



Anthropologists Engaging Violence, 1980-2012, in American Anthropologist

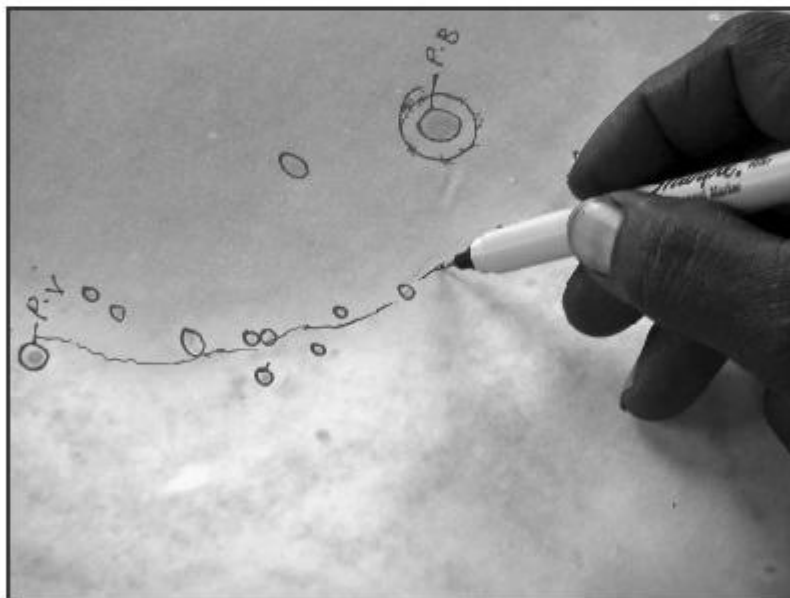
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August, 2013



VOLUME 111 • NUMBER 3 • SEPTEMBER 2009

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



Virtual Issue edited by [Virginia R. Dominguez](#)

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Introduction

Violence takes many forms and anthropologists have long explored it and addressed it. In this Virtual Issue, I draw on 59 articles that frame their topic at least partly in terms of violence and that were published in *American Anthropologist* between 1980 and 2012.

An internal search of AnthroSource (explicitly focusing on the term violence) generated over 100 items published in AA during this period. A later manual search brought that total to over 200. That most of these items were book reviews is telling. It indicates a serious and high level of attention to matters of violence not just among the anthropologists who wrote the books but also among the publishers who published their books, the editors of AA (at least the book review editors) who chose to get these books reviewed, and the anthropologists (from various parts of the profession) who agreed to review the books themselves. While many Virtual Issues just include full-fledged articles that address a topic, I believe it is important to highlight here both the full-length articles published in AA between 1980 and 2012 and framed by the authors as about violence, and the books explicitly addressing violence that the journal reviewed. Hence, this Virtual Issue includes links to the full-fledged articles themselves (and some thoughts here about ways to group them, juxtapose them, or reflect on them) but also the titles of books on some aspect of violence that the AA reviewed during this period.

Topically there is, of course, overlap but interestingly there is also a bit of a difference in coverage or emphasis. For example, **human rights, torture, ethics, and sexual violence** definitely feature among the regular articles the AA published during this period (e.g. articles included here by Deal; Fry; Fuentes; Handwerker; Hayden; Linke; Schwenkel; and Weiss), but these topics appear even more in the books reviewed and debated by the AA on this general topic over the same period of time (at least 200). These include a few dozen books to which I want to call special attention here. Interestingly I have identified nearly none appearing in the 1980s (although 20 books explicitly deal with war and warfare or other explicit forms of violence during this period). Closest to this subset on



human rights, torture, ethics, and sexual violence were books by Maurice Bloch, Wauthier de Mahieu, Bruce Kapferer, and Robert Carmack. Many more, however, were reviewed in the 1990s and an even larger number between 2000 and 2012. Clearly the topic of violence, its framing as about violence, and its special emphasis on human rights, including the right to be free from sexual violence, grew substantially in visibility, if the AA is any indication of the attention anthropologists are giving to this topic. To cover both the research articles and the book reviews, in this Virtual Issue, I separate them out here, first addressing ways of reading the full-fledged articles and later offering ways of reading the book reviews as well.

