
GLOBAL RESPONSES,
LOCAL PRACTICES

APPLYING ANTHROPOLOGY TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

edited by

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Applying Anthropology to Gender-Based Violence

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This volume is dedicated to Louise Lamphere, who has devoted her time, expertise, and compassion so generously to anthropologists studying gender-based violence.

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Acknowledgments

A book like this relies on the heavy lifting of not only the authors and editors, but also on the part of the kin and community that support our efforts to expose the vile crimes against humanity. Our family and friends endure hours of stories of pain, misery and suffering, and they are often the ones who help us to see clearly why our work matters, and how it will contribute to making the world a better place. A major support for our efforts here has been the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA). In 2007, Jennifer and Hillary approached the leadership and requested the right to establish a Topical Interest Group on the issue of gender-based violence. They agreed, and in the seven years since its inception, it has grown from one attendee into a group of sixty-plus undergraduates, PhD students, applied anthropologists, and faculty who gather at the annual meetings to present their work and share ideas. It has become a home for scholars and practitioners who work on the issue of gender-based violence. The SfAA's support of our group and for providing a venue for our work is what led to this volume. The chapters herein arose from the March 2014 meetings in Albuquerque, and the speed with which we were able to make this book a reality owes much to the Society for giving us the time and space to share our collective goals.

We also thank the efforts of all the frontline workers, activists, scholars, practitioners, and survivors who make up the ethnographic stories in the volume. These people often remain anonymous in our stories, or at most are given pseudonyms, but their work, experiences, and stories are the human element in what we do. As anthropologists, we cannot forget that what we know is entirely dependent upon them, and their willingness to let us listen.

Jennifer R. Wies [Richmond, KY]

Hillary J. Haldane [Fairfield, CT]

Chapter One

Return to the Local

Lessons for Global Change

Jennifer R. Wies and Hillary J. Haldane

In 2005, the World Health Organization (WHO) published their findings from a multi-country study on rates of gender-based violence. The document finally proved what scholars, activists, and survivors had known for decades: the scale of violence against women is significant, and the scope of the problem is varied and complex. The WHO study, containing data drawn from over 24,000 interviews in ten countries, reignited interest in, and funding for, research to identify the problem of gender-based violence across cultural settings, attending to the differences of forms of violence and experiences of abuse in rural and urban, poor and wealthy, and Northern and Southern locales.

Applying Anthropology to Gender-Based Violence: Global Responses, Local Practices is a response to the interest of gender-based violence and to the concern for the well-being of those who suffer. The volume directly links anthropological theory and methods to applied and practical solutions for addressing gender-based violence in myriad forms: domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and institutional abuse. The volume focuses on methodological approaches and ethical dilemmas in gender-based violence research, the limits of universal human rights frameworks and presenting possible alternatives, practical approaches for improving the delivery of services to victims, and an action-oriented foundation for transdisciplinary collaboration. Decades since the inception of anti-violence movements, we are still falling short in our ability to effectively prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Thus, a priority of this volume is to identify the best practices for anthropologists and others to mobilize their efforts in a way that reduces harm without causing new problems as part of the process.

This volume is distinct from other work on the topic of gender-based violence for several reasons. First, there is a recognition and articulation of a theoretical shift in conceptualizing gender-based violence. We expand the scope of gender-based violence research to include phenomena such as the commodification of identity among indigenous populations in North America, policies related to prostitution in the United States, gendered-violence among refugees in post-earthquake Haiti, and the struggles of displaced populations in Kenya. Second, the contributors explore new ways that anthropological research can integrate multidisciplinary frameworks and mixed methods to influence, shape, and change gender-based violence intervention systems and policy domains. Third, this volume takes an explicitly applied angle to conducting research by considering ways anthropology can offer solutions to local and global problems.

APPLYING ANTHROPOLOGY TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The discipline of anthropology has historically been concerned with acts of violence and conflict, largely focusing on the presence of warfare or violence situated within cultural rituals, such as female genital cutting (see Wies and Haldane 2011). However, these early studies tended to avoid casting an eye toward violence at the interpersonal level, namely what we would refer to as intimate partner violence or gender-based violence today.

