

Toward Global Anthropological Studies of Reproduction

Concepts, Methods, Theoretical Approaches

Despite unprecedented levels of transnational migration and global flows of communication, commodities, and medical technologies, there remains a dearth of creative, new anthropological research investigating the impact of these processes on human reproductive activities (Barnard 2000; Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Inda and Rosaldo 2002; Van Hollen 2003). To help ameliorate this situation, in June 2006 we convened a workshop with eighteen scholars from Asia, Africa, Western Europe, and the United States. Our objectives were to enhance understanding of the consequences for reproduction, reproductive health, and reproductive rights of escalating globalization processes as they intersect with state, regional, and local structures, policies, and practices, and to develop nuanced concepts and methodological approaches for investigating these interactions.

The chapters that follow show that the theories, concepts, and methods of global ethnography are particularly well suited for exploring these dialectical processes across a range of ethnographic contexts (Burawoy 2000b; Whiteford and Manderson 2000). Their aims are threefold: to better define and operationalize the concepts of global, state, local, and individual in relation to reproductive activities in the contemporary world; to achieve a more meaningful conceptualization of human agency through finely textured analyses of diverse facets of reproduction and reproductive health; and to move beyond the limitations of conventional methodology to develop better strategies for research in this domain.

Crosscutting the various chapters is a core question: to what extent might it be meaningful to conceptualize a global anthropology of repro-

duction and reproductive health? Over the past two decades, social scientists have convincingly shown that research on human reproduction, once disdained as marginal, is at the very core of social theory (Ginsburg and Rapp 1991; Browner 2000; Sargent 2005). This is because reproduction is inevitably shaped by and reflective of large-scale sociopolitical, economic, and ideological processes. Equally important, even in the face of efforts by the state and other institutions to intensify control over the bodies of women and men, individuals strategize through multiple forms of negotiation and resistance to circumvent these agendas. In this collection, we argue that by examining local, regional, state, and global structures as they shape and in turn are shaped by reproductive behavior, we gain new insight into the means through which women and men exercise initiative and intent. The following concepts provide the framework and orientation for the ethnographic chapters.

Why Reproduction?

Our aim is to understand the diverse consequences of interactions among global and state population politics and policies; public health, human rights, and feminist movements; religious doctrines and their manifestations; diverse medical systems and practices; and kinship relations, intimate personal relationships, and individual aspirations on the reproductive lives of women and men. In doing so, we build on thirty years of vital research (Franklin and McNeill 1988; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991, 1995; Pigg and Adams 2005; Sharp 2000; Browner and Sargent 1996, 2007).

Although anthropological interest in reproduction and childbirth dates from the earliest nineteenth- and twentieth-century ethnographies, it was not until the second wave of feminism began to transform academia in the 1970s that anthropological research on reproduction moved from descriptive to more analytical and began to focus on the multiple ways that broad structural factors in concert with different types of power dynamics shape reproductive experiences.

Ginsburg and Rapp's *Annual Reviews of Anthropology* article, "The Politics of Reproduction" (1991), and the edited collection they published just a few years later (1995) were instrumental in this conceptual turn. Their objectives were to explicate the effects of global processes on women's reproductive experiences and, in so doing, argue for the necessity of placing reproduction at the center of social theory. Their brilliant, pathbreaking insight lay in

unequivocally demonstrating that the social organization of reproduction was intrinsically linked to the production of culture, not a mere reflection of it (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995, 2). In addition they built upon and extended Shellee Colen's transformational concept of "stratified reproduction" to represent some of the diverse types of power relations brought to bear in certain reproductive sectors (Colen 1995). Ginsburg and Rapp were also among the first to explicate some of the kinds of social relationships created—or recreated—through reproductive technologies. Their book was broadly informed by an explicit political agenda: "Our interest in the agency of our subjects springs from our unapologetic concern with the political nature of both reproduction and research about it." Their express goal lay in the development of new theories and methods to enable researchers to discover unrecognized potential for innovation and activism (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995, 9, 12).