There is, however, an interesting conundrum in all this. In addition to examining what AnthroSource's own Search engine identified (from words in an article's title, its subtitle, its abstract, and its keywords), I have also explored the Tables of Contents of all the AA issues between March 1980 and December 2012. That separate search generated a good number of other articles and many book reviews not initially "caught" by AnthroSource's internal Search engine. Two patterns emerged. The first concerned topics that were not framed as about "violence" (or analytically in terms of "violence") at the time they were published but that, in all likelihood, would be now, given the great discursive presence of *violence* in more recent anthropological work. The second concerned topics in which killing, massacre, torture, homicide, terrorism, war, murder, suicide, or genocide appear prominently displayed in the articles' titles or subtitles but that were not picked up by my original AnthroSource Search under "violence."

I choose here to handle the two patterns differently. In the former the frame of reference is not *violence* even if many readers might now want to look up these articles, mine them for their data, and subsequently frame their analyses as concerning violence. I therefore mention them here but do not include them in the various groupings I offer as ways to read the articles included in this Virtual Issue. In the latter I am not convinced that the frame of reference isn't violence, even if the articles' titles, subtitles, abstracts, and keywords did not include the term violence itself. I therefore choose to include these articles here in the



various groupings I created for this Virtual Issue and that appear in the Tables of Content.

One excellent example of the former is hunting, a topic amply included in AA issues in the 1980s but not framed by the authors as about violence and, hence, not appearing in my original Search results. Indeed I (manually) found 7 articles on hunting, or hunting and gathering (or foraging) societies, and these appeared in March 1981 (by David Frayer), June 1983 (by Carol R. Ember), March 1986 (by Pat Shipman), September 1987 (by Kent H. Redford and John G. Robinson), March 1988 (by Robin Ridington), June 1988 (by Odell), and March 1989 (by Robert C. Bailey et al.). While more recent anthropologists of human-animal relations might frame hunting as human activities entailing the killing of animals (and, hence, entailing outright violence to animals), the authors of these 1980s articles debated the nature and extent of hunting relative to foraging, farming, weapon use, body size, the archaeological record, and habitat.

Good examples of the second type of article not initially identified by AS as concerning *violence* but very hard to exclude from this Virtual Issue are those concerning homicide (June 1982 and June 2000), suicide (Sept. 2002 and March 2006), massacres (Dec. 1994), war (Sept. 2002, Sept. 2007, and March 2011), warfare (Sept. 1982 and Dec. 1988), killing (Dec. 1993), genocide (Dec. 1996), and terrorism (Sept. 2002). Articles naming Abu Ghraib (March 2006), Operation Iraqi Freedom (Dec. 2008), the U.S. military (June 2008), U.N. peacekeeping (Sept. 2010), or simply September 11 (Sept. 2002) also fit here. Many colleagues would also include an article on female genital cutting and the politics of intervention (by Bettina Shell-Duncan in June 2008). And it is the content of the article by Barbara A. Purdy (“American Indians after A.D. 1492: A Case Study of Forced Culture Change” in the September 1988 AA) that warrants inclusion here as well. “Forced culture change” entailed many of the kinds of acts against bodies and persons otherwise included in the many AA articles that frame themselves as addressing *violence* to persons and their communities. Of course, readers may want to go further and include in their readings even more articles addressing systemic injustice, ideologies that support them, and practices that reproduce



them including those more typically framed differently but that contribute to the systematic undermining of specific segments of a society's population (or the world's population) and the individuals categorized as belonging to those segments.