The anthropology of gender-based violence has expanded significantly since the 1982 publication of Peggy Reeve Sanday's work on sociocultural aspects of rape and the 1992 edited volume *Sanctions and Sanctuary: Cultural Perspectives on the Beating of Wives* (Counts, Brown, and Campbell 1992). While studies since have taken many directions, a particularly rich vein of work has examined the relationship between gender-based violence and the state. Parson's (2013) ethnography of social suffering in Chile confronts the mechanisms whereby the state reproduces inequalities that allow the persistence of gender violence. Ethnographically situated in Peru, Alcalde (2010) traces women's experiences with domestic violence and the ways that those experiences intersect with state-imposed structures of inequality and violence. Located in a domestic violence shelter, Plesset's (2006) rich ethnographic data explores the institutions that respond to gender violence as intermediate agents of the state. McClusky's (2001) deeply humanistic ethnography demonstrates the power of participant observation-based research to give voice to the women experiencing violence amidst an unstable state apparatus in Belize. More recently, our earlier volume *Anthropology at the Front Lines of Gender-Based Violence* (2011) specifically explores the roles and lives of frontline workers in global efforts to respond to and eliminate gender-based violence.

The chapters in this volume demonstrate research, advocacy, and activism that apply anthropology to gender-based violence. When we invoke the words “apply” or “applying” to anthropology, we follow a tradition of mobilizing anthropological theory and method to solve social problems in local and global contexts. “Applying anthropology” implies that the writers assume an action-oriented approach to their anthropological practice. Applied anthropology begins with social problems and the applicability of research, utilizes appropriate methods, and then applies theory to the research process and findings.

Throughout the volume, readers will note the work represented here shares a number of characteristics of the tradition of applied anthropology, wherein anthropologists “use the knowledge, skills, and perspective of their discipline to help solve human problems and facilitate change” (Chambers 1985, 8). First, applied anthropology begins with the intent to address social problems identified by communities. In this collection, the contributors place gender-based violence at the center of their analysis. Throughout the anthropology literature, violence is often mentioned, but gender-based violence is rarely the starting point of inquiry. As we have discussed elsewhere (Wies and Haldane 2011), acts of violence and conflict have been studied extensively in the anthropological literature, however, it was not until the 1980s that the study of gender-based violence in anthropology became a topic in its own right. This volume is unique in its emphasis on anthropological work that begins with the question of how people are affected by gender-based violence and the ways that local and global structures impact those experiences. In so doing, the collection squarely identifies gender-based violence as a social problem for which anthropologists can participate in a solution. As these chapters show, the solutions are varied. However, they all begin with one of the central tenets of anthropology: an emphasis on the holistic and comparative aspects of culture.

Second, the applied anthropologists “put people first” by tailoring the design and implementation of their projects for the people who are supposed to benefit from the research most (Uphoff 1991). The contributors have experience living with and/or working directly with the people represented in their work. This deep and meaningful participant observation involvement establishes a binding tie between the anthropologist and local peoples and provides a backdrop for ethnographic intimacies that places emphasis on individual voices and collective cultural experiences. As Finan and van Wiligen (1991, 1) state, “As anthropologists, we attempt to enter the world of our research subjects, to fathom their systems of meaning, and to accurately translate their categories of knowledge into categories we understand and use in other contexts.” The chapters in this volume collectively suggest that as we engage in this process of entering the world of our participants and consciously place their experiences at the forefront of our knowledge base,

we are advancing the role of anthropology as one that can actively participate in the resolution of social problems.

Third, applying anthropology requires attention to local peoples as agents who exist within larger structures. As Scheper-Hughes (1992, 221) suggests:

In advanced industrialized societies and in modern, bureaucratic, and welfare states, the institutions of violence generally operate more covertly. A whole array of educational, social welfare, medical, psychiatric, and legal experts collaborate in the management and control of sentiments and practices that threaten the stability of the state and the fragile consensus on which it claims to base its legitimacy.

