the meaning of changes in the story of woman abuse and their unanticipated consequences to uncover the real meaning of change and the social meaning of woman abuse prevention (DeKeseredy & MacLeod, 1997).

Despite budget cuts, the anti-feminist backlash, and a host of other obstacles and challenges, men and women involved in the violence against women movement have achieved much over the past four decades (Johnson & Dawson, 2011). Abused women now have more resources to choose from, but they are not markedly safer (Dragiewicz & DeKeseredy, 2008). Without a doubt, separated/divorced women in Canada are still at high risk of being killed if they lived with abusive and/or controlling men (Cross, 2007; DeKeseredy, 2011a). Sadly, scores of women will continue to suffer in silence until the major causes of woman abuse are recognized, understood, and addressed by policy makers and the general public (Johnson & Dawson, 2011; Wolfe & Jaffe, 2001). We suggested some effective means of helping to achieve this goal and for making the feminist struggle to end woman abuse a "usual, rather than unusual part of public policy" (Hearn, 1998, p. 113).

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Notes

1. See Johnson (1996) for more information on Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS) methods and the data gleaned by them.
2. This is a subheading in Section 1 of Denham and Gillespie's (1999) overview of Canadian initiatives and resources to end woman abuse.
3. See DeKeseredy (1990), DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998, 2002, 2009, 2010), and Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997) for in-depth reviews of the empirical and theoretical literature on the relationship between male peer support and woman abuse in various intimate heterosexual relationships.
4. See http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/EB/2011/july-juillet/e-bulletin-eng.php.
5. For more information on her recent Canadian work on these issues, see DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz (2007, 2009) and Dragiewicz and DeKeseredy (2008, 2012).

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