

THE GROWTH OF GENDER RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA AND SOUTHERN THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The late twentieth century saw a steep rise in published works on gender in South Africa. This article is based on a quantitative analysis of the production of gender research. The theoretical backdrop is current interest in Southern theory, theory produced to analyse and challenge existing global knowledge inequalities. As a domain of research, South African gender writings draw both on global feminist impulses as well as national and local ones. In this paper we identify the trajectory of gender research in South Africa and consider the genealogy of its feminist writing. We show how the focus of gender was sometimes divided on grounds of race, but often was united by opposition to patriarchy which took forms of activist scholarship. We focus on a number of themes to show how feminist scholarship developed out of engagements with questions of inequality, race, class and gender. While gender research featured powerful engagement with local, South African issues which serve to give this body of work its cohesion, it also manifested divisions that reflected the very inequalities being researched.

Keywords: Knowledge production; gender research; feminism, bibliometrics; periodisation

INTRODUCTION

Starting from a small base in the second half of the twentieth century, there was steady growth in the publication of gender research until a veritable explosion at the turn of



the twenty first century. In this article we present the findings of a literature search that sought to measure gender research publication in South Africa. We expected to find, and did find, strong growth in research that reflected interest in gender studies as a discreet field of study in South Africa, but also as a variable increasingly recognised for its relevance in humanities and social science. The growth of gender scholarship also reflected the influence of feminism in academia and activism.

While South African gender research matured, questions about knowledge production were being asked. The bulk of academic publishing is undertaken by scholars of and in the urban, industrial North (Dados and Connell 2012) and this raises questions about the marginalisation or silencing of voices from the South. Global knowledge inequalities are the focus of contemporary writers such as Connell (2007) as well as Comaroff and Comaroff (2012). In the South African context, Dawes (1998) considers distinctions between the demand for the rejection of colonial knowledge, which is a form of Northern knowledge, and its replacement with indigenous approaches. He argues for an eco-cultural approach which acknowledges the importance of context in shaping knowledge and the need to use concepts (whether developed in the North or elsewhere) that are relevant to analysing knowledge-making processes. In this way he avoids throwing the baby out with the bathwater. An eco-cultural approach in our study would draw on the strengths of feminist theory as well as being receptive to alternative approaches, including that of indigenous knowledges. In this paper we show that gender research in South Africa drew on existing debates in the “North” but that it was also shaped by very direct engagement with local concerns and thinking. We argue that the specific conditions in South Africa – colonialism, apartheid and the patchwork of patriarchies (Bozzoli 1983) – resulted in work that was distinctive and contributed to a more inclusive feminist scholarship that reflected diversity and activism.

We begin by demonstrating the extent to which publication of South African gender research has grown over the last century. There is no doubt that this growth is linked to the development of gender theorising in the North, alongside new publishing opportunities and increased interest in gender by students and researchers in South Africa. However, we resist the conclusion that this is simply a derivative process. Instead we argue that while South African gender research is clearly influenced by Northern theorising, it also reflects change within the South African academy; change emerging out of concerns specific to local contexts and challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses basic quantitative bibliometric methods to establish the profile of gender publishing in South Africa between 1960 and 2014. It draws on two databases that collect specifically South African materials. It then counts the number of gender publications in and about South Africa and presents these numbers in Figures 1 and 2 below.

Bibliometric methods “define general productivity in a given area” (Andres 2009, 9). A key element of a bibliographic search is coverage – “the extent to which the sources processed by the database cover the written scholarly literature” (Andres 2009, 10). As we indicate below, our database did not provide universal coverage and there are noticeable absences; nevertheless we have not been able to find any database that offers coverage that is any more comprehensive.

