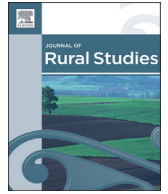




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New directions in feminist understandings of rural crime

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ABSTRACT

In the early to mid-1990s, Patricia Gagne's work on woman abuse in the Appalachian region of the United States (U.S) sparked contemporary feminist interpretations of rural crime and social control. Nevertheless, the flames did not emerge until the latter part of the last decade, with the publication of a spate of scholarly books, journal articles, and chapters. These feminist contributions enhance an empirical and theoretical understanding of rural criminality and societal reactions to it, but there are still key gaps in gender and rural crime research. The main objective of this article is twofold: (1) to briefly review the extant feminist literature on rural crimes and societal reactions to them and (2) to suggest new directions in the development of a feminist rural criminology.

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1. Introduction

Criminology is urban-biased and few people know this better than the contributors to this issue of the *Journal of Rural Studies*. Actually, rural crime consistently ranks among the least studied social problems in criminology (Donnermeyer, 2012). This interdisciplinary field, however, was not always urban-centric, even though it did first develop in countries of Europe and North America, which were among the first to industrialize and whose urban populations became the majority after the start of the 20th century (Weisheit et al., 2006; Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2014). It is beyond the scope of this piece to describe how and why criminology took a sharp urban turn after the 1950s, but it is easy to conclude that, on top of marginalizing the plight of rural people, the abstracted empiricist nature of the discipline, at least in North America, "has expanded on a level which would have surely astonished" C. Wright Mills if he were alive today (Young, 2011, p. viii). Mills was a radical U.S. sociologist at the peak of his academic career and he coined the term *abstracted empiricism* in his 1959 seminal book *The Sociological Imagination*. This type of "so what? criminology" now dominates criminology and involves doing a-theoretical, quantitative research on relatively minor issues and presenting the findings in a highly unintelligible fashion (Currie, 2007). The late pioneering critical criminologist Jock Young (2004) labeled this approach "voodoo criminology." Critical criminologists emphasize not only social and economic inequality in

society, and its effect on crime, but also gender and race differences in victimization and offending (DeKeseredy, 2011a; DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz, 2012, 2014).

The expansion of feminism throughout the social sciences would have also amazed Mills (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2013). In fact, a growing cadre of feminists are chipping away at criminology's urban, positivist Bastille and produce "cutting edge" theoretical, empirical, and policy work on the gendered nature of certain crimes in rural contexts. The main objective of this article is twofold: (1) to briefly review the extant feminist literature on rural crime and social control and (2) to suggest new directions in the development of a rural feminist criminology. It is first necessary, though, to define the terms *rural*, *feminism*, and *gender*.

2. Criminological definitions of rural, feminism, and gender

2.1. Definition of rural

Not all rural communities are alike and defining the concept *rural* is subject to much debate (Websdale, 1998; Wendt, 2009; Donnermeyer, 2012). Even so, following DeKeseredy et al. (2007) and Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2014), a nominal conceptualization of rural is offered here. Rural communities are places with small population sizes/densities, areas where people are more likely to "know each other's businesses" and "come into regular contact with each other" (Websdale, 1995, p. 102), and they are locales that exhibit variable levels of what Sampson et al. (1998, p. 1) refer to as *collective efficacy*. This means "mutual trust among neighbors combined with a willingness to act on behalf of the

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common good, specifically to supervise children and maintain public order”.

