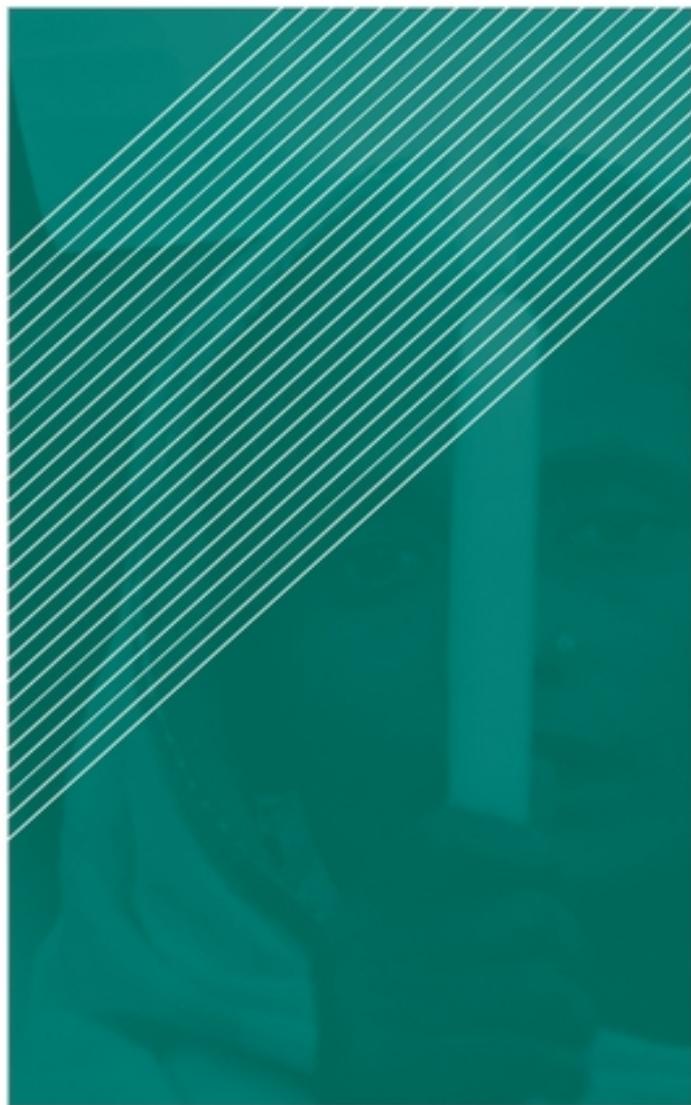


SALLY ENGLE MERRY



GENDER VIOLENCE

A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTIONS TO ENGAGED ANTHROPOLOGY

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

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Sally Engle Merry

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Preface

A book is always a collaborative project, building on the work and insights of others and benefiting from their research, activism, and personal experiences. This book has been especially collaborative, since its goal is to bring together the ideas, insights, and experiences of a social movement, of those who have survived violence, and of those who have studied and tried to understand gender violence. For the last 17 years, I have talked to leaders of the movement against gender violence, people working on the problem in local courts and programs, and people who have experienced or perpetrated violence in their families and communities. While my work in the 1990s was based in the USA, since 2000 I have been studying the international movement, looking in particular at efforts in the Asia Pacific region and the work of international organizations such as the United Nations. I have met and talked to inspirational activists and survivors in all these settings, and hope that this book reflects something of their wisdom and commitment. To all who gave their time and insights to me, I am most thankful. I hope that this book will be a contribution to the public's general understanding of the issue, as it pulls together much of their knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

The scope of the book is very broad, endeavoring to discuss many forms of gender violence. I have drawn on a growing body of published literature, particularly recent work in anthropology that offers an ethnographic portrait of gender violence. An anthropological perspective has been adopted, differing from much of the current literature which takes a more psychological approach. Many wonderful research assistants have contributed in significant ways. My undergraduates at Wellesley College worked on specific sections, providing me with invaluable information and insights: Clare McBee-Wise on transgendered people and