How to select our database was a challenging question. We were led by available repositories and our research resources (Williams and Bornmann 2014). We enlisted the support of the UCT library, who recommended that we search the Africa Wide database via EBSCOhost – a narrower set of Africa-orientated publications – and a database geared to more precise searching. Africa-Wide Information combines databases (African Studies, South African Studies, and African Healthline) to form a multidisciplinary aggregation offering unique and extensive coverage of all facets of Africa and African studies. We searched it for “South Africa” and (gender or femin* or masculin*). The search which was conducted in March 2015 brought up 7 854 hits, including many medical journals which were more concerned with the biological sex of patients, rather than gender as such. We therefore refined the search with the command “SU” which restricts the search only to those terms in the assigned subject field: [“South Africa” and “SU gender” or “SU femin*” or “SU masculin*”]. This brought up 2 984 results ranked by date. We then further reduced the list using the “Scholarly Journals” limiter. This generated 736 results, though a casualty was that chapters in scholarly books and theses were omitted. The results seemed to go back to 1965, with a few entries undated. We also sourced, separately, a data set from Harzing’s Publish or Perish (<http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm>). We searched (using the general citations tab) for all articles containing “South Africa” and any of the words “gender”, “feminism”, “femininity” and “masculinity”. This resulted for the time scale 1900 to 2015 in 1 000 hits (the maximum that this search will deliver) organised by year.

Once we had the list we operationalised a process to sift through each entry. We excluded from the list all articles that were not related to South Africa or that referred to biological sex rather than gender. In addition, we excluded items that were not discoverable on Google (using the Google Scholar finding aid) or in cases where no author was referenced. Conversely, we included all articles which contained gender in the title or as a keyword and those where “masculinity” and “femininity” were topics. We included book reviews in the database. The result of the sifting process was that we obtained 404 publications from the Africa Wide Information data set and 322 from Harzing’s Publish or Perish, providing a total of 726. In Figure 1 below we see that both data sets reveal similar trends.

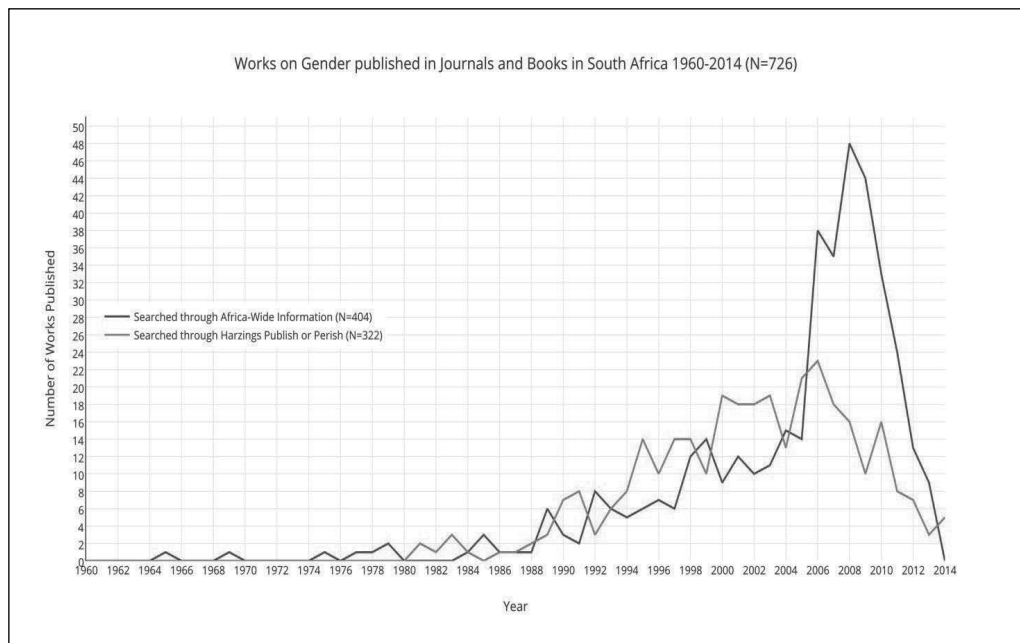


Figure 1: Works on gender published in journals and books in South Africa 1960-2014 (searched through Africa-Wide Information and Harzings Publish or Perish)