THE RESEARCH ARTICLES/FULL-LENGTH ARTICLES

To look at the articles I have selected for inclusion in this Virtual Issue is to look at anthropologists as authors, researchers, teachers, advocates, and practitioners engaging questions of violence. The articles, of course, vary in content, and even in approach but I also see, in the whole set, areas of special attention over this period of time. Intellectual communities and sub-communities clearly exist, influence each other, tend to try to examine and develop topics not always noticed by others, and at times frame those topics using language that is novel or indicative of the paradigms within which they are working. But there are always some surprises, some people using fairly different terms but addressing topics that bear more relation to each other than many readers (or researchers) might frequently realize. ***It is in that spirit that I have created groupings here. Rather than present the Virtual Issue's main contents chronologically, I seek to invite readers to read across (and perhaps even outside) their more familiar circles.***

Nonetheless, to take full advantage of possibilities offered by Virtual Issues, I also offer alternative groupings. In this sense, I do not offer a typical Table of Contents. Each of the 9 groupings here could be read as a separate Table of Contents of a separate edited book or special issue of a journal (published in the conventional sense). A number of articles appear in more than one category, because their topic, approach, or analysis warrants it, and it is possible—and compelling—to present them in relation to other articles in this Virtual Issue.

For example, several articles address questions concerning Islam and Muslims, and the historical context in which they do so is relevant. The AA, after all, is a U.S. journal, and the Muslim world has garnered much attention in the U.S. since



the mid-1970s with the oil crisis followed by the Iran hostage crisis in the late 1970s, the first Gulf War in 1991, bombs going off in a variety of countries (including the U.S.) and correctly or incorrectly assumed to be the work of Islamic extremists, and then, of course, the events of September 11, 2001, followed by the immediate war in Afghanistan against the Taliban, and the March 2003 invasion of Iraq in search of Saddam Hussein, his military, and his presumed weapons of mass destruction. That the U.S. continues today to have hundreds of thousands of troops and military advisors in multiple countries in the Middle East—in countries with majority Muslim populations—and that this military involvement is now the longest military engagement in U.S. history is, of course, a topic of high concern and attention among anthropologists of many sorts. So, it is not surprising that several of the full-fledged articles appearing in the AA between 1980 and 2012 frame the issue in one way or another as concerning Muslims and Islam. Yet, it would be a missed opportunity to just group those articles as about Muslims and Islam and not also as analytically or thematically elucidating anthropological contributions of different sorts.

Therefore, I am asking readers to make the most of what the digital world now offers us and contemplate the alternative juxtapositions I offer here. These groupings concern (a) torture and trauma, (b) human rights, individual rights, and collective rights, (c) state structures and non-state organizations, (d) display, performance, and social reproduction, (e) Muslims, Islam, and approaches to Islam, (f) war and warfare, (g) nations and their spaces of violence, (h) murder, homicide, suicide, genocide, and (i) challenging anthropological practices. Most of these terms are used by specialists and well as non-specialists. They carry meanings in different contexts, and some of them might seem more contested than others.

My goal here is to lead readers to contemplate the issues from the points, messages, analyses, research, and arguments presented by anthropologists in the AA since 1980. It is to show the *range* of those discussions and explorations, in order to foster better understanding of the issues from within the world of anthropology. All authors will not appear to agree on a point any more than all



readers would, but that so many anthropologists have been asking questions of certain sorts and framing the issues in particular ways is noteworthy, and I seek to highlight this part of anthropological life and anthropological practice. Let me put it bluntly. I seek to highlight anthropological research, thinking, and writing on violence and not on culture. The general public may automatically think of anthropologists as students of culture and cultural difference (especially those in social, cultural, or linguistic anthropology), and anthropologists are indeed heavily trained to contemplate those issues, but anthropologists also work intensely and in depth on other issues, highlighting them and framing them as central to their explorations—and one of them is violence.

