Researching intimate violence against women using feminist ethnography

Nishi Mitra vom Berg
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6294-1648

Abstract: Researching intimate violence against women using feminist ethnography is a difficult and contentious undertaking for both the researcher and the participants as feminist ontology and epistemology are at odds with the mainstream sociological understandings of theory, method and methodology. The topic of intimate violence is not only emotional and traumatic; doing an ethnographic study of it is fraught with tensions that are fundamental to creation of a women centered knowledge that is subjective. This article attempts to explain feminist understandings of ontology, epistemology, and ethics and to make clear the nature of these tensions in feminist ethnographic research, writing and praxis. It elaborates, through illustrations derived from doctoral research of the author on intimate violence against women, how researching the theme of violence is a challenging and rewarding exercise when it is based on the lived experiences of women with whom the researcher identifies. The results are transformative for the researcher and participants and contribute to the praxis of human rights.
Keywords: feminist ethnography; intimate violence; transformative knowledge.

1 Introduction

Researching violence using feminist epistemology and ontology makes it from the very beginning a difficult and contentious enterprise, fraught with tensions of a fundamental nature with mainstream sociological understandings of theory, method and methodology. One of my attempts in this chapter will therefore be to explicate feminist understandings of epistemology and ontology and make the nature of such tension clear in feminist ethnography and writing. Moving beyond the tension between the different feminist epistemological positions and conventional scientific research traditions in Western thought, I will elaborate through illustrations from my research on intimate violence against women, how researching the subject of violence is both a challenging and fulfilling exercise when based on the lived experiences and understandings of women (Mitra, 2005). For understanding and illustrating distinctive aspects of feminist ethnography, I will draw on my yearlong ethnographic research in two counselling cells where women reported intimate partner violence. I discuss

specific objectives, approaches and methods that I adopted and the decisions I took in intellectual resolutions of conflicts related to the task of doing ethnographic research on intimate violence against women in an urban setting in India.

The problem that we need to address is related to the question – Is feminism valid knowledge, or is it a form of essentialism? To answer it I draw on Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) assertion (but if I wish to define myself). I must first of all say: I am a woman: on this truth must be based all further discussion. A fitting starting point to research women is to locate women's alienation from men's experiences and to explore their self-definitions of themselves and their world. This is linked to women's urge to theorize about themselves based on how they understand and make reason of their own lives. Feminism, defined, most simply is about women's gendered perspective on social phenomena. As Stanley (1990) wrote:

> Feminists should use any and every means available for investigating the 'condition of women in sexist society…written accounts of feminist research should locate the feminist researcher firmly within the activities of a research as an essential feature of what is 'feminist' about (Stanley,1990, p. 12).

There is no unified feminist approach and feminism is not a homogenous body of knowledge or practice, it binds within its fold a variety of positions that differ and often conflict politically as well as epistemologically. Yet it is possible to characterize mainstream feminism by the centrality of gender and women at the core of its analysis.

> First, gender represents an essential theme in the attempt to understand virtually all social relations, institutions and processes. Secondly, gender relations are seen as problematic since they are associated with conditions of dominance, inequality, stress and conflict. Thirdly, gender relations are regarded as socially constructed, which means that they are not given by nature, nor are they inevitable; rather, they are the result of social-cultural and historical conditions and can be radically altered by human action. (Alvesson; Skoldberg, 2000, p. 210).

This centrality of women and gender in feminist research makes for a radical challenge to knowledge hitherto generated and distributed. This position starts with the potential to alter the nature of all knowledge fundamentally. It questions the objectivity and relevance of knowledge created by men for men. It attacks directly at the politics of knowledge and theory, a politics that is seen to be the cause of women's subordination and its continuation. Science is critiqued for its theories and methods that led to oppression and exploitation of women through its biologism and disregard of power in the relations of the sexes.

Feminism, feminist theory and feminist research are not only interlinked but also profoundly political. All three analyze women's oppression and subordination in a patriarchal order and orient themselves towards transforming women's lives and towards making for women's liberation (Segal, 1999).

2 Women's liberation movement and feminism

From its beginning in the women's liberation movement that emphasized women's shared oppression and the need to unite in a struggle to end gender inequalities and cultural subordination, feminism has come a long way. While the consensus to fight together for change in the lives of women everywhere marked the movement at its activist peak in the 1970s it could not hold for long. Real and multiple differences between women asserted themselves to make for distinct political prioritization in the 1980s. Emerging feminist consciousness no longer found it easy to iron out differences between the varied conceptions of the nature of women's oppression, it's causes and the strategies for change. Traditionally three distinct feminist perspectives have been located – radical, Marxist/socialist and liberal. The crystallization of feminist positions into these three categories would be considered today as simplistic and obscures the fact that feminist consciousness is a matter of continual evolution and change. There is no fixed and stable feminist consciousness and feminists have themselves pointed out the complexities and contradictions in their positions and strategies in different sites and times.

Theory has been a sticky issue for most feminists. While it is necessary to evolve or engage with theory so as to successfully challenge existing patriarchal knowledge forms and practices, feminists have been cautious about theorization that is alienated, elitist or generalized. Theory that creates power relations between academic and ordinary women is considered suspect. The threat of no theorization however would be that women will continue to be defined by the existent and proliferating patriarchal forms of knowledge which have either defined women in opposition to men, or have unceremoniously merged women with men, or have defined her merely as sexualized object for male desire. The important question for feminist academics has been how to balance experience, theory and practice, the three critical areas of feminist's initiative such that they exist in a mutually beneficent and synergetic relationship with each other. Feminists have responded to this variously.

Barett and Philips (1992) in their book *Destabilizing Theory*, point out a history of feminist engagement with social theory where the terms of the discourse, show a paradigm shift from its nascent days to contemporary times. Schrock (2013) writes that feminist ethnography does not have a coherent or a singular definition and Visweswaran (1994) illustrates how changes in conception of gender and feminism defined production of different

genres of feminist ethnographic fictions. The struggles over the definition of feminism and its goals impacted the nature and focus of feminist ethnography. Thus, one sees feminist academics in the 1970's reflecting the modernist impulse in looking for cause of women's oppression. While there was considerable difference and debate in where feminists looked for this cause, yet feminists could not shirk off the modernist influences in not really questioning the notion of a cause itself. Marxist feminists saw the cause in capitalism's need for a docile labor force, radical feminists in male control of women's sexuality and liberal feminists in the patriarchal system of inheritance and education. Similarly, oppression itself was taken as a homogenous experience the meaning of which was presumed to be self-evident. Those feminists who sought to uncover the causes at the structural level, focused on such aspects of social structure as class, patriarchy, exploitative political and economic systems and family. Appeal to nature and biology by opponents of feminism were countered by the emphasis on social and environment causes. Thus, the very feminists, who questioned western scientific dichotomies of objectivity-subjectivity and masculine-feminine, dichotomized culture and biology in their quest to free women's potential from the confines of coercive femininity. The feminist attachment to establishing the fundamentals of social causation of oppression as well as the early feminist tendency to cast the issues of gender discrimination in social-structural terms explicate the fact the feminists have been in constant dialogue with social theory since the beginning (Vishweswaran, 1997).