Conceiving the New World Order has remained a classic because of the high quality of its ethnographic chapters and its success at articulating how research and political agendas can be mutually informing and transformative. The collection also helped generate a spate of single-country monographs, including Kanaaneh's *Birthing the Nation* about Palestinians in Israel (2002), Kahn's *Reproducing Jews: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception in Israel* (2000), Rivkin-Fish's *Women's Health in Post-Soviet Russia* (2005), Van Hollen's *Birth on the Threshold* (2003), Elizabeth Krause's *A Crisis of Births* (2004), Greenhalgh's account of science and reproductive policy in China (2008), Kligman's work on abortion policy in Ceaușescu's Romania (1998), Paxson's on family planning in urban Greece (2004), and Maternowska and Farmer's on poverty and population politics in Haiti (2006). These monographs are among the outstanding works that have added depth to our understanding of the ways in which reproductive processes are shaped through the confluence of historical, political economic, and social structural forces. Still, for the most part, they do not problematize globalization as a concept, explore methodological dilemmas associated with global ethnography, or examine the impact of global processes in concert with state policies for reproduction, as do the chapters in this book.

Since publication of Ginsburg and Rapp's collection, dazzling new developments have occurred in the field of reproduction, most notably a proliferation in technologies for assisted reproduction, far more sophisticated surrogacy practices, and a vast expansion of techniques to evaluate the health

of a developing fetus and monitor childbirth. Growing movements promoting midwifery and more natural and lower-tech deliveries have arisen in counterreaction. Other important bodies of research on fetal subjectivity, DNA paternity testing, the consequences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the dramatic growth of gay and lesbian families have also appeared (for a review see Sargent and Gulbas 2010).

At the heart of much of the earlier research was the insight that reproductive relations can generate conflict at every level of a society—from the cohabitating couple to contested efforts to enact state regulations and policies (Petchesky 1984; Browner 1986). As Kligman so eloquently writes:

That reproduction has been politicized in all societies in one way or another is hardly surprising: reproduction provides the means by which individuals and collectivities ensure their continuity. . . . [Moreover] reproduction is fundamentally associated with identity: that of “the nation” as the “imagined community” that the state serves and protects, and over which it exercises authority; or that of the family and the lineage. . . . In view of the multiple interests and values attached to reproduction it is understandable that . . . individual, familial, and political interests in reproduction differ so dramatically. . . . [Reproductive] issues constitute a focus for contestation within societies as well as between them. (Kligman 1998, 5)

While a significant body of anthropological research on reproduction became increasingly more attentive to the political dynamics that inherently shape reproductive relations, relatively little anthropological attention has focused directly on the presence and role of the state (Greenhalgh 2003, 197). Instead research on this subject has generally been conducted by policy experts and demographers who tend toward top-down analyses of population as a vast field of power (for some exceptions, see Morsy 1995; Kligman 1998; Bledsoe 2002; Kanaaneh 2002; Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005). Furthermore, scholarly interest in the dramatic implications of globalization processes has marginalized research on the continued importance of the state in the management of reproduction. The authors in this collection seek to reinvigorate debates about the nature and consequences of these mutually reinforcing processes.

The chapters also build on earlier work to explicate how diverse political agendas may be served through reproduction. For instance, via negotiation

or active protest, actors can establish new relationships between a state and its residents; they can redefine the categories by which inhabitants are classified or enumerated; reconstitute the political legitimacy of the state; redefine the category of nation with regard to which groups are included and excluded from it; and accept or deny women as particular types of political actors (Gal and Kligman 2000; see also Rivkin-Fish 2003).

Chapters by Carolyn Sargent and Carole Browner illustrate some of these dynamic issues. Sargent shows that reproduction among West African immigrants to France can produce multiple areas of conflict between spouses, among potentially rivalrous co-wives in polygamous marriages, between migrants in France and their families in West Africa, and between the migrant and biomedical communities. Browner analyzes the ambivalent reactions of pregnant recent immigrants from Mexico to California's state-mandated program of fetal diagnosis and reveals the immense "wild card" influence of untrained interpreters in these women's amniocentesis decisions. These two studies illuminate the range of broad structural factors and local, state, and global politics and policies that shape the everyday reproductive experiences of particular immigrant groups.

