The sociology of gender in Southern perspective

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Abstract

In its founding generations, sociology was greatly concerned with gender, as part of its theorizing of the world of colonialism and empire. Sociology then focused on the global metropole, so its analysis of gender in the decades since the Women's Liberation movement has been developed in a Northern container. This can now change, if the extraversion of sociology around the global South can be overcome. The thematics of gender analyses in the periphery highlight historical processes of the formation and disruption of gender orders, dealing with issues of violence and land. The work of a number of gender theorists and researchers from the South is discussed. The material conditions of knowledge formation in developing countries have to be recognized, as well as the differing ways intellectuals in the South handle influences from the metropole. New issues have emerged in the sociology of gender as a neoliberal world order has taken shape, producing new patterns of masculinized power as well as pathways of change for women.

Introduction

Gender research is, today, one of the major fields of sociology, both academic and applied. The sociology of gender has had significant impact in the education and health sectors, in violence prevention, antidiscrimination and equal opportunity policy. As an organized field, however, it is not yet strongly influenced by the postcolonial revolution in knowledge.

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In this article I explore how the sociology of gender can be developed in the light of Southern theory and Southern research. This is not a small task, not a matter of creating a postcolonial corner inside the sociology of gender. The issue concerns foundational concepts and methods, global relations of power and centrality in knowledge production. The analysis must be grounded in an understanding of the history of sociology, but also needs to engage contemporary global developments in feminist thought.

I start with the changing place of gender issues in the discipline of sociology, how sociology in the global North has tried to theorize global issues, and how both metropole and periphery are embedded in a global economy of knowledge. I then turn to intellectual work in the global South, first considering some of the distinctive themes that emerge from gender analyses in the periphery, then sociology-of-knowledge questions about the production of knowledge and configurations of knowledge. Finally, I discuss the view of gender relations on a world scale that is tentatively emerging from these starting-points.

I am conscious that this article addresses a vast terrain and can offer only a few details from a rich literature. The material is drawn mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Latin America, India and Australia; a longer treatment would also consider gender analysis in the Arab world, East and Central Asia, and more. I hope this is enough to document the need for change and show some of the directions of movement.

Sociology and gender

The place of gender in sociology is debated, and has changed. A quarter-century ago, US colleagues spoke of 'the missing feminist revolution in sociology' (Stacey and Thorne, 1985). The revolution at that time was not so much missing as refused. Sociology clung to a foundation story in which the discipline was invented by a group of white male founding fathers preoccupied with European modernity and its experience of industrialization, class conflict, alienation and bureaucracy. There was little place for gender in this story.

It is true that white men were central to the creation of sociology as a cultural project. But the group was larger than the Marx–Weber–and–Durkheim foundation myth usually acknowledges, and its history is much more interesting. Nineteenth-century sociology in the global metropole drew much of its data from the colonized world. It had a great deal to say about gender and race. In fact these were key issues for the first two generations of sociologists.

These issues were seen, however, from the point of view of the colonizing powers. The discipline of sociology was constructed as a debate among the intellectuals of the imperial centre about the world that global imperialism had encountered or created. In Comtean sociology, as I will call the dominant form of the discipline *c.* 1850–1920, difference between the metropole and the colony, interpreted as 'progress', was sociology's key organizing concept.

The status of women was commonly seen as an index of progress. The evolution of sexuality, household and marriage was a theme of great interest to Comtean sociologists. Spencer, whose *Principles of Sociology* (1893–1896 [1874–1877]) was probably the most influential sociology book ever written, wrote at length about 'domestic institutions', meaning family, kinship and the status of women. Ward, the most prominent

among the founders of North American sociology, wrote in *Dynamic Sociology* (1897) at even greater length about sexuality, gender differences and 'sexuo-social inequalities'. Engels' interest in the 'origin of the family' is famous. Sumner's *Folkways* (1934 [1906]) was stuffed with details about kinship, sex, marriage, prostitution and incest; and more examples could be given.

Northern sociology's twentieth-century history involved a partial retreat from imperial concerns and a sharp retreat from the Comtean framework, to focus on social difference and social conflict within the society of the metropole (Connell, 2007). It was a more restricted version of sociology, with its research technology of censuses, surveys and urban ethnography, that was exported to the rest of the world during the Cold War era, and became the basis of academic and policy sociology as we know it today.