Much feminist theory of the earlier phase was concerned with the white women in the western society and looked cross-culturally to essentially emphasize the common nature of women's subordination across the world. These assumptions and generalizations got challenged later by non-white, black, third world, postcolonial, lesbian and queer feminists, who pointed out that gender identities are linked to race, development, nationality, sexual identity, colonial experiences, imperialism and many other subjectivities that women experience apart from their gender (Mohanty, 1991). The political context of the women's movements in different regions gave the space for the differences between women to be brought out just as their sameness (Ong, 2000). These developments made later feminist analysis of women's oppression more complex, more responsive to the exclusions and inclusions and more open to a constructive negotiation of differences amongst women. Feminist analysis became more complex, women more differentiated as gender and inequality came to be understood in its variety and feminist analysis made space for more cultural and symbolic mode (Abu-Lughod, 1990). With increasing exchange with psychoanalytic writings, feminists were forced to rethink on the neat division between sex and gender that they had constructed in the 1970s and 1980s. Questions of gender identity had to take into cognizance not just race, class, ethnicity, sexual choice but also particular life situations as that of being a mother, or a religious functionary. One impact of this was that feminist analyses re-looked

at the issue of biology and difference with new spectacles. From the initial phase when biological sex was seen as the determiner of social roles, to the emergence of gender as an analytical category; from critiquing sex as determinative of gender to critiquing sex gender systems and regimes, and then came more sophisticated critiques of gender essentialism and recognizing of sex itself as a social category. This involved a long-drawn process of feminist research and debates (Visweswaran, 1997).

Debates within social and cultural theory have also had their influence on feminism in terms of opening the category woman further. Post-structuralists, primarily working on cultural representation, sexuality and identity have problematized the notion of any kind of fixed identity of women and woman as a category is regarded as constantly shifting. It signifies multiple meanings. Dialogue between feminism and developments in post-structural and post-modernist ideas was productive and led to explorations of new feminist aspirations which were not first found in it (Schrock, 2013). In the post-modernist world feminism is seeing a collapse of whatever it built through the earlier decades for in this world of instability of all identities and differences, it has become incredulous to not only have a singular but also a stable feminist consciousness. Yet some feminists are left dissatisfied by these positions for too much emphasis on diversity, change and resistance threatens towards deconstruction and reduction of the category 'woman' such that any joint action for her human rights becomes tenuous.

Yet, feminists are routinely dismissed for being essentialists and feminist research and theories for being subjective or one sided. This essentialism relates to women's prioritizing of gender as the critical factor in construction of knowledge and in understanding the world. Within feminism, however essentialists refer to those who hold a biological or genetic determinism and even those who attempt universalistic explanation of women's oppression on ground of nature or human nature. Feminists holding the social constructionist positions hold the ideas, however that human nature is not natural, fixed, or universal rather it is specific to social cultural and historical contexts. Essentialists, naturally are not optimistic of change while social constructionists emphasize, change discontinuity and contradiction. Ironically more people outside the feminist circles adopt biological determinism to counter feminist positions than feminists themselves do (Stacey, 1993).

While some feminists adopt essentialism as strategic, most feminists find essentialism regressive for its denial of human agency of both men and women. In this respect Stacey (1993) points out that the label 'essentialism' is fraught with problems for it is itself a relative one used by theorists against each other to dismiss their positions. All theories, which address questions of political change, have necessarily to negotiate with questions of essentialism. It becomes politically imperative even when the positions may neither be unified nor fixed.

To summarize, while evaluating the role of feminism in social theory we must emphasize that feminism provides irrefutable evidence to 'destabilize' the fundamental assumptions of modern theory. By unveiling the pretensions of objectivity of the 'grand', 'high' social theory, feminists through their writings and research, repeatedly demonstrate the andro-centric preoccupation and assumptions of social theory. They force social theorists to re look at questions of scientificity of knowledge, the power implications of social theorization and the systemic exclusion of one half of humanity's concerns.

3 Method: epistemology and methodology in feminist research

From the discussion above it becomes clear that feminist research has developed because of two main preoccupations of feminism: the feminist critique of the mainstream research and its sexist bias, and the feminist liberation movement and its requirement to analyze the universal subordination of women through use of perspectives inclusive of women's realities.

Yet, since there is no one kind of feminism, that implies that the monolithic category of feminist research itself hides a disparate and often contradictory variety of assumptions and approaches that imply difference in political, ethical and epistemological terms, within feminism and feminists (Abu-Lughod, 1990). Having said that, feminists still recognize the value of a 'feminist consciousness' to the way that they conduct research. Stanley and Wise say about the original contribution of feminism:

> This original contribution is we shall argue, the proposal that women's experiences constitute a different view of reality, an entirely different 'ontology' or way of going about making sense of the world. In other words, we shall suggest, feminist consciousness makes available to us a previously untapped store of knowledge about what it is to be a woman, what the social world looks like to women, how it is constructed and negotiated by women (Stanley; Wise 1983, p.117).

This consciousness is expressed in practical and positive ways in feminist research processes in such things as the relationship of the researcher and the researched and the inclusion of feeling and emotion in research experience. A conscious statement of the intellectual autobiography of researchers leads to management of the distinctions in realities and understandings of the researcher and researched such that there are conscious attempts to address the question of power between the researcher and researched both in conducting research and in writing it (Lawless, 2019).

Thus, feminism seeks to espouse an ethnographic method that locates and proceeds research from the grounded analysis of the women's realities. It provides space for the grounded realities of the women researched as well as the researcher woman (Ghosh, 2016).

There are three basic kinds of feminist epistemologies. Sandra Harding (1988) has labeled them as feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint theory and feminist postmodernism. Feminist empiricism continues to adopt the rules of scientific enquiry while insisting on the inclusion of women as both the researchers and the researched. The objective of feminist empiricism is to make for a truly good science that is not gender blind and that by inclusion of women can be truly objective. Feminist standpoint epistemologies make a break from feminist empiricists by redefining bias in perspective and methods by privileging the perspective of the subjugated and oppressed gender (Sweet, 2020). All knowledge is grounded in experience and standpoint feminists focus on women as the active agents of knowledge by virtue of certain and specific consciousness and experience. It is acknowledged among standpoint feminists that there can be multiple standpoints located at the intersection of gender with identities of class, caste, race, sexuality, religion etc. Feminist postmodernism decries theorizing on any assumption of universalistic subject/self and thus engages with differences such that no particular aspect of this subject/self is privileged over the other.