Similarly, Caroline Bledsoe and Papa Sow examine the impact of global humanitarian conventions, in this case, "family reunification" policies, on local reproductive life among African immigrants in Germany and Spain. They argue that in an age of transnationalism, attempts by immigrants to maintain family ties across national boundaries have drawn insufficient scholarly attention. Their chapter is a case study of how restrictive and contradictory family reunification requirements are increasingly shaping marital relations, reproductive decisions, and ultimately fertility patterns in some immigrant populations, as reproduction becomes one element in "immigration battlegrounds" that at once involve family, national, and global players.

Conceptualizing the Global, the State, and the Local

Intrinsic to global processes are reciprocal connections and consequent interactions across time and space. Accordingly, studying reproduction as a global process involves recognizing that the concepts of individual, local, state, and the global are mutually constituent forces that must be operationalized in relation to one another—and that these definitions are contingent on the specific topic, setting, and nature of the research in question.

To orient the reader and set the stage for our ethnographic chapters, we briefly define these concepts, as they will be used in this collection. We begin with globalization and its relevant constituent dimensions: global ethnography and the global assemblage. We then consider the concepts of the state, the local, and the individual, along with some productive intellectual frameworks for disarticulating their interrelationships, notably the concept of agency, practice theory, and co-production theory.

Globalization

Globalization is the term conventionally used to describe the movements—or flows—of information, products, commodities, capital, and people across national boundaries. Academics continue to debate the nature, origins, and consequences of these processes; whether on balance the outcomes are positive, negative, or both; and if it is even meaningful to ponder such questions. Anthropologists have been especially critical of the view that these movements are unitary processes with singular outcomes and the corollary that any global process will inevitably result in homogenization. Yet many consider the converse just as problematic: local formations are so unique, diverse, and particular that each can be understood only in its own terms. Stacy Pigg and Vincanne Adams offer a constructive exit from this conundrum: “It is necessary to replace vague, monolithic, and often hyperbolic references to the global with a more measured and empirical curiosity about myriad ‘global projects’ as specific, traceable networks of connection and exchange [which] would enable us to understand the effects of these networks on the people caught up in them (or bypassed by them)” (2005, 10).

Chapters in this collection adopt this more nuanced and situated perspective in their analyses of the making and remaking of individuals and social groups as they exercise diverse forms of agency in their everyday movements, relations, and shifting, competing agendas (Tsing 2000, 330). The specific issues that concern us are how global flows of people, technologies, and political agendas shape reproduction: for instance, how gender politics play out in reproductive arenas; how the reproductive behavior of immigrants comes to mirror that of women in a host society; and how state politics, policies, and institutions, which may at times be forged in the contexts of broader global political dynamics or processes, produce citizens who approximate certain ideal and idealized criteria (e.g., bearing children born without anomalies, pro- and antinatalist policies for different social

groups, family “reunification” immigration policies, etc.). Chapters by Fonseca, Chen, and Gutmann, among others, address these issues.

Global Ethnography

Globalization studies are often criticized for being ethnographically thin, primarily because of the difficulties associated with conceptualizing and dealing with the intricate webs of articulations and disarticulations that exist between global, state, regional, and local levels (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Burawoy 2000a, 2000b). The authors in this collection consider whether (and if so, how) standard ethnographic approaches (by which we mean the attempt to understand another lifeworld using the self as the main data-collecting instrument) can still be relevant in studying global processes of reproduction. Sherry Ortner has constructively argued that to the extent that the researcher maintains a commitment to producing understanding through richness, texture, and detail rather than parsimony, refinement, and mathematical elegance, “thickness” can remain at the heart of ethnographic research on global issues (1995, 173).