In the mainstream sociology of the mid-twentieth century, gender issues were mainly understood as questions about the domestic order inside metropolitan society. This was the era of 'sex role' concepts, as understood in the USA by Parsons (Parsons and Bales, 1956) and Komarovsky (1950). Change in gender norms was certainly recognized by these writers. But their conceptualization of sex roles was addressed to the functioning and normative integration of Northern society, understood as a closed system. The first phase of feminist sociology in the 1970s offered a more critical evaluation of norms and roles, now seen as restrictions on women's freedom, without immediately changing the conceptual framework.

Nevertheless sociology under the impact of the women's movement paid more attention to gender issues than most academic disciplines. Gender is currently one of the largest fields of empirical sociology. Journals such as *Gender and Society* publish a stream of research on the gendered division of social labour, gender patterns in culture, gendered institutions, gender identities, sexuality, household structures, and more. Sociology became the main base for theoretical analysis of gender relations as one of the main structures of the societies we live in (Barrett, 1980; Walby, 2009).

In the last generation, the themes of the sociology of gender have continued to evolve. Studies of sexuality have become more prominent, influenced by the urgency of the struggle with HIV/AIDS (Dowsett, 1996). The appalling scale of gender-based violence around the world has become clear, though we are still far from having adequate theories about this (Small Arms Survey, 2011). Gender patterns in schooling, the subject of several waves of public controversy, have become increasingly important issues in the sociology of education. Under the influence of post-structural thought since the 1980s, the discursive construction of gender identity, and the instability of gender identity, have become major themes. In this context, questions about patterns of embodiment displaced the old nature/nurture quarrel.

Sociology as a discipline has been greatly enriched by this work. The injustice, violence and distress that unequal gender relations produce are widely recognized as key concerns for applied sociology. The development of the sociology of gender over the last generation is, all things considered, a notable achievement of progressive social thought.

It must be said, however, that the sociology of gender has developed essentially within the framework of twentieth-century Northern sociology, with its post-Comtean preoccupation with the society of the global metropole. Northern theorists provide the

field's leading ideas and Northern methodologists its main research techniques. This situation is in urgent need of change.

Northern gender analysis and the global dimension

The situation has already begun to change. In the last 20 years it has become normal for Anglophone gender scholarship to acknowledge global issues. The number of papers recorded in the ISI Web of Knowledge database whose titles or abstracts combined the term 'globalization' with a gender term rose 10-fold between the early 1990s and early 2000s. Collections of ethnographic, historical or thematic studies from around the periphery such as *Women's Activism and Globalization* (Naples and Desai, 2002) are now an established publishing genre. So are integrative international surveys of knowledge, such as *Gender, Work and Economy: Unpacking the Global Economy* (Gottfried, 2013).

Influential sociologists in the metropole now try to formulate their conceptual analyses at a world level. Notable examples are Chow's (2003) argument on the gendered character of globalization; Acker's (2004) sociology of the gender processes in global capitalism; Unterhalter's (2007) global analysis of gender and social justice in education; and Cockburn's (2010) analysis of gender relations, militarization and war.

This scholarship on global gender is illuminating and productive, but contains a deep-seated problem. Acker (2004: 17) refers to 'the mostly Western scholarship on gender and globalization', and – setting aside some doubts about the concept 'Western' – she is right. It isn't only that Europe and the United States publish most of the world's journals and that most of the articles in them are about Europe and the United States. Most scholarly gender analysis remains in the conceptual world of Marx, Foucault, de Beauvoir and Butler even when it is talking about sexuality in India, identity in Australia, migration in the Mediterranean or factories in Mexico.

If we look back into the history of gender research, it is clear that data acquired by European colonial conquest and postcolonial dependency have been very important to metropolitan theorists. Mohanty's famous essay 'Under Western eyes' (1991) revealed the colonial gaze that constructed a false image of the 'third world woman'. But even this understated the importance of knowledge from the periphery.

The colonized world provided raw material for metropolitan feminist debates about the origin of the family, matriarchy, the gender division of labour, the Oedipus complex, third genders, male violence and war, marriage and kinship, gender symbolism – and now, of course, globalization. Such pivotal feminist texts as Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), Rubin's 'The traffic in women' (1975) and Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) would be inconceivable without the colonial knowledge on which Freud, Lévi-Strauss and other mighty men of the metropole built their theories.

Gender analysis, then, is involved in a global political economy of knowledge. Global imperialism left no culture separate or intact, not even the culture of the imperialists. The colonial encounter, continuing as the encounter of contemporary communities with globalized power, is itself a massive source of social dynamics – including intellectual innovation.