Postulating endless differences however makes for woman itself losing its centrality as an analytical category. The feminist goal has been not to be involved in producing alienated knowledge or reproducing masculinity within the academia. Science prides itself on the separation of the knower from what or who is to be known, it differentiates objectivity from subjectivity, it distinguishes between organized and systematic science and chaotic nature. Feminists have pointed out that by these distinctions scientists cancel out the actual act of knowing and make invisible the assumptions that make for so called research findings. Knowledge is sanitized and what was contextually meaningful is professed to be universalistic thus making for a knowledge that is separated from the conditions of its production and the social relations that underlies it. Feminist conception of un-alienated knowledge says Stanley, has the following three dimensions,

> the researcher/theorist is grounded as an actual person in a concrete setting; understanding and theorizing are located and treated as material activities and not as unanalyzable metaphysical transcendent ones different in kind from those of mere people; and, the act of knowing is examined as the crucial determiner of what is known. (Stanley, 1990, p. 12).

While feminists see good research in terms of it being un-alienated, it must be acknowledged that there are risks associated with adopting this position. It makes the researcher professionally vulnerable because feminism and feminist research may not be seen in the larger academic circles as serious and reliable. It is easier by far for mainstream scholars to dismiss such research irrespective of its methodological strengths (Stanley, 1990)

Finally, we may say that whatever the feminist epistemology informing research, researchers working within the feminist frameworks seek to reinvent research in terms of the questions they ask; the subjectivity and reflexivity that they make integral to research; and the potential they build in the research output to transform women's oppression and exploitation.

The question they ask – on feminist slogan – personal is political? At once expanded the universe of study to include of women's world what was either dismissed or treated as mundane, routine, boring, irrelevant and private. Women's invisibility in social research gets redressed through the kind of questions feminist researches ask. So does the mystification of knowledge about women in traditional research.

The subjectivity is no longer an objective expert but involved in research in emotional as well as intellectual terms. Feminists recommend conscious partiality instead of value free research with neutrality and indifference towards the research objects. This is more than empathy as the identification widens consciousness of both the researcher and the researched. However, there may be danger of exploitation of the informants which may be masked, and ethnographic outcomes and processes may themselves lead to elements of inequality and betrayal (Stacey, 1988.)

Reflectivity – identification and non-hierarchical relationship of the researcher and researched makes for a fluid and open research that is reflective of the interpretive, political and rhetorical nature of research (Hesse-Biber; Piatelli, 2012). Reflexivity includes philosophical reflection and the problematization of researcher's assumptions, interactions and interpretations of empirical material. Also, the factor of power in the relationship of the researcher and the researched so that the ethical dilemmas involved in any deep interaction may be resolved consciously by the researcher who is aware of the theoretical and ethical issues (Linabary; Corple; Cooky, 2021). Insights from such introspection flavor activist feminist research distinctively and make it rich, viable and open to explanation at the same time (Adkins, 2004; Davis, 2014).

The transformation potential of the feminist approach refute empiricists recommendation of keeping science and politics separate. Feminists are not merely interested in research for the sake of research. Feminist research overtly acknowledges that it is research for change. This lends an ethical-political dimension to feminist research. Research must serve the interests of the dominated, exploited and oppressed groups like women instead of being an instrument of domination and legitimization of elite. Moreover, feminists are of the view that feminist researchers must involve themselves in active participation in movements and struggles for women's emancipation. Research thus becomes an integral part of such struggles.

Feminists are careful to point out that while there is no singular feminist method in terms of techniques nor a singular methodology in terms of a theoretical framework, yet to reduce feminism to a mere perspective would not be right. Feminist researches combine the feminist perspective, a way of seeing, with a feminist epistemology, a way of knowing, and also a feminist ontology, a way of being in the world. Stanley (1990) cautions that this should not be read as essentialism for admittedly women do not share one way of being and women do not perceive themselves to be one by virtue of their biology. In talking of a feminist ontology, one is referring firstly not to women but to feminists, those who for all their differences draw from the common experience of oppression. In Stanley's words,

> it is the experience of and acting against perceived oppression that gives rise to a distinctive feminist ontology; and it is the analytic exploration of the parameters of this in research process that gives expression to a distinctive feminist epistemology (Stanley, 1990, p. 14).

In this background, feminist researches are about a distinctive perspective, an epistemology, a broad theoretical framework that informs feminist researches and a feminist ontology and a combination of these three is reflected in some very interesting and significant research processes. I now attempt to explicate these processes with the example of my ethnographic research.

4 Issues and processes in researching intimate violence against women

This section will describe the making of a feminist topic for my research. In this process it will explicate how the construction of the area of research itself was linked to my personal and professional experiences. At the time I started my research I broadly defined my field of study as the study of patterns of domestic violence against women with the chief objectives of the study being: to understand the complexity of women's experience of violence in the marital home, its forms and its effects; to understand women's explanations of domestic violence; to understand what viable solutions to the problem could be, based on the realities of Indian women's lives.

This framing of the objectives of my research was done in what I consider as an anthropological enquiry. As I went deeper into operationalizing these objectives however and in reading feminist literature, I discovered an intellectual journey that veered me towards defining my topic and my methods in what may be called, the feminist way. In recounting this change I need to first make explicit my own journey. I had been in the recent past, involved with an international initiative to document the various societal responses to domestic violence against women, with the intent of analyzing and evolving criteria for best

practices among responses to violence against women. Herein I had focused on looking at the services such as policing, counseling, alternative shelter, legal interventions etc. so as to document and analyze the range of organized responses to women victims of domestic violence both by the government agencies as well as the community-based organizations. The study comprised of a non-random, cross-sectional survey of various actors involved in interventions such as police officers, counselors, lawyers, doctors, social workers, women's activists and such.

Despite reforms in laws and legal criminalization of domestic violence, setting up of institutions like women police stations, legal aid cells, counseling cells family courts etc., the State was found in this study to have addressed domestic violence only marginally. The State continues to maintain the dichotomy of public and private and relies by and large on counseling through desks established at each of these institutions. Available state infrastructure for relief was found to be not only lacking both in the range of services offered and the quality of these services but also in terms of the perspective and approach to the issue as both a development and human rights issue (Manjoo, 2016). As far as the community-based groups were concerned, some commendable work was seen to be done at the grassroots level in changing community norms regarding violence as well as in providing individual support and help to violence victims/ survivors. While public awareness and opinion on the issue had been mobilized as the private nature of domestic violence had been questioned and demystified, it is also true that by and large organizations were seen to help women rehabilitate within the matrimonial home. This, despite the fact that women live in potentially dangerous and at times life-threatening situations in their families (Hawkins; Humes, 2002). Many women's activists maintained that in the Indian context, the search for solutions within the institution of the family was unavoidable and inevitable. Most women want just that! There are several reasons for it but one of the very important ones I was told, is the fact that the very family, which is the site of power relations and violence, is also the haven of love and security.

These findings were significant in terms of the objectives of understanding and defining best practices in the Indian context. Yet the focus on the services rather than the 'women who sought these services' left me feeling that my earlier study excluded women's perspectives as both victims and survivors of intimate violence. Moreover, it gave too much importance to the service givers versions that can only be expected to be one sided, limited in perspective by the nature and constraints of the system concerned and elitist. Also, of course was the fact that since men were often the personnel occupying positions in the services, they were the gatekeepers of the information given and thus there was every possibility of the reported data being androcentric. I frequently found the constructions of women victims of violence by the service providers to be distorted biased and androcentric.

