

Indigeneity, Violence, and the Work of the Frontline

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Domestic and family violence is a scourge in Australia and the United States of America.

Why the Centre?

The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research is unique, and serves as a model for how we need to reconceptualize applied research in the US.

- Works within academia and communities of practice
- Works directly with peak body and peer review fora
- Holds symposia and conferences with shared attendance of researchers and practitioners
- Conducts community assessments and scope of knowledge
- Offers courses and training to frontline workers and contributes to university degree programs
- All research is applied in scope
- Interdisciplinary research teams
- Intersectional and holistic frameworks of analysis

If Violence is Global, Why Study Australia?

In 2010, Australia embarked on an ambitious campaign against domestic and family violence entitled: “The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022”. Queensland, the state where this research is conducted, produced a state-based document in 2015: “Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland” with 140 recommendations for change.

My research considers how these federal and state level mandates impact the women and men who work with survivors and perpetrators.



Rates of Violence Against Women in Australia

- 1 in 3 women will experience Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) in her lifetime
- 49% of female homicide victims are victims of DFV
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 35 times more likely to experience abuse than their white counterparts
- 1 in 5 women will experience rape/sexual assault
- In one year alone (2005) over 350,000 experienced physical violence and over 125,000 women experienced sexual violence (Source: ANROWS)

What do US/Australia have in common

- Similarly high rates of violence against women
- Similar cultures of violence inclusive of homophobia, toxic masculinity, racism, sports cultures and ableism
- High cost of education (except for PhD)
- Settler society legacies

Key Differences

- Gun Laws
- Integrative vs. silo approaches
- Community policing vs. militarized police

Why Anthropology?

Gender-based violence (GBV) research has been dominated by legal, sociological, psychological and social work perspectives. These fields have contributed an enormous amount to our understanding of the forms of violence we are facing. However, they also produce static and ahistorical portraits of violence and unwittingly have reproduced the framing of violence as “Western” violence=individual pathology and “non-Western” violence=culture.

The idea of a holistic analysis comes from Malinowski, the father of ethnographic fieldwork. He argued that one cannot understand a society without considering all the factors that make up that society:

- kinship
- economics
- beliefs
- education
- legal
- political system
- subsistence strategies
- housing

In researching GBV, anthropology uses a holistic analysis and examines the problems through a variety of disciplinary subfields: archaeology, biological anthropology, linguistics, and cultural anthropology. This four field approach to the study of GBV provides multidimensional and comparative analysis to ensure that our findings are historical, cross-cultural, and draw from the emic, or insider’s, perspectives, to contribute to a richer understanding of the causes and consequences of one of the greatest social problems of our time.

Key Questions of Research

- How do frontline workers (flw) see the federal and state plans aligning with their current work?
- How are efforts to create integrated services impacting flw quotidian labor?
- What would have to change in flw daily work/training in order to accomplish the goals outlined in the policies?
- What gaps are there in the plans from a flw perspective?

Key Goals of the Research

- Contribute to the growing literature in anthropology on GBV
- Turn scholarly data into useable policy directives
- Reconsider American approaches to GBV and intersections with Indigeneity in light of the Australian finding



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