No assumptions about collective efficacy in rural contexts should be made because it can facilitate some types of crime while constraining other forms of offending (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2014). For example, DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) found that many rural Ohio men who abuse their intimate female partners depend on male friends and neighbors to support their hurtful actions even while they count on the same people to help prevent public crimes (e.g., vandalism, burglary, etc.), which to them is acting on “behalf of the common good.” There is a system of social practices that dominates and oppresses rural and urban females alike, but it operates differently in rural places. While some men in urban vicinities report adversarial relationships with police, violent men in rural communities are more likely to be protected by an “ol’ boys network” (Websdale, 1998). Referred to as “mateship” in Australia (Wendt, 2009), many rural battered women know that the local police may be friends with their abuser, and officers may refuse to arrest on the grounds of friendship (Zorza, 2002; DeKeseredy and Joseph, 2006; Rennison et al., 2013). Note, too, that one of the key risk factors for violence against women in rural areas is *patriarchal male peer support* (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2013; Hall-Sanchez, 2013, 2014). This determinant is “attachments to male peers and the resources they provide that encourage and legitimate woman abuse” (DeKeseredy, 1990, p. 130).

In rural parts of Ohio and other states, such as Kentucky, as well as in Australia and Canada, there is also widespread acceptance of woman abuse and community norms prohibiting victims from publicly revealing their hurtful experiences and from seeking social support (Krishnan et al., 2001; Lewis, 2003; DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2008; Brownridge, 2009; Wendt, 2009; LaViolette and Barnett, 2014). Moreover, while urban abused women encounter may barriers to service, rural women by comparison have fewer social support resources (Lohmann and Lohmann, 2005; Merwin et al., 2006; Barnett et al., 2011; Ragusa, 2013; Rennison et al., 2013), and those available cover very large geographic areas (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2009; Logan et al., 2004, 2005). Rural women face additional barriers, including geographic and social isolation and inadequate (if any) public transportation (Lewis, 2003; Logan et al., 2006). Another factor exacerbating rural women's plight is being uninsured. What's more, rural women are less likely to be insured than are urban and suburban residents (Mueller and MacKinney, 2006; Patterson, 2006), which restricts their access to physical and mental health care services (Basile and Black, 2011).

2.2. Definition of feminism and gender

Defining feminism is a challenge but one thing all feminist scholars agree with is that “feminism is not merely about adding women onto the agenda” (Currie and MacLean, 1993, p. 6). Here, offered is Daly and Chesney-Lind's (1988, p. 502) definition because it is one of the most widely used and cited conceptualizations in the criminological literature. Feminism is “a set of theories about women's oppression and a set of strategies for change.” Nevertheless, it is incorrect to paint all feminists with the same brush because there are at least 12 variants of feminist criminological theory (Maidment, 2006; Renzetti, 2012, 2013). Yet, all feminists prioritize gender, which should not be confused with sex even though both terms are often incorrectly used interchangeably (DeKeseredy, 2011a). These two concepts are related but are not the same. Gender is commonly defined as “the socially defined expectations, characteristics, attributes, roles, responsibilities, activities and practices that constitute masculinity, femininity, gender identity, and gender expressions” (Flavin and Artz, 2013, p. 11). Sex,

on the other hand, refers to the biologically based categories of “female” and “male” that are stable across history and cultures (Dragiewicz, 2009). For instance, throughout the world, men commit most of the violent crimes, but many societies have much lower rates of violence than those of the U.S., the Russian Federation, or Columbia (Krug et al., 2002; Currie, 2009, 2012). Hence, if “boys will be boys,” they “will be so differently” (Kimmel, 2000), depending on where they live, their peer groups, social class position and race/ethnicity, and a host of other factors (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2014).

There are consistent sex differences in crime that are heavily influenced by dominant gender norms (Schur, 1984; DeKeseredy, 2014). Consider, too, that men and women may commit the same crimes, but for different reasons. For instance, men typically steal as a means of “doing masculinity” and they tend to “pinch” goods like iPhones and tools, items that are not necessary for their survival (Messerschmidt, 1993; DeKeseredy, 2000; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013). On the other hand, women steal items that are lower in monetary value but are useful to them as mothers, homemakers, or for feminine appearances (e.g., clothing, groceries, and makeup). They also write bad checks mainly to get these goods. Likewise, most women who defraud the government do so because they and their children cannot afford to live on minimal welfare payments or wages accumulated from “pink ghetto” work (e.g., a server in a restaurant) (Barker, 2009; Morash and Yingling, 2012).