Police and advocates routinely defined women as willful, revengeful and given to confusion due to parental interference. Social workers and counselors often defined them as helpless and childish, lacking maturity and tact, and most importantly talked of women's economic dependency as the chief reason for their suffering violence. These constructions seemed to me in accordance with how the service givers perceived the problem of domestic violence, themselves. So, the major issue that remained unresolved for me was the issue of what does being violated mean to women? Though the earlier study being a sponsored one did not provide scope for pursuing this question, it became important to me to understand the complexity of women's experience of violence before seeking solutions to the problem. The problem, when I started talking to women, I understood, had been largely defined in terms of legal and economic rights, yet women seemed not to be searching for just these solutions. So what? Women when they were seeking help from the organizations were in most cases not talking of things like maintenance, custody of children, restoration of conjugal rights, divorce or separation, though these were in some cases the core issues. In most cases, they wanted the organization to intervene like a powerful elder in making the husband and his family, understand, samjha dijeye (make him understand), they would say. They wanted to continue to be with the husband and his family with changed circumstances. I realized that I had to define my topic of research such that it does not go contrary to women's understanding of their families and that I do not dismiss their conservatism by the simple adage of false consciousness. Given the importance of family relationships in women's lives it is very important that any research on violence in the domestic setting made central the understanding of various facets of family life. Women's ambivalence to family life comes in a large measure due to their oppression and violence in this setting, yet if the feminist criticism of family is not to be read as a blanket criticism of all aspects of family life, nor an attack on those who live in families, we need to be sensitive to women's ambivalent feelings about their families (Burton, 2000). I sought to understand these complex realities. Some of the questions were there in my mind, more evolved as the interface with women respondents took place. Let us see how the questions were framed at the beginning of research and how they changed substantially in the process of research.

Learning from de cause and effect, when I started, my research I was interested in the profile of the women victims, their age, education, employment status, class or economic status, number of children, natal and marital family context. I explored which family members were women's allies and who were her adversaries. I enquired about their marital and violence history, frequency and nature of violence and such details which would yield information about the women victims and their abusers. I sought to understand any correlation of factors that make women vulnerable to violence, as well as those factors that facilitate their struggle against it. So, for instance I wanted to know the main sources of conflict leading to

violent attacks on wives. In this context it needs to be mentioned that studies have explored linkages between violence and factors such as: years of married life, economic employment of husband/ wife, education, residence in nuclear/ joint family, number of children: male/female, factors of caste, class and ethnicity. Also, various studies have shown that the causes for marital violence are things like possessiveness and jealousy, men's expectations concerning domestic work, men's sense of the right to punish women for perceived wrongdoing, alcoholism / substance abuse, dowry, money matters and financial stress, extra marital affairs of husband etc. A factor that came up in my earlier study of responses to violence was sexual incompatibility that was reported again and again by counselors. Counselors reported that very often violence in Indian marriages has the underlying reason that comes from dissatisfaction with sexual relationship. Many men and women report incompatibility hesitantly and casually, yet some counselors held it as an important reason for marital violence.

As I started doing my ethnographic fieldwork however, this early concern for finding correlations in an attempt to understand causes of violence was given up in favour of the urge to look for the patterns of violence in terms of what it does to women. I realized soon after I started collecting my data that my objective of understanding causes was futile. The so-called causes reported by women were often immediate causes that were not sufficient in explaining violence as an institutionalized part of family and marriage. So, one of my concerns became, the deconstruction of the immediate causes and analyzing violence at a deeper level. Sexuality, masculinity and femininity emerged as important constructs as I tried to make sense of how women constructed the violence and abuse in their subjective experiences of marital life. This concern came to be voiced in terms of questions pertaining to women's experiences as mothers of small and dependent children and also, as women dealing with their own sexual desires, their sexuality and their sense of well-being while they negotiated their feminine roles with their husbands in context of regular violence in homes.

Control of women's sexuality is a major factor in all violence, in homes as well as outside it. It has been said that violence against women is sexual on the one hand and on the other hand sexuality as it is defined in contemporary society is itself pervaded with violence. Men and women practice these definitions of sexuality in terms of dominance of men and submission of women. I became interested in exploring women's accounts of love and sexuality to understand what violence is seen as expression of love and sexual difference, what is defined as abuse.

In terms of understanding the issue of sexuality and its linkage to violence I became interested in studying how women define what the counselors call sexual incompatibility. How is sexual abuse linked to sexual incompatibility? How do women define sexual violence? How is violence intertwined with male expressions of love and sexual desire?

Children are not left unaffected by violence in homes. Children are frequently reported to witness violence in homes, and this has an impact upon their attitude to physical violence. Research evidence has found links between wife beating and child abuse. Men and women in marriage who assault each other have been found to hit their children. Often children are themselves used for inflicting violence on women. Children are used as pawns by parents in quarrels between themselves to spite each other. Children are also very important reason for women to continue to stay in violent homes. The link between wife beating and child abuse is hinged on the power inequality that marks the relationship of spouses and that of parents and children. It was of interest to me, what reporting tells about violence and children in so far as it affects women themselves. At first, I thought I will interview mothers as well as a few children on it, but I realized later that to really get a sense of what it means to children I had to go back to my own childhood. I delved deeper into the impact of violence on children when I decided to use the method of introspection. I developed a more complex understanding of the issue as I looked back into my memories for how my perceptions on violence changed over a period of time. As I turned the researcher's lens onto myself, I realized that as a child some forms of violence appeared to me as power and therefore quite appealing. Then I experienced it as a power that limits and controls me, thence came a time when I developed deep intolerance to it, I reacted to violence with violence without realizing it to be so and much later I started recognizing my own violence and came to realize that violence is not always done, violence is felt, violence is perceived. This inward exploration therefore was very useful in understanding the implications of violence on children. The insights I gained through this introspection not only broadened my understanding of violence on women but also helped me heal the hurt, perplexed and angry child inside me.

By looking for help, in a general environment where there is traditional tolerance of male violence and indifference to women who suffer such violence, when do abused women come forward for support? From what do they try to escape? In context of understanding ways of handling domestic violence, I became interested in finding what recourse do victims take, what are the alternatives that are perceived as viable and which are found operational? In other words, what brings relief? How transient or permanent is the relief?

I had the realization even before I started my data collection that the violence women experience is not just an episode or an event but a process and often one in a string of positive and negative experiences. Love, intimacy, physical and emotional dependencies legitimize a lot of violence in homes and make it that much more difficult to challenge it. So how is the violence in these women's lives being challenged? The answer to such questions came to me as doing interviews after interviews, I came to understand that the assumption that women are poor victims is not quite adequate and I need to see women's agency so that they are not limited in my constructions as mere victims but actually as survivors. In my re-

search work, my perspective drew from and oscillated between standpoint feminist positions and post-modernist understandings. In attempting to understand the common experience of violence against the backdrop of my own experience of it and that of women I interviewed, I wrote on violence without the objectivity of feminist empiricists.