Still, researchers have been challenged to find ways to adapt standard ethnographic approaches developed to study territorially based social and political units (i.e., state, community, family) to contemporary globalized social life, where territorially based units are still meaningful but are not the only ones of consequence. Michael Burawoy offers the concept of *global ethnography* as a means toward advancing ethnographic studies beyond the boundaries of space and time. He urges ethnographers to investigate the constant movements of subjects, commodities, currencies, images, and technologies in relation to one another and to do so by incorporating perspectives “from singular but connected sites” (2000b, 4–5). Susan Erikson characterizes this type of ethnographic research as “iterative, involving a kind of snowball sampling of sites rather than of populations” (Erikson, this volume). Such a research strategy starts with human experiences, as defined in part by their spatial and temporal dimensions, such as regional migration patterns. These are then examined in the contexts of other levels of analysis (e.g., state, global) and particular domains—in our case, reproduction. Sites, then, take on relevance not necessarily in and of themselves but principally as manifestations of lived experience.

The promise of global ethnography is that it can provide a means to move beyond the static binaries of individual-social, local-global, structure-

agency, structure-event, habitus-practice, subjectivity-objectivity, macro-micro, and so on, to a deeper and richer understanding. In addition, global ethnography offers a framework for examining tensions among state institutions and policies; individual, family, and community practices; and agency in the sense of initiatives, negotiation, complicity, and opposition. For the purposes of this collection, a global ethnographic approach offers insight into emergent social issues linked to macro-level demographic and other social policies and agendas, and reproduction, reproductive health, and reproductive rights initiatives.

Our broadest aims, then, are to articulate the connections among agency, structure, family, politics, and economy within the multiple dimensionalities of local, national, and global formations. Susan Erikson considers these linkages in her chapter on prenatal care and ultrasound imaging in Germany. She asks whether anthropologists can produce ethnographic narratives that are also global in scope and whether it is possible to transcend the conventional local-global binary. Her subtle analyses of women's lived experiences of pregnancy also suggest how anthropologists might reconceptualize ethnography to better capture the relationship between structure and agency. Linda Whiteford and Aimee Eden offer a rare and compelling analysis of the challenges faced by aid workers seeking to assist displaced women in need of humanitarian assistance. They illuminate the role of global forces in contexts where the authority of the state is nebulous at best, revealing the true magnitude of displaced women's reproductive health needs and how and why they might be either ignored or explicitly opposed in global humanitarian policies.

Ellen Gruenbaum draws on more than thirty years of research in the Sudan to examine the oftentimes paradoxical and contradictory interactions among global, state, and local discourses concerning female genital cutting (FGC) and the impact of these discourses on the forms and prevalence of such practices. She shows how the rhetoric of "eradication"—a term that robs social actors of their agency—reflects globalizing influences of Western feminism, public health, and human rights movements, all of which seek to free women and girls from harmful interventions. Yet global public health agendas also resonate with local struggles for change, thus refuting any notion of women's passivity with regard to the perpetuation of FGC. Gruenbaum's chapter reveals the multiplicity of ways that local orientations to FGC reflect these dynamics, even as they generate new perspectives and practices.

Global Assemblage

In employing global ethnographic techniques to investigate globalization processes, the concept of the *global assemblage* has been productive. A global assemblage is a collection of heterogeneous elements characterized by contingency, structure, organization, and change that reflect the manifestations, tensions, and contradictions intrinsic to global processes. Following Stephen Collier and Aihwa Ong, we define a global assemblage as “the convergence of scientific practices, material structures, administrative routines, value systems, legal regimes,” and technologies of the self grouped together for purposes of inquiry (Collier and Ong 2003, 421). Examples of constituent elements include NGOs and multilateral donor agencies; treaties regulating population flows of refugees and migrants; and governance structures, global management practices, and transnational corporations, such as the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries. Fluidity and open-endedness are essential features of the global assemblage, which references emergent forms rather than “a progression to some fixed state or new structural formation” (423; see also Fonseca, this book).