I could say that some of the terms I have used in creating the 9 groupings of articles that appear here are more controversial than others—for example, *torture*, *collective rights*, *Islam*, and *spaces of violence*. But I think *all* the terms I use in grouping articles, like the terms used in the articles themselves and the concepts they address, are best seen as open for discussion and contestation. If there is one thing anthropologists have long stressed, done, and been known for, it is the close examination of ideas that one or another society takes for granted. At times this leads to people thinking that anthropologists always look at things with too much emphasis on variety and complexity, but I always wonder if those readings do not have more to do with people becoming uncomfortable calling into question cherished ways of thinking or habits of understanding.

In Grouping A, for example, Christina Schwenkel clearly thinks of the contemporary U.S. as an empire, and relates this to the “tortured bodies” at Abu Ghraib, and Carlina de la Cova clearly sees in U.S. cadaver collections evidence of trauma among 19th century males, and asks hard questions about what race and racism might have to do with it. The idea of the U.S. as an empire might not sit well with some readers any more than the idea that a racial hierarchy could produce trauma to bodies that can still be spotted in cadavers over a century later. But both authors offer serious, research-based food for thought and, in including them in the same grouping here, I admit to seeking even more discomfort on the part of readers, admittedly a productive discomfort when



juxtaposing the handling of prisoners across time and space but by agents of the same society (in this case the United States).

The same goes for thinking of children subjected to corporal punishment in domestic settings alongside children functioning as soldiers in war zones. Is there one, and only one, ethical position to take? No. But the juxtapositions highlight our conceptual “comfort zones” and the advantages of moving into “zones of discomfort,” as I argued in my November 2011 Presidential Address to the American Anthropological Association (later published in the AA in September 2012 as “Comfort Zones and Their Dangers: Who Are We, Qui sommes-nous?”).

Much the same approach guides the content of the other 8 “groupings” of articles here. In Grouping B, critics of widespread notions of “human rights” appear alongside advocates of them, and articles critiquing state policies and practices that favor some sectors of the population over others appear side by side leading one to wonder whether some look more easily like cases of state violence than cases of competing rights. In Grouping C, I include articles on militarization (both state-led and non-state-led) alongside several focusing on urban fears and gated communities that on the surface look much more like comments on class and race in the contemporary U.S. Interestingly I am not sure which is likely to generate more discomfort. In Grouping D, it is the highlighting of display and performance that is likely to raise eyebrows, especially when we are not talking about the kinds of things long associated with “primitive” people and “primitive warfare.” In Grouping E, I deliberately include articles on the Israeli and U.S. militaries in a set that focuses on Muslims, Islam, and the contemporary non-Muslim world engaging with Islam. And I include articles that focus on the perpetrators-of various sorts—as well as on imagined or actual victims.

Groupings F, G, and H address “war and warfare,” “nations and their spaces of violence,” and “murder, homicide, suicide, genocide.” To some readers, the surprise might be that I include an article using the phrase “primitive warfare” but what would it mean to exclude such an article? It is a part of our collective exploration of warfare even in the later 20th century. Rape and other forms of



gender violence loom large in the grouping I made of “nations and their spaces of violence.” Clearly these issues are present in many settings, and deserve to be seen in the broader context I offer here. The same goes for consequential and systemic poverty, or what Paul Farmer prefers to call “structural violence,” that which entails deep and traumatic differentials in the life chances of members of nations, countries, and societies. While every anthropologist does not frame work on poverty, discrimination, crime, and differential life chances using the rubric of violence, many increasingly do and we see in this grouping a good mix of their approaches.

That the last grouping I created (grouping H called “challenges to and within anthropological practice”) is the shortest one troubled me in creating this Virtual Issue. I have absolutely no intention of suggesting that the few articles I include in that grouping are the only ones that aim to challenge anthropologists’ (and others’) ways of seeing, thinking, and doing. Indeed a different search focusing on fieldwork and ethics would no doubt include many more articles and comments—from those authored by Lawrence Rosen, Joan Cassell, Dorothy Willner, and Raymond Firth in the March 1980 issue of AA (the oldest of those examined for this Virtual Issue) to articles on Margaret Mead (June 1980), public archaeology (Sept. 1980), and gender in fieldwork (June 1984). But I consider the ones I do include in my grouping to front the issue and, hence, to ensure that this Virtual Issue visibly compels readers/users to think about those ethical, evidentiary, and performative challenges any time the topic is framed in terms of violence—macro or micro-violence, violence close to home or far away from it, blatant violence or more latent forms of violence.