My research involved a peculiar setting, informants and data collection for a yearlong period in two counseling cells in Mumbai – it is proper to mention that both these cells are not counselling cells in the sense of psychiatric counselling. In India the term counselling is often loosely applied to psychological, legal and practical advice given to women seeking relief from marital and domestic problems and or violence. I conducted my fieldwork at the Special Cell for Women and Children located in a police station in central Mumbai. The special cells are part of a joint initiative of police and social workers to eliminate violence against women. Housed within Police Stations these cells are run by trained social work professionals with administrative and infrastructural support from the Police. The cell workers are involved in direct work with women, offering immediate services in cases of family violence and atrocities against women such as police assistance in registering criminal complaints, placement in institutions, counseling, referral to family service agencies and legal aid. Also, they work with groups and communities, with police and in networking associations with other organizations. These cells keep good records of cases that come for registration and use it for research and training.

The other counselling setting wherein I worked for my data collection was that of a reputed and pioneering women's group called Stree Mukti Sangathan (SMS). SMS is a leading women's organization in Maharashtra working since 1975 with the community towards various aspects of conscientization and outreach. Through their various publications including a regular Marathi Magazine, street theatres, feminist songs and awareness programs with different groups in the society they direct their efforts at upliftment of women by creating awareness in society about women's issues. They run several counseling cells in Mumbai that are supported by the Social Welfare Board. For my fieldwork, I sat in their family counselling cell located in a suburb of Mumbai.

In relation to participant observation, my previous training in anthropological fieldwork methods defined for me to a large extent the actual methods I adopted for data collection. I decided that if I could successfully combine an adaptation of participant observation with in-depth interviewing then I would be able to catch the complex realities I sought to understand. I started with sitting in the two counseling cells/crisis centers and I intended to combine my study of the records of cases registered at the cells with in-depth, qualitative interviews with women victims /survivors, who approached the counseling cells/crisis centers. These interviews depended solely on the availability of participants and sampling was purposive. Some interviews with abuser men were also attempted. By sitting in the counseling cells over a

period of about a year I got the opportunity to see and study the development of cases that came up for consultation during this period. I must point out that when I first started sitting in the counseling cell, I sat on the side of the social worker/ counselor as a student and was frequently allowed to question the women and their families after the social worker was through with them. At this time, I was introduced as a student. However, after about a month or so of regular sitting at the cell, I started losing this definite status of an outsider and both the staff at the cell as well as women approaching it saw me as part of the team. I came to be increasingly roped in in actual counseling work. This shift was gradual and was marked by the comfort that developed in my relations with the staff at the cells.

At this point I need to make certain clarifications regarding why I choose to apply the term participant observation when the method I used greatly deviated from the way it is traditionally defined. The application of this well-established anthropological technique is generally related to studying a people and their way of life from close quarters such that the investigator lives with the people and in the course of his/her participation in various life activities, learns through his various senses. Most important rationale for participant observation is the wish to learn from people's actions as what they actually do as opposed to simply resting on people's reporting of what they do. Also of course is the wish to preserve the natural setting where the phenomena are to be studied and to minimize disturbance by some sort of participation. The counseling cell provided the scene to make such observations, albeit limited. There can be questions about the representative ness of these observations given the limited setting, yet I have been conscious of this limitation and been able to take cues from even this very limited observation to interview and find answers to my questions. These questions themselves arose from my participation with the help seeking women and their families and the counseling cell was like any other cultural background in which subjects shared their meanings. I had scope to take cues and search for lines of enquiry from the various scenes of family conflict that broke open before me in the course of seeking counseling. These were unrehearsed scenes, often motivated with the intention of influencing the counselor yet provided significant understandings of how men and women were involved with each other around the problem of violence in homes. Through this intensive involvement at the counseling cell, I came to share meanings with the women who came to talk of their intimate lives as well as with the counselors/ social workers who gave them a hearing.

I could make my inferences allowing for the distortions caused by their motivations of influencing the counselor and could check my observations thought the use of other research techniques.

I relied extensively on in-depth interviewing. This was usually what has been called as a conversation with a purpose. The interviews were completely unstructured and I took care to wait till the problem unfolded as the respondent viewed it. Typically, I would explore

a few general topics to get a sense about the problem that brought the woman or her family to the counseling cell and then follow the cues on the basis of how the woman respondent framed and structured her responses. I would also listen to additional or conflicting statements made by any accompanying persons, to make parties concerned feel at ease and unthreatened and then seek to make a few queries that clarified the problem further. As I would get to a point where the respondents felt that they had said what was the problem that brought them to the counseling cell, I would start a gentle probing with requests for elaboration or explanations. I would seek clarifications whenever there was inconsistency and tried all the time to try and pursue the meanings that men and women attached to each other's words and actions.

I was in the counseling cell day after day for a period of a year and this had two important results. First at the time a complainant first approaches a counseling cell, she is very optimistic about a result and frequents the cell again and again, sometimes even before the appointed date. Since I was routinely sitting in the counseling cell I could meet with these women whenever they came and benefited for, they were very interested in talking to me. Also, I was there for the appointed sittings with women complainants and could interview at length those women whose cases I became interested in. Routine sitting at the counseling cell was helpful in establishing rapport with the counselors as well as the women complainants. I benefited overall in a quicker understanding of what would give me access to people's personal accounts of their lives.

Introspection is part of an interpretive researcher process. I tried to work fluidly on clues and understandings that made for unexpected research leads and thus followed an unplanned and continuously unfolding research design. Introspection became an important tool of this process as this research came to be centered in a substantive way on my personal experiences. Traditionally introspection has been regarded as a very important tool for social and behavioural research although in recent texts it is not discussed as a technique or method of data collection. Let me clarify how this process of introspection became a method of data collection in this research through usage of two concepts given by Maslow: impulse voices and peak experiences.

Maslow (1972) has talked of what he first referred to as impulse voices but which he later thought is better called as inner signals (or cues or stimuli). Full humanness includes according to Maslow, the ability to have or cognize these inner signals. Talking of neurosis as a failure of personal growth, Maslow writes:

> The experientially empty person, lacking these directives from within, these voices of the real self, must turn to outer cues for guidance, for instance eating when the clock tells him to, rather than obeying his appetite (he has none) he guides himself

by clocks, rules, calendars, schedules, agenda and by hints and cues from other people. (Maslow ,1972, p. 33)

During the process of data collection and I think as a result of the process itself I became aware of myself as a survivor of violence. In exploring myself and my past and making myself as one of the subjects of this study, I answered the impulse voice the inner urge to come to terms with my experience of violence and to thence move on, to grow. This inner urge first expressed itself in the form of a dialogue between a friend and me about my motivations for this research. I consider this development as an ethnographic harvest as the psychoanalytical and deep revelations became an inspiration that gave me most significant insights about the phenomena of violence.