This is the territory now being explored in a vigorous literature on the global dynamics of knowledge. The strands of this literature include research on Southern theory (Connell, 2007; Meekosha, 2011), alternative traditions in social science (Alatas, 2006; Patel, 2010), postcolonial sociology (Bhambra, 2007; Reuter and Villa, 2010), indigenous knowledge (Odora Hoppers, 2002), the psychology of liberation (Montero, 2007), decolonial thought (Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000), the decolonization of methodology (Smith, 1999) and more. In the context of this article it would be superfluous to discuss this whole terrain, but my analysis of the sociology of gender has a specific starting-point within it. This is the global sociology of knowledge developed by the Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji in *Endogenous Knowledge* (1997; see Connell, 2011).

Hountondji observes that imperialism created a global division of labour in the sciences, in which data were collected in the colonies and concentrated in the metropole, where theory was developed and the data were processed. This division of labour persisted after decolonization. The global periphery still exports data and imports applied science, the global metropole is still the centre of theory and methodology. An international circulation of knowledge workers accompanies the international flows of data, concepts and techniques. Workers from the periphery travel to the metropole for doctoral training, sabbaticals, conferences or better jobs; workers from the metropole frequently travel to the periphery to collect data, rarely to get advanced training or to learn theory.

One of the most striking parts of Hountondji's analysis concerns the attitude of knowledge workers in the global periphery resulting from this global structure. This attitude he calls 'extraversion' – being oriented to external sources of intellectual authority. Extraversion is seen in practices such as citing only metropolitan theorists, publishing preferentially in metropolitan journals, joining 'invisible colleges' centred in the metropole, and acting as native informants for metropolitan scientists who are interested in the periphery.

We can add to Hountondji's analysis the powerful influence of neoliberal politics and management. Neoliberal agendas are currently deepening extraversion by locking the universities of the periphery into market competition and global ranking systems – in which the elite universities of the United States and Europe always appear on top, defining the 'excellence' others must strive for. Scholars in the periphery are now under heavier pressure than ever to publish in metropolitan journals, gain recognition in the metropole and form partnerships with prestigious centres.

Extraversion in this sense is as widespread in gender studies as in other fields of knowledge. Metropolitan texts about gender are translated and read in the periphery, and treated as authorities. Gender researchers from the periphery travel to the metropole for qualifications and recognition. Whole frameworks, terrains of debate and problematics are liable to be imported.

A few examples may illustrate the point. The late Heleieth Saffioti's *A mulher na sociedade de classes* (1978 [1969]) was a towering achievement, yet shaped by structuralist Marxism from Paris. Not even *Subaltern Studies* was immune to extraversion: the journal's main attempt at gender theory, Tharu and Niranjana's 'Problems for a contemporary theory of gender' (1996), defines the problems of Indian feminist politics by applying postmodernist feminism from the metropole. Bhaskaran's lively *Made in India* (2004), treating sexual diversity, applies queer theory from the USA. The empirical core

of *Masculinities* (Connell, 1995) is Australian but its main theoretical sources are German, British and North American.

But there is always some friction between the intellectual perspectives created in the imperial centres, and the realities of society and culture in the colonized and postcolonial world. Nelly Richard (2004 [1993]), importing French postmodernist thought to feminism in Chile, notes that these ideas have to be 're-worked' in the periphery.

We could put this more strongly. The re-working requires a critique and transformation of the metropolitan frameworks themselves. The debates about decolonial thought, Southern theory, indigenous knowledge and postcolonial thought, though they have mostly not been gender-informed, are now vital resources for developing the sociology of gender.

Southern thematics for gender analysis

The necessary starting-point is imperialism itself. Gender dynamics take specific forms in colonial and postcolonial contexts because, as María Lugones (2007) states, they are interwoven with the dynamics of colonization and globalization. As Valentine Mudimbe (1994) has argued, the colonizing power, in order to establish itself, had to create a new society. It is important to register that the large majority of the world's people live in such societies with colonial, neocolonial and postcolonial histories. The global metropole is the exception, not the norm. Analysis informed by what Lugones has usefully called 'the coloniality of gender' should be the mainstream of the sociology of gender.

