

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Starting in the late 1960s, with the growth of the Second Wave of feminism, women gathered to talk about the realities of their lives in what were called “consciousness-raising” groups. They soon discovered that domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape were not uncommon. The early critics of men’s violence were radical feminists who saw patriarchal society as the root cause of women’s oppression, and violence against women as the key mechanism by which men exercised power and control over women. The critics worked hard to bring this to public view, which was an uphill battle. Former Liberal Member of Parliament Monique Bégin has noted that the Canadian Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which was formed in 1967 in response to feminist pressure for change, shied away from dealing with issues connected to violence. She later noted that “The commission did not even identify violence towards women—physical, sexual, and psychological—as a feminist issue” (Bégin, 1992, p. 31). Women’s access to child care, abortion services, and workplace equality were the concerns that were considered the appropriate mandate of the Commission. Violence was seen as a social or criminal matter that the legal system should address. The number of charges placed and convictions gained in crime victimization data indicated that domestic violence was a problem that was thought to happen only in severely dysfunctional families at the lower end of the socio-economic order. Rape was seen as a rare event that happened in dark alleyways where predators lurked. Sensible middle-class women who stayed away from dangerous places, it was assumed, were not likely to be victimized. The Commission was criticized by many feminists who felt that the final recommendations did not adequately challenge such stereotypes or address questions of violence against women.

Unwilling to simply wait for government action, feminists moved forward to address woman abuse issues directly. In 1972 the first shelters for battered women and rape crisis centres were opened across Canada. They fought hard for government funding, which was eventually granted reluctantly, but their financial viability was precarious (Janovicek, 2007, p. 5). One of the recommendations of the 1970 Commission Report was the establishment of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. In 1980, responding to persistent pressure from the women’s movement, the Council published a study by Linda MacLeod, *Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Cycle*. This was the report that Margaret Mitchell had referred to in Parliament. MacLeod worked closely with battered women’s shelters to obtain information about the women who used their services. Extrapolating from their records, she concluded that a conservative estimate of the proportion of Canadian women abused every year by their male partners was 10% (MacLeod, 1980, p. 21). Seven years later an update was published, also relying heavily on data from shelters. MacLeod pointed to several advances since her last report, including a new law passed in 1983 that made it illegal for a husband to rape his wife. Formerly consent to sex was considered to be part of marriage. She also noted the ever-increasing number of shelters, which had tripled to 264 across Canada, as well as the corresponding increase in the number of women who used their services (MacLeod, 1987, p. 113).

Two years after this report, on December 6, 1989, a lone man with a legal hunting rifle walked into the École Polytechnique in Montreal, entered an engineering classroom, and ordered the men to leave. He accused the women of being feminists and shot them. By the time he was finished his rampage through the college and turned the gun on himself, 14 women had been killed. This is known as the Montreal Massacre and an intense and, at times, acrimonious national debate opened in its wake. Many discussions focused on gun control and mental illness as the important issues. Feminists felt that it was an example of the systemic abuse of women in a patriarchal society and the reality of male violence against women. The Montreal Massacre is commemorated on December 6 across Canada as an official day of mourning and remembrance (see also Cultural Memory Group, 2006).

Public consternation along with feminist lobbying led to the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women that was struck in 1991, followed by public hearings across the nation. Its report, *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence, Achieving Equality* (Marshall & Vaillancourt, 1993) was completed in 1993 and made 494 sweeping recommendations, most of which remain unimplemented today. The report argued that structural inequality was the basis of all forms of violence against women. Despite government endorsement of the report, no actual funds were allocated to implementation (Levin, 1996, p. 348).

However, at the same time as *Changing the Landscape* was released, two other positive initiatives were launched, both by Health Canada. One was the establishment of five regionally based research centres on violence against women that were funded for five years and still operate today. The second initiative was the national Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS), conducted by Holly Johnson of Statistics Canada. Since the results of the standard Canadian crime victimization surveys did not line up with the qualitative information and usage numbers being collected from front-line women's anti-violence organizations, a specialized survey was deemed necessary to get a full picture. The survey was given to a representative sample of 12 300 women across Canada. During the design of the questionnaire, Johnson consulted extensively with feminist anti-violence workers and researchers about how to ask women about male violence and specially trained the female interviewers to ask these sensitive and sometimes difficult questions.

When released, the results of the VAWS shocked Canadians. They revealed that “51 percent of Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual assault since the age of 16 and 10 percent had been victims of violence in the 12-month period preceding the survey” (Johnson, 1996, p. 49). As is the case now, women were three times more likely to be assaulted, either sexually or physically, by men they knew and often were in an intimate partnership with, rather than the imagined stranger in the dark alleyway.

“The VAWS captures almost twice as many incidents as the GSS [Statistics Canada General Social Survey],” Johnson reported, “3 times as many cases of wife assault as are reported to the police, and about 38 times as many sexual assaults as police statistics” (Johnson, 1996, pp. 50–51). One of the most striking results was women's fear for their safety when they were alone after dark: 60% of women were either very or somewhat afraid of walking in their own neighbourhoods, 76% of waiting for public transit, 83% walking to their car in a parking garage, and 40% in their own homes. As a result of the

prevalence rates determined from this survey, it became possible to also calculate the economic costs to society of violence against women. Economist Tanis Day was the first to do so, conservatively estimating that based on health care alone, the cost was just under \$1.54 billion annually to Canadian society (Day, 1995). A second study expanded this to cover other areas of cost and came up with an estimated cost of \$4.7 billion for 1993 (Greaves, Hankivsky, & Kingston-Reichers, 1995).

The backlash to the results of the VAWS was unprecedented for a Statistics Canada survey. That it was done only on women was considered an outrage to some, who wondered why there hadn't been such a dedicated survey for men, especially in the case of spousal violence. The involvement of feminist anti-violence experts and agencies in the early stages of the survey's development was seen as inserting political bias into objective research causing the interviewers to ask "leading" questions. "Serious" and "non-serious" offences were viewed as being not sufficiently distinguished and the results about women's fear were criticized for being unnecessarily inflammatory and an attempt to cause panic among women who otherwise felt safe (Johnson, 1995, pp. 148–156). As Anthony Doob, professor of Criminology at the University of Toronto concluded, "Criticisms of the survey—couched often in 'technical' or methodological language—appear to be motivated primarily by political and social attitudes, rather than by concerns about the actual methodology" (Doob, 2002, p. 61). As a result, Statistics Canada now only conducts surveys on domestic violence that include both men and women. What shocked the public, but was no surprise to anti-violence feminists, were the variety of ways in which women experienced violence, and its deep systemic roots.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sexual Assault