Maslow (1972) in his book, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* has also talked of 'Peak experiences.' Somewhat mystical these peak experiences are according to Maslow, periods of great creativeness for these are periods when one experiences loss of self or of ego or at times a sort of transcendence of self. Maslow characterizes these moments as:

> There is a fusion with the reality being observed… a oneness where there was a twoness, an integration of some sort of the self with the non-self. There is universally reported a seeing of formerly hidden truth, a revelation in the strict sense, a stripping away of veils, and finally always, the whole experience is experienced as bliss, ecstasy, rapture, exaltation (Maslow 1972, p. 62)

The author admits that these are shaking experience and are often considered to be "superhuman, supernatural and attributed to trans-human sources" (Maslow (1972, p.62) for they appear greater and grander than what can be conceived as human. And yet these moments have been the inspiration for much progress in science and art and as Maslow says form part of human experience as well as cognition.

The dialogue between me and my friend for my personal motivations and childhood history was for me one such great moment. I must admit however that when I experienced the dialogue with my friend, I was not aware that it could yield creative insights in me that would change the entire direction of my research. As I deconstructed this dialogue and worked on it, I could make meaning of the texts and the subtexts of things happening around me. I came to have an expanding consciousness of the importance of this revelation in understanding the problem of violence against women and writing about it.

I believe it is meaningless to seek to understand social problems without linking them up to philosophical questions that drive men and women. Science has routinely shut out those aspects of philosophical questions that cannot be empirically tested. Yet feminism must not do so. In prioritizing the personal, the feminists have made space for researches on contested phenomenon like intimate violence. The data of experience and of human

awareness even if it appears illogical, ambiguous, vague, contradictory or mystical is important data that can add to our knowledge about us. As Maslow puts it, "Knowledge of low reliability is also a part of knowledge" (Maslow, 1972, p. 62). Man is by his very nature baffling, unpredictable, mysterious, and largely inexplicable and the knowledge we have of man is itself inchoate and imprecise. As Maslow says any increase in this knowledge can take place only if we adopt an expansive and exploratory attitude and do not close door to possibilities of understanding through what appears at first mysterious, illogical, ambiguous or part of the unconscious.

Centering any research in a substantive way on the researchers' questions and experiences may pose a problem in the mainstream understanding of objective research. What constitutes proper approach to social research is a deeply contentious issue and philosophical doubts about scientific objectivity have only made for more trouble for the social scientists who have found that while it is alight to theorize on new and productive perspectives in social sciences, it is a different issue when it comes to choosing a method in empirical research which varies substantively from the traditional approach that makes hypothesis formation and testing, or generalizations as central to its enterprise. However, method is and must be seen as a practical matter. While commenting on the method of my study, I therefore focus on the phenomenon of study, i.e. violence in intimate relations and the purpose and expectations of my enquiry, which was very specifically to attempt to get some idea about the complexity of the issue without either making it simplistically an all or nothing phenomena as has been done most often or make for a complete robbing of women's agency and differing consciousness which posits them with the authority to privilege varying subjectivities at different points in their narrations, sometimes as helpless victims, sometimes as struggling women of courage, sometimes as women who are successfully handling trying and testing circumstances and sometimes one who have decided to take no nonsense and have adopted more aggressive and assertive postures due to being forced against the wall. I had to be flexible in sensing the phenomena of violence first on the outside and then within my own consciousness as it developed with an emerging sense of understanding. So, from the field that lay outside I went inside more private and personal domains and started to see myself as an object/subject. Kristeva [1941] uses the word abject to refer to this confused state wherein one confronts the object within, an object that actually typifies the subject. I saw my violence as just such an abject. It was inside me, defined me yet was something outside of me and therefore I could withdraw from it and analyze it.

For me the issue that still needed some clarification was the problem of speaking personally without being self-centered. The language of feminist writing is not the bodiless objective language. It is the language of the lived experience. So, of what significance is the way I think, feel and live to the understanding of violence. Am I not anybody, a thoroughly

dispensable non-entity that has little or no relevance in this world of three billion women? Spivak addresses the problem, thus:

> […] even in the most superficial and minimal analysis, one of the most striking characteristics of any version of advanced capitalism is the fragmentation and decentralization of the individual's putative political and economic control over her own life. One of the peculiar and paradoxical by-products of this system is to generate a conviction of individual centrality among most members of the intellectual, bourgeois, as well as managerial classes… accompanied by either a dispirited anguish against "their" power, or a spirited faith in "our" proliferation, with assorted permutations and combinations, of course. The official philosophy of this group is an individualism more or less disguised as pluralism. The generalizable result: lack of any conceivable interest in a collective practice toward social justice, or in recognizing the ethico–politically repressive construction of what presents itself as theoretical, legal, benign, free or natural. (Spivak, 1996, p. 101)

The doctrine of individual uniqueness by its focus on individual power and powerlessness is a betrayal of the feminist agenda and politics. It does so by adopting a position that the self, centered in these narratives, is a self that is very localized and that while personal experience may have deep meaning for the formation of the subjective person but that nevertheless cannot be taken to generalize. Feminists have pointed out that this makes for a false privatization of the personal. While one can take the position that centering the self in this theorization cannot legitimately be made a ground for any generalization, for the 'self' is too localized, I take the feminist position regarding the privatization of self as a patriarchal mechanism to control people's lives, particularly that of women. Fragmentation and decentralization of control over one's life is a symptom of our contemporary times, yet between a dispirited anguish against my powerlessness and a 'spirited faith' in pluralism and practice oriented towards social justice, even if individual, I choose the latter. The problem of generalization will remain however big the sample size, however controlled the study of limited variables.

Also, personal experience of doing this research has a deep meaning for the formation of my growing self and I agree with Maslow when he writes:

> When a little boy discovers the decimal system for himself this can be a high moment of inspiration, and a high creative moment and should not be waived aside because of some a priori definition which says creativeness ought to be socially useful or it ought to be novel, or nobody should have thought of it before etc. (Maslow,1972, p. 60)

Besides, I find myself agreeing with Foucault who in article entitled *What is an author* writes:

> All discourses, whatever their status, form, value, and whatever the treatment to which they will be subjected, would then develop in the anonymity of a murmur. We would no longer hear the questions that have been rehashed for so long: Who really spoke? Is it really, he and not someone else? With what authenticity or originality? And what part of his deepest self-did he express in his discourse? Instead, there would be other questions, like these: What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions? And behind all these questions, we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of indifference: What difference does it make who is speaking? (Foucault, 1984, p. 119-120)

To conclude this section, I would submit that at first, I started with the intention of doing a qualitative study of women victims of intimate violence, then went on to define my approach in terms of being more specifically an interpretive approach and later graduated to a full-blown feminist methodology with all its characteristics of the questions I pursued, my subjectivity and reflexivity and of course the transformative potential this has for me and for women who can identify with the problem of intimate violence.

5 Conclusion

There are two aspects that need further discussion regarding the soundness of feminist ethnographic researches. These pertain to the hidden assumptions of the researcher and the issues of representation and validity of conclusions.