violence, Dante Costa on refugee women, Hao Nguyen on immigration laws and practices, and Rebecca Goldberg on female genital cutting as well as her experiences with anorexia and the insight this gave her about genital surgeries. These students took a course I offered at Wellesley with Nan Stein called "Gendered Violations." Collaborating with Nan in teaching this course and sharing our interests in gender violence and sexual harassment have been of great benefit to my intellectual life and to the shaping of this book. The work in Hawai'i benefited from the research work of Marilyn Brown and Madelaine Adelman. My graduate students at New York University also contributed: Nur Amali Ibrahim worked on the section on rape and genocide in Rwanda and Jennifer Telesca worked on the discussion of Ciudad Juárez. Jennifer Telesca also prepared the discussion questions and video resources. My undergraduates at NYU did a test drive of the book in the spring of 2007 and learned something from it, which seems a good omen.

The book includes some of my own research on approaches to gender violence in Hawai'i, India, China, and the United Nations. I have been generously supported by the National Science Foundation Law and Social Sciences and Cultural Anthropology programs, grants SES-9023397, SBR-9320009, SBR-9807208, BCS-9904441, SES0417730, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, the Mellon New Directions Fellowship at Wellesley College, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for a related conference. Peggy Levitt, my collaborator in my current research project on the localization of women's human rights in China, India, Peru, and the USA, has also contributed significantly to this project. My research was supported by my time as a Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School at Harvard University and at the Bunting Institute at

Radcliffe College. Wellesley College and New York University have both provided a supportive working environment for my research and writing.

Finally, I would like to thank Jane Huber of Blackwell for proposing that I write such a book, one that is far broader and more ambitious in scope than others I have written. Her enthusiasm has kept me at a project that seemed daunting at first, and in some ways still does. I have tried to use stories and ethnographic case studies as much as possible, while weaving these together with analytic anthropological arguments. I am particularly indebted to two anonymous reviewers who provided detailed and insightful advice. Any errors, of course, remain mine.

I would like to dedicate this book to my daughter, Sarah, who has provided me with support and encouragement in many of my endeavors, and my sister Patricia, whose work on international child development and nutrition has been an inspiration. My husband and son have also been, as always, steadfast supporters of my penchant for writing books.

Sally Engle Merry

Wellesley, MA

January 2008

1

Introduction

Gender violence is not a new problem. It takes place in virtually all societies around the world, but only in the last thirty years has it become visible as a major social issue. Historically, forms of violence taking place within the family were treated as less serious than those occurring in the public sphere. Much of recent feminist activity has been directed toward reformulating the legal and cultural notion of the private sphere of the family, in part to foster societal and legal intervention into families. In the 1990s, gender violence was defined as an important human rights violation for the first time. Now it is considered the centerpiece of women's human rights.

Despite its near universality around the globe, local manifestations of gender violence are highly variable. They depend on particular kinship structures, gender inequalities, and levels of violence in the wider society. They vary depending on how gender is defined and what resources are available to those who are battered. Violence against women in the home is shaped by patterns of marriage and the availability of divorce, by conceptions of male authority and female submission, and by the family's vulnerability to racism, poverty, or marginalization. The prevalence of sexual violence against women during armed conflict depends on ideas of militarized masculinity and the use of rape to dishonor enemies. Some legal systems are far more effective in punishing gender violence than others, and communities vary a great deal in the kinds of informal and formal social support they offer victims of violence.

Although women are disproportionately the victims of gender violence, in many situations men are also victimized. Male rape in prison, torture of men in wartime, patterns of hazing and harassment in male organizations, and homophobic assaults on gay men are only a few of the kinds of violence directed against men. Both men and women are targeted by the cultural practice of genital surgeries, although those performed on women are generally more severe. Violence between intimate partners includes women's attacks on men as well as men's on women, although women are more likely to be injured. Individuals in same-sex relationships use violence against their partners at about the same rate as those in opposite-sex relationships.

Although gender violence is often an assault by a male on a female, this is hardly a universal feature of male behavior. The large majority of men do not practice gender violence against women, and many seek to intervene to protect women as well as other men from gender violence. While gender violence is a widespread pattern, it is far from a universal one.