[Read the Articles Here](#)

THE BOOK REVIEWS (AND BOOKS REVIEWED)

There is some very real merit in looking at the book reviews both thematically and chronologically. There has been an enormous increase in the topic in the past 30 years and it is useful to see some of the shifts around the topic. In fact, the



growth in the number of books published on acts of violence and forms of violence—and reviewed in the *American Anthropologist*— is striking. Restricting my count to books explicitly dealing with war, warfare, homicide, terrorism, violence, militaries, and capital punishment, I found no more than 25 between 1980 and 1990 (out of over 2000), but by the 1990s that number exceeds 60 and it exceeds 100 since the year 2000. Let me add that the numbers would clearly be greater if I were also regularly including books in and on political economy, systemic injustice, sexism, racism, and inequalities of many sorts. The list of book reviews I offer in the Appendix to this Virtual Issue is obviously indicative of both an anthropological concern now garnering a great deal of attention and a chosen frame of interpretation, research, and analysis. I consider all these books to address the topic of violence and the engagement of anthropologists with violence. A different editor, of course, might have excluded a few and added others, but the great majority of books would appear on any editor's list.

In the next few paragraphs, I discuss some thematic patterns I find in the set of books published and reviewed by the *American Anthropologist* between 1980 and 2012. In the Appendix, however, I present them chronologically but by half-decade in order to make the growth even easier to spot.

War and Warfare/Military and Militarization

Perhaps most obvious as books on violence are those books explicitly dealing with war and warfare. They have appeared throughout the decades since 1980, although the terminology has shifted somewhat and differs to some extent by subfield. For example, warfare is less common now and a focus on the U.S. military more common now than in the 1980s. The earliest book review I found on this topic appeared in June 1981 and concerned Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt's book, The Biology of Peace and War. Other 1980s reviews appeared in 1983 (one), 1986 (one), 1987 (one), 1988 (two), and 1989 (two). Twelve (12) more appeared in the 1990s, sixteen (16) between 2000 and 2009, and 3 more between 2010 and 2012. But these numbers do not include books framing their topic in slightly different terms. The first I noted to do so was in a review appearing in September 1987 but



7 reviews in the mid-1990s did so along with 2 more between 2010 and 2012.

Some used slightly different frames of analysis—such as crisis or revolution or massacre—but dealt with places at war or recently emerging from war or near-war. Here I include the following from the 1980s through the late 1990s: the June 1981 review of Michael Fischer’s book (Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution) on Iran; the March 1989 review of Bruce Kapferer’s book (Legends of People, Myths of State) concerning Sri Lanka and Australia; the June 1989 review of Robert Carmack’s edited volume (Harvest of Violence) concerning Guatemala; the December 1992 review of Allen Feldman’s book (Formations of Violence) on Northern Ireland; the September 1994 Review (Essay) by Judy Ledgerwood titled “Surviving Shattered Worlds: Vietnam and Cambodia”; the September 1994 review of David Stoll’s book (Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala) on Guatemala; the December 1995 review of Ricardo Falla’s book (Massacres in the Jungle; Ixcan, Guatemala 1975-1982) also on Guatemala; the December 1997 double review of books on Sikhs and Sikh militants in South India (Joyce J. M. Pettigrew’s The Sikhs of the Punjab and Cynthia Keppley Mahmood’s Fighting for Faith and Nation); and the December 1999 review of Philip Gourevitch’s book (We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families) on Rwanda.