Prior to 1983 when new legislation was introduced, sexual assault was known as "rape" in Canadian law. Feminists pressed for this legal change in order to remove rape from the realm of morality and sex and make it a violent assault upon the person. Rather than see rape as only an act perpetrated by men on women, it was de-gendered so that men could be rape victims too. The intent of this change was to circumvent rape myths that had biased the behaviour of police, prosecutors, and jury members who had drawn on entrenched social attitudes that hinged on whether women meant "no" when they said "no" to sex, or whether they indicated their willingness by other, non-verbal means such as wearing skimpy clothing, drinking in public places, walking alone after dark, or having had sex previously with the assailant. Certain groups of women, such as sex workers and racialized and Indigenous women, were often considered to be more "sexual" and therefore more likely to give consent. If a woman had engaged in previous non-marital sexual relationships, it was often considered as evidence that she was more likely to have consented to sex and the accused might have reasonably assumed that she was willing. Furthermore, any delay in reporting was seen as possibly indicating that a woman had

second thoughts about having sex or was seeking revenge on a man who had rejected her. Feminists protested that putting a woman's behaviour and motivation under such intense scrutiny to defend the accused in effect put the victim on trial for the crime (Du Mont & Parnis, 1999, pp. 102–109). In contrast, no one who was the target of theft was questioned about whether their behaviour had invited the crime, or to show physical injuries as proof of resistance. The new law introduced what was called a “rape shield provision” that introduced “limits on the ability of the defence lawyers to ask questions about the sexual history of the complainant . . .” (Balfour & Du Mont, 2012, p. 705). This, however, has not prevented defence lawyers from attempting to establish “inconsistent testimony or a pattern of fabrication by the complainant, thus retrenching rape myths of raped women as liars, mentally unstable, or hysterical” (p. 706).

Women who have been through the legal system and cross-examined by a hostile defence lawyer describe the process as brutal (Doe, 2003). Women who bring complaints to the police are often subjected to very rigorous interrogation to ensure that their case will be strong enough to stand up to questioning in court. This means that the victim must relive the details of a traumatic assault repeatedly throughout the whole legal process, and in front of sometimes unsympathetic and judgmental strangers. Persistent lobbying by feminist activists has resulted in efforts being made to improve the process of collecting forensic evidence immediately following a rape. There are now specially qualified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners who not only collect evidence, but also provide support and referrals to rape victims. In many hospitals, there are sexual assault treatment centres that also aid women who have been assaulted by their partners and children who have been abused. However, as Johnson and Dawson have observed, “Despite decades of activism by feminist grassroots organizations, researchers, and legal scholars, myths and prejudicial stereotypes about sexually assaulted women persist, sexual assault remains hidden, and victims are routinely blamed and stigmatized” (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, p. 121).

Thus it is not surprising that an estimated nine out of 10 non-spousal sexual assault cases are never reported to the police. Of those who reported in 2011, 44% were unsolved either because the rapist was not identified or the police did not feel that there was sufficient evidence to lay charges (Status of Women Canada, 2013). Of the 56% that went to trial, 42% resulted in convictions (Dauvergne, 2012, p. 25). This means that in over 97% of cases of alleged sexual assault, the accused rapist walks away with few, if any, consequences. This is why many feminists call our society a rape culture that supports the sexual assault of women by not taking the issue or the women who have been subjected to such violence seriously.

A woman known only as Jane Doe has brought many of the problems with how the police and legal system deal with sexual assault to public attention. In August 1986, she was attacked in her own home at night by a serial rapist armed with a knife who had entered through her balcony door. After she reported the incident to the police, she was dismayed to learn that they were well aware of the perpetrator, who had assaulted four other women in her neighbourhood in the same manner. When she asked why she had not been warned, the police said that they did not want to alarm women, cause them to become hysterical, or scare the rapist away. In effect, Jane Doe concluded, she and other

women were being used as “bait” in an on-going police investigation. Defying the police, Jane and other women postered their neighbourhood with warnings about the rapist. Ironically, this led to his arrest within 24 hours when his parole officer turned him in. He was charged with sexually assaulting Jane Doe and four other women, and the evidence against him was so overwhelming that he entered a guilty plea in exchange for a sentence of 20 years instead of indefinite incarceration as a Dangerous Sexual Offender. In an unprecedented move, Jane Doe hired her own legal representation and was granted approval by the court to be present at the entire pre-trial hearing. Previously, rape victims were only called in to testify and then required to leave. Jane did not stop there. Supported by the Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund, which had been formed in 1985, she sued the Toronto Police. Eleven years later, she was awarded damages of \$220 000 in a “judgment that damned the police” and found them responsible for “breaching her right to equal treatment under the law, guaranteed by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; for her right to security of the person, also guaranteed by the *Charter*; and for carelessly failing to warn her that she fit this rapist’s pattern of targets” (Sheehy, 2012, p. 25). This judgment made legal history. Jane continues to work to end violence against women and in support of rape victims, but she warns women to be aware of the challenges they will face as complainants in the legal system (Doe, 2003).

By 2008 in Canada, there were at least 134 rape crisis centres serving over 80 000 women every year (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, p. 119). Despite uncertain funding and constant pressure to become more professionalized and less openly feminist, they offer 24-hour crisis lines, individual and group counselling, support through all stages of the rape investigation process from the hospital to court, and are tireless in their public education efforts. They have inspired the organization of Take Back the Night women’s marches held the third Friday of September since the late 1970s to protest gender-based violence. Women undertake all of this work on limited and precarious funding.

In 2011 a grass-roots action called SlutWalk developed from the reaction of young women to a Toronto police officer evoking rape myths by suggesting that women should stop dressing like sluts if they didn’t want to be victimized (SlutWalk Toronto, 2015). Although he later apologized, young women responded to this with outrage, and in protest held marches where they dressed like “sluts” as an anti-rape protest and to assert their right to wear what they pleased without being assaulted. These sex-positive walks have become an international phenomenon. Some have criticized the march, arguing that “the word slut was beyond rehabilitation, and the movement was critiqued for mounting a spectacle for the male gaze in the choice by (some) participants to dress provocatively” (Teekah et al., 2015, p. 5). Some Black (Hobson, 2015) and Indigenous women and their allies (Walia, 2015) have observed that the SlutWalk ignores the daily realities of violence and racial discrimination women of colour experience in the street. In “An Open Letter From Black Women to the SlutWalk” it was pointed out that, “Although we vehemently support a woman’s right to wear whatever she wants anytime, anywhere, within the context of a ‘SlutWalk’ we don’t have the privilege to walk through the streets . . . either half-naked or fully clothed self-identifying as ‘sluts,’ and think that this will make women safer in our

communities . . .” (Newblackman, 2011). SlutWalk supporters acknowledge and have engaged with these critiques but still contend that the repurposing of the word is empowering and instrumental in returning popular attention to the issue of sexualized violence and victim-blaming (Teekah et al., 2015). The SlutWalk demonstrates the political engagement of a new generation of young feminists with the anti-rape movement.