In our application of anthropology to gender-based violence, there is a shared recognition that individual experiences are shaped by structures and institutions that potentially create and maintain violence. Thus, in the analyses throughout this volume, careful attention is paid to the relationships, contestations, and influences between the local and structural levels. However, the case studies repeatedly show these larger structures and their embedded power as possible sites for cultural changes that can contribute to the diminishing and eradication of gender-based violence. This recognition of the potential for positive change that can occur when engaging structurally-violent systems is unique in that it reflects an applied approach of collaboration over dismissal. While challenging, this approach may yield results that are inconceivable without a framework that recognizes the multidirectional influences between local populations and structural violence.

The fourth characteristic of applied anthropology is a commitment to engage in preventions and interventions. As scholars of gender-based violence, advocates for those affected by gender-based violence, and activists who continually seek venues for ameliorating violence experiences, we assert that the experiential knowledge gained in the application of anthropology informs the discipline's theory, method, and practice, thereby influencing and possibly increasing the success of future gender-based violence intervention and prevention activities. As Hill-Burnett (1987, 124) states when reflecting upon the relationship between anthropological theory and practice, "The use of knowledge entails its further development, not simply by adding to it but through transforming its assumptions, categories, and paradigms. Knowledge is tested in use; when found wanting, it must be further developed or clarified." This iterative model for improving the lives of people is most successful when we recognize the multiplicity of roles that anthropologists may take and value the experiential form of knowledge-making as equal to scientific contributions.

Finally, despite efforts by anthropologists to apply theory and method to the solution of gender-based violence, one of the shortcomings of anthropology has been its limited engagement with other disciplinary approaches.

Psychology, criminology, legal studies, and sociology, have been the dominant disciplines drawn upon for addressing gender-based violence and for offering remedies or solutions. Therefore, the fifth characteristic indicative of an applied anthropological approach is an explicit recognition of the need to enter into transdisciplinary conversations and collaborations. Anthropology has much to offer a transdisciplinary effort at this point in time: greater awareness of cultural differences in identifying and addressing violence has increased in other disciplines; longstanding theoretical models and methodological skills for contributing to a collaborative approach to minimize violence and the harm it causes; and a continued commitment to documenting the local, lived experiences of people around the world. Therefore, a goal of this volume is to highlight not only the strength of bringing applied anthropology into conversation with other disciplines around the topic of gender-based violence, but the necessity.

ANTHROPOLOGY THEORY AND METHODS

This volume is an example of how to combine applied anthropology, ethnography, and an emphasis on the local context in the study of gender-based violence. Throughout this volume and the anthropological studies of gender-based violence, one important theoretical framework has been to examine the role of history, structure and power in situating cases of abuse. Therefore, the majority of studies in anthropology that examine gender-based violence do not shy away from the material reality of people's lives: the abuse is not "just in their head" and the factors that cause abuse to happen are not merely ideological in nature. Theoretically, the anthropology of gender-based violence examines the relations and asymmetry of power—girded by structures, historically produced, and consciously engaged—that allow for one person or group of people to direct violence against another.

Furthermore, "doing" applied anthropology inherently has power dynamics that must be theoretically addressed and interrogated. Throughout this volume, the contributors are in positions that are not afforded to the people suffering in their fieldsites—they have access to passports and visas, they are affiliated with university or other institutional organizations, and they have the financial resources to carry out the work. Thus, they are in a position to influence how the information is gathered, presented, and disseminated. All of the contributors are deeply aware of this and the tension of working to end unequal relationships while acknowledging that the inequality is what produces the scholarship. This tension is at the heart of engaged and applied anthropology, and while the chapters herein cannot offer solutions to end the tension, the first step towards acknowledging possibilities for change is to be transparent of what the structures of inequality are, the various positions of

the actors, and the ideology that supports the continued domination. In some ways, applied anthropology is grappling with a tension that is not dissimilar from what the very programs examined in this volume are trying to do: recognize the power structures (between husband and wife, indigenous populations and settlers, universities and the criminal justice system, etc.), identify the ideology that supports the imbalance, and identify what local citizens see as alternatives for change.