Here I would also place more recent books and their reviews—including the June 2004 review of Victoria Sanford’s book (Buried Secrets), another book dealing with violence in Guatemala; the September 2004 review of Franz Husken and Huub de Jonge’s edited book (Violence and Vengeance) on Indonesia; the September 2004 review of Daniel Wilkinson’s book (Silence on the Mountain) on Guatemala; the March 2005 review of James Ron’s book (Frontiers and Ghettos) on Serbia and Israel; the March 2005 review of Johan Pottier’s book (Re-Imagining Rwanda) on Rwanda; the September 2005 review of William R. Kelleher’s book (The Troubles in Ballybogoin) on Northern Ireland; the September 2005 review of Emma Tarlo’s book (Unsettling Memories) on Delhi; the June 2006 Review Essay (titled “Sense and Sense-Making in the Caucasus”) by Bruce Grant on three books dealing with the war-torn Caucasus; the September 2006 review



of Paul Sant Cassia's book (Bodies of Evidence) on Cyprus; the September 2006 review of Antonius Robben's book (Political Violence and Trauma in Argentina) on Argentina; the March 2008 review of Alexander Hinton's book (Why Did They Kill?) on Cambodia; the March 2010 review of David Vine's book (Island of Shame) on Diego Garcia; the June 2010 review of C. Sarah Soh's book (The Comfort Women) on Korea and Japan; the December 2010 review of Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld's book (Fighting Like a Community) on Andean civil society; the September 2011 review of Brigittine French's book (Maya Ethnolinguistic Identity) on highland Guatemala; and the December 2011 review of Erica Caple James' book (Democratic Insecurities) on Haiti.

Memory (in Relation to Violence)

A number of books explicitly frame their topic in relation to memory, and it is useful to identify the more obvious here. They include: (1) Liisa H. Malkki's Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania (reviewed by Marc Sommers in March 1997); (2) Michael Gilson's Lords of the Lebanese Marclies: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society and Ted Swedenburg's Memories of Revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past (reviewed jointly by Stephen Caton in September 1997 under "Political Violence, Narrative, and Memory"); (3) Ussama Makdisi and Paul A. Silverstein's edited volume, Memory and Violence (reviewed by James Peacock in September 2002); (4) David E. Lorey. and William H. Beezley's edited volume, Genocide, Collective Violence, and Popular Memory: The Politics of Remembrance in the Twentieth Century (reviewed by Alexander L. Hinton in June 2004); (5) Rosalind Shaw's Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone (reviewed by Martin Klein in September 2004); (6) Daniel Wilkinson's Silence on the Mountain: Stories of Terror, Betrayal, and Forgetting in Guatemala (reviewed by W. George Lovell in September 2004); (7) Thomas A. Vogler's Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma (reviewed by Kelly McKinney in March 2005); (8) Ussama Makdisi and Paul A. Silverstein's edited volume, Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa (reviewed by Richard U. Moench in June 2007); (9) Edna G. Bay and Donald L.



Donham's edited volume, States of Violence: Politics, Youth, and Memory in Contemporary Africa (reviewed by Wendi A. Haugh in March 2008). and (10) C. Sarah Soh's The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan (reviewed by Haeng-Ja Chung in June 2010).