Gender violence is embedded in enduring patterns of kinship and marriage, but it can be exacerbated by very contemporary political and economic tensions. In recent years, increasing economic inequalities, warfare, nationalism, and insecurity have increased rates of gender violence. For example, in China, where domestic violence was traditionally legitimated by a family system based on male authority, female obedience, and filial piety, with the tumultuous changes of the last half century such as the Cultural Revolution, the one-child policy, the turn to a capitalist economy that has eliminated much of the socialist welfare system and forced many women to lose their jobs or retire early and to share a husband with a concubine, the incidence of domestic violence is on the upswing (Liu and

Chan 2000: 74-84; Human Rights in China 1995). In many parts of the world, the kinship-based systems that long served to control violence within families are weakening in response to urbanization, wage labor, mobility, and the economic and cultural effects of globalization. Neoliberal economic policies which reduce state and community support for the poor affect women disproportionately, making them more vulnerable to violence. Poor men are also more likely to experience violence from other men and from their female partners than wealthy men.

Many forms of gender violence are part of wider conflicts such as ethnic attacks, military occupation, warfare, and movements of refugees. Migration of peoples across borders increases their vulnerability to violence, particularly when migrants are illegal or unprotected in the country of arrival. Warfare and local armed conflict between religious, ethnic, or regional groups often rely on rape and violence against women, while it is primarily women and children who flee these situations and become refugees. In wartime, men are often the victims of sexualized forms of torture as well as brutality in the course of combat.

Violence in intimate relationships is inseparable from societal conflict, violence, and injustice. As this book shows, interpersonal gendered violence and structural violence - the violence of poverty, hunger, social exclusion, and humiliation - are deeply connected. It is impossible to diminish violence against women without reducing these other forms of violence and injustice. The conditions which breed gender violence include racism and inequality, conquest, occupation, colonialism, warfare and civil conflict, economic disruptions and poverty. Impunity for violators contributes in important ways, whether they are violent spouses, so-called "honor" killers, or political leaders. Patterns of kinship and sexuality provide the justifications for gender violence and determine the possibilities of

escaping it. Given this context, it is not surprising that three decades of activism around the world have increased awareness of the problem but not slackened its incidence. Only the achievement of a more just and peaceful world will improve the safety of both women and men.

Defining Gender Violence

In this book, I define gender violence as violence whose meaning depends on the gendered identities of the parties. It is an interpretation of violence through gender. For example, when a blow is understood as a man's right to discipline his wife, it is gender violence. When a mob lynches an African American man for allegedly raping a white woman, the violence is defined through gender and race. Thus, the meaning of the violence depends on the gendered relationship in which it is embedded. These relationships are used to explain and even justify the violence. For example, a man may justify hitting his wife because she was disobedient. A prisoner might explain his anal rape of a fellow prisoner by saying that the victim is less than a man because he was a sexual predator against children. A soldier can explain raping an enemy woman as a way to dishonor his enemy. Not everyone who commits gender violence tries to justify it, of course, but when individuals do offer explanations of the incidents, they typically draw on ideas of gender and its responsibilities and entitlements.

Understanding gender violence requires a situated analysis that recognizes the effects of the larger social context on gender performances. When men abuse women in intimate relationships, they use the violence to define their own gendered identities. A batterer often wants to show the woman that he is in control or to prove to other men that he controls her. He may view the violence as

discipline that the woman deserves or has provoked. Perhaps she failed to take care of the house or has dressed provocatively and awakened his suspicions and jealousy. Men often use violence to establish power hierarchies, both against other men and through raping other men's wives. This form of gender violence is a fundamental strategy of war as well.

Gender violence is now an umbrella term for a wide range of violations from rape during wartime to sexual abuse in prisons to insults and name-calling within marriages. Although the early movement against gender violence in the USA centered on rape and battering in intimate relationships, the movement now uses a far broader definition both in the USA and internationally. International activists continue to expand the scope of violence against women, to include cultural practices such as female genital cutting, illegal acts such as dowry deaths, the trafficking of women as sex workers, the effects of internal wars such as displaced people, and the vulnerability to violence experienced by migrants in the context of contemporary globalization. The scope of gender violence is continually changing.