The databases do not include all publications for the period 1900–2014. There are very few publications for the early period. This is because the databases are dependent on the cataloguing/data supplied by the organisations which contribute the records. If they do not have a record, or if their cataloguing is delayed, or their collection only started in the 1970s, they will not have the record. There are strange anomalies of articles and especially books and book chapters that are not present in the bibliometric search, yet are well known in the field. In what follows we focus primarily on the items discovered in the bibliometric search, but we refer to publications that are not in this database as a way of fleshing out the periodisation which is reflected in the two figures. To avoid confusion, works that are not captured in the database are referred to hereafter as supplementary.

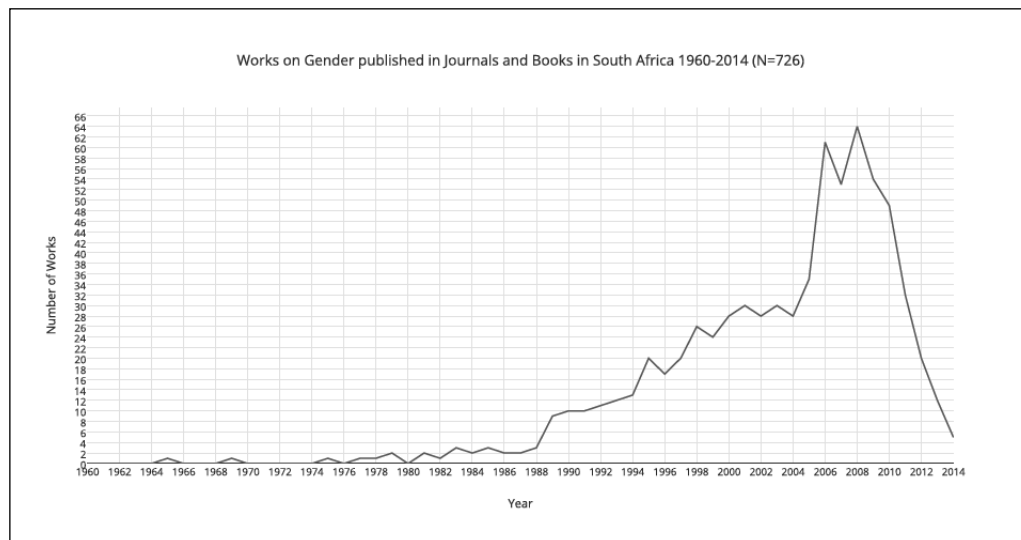


Figure 2: Works on gender published in journals and books in South Africa 1960-2014

Figure 2 displays the trajectory of gender publishing based on an amalgamation of both data sets. It shows that there was negligible gender publishing prior to the mid-1970s. From then there was a fairly steady increase that begins to rise sharply from around 1988–1990 and then reaches a plateau in the mid-1990s; followed by another rise in the late 1990s and then a veritable explosion of publications from 2005. A peak of publishing is reached in 2009, where after there is a curious decline which becomes accentuated the closer one comes to the chronological end point of the data set.

The figures confirm what might be expected. Following the growth of second wave feminism in Europe and the US in the 1960s, there was a spread of interest in gender, especially in those countries with strong cultural and political ties to the global North. South Africa, despite the global isolation developing as a result of its apartheid policies, was fertile ground for radical politics and readily drew on the counter-cultural and anti-colonial literatures that developed after the Second World War. In what follows, we discuss the growth of gender research in South Africa, reflecting on its diverse manifestations, its relationship to activist politics and its conceptual and theoretical lineage.