Intimate Partner Violence

Canadians were very surprised to learn from the VAWS that 51% of Canadian women had been subjected to violence from a man (or men) in their adult lifetime. Almost 30% of the general sample had experienced this at the hands of their spouse and 16% from a date or boyfriend. Most Canadians believed that in a good relationship, a woman would be protected from violence in the safety of her own home. However, stranger violence was the least likely to occur, with only 23% being victimized by men they did not know (Johnson, 1996, p. 51). This was not a shock to workers in shelters and transition houses for battered women, who for years had seen spousal abuse at close hand. Rather than focusing on the violent men, however, many members of the public asked, “Why doesn’t she just leave?” Looking at the abusive relationships from the outside, they wondered whether there were mental or emotional weaknesses that prevented women from leaving.

As with sexual assault, feminists objected to this victim-blaming that made women responsible for their own abuse. Researchers and activists sought to find reasons why, after fleeing to shelters in a crisis, many women kept returning to abusive relationships, sometimes a dozen times or more before finally leaving. Based on the qualitative observations of front-line workers, it was thought that battered women were trapped in a “cycle of abuse” that caused “learned helplessness” that caused them to be unable to extract themselves from the violent relationship. The cycle of abuse followed a pattern of a violent incident followed by apologies, a honeymoon period, and then a buildup of tension until the next violent episode exploded. Believing in the contrition of their spouse or boyfriend, women kept returning in the hope that things would be different next time. The constant attacks on a women’s self-esteem undermine her ability to act independently for fear of invoking her partner’s anger and because she may feel that she truly needs to improve to earn his approval and make her relationship work. This state of “learned helplessness” has also been called the “Battered Woman Syndrome” (BWS) (Walker, 1984/2009). The BWS has been used, first in American and then in Canadian courts, as a defence strategy in cases where women have killed their abusive husbands, especially in cases where the killing occurred during a time when the women were not immediately under direct threat of harm. The first successful case in Canada was that of Angélique Lavalee, who shot her common-law husband in the back of the head after years of abuse. He was walking away from her after just threatening to kill her later that night. In 1990 the Supreme Court of Canada acquitted her of all charges. Despite this victory, the BWS defence has rarely been used, remains controversial, and is difficult to prove in court. Some feminist analysts have objected to the use of the BWS defence because it

psychologises women, making psychiatrist expert testimony more important than the woman’s own words, and reduces the case to a women’s individual state of mental weakness. Absent is an analysis of the political context and the systemic factors that make for an unequal society in which women can be terrorized by abusive partners.

Indeed, researchers have suggested many other reasons that women might stay in abusive relationships other than learned helplessness. One of the aspects of an abusive man’s dominance over his partner is restriction and control. In Duluth, Minnesota, a model of the comprehensiveness of this abuse was made by the “Domestic Abuse Intervention Project” called the “Power and Control Wheel” (pictured on page 208). Developed by those with experience working with survivors of intimate partner violence, it graphically and very effectively displays the totality of the controlling behaviours to which women living with abusive partners might be exposed. It makes the point that physical violence is only the final stage of a pattern of domination that starts out in small ways and gradually

FIGURE 8.1 Power and Control Wheel



escalates. This includes such behaviours as isolating women; mocking, criticizing, and complaining; exercising male privilege to get his own way; using threats against children, pets, or the woman herself to control her; restricting and monitoring her movements; and withholding money and refusing to allow her to engage in paid work. Relationships with friends and family who could assist a battered woman are often systematically undermined, limiting the options she may have for support. Economic control and refusal to allow a woman to undertake paid work limit her ability to support herself independently.

Compounding this, welfare benefits have been cut and punitive monitoring to detect fraud increased. Thus, “research undertaken by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses shortly after a 21.6% rate cut was introduced in the mid-90’s,” showed that, “all of the shelters surveyed reported that women were remaining within, or returning to, abusive relationships as a direct result of the decrease in financial assistance” (Mosher & Evans, 2006, p. 163; see also Mosher et al., 2004). Women are vulnerable to negative reports to welfare agencies from vindictive ex-partners that can result in a loss of benefits. Welfare payments are so meagre that often women are unable to secure adequate housing for themselves and their children. One recent Canadian study has suggested that, “For some abused women, leaving becomes a path to homelessness” (Tutty et al., 2013, p. 1498). As a consequence of their precarious financial state, women can lose custody of their children to an ex-partner or the Children’s Aid Society. Rather than face such poverty and the loss of her children, many women are forced to stay in an abusive relationship. Researchers have observed that rather than just being concerned about women’s immediate safety in the wake of violence, “Adequate, non-punitive and respectfully bestowed welfare benefits must be understood as a crucial component of Canadian anti-violence policy and strategies” (Mosher & Evans, 2006, p. 162).

However, it became apparent after the VAWS that violence does not just happen to women who are economically disadvantaged. One recent study published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, citing Statistics Canada data, asserted that, “70% of the Canadian women who report having experienced spousal violence are working women and 71% have a university or college degree” (McInturff, 2013, p. 5). Much of the information we have about women returning to their abusers is derived from the very valuable data collected by interval and transition houses that shelter abused women. Women who have alternatives might never go to a shelter. Audra Bowlus and Shannon Seitz, further analyzing the data from the 1993 VAWS, determined that the vast majority of women in abusive partnerships divorce their husbands or leave their common-law partners. The VAWS measured spousal violence both during the previous 12 months and over a women’s lifetime. Over a lifetime, women who had been subjected to violence from their partners were six times more likely to have divorced or left him. On the basis of this, they challenged the model of learned helplessness that, they argued, was based on a limited, non-representative sample of abused women (Bowlus & Seitz, 2006, pp. 1113–1149). What this shows us is that the answer to “Why doesn’t she just leave?” is that she *does* leave—provided that she has the economic means to do so. Women’s increased educational attainment and employment is a vital systemic factor in eliminating gender-based intimate partner violence.

A final consideration deterring many women from leaving abusive relationships is that the physical violence may not start or escalate to extreme levels until the time she threatens to end the relationship. While most women leave successfully, in some cases there are increased threats to her or her loved ones' safety when the control of her partner is threatened. Johnson and Dawson, drawing on Statistics Canada data, report that 20% of women have been stalked by their partners or ex-partners. "Women stalked by a partner were more likely to experience multiple forms of stalking . . . than if the stalker was not an intimate partner. Women also faced the greatest risk of stalking by an ex-partner and were more likely than other stalking victims to be intimidated, threatened, grabbed, attacked, or to fear their lives were in danger" (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, p. 68). Indeed, women in Canada are six times more likely to be killed by an ex-spouse than a current spouse (Status of Women Canada, 2013).

It might be expected that women would turn to the police for protection and support in leaving an abusive situation, but in practice only 30% of women experiencing abuse reported police involvement. These were mainly in the most extreme circumstances of physical violence, where women would have had the greatest fear of being seriously injured or killed. In 2009, 15% of abused women obtained a restraining order against their spouses, but fully one third of those were breached (Status of Women Canada, 2013). Restraining orders mainly act as a deterrent, and the police cannot effectively enforce them on an on-going basis.