The concept of the global assemblage can be constructively employed in global ethnographic studies of reproduction because it can accommodate the partial, contingent, unstable, situated, and heterogeneous elements that constitute what Margaret Lock has termed “local biologies” (Lock 2001). Aditya Bharadwaj adds that it is in new, emerging, and dispersed biotechnological assemblages that “ethical ideologies, governance protocols, ‘free’ markets, venture capital, and geopolitical cultures of scientific research and application” intermingle (Bharadwaj, this book). Additional key features of global assemblages that serve to conceptualize links between reproduction and globalization processes include the commodification of the body and its parts, the manipulation of fertility, and transnational commerce in reproductive materials.

Marcia Inhorn’s chapter, for example, examines the global movements of infertile women and men in pursuit of assisted reproductive technologies (ART). Based on ethnographic research in Egypt, Lebanon, and Arab America, she explores the political, social, and cultural factors that motivate this type of reproductive tourism. Chapters by Lisa Richey and Cecilia Van Hollen also examine global biotechnology flows and body commodification. Lisa Richey’s study of antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS in a township

clinic in South Africa demonstrates the need for a genuinely integrated global concept of reproductive health that takes into account, among other things, the often contentious set of issues associated with efforts to integrate family planning technologies into HIV/AIDS treatment clinic protocols. Van Hollen, in also addressing the effects of HIV/AIDS on reproductive health, examines how globalizing policies and technologies intersect with local structures of kinship and marriage and with the organization of South Indian medical practices. The three case studies she offers of local programs designed to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission vividly document the stigma and discrimination that seropositive women endure and the strategies they employ to pragmatically negotiate despite their stigmatized status.

The State

Anthropologists' efforts to formulate typologies of social organization have often yielded static and reified conceptualizations of *the state*. In reality, the term refers to a range of types of central governments whose scales, institutions, and forms of statecraft may differ vastly and may also vary in terms of their motivations for exercising power and integrating or excluding people (Covey 2007). Research on reproduction as a global process must therefore take into account the actual range of variation in state forms and processes (e.g., peripheral, central, weak, strong, absent, bounded, flexible), as well as the implications of this variation for lived experience. Chapters by Bledsoe and Sow, Chen, Sargent, and Van Hollen clearly illustrate this important point.

Claudia Fonseca further illustrates the diversity of ways that central state governments exercise power in the area of reproduction, and some of the factors that may limit their ability to do so. Fonseca presents the intriguing case of the astonishing popularity of DNA paternity testing in Brazil, offered by the government at no cost to a wide range of potential fathers. She traces the mix of gendered politics, national judicial policies, and transnational connections that are implicated in the routinization of DNA paternity tests in that nation-state.

Yet, despite significant variability in many particulars, states possess certain universal features. In addition to enumerating populations, one of the most significant functions of the modern state lies in its creation of cultural identities. James Scott refers to this as “the state’s attempt to make a

society legible,” which he sees as taking varied forms, most associated with what he classifies under the category of high modernism: “The builders of the modern nation-state do not merely describe, observe, and map; they strive to shape a people and landscape that will fit these techniques of observation” (Scott 1998, 82; in this volume, see the chapters by Bledsoe and Sow, Browner, Chen, Erikson, Richey, and Sargent for illustrations). One principal means for achieving this is the census, whose purpose is not only to represent a state’s aggregate populations but also to do so according to specific identity criteria (Kertzer and Arel 2002). Census practices enable states to aggregate information about social conditions while simultaneously developing empirically based plans for dealing with them. Michel Foucault regarded such practices as essential to the emergence of the modern state, in which populations are managed through increasingly sophisticated techniques of surveillance (Foucault 1977; 1978, 139–46).