KNOWLEDGE-MAKING AND THE RISE OF SOUTH AFRICAN GENDER RESEARCH

Critiques of knowledge inequality are certainly not new. Forty years ago, Said and Spivak raised issues of “voice” – who speaks for whom and how one perspective,

that of the North, was privileged and naturalised as “the one”. A critical gaze was turned back on the North and its practices and powers were interrogated (Bhambra 2007). Scholars were invited to consider Europe as a province rather than as the centre (Chakrabarty 2000). In Africa, responses to “Europe’s one-sided impositions” (Keita 2014, 25) and the destruction of local knowledges included showing how voices of indigenous women in Africa were denied by the colonial and postcolonial states, and how European understandings of gender were imposed on analysis of African societies (Amadiume 1987; Oyewumi 1997). More recently, Raewyn Connell (2007) has revisited critiques of Northern orthodoxies to show how, as an expression of elitist forms of knowledge production, Northern theory could not address the social, economic and political challenges of the South. Jean and John Comaroff have provided a different but complementary perspective in *Theory from the South* (2012) to point to forms of knowledge-making and praxis in Africa which were, they argued, making a distinctive contribution to knowledge that offered greater potential for insight than old and stale approaches of the North.

The consolidation of centuries of unequal and racially divisive development in the form of apartheid produced a social crisis which provided fertile ground for activism and socially-engaged scholarship. The passage of race legislation in the 1950s and state repression in the 1960s ignited radical student movements and saw increasing numbers of mostly white scholars studying overseas and challenging existing scholastic, largely liberal, orthodoxies. A wave of revisionism reflecting encounters with Marxist and/or feminist theory swept through South African scholarship and gave impetus to gender research (Razis 1980; Saunders 1988). Second wave feminism undoubtedly inspired local gender research, but it did not take long for adaptations of Western feminism (the concept of “triple oppression” for example) to be developed.

While the infusion of feminist ideas and the work of scholars who had trained overseas made a major impact on gender scholarship, this work cannot be separated from “genuine” indigenous South African work as though it were authored by émigrés or foreign transplants. Rather than simply derivative the – at times – explosive debates within and without the South African academy about the significance of race, class and gendered histories and the politics of representation contributed to and helped shape global debates. Local critiques of the concept of “triple oppression”, for example, anticipated the later acceptance of intersectionality as a key concept, and also fed into Southern critiques of Western feminism as narrow, individualistic and racially blinkered (Mohanty 1988; Mohanty et al. 1991).

In what follows we present a periodisation of gender research based on our quantitative bibliographic research as well as on works not discovered and captured in our databases. These are identified as supplementary works. We offer an explanation for and a description of distinctive features of each of the phases revealed by Figure 1. We begin by suggesting that in the early period concern for South African women and women’s issues was foregrounded through activism and creative writing rather than conventional scholarship.

1900–1960s

Our survey reflects no publications in these years. This, we suggest, points to the limitations of our database and the possibility that early texts have not been digitalised, rather than the absence of thinking, writing and activism about gendered lives. In the early part of this period the lives of women were explored extensively in the writing of suffragette and novelist Olive Schreiner, for example. Her first novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) highlighted processes producing social inequality accompanying the mineral revolution. Later, against the background of conflict and war characterising the end of the C19th, Schreiner's writings explored race and gender, and ways in which white women were implicated in maintaining racial and class hierarchies (see Schreiner 1911 for example).

If Schreiner, as Daymond, Driver, Meintjes, Molema, Musengezi, Orford and Rasebotsa (2003) note, was a pioneer, she was not entirely alone in her thinking. A range of writers such as Noni Jabavu, Nadine Gordimer and Bessie Head (see Hetherington 1993) explored similar and related experiences through autobiography and fiction over the first half of the twentieth century. The period also saw the emergence of a range of militant and highly effective women leaders. Trade unionists such as Ray Alexander and Frances Baard, as well as activists and politicians such as Cissy Gool, Hilda Bernstein, Charlotte Maxeke, Josie Palmer, Ida Mtwana, Albertina Sisulu, Florence Matomela, Ruth First, Fatima Meer, Lilian Ngoyi, Ruth Mompati, Helen Suzman, Dorothy Nyembe, Annie Silinga (see for e.g. Gasa 2007; Russell 1989; Scanlon 2007; Walker 1982) challenged divisions around race, ethnicity, gender and class through activism rather than through a genre of writing that might have been captured in our database.