Recognition of the fact of colonization has already polarized postcolonial gender analysis. In reaction against Northern feminism, more exactly a simplified version of it, one school of thought asserts that 'gender' is itself a product of colonialism, imposed on societies which previously did not organize themselves in gendered ways. Perhaps the best-known example is Oyeronke Oyewumi's *The Invention of Women* (1997), which contrasts Western sex dichotomy with 'a Yoruba stance' that does not classify people on the basis of bodies. Accordingly, gender is not a structure of precolonial Yoruba society and 'women' does not exist as a social category. This argument has been criticized in Africa as both an inaccurate account of precolonial society, and as replacing an essentialism of bodies with an essentialism of culture that helps to legitimize postcolonial patriarchy (Bakare-Yusuf, 2003; Lewis, 2002). Powerful men in postcolonial regimes can, and do, fend off demands for gender equality by branding feminism as a neocolonial intrusion.

Uma Narayan (1998: 103), whose critique of cultural essentialism is exemplary, defends legitimate generalizations about gender: 'virtually every community is structured by relationships of gender that comprise specific forms of social, sexual, and economic subjection of women'. This view is complicated by research that shows precolonial conceptions of gender to be complex and structured differently from European conceptions. Thus Sylvia Marcos (1998), examining the metaphorical religious thought of Mesoamerican communities in surviving colonial-era documents, finds powerfully embodied conceptions that emphasize duality, integration and the absence of barriers. On the other hand, oral-history evidence from Aboriginal people and anthropologists about precolonial society in Australia points to ritual separation of women and men, as well as a marked gender division of labour, in that very different civilization (Berndt, 1974).

Whatever the precolonial situation, it was transformed by colonialism, and not gently. Gendered violence played a formative role in the shaping of colonial and postcolonial societies. Colonization itself was a gendered act, carried out by imperial workforces, overwhelmingly men, drawn from masculinized occupations such as soldiering and long-distance trade. The rape of women of colonized societies was a normal part of conquest. The colonial state was built as a power structure operated by men, based on continuing force. Brutality was built into colonial societies, whether they were settler colonies or colonies of exploitation. The level of gendered violence in postcolonial societies is now a central issue in global feminism, from international policy forums (Harcourt, 2009) to local research and action agendas – illustrated by the emphasis on gender violence in the women's studies programmes in Costa Rica (Cordero, 2008). Saffioti's (2004) later work paid close attention to the issue; she quotes survey data showing about half of Brazilian women have experienced gender-based violence.

In a powerful paper, Amina Mama (1997) recalls the violence of imperial patriarchy, the creation of colonial economies that marginalized women, and the gender dimension of the struggles for independence in Africa. Women widely supported the nationalist movements, but once in power, few of the nationalist regimes defended women's interests. With the economic crisis of the post-independence states that began in the 1970s, very harsh conditions were created for women, and high levels of violence against women became apparent.

Mama argues convincingly that the feminist strategies against gender violence developed in the metropole do not apply in this context, because these strategies presuppose a well-functioning state and a coherent gender order; neither of which is experienced by Black and working-class women in postcolonial Africa. Nina Laurie (2005) makes a similar point when discussing masculinity politics in the contemporary Andes, that research in the global South cannot presuppose a consolidated gender order. Jane Bennett (2008: 7) in South Africa describes the specificity of gender research in conditions where 'relative chaos, gross economic disparities, displacement, uncertainty and surprise' are the norm not the exception.

Gender analysis from the global South thus, in a sense, must invert the problematic of recent gender theory in the global North, where a deconstructionist agenda is hegemonic. In the colonial and postcolonial world the *making* of gender orders, or the attempts to make them, are central issues. Establishing colonial gender arrangements required, as well as formative violence, a sustained cultural and organizational effort on the part of the colonizers. This is rightly emphasized by Lugones (2007), though I think she is mistaken to describe gender arrangements as 'imposed' on the colonized. Active responses by the colonized were also involved; and the active responses by women of colonized societies are now well recognized in feminist historiography and indigenous critique (Moreton-Robinson, 2000).

Less recognized in most of the gender literature are the active responses also made by men. This issue is explored by Ashis Nandy, whose book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (1983) is a classic study of the social construction of masculinity. Nandy traces how the pressure of British conquest and the colonial regime re-shaped Indian culture, including its gender order. The response to this pressure called out specific elements of Indian tradition, over-valuing the *Kshatriya* or warrior category,

to justify essentially new patterns of masculinity in a modernizing process. Equally important, Nandy shows how the colonial encounter re-shaped models of masculinity among the colonizers. As the regime settled into a permanent governing structure during the nineteenth century, a distinctive culture emerged that exaggerated gender and age hierarchies. This produced a simplified, dominance-oriented, and often violent masculinity as the hegemonic pattern among the British, despising weakness, suspicious of emotion, concerned to draw and police rigid social boundaries.

