

# Women and Gendered Violence in Canada: An Intersectional Approach

Susan Manning

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*Women and Gendered Violence in Canada: An Intersectional Approach* by Chris Bruckert and Tuulia Law. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

Conceived of as a teaching tool, *Women and Gendered Violence in Canada: An Intersectional Approach* brings an expanded lens to the literature on gendered violence, moving beyond the conventional focus on gendered violence as interpersonal violence perpetrated by individual men against individual women. The authors' intersectional approach pays critical attention to interlocking relations of power as creating different experiences of gendered violence for different groups of people. The book's authors, Chris Bruckert and Tuulia Law, research and teach within the discipline of criminology at the University of Ottawa and York University respectively. Both have published widely in the area of intersectional experiences of gendered violence. With its Canada-centric content, and its focus on issues that are increasingly important to students today, *Women and Gendered Violence in Canada* will be a valuable addition to Canadian undergraduate courses in many disciplines.

The authors describe their approach in the book as "intersectional and interdisciplinary" (p. 2). Those commitments are clear in every chapter of the book. Unlike many texts on gendered violence that emphasize patriarchy as the most important system of power in explaining gendered violence, Bruckert and Law argue that "the violence inflicted on women is not only rooted in patriarchy but in a host of interlocking social, political, and economic systems that work through and with patriarchy, including colonialism, neoliberalism, capitalism and national and global economies" (p. 9). Each chapter examines the workings of those systems in relation to the main theme of the chapter. For example, Chapter 7 shows how toxic workplace cultures, racism, barriers created by immigration systems, and ableism (among others) are systems that shape different women's experiences of sexual harassment, bullying, and microaggression in their workplaces.

While each chapter focuses on one central theme, such as violence in the criminal justice system, within the chapter are concepts, theoretical explanations, and examples from many different academic disciplines. In Chapter 11, which pertains to the criminal justice system, the influence of scholars, theories, and concepts from gender studies, philosophy, criminology, legal studies, Indigenous studies and critical race studies can be seen. This chapter is a great example of the value of the authors' interdisciplinary approach to creating more holistic understandings of the many different ways people can experience gendered violence.

Scholars of intersectionality often critique books that claim to use an intersectional approach for straying far from intersectionality's intellectual and activist roots, by de-politicizing analyses of identity. *Women and Gendered Violence in Canada* would not be subject to this critique. Bruckert and Law give appropriate credit and attention to the genealogical roots of intersectionality in critical race scholarship and the activism of women of colour. The authors explain their positionality in the introductory chapter and describe how this has shaped their approach to the book. Throughout the book, they remain attentive to the interlocking systems of power that shape and contribute to gendered violence. They are cautious to avoid the individualized, essentialized, or stereotypical discussions of identity that sometimes characterize other work

labelled “intersectional.”

Bruckert and Law have split the book into four sections, reflecting four important themes (context of gendered violence in Canada, interpersonal violence, workplace violence, and structural violence). Each section has three chapters that explore different issues within the section’s theme. For example, the interpersonal violence section has chapters devoted to everyday experiences of harassment, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence. Each chapter follows a similar format. The first part of the chapter discusses key concepts and historical or theoretical context, and is followed by sections discussing different dimensions of the issue, or how different groups of people may experience this type of violence differently. The section before the conclusion focuses on actions of resistance taken by people who have experienced gender violence and their allies, such as Black Lives Matters Toronto’s intervention in the Pride parade and the Idle No More movement. Celebrating resistance is an important commitment within intersectional scholarship and helps to avoid the stereotypical representation of women and other marginalized folks solely as “victims” of violence that one sometimes finds in work on this subject. The authors also highlight the first-person experiences of gendered violence by sharing stories, quotations, and document excerpts written or spoken by people who have experienced the particular form of violence under discussion, such as Michelle Rempel’s op-ed about everyday sexism in the Canadian House of Commons.

*Women and Gendered Violence in Canada* is intended as a textbook to be used in the university classroom. It would work well with undergraduate learners in a variety of different disciplines, including women and gender studies, criminology, sociology, and social work, among others. It would likely work best in an upper-level class focused on the topic of gendered violence, as it introduces learners to many theorists and concepts that are essential to a thorough understanding of gendered violence. This in-depth approach would likely make it less suitable for use in an introductory survey course. Each chapter ends with an exercise intended to prompt personal reflection and classroom discussion. These exercises are wonderful resources for instructors who want to integrate more active learning in their classrooms but may not be sure where to start.

Unlike other textbooks on this topic, Bruckert and Law have expanded the scope of what needs to be considered when discussing gendered violence in the classroom beyond the traditional focus on interpersonal (or domestic) violence and sexual assault. Their detailed exploration of gendered violence in its interpersonal, workplace, and structural manifestations alone makes this book a valuable intervention in this subject area and sets it apart from other textbooks. The rich description of interlocking systems of oppression in both contemporary and historical events, and the authors’ commitments to a truly interdisciplinary approach should make this textbook a beloved resource for teachers and learners in many fields.

Susan Manning  
PhD Candidate (Political Science), Dalhousie University  
Email: susan.manning@dal.ca