Writing foregrounding women and women's issues was also largely absent from a South African academy overwhelmingly dominated by white men. By the late 1940s, for example, men made up about 73 per cent of the student body at UCT, with women confined to fields of study considered "academically lightweight" (Phillips 1993, 226). In 1949, 458 of the 521 posts in the Faculties of Arts, Fine Art and Music at UCT were occupied by men. The first woman to become a permanent member of Senate was Monica Wilson in 1952 after she assumed the chair of Social Anthropology (Phillips 1993, 261, 387 no. 9; see also Hirson 2001). While women were not entirely excluded from the South African academy, there was a tradition of women anthropologists, some of whom (for example Audrey Richards, Ellen Hellman and Sheila van der Horst) were feminists of a kind and pioneers in their field (Bank and Bank 2013). The androcentricism of the South African academy saw women and issues of gender relegated to the indexes of what Second Wave feminists and others have described as "malestream" histories and anthropologies (see Bennett 2000; Diouf and Mamdani 1994; Prah 1999).

Outside the academy, however, the historical record demonstrates that South African women were developing sophisticated – and original – insights into challenges confronting them. Formed in 1954 (over a decade before the National Organisation of Women was established in 1966 in the United States) the Federation of South African

Women (FEDSAW) aimed to bring South African women together across race, colour and creed. In declaring that “freedom cannot be won for any one section or for the people as a whole as long as we women are in bondage” (cited in Walker 1991, 157) the Women’s Charter drawn up by FEDSAW in 1954 broke significant ground globally. Not only did the Charter critique ways in which women’s subordination in national liberation struggle was perpetuated by men, it also took seriously the concerns and experiences of ordinary women. Taking what today might be termed an intersectional approach, the Charter predated the Combahee River Collective’s statement of 1977 by over two decades to insist that women’s personal histories of struggle over race, class and gender mattered. It articulated a comprehensive range of objectives including a universal franchise, equal opportunities, equal pay, equality before the law, paid maternity leave, child care for working mothers as well as free and compulsory education for all South African children (Walker 1991).

Strikes by French students, Second Wave feminist activism, the Woodstock festival, the US Civil Rights Movement, anti-war protests and a dramatic surge in decolonisation that saw former colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean gain independence, coincided with an authoritarian crackdown and a “decade of quietude” in South Africa (Worden 1994, 113). Following the Sharpeville anti-pass law shootings in which 69 black protestors were shot dead, South Africa declared itself a republic (1961) and began a long march into international isolation. Growing repression, combined with internal and external opposition to the consolidation of apartheid legislation, contributed to a stagnation of the South African academy over the 1960s. However, by the end of the decade, as mostly white South Africans returned from postgraduate study in the UK where they had encountered Marxist and feminist theorising alongside televised reporting on global protests, so possibilities for breathing new life into the South African academy presented themselves (Saunders 1988, 165–176).

1970–1990

Change, as indicated by Figure 1, was slow with few publications exploring gendered lives in the 1970s. A series of contributions in the *South African Medical Journal* debated the loss of women doctors from service as a result of gender-discriminatory taxation systems, inflexible work rules and gender-unequal parenting conventions (Kane-Berman 1979). Another offered a summary in 1975 of Sylvia Vietzen’s pioneering work on “European ‘Girls’ education’ in Victorian Natal” (1973). In addition, Figure 1 may understate the pace of change; Vietzen’s 1973 book is not captured whereas the summary of the book – also by Vietzen – is. Similarly another of the earliest gender monographs, Jaclyn Cock’s (1980) text *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation*, is not captured and therefore supplementary. Challenging the idea of a feminist “sisterhood”, and employing a Marxist analysis to consider the oppression of women by women, Cock reflects on ways in which white and black South African women were positioned