One of my assumptions while doing research on the contested theme of intimate violence is the idea that human beings are not fundamentally bad or villainous. Another assumption is that every human being carries with him/her a consciousness that is a function of a personal history as well as a social history and thus there is both uniqueness as well as a shared aspect to individual existence. In this history lies the potentiality to develop one's consciousness and thus there is scope for both individual agency as well as social environment to play a part in the extent of flowering of potentialities and development of consciousness. These assumptions come close to the humanistic approaches, of the psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

There was intellectual disquiet in me regarding the deterministic orientation of domestic violence research wherein the women were depicted as helpless victims, driven to misery by the violence of their husbands and also the dehumanization of both men and women in such researches. Slife and Williams (1995) point out that humanistic theories themselves can be alleged to be deterministic like the psychodynamic and behavioristic theories because they take the growth potential in human beings as being a sort of an instinct and in this sense, beyond individual control, yet humanists themselves hold that the influence of

what they refer to as growth potentials or organismic valuing processes are not as strong as instincts or conditioning.

These researches were based on a constructed model of behavior yet somehow, we feminists ourselves slid into assuming that this is for real. This model however created disquiet in me for I found that it concealed the complexity of individual experience and awareness. Also is the fact that for obvious reasons much of this research is done on lower class women and in locating this violence in the lower-class women, we feminists from the middle and upper classes with privileges of education, wealth and often independent incomes even when we say that violence exists across classes ourselves add in haste that the violence, we experience is different, thus we remain blindfolded and unquestioning of the model of behavior that we construct. Interviewing women in the counseling cells for as long as a year made me realize that   women were speaking differently of their violence than what has generally been abstracted and that in our quest to bring the issue to public focus, we are ourselves contributing to its distortion. As I sat in the counseling cell and heard women after women talking of their experiences, I became aware of a common thread in their narratives and my personal experience. Thence I saw in my conceptualization of this research, a need to look within, to understand what meaning violence has in my life and to move ahead in analyzing women participants narratives based on this understanding. A new chapter unfolded in my research journey.

I am aware that the picture that I attempt to show is itself a construction and an abstraction and not the reality. The purpose for which I do this writing of the process of research however is not to make male violence against women in the confines of the home visible but to make sense of why women continue to live in violent relationships and to seek love and tenderness from those who violate them. I did not see the traditional explanations of women's masochism or women's economic dependency as sufficient. I found instead insights in the 'meanings' that violence and love have for women and their self.

Shipman while writing on the move towards small scale interpretive social science, writes, "Today the view of science as the treatment of data through the use of pre-established theoretical models is seen as inappropriate for studying human behavior" (Shipman, 1988, p.26), because it imposes a straitjacket on the collection of the crucial data on how humans make their worlds intelligible. That means that the researcher must get to know the symbolic world of those studied not ignore it while concentrating on overt behavior. Inner thoughts not appearances become the subject of study. The emphasis has shifted to uncovering the meanings given to situations researched by those actually involved, and in their terms, not that of the researcher.

Later I discovered that my quest to understand these aspects of violence and not what has hitherto been the case was itself what the humanists would refer to as a need for

growth of myself and my actualization. I cannot realistically, with this assumption, make any claims for understanding reality as it exists for others for as Slife and Williams) explain, the implication of this humanistic understanding, "No one can know for certain what is true for another individual." (Slife; Williams, 1995, p. 37) The feminist position that I claim and the relativism in morality and knowledge that the humanistic assumption implies can be seen as being in contradiction. However, I believe that it is not so. Feminism in the ultimate cannot be against individual freedom and fulfillment. It grapples today with the difficulty of reconciling individual freedom with community responsibility and this is not a problem which feminism alone grapples with. It is a more fundamental dilemma that seeks resolution. There are no clear answers.

The humanist emphasis on self and individual meanings however makes it appear that my position has a general shortcoming of humanist assumptions that is of moral relativism and relativism of knowledge. While I hold strongly to the assumption that individuals know best what is best for them and that individual needs for fulfillment and self-actualization are pursued in unique ways, yet I do not think that this emphasis on individual agency absolves the responsibility of the community and society towards individual development and actualization and in fact I think that individuals are locked with each other and can truly satisfy their own needs and further their spiritual development through satisfaction of mutual needs and relationships and common commitments. Personal development cannot be simply individual development.

Ethnographic research cannot claim to be replicable or even to be generalizable, yet it satisfies to my mind one of the most important criteria of good qualitative research, there is a certain organic link, a consistent rationale between the methods used and the unfolding complexity of the phenomenon being studied. It involves a flexible research design and opportunity to change research strategies, being sensitive to the learning made from the unfolding phenomena. Changes in strategies and important decisions in the course of doing ethnographic research are required to resolve conflicts of and for the researcher, but also gives a particular direction to the research. Yet ethnographic research follows a clear theoretical framework and data collection, and analysis are guided by concepts and models outlined in theoretical frameworks guiding the research. The feminist ethnographer despite being located in feminism seeks to define the theoretical parameters of the research study and to put out in the open some of what otherwise goes as hidden assumptions. Secondly and more importantly the researcher makes attempts at all points to tie the findings of this specific study into a recognized and meaningful body of feminist theory. The feminist ethnography has potentiality to yield valuable insights which even when they digress from mainstream understanding, illuminate a useful understanding on violence in general and male violence in particular and thus strengthen the usefulness of feminism to make a wom-

en centered analysis of the phenomena of violence. The final product of ethnographic research cannot be anticipated at the beginning of the process, yet its organic development and interrelatedness of the field situations helps in marrying the ethnographer's subjectivity with a certain professional ability to conduct research.

There is a lot of ambiguity in the social sciences and their explanations of social phenomena, and this ambiguity reflects the ambiguity of life. While sociologists – the term herein is used in a broader context to refer to not just those trained in sociology but those who study social – would generally agree that there is no one correct theory or explanation, there is much more confusion and conflict in what sociologists would consider as good or bad explanation and especially when it comes to differentiating, what has been defined as theoretical wheat from the chaff – Slife and Williams (1995, p. 1) use the phrase to refer to the elimination of theories because they do not measure up to certain standards.

Being able to hold itself under the scrutiny of Science is largely considered to be the test. This means that we define science, and this opens a Pandora's box for science itself is not an easy concept to define today after a deluge of philosophical arguments on the concept and is routinely applied to mean that which is empirical, systematic, rigorous and self-critical. This makes for a rather broad range for social 'science' research.

Most scientific analysis however has both intuitive and logical aspects to it. Martin Shipman says: "Social Research is important and is influential. But it is also fun for those involved and should not bore those who read it. When research meets human ingenuity and unpredictability, it should reflect not conceal the variety" (Shipman 1988, p 37).