Persistent lobbying by anti-violence feminists has resulted in the police and the court system implementing a number of measures to address the issue of the safety of women in violent relationships. In the past, police had been reluctant to intervene in family disputes, because such matters were seen as private and not the proper concern of the law. Now they are mandated to respond to such complaints. As with rape myths, there were also misconceptions about domestic violence—that women stayed in such relationships because they wanted to; that they provoked men's violence; or that they were people on the lower level of society who were poor, drug abusers, or alcoholics. Although it is true that alcohol use and lower incomes are often correlated with domestic violence, the most important predictive factor found in research is the attitude of the violent men, specifically their conviction that they have the right to control their partners (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, p. 83). The education of police officers in an effort to dispel outdated attitudes has been given a high priority. In a recent report it was observed that, "In the last 30 years, Canadian jurisdictions have put into place aggressive criminal justice policies to respond to intimate partner violence, including pro-arrest policies, pro-prosecution policies, and specialized domestic violence courts" (Johnson & Fraser, 2011, p. 3). Yet in spite of this, women's rate of reporting intimate partner violence to the police has declined 6% since 2004 (Status of Women Canada, 2013). To the frustration of prosecutors, up to half of women retract their statements accusing their partners of violence when they get to court (Robinson & Cook, 2006, pp. 189–213). These women did not wish their partners to be sent to jail, rather they wanted the police to intervene to stop the violence. If a man goes to jail, the main source of family income may be removed and many women will face financial disaster. For those who leave, the on-going court process provides their ex-partner with further contact and access to information about them. If their abuser gets a light sentence or is found not guilty,

he may seek revenge. Ironically, the very policies that mandate that police must charge the abuser may make women less likely to ask for police assistance.

The very high percentage of women who do not call the police (70%) when they are abused indicates that they do not feel that their safety or best interests will be served by doing so. Very often, women from particular racial or ethnic groups have had bad experiences with police and do not trust them. Many of those who did not report when asked, gave as the reason that they were afraid of retaliation, that involving the police would escalate the violence, and many women were ashamed to reveal the problems in their relationships. Some may fear that the Children's Aid Society will remove their children if violence is reported in their home. One quarter of abused women instead turned to social services such as counsellors, psychologists, crisis lines, shelters for battered women, or community centres. In a one-day snapshot survey of shelters across Canada on April 15, 2010, 4646 women were found to be seeking safety from abusive male partners (Status of Women Canada, 2013). Researchers have found that despite the efforts made to improve legal redress for women who have suffered abuse at the hands of their male partners, they remained intimidated by and dissatisfied with the results of police intervention and court proceedings. Police attitudes continued at times to be biased against abused women. In interviews with women who had been through the court system as accusers of their partners, one study found that they were "offered little protection from further violence after their partner completed his sentence. Most of these women continued to fear for the safety of themselves and their children and found little support from the legal-judicial system. . . . All women reported that they would be reluctant to involve the legal-judicial system in future domestic violence cases" (Gillis et al., 2006, 1164).

Gender Symmetry in Intimate Partner Violence? Despite the overwhelming evidence that women are the primary sufferers in abusive relationships, there are some who assert that the truth is that women are just as violent as men. Researcher Murray Straus has dedicated his career to attempting to prove this. In 1972 he developed a tool for measuring violence in interpersonal relationships called the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). Using the CTS, he asked men and women how they and their partners deal with conflict in their relationships. Their responses are rated on a scale of severity of violence from less severe forms, which include verbal harassment and name calling; moderately severe, which involve physical violence such as hitting, kicking, and pushing; and the most severe forms, which involve assault with a weapon such as a knife or gun. Straus and others who have used this model find that men and women have nearly equal levels of violence in their intimate relationships. As Johnson and Dawson have observed:

The CTS has been criticized for failing to provide the context, intentions, or meanings needed to provide accurate interpretations, for equating less severe acts with more violent ones, for equating a single act with chronic on-going violence meant to terrorize, for leaving out sexual assault and violence after separation, for failing to distinguish between offensive and defensive acts, and for ignoring gendered power imbalances in intimate relations and society more generally. (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, pp. 55–56)

For example, a man who consistently terrorizes his wife with threats to harm her or those she loves would be considered equal to a woman who yells a single threat in an argument. Similarly, on the CTS throwing a dish is equivalent to threatening with a gun, and shoving away an attacker is rated the same as a man hitting a woman in the face with a closed fist. Isolation from family and friends, belittling, and withholding of economic resources are completely ignored by the CTS. Furthermore, research has shown that men tend to minimize and underreport their violence while highlighting what the woman may have done to “provoke” them. Women tend to do the opposite—minimize the violence done to them by men while exaggerating their own actions (Dragiewicz & DeKeseredy, 2012, p. 1012). The result is that every survey using the CTS has shown results with nearly equal amounts of male and female violence in disputes between co-habiting partners. While Straus has responded to criticism by making some modifications to his scale and has expressed concern that “the statistics are likely to be used by misogynists and apologists for male violence” (Strauss, 1997, p. 79), he feels justified in highlighting women’s violence. Although he admits that male violence is more of a concern, he argues that women’s violence provokes men’s, and ending it is a vital component of ending men’s violence. This is an example of how domestic violence myths still influence thinking today. In a 2009 article, he stated that feminist academics “have concealed, denied or hidden the evidence,” given by studies using the CTS because the message is not acceptable to the front-line anti-violence workers who solely work with abused women (Straus, 2009, p. 560). He argued that this does a disservice to such women because they need to be helped to recognize their problem not only so that they will not expose their children to violence and have better relationships, but also because “it increases the probability of physical attacks by the woman’s partner” (p. 563). He denies the feminist position that patriarchy is a vital causative factor in violence against women, and ignores the results of numerous surveys done around the world, which, like the VAWS in Canada, have looked at violence against women in a more complex, systemic manner, and not just in the context of current partner relationships.

