

A review of *Women Abuse in Rural Places*, by Walter S. DeKeseredy

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Historically, violence against rural women received very limited attention by scholars. Today, however, we are seeing a rapid growth in theoretical, empirical, and policy work on various types of woman abuse that occur outside the metropole, and Walter DeKeseredy's *Woman Abuse in Rural Places* is a prime example of this fresh new wave of criminological scholarship. This book synthesizes an international body of interdisciplinary contributions to the field, and scattered throughout it are the voices of survivors of abusive behaviors that few of us can imagine, including those who were targets of crimes of the powerful, such as workplace sexual harassment.

Women Abuse in Rural Places is unique for several reasons. First, DeKeseredy extends his review of the extant literature beyond the borders of the U.S. and Australia, two countries that have thus far generated the bulk of rural woman abuse studies. Second, his book examines a wide array of crimes against women, ranging from physical and sexual assault, abortion bans, forced pregnancy and coercive control to other topics, such as genocidal rape and corporate forms of violence. Third, as noted in Chapter 1, DeKeseredy reminds us of the fact that defining the concept "rural" is subject to much debate. So is conceptualizing violence against women, but DeKeseredy fundamentally opposes gender-neutral terms like *intimate partner violence* because they suggest that men and women are equally violent. In Chapter 1 he makes a compelling case for his choice of the gender-specific term *woman abuse*. As he puts it:

It is essential to clearly name what one is talking about. Although it may be perfectly legitimate in certain contexts to be talking about male-on-female and female-on-male violence, this is not one of those contexts. The violence I am talking about is primarily committed by men and by male-dominated corporations and governments (p. 13).

Additionally, DeKeseredy (2020) introduces a modified version of British feminist Liz Kelly's *continuum of sexual violence*. He labels his rendition the *continuum of woman abuse* and the behaviors that exist on it range from non-physical acts such as online and offline sexual harassment to crimes of the powerful. As well, in the true spirit of feminism, DeKeseredy puts



his politics up front for all readers to scrutinize and he is adamant that research on women abuse in rural places should be influenced by feminist thought.

DeKeseredy (2020) brings various types of woman abuse to life by incorporating enthralling, word-for-word, excerpts of interviews, along with background knowledge of the harms his interviewees directly experienced or witnessed. These voices emotionally connect readers to survivors and make explicit that the people quoted have seen, or gone through, much pain and suffering. One example is Ms. Barnett, “who did not realize that a man was killing a woman who lived near her Westover, West Virginia house.” She was:

drinking coffee at her home when she heard four gunshots shortly after 10 a.m. at a nearby trailer where one of the victims lived. “I didn’t pay attention to it because I thought, oh heck, it’s deer season,” Barnett said. “I thought they were deer hunting. I just went about my business and didn’t connect anything. Then I heard the sirens” (p.32).

DeKeseredy draws attention to the importance of political crimes against women in rural places by highlighting how many of them are not only survivors of abuse committed by their partner or former partners, but scores of them are also survivors of state-perpetrated violence. Prior to *Women Abuse in Rural Places*, the study of female survivors of crimes of the powerful (including those committed by corporations) existed only on the periphery of criminological attention.

In sum, *Women Abuse in Rural Places* is a must read for anyone interested in contemporary feminist criminological scholarship on violence against rural women. The new ideas presented therein, will not only engage the reader, but they are sure to inform new policy, practice, and theory surrounding women abuse in non-metropolitan areas.