Feminists remind us that analyses of crime rates, regardless of whether they are in rural, suburban, or urban communities, that rely on the variables “male” and “female” cannot tell us much about gender, the socially constructed and normative set of meanings attached to these categories (Renzetti, 2013). This distinction is one of the primary contributions of feminist perspectives to the social sciences (Dragiewicz, 2012). Research that asks perpetrators and survivors about the nature of violence between intimates finds that both say much about gender. For example, rural violent men talk about threats to their masculinity when their intimate female partners try to leave them (DeKeseredy et al., 2007; DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2013), whereas women talk about the normative expectations that abusers use to justify their violence (DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz, 2007).

Critically examining the role of gender in crime and other social problems does not mean that all feminists only examine women's experiences. True, given that women's issues have historically been excluded from mainstream criminological work, many feminists prioritize women's experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. Even so, there are feminists who study femininities and masculinities (Renzetti, 2013). A central argument of feminist masculinities theorists is that there is no simple standard of being a man that guides all male behavior, including crime (Messerschmidt, 1993; Polk, 2003; Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2012). Masculinities theorists who study crime contend that, for many men, crime and violence are viable techniques for performing and validating masculinity. Still, these scholars recognize that the decision to commit certain crimes is affected by class and race relations that structure the resources available to accomplish masculine identity (Messerschmidt, 2005, 2014).

For example, many poor young men, regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, cannot effectively establish masculinity at school through academic advancement, participation in sports, or involvement in extra-curricular activities (Messerschmidt, 1993). This problem results in some boys experiencing status frustration, dropping out of school, and creating a subculture with other boys who share this frustration (Cohen, 1955). This subculture grants members status based on accomplishing gender through violence and other illegitimate means (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2005).

In addition to prioritizing gender in their scholarly work, feminists embrace multiple empirical “ways of knowing” (Jaffe et al., 2011; Renzetti, 2013; Renzetti et al., 2013). For example, to discern whether rural women in the U.S. are at greater risk of being abused by current or former male partners than are their urban and suburban counterparts, DeKeseredy and Rennison (2013a) and Rennison et al. (2012a,b, 2013) analyzed data gleaned from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Other feminists, such as Gagne (1992, 1996), Websdale (1998), Wendt (2009), and DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) could not collect their rich rural woman abuse data using quantitative methods and thus relied on qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews and ethnography.

The empirical diversity in the feminist literature on rural crime and social control reflects the view that research methods are tools that can be used in a variety of ways to achieve different goals. Think of something as simple as a shovel. It can help build a rape crisis center or a private prison that punishes economically and socially excluded victims of the U.S. government's failed “war on drugs”. Feminists prefer to build a rape crisis center and their research methods show how broader social forces, such as patriarchy, combined with micro-level factors (e.g., male peer support) contribute to crime and victimization (DeKeseredy, 2011b).

Most feminists also agree that the majority of countries around the world are *patriarchal*. The definition of patriarchy is passionately debated within feminist academic circles, but it is still widely used because, as noted by Hunnicutt (2009, p. 554), it keeps the focus “directed toward social contexts rather than toward individual men who are motivated to dominate.” Following Renzetti (2013, p. 8), patriarchy “is a gender structure in which men dominate women, and what is considered masculine is more highly valued than what is considered feminine.” All the same, feminists recognize that not all men benefit equally in patriarchal societies and that some groups of women have more privilege than others. This is a key reason why some contemporary feminists examine *intersectionality*. This involves addressing “the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression, and other discriminatory systems create background inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes and the like” (Crenshaw, 2000, p. 8). Intersectionality is front and center in the North American feminist criminological literature on the lives of inner-city African–American girls and women, and two prime examples are the writings of Nikki Jones (2010) and Hillary Potter (2006, 2008). However, intersectionality has yet to gain momentum in North American rural criminological research.