The backlash to the VAWS in the mid-1990s was at least partly fuelled by those who cited Straus’s work. The result was that the violence against women framework was abandoned by the Canadian government and replaced by a family violence perspective. The next round of data collection was done with the GSS in 1999 and was based on a modified version of the CTS. Unsurprisingly, the results showed far greater gender symmetry in violence than did the VAWS. Over the previous five years, the 1999 GSS found that 8% of women and 7% of men had experienced domestic violence as compared to 12% for women in the 1993 VAWS (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, p. 66). These findings seemed to fly in the face of everything scholars, policy-makers, front-line workers, and activists had been saying for the previous 25 years. Was violence against women decreasing, were women equally as violent as men, or was the design of the survey flawed? Yasmin Jiwani analyzed the results and noted that many of the flaws in the CTS, such as lack of context, the limited view of the types of violence and control women are subjected to, and the conflation of more and less severe forms of

violence, had been reproduced. Additionally, the violence women experienced was much more severe:

Some 65 per cent of the women were assaulted more than once, and 26 per cent reported being assaulted more than 10 times. Forty per cent of women compared to 13 per cent of men reported being physically injured as a result of the violence in the five years preceding the interview and women were five times more likely to require medical attention as a result of the violence. Four out of ten women are afraid for their lives, as compared to one out of ten men. (Jiwani, 2002, p. 68)

By 2012, the results were very similar, with very nearly equal rates of 6% for both men and women. However the same pattern of women experiencing more severe forms of assault, being almost four times more likely to report to police and more likely to suffer from chronic abuse, still held true (Status of Women Canada, 2013). If violence against women in intimate partner relationships is truly decreasing, this is a positive sign, but the idea that there might be parity is inconsistent with what we know from other areas of gender-based violence. As Johnson and Dawson have noted, “Given that there are no other situations in which women and men are equally violent, it would be very surprising indeed if women were violent on par with men in intimate relationships and no others” (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, p. 57).

Despite the assertions that men also suffer from domestic violence, there has yet to be any demand to have shelters established for them. Fortunately, despite government cutbacks and years of uncertain funding, the numbers of shelters for women has continued to grow. In 2010, there were 593 across Canada that had over 46 500 admissions in the previous year. Most of these abused women (60%) had not contacted the police (Burczycka & Cotter, 2011, p. 5). In a study of Canadian women’s help-seeking behaviour in response to intimate partner violence, it was found that only 11% went to shelters, although 66% sought out some and often multiple types of formal support. Some contacted counsellors (39%), police or court based services (6%), crisis lines or centres (17.3%), community centres (15.5%), or women’s centres (11.2%). Despite the fact that the Canadian government had adopted a comprehensive plan for gender equality in 1995, there has been little fiscal commitment to coordinating and stabilizing this patchwork of services. It is not surprising that most women who have been abused seek less formal channels of support such as family (66.5%), friends or neighbours (66.5%), co-workers (27.8%), and religious or spiritual advisors (11.5%) (Barret & St. Pierre, 2011, p. 57). For those dedicated workers who provide essential crisis support with uncertain funding to those suffering from violent partners, the task can be extremely stressful. Its effects have been called “vicarious trauma” or “compassion fatigue.” Stephanie Martin, a Toronto psychologist, has pointed out, “Canadian frontline anti-violence respondents literally bear witness, on a daily basis, to the pain and suffering experienced by the victims of woman abuse.” She calls for “anti-violence advocates, agency administrators, and policy-makers to prioritize the welfare of frontline anti-violence responders as an important aspect of our collective effort to eradicate woman abuse in Canada” (Martin, 2006, p. 11).

Dating Violence Less attention has been paid by researchers and activists to dating violence, but all indications are that violence against women in non-spousal intimate relationships is a serious problem as well. In fact it may be more severe than in spousal relationships. Statistics Canada reported in 2011 that unmarried women were 60% more likely to be subjected to violence from their dating partners than women in married or common-law relationships (Sinha, 2013, p. 20). In general, women ages 15 to 34 were most at risk in Canada for all kinds of violence (Sinha, 2013, p. 54; Status of Women Canada, 2013).

In 1992, Walter Dekeseredy and Martin Schwartz surveyed over 3000 randomly selected students in universities across Canada. Overall, 28% of the female participants reported having been sexually abused in the past year, while 11% of the males admitted to abusive behaviour. Since leaving high school, 45.1% of the females had been sexually abused and 35% reported physical violence. In the past year, almost 80% of the young women reported psychological abuse from their dating partner, such as insults, swearing, put-downs, threats, and jealous accusations (Dekeseredy & Schwartz, 1995, p. 62). A 2005 American study of female university students surveyed about previous relationships showed that 47% had experienced physical violence, 22% sexual violence, 57% jealousy, 58% attempts at isolating from family and friends, 54% criticism and insults, 68% monitoring of behaviour by former partners, and 36% stalking combined with physical violence post break-up (Roberts, 2005, pp. 89–114).

Drawing on Statistics Canada data, a researcher from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported in 2013 that of the women who have been sexually assaulted in the past 5 years, 29% were students (McIntuff, 2013, p. 5). Clearly this is a significant problem, and colleges and universities across Canada have attempted to grapple with this issue with varying degrees of success. However, they are often reluctant to take aggressive action in individual cases. (For some Canadian examples, see Ikeda & Rosser, 2009/10; Quinlan, et al., 2009/10.) Adding to this is the difficulty many young women experience in recognizing and naming the violence, particularly sexual assault. If they were drinking at the time, they may feel responsible. Giving in to a dating partner's forceful sexual demands may not be recognized as rape. Thus, as we find in general population studies of sexual assault and spousal abuse of women, only a small fraction of such incidents are ever reported (Cleere & Lynn, 2013; Edwards et al, 2014; Sudderth et al., 2009/10).

Sexual Harassment

The types of sexual harassment that women experience vary greatly. In the wake of relationship break-ups, some women are stalked, threatened, or experience violence. This is called criminal harassment and is against the law. Bothersome but still frightening behaviours can include stalking on social media, harassing texts and phone calls, following or showing up in the same public places, and making threats. These may skirt the edges of illegal behaviour, but it is possible to obtain a restraining order to prevent the offender from coming into contact with his target. However, as noted earlier, restraining orders have little practical effect and mainly serve as a deterrent. Of the violent offences that women reported in 2011 to

police, 7% were cases of criminal harassment and 13% uttering threats (Sinha, 2013, p. 11). How these percentages relate to the actual incidence of these behaviours is unknown.

Other types of harassment are not addressed by the law, but within the framework of human rights. Each province has a human rights commission that can deal with such complaints. In practice, these tribunals are seldom used. Since the 1970s, sexual harassment of women by men in the workplace has been recognized as a problem for women entering traditionally male-dominated job settings. (For one early Canadian example see Backhouse & Cohen, 1978.) Since 1985, it has been part of the Canadian Labour Code as constituting unacceptable workplace conditions. These behaviours include telling obscene jokes and posting or viewing pornographic images or videos at work, unwanted touching, persistent requests for dates, offering of promotions or favours for providing sex, punitive behaviours for refusing a man's advances, making comments about a woman's body, and spreading sexual rumours. At first dismissed as normal male behaviour, today most large workplaces have zero-tolerance policies and human resource departments to handle complaints. However, the deterrents to women reporting are real, and when they do complain, often the complaint is dismissed or handled privately with no penalty for the perpetrator. Often the woman is the one who suffers a second time from office backlash against her coming forward. In a 2014 report on sexual harassment in federal workplaces, the committee noted that,

in some workplaces, sexual harassment remains under-reported because it is normalized or trivialized within the workplace culture. . . . The Committee was told that in some workplaces, victims of sexual harassment will not report the situation because they fear that they will not be believed by management or co-workers. Many victims will be concerned about the effect that reporting will have on their reputation, including being labelled as a “troublemaker,” losing the trust of co-workers, or being subjected to value judgements. (Le Blanc, 2014, p. 56)

The Committee noted that this negative atmosphere was particularly accentuated when the workplace was a male-dominated one (Le Blanc, 2014, pp. 57–58). Particularly notorious are the military and the legal professions (Gill & Febraro, 2013; Leskinen et al., 2011). Canada's federal parliament is also a well-known location for sexual harassment, both in Margaret Mitchell's time and today (Ditchburn, 2014). Ironically, having very few complaints filed does not mean that a workplace is harassment-free, but may indicate the opposite. It may be that women are afraid to come forward. A workspace where many complaints are filed may correspondingly indicate a more open and gender-sensitive atmosphere. Experiencing sexual harassment is psychologically traumatic for the victim. It may cause her to become apprehensive and fearful, undermine her confidence in her work, and cause her stress and ill health. This in turn may negatively affect her work performance (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008).