Torture, Trauma, Terror, Abuse

Likewise it may be useful to select some of the more obvious examples of anthropological works engaging with torture, trauma, terror, and abuse in situations otherwise deemed times of peace (or at least not of outright war). Some are explicitly sexual and some not. Among those I choose to note (and some appear above as well) are: (1) Jean La Fontaine's Child Sexual Abuse (reviewed by Jill Korbin in December 1992); (2) Jacquelyn C. Campbell's Sanctions and Sanctuary: Cultural Perspectives on the Beating of Wives (reviewed by Dorothy Ayers Counts in September 1993); (3) Gregory M. Matoesian's Reproducing Rape: Domination through Talk in the Courtroom (reviewed by Mary Bucholtz in December 1994); (4) Frances E. Mascia-Lees' Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture and Text (reviewed by Gilbert Herdt in June 1996); (5) Darius M. Rejali's Torture and Modernity: Self, Society and State in Modern Iran (reviewed by William Beeman in December 1996); (6) Jeffrey A. Sluka's Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror (reviewed by Avram Bornstein in March 2001); (7) Cara E. Richards' The Loss of Innocents: Child Killers and Their Victims (reviewed by Jill Korbin in June 2001); (8) Catherine Weinberger-Thomas' Ashes of Immortality: Widow-Burning in India (reviewed by Martha Ann Selby in December 2001); and (9) Brian Keith Axel's The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation and the Formation of a Sikh "Diaspora." (reviewed by Verne A. Dusenbery in March 2004).

Despite reaching a bit farther here than others might, I would also include in this category (1) Martha Oehmke Loustaunnau and Mary Sanchez-Bane's Life, Death and In-Between on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Asi es la vida (reviewed by Robert R. Alvarez in December 2001); (2) Carel P. van Schaik and Charles H. Janson's Infanticide by Males and Its Implications (reviewed by Agustin Fuentes in June



2002); (3) Kathleen M. Blee's Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement (reviewed by Chip Berlet in March 2004); (4) Thomas A. Vogler's Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma (reviewed by Kelly McKinney in March 2005); (5) Lorna A. Rhodes' Total Confinement: Madness and Reason in the Maximum Security Prison (reviewed by Dylan Rodriguez in March 2005); (6) Paul Farmer's Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor (reviewed by Jeff Maskovsky in June 2005); (7) Gretchen E. Schafft's From Racism to Genocide: Anthropology in the Third Reich (reviewed by Bernhard Streck in March 2006); (8) David M. Rosen's Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism (reviewed by Ilene Cohn in June 2006); (9) Jonina Einarsdottir's Tired of Weeping: Mother Love, Child Death, and Poverty in Guinea-Bissau (reviewed by Dorothy D. Wills in September 2006); (10) Andrea Parrot and Nina Cummings' Forsaken Females: The Global Brutalization of Women (reviewed by Marcia Mikulak in September 2007); (11) Arnold Arluke's Just a Dog: Understanding Animal Cruelty and Ourselves (reviewed by Molly Mullin in March 2009); and (12) Ellen Moodie's El Salvador in the Aftermath of Peace: Crime, Uncertainty, and the Transition to Democracy (reviewed by Kimberly Theidon in December 2011).

Concluding Thoughts

It may be worth contemplating how and why this great increase in explicit attention to violence among anthropologists has occurred. Both in the articles published and the books reviewed in the *American Anthropologist* since 1980 there is ample evidence of this "explosion." To those who think of anthropology (especially social, cultural, and linguistic anthropology) as a field defined by a notion of culture, this "explosion" in attention to distress, war, terror, human rights, and multiple forms of physical, social, and psychological violence should be an eye-opener. Anthropologists may not have abandoned a sense of culture or of social, ideological, and cognitive diversity among humans on this planet, but clearly something else looms large for many in the field of anthropology (and across a number of its subfields).



I try to document this in this Virtual Issue, and to make much of that work readily available. I also try to provoke readers to go beyond their comfort zones in reading across time periods, spaces, and even interpretive orientations. Each of the sets I have created here can work well to point to our “comfort zones” and to imply or even create our “zones of discomfort,” and it is this possibility that makes this Virtual Issue on Violence (and specifically on anthropologists engaging questions of violence) so compelling. Clearly the concerns with human rights, cultural rights, gender violence, political violence, and state violence that I identify here emerged very palpably on the scene from the late 1980s through the first decade of the 21st century, but they also clearly continue. Indeed I think they grow as anthropologists build on each other’s earlier work and apply those frames for “looking” and thinking to a great deal of social, economic, military, and political life around the world.