



Crossing Boundaries, Workshopping Sexualities

WORKING PAPER ON **VIOLENCE AND SEXUALITIES**

Coordinator: Laurel Westbrook

I. INTRODUCTION

Within sociology, the subfield of sexualities and violence is diverse and fragmented. There are no canonical texts, nor are there a set of central questions motivating research. The description of the subfield provided here should be read with that in mind.

II. TOPICS OF RESEARCH

- A. Specific locations and settings that have been studied:
 - a. Predominantly in the U.S.: The military (sanctioned and unsanctioned), sports, schools and campuses, workplaces, street, prisons
 - b. Sexualities and violence during colonialism and "post-" colonialism.
- B. Populations that have been studied (as perpetrators and/or victims/survivors) :
 - a. Women (primarily sexual/intimate partner violence), men (violence perpetrated by other men), lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people, trans people, sex workers, the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, youth and adolescents, college students, native populations in the U.S., rural populations, couples (married and dating)
- C. Specific phenomena that have been studied (predominantly in the U.S.):
 - a. Physical violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, social movements (e.g., anti-violence, bullying, anti-rape, feminist self-defense), trafficking, sex “scandals” (e.g., church, state, education, sports), institutional violence (e.g.

prison rape), violence as a response to perceived sexual threats (e.g. homosexual panic defense), violence resulting from transgressing gender norms, sex segregated spaces as a site of perceived potential sexual threat (e.g. rape or any sexualized presence in bathrooms, locker rooms, etc.), symbolic or instrumental violence used to maintain norms (e.g., heteronormativity, homonormativity, mononormativity) and/or enforce oppression (heterosexism, homo-bi-transphobia), resistance as a site of potential violence, sexual violence as an act of war

III. TOPICS OF RESEARCH

- A. How do you operationalize violence?
 - a. Who has the power to say what “counts” as violence?
 - b. Physical vs. emotional vs. economic vs. symbolic vs. political violence
 - c. Rates of violence (self reports, counting acts, prevalence, frequency, severity, lethality, demography of victims and perpetrators) and the social construction of violence
 - d. Debates over Conflict Tactics Scales and population research versus qualitative approaches emphasizing the complex and varied meanings of sex, sexual, or sexuality related violence
 - e. Violence as a dependent variable, independent variable, or both
 - f. Meanings and measures of consent and other issues of sexual ethics
- B. IRB and access to research subjects – especially with “vulnerable populations” (which include both sexual minority and transgender populations, as well as victims/survivors of violence)
- C. Dilemmas studying both desire and victimization (i.e., does recent research emphasizing women’s sexual agency pose a threat to the construction and reality of gender-based sexual violence perpetrated against women? Can research attend to pleasure, danger and exploitation?)

IV. TOPICS OF RESEARCH

- A. Intersectionality: Gender, race, class, nation, sexuality, disability, age – deconstructing the categories and their social production and contestation, in addition to the ways they

are mutually constitutive, potentially contradictory or complementary; attentive to the dangers of reification

- B. Comparative studies
- C. More emphasis on transnational/global issues
- D. Policy oriented work aimed at interventions in violence
 - a. This area is underdeveloped by sociology and without our input will be limited to public health or crime prevention models that often obscure or deny the role of sexuality as well as gender
- E. Violence as productive power (violence does not just repress people, it also creates ideas, behaviors, and identities, particularly through the narratives we tell about violence)
- F. Theorizing and studying both sexuality and violence as principles of social organization as well as phenomena constructed in terms of each other
- G. Studying young adults who are not college students, as the vast majority of research on this age group is conducted with convenience samples on college campuses
- H. Exploring how positive ways of engaging men in violence prevention work can reshape gendered cultural norms and practices interpersonally and more widely (e.g. the power of the international White Ribbon Foundation to engage corporate men and athletes as leaders and role models in non-violence)
- I. Exploration of community-based (outside of the CJ system) approaches to violence prevention and correction, such as restorative justice models for sexual and gender-based forms of interpersonal violence
- J. Studying how members of groups that have traditionally been seen as “victims” also perpetrate violence; conversely how perpetrators of violence may also be “victims” of violence
- K. Interdisciplinary work that integrate insights, theoretical perspectives, and methodologies from the many fields that study sexualities and violence/victimization, but that are currently not in dialogue