Feminists propose a diverse range of policies too numerous to summarize here. Still, it must be emphasized that feminist criminologists do extensive theoretical, empirical, and policy work on a myriad of important problems, including women and girls' pathways to crime, drugs, intimate violence, and moral panics about female youth violence (Renzetti et al., 2013). Furthermore, feminist theorists and researchers have had a major impact on criminal justice and social policy (Lilly et al., 2011), especially in the area of violence against women.

3. Rural feminist criminology: the current state of social scientific knowledge

Feminist criminology is widely recognized as a key variant of critical criminology (DeKeseredy, 2011a; DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz, 2012, 2014). Additionally, Gagne's (1992, 1996) feminist work on violence against rural women marked the start of contemporary critical interpretations of crime (DeKeseredy and Donnermeyer, 2013). As a matter of fact, until the recent explosion of *green* criminological scholarship, feminist inquiry

dominated critical rural crime research. Following Brisman and South (2013, p. 2), green criminology is “the term that criminologists most frequently employ to describe the exploration and examination of cause of and responses to ‘ecological,’ ‘environmental,’ or ‘green’ crimes, harms, and hazards”. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this chapter, this vibrant new direction in critical criminology remains “gender-blind” (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1988), with the insights of feminist contributions almost completely marginalized. For example, the words “feminism” and “gender” are nowhere to be found in the index included in White and Heckenberg's (2014) widely read and cited *Green Criminology: An Introduction to the Study of Environmental Harm*. Also conspicuously absent from this book is an examination of *ecofeminism*, which is a school of thought first introduced in a 1974 book written by French feminist scholar Francoise d'Eaubonne.

Shortly after Gagne's work came Websdale's (1998) research on rural woman battering in Kentucky. But, feminist research on violence against rural women quickly exploded on the scene in the latter part of the last decade with the publication of books and articles on violence against women, with the bulk of these materials produced in Canada, the U.S., and Australia (Sandberg, 2013). Rural violence against women research does, however, occur outside these countries. Consider Bhuiya et al. (2003) study of the abuse of women in rural Bangladesh.

Most of the recent North American work on this topic was done by Walter DeKeseredy and his colleagues, as well as T.K. Logan and her co-researchers based at the University of Kentucky. The former cohort is primarily interested in separation/divorce assault and the factors that motivate men to perpetuate it (e.g., DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2009; Hall-Sanchez, 2014), while the latter's empirical focus emphasizes abused rural women's barriers to service (e.g., Logan et al., 2004, 2005). DeKeseredy was also part of a research team that used aggregate NCVS data either from 1992 to 2005 and from 1992 to 2009 to examine:

- urban, suburban, and rural Intimate relationship status variations in violence against women (Rennison et al., 2013);
- urban, suburban, and rural differences in racial/ethnic variations in violence against women (DeKeseredy et al., 2012);
- urban, suburban, and rural variations in separation/divorce assault (DeKeseredy and Rennison, 2013a; Rennison et al., 2012a,b); and
- dominant situational contexts of reporting of violence against women to police across rural, suburban, and urban areas (Rennison et al., 2012a,b).

In Australia, a “hot spot” of rural critical criminological research, feminists, such as Kerry Carrington and Sarah Wendt, too, generate rich theoretical and empirical work on violence against women, with much emphasis on masculinity and violence (Hogg and Carrington, 2006; Carrington et al., 2013). The rural rates of violence against women in Australia are very high, especially in the remote regions (Carrington and Phillips, 2006; Neame and Heenan, 2004; Wendt, 2009). Thus, it is safe to conclude that, collectively, using qualitative and quantitative data, international research done to date demonstrates that rural women are at higher risk of experiencing intimate male intimate violence than those in more densely populated areas. The key risk factors identified include those described earlier (e.g., isolation, male peer support, “ol' boys network”), but our knowledge about private violence in the lives of rural women is incomplete. It should also be noted in passing that there are, of course, feminist scholars based in disciplines (e.g., health and nursing) outside criminology who study violence against women and who have produced equally important results (e.g., Anderson et al., 2014).