More recently, the making of masculinities and negotiation of gender relations in colonial and postcolonial transitions has been the subject of intense research in southern Africa (Epstein et al., 2004; Morrell, 2001). This research goes far to establishing two important conclusions. The first is the sheer diversity of masculinities that are under construction at the same time in the one national territory. Postcolonial gender reality cannot be captured by generalized models of 'traditional' vs 'modern' manhood. The second is how intimately the making of masculinities is bound up with the vast and continuing transformations of postcolonial society as a whole. Gender is not off to the side in a cupboard of its own. It is enmeshed with the changing structure of power and shifts in the economy, the movement of populations and the creation of cities, the struggle against Apartheid and the 1990s lurch to neoliberalism, the institutional effects of mines, prisons, armies and education systems.

This illustrates a tendency in postcolonial gender analysis towards a sociological view of gender. Mara Viveros (2007) from Colombia, in a discussion of the concept of difference, argues that colonialism forged an integral link between gender and race that was not present in the global North (which has tended to treat these dimensions through concepts like 'intersectionality'). Fundamental themes in the gender studies programme of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (2009) are the sociocultural conditions constructing gender relations, women's visibilization, the social inequalities of sexuality and gender and public policy. Of course there are institutions with greater emphasis on philosophy and culture. But when we factor in the significance of development issues (Harcourt, 2009), there is a sense in which the sociological approach to gender as a structure of social relations is central to gender scholarship in the global South, in a way that is not true in the global North.

This can be seen, for instance, in Chilean discussions of voice and identity. Julieta Kirkwood's feminist classic *Ser política en Chile* (1986) concerns the establishment of women's political voice in twentieth-century Chile. This could be treated in terms of cultural identity, but it is not. A key step in Kirkwood's research was an interview study with women's movement activists under the dictatorship, and she constructs the history of Chilean feminism as a collective story of social struggle. The emergence of women as a political subject, in her narrative, was closely bound up with the features of a postcolonial political order, and the changing ways in which Chile's socioeconomic formation was articulated with the world economy and international politics. Sonia Montecino (2001) similarly emphasizes that gender identities are collective constructions, in their diversity; indeed, she suggests that an understanding of identity as emerging from social struggle is characteristic of Latin American thought.

As I have argued in *Southern Theory* (Connell, 2007), the issue of land is crucial in understanding colonial society, and this applies to gender relations. Marcia Langton

(1997), a leading Aboriginal intellectual in Australia, shows one dimension of this. Australian Aboriginal culture has been portrayed as patrilineal and patriarchal, but this account mainly comes from male anthropologists convinced of women's inferiority. Women have increasingly demonstrated that women's rights were embedded in precolonial land tenure systems. In the conditions of violent conquest, and the extreme pressure on most Aboriginal cultures that followed, this land-and-gender order was badly disrupted. Langton argues that it was women's traditions and ties to place – 'Grandmothers' law' – that were the more resilient, and proved crucial in holding Aboriginal society together. Older women thus became the key to social survival.

Land is also central to the analysis of gender relations in agricultural society in the Indian subcontinent by Bina Agarwal, whose *A Field of One's Own* (1994) is one of the great classics of modern gender analysis. Agarwal is professionally an economist, but *A Field of One's Own* is actually a rich interdisciplinary exploration of peasant society, involving regional and legal history, sociology of the family, studies of political movements, and more. Land is shown to be a crucial element in gender practices ranging from kinship alliance and inheritance to the constitution of patriarchal power structures. Agarwal documents a vigorous gender politics including collective mobilizations by women for land ownership and land use, and widespread, sometimes violent, resistance by men.

To argue there are common themes that emerge from Southern gender studies is not to imply there is a single Southern gender order. Very certainly, there is not – neither before nor after colonization. Indeed, recognition of the diversity of gender orders is an important consequence of the arguments of Southern feminists in forums such as the UN world conferences on women, from Mexico City in 1975 to Beijing in 1995. Critique of unexamined universalism in Northern gender theory has been a persistent theme in African feminist studies (Arnfred et al., 2004), and the arguments apply also within the global South.

Gender analysis from the global South therefore poses the question of diversity, the multiplicity of gender forms, not at the level of the individual, but at the level of the gender order and the dynamic of gender relations on a societal scale.