Gender violence occurs throughout the world, but it takes quite different forms in different social contexts. It is located in particular sets of social relationships, structures of power, and meanings of gender. It does not fall into any simple pattern, such as being more prevalent in traditional societies than in modern ones. There are no universal explanations for gender violence. It is best understood in terms of the wide variety of particular contexts that shape its frequency and nature. Although enhancing gender equality is commonly thought to diminish gender violence, more egalitarian societies are still plagued by widespread violence. Traditional or rural societies are not systematically more violent than modern or urban ones. In fact, the

transition to a modern, capitalist society can exacerbate gender violence, as it has done in China. Violence does not diminish with the shift to more modern or urban forms of social life, but it may change its form and meaning.

Defining Violence

An introduction to gender violence must begin by exploring its key terms: “violence” and “gender.” Violence, like gender, is a deceptively simple concept. Although it seems to be a straightforward category of injury, pain, and death, it is very much shaped by cultural meanings. Some forms of pain are erotic, some heroic, and some abusive, depending on the social and cultural context of the event. Cultural meanings and context differentiate consensual or playful eroticized forms of pain from those of a manhood ritual and those from a cigarette burn on a disobedient wife. Gender violence is both physical and sexual. Although historically there has been a division between activists working on domestic violence and those focused on rape, in practice the two usually happen together. Domestic violence frequently takes sexualized forms, while rape is typically violent. Gender violence is often the result of a jealous desire to control another’s sexual life. Violence can be erotic. In recent years, the terms “sexual assault” and “sexual violence” have been used to indicate the interrelatedness of sexual and physical forms of violence.

Activists in the battered women’s movement have expanded the meaning of gender violence from hitting and wounding, including rape and murder, to a far more varied set of injuries and degradations. Leaders in the field emphasize the emotional and psychological dimensions of gender violence, recognizing that it includes insult, humiliation, name-calling, driving by a person’s house and calling out insulting words, telling a woman that she is fat

and useless and will never be attractive to other men, and myriad other insults. Some battered women told me that these assaults on their self-esteem hurt more than blows. Gender violence includes threats, harassment, and stalking – actions that evoke fear even when there is no physical harm. Injuries to those one cares about, including children, pets, or personal possessions, or threats to injure them, are also forms of violence. The plate thrown against the wall subtly says, “It could have been you.” A lack of care such as withholding money or food from a partner or child can also be considered violence. Threats of sorcery or supernatural injury are forms of gender violence that evoke fear and the threat of harm. Violations that a person experiences as a result of racism, class humiliation, and poverty often have gendered dimensions.

In their overview of anthropological work on violence, Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois emphasize that violence is a slippery concept that cannot be understood only in physical terms. It also includes assaults on personhood, dignity, and the sense of worth and value of a person (2004: 1). Violence is fundamentally a cultural construct. “The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what give violence its power and meaning” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 1). They argue that there is no simple “brute” force, but that violence has a human face and is rarely “senseless.” Instead, it often has meanings that render it heroic, justified, reasonable, or at least acceptable. From an anthropological perspective, violence as an act of injury cannot be understood outside of the social and cultural systems which give it meaning.

Nor are the meanings of violence stable, since they depend on the social position of the observer and the social context of the event. Some violence is interpreted as legitimate, such as the actions of state police controlling unruly mobs, while other violence is defined as illegitimate,

such as that of the protesting mobs themselves. Police violence against criminals is to some extent authorized while the violence of criminals is not. One person's heroic revolutionary is another's terrorist. These distinctions are often murky. When a community lynches an offender because the police fail to act, as has occurred in parts of Bolivia, it can be defined either as legitimate community policing or as illegitimate vigilante justice (see Goldstein 2004; 2007).

Structural violence

An important dimension of violence is structural violence, violence that impacts the everyday lives of people yet remains invisible and normalized. It includes poverty, racism, pollution, displacement, and hunger. Structural violence is usually concealed within the hegemony of ordinariness, hidden in the mundane details of everyday life. Violence is sometimes highly visible, as revolutionary violence or state repression, but it is often hidden in the everyday violence of infant mortality, slow starvation, disease, destitution, and humiliation (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 2). Structural violence is intimately connected to more interpersonal forms of violence. For example, upper-caste men in parts of India use the rape of lower-caste women to maintain their dominance (e.g. Srivastava 2002: 272-275). Bourgois's work on crack dealers in East Harlem, New York reveals links between self-destructive substance abuse, the gendered violence of family life and adolescent gang rape, and the structural violence of US urban apartheid (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 3). Scheper-Hughes argues that the family is a violent institution, but sees its violence as responsive to larger socio-economic conditions which make violence the only option (2004: 3). In postcolonial societies, such as Papua New Guinea, violence is embedded in systems of