Feminists, too, are heavily involved in doing theoretical work on rural woman abuse. While all of the perspectives offered thus far prioritize the gendered nature of this harm, there are some key variations. For example, [Wendt's \(2009\)](#) theoretical approach focuses heavily on rural culture and women's experiences of male violence, while [Websdale's \(1998, p. 91\)](#) contribution concentrates primarily on the rural criminal justice system's response to woman battering. The offerings of DeKeseredy and his colleagues (see [DeKeseredy et al., 2004, 2007](#)) and that of [Hall-Sanchez \(2014\)](#), on the other hand, put patriarchal male peer support at the forefront of their analyses and are crafted to explain separation/divorce sexual assault in rural communities. Their theories are also strongly influenced by male peer support models constructed by Walter DeKeseredy and Martin Schwartz over the past 25 years (see [DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2013](#)).

Spawned by rural southeast Ohio research showing that pornography is heavily involved in a myriad of assaults committed against women who want to leave, are trying to leave, are in the process of leaving, or who have left their marital/cohabiting partners ([DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2009](#)), [DeKeseredy et al. \(2014\)](#) merged cultural criminological and feminist modes of thought in their exploratory research on rural horror films and pornographic videos. Their key finding is that, with the help of new information technologies, these media are normalized, mainstreamed, and contribute to the horrification/pornification of rural culture, and by doing so, mask the real issues about crime, violence, and gender relations in the rural context, such as male violence against female intimates.

DeKeseredy, Muzzatti, and Donnermeyer define horrification as the persistent depiction of any group of people within a particular society as either the perpetrators and/or victims of extreme violence by various visual, print, and other mass media genres, and of its distribution. Similarly, pornification is the persistent depiction of any group of people within a particular society as either the perpetrators and/or the victims of extreme forms of sexual behavior and exploitation, including violent and racist portrayals of heterosexual sex in various mass media, and of its distribution and use within society.

Why does the media's horrification/pornification of rural culture continue to flourish? DeKeseredy and colleagues offer [DeKeseredy's \(2014\)](#) answer to this question. For him, highly degrading and grossly distorted media representations of male-to-female violence serve the interests of men who abuse female intimates. Such images support the myths that sexual assaults, murders, and beatings are committed by pathological "sex fiends" and that women enjoy "rough sex" depicted in cyber porn ([Beckett and Sasson, 2000](#)). However, DeKeseredy, Muzzatti, and Donnermeyer do not provide strong evidence to support this theory and many would claim that what DeKeseredy is in fact describing is the consequence of viewing rural horror and porn.

If we accept many feminists' standpoint that pornography, like beatings, sexual assaults, and other forms of abuse women experience in intimate relationships, is a form of violence, then it is fair to conclude that violence against women research monopolizes rural feminist criminological scholarship ([DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz, 2013](#)). There are, though, a few exceptions to the rule, such as [Judith Grant's \(2008\)](#) gendered analysis of Appalachian women's pathways from addiction to recovery, [Rockell's \(2013\)](#) study of rural drug-involved recidivist property and public order female offenders, and [Little et al. \(2005\)](#) work on rural women's fear of crime. Obviously, research on other topics is much needed. Feminist criminology in general has been reshaped over the years in various theoretical, political, and empirical ways, but like the vast majority of other social scientists, the largest number of scholars guided by this vibrant school of thought have yet to take "departures from criminological and sociological urbanism" ([Hogg and](#)

[Carrington, 2006](#), p. 1). Suggestions for achieving this goal are the main theme of the next section.