Of course, not all harassing behaviour happens in the workplace. In the VAWS, 89% of the respondents had experienced some form of sexual harassment in their lifetime (Johnson, 1996, p. 70). Women experience harassment in the streets; from landlords, police, and other officials; and in all levels of school. One study of high school students in grades 9 to 11 found that 46% of the girls had experienced sexual harassment (Wolfe & Chiodo, 2008, p. 3).

The unwelcoming atmosphere for women in universities first became known as the Chilly Climate in the 1980s and still persists (Prentice, 2000).

A new sphere for harassment that disproportionately impacts young women is the internet and all forms of social media. Studies of cyberbullying among teens show high results for both genders. One survey of over 2000 high school students in the Toronto region shows that 21% had experienced cyberbullying and 28% had witnessed it (Mishna et al., 2008, pp. 5, 7). Although there was no gendered analysis of the results, elsewhere the authors state that girls are far more likely to experience unwanted sexual comments online (Mishna et al., 2010, p. 365). The multiple means of communication, the speed with which images and gossip can be sent to many people on linked social networking platforms, and the possibility of anonymity make bullying through the internet much easier than face-to-face abuse. The internet security firm McAfee surveyed 2000 11- to 17-year-olds about cyberbullying in two consecutive years in the United Kingdom, finding that in 2013 16% reported cyberbullying compared to 35% in 2014. Similarly, 22% had witnessed cyberbullying in 2013 compared to 40% in 2014. Clearly, this is a growing problem (*The Guardian*, 2014).

Adults also report cyberbullying. Statistics Canada asked questions about internet victimization in the 2009 GSS. About 7% of all ages of adult internet users reported being cyberbullied, but younger adults ages 18 to 24 years had a much higher incidence at 17% (Perreault, 2011, p. 5). Although little systematic research has been carried out on this, some of the worst cases of internet harassment take place in anonymous postings on message boards, on Twitter, or in the responses to blogs. One university law student and feminist blogger wrote about her experiences with online harassment. “When women write about politics or technology, or when they pursue an education in a traditionally male field like law,” she observed, “they are reminded of their secondary status through sexualized insults, rape threats, and beauty contests” (Filipovic, 2007, p. 303). One recent example of this was a widely publicized scandal that involved dental students at Dalhousie University, who posted sexually explicit messages about their fellow female classmates on Facebook (Hampson, 2015).

It is this chilly climate that is perhaps one of the most pervasive effects of the harassment of women—whether they are subject to disparaging sexist comments in the office, cat-calling on the street, or gossip and threats on the internet. This feeds into women’s fear of violent sexual assault, which, as the VAWS showed, is a factor in their everyday existence. Women are often forced to plan their lives around avoiding situations where they might be at risk (Stanko, 1997). Some feminist scholars have gone so far as to label this “*sexual terrorism* because it is a system by which all males frighten, and by frightening, control and dominate females” (Sheffield, 2007, p. 111).

Violence Against Women and Intersectionality

In the overall statistics on violence against women, the differing experiences of many women are left out of the picture. Kimberlé Crenshaw was the first to point this out in 1991 when she wrote about Black women in America.

Where systems of race, gender and class domination converge as they do in the experiences of battered women of color, intervention strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help to women who because of race or class face different obstacles. (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1246)

One Canadian study on help-seeking behaviours of women who have been subjected to intimate partner violence indicated that women of colour faced “unique barriers” to seeking help. “Common deterrents to service utilization” included “a perceived lack of cultural sensitivity and inaccessibility of services, social isolation, distrust of service providers, and lack of specialized services” (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 48). When interviewing women who had reported their partners to the police, one study reported that “not one woman of colour reported positive experiences within the legal-judicial system, indicating that racist stereotypes and cultural barriers were in play” (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 1163). If all women are seen as potentially inviting sexual assault, women of colour are doubly so. Popular racial stereotypes portray women of other races as “exotic” and more animalistic. They are seen as less reliable witnesses and their testimony is given less weight. They do not fit the image of the stereotypical innocent victim to the police or in court (Pietsch, 2009/10). Very often, they also do not fit the image of the innocent “battered woman” (Goodmark, 2008) or the violence is seen to come from “the pathology of particular cultural traditions” and thus is minimized (Jiwani, 2006, p. 106).

Immigrant women also experience obstacles in seeking help. Researchers who interviewed immigrant women in Toronto found they “faced additional linguistic and cultural barriers that prevented them from contacting the police. They often did not have access to sufficient legal information and were unable to communicate their situations to English-speaking police officers” (Gillis et al., 2006, p. 1158). Many were unfamiliar with Canadian laws and what their rights were. “Some immigrant women believed that involving the police in domestic disputes could risk deportation of themselves and their partner” (Gillis et al., 2006, p. 1152). Immigrant women are also vulnerable to violence from their Canadian employers, since leaving a bad work situation may result in deportation. The live-in-caregiver provision that allows women to enter the country on work visas requires that they continue to be employed to stay in the country.

One particularly vulnerable Canadian group is Aboriginal women. In 2009, the GSS reported that Aboriginal women had a rate of violence that was 2.5 times that of the general population (Sinha, 2013, p. 19). In cases of spousal violence, more were likely to suffer severe injuries than the non-Aboriginal population (59% to 41%) and to fear for their lives (52% to 31%). “According to the 2011 Homicide Survey, between 2001 and 2011, at least 8% of all murdered women aged 15 years of age and older were Aboriginal, double their representation in the Canadian population (4%)” (Status of Women Canada, 2013). These figures do not include the high number of missing Indigenous women whose fate may never be known. In 2005, The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) received \$10 million in funding over five years from the federal government to investigate this issue. This was known as the Sisters in Spirit initiative. They developed a database of over

582 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Most of these disappeared, not from First Nations communities, but from cities (70%) (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010, p. ii). This information brought condemnation from such international bodies as the United Nations and Amnesty International, which embarrassed the Canadian government (see, for example, Amnesty International, 2009). At the end of the five-year period, the Sisters in Spirit initiative was terminated and the funding and responsibility handed over to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). However, with the addition of nationwide police resources, the RCMP were able to compile a much larger list of 1181 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women across Canada from 1980 to 2012. In a report released in 2014, it was admitted that this could even be an underestimate, given mistakes, difficulty in the identification of victims, and under-reporting. These new figures show Aboriginal women were 23% of all female homicides in 2012, more than five times their percentage representation in the population in 2011 (4.3%) (RCMP, 2014). A United Nations report on the situation of Indigenous peoples in Canada released in 2014 called for "a comprehensive, nationwide inquiry into the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, organized in consultation with indigenous peoples" (James, 2014, p. 21).