differently. Cheryl Walker's landmark study, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (1982) published two years later, was banned by South Africa's censors and is only represented in our database in its republished version (1991). Walker explores women's activism from the 1910s to the 1960s, dwelling particularly on the intersections of race and class and the patriarchal nature of the state. Her meticulous research included archival work and interviews with major activists including Ray Alexander, Frances Baard, Amina Cachalia, Helen Joseph and Lilian Ngoyi.

Movement towards more conventional scholarly output foregrounding gender and women that Figure 1 does highlight, reveals strong links with Northern research institutions and US civil rights activism. *Oppression and Resistance: The Struggle of Women in Southern Africa* (Urdang and Lapchick 1982) was published in New York by Stephanie Urdang and Richard Lapchick. Born South African, Urdang went into exile and worked as a journalist in Mozambique. In 1989 she published another feminist study, *And Still They Dance: Women, War and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique* (Urdang 1989). Lapchick was an American anti-apartheid activist involved in the sports boycott of South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. A second publication, "*The crying need of South Africa*": *The Emigration of single British women to the Transvaal, 1901–10*, by Van Helten (at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London) and Williams, appears in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (1983). Van Helten was a student of Shula Marks, a South African born professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and a major figure in Southern African Studies. The piece reflects the influence of social and workers' history exemplified by the History Workshop conferences at Wits University. A third example was an article in the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, "Marxism, feminism and South African studies" by Belinda Bozzoli (1983). A South African who completed her PhD at Sussex University before taking a position in Sociology at Wits University, Bozzoli chaired the History Workshop Conference Committee and edited the volumes based on these conferences. Her article became a landmark piece in South African gender studies, not just because it was one of the first efforts to engage with the big picture of patriarchy, but also because it placed gender analysis within an existing historiography of race and class analysis.

The focus on oppression, protest and resistance in the academy helped inform a shift in analytical emphasis from the state (and structure) to people (and agency) as well as the launch of two feminist journals. Launched in 1982, *Speak* aimed to provide a platform for women to write for "grassroots" audiences. Established in 1987, *Agenda* aimed to challenge the artificial divide between the activism of working class women generally categorised by apartheid as black, coloured and Indian, and an academy that was home to primarily white women through an inclusive approach offering space for creative writing, shorter and more accessible pieces of writing as well as more conventional academic texts. A decade later, Fatima Meer, an academic and founding member of FEDSAW, explained some of the motivations for establishing *Agenda*. "We were feminists," she declared:

... who were fed up with the personal politics of men on the left. While adopting politically correct rhetoric they were able to make their mark in the liberation struggle because they had women to keep the home fires burning, to care for the children and even at times, bring home a significant share of the bread. We wanted to address both the structural and more personal aspects of our oppression ... so that the liberation of our country would mean liberation for women. (Meer 1997, 6)

The 1980s, then, saw a feminist consciousness emerge in writing from the South African academy. In the early 1990s there were two dominant themes in this body of work according to Penelope Hetherington in a supplementary work (see Hetherington 1993). One focused on black women as “oppressed ‘victims’ of a special kind of capitalism buttressed by the state” while another celebrated the “heroic resistance of women against such oppression” (Hetherington 1993, 261). Both foregrounded the struggles of black rather than white women, and both continued to be underpinned by a focus on class and race as explanatory variables that mediated the challenge of critiquing South African patriarchies (Bozzoli 1983).

At the same time a focus on women did not require a feminist consciousness. There was, for example, a growing body of work that, following international trends, could be described as “recovery” work focusing on women that sometimes asked feminist questions (see *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1983). The University of South Africa’s Centre for Women’s Studies, established in 1984, was an exception in an academy that continued to stereotype (and resist) a feminist theorising it conceptualised as “subjective” and “unscientific” (see Erlank and Clowes 2004; Hassim, Metelerkamp and Todes 1987; Van der Spuy and Clowes 2007).