A related core function of the modern state is protecting the health of its citizens. One of the ways this is accomplished is by establishing infrastructures and technologies for controlling the spread of disease and “producing sanitary citizens” (Briggs 2003, 288; see also Padilla, Sargent, Browner, this volume). Toward this end, state ideologies are deployed to encourage or impel immigrants and ethnic minority communities to adopt the lifestyles and values of the dominant society, at the same time as bodies and domestic spaces become identified as appropriate domains for such intervention. Efforts to control reproduction are an iconic example of these processes, as is illustrated in chapters by Chen, Gutmann, and Bledsoe and Sow, among others.

Whether the relationship between states and their citizens in contemporary society has assumed a different character than in the past has been of concern to social analysts like Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas (Rose and Novas 2005; see also Petryna 2002). They suggest that advances in science, technology, and medicine, along with the complicated ethical dilemmas these advances can entail, require an educated and informed public of “biological citizens.” In their view, biological citizens are characterized by particular types of subjectivities rooted in biological concepts and categories (e.g., regarding oneself as having a hereditary disposition for a particular disease or a certain specific kind of vulnerability to stress), and accordingly that the language with which individuals understand and represent them-

selves has become increasingly biological. According to Rose and Novas, these processes involve more than just changing subjectivities: they are also affecting how persons are understood by a wide range of authorities, including political, medical, and legal authorities, and even potential employers and insurance companies. Still, for now the relevance of the concept of biological citizen for different groups in any given society will necessarily vary, in that those most apt to perceive themselves in biological terms are generally educated, literate residents of industrialized nation-states. This, then, raises the intriguing question of how other groups (e.g., undocumented migrants relying on interpreters; or persons with little or no formal education) come to adopt and employ whole or partial representations of the biological subject based on popular discourse, interpretations of hearsay, and the like. Chapters by Richey, Fonseca, and Browner consider these dynamics in the global contexts of reproduction and reproductive health.

The Local

Just as the concepts of globalization and the state are often used in broad, imprecise ways, the same is true of *the local*—loosely deployed to encompass everything from conjugal intimacy to community politics (Pigg and Adams 2005). Authors in this collection argue that to better understand the local, the place to begin is with the lived experience of actual individuals—women and men—and from there to scale up to families, households, and domestic groups, and continue on to larger configurations including villages, neighborhoods, immigrant collectivities, refugee settlements, hospitals and clinics, and so on, and back again.

Mark Padilla's chapter is especially useful in this regard. He deconstructs some of the core processes through which social and contextual features of regions or spaces shape masculinity, and reveals ways that these "regional" masculinities may contribute to HIV/STI risks. In the course of ethnographic research among men who exchange sex for money in two cities in the Dominican Republic, Padilla discovered the limitations imposed by an overly bounded notion of the local in a context where a significant proportion of men migrate across Caribbean tourist sites in search of income. He develops a provocative model to move beyond population-based thinking in global reproductive health research that accommodates transnational migration, transformations in local economies, and shifting gender relations. Ethnographically, Padilla unpacks the set of specific meanings of the local as it is

linked to regional variations that in turn produce reproductive and sexual health vulnerabilities among a group of men and their male and female sexual partners.

Agency and the Individual

Core problematics that concern us here are the nature of the individual in the context of globalization, the need for a theory of identity in this regard, and further how to conceptualize human agency in global anthropological studies of reproduction. Contemporary social theorists agree that agency is a fundamental human attribute (Sewell 1992). Without offering an exhaustive review of the many efforts to define the concept, for our current purposes, we define *agency* as the socioculturally mediated capacity to act. Broadly speaking, the term has been used to imply two different types of meanings: intentionality on the one hand and the exercise of power on the other. Interest in agency emerged largely in response to the limitations of a body of social theory that construed human behavior as shaped and defined by external constraint (Barnard 2000).