power such as colonialism, family institutions such as bride price, development projects and their large-scale environmental degradation, and the poverty and social exclusion experienced by poor rural migrants to the city who face unemployment and residence in squatter settlements without adequate drainage and sewage systems or clean water. They confront high levels of violent crime as well as disease (see Dinnen and Ley 2000: 2-3). Violence here includes the violence of police and security forces as well as the fear of sorcery.

Domestic violence: a case study

Dora's story (a pseudonym) illustrates the complex blending of threats, fear, and physical violence in domestic violence situations. Her story comes from a small town in Hawai'i during the early 1990s, the beginning of the battered women's movement. Dora is in her early twenties, a mainland white woman from a middle-class family with two years of college and an adequate family income. When I interviewed her she said, "I had the stereotype that it doesn't happen to people like me with a house and education. I thought it just happened to welfare people." Like many other battered women, Dora turned to the courts only after years of violence from her husband. She wrote this account of the violence in 1992 as a request for compensation as a crime victim:

Sam and I have been together for almost five years. There has been abuse on and off for the first few years. This past year has been the worst, it got to the point where he would beat me at least once a day and for about four weeks he beat me two or three times a day. It was so hard living with him. I have no family out here, only myself and our son. I lived in constant fear of Sam, never knowing of his coming here, afraid of what he was going to be like. Sam has threatened me with guns, spear

guns, knife on one occasion. He would drag me down the hill by my hair, rip my clothes off of me, smash pans over my head. We had to replace or fix all but two doors in our house because he threw me through the other doors.

There was so much constant abuse it seemed like it would never end. Many times I thought that when I died it would be because my husband killed me. I was afraid to have him arrested because I knew he wouldn't stay in that long and I thought that he would kill me when he got out. Finally, on May 31, 1992, I couldn't deal with it. We were driving home from Hilo, my husband was sitting in the back of our truck. I was driving because Sam was too drunk. We were driving down the road and he reached through the back window and grabbed my face, scratching my face, then he tried to choke me and I felt that if he got open the door he would kill me. I looked over at my son in his car seat. He was frightened, screaming, crying and I knew I couldn't put up with this terror any more. I managed to drive away when he got out of the back to open my door. I just wanted the hell that my life had become to end. Since that time Sam has started ATV classes [a violence control program] and is making much improvement. He knows that he needs to change to keep his family, and that abusing me is wrong. I feel that calling the police was the hardest, and best thing I ever did.

They had been married for three years, and he had abused her most of the time. Dora explained his violence in terms of his cultural background, saying that in Samoa it is the man's responsibility to keep the woman in line. After this incident, Dora called the police to help her get her things and go to the shelter, but the police let him follow her alone into the bedroom, which frightened her. Then the police started "talking story" with him, discussing where to go fishing. They took him away, but only to his sister's house which

was four houses away. Ten minutes later he was back. The next day he was still there and she called the police, discovering that he had a 24-hour restraining order against him. This meant that he got arrested for violating the order of the court. Dora said that she always thought that if he were arrested, he would kill her, so his sister went down and posted bail. Using the law clearly represented a powerful challenge to him.

Dora got a restraining order against Sam that prohibited him from seeing her, but he came to visit her at the house anyway. Two weeks after the incident they went together to family court, which required both of them to attend Alternatives to Violence (ATV), the feminist batterer intervention program. "It was scary going to court. I didn't know if they would send him to jail. But I was also glad because he had to go to classes now." Both attended meetings at the ATV program. She was pleased that the court required him to attend ATV because otherwise he would not have gone. Three months later, Dora told me that things had gotten a lot better. He had not been violent for three months and she had learned a lot about his controlling actions toward her. Before it felt like she was in prison, forced to go places with his family who didn't like her because she was white, but now she was better able to gauge what was happening to him. Although Dora thought that the police were overly lenient, telling her that there was hardly a scratch on her and that they couldn't arrest him, the family court judge firmly said this was wrong and was concerned about her safety. Dora was reluctant to see the violence she experienced as a crime worthy of court intervention. This was the first time she had been to court, and she did not know anyone else who had tried. Although the police treated the problem as relatively unimportant, the stern family court judge and the feminist ATV program convinced her that what she had endured was a serious

form of violence. Clearly, she learned a new way of defining the everyday threats and attacks she had long experienced in her marriage.