Conditions and configurations of knowledge

Thematics are one thing, practicalities another. One of the big differences between gender research in the global North and the global South is the scale of resources available for scholarship. There are some well-resourced universities in the periphery, such as the federal university system in Brazil, the elite universities in India, the 'sandstones' or 'Group of Eight' in Australia, the 'historically white' universities in South Africa and the National University of Singapore. Public investment in higher education, currently static or contracting in the North, has grown in China and Brazil especially. Smaller resources, multiplied, might still amount to a significant asset: across Africa, about 30 universities were teaching gender studies in the early 2000s (Mama, 2005).

None of this, however, is comparable to the scale and wealth of the higher education systems in Europe and the United States, the publishing industries of the metropole, the corporate and state-funded research centres (including census bureaux), and therefore

the workforce potentially engaged in gender research in the global North. With the crisis of the postcolonial developmental state and the advent of global neoliberalism, gender research in the South depends to a large degree on NGOs and development aid programmes. As Mama notes, the African university programmes have been struggling with contradictory demands, staff in need of qualifications and erratic institutional support. Continent-wide networks and capacity-building programmes have been created, but the situation is precarious.

The consequences for gender studies are significant. One of the most important is the framing of much gender research by economic development agendas. The 'women in development' movement of the 1970s, and the 'gender and development' framework that grew out of it, have been important in funding research and providing political legitimacy for gender studies. But the 'gender framework' in development work has usually been categorical, if not essentialist – treating 'women' as an undifferentiated natural category. NGO-based research is generally small-scale, focused on practical problems, and short-term; not a promising way to develop new perspectives. Dependence on aid funds means subordination to donor-driven agendas and established formulae which, as Desiree Lewis (2002) points out for African gender research, marginalizes critique and intellectual innovation. Teresa Valdés (2007) similarly speaks of a 'technification of gender knowledge' in the Southern cone countries of Latin America, as policy research tends to replace movement-based feminism.

These are among the bases of the extraversion of Southern intellectual work discussed earlier. The 'traffic in gender', to use Claudia de Lima Costa's (2006) witty phrase, is mainly from North to South.

Sometimes this is planned. In the early days of women's studies in China, for instance, the US model of women's studies was deliberately imported in the 1980s. In the absence of an autonomous women's movement, especially after the political crackdown of 1989, no other base for theory was available. Min Dongchao (2005) notes that research was at this stage only done if funded from outside, mainly from the United States; it had to be practical, and expressed in conceptual terms familiar to the donors.

Min also notes, however, that the women engaged in creating Chinese women's studies were conscious of major gaps between the historical experience of Chinese women and women in the global North. Costa (2006) points out a return traffic. For instance, French post-structuralism, so influential in Anglophone gender studies, was itself influenced by the experience of Francophone North Africa. She also notes the difficulties in translating concepts from one region to another. For instance the concept 'women of colour', important in challenging essentialism in US gender studies, makes little sense in other places; while the concept of revolutionary transformation of society, central in Julieta Kirkwood's thought, has little grip in the global North.

Cecília Sardenberg (2010) in Brazil has recently been exploring another way that Northern hegemony is contested. The language of 'women's empowerment' has recently spread in Brazil, in the context of development agendas – it is seen by many as World Bank jargon (though it originated in feminist activism). But it is possible to inflect such language in different ways. A group based at the Federal University of Bahia has been doing just that, rejecting liberal empowerment in favour of 'liberating empowerment' directed to transforming the gender order of patriarchal domination.

Northern wealth and power therefore do not necessarily produce intellectual domination. Nor does the critical response to Northern gender analysis have to be 'denunciatory' or engage in 'castigation', to use Lewis's (2007) terms. There can be constructive critical use of Northern thought, treating it as a resource rather than a framework, and moving ahead of it on the basis of Southern experience.

An example is a notable piece of sociological theorizing, 'On the category "gender": A theoretical-methodological introduction', published in 1992 in the *Revista Interamericana de Sociologia* by Teresita de Barbieri, a South American sociologist who settled in Mexico. This paper starts with feminist movements and their hypothesis that the subordination of women is a question of power, not nature. After reviewing a number of metropolitan feminist thinkers, especially Gayle Rubin, de Barbieri sets out a line of analysis centring on social control over women's reproductive power, and men's assertion of their rights over offspring. This commits her to a relational view of gender, though one in which biological capacities are at stake – it is not a disembodied or purely discursive view. De Barbieri sees the relationship between the cultural figures of the mother and the male head of household as the nucleus of gender relations in Latin American societies.

But she does not have a binary view of gender. Indeed, she emphasizes the significance of the family life cycle that gives a different social position to post-menopausal women. Drawing on Brazilian black feminist thought, she explores the interaction of gender with race and class in a stratified society. She further complicates the picture of the gender order by laying stress on relations between men, and the class and racial differences among women.

