



Women sought comfort in their grief over the senseless murders.

answer this question based on the assumption that there are factors in the nature of society itself that encourage some men to act violently towards women. One cannot explain a single act of violence without looking at larger societal reasons.

The method: To find the answer, anthropologists would examine statistics and other evidence about violence in Canadian society. They would try to link together important information to see if a pattern emerges.

The explanation: Anthropologists would explain that Marc Lepine's murderous rampage was the ultimate act of violence against women in a society that has traditionally tolerated such violence. Figures show that one woman in five has been or will be sexually abused, while one woman in four has been or will be physically abused. Indeed, until recently, courts tended to impose much lighter sentences on men who assaulted their wives or girlfriends than on those who assaulted strangers. Movies tend to glamorize violence, particularly against women. Advertisements regularly exploit women as sex objects in order to sell beer, clothes, and almost anything else.

Marc Lepine's experiences were not unique. In fact, they were altogether too common. He got the same message at home as he did in society—that violence against women is acceptable. When his problems became too much for him, these two mes-

sages came together. His violent rampage was the inevitable result.

A sociological explanation

The question: A sociologist trying to explain the reasons for Marc Lepine's behaviour would attempt to answer the question *What common factors are there in the lives of men who have acted with extreme violence towards women?*

The assumption: Sociologists would study this case based on the assumption that the significance of the acts Lepine

committed can only be understood when they are compared to those of others like him and of Canadian men as a whole.

The method: Sociologists would study the lives of mass murderers, especially those who chose women as their victims. They would then compare this group with a **control group**—a group of men randomly selected from society.

The explanation: Sociologists would offer the following explanation for Marc Lepine's murder spree: Mass killers as a group display a number of common characteristics. They are loners with few friends. They come from broken families, usually ones in which violence has played a major role. Most have been sexually or physically abused as children.

Mass murderers have difficulty dealing with their emotions. Frustration and anger frequently take control of their lives. Although they may appear calm on the outside, they are often tormented on the inside.

Marc Lepine was typical of this group. When he did not get what he wanted out of life—respect, freedom, and companionship—he blamed others. Virtually all convicted mass killers are male, and many of them blame women as a group for their failures in life. Lepine exploded into violence without warning, and fourteen victims lay dead as a result.

Follow-up

Focusing

- 1 a Make a timeline of events as Marc Lepine went on his rampage in Montreal.
- b Do you think anyone present in the classroom that day could have prevented this tragedy? Give reasons for your answer.

Recording

- 2 Make a copy of the following organizer and complete it in your own words.

	<i>Psychological explanation</i>	<i>Anthropological explanation</i>	<i>Sociological explanation</i>
Question			
Assumptions			
Method			
Explanation			

Assessing and evaluating

- 3 Which of the three explanations for Marc Lepine's crime do you find the most plausible. Give reasons for your answer.