Regardless of major gaps in the literature, feminist analyses done so far are refreshing changes from social disorganization perspectives, which are the theories most frequently adopted by rural criminologists ([Donnermeyer, 2012](#); [Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2014](#)). Feminist rural criminologists (e.g., [DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2009](#)), together with [Barclay et al. \(2004\)](#), show that what may appear to orthodox or mainstream sociologists as social disorganization is often "simply a different form of social organization if one takes the trouble to look closely" ([Wacquant, 1997](#), p. 346; [Venkatesh, 2000](#)).

4. Filling the gaps in rural feminist criminology

4.1. New ways of understanding violence against women

Virtually all studies of rural woman abuse have gathered data primarily from women. Undeniably, due to social desirability effects and other factors, listening to women's voices and inviting them to fill out surveys uncovers higher estimates of any type of violence against women than those derived from self-report surveys administered to men ([DeKeseredy et al., 2004](#); [Jacquier et al., 2011](#); [DeKeseredy and Rennison, 2013b](#)). Be that as it may, the feminist research community is now at the point where it can confidently state that an alarmingly high number of rural women are victimized in private places and hence it is time to use some different techniques to yield better answers to some theoretically important questions, such as "Why Does He Do That?" ([Bancroft, 2002](#)). This is not to assert, though, that interviewing women or administering surveys to them does not help achieve this goal. They definitely do and an international body of scholarship shows that data gleaned from women generate some rich information on the characteristics of the men who abused them. Still, interviews with men are in short supply and so are self-report surveys administered to men. Such methods will tell us much about what drives them to be abusive and enable researchers to more effectively assess the explanatory power of certain theories, such as the above male peer support perspectives. Several hypotheses derived from them could easily be tested using measures of male peer support developed by [DeKeseredy \(1988\)](#), [Smith's \(1990\)](#) familial patriarchal ideology items, and other quantitative items. Regardless, of which methods are employed, research on men is necessary because much insight is gained through invading and carefully studying the social constructions of men who abuse current and former female partners ([Scully, 1990](#)).

A variety of methods enhance a social scientific understanding of rural woman abuse and some new techniques seem promising. One in particular - back-talk focus groups/interviews - may at first appear novel, but has roots in African American slavery history ([Collins, 2000](#); [Hall-Sanchez, 2013](#)). It then meant "speaking as equal to an authority figure. It meant daring to disagree and sometimes it just meant having an opinion" ([Hooks, 1989](#), p. 5). As well, talking back involved bearing witness, "to bring forth, to claim and proclaim oneself as an intrinsic part of the world" ([Collins, 2000](#), p. 2). Today, back-talk focus groups are becoming known as useful means of eliciting fruitful qualitative data. Typically used in feminist community-based studies, researchers "go back" to the community to present their results as an attempt to get more feedback from a sample of community members. As [Hall-Sanchez \(2013, p. 46\)](#), a feminist scholar who recently used this approach in rural Ohio, puts it:

These researchers often present their findings in order to obtain reactions, additional questions/concerns, and or suggestions for

future research/policy proposals, etc. These discussions of the participants with each other and the researcher generate rich qualitative interactive data that can be used to supplement a previous or ongoing study or as new data to be further analysed on their own (Wilkinson, 1998). Back-talk focus groups and interviews are empowering to the participants as they provide an opportunity to exercise a greater role in the research process. The researcher can also demonstrate the responsible dissemination of sensitive issues to a potentially diverse and highly politicized audience, which contributes to the creation of a more reflexive and social responsible research culture (Frisina, 2006).