In explicit critique of the simplifications of metropolitan gender analysis, de Barbieri locates gender relations in the context of the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s, and the impact of global restructuring on the popular classes. The result is a sophisticated, structurally complex picture of the gender order; at least as diversified as, and notably more dynamic than, the intersectional model emerging in the metropole at the time this paper was published.

There are, however, problems that more strongly resist interaction with Northern categories of gender analysis. This can be seen in a fascinating study in historical sociology, Uma Chakravarti's *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens* (2003). 'Caste' is not capable of being cross-classified with 'gender' in the style of North American intersectional sociology. Rather, caste *is* gender in a unique configuration. Chakravarti pictures the Indian caste system as a deep-seated structure of privilege and exclusion that combines gender hierarchy, property ownership, religious ideology and social identity. Caste is a hierarchical system of endogamous groups, making exclusive marriage its key institution. Control over women's sexuality is therefore crucial to the maintenance of male lineages. An ideology of purity, focused on women but also affecting men, provides the cultural rationale. Upper caste women become complicit in this system, as their conformity to patriarchal prescriptions is what guarantees their access to privilege.

Chakravarti traces how this gender order came into existence, over a long historical period. The caste system was associated with the consolidation of an agricultural economy and a state structure, rationalized by Brahmanical intellectuals. A flexible social

order allowed some caste mobility, and created a patchwork of different castes in different parts of the country. Colonialism did little directly to change this, as the British imperial regime drew upper castes into the colonial state and gave them Western-style education. Nevertheless the caste system was always contested. In its early stages it was challenged by no less a figure than the Buddha. In the late colonial period it was challenged by Phule, Ambedkar and others speaking for the 'untouchables'. But it remains powerful in postcolonial India, enforced by violence as well as ideology – violence directed at lower caste men as well as women who break the rules.

Taking these initiatives and examples together, we can imagine a global configuration of gender research very different from the Northern-centred patterns of the past generation. It has gradually been accepted that there are irreducible differences between feminist perspectives. But it is also argued that dialogue across such divides is possible (Bulbeck, 1998). Not only dialogue, but active political cooperation across national borders, and conceptions of feminism on a global scale, are increasingly visible elements of gender politics (Naples and Desai, 2002). Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) nicely summarizes this in the idea of 'feminism without borders'.

Ashwini Tambe (2010) has recently offered an intriguing model of 'transnational feminist studies' that contests the metropole-centred narrative of development, the homogenizing vision of essentialist global feminism, and even the kind of metropole/periphery model used in this article. Local feminisms differ from national, she rightly observes, and may have distant links. Mara Viveros (2007) also notes the importance of South–South alliances in getting beyond the mosaics of liberal conceptions of difference and the hierarchies that are the legacy of colonialism. To change social structures still requires a decolonizing practice; and in this practice, the connection between the personal and the political can be re-established.

Gender and the neoliberal world order

Quijano's (2000) fruitful concept of the coloniality of power explicitly applies to the time after national independence as well as before. An examination of the coloniality of gender similarly has to attend to historical continuities in global power. But global power relations have changed; the old empires have gone, and new formations of power have appeared. It is now necessary to understand gender in the era of transnational corporations, the Internet and global neoliberal politics. This requires gender analysis to move beyond states and even regions into what Elisabeth Prügl (1999), in a study of home-based work and the ILO, calls 'global space'.

There is now considerable industrial-sociology research on this interplay in sites such as the garment and microprocessor factories of Southeast Asia, the south China economic miracle, or the *maquiladora* industries of northern Mexico (e.g. Elias, 2004). The gender effects are much more than economic. This becomes clear when we reflect on the toxic conjunction of US-dominated free trade, labour migration, *narcotráfico*, corruption, poverty and masculine cultures of violence that has produced femicide in Ciudad Juárez (Dominguez-Ruvalcaba and Corona, 2010).

There has been less attention in gender studies to the groups privileged by gender relations in the most powerful institutions of the neoliberal global economy and political

order. Of the 500 largest transnational corporations in 2012, as listed by *Fortune* maga-
zine, just 2.6% had women as chief executives; which is to say, 97.4% had men. We have
some beginnings of knowledge about this heavily masculinized arena, in studies of the
hegemonic forms of masculinity among the managerial cadres of transnational corpora-
tions and local businesses involved in the international economy (Elias, 2008; Olavarría,
2009). There is a great deal to be done to fill out the empirical picture, to link these stud-
ies to theory, and to link the theorization of gender to contemporary understandings of
neoliberalism and the modern security state.