The reasons for the shockingly high prevalence of violence against Indigenous women in Canada are not difficult to understand. The disadvantages experienced by all racialized and immigrant women are compounded in the case of Aboriginal women by a history of colonialism and discrimination. From the 1870s until the late 20 century, the Canadian government promoted a policy of assimilation by removing Aboriginal children from their families and placing them in residential schools where their culture and language was forbidden. Many of the children in these schools were subjected to physical and sexual abuse. The NWAC has called this "cultural genocide" (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010, p. 8). "These schools had a profound impact on the traditional family, community and educational systems of Aboriginal nations" (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010, p. 7).

An intersectional approach also reveals the way in which women with disabilities experience violence. This group is often ignored but is extremely vulnerable to violence, very often from those closest to them. Douglas Brownridge, in reviewing the research on women with disabilities in Canada, found that they "tended to be more likely to experience severe forms of violence and/or were more vulnerable to consequences associated with violence" (Brownridge, 2009, p. 256). The 2009 GSS collected information on women with what they called "activity limitations." It was found that although men with disabilities experienced no increase in partner violence, women "experienced rates of spousal violence in the past five years that were nearly double those without limitations" (Sinha, 2013, p. 60). Depending on the disability, it may be extremely difficult for such women to leave abusive situations because of dependency on a caregiver, difficulty in being employed, and low income. There is a severe shortage of services geared to their needs. The Disabled Women's Network of Canada reports that only one in 10 women with disabilities were able to get help at a shelter or transition house because of lack of accessibility. This is usually because of lack of funding to make the necessary renovations or purchase the required services/equipment (Disabled Women's Network of Canada, n.d.).

For those who do not fit comfortably in the stereotypical gender binary, the situation may be even more difficult. Lesbian couples or transsexual women have very few community resources available to them and may not feel welcome at agencies that were founded to support heterosexual women. Further, although scholars such as Janice Ristock have identified lesbian abuse as a significant Canadian problem (Ristock, 2002), research on partner violence in non-heterosexual communities has been sparse. Thus, “it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the nature and prevalence of IPV [intimate partner violence] in gay, lesbian and bisexual partnerships” (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 5). The GSS has recently started to ask questions that have allowed those who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual to identify themselves. In the 2004 GSS, 372 persons identified themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and of these 186 reported current partners and so were asked questions about IPV. Researchers Barrett and St. Pierre reveal that of these, 65 people, or 34.9%, reported emotional or financial abuse and 38, or 20.4% reported physical/sexual abuse from their partners. Of these 38 persons, “38.9% identified as bisexual women, 26.4% identified as gay men, 19.6% identified as lesbian women, and 15.1% identified as bisexual males” (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 11). Although this is a small sample, it is nationally representative. Similarly:

The 2009 GSS indicates that women who self-identified as lesbian or bisexual were significantly more likely than heterosexual women to report violence by a current or previous spouse in the previous five years (20.8% versus 6.1%). . . . It should be noted that the sex of the abusive spouse was not asked; therefore, the prevalence rates for lesbian or bisexual women could include some opposite-sex spouses. (Sinha, 2013, p. 59)

Barrett and St. Pierre note that a 2011 American National Violence Against Women Survey found that bisexual women were most likely to be victimized by their opposite-sex partners, but warn against applying a heteronormative model to these relationships, that is, assuming that their experience is just like that of heterosexual women (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2013, pp. 17–18). The higher rate of violence experienced by bisexual women is not just because they are women in a patriarchal society. It is also because their bisexuality challenges the dominant heterosexual norm. As with other forms of intersectionality, it increases their vulnerability to relationship violence. The same has been observed of transsexual persons. An American survey found that:

Nineteen percent (19%) of respondents have experienced domestic violence at the hands of a family member because of their transgender identity or gender non-conformity. . . . MTF [male transitioned to female] respondents endured family violence more often (22%) than FTM [female transitioned to male] respondents (15%), while gender non-conforming respondents were victimized more often (21%) than their transgender peers (19%). (Grant et al, 2011, p. 100)

A recent large Canadian internet survey on IPV found that just under 30% of those who did not identify as heterosexual were being abused in current relationships, although further details on their sexual identity were not provided (Wathen et al., 2014, p. 5).

These significant prevalence rates are regrettably not matched by services. Lesbian, bisexual, or trans women may not be “out” to some friends or family or not want to expose this information to strangers. Often they fear that they will be subject to homophobia when they approach the police or social services (Hardesty et al., 2011). If the legal system is a challenge for heterosexual women, it is even more fraught for lesbian, bisexual, or trans women. As with all others who experience the multiple oppressions of race, ethnicity, gender, or ability, IPV is a more difficult and complex problem for them.

Pornography and Prostitution

Pornography and prostitution have been areas of controversy for feminists. Those who consider themselves to be “sex positive” have argued that sexuality of all kinds should be celebrated and not subject to censorship. They point out that human self-expression and especially those areas of sexuality deemed “queer” by the heterosexual majority will be repressed. Pornography is framed more as free speech from this perspective than as a practice (see, for example, Taormino et al., 2013). Similarly, sex-positive feminists refuse to condemn the practice of prostitution and the many ways of selling sex such as by phone, erotic dancing and stripping, live streaming on the internet, videos, massage parlours, escorting, and street prostitution. They are concerned about stereotypes of “easy” women that result in “slut-shaming,” which denigrates the work done by women in the sex trade. From a socialist feminist perspective, sex work is labour like any other and deserves to be treated with equal dignity and respect, with good working conditions. However, both pornography and prostitution as they exist now commercially do not meet the standard of good working conditions. Not all sex workers are at the top end of escort service, work in well-run brothels (not legal in Canada), and appear at glittering porn awards ceremonies in Las Vegas. Critics point to the dangers inherent in street-involved prostitution, the fact that many who perform in porn films are poorly paid (usually by the act with no share of the profits) and have increasingly been asked to perform painful acts involving multiple penetration, choking, and verbal and physical abuse.¹ In Canada, there are sex workers who are recruited into prostitution at very young teen ages by exploiters who lure them by a combination of seduction and coercion. This is considered human trafficking by law enforcement agencies (and is also condemned by sex worker advocacy groups) because the girls did not enter sex work of their own volition or for their own profit, in addition to being underage. Almost all of those trafficked for sexual exploitation in Canada are recruited from within our own borders (RCMP, 2010; 2013). A recent study on sex trafficking by Nicole Barrett for the Canadian Women’s Foundation points out that no one knows the exact numbers of women who are trafficked in Canada. The illegality, the fact that the underage girls are rarely seen on the streets but are marketed through the internet and work indoors, the reluctance or inability of exploited girls to report their abusers, and the frequent connections with organized crime make it impossible to know the exact numbers. The small number of prosecutions and convictions recorded by the police represent only a tiny fraction of the numbers suggested by qualitative reports (Barrett, 2013).