As of 2013, Hall-Sanchez is the first feminist criminologist to employ this method in a rural woman abuse study. She presented the results of DeKeseredy and Schwartz's (2009) ten-year-old separation/divorce sexual assault study to a purposive sample of 12 women and her face-to-face interviews with each of them are insightful. In fact, two of the most important themes uncovered by DeKeseredy and Schwartz – male peer support and patriarchal dominance and control – clearly stood out. Hall-Sanchez also found that hunting was an integral part of the rural male peer support subculture that promoted and justified male-to-female violence in her participants' communities. She notes:

Regardless of why these men participated in the hunting subculture, the excruciatingly imperative reality is that it allowed them access to a legal and justifiable weapon that could be (and oftentimes was) used to intimidate, threaten, control, and hurt their female partners. This fact alone has a profound impact on the lives of rural women experiencing violence in their intimate relationships, especially when they are expressing a desire to or actually separating from their abusive male partners (Hall-Sanchez, 2014, p. 8).

What makes Hall-Sanchez' study unique is not only her back-talk methodology, but also that she helped fill a major gap in rural patriarchal male peer support research. Ironically, given that many women murdered by their current and former male partners are killed with guns and that rural areas have higher rates of gun ownership than urban and metropolitan places (Wendt, 2009; Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2014), male peer support researchers such as DeKeseredy and Schwartz have to date paid little attention to hunting-related issues. It is fair to assume that Hall-Sanchez's innovative research will influence them and other feminist rural criminologists to do so in the near future.

4.2. Women in conflict with the law

It is unclear whether rural women and girls are at greater risk of committing crimes than their urban counterparts. Our knowledge of similarities and differences in criminal justice system responses to rural and urban women/girls in conflict with the law is also limited (DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz, 2013). Doing rigorous feminist research on these issues is much more than an academic enterprise. Rich quantitative and qualitative data are needed to inform policies and services that help prevent female crime within the context of the specific communities where women and girls live (Logan et al., 2004).

4.3. Rural racism

Feminist analyses of rural racism and hate groups are in short supply. Yet, examining hate groups, most of which have rural roots and mostly act out their biases in rural environments (Young, 1990;

Kimmel and Ferber, 2000; Dees and Fifer, 2001; Kimmel, 2013), is a vital arena for rural feminist criminological research and theorizing. For example, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center (2011), there are over 1000 identifiable hate groups ranging from traditional chapters of the Ku Klux Klan to branches of a racist right-wing religious group known as Christian Identity, with a disproportionate share of all hate groups located in rural areas (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2014).

Gender plays a key role in the development of rural hate groups, which consist primarily of "emasculated white men." Based on his many years of empirical work on white supremacists and neo-Nazis, masculinities scholar Michael Kimmel (2013, p. 257) notes:

If the first "gendered strategy" of the White Wing is to trumpet the emasculation of the American white man, the second gendered strategy is to criticize the masculinity of the other - Jews, gays, blacks, Latinos, women, basically everyone who is not an American white man. They are illegitimate pretenders to the throne of masculinity; it is *their* masculinity that is the problem, not ours. They reap rewards they have not earned and do not deserve, doled out by a government in the thrall of Jewish bankers, feminist women, and African American guiltmongers.

Kimmel and Abby Ferber (see her 1999, 2000, and 2004 contributions) are among less than a handful of feminist scholars who study rural hate crime. This is surprising for the above reasons and since it is well documented that rural hate crime is a key way of "doing white masculinity" (Perry, 2001; Messerschmidt, 2014). Furthermore, there is a considerable amount of hate-motivated male violence against women in rural communities that is used to keep women "in their place" (Perry, 2003; DeKeseredy, 2009). Feminist research on these and other highly injurious symptoms of rural racism will help us achieve a better understanding of how rural social structure and cultural contextualizes issues related to crime, safety, and policing (Hogg and Carrington, 2006).