The contributors also attend to the macrostructures that maintain the systems of inequity. Largely drawing upon political economic theories, the contributors see the ways that global capitalism has been an unavoidable factor in creating the forms of gender-based violence they engage in their work. As much anthropological work has pointed out over the last century, there is violence found in almost all societies, and capitalism is not solely responsible for the fact of violence in our species. However, it is clear that the very particular forms of violence this volume engages cannot be separated from the conditions of the global market and the rapacious appetite for resources and cheap labor global capitalism requires. Thus, the theoretical challenge is to attend to the specificity of how each locale, in its relationship to the global system, is impacted by the demands of the market on kin and community.

Methodologically, each case study emphasizes the geographic specificity of the narrative, while connecting the experiences of the women and men with wider global trends. This approach underscores the importance of locally produced and disseminated understandings of gender-based violence to inform us of the limits of the top-down approach common in international engagement with gender-based violence, and highlights how unique each cultural context is as it constitutes grapple with a global epidemic. The chapters also take into account the very different resources available to address violence due to local economic constraints, and it is clear throughout the volume that resources are not equivalent. This volume takes us to local settings in Kenya, Uganda, Vietnam, Aotearoa New Zealand, Guatemala, Belize, Ecuador, Haiti, American Indian Tribal Country, and U.S. college campuses.

Adelman (2004, 49) asserts that “a trend in domestic violence studies is either to remove from the analysis any overarching critique of culture, politics, and the economy, focusing instead on abstracted, isolated or decontextualized data; or to provide a snapshot or cross-sectional view of the context, grounding experiences to local circumstances.” This volume responds to this apparent dichotomy by synthesizing approaches to gender-based violence that begin at both the global and local level. We present chapters that are influenced by a methodological trend in the discipline that has developed over the last decade, but marries this to a mainstay of anthropology, the holistic view of local contexts, that has been at the heart of anthropology since its inception (Haldane 2010).

In 2006, the small, but growing community of anthropologists working on gender-based violence was introduced to a new methodology and framework for engaging with forms of violence against women: the deterritorialized ethnography (Merry 2006a). This methodological approach grew out of the work of Sally Engle Merry, in which she traced the development and movement of a discourse of gender-based violence as it made its way from the halls of various United Nations offices in Geneva and New York, London and Paris, to diverse contexts like Suva, Beijing, Delhi, and Hong Kong. Merry's work was critical for demonstrating the production of new regimes of knowledge, and a resulting global biopolitic. What Merry found was that while in individual cultural contexts there were still very diverse understandings of marriage, kinship, sexuality, love and companionship, the way nation-states were defining anti-violence efforts, and the way activists developed corresponding programs and prevention efforts, shared an emphasis on individual human rights, a legal framework and approach, and a criminalization of the behaviors defined as formed of gender-based violence. What appeared around the globe were ways of defining and addressing violence that looked strikingly similar to each other, and to the categories that were dominant in the West.

The dominant characteristic of a deterritorialized ethnography is that the focus is on a problem, not a place. This approach has been useful in substantiating research of gender-based violence in-and-of-itself, and provides a framework for examining gender-based violence that is not geographically bound. It allows anthropologists to examine information from literature and reports to apply an anthropological lens to consider what has been left out, deemphasized, or possibly misrecognized. In this volume, the contributors use their anthropological insights to recast what may seem like an obvious social script—prostitution is bad (Katsulis), campuses should end rape (Wies), governments should not torture (Torres), and American Indians (Pettillo) have been treated poorly—to complicate the narrative in a way that makes the historically predominant approaches to addressing these problems seem ill informed. These contributors challenge the “taken for grantedness” that has informed quick solutions to complex problems, which result in new problems in their wake.

Yet, we also need to recognize that a deterritorialized ethnography complicates the notion of ethnography itself. In some ways, it can hardly be correct to still refer to this as *ethnography* in its true sense as a writing of a people. The individuals in a deterritorialized, problem-based project would not conceptualize themselves as “a people”—they do not share a language, a religion, an ethnicity, a kinship system, citizenship, or even an economic system. Therefore, this volume also includes pieces that also reterritorialize ethnography. Following from Deleuze and Guattari (1983), what we mean by reterritorialized ethnography in the field of gender-based violence is not so

different from what we find in art, music, or pop culture more broadly—after the destruction that occurs via the deterritorialization (colonization, spread of capitalism) process, the emergence of new forms of action and thought, that may seem to have a common origin, can in fact be new examples of indigenous expression. There is no denying that the human rights framework for defining and acting against gender-based violence is powerful and has become embedded in cultural contexts all over the globe. What this volume demonstrates is how distinct each “local” is, and the myriad ways the local is speaking back. By emphasizing the wider ethnographic context of the expressions of violence, it allows us to see where broader global interventions can be successful, but similarly, how local ideas and actions can be recognized as equally valid. In some ways, a return to a more holistic understanding of the local, balancing the problem itself with the wider cultural context, brings us back to one of the main goals of anthropology: to learn about and from others.