Gender policing: violence against transgendered people

People who fail to conform to normative expectations of male or female appearance or behavior face high levels of violence and murder. The term “transgender” refers to people whose gender identity or expression does not conform to the social expectations for their assigned sex at birth (Currah et al. 2006). People who fail to conform to heterosexual male and female identities face gender policing in the form of harassment and violence. This violence, often delivered randomly by strangers, is a mechanism for enforcing what has been called a heteronormative binary system. This refers to the requirement that all humans fit into a binary – that is, male and female – heterosexual arrangement of gender identities. Those who fail to conform face a variety of forms of violence. For example, in 2003 Gwen Araujo, a transgender teenager from a small town in California was killed by a group of young men who beat her to death with a shovel after discovering that she had male genitalia. Their attorneys argued that she was guilty of “deception” for not disclosing her identity to them. As Currah et al. (2006: xiv) point out, this incident is only one of thousands of hate crimes against transgender people. A study by a Boston activist group, Gender Public Advocacy Coalition or GenderPAC, reported that over the past ten years, more than 50 young people under 30 were violently murdered for their failure to conform to gender stereotypes (Gender Public Advocacy Coalition 2006). Most of the murder victims were biologically male but presented themselves as more or less feminine. Many were black and Latina. They were killed

by young males in acts of unusual violence. Research suggests that violence against transgender people is related to their gender variance, with those who regularly pass as either gender reporting a lower frequency of violence (reported by Dr. Scout, Director of National LGBT Tobacco Control Network, speaking at Baruch College, New York 2007; see also Namaste 2006). David Valentine's study (2003) of transgendered sex workers in New York City shows how those who are poor are less able to protect themselves from violence and murder. They have more dangerous jobs, such as street prostitution, and are less able to afford surgery in order to pass more effectively. Those without the funds to biologically reshape their bodies to conform to their gender identities are less successful at passing as the other gender and therefore face a greater risk of violence. Even when a person does not experience violence directly, these narratives create an environment of danger and threat. Thus, violence ranges from physical injury and death to threats and forms of humiliation and degradation that injure a sense of self even when the body is spared.

Defining Gender

In the social sciences, the concept of gender has changed dramatically over the last 30 years. The new conceptions redefined the movement in very significant ways. Before the 1970s, most social scientists failed to pay attention to what women thought or did. In anthropology, for example, with some notable exceptions such as Margaret Mead, women were portrayed in the background or were neglected altogether. The first anthropologists to think about gender simply tried to add a focus on women. They began to write studies of kinship in which women were agents rather than pawns and of politics that included women's struggles for power in the extended family.

Anthropologists who began to focus on women in the 1970s were primarily concerned with explaining women's universal subordination to men (see Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974a). This was a political as well as an analytic problem, raised by feminism and the contemporary interest in Marxist theories of class and power (see di Leonardo 1991b). Sherry Ortner (1974) attributed women's inequality to a cultural linkage between women and nature and between men and culture, while Michelle Rosaldo saw women's subordination as the result of their embeddedness in the private sphere while power resided in the public sphere (Rosaldo 1974). While these dichotomies were analytically useful, they did not help us to understand the myriad ways gender shapes social relationships (see Sanday 1981). Micaela di Leonardo (1991b) points out that the nature/culture dichotomy is not universal and was formed in the Enlightenment, while the private/public sphere was developed in nineteenth-century Europe. Neither describes universal features of women's and men's lives.

However, challenging the distinction between the public sphere and the private sphere was politically important to feminists. Seeing women as embedded in the private sphere excluded them from politics, power, and authority. It situated them in the protected sphere of the home and family where they were governed by men. It justified the state's reluctance to intervene in the family, even in cases of violence. By locating men in the public sphere and women in the private sphere, this ideology legitimated gender inequalities. Under the claim that "the personal is political," advocates for battered women battled to tear down the walls between the public and the private to enable social and legal intervention into violence in families.