It is also difficult to distinguish those trafficked from those who entered prostitution on their own initiative. Although a person might be lured or coerced into prostitution from all sectors of Canadian society, those who are poor or Aboriginal are significantly over-represented. Many come from violent homes or have been subjected to sexual abuse (Barrett, 2013, pp. 20–21). The Native Women’s Association of Canada, in a comprehensive review of qualitative research based mainly on interviews with front-line workers in service organizations that supported sex workers, concluded that, “Human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is a serious concern in Canada. The prevalence of aboriginal women and girls who are drawn in through force and many other recruitment strategies represents a dark, discriminatory practice in this country” (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2014, p. 67; see also Sethi, 2007, pp. 37–71; Sikka, 2009).

Sex-positive feminists who acknowledge the violent realities of women’s sex work argue that legalization of prostitution will allow it to be better regulated and safer. They point to the models of Australia and New Zealand where women work in legal brothels. Feminists who feel that sex work is inherently exploitative of women and girls prefer what has become known as the Nordic Model adopted in Sweden, Norway, and Iceland that makes the buying of sex illegal, but not the act of selling, and provides state support to assist women leaving sex work. Canada has recently adopted a variant of the Nordic approach that mainly criminalizes the purchasers of sex. Will this approach support women in leaving prostitution or will it expose sex workers to ever more secretive and therefore dangerous situations? Alternatively, should the state endorse the sale of sexual acts by turning pimps into respectable businesspersons? Even with legalization, there could still be an exploited group of sex workers who do not meet the requirements of brothel owners, because of physical appearance, age, race, or ethnicity, and who would be forced to work in unregulated conditions on the streets. Feminists are deeply divided on this issue, and it is clear that there are important arguments on both sides but as yet no ideal solution to the violence that sex workers in Canada experience.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INTERNATIONALLY

In this chapter we have focused on the Canadian and sometimes North American realities of violence against women. Domestic violence against women has been recognized as a serious concern and violation of women’s human rights by major international bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations (UN), and Oxfam (Raab, 2012; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010; WHO, 2010; 2013). There have been two major international surveys done on violence against women. One was a collaborative effort of the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, in partnership with Statistics Canada’s Holly Johnson that took place in eleven countries worldwide from 2002 to 2005 (Johnson et al., 2008). The other was conducted by the WHO in 2000–2003 in ten other countries (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; WHO, 2005). Results varied considerably from nation to nation, and even in different regions of the same country. However, one systematic review of

all domestic violence prevalence studies worldwide has concluded that the accumulated evidence shows that “violence against women has reached epidemic proportions in many societies” (Alhabib, 2010, p. 369). In a 2014 report on gender, the UN Statistics Division and UN Women reported that an average of 30% of women globally have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime (United Nations Statistics Division, UN Women, 2014). If we compare this to the almost identical result from the VAWS, it appears that Canada is consistent with the rest of the world in the amount of violence that women experience.

CONCLUSION: IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A SOCIETY WHERE WOMEN ARE FREE FROM MALE VIOLENCE?

Many feminist activists, researchers, and policy-makers have sought to understand the roots of male violence against women so that effective means can be taken to end it.² They have found multiple causes, ranging from personal history, family context, to broad social values and influences. Particularly influential are such factors as witnessing domestic violence as a child or being abused as a child. When the broader society and a boy’s peer groups support or trivialize violence, they reinforce it.

Anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday has surveyed studies of 95 tribal societies where it was possible to determine the presence of rape, classifying them as rape-prone or rape-free. Of these 47% were classified as free of rape, or rape was a very unusual event. They differed significantly from societies where rape was more prevalent. By far the most important indicator of a rape-prone society was the high value it placed on male dominance and control over women. The sexes were separated in such societies, with the men controlling community wealth and dominating important rituals. The rape-free societies had a much more equal distribution of power between genders and placed a higher value on women’s assets, such as fertility. Sanday concluded that since the prevalence of rape is so varied in these tribal societies, it shows that it is not an act that is natural or inevitable in men. Men’s violence is dependent on the social and cultural conditions men were socialized in. It follows that if we change the dominant values of a society, we should be able to also reduce or eliminate violence against women (Sanday, 1981). This is not an easy challenge, but it is possible.

Everywhere we look in the media, it seems that almost daily there is a new report of politically motivated kidnappings of girls, rapes and murders of women in both war zones and peaceful communities, gender-based internet attacks, sexual harassment, and popular male entertainment figures accused of being serial sexual assaulters. It may seem as if violence against women is increasing and out of control. However, it is also just as likely that public consciousness and the media have been sensitized to the issue by the hard work of feminists and are reporting events that would have passed unnoticed even a decade ago. What is also encouraging is that many men are now speaking out about male violence and working for positive change.³ What was previously ignored, seen as shameful and hidden in private is now coming to light, and women are less afraid to speak out about the violence they have experienced. Viewed in this manner, these new public discussions are indicative of real positive change in social values, which bodes well for the future.

Endnotes

1. For critical perspectives on pornography and prostitution see: Gail Dines. (2010). *Pornland: How Porn has Hijacked Our Sexuality*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press; S. Jeffreys. (2009). *The Industrial Vagina: The Political Economy of the Global Sex Trade*. New York, NY: Routledge; and M. Tankard Reist and A. Bray (Eds.). (2011). *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the Harms of the Global Pornography Industry*. North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press.
2. For an overview of this research, see Johnson and Dawson (2011), 13–36.
3. See for example: W. S. Dekeseredy and M. D. Schwartz. (2013). *Male Peer Support and Violence Against Women*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press; J. Katz. (2006). *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks; M. Kaufman. (1993). *Cracking the Armor: Power, Pain, and the Lives of Men*. New York, NY: Viking; M. Kimmel. (2008). *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the intersection of oppressions based on factors such as ability, gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual identity affect gender-based violence?
2. What are “rape myths”? How do they disadvantage women of many different backgrounds?
3. What is “slut-shaming”? How have different groups of women responded to this problem?
4. Why do some women stay in violent relationships? What would allow them to leave?
5. What actions have been undertaken by feminists to end violence against women?

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