Most conceptualizations of agency assume an individual actor characterized by self-reflection and the capacity to engage in the pursuit of goals (Ahearn 2001, but see Beldsoe's chapter for a discussion of social agency). Purnima Mankekar goes one step further to regard agency as "the ability to actively engage with, appropriate, challenge, or subvert" dominant discourses (Mankekar 1999). It is also the case that the constraints that bind people can become sources of creativity and transformation. Although many anthropologists have uncritically equated agency with empowerment, in reality exercising agency does not necessarily produce an unequivocally positive outcome (Van Hollen 2007; Lock and Kaufert 1998). Strathern and Ong have each also added important complexity to the agency concept by offering instances in which individuals' actions may further the interests of a larger group while undermining their own (Strathern 1988; Ong 1990). Finally, in what sense is the term *agency* even meaningful when the very acts in question, although "agentive," may be destructive or rooted in the exigencies of survival (e.g., "survival sex," pressures to produce only sons, aborting female fetuses)? This last point has special relevance in research on women's lived experience including research on reproduction, in that their ability to act may be constrained by family obligations to a far greater extent than men's.

Despite its widespread use, the concept of agency has been critiqued for

excessively reifying the individual (for a review, see Wardlow 2006, 6–8) and as being a product of Euro-American feminist preoccupations with agency as resistance. In addition, Mahmood, among others, reminds us that in addition to the more obvious and better-studied politically subversive forms that agency can take, we must not ignore its multiple other manifestations (2005, 153). We further take up this point later in the introduction. Moreover, integral for our purposes is to identify how the crosscutting dimensions of gender and reproduction complicate efforts to understand concepts of agency and to productively use them in global ethnographic analyses. Regardless of its definition, it is axiomatic that acts termed *agentive* are both culturally constituted and constrained and that in most societies those constraints take on different valences based on the individual's gender.

Sherry Ortner identified additional difficulties involved in conceptualizing the individual, the nature of identity, subjectivity, and agency within a global ethnographic framework. To her mind, the challenges are to find the means to “picture indissoluble formations of structurally embedded agency and intention-filled structures, to recognize the ways in which the subject is part of larger social and cultural webs, and in which social and cultural ‘systems’ are predicated upon human desires and projects” (Ortner 1996, 12). Following Anthony Giddens (1979), Marshall Sahlins (1978), and Ortner (2005), we regard humans as knowledgeable and intentional subjects with the capacity to reflect on their own actions, even as they perceive and experience larger forces impinging on them.

Pierre Bourdieu proposed a theory of identity and a framework for understanding individual subjectivity through his concept of habitus. Bourdieu, however, regarded individuals as principally the products of their class and collective history and not autonomous or self-generating to any meaningful extent. Moreover, Bourdieu's conceptualization cannot easily account for hybrid identities and shifting forms of subjectivity derived from experience (Reed-Dahanay 2005, 156).

Practice theory promises to move researchers beyond the arbitrary and sterile polarizations of structural determinists such as Karl Marx, Talcott Parsons, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, and pure constructivists like Louis Althusser, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault. The pure constructivists regarded subjects as constructed by—and subjected to—historical, political, and other societal-level forces that provided the contexts for, and terms of, their survival. But neither the structural determinists nor the pure constructivists

were especially interested in how actors enacted, resisted, or sought to negotiate change in their particular worlds. In contrast, a practice framework posits that although by their very nature sociocultural systems strive to constrain human action, that structure is itself the product of human action, which inevitably reproduces itself, transforms itself, or does both (Ortner 2006, chap. 6). Moreover, Jennifer Johnson-Hanks observes, “practice theory . . . proposes a constant interplay between structure and subjective disposition such that social structures are embodied by social actors as generative principles of action which guide actors’ engagements with the world” (2006, 21). Practice theory, with its capacity to mediate rigid structuralist and extreme constructivist representations of social life, provides a useful theoretical framework for reading the chapters in this collection.

Deeper reflection on the concepts of agency, pragmatism, and resistance leads us to posit the human body as a uniquely rich domain for interrogating the dynamic interrelationships between individuals and larger structures (Browner, Ortiz de Montellano, and Rubel 1988). Yet as others have usefully observed, such a focus does not mean that we regard the body as “a privileged site . . . a supposedly evident and stable platform from which we can unproblematically speak” (Probyn 1991, 111, in Lester 1997, 483). Far from reifying the body as a source of absolute truth, the authors in this collection take it to be dynamically constructed by means of dominant discourses and societal constraints and structures. At the same time, we should not forget that the concept of the body does indeed reference actual physical bodies.