Several chapters in this volume draw upon a core method in anthropology, participant-observation, reminding us of the importance of doing anthropology at the frontlines of gender-based violence and focusing on the “imponderabilia of everyday life” (Malinowski 1922). The value of participant-observation is it provides the researcher with a way of thinking historically about the society in which they are living—the researcher must attend to the economic, social, civil, legal, spiritual, educational, and kin-based systems of people’s lives. In this respect, the researchers who focus on gender-based violence as a topic in their research setting cannot divorce the acts of violence from these other structures in an individual’s lives. Here, the contributors (Beske, Frederic, Haldane, Kwiatkowski, Schuller, and Wirtz) focus on gender-based violence with ethnographic sensibility—to foreground a holistic understanding of the people that does not reduce them to merely victims of violence, but as Belizean, Vietnamese, Kenyan, Haitian, etc. women who are enculturated and engendered by locally specific beliefs and through locally constituted structures.

APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY CHALLENGES

The chapters in this volume take on the challenge of being attentive to the local detail of their authors’ respective fieldsites, consider the historical and global resonances of the way they frame the problems they examine, remain mindful of the delicate balance between interfering and providing useful assistance, and identify ways for anthropology to partner with others to make the world a safer place. Great attention has been paid to the available literature, and each author carefully considered the standpoint of their interlocutors to present heterogeneous accounts of violence.

The first section, titled *Ethnographic Intimacies*, brings the strength of anthropology to bear on the topic of gender-based violence: our qualitative and long term methodological encounter with interlocutors from places throughout the world. The two chapters in this section foreground the way ethnographic research lends itself to new and nuanced understandings of victim and survivor experiences. In these chapters, we see how women come to understand the abuse as an integral aspect of their lives and how they embody the violence. The chapters require those who wish to stop abuse to rethink how you remove the violence while keeping intact a woman's sense of self.

Lynn Kwiatkowski expertly unpacks this dilemma in her chapter, as she details the stories of women seeking to reconcile contradictory discourses of individual rights and the demands of kinship and marriage in Vietnam. This chapter makes explicit how necessary attention to notions of kinship is for understanding the reasons abuse occurs, but also for what appears on the surface to be the implicit acceptance of abuse as a normalized facet of life.

The next chapter, by Elizabeth Wirtz, explores a second type of dislocation, one of refugee status and liminality, contextualized by the intimate and structural forms of violence women experience in the refugee camps of Kenya. Within these camps, the bureaucratic strictures of the refugee resettlement process create a dilemma for abused women, due to their identity within the refugee camp as a family member, and not as an individual. Wirtz examines the way refugee women are forced to choose between two forms of abuse: the dehumanizing and structurally oppressive confines of the camp by moving away from the abuser and beginning the resettlement process anew on their own or expediting resettlement in a different country with a husband who inflicts violence on a regular basis.

This section most explicitly identifies the ways that contemporary Western responses to violence fall short of meeting local needs in variable contexts. From this, the privileging of women's voices and close readings of their circumstances point to promising avenues in the fight against violence. The women themselves clearly identify the barriers to violence-free lives, and their perspectives, drawn from ethnographically intimate engagements, can inform a more holistic approach to ending violence going forward.

The second section of the volume, *Multi-Scalar Responses to Gender-Based Violence* contains three chapters exploring the relationship between victim experiences and the state apparatus charged with categorizing the violence, remedying the violence, and creating the context for violence in the first place.

In the first chapter of this section, Hillary Haldane details the ways people in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand responded after a magnitude 6.3 earthquake destroyed local services and the local economy. As families were left homeless, jobless, and in many cases, on the margins of food insecurity,