Love and Violence in Sierra Leone

In the decades following the civil war that took place in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002, new laws were passed to rebuild the state and to prevent rape, teenage pregnancy, and domestic violence. In this ethnography, Luisa T. Schneider explores the intricate semantic, empirical, and socio-legal dynamics of love and violence in contemporary Sierra Leone, challenging the oversimplification of these phenomena. Schneider underscores the limitations of imposing singular interpretations on love and violence, advocating for a nuanced, phenomenological approach that reveals how state and institutional attempts to regulate violence and loving relationships without considering local lived experience and meaning-making can yield negative consequences. By analysing how love and violence are historically constituted, experienced, and (re)produced across personal, social, legal, and political levels, this book critiques the construction of violence within gendered sexual relationships by development agencies, lawmakers, and politicians, urging them to engage with local knowledge and experience.

Luisa T. Schneider is a sociocultural anthropologist specialising in intimacy, violence, and law. Schneider is Assistant Professor at VU Amsterdam, a published academic and public author, and advisor to policy-makers and practitioners. She has conducted ethnographic research that emphasises the importance of local knowledge for over ten years.

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Love and Violence in Sierra Leone

Mediating Intimacy after Conflict

Luisa T. Schneider
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

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