Several of our contributors further demonstrate the value of broadening the concept of site to refer not just to a geographic place but also to a subject (or body) where multiple social, cultural, political, and economic agendas converge. Matthew Gutmann’s chapter is one of several to do so and also to consider reproduction and men (see also Browner, Padilla, Inhorn, Bledsoe and Sow, Fonseca). Using the example of Oaxaca, Mexico, Gutmann analyzes the global pharmaceutical industry, multilateral NGOs, national population control agencies, and the Catholic Church to reveal when, how, and why men became both excluded and absolved from responsibility for preventing pregnancy. His chapter is an exemplary case study of how interactions between state policies and institutions on the one hand and the global political economy on the other can play out in couples’ intimate reproductive behaviors in a particular place and time.

Aditya Bharadwaj takes a different but related tack in his examination of

India's biocommerce in embryonic stem cells and his analysis of some of the consequences for women whose embryos are harvested and whose bodies can, in this way, be said to be serving the interests of the Indian state. His chapter illustrates the larger point that in today's world, body parts of poor people that would otherwise be considered expendable take on new meaning and value when profit can be derived from them. Although the Indian state has thus far avoided directly addressing the moral and public policy issues surrounding the commercialization of bioproducts like embryonic stem cells, Bharadwaj argues that the state cannot continue to do so indefinitely.

Co-production Theory

Several chapters also draw on *co-production theory* in developing their analytical frameworks (Jasanoff 2004; Thompson 2005). First developed by researchers in science and technology studies (Latour 1993; Lynch and Woolgar 1990; Latour and Woolgar 1979), co-production theory has been moving into other fields of inquiry, including medical anthropology, because co-production offers unique insights and tools for analyzing experience and the production of meaning across a broad range of contemporary global domains. Its main premise is to regard the natural and social orders as being produced together, in other words, as “co-produced.”

Like practice theory, co-production theory is at its core deeply concerned with explicating links between culture, knowledge, and power. Through insights that derive from a rich synthesis of intellectual traditions, including history, politics, economics, philosophy, law, sociology, and anthropology, co-production theory offers a methodology for analyzing the nature and practice of science and technology at given historical, social, and cultural moments. As such it can offer tools for analyzing the nature of globalization processes in the modern historical period and, for our purposes, how the organization of reproductive practices takes a particular form (Cambrosio, Young, and Lock 2000).

Co-production theory assumes that any expert system of knowledge is in no way a detached, separate, or value-free reality but is fundamentally shaped by, and is itself capable of, shaping all that is cultural and social, including norms, conventions, identities, theories, and institutions (Hilgartner 1995; Rabinow 1999b). It follows, then, that the four main sites for co-production involve the creation of identities, institutions, discourses, and representations (Jasanoff 2004, 3, 7). It is important to remember, however,

that co-production is not mainly about ideas, ideologies, and institutions but also about the creation and production of technologies and their associated practices. This is illustrated in Bharadwaj's chapter on India's embryonic stem cell industry, Fonseca's account of DNA paternity testing in Brazil, and Browner's contribution on the culture and politics of amniocentesis acceptance by a group of Mexican immigrant women in the United States.

Conclusion

The dialectical nature of the relationship between the individual and broader contexts and structures inevitably raises questions about subjectivity and intentionality. In acknowledging the fluidity of the processes associated with globalized forms of social life, we remain committed to the explanatory value of nuanced notions of structure(s) as they are transformed by human beings continually evaluating their circumstances, creating and pursuing strategies, and negotiating within and around larger constraints. It is by formulating and reenacting social projects that individuals sustain and transform themselves and their worlds. The challenge—and the reward—of global ethnographies of reproduction such as those in this collection, lie in their meticulous representation and analysis of these processes.