Studies of other societies suggested that women's subordination was less intense in small-scale hunter-gatherer societies (Shostak 1981). Some anthropologists

searched for matriarchies - societies in which women exercised power - but found only myths that women in power abused it and destroyed the society (Bamberger 1974). Feminist social scientists began to focus on violence as a major explanation for the universal subordination of women.

Out of this intellectual ferment and political activism came several significant developments in the sociological theory of gender (see e.g. Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974b; di Leonardo 1991a; Ginsburg and Tsing 1990; Lamphere, Ragoné, and Zavella 1997). Here I focus on the contributions of anthropology, but this was a very interdisciplinary intellectual movement. Three developments are particularly important: the shift from sex to gender, from roles to performances, and from essentialized gender identities to intersectional ones. Each of these theoretical changes had a major impact on the gender violence movement, particularly in the USA.

Sex to gender

Anthropologists initially discussed women through the framework of sex roles and sex differences. Sex differences were understood to be rooted in biological features. Sex roles were sets of expectations of behavior rooted in particular sociocultural systems based on sex differences. As anthropologists looked more carefully at sex roles, however, it became clear that they were highly variable and that they were produced through social processes of learning and training that instilled ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman into each person's consciousness. Instead of referring to sex roles, anthropologists adopted the concept of gender to talk about the social dimensions of sex differences. This term expresses the idea that differences between men and women are the product primarily of cultural processes of

learning and socialization rather than of innate biological differences. “Sex” refers to genitalia while “gender” describes the social aspects of how men and women are expected to act. This term has now become international. For example, when the Chinese word for gender is translated back into English, it becomes “social gender.”

However, even the concept of sex is less certain than this analysis suggests. A person’s sex is also a product of cultural definition. For example, a study in Brazil of men who dress as women but work as male prostitutes suggests a very different division by sex than the conventional male/female divide on the basis of genitalia (Kulick 1999). These men, referred to as *travesti*, enjoy anal penetration as a sexual experience. They seek to transform their bodies into a more feminine shape through hormones and silicone injections. When they have sex through anal penetration of other men, they are socially defined as men, and when they are penetrated by other men, they are defined as not-men, as sharing gender with women. Similarly, effeminate gay men who enjoy anal penetration also acquire the identity of not-men, or women. Thus, Kulick argues, the distinction between men and women, or more accurately men and not-men, depends on the role a person plays in the sexual act, with the penetrator retaining a male identity and the penetrated taking on the notman identity, or the gender of a woman. It is because they desire to be appealing as women that the *travesti* devote substantial energy to producing buttocks and female curves in their bodies, but they are clear that they are men, not women. Thus, not only is gender a culturally created and defined social position, but so also is sex. It cannot be seen as a clear biological category any more than gender.

Role to performance

In a second development, anthropological theory has shifted from role to performance. In the 1970s and earlier, anthropological research focused on exploring the discrete roles of women and men in every society. Roles were sets of expectations of behavior that evoked sanctions when individuals failed to conform. They were shared, expressed as norms, and relatively stable, although they were not necessarily always followed. Although societies differed in their gender roles, they shared an emphasis on the centrality of gender as the basis for the division of labor - of the tasks each person was expected to do based on their identity. One study, for example, showed that every society had a distinct set of male and female tasks (Parker and Parker 1979). As the authors listed the tasks allocated to women and to men in societies around the world, they described them as differences in sex roles.

However, the concept of role proved too simple and static to describe the way gender operates in social situations. Since the 1980s, anthropologists have increasingly theorized gender as a performance directed at an audience (see Butler 1990). As a performance carried out in a particular situation, gender is expressed in different ways depending on the context. The same person can enact gender differently for different audiences. Such an analysis sees gender as created through the performance of tasks and activities. For example, in Segura's study of Chicana women in whitecollar jobs in California, she argues that gender and race-ethnicity are not simply categorical statuses but accomplishments: identities produced through dynamic interaction and performance (Segura 1997: 293). As women do work, particularly in female-dominated jobs, they also "do gender," enacting what they see as the essential nature of women. Women in service jobs, for example, affirm themselves both as workers and as women. Employment in supportive service tasks enables them to do