   It is important to realize that neoliberalism on a world scale is not a matter of the
privatization/deregulation package in the economies of the global North trickling down
to the global South. Neoliberalism first got a political grip in the South, under the
Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. The structural adjustment programmes and the reshaping
of world finance were contemporaneous with, not later than, the neoliberal regimes of
Thatcher and Reagan. Neoliberalism seen from the South has always been about global
trade and new market-driven development strategies, quite as much as privatization and
deregulation (Connell and Dados, 2014).

   The shift to trade-led development strategies has had complex implications for gender
orders. By drawing new groups of women workers into export industries, it has created
some opportunities for economic autonomy for women or at least a shift away from
breadwinner/housewife norms, also creating pressure for change in masculinities. Public
investment in women's education, as a strategy for creating a more competitive work-
force on world markets, has opened paths into higher education and professional occupa-
tions for middle-class women, though not yet in such numbers as middle-class men. Yet
the increasing reliance on market incomes, rather than redistribution via the state, gener-
ally advantages men. And corporate management is a strongly masculinized world in
which wealth and power is accumulating on an unprecedented scale, overwhelmingly in
the hands of men.

   Gender politics, too, increasingly occurs in global space. Valentine Moghadam's
Globalizing Women (2005) is an important demonstration of this, documenting three
groups of transnational feminist networks: one group concerned with structural adjust-
ment and trade, one doing solidarity and advocacy work for women in Muslim-majority
countries, the third linking women's groups around the Mediterranean. Here are some of
the South–South links invoked by Viveros, and necessary for the project of knowledge
creation outlined in this article.

   We are still at an early stage of understanding these dynamics. We are also at an early
stage of reconstructing the sociology of gender from Southern perspectives. I think the
two tasks are connected, because only a gender analysis systematically incorporating the
experience and thought of the majority world will be powerful enough to understand
gender dynamics on a global scale. I also think this work is highly important, as the
worldwide making and unmaking of gender relations is a significant part of the most
urgent issues of our time.

Funding

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Résumé

Durant ses générations fondatrices, la sociologie s'inquiétait beaucoup du genre dans le cadre de la théorisation du monde du colonialisme et de l'impérialisme. La sociologie s'est ensuite concentrée sur la métropole globale, si bien que son analyse du genre dans les décennies écoulées depuis le mouvement de libération de la femme a été développée dans le contexte boréal. Ceci peut maintenant changer si l'extraversion de la sociologie vers le Sud global peut être exercée. Les thématiques des analyses du genre font en périphérie ressortir les processus historiques de la formation et de disruption de l'ordre des genres, examinant les problèmes de violence et de territoire. Les travaux de divers théoriciens du genre et chercheurs des pays du Sud sont discutés. Il faut que soient reconnues les conditions matérielles de la formation du savoir dans les pays développés, ainsi que les différentes manières utilisées par les intellectuels du Sud pour gérer les influences de la métropole. De nouveaux problèmes ont émergé dans la sociologie du genre avec la formation d'un ordre mondial néolibéral, produisant de nouveaux modèles de pouvoir masculinisé et ouvrant des possibilités de changement pour les femmes.

Mots-clés

Genre, globalisation, patriarchie, postcolonial, sociologie, théorie australe

Resumen

En sus generaciones fundacionales, la sociología se preocupaba mayormente de las cuestiones de género como parte de su teorización del mundo del colonialismo y el imperio. Luego, la sociología se enfocó en la metrópolis global, por lo que su análisis

del género en las décadas que siguieron al movimiento de liberación femenina se ha desarrollado dentro del Norte global. Ahora, esto puede cambiar, si se puede lograr la extraversión de la sociología sobre el Sur global. Las temáticas de los análisis de género en la periferia destacan los procesos históricos de formación y disrupción de las órdenes de género, tratando temas de violencia y tierra. Se analiza el trabajo de un número de teóricos e investigadores del género del Sur global. Deben reconocerse las condiciones materiales de formación del conocimiento en los países en vías de desarrollo, así como también las diversas maneras en que los intelectuales del Sur global manejan las influencias de las metrópolis. Al delinearse un orden mundial neoliberal, surgen nuevos temas en la sociología de género, produciendo nuevos patrones de poder masculinizado, así como vías de cambio para las mujeres.

Palabras clave

Género, globalización, patriarcado, postcolonial, sociología, teoría austral