4.4. State and corporate/white collar crime

There is extensive critical criminological research on government or state crimes. The same can be said corporate/white collar crime (Friedrichs and Rothe, 2012). If one combines both topics, he or she would be hard pressed to disagree with this statement made by a colleague to David Kauzlarich and Rick Matthews (2006, p. 239), "[S]uch a sustained body of high-quality scholarship from a network of researchers working in concert on a particular problem area was unparalleled in criminology." Certainly, many genocidal acts committed by governments (and other types of state crime) occur in rural parts of countries like Darfur and Rwanda (Rothe and Mullins, 2008; Mullins, 2009) and a sizeable portion of corporate/white collar crimes, such as the dumping of toxic waste and the exploitation and victimization of farm labor (DeKeseredy and Donnermeyer, 2013; South and Brisman, 2013; Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2014; White and Heckenberg, 2014), occur in rural communities. What are lacking, though, are feminist studies of such crimes (DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz, 2013). The little feminist rural work that has been done on crimes of the powerful focuses mainly on state-sanctioned violence against women and various types of harms caused by mining companies in Australia (Carrington et al., 2011, 2012; Carrington, 2012; Carrington et al., 2012). Consider, too, that the words "gender" and "feminist" are conspicuously absent from the index in Chambliss et al. (2010) widely read and cited book *State Crime in the Global Age* and nowhere in Friedrichs and Rothe's (2012) in-depth review of the literature on white collar and other variants of "crimes at the top" is any mention of feminist research in rural vicinities. That the editors

(Renzetti et al., 2013) of the *Routledge International Handbook of Crime and Gender Studies* could not find someone to write and entire chapter on state crime in general provides more support for the call to fill this major research gap.

5. Conclusions

Rural criminology is dominated by place-based theories (e.g., social disorganization theory) and the concepts of gender and sex continue to be situated at the margins of scholarly and policy work in the field. Still, as is the case with other schools of thought and subfields of criminology, a growing cadre of feminists challenge malestream hegemonic thinking. However, as feminism advances within rural criminology and other disciplines, it is essential to keep on doing new research and to avoid simply producing “oppositional rhetoric” about orthodox criminology (Carlen, 2011). Feminism does not have to justify its existence in rural criminology, has much to offer, and opened important new avenues of empirical and theoretical inquiry. Yet, as can be said about other rural criminological ways of knowing, much more empirical and theoretical work is necessary, and the new directions proposed in the previous section constitute just the tip of the iceberg. To be sure, many more suggestions could easily be made and will be in the near future.

Consistent with Renzetti's (2013) cautionary note about her recommendations for future feminist criminological work, I, too, must admit that my suggestions reflect my own personal priorities, some of which feminist readers will agree with and some that they may reject. This is to be expected since feminist criminology involves using a diverse range of theories and methods. Constructive debates from within feminist rural criminology are necessary for advancement; however, reflexivity and debates should not be restricted to feminist understandings of rural crime, law, and social control. As Carlen (2011, p. 97) correctly points out, criminology as a whole:

should be: open; constantly recognizing, questioning, and, if necessary, destroying the conditions of its own existence; and neither 'trimming' its questions to make them politically correct or expedient, nor 'clubbing' - that is, pulling its punches - either to conform to contemporary academic fashions or political prejudices, or in response to disciplinary bullying by either political or academic powers-that-be.

What is to be done about crime in rural communities? So far, most of the feminist answers to this question focus primarily on responding to violence against women. For example, DeKeseredy and Schwartz propose these initiatives to improve the plight of rural survivors of separation/divorce assault: building a more diverse rural economy; transportation subsidies; job training and education; second generation crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED); and increased funding for rural survivors. As well, informed by DeKeseredy et al. (2014) research on the horrorification and pornification of rural culture, Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2014) call for confronting pornography through boycotting companies and services that disseminate hurtful sexually explicit media, which, in turn, often contributes to male-to-female physical and sexual violence (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2009).

Feminist policies designed to reduce the other harms discussed in this article, such as rural racism, are much needed. However, it is first necessary to carefully study these topics because effective solutions are based on sound empirical evidence. Moreover, regardless of whether policies are informed by feminism or other schools of thought, they should be creative and developed within the context of specific communities where the victims of the harms identified in this paper live (Logan et al., 2004).

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