Ethnographic research I think illustrates the meeting of research with a certain human ingenuity and unpredictability. For a researcher, ethnography requires an awareness and state of preparedness and consciousness that influences the final product and relies on subjective processes of observation and interpretation. This makes ethnographic research in the scientific sense technically weak. However, it is today recognized, though in smaller circles that the boundaries of sociology overlap with fiction and such writings have gained in time academic respectability. Shipman says,

> […] looking into everyday situations, writing accounts up in the language of those studied and avoiding predetermined methods brings social science very close to media reporting, to literature and to the reports of professionals such as inspectors Once you get Inside the Whale of society it is not reducible to laws but requires imagination and metaphors that are not mechanical. (Shipman, 1988, p. 162,168)

The author tis of the view that fatalistic, deterministic social science allows little room for individuality, ingenuity and enterprise.

While this certainly involves the sacrifice of the title scientific yet the gains of a more valid data and the intellectual and emotional stimulation related to understanding how people actually think and conceive their worlds are for me the highpoints of feminist ethnographic research. Most importantly ethnographic research has been a journey that in retrospective I know I had to undertake to wash the scars of violence that I carried myself.

REFERENCES

ABU-LUGHOD, Lila. Can there be a feminist ethnography? Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory, London, v.5, nº.1, p.7–27, 1990. https://doi.org/10.1080/07407709008571138

ADKINS, Lisa. Passing on feminism: from consciousness to reflexivity? **European Journal of Women's Studies**,vol.11,nº.4, p. 427-444, 2004. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506804046813

ALVESSON, Mats; SKOLDBERG, Kaj. **Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research**. Londres: Sage. 2000. 350 p.

BURTON, Barbara. Brutality and bureaucracy: human rights, intimate violence and the role of feminist ethnography. **PoLar: Political and Legal Anthropology Review**. Vol. 23, nº 1, p. 138-147, 2000. https://doi.org/10.1525/pol.2000.23.1.138

DAVIS, Dána-Ain. What is a feminist activist ethnographer to do? **American Anthropologist**. Vol. 116, nº. 2, p. 413-415, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.12112

DE BEAUVOIR, Simone. **The second sex**. Tradução: Holward Madison Parshley. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1949. 768 p.

FOUCAULT, Michel; ROBINOW, Paul (Ed.). **The Foucault reader**. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. 400 p.

GHOSH, Sanjukata T. Feminist ethnography. In Naples, Nancy A. (Ed.). **The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies**. Wiley Blackwell, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss765

HARDING, Sandra. Introduction: is there a feminist methodology? In Sandra Harding (Ed.), **Feminism and methodology**. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 01-14. 1988. https://doi.org/10.1520/STP20024S

HAWKINS, Darren; HUMES, Melissa. Human rights and domestic violence. **Political Science Quarterly**, Oxford University Pres. Vol. 117, nº 2, p. 231-257. 2002. https://doi.org/10.2307/798182

HESSE-BIBER, Sharlene Nagy; PIATELLI, Deborah. The feminist practice of holistic reflexivity. In Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (Ed.). **Handbook of feminist research: theory and praxis**. (2ªed) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, Capítulo27, p. 557-582. 2012. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483384740

KRISTEVA, Julia. **Powers of horror: an essay on abjection**. Tradução: Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press. 1941.

LAWLESS, Elaine J. **Reciprocal ethnography as feminist and emergent**. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. 214 p. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvpb3z54.

LINABARY, Jasmine R; CORPLE, Danielle J; COOKY, Cheryl. Of wine and whiteboards: enacting feminist reflexivity in collaborative research. **Sage Journals**, UK. Vol. 21, nº 5, p. 719-735. 2021. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120946988

MANJOO, Rashida. Special guest contribution: violence against women as a barrier to the realization of human rights and the exercise of citizenship. **Feminist Review**, UK, Vol. 112 nº1, p. 11-26. 2016. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/fr.2015.54

MASLOW, Abraham H. The farther reaches of human nature. New York: Viking Compass Book Press, 1972. 423 p.

MITRA, Nishi. **Marital violence**: a feminist understanding of violence in intimate relations. Thesis (PhD in Social Science) School of Social Sciences, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India. 2005. Disponível em: http://hdl.handle.net/10603/22316. Acesso em: 5 jun. 2024.

MOHANTY, Chandra Talpade. Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. In Chandra Talpade Mohanty; Ann Russo; Lourdes Torres (Eds.). **Third world women and the politics of feminism**. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Capitulos 01, p. 51-80. 1991.

ONG, Aihwa. Colonialism and modernity: feminist re-presentations of women in non-western societies. In Kum-Kum Bravnani (Ed.). **Feminism and race**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Capítulo 10, p. 108-118. 2000. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198782360.003.0011

SCHROCK, Richelle D. The methodological imperatives of feminist ethnography. **Journal of Feminist Scholarship**. Vol. 5, nº5, p. 54-60, 2013. Disponível em: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jfs/vol5/iss5/5 Acesso em: 5 jun. 2024.

SEGAL, Lynne. **Why feminism: gender, psychology, politics**. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999. 296 p.

SHIPMAN, Marten. **The limitations of social research**. 4. ed. London: Longman. 1988.

SLIFE, Brent D.; WILLIAMS, Richard N. **What's behind the research? Discovering hidden assumptions in the behavioral sciences**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.1995. 264p.

SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty; LANDRY, Donna; MACLEAN, Gerald (Eds.). **The Spivak reader: selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**. New York: Routledge.1996. 344p.

STACEY, Judith. Can there be a feminist ethnography? **Women's Studies International Forum**, Vol.11, nº1, p. 22-27. 1988. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(88)90004-0

STACEY, Jackie. Untangling feminist theory. In, Diane Richardson; Vitoria Robinson (Eds.) **Introduction to Women's Studies**. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Capitulo 3, p. 49-73.1993. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-22595-8_3

STANLEY, Liz (Ed.). Feminist praxis: research, theory, and epistemology in feminist sociology. In Lyz Stanley. **Feminist Praxis (RLE Feminist Theory) Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology.** Vol.13, p 1-3.New York: Routledge Library Editions: Feminist Theory.1990. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203094020

STANLEY, Liz; WISE, Sue. **Breaking out: feminist consciousness and feminist research.** New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul Books. 1983. 210 p.

STANLEY, Liz; WISE, Sue. Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research process. In **Feminist praxis**: research, theory, and epistemology in feminist sociology. New York: Routledge Library Editions: Feminist Theory, 1990. cap. 2, 282 p.

SWEET, Paige L. Who knows? reflexivity in feminist standpoint theory and Bourdieu. **Gender and Society**. Vol. 34, nº 6, p. 922-950. 2020. Disponível em: https://www.jstor.org/stable/26967176. Acesso em: 5 jun. 2024.

VISHWESWARAN, Kamala. Defining feminist ethnography. In, Kamala Vishweswaran **Fictions of feminist ethnography**. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, Capítulo 2, p. 17-27. 1994.

VISHWESWARAN, Kamala. Histories of feminist ethnography. **Annual Review of Anthropology**. Vol 26, nº1, p. 591-621. 1997. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.26.1.591

MINI BIOGRAPHY

Nishi Mitra vom Berg
Researcher at the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). PhD in Women's Studies – Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India. Master in Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India and Graduated in Anthropology with a specialization in Social-Cultural-Anthropology.
E-mail: nishimitra@tiss