1991–2005

The dramatic increase in publications meeting our search criteria during this period is, we suggest, linked to a confluence of events and processes connected to global change as well as the end of white minority rule and the establishment of a democratic government in South Africa. Part of the explanation may also lie in changes to the global and national research and publishing landscape, where government subsidies and greater competitiveness in universities were fuelling greater publication levels (Kahn 2011).

After decades of isolation that had included an academic boycott in the late 1980s for instance, the enhanced mobility of scholars generated a host of north-south collaborations that saw new research possibilities open up (Morrell 2016). Elaine Unterhalter (1990) describes the impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the freeing of Nelson Mandela:

Suddenly you’re able to talk about it [citizenship] in a new language because before that the language of that was just a Cold War language; there was a capitalist or there was a communist version of citizenship. But suddenly in the 1990s I think those become new fields of scholarship

and South Africa presents this very interesting case of trying to re-write all those prefaces. (Morrell 2016, 203–204)

At the same time, the early 1990s saw South African feminists increasingly drawn into broader African feminist debates (see Amadiume 1987; Ogunyemi 1984) as critiques of Second Wave feminism gathered momentum (see Hooks 1981; Hill Collins 1990; Mohanty 1988; Walker 1990; Walker 1991), and these shaped activist as well as research agendas in South Africa. The conclusion by the ANC in 1990, for example, that a Marxist-Leninist analysis “was appropriate in exploring gender oppression and exploitation in South Africa” (Charman, De Swart and Simons 1992, cited in Hetherington 1993) came under increasing scrutiny and critique from academics and activists when juxtaposed against women’s continued subordination and exclusion from authority in independent African states. Such thinking also informed the activism and lobbying by South African women’s movements, consolidated momentarily in the early 1990s into the Women’s National Coalition, to inform development of the Constitution of 1996 (Hassim 1991, 2006; Nhlapo 1994) and to the decision by the newly elected ANC government in 1994 to create an Office on the Status of Women and a Gender Commission. As exemplified by Shireen Hassim and Amanda Gouws (see Hassim 1999; Hassim and Gouws 1998), it was the opportunities and constraints presented by these new relationships between and amongst the state, civil society and women’s activist organisations that contributed to a substantial body of work over the 1990s.

Another key element emerged out of increasing tensions between activists and academics. Robust and heated debate about the politics of identity surfaced in Durban in 1991 at the first Women and Gender conference to be held in South Africa. Additional contested issues included authorial subjectivities and representation, and racism and androcentricism in the academy itself (see Lewis 1996). Hassim and Walker (1993) identify three key issues revolving around the underrepresentation of black women in the academy, around allegations of the misrepresentation and misappropriation of black women’s experiences by white academics, and around academic accountability to research “subjects” and the women’s movement. Leading to critical and sustained reflection of the relevance and authenticity of South African feminism itself (Steyn 1998), this debate was another important driver of the expansion of gender research highlighted by Figure 1.

A further driver of gender research was the HIV and AIDS epidemic that began to attract analyses situating unequal gender relationships at the heart of the epidemic. In contrast to the North, where gay men bore the brunt of the disease and associated stigma, a critical focus on patriarchal and violent heterosexualities began to emerge out of approaches foregrounding how race and class intersected with gender, sexuality and generation to make young black women vulnerable to male violence in ways that positioned them at the centre of the epidemic. This work on patriarchal sexualities led to research exploring alternative sexualities and diverse genders as well as encouraging a critical focus on masculinities and male violence that made another substantial

contribution to the increase in publications highlighted in Figure 1. Writing against the violent backdrop of KwaZulu-Natal, where 11 600 people were killed in an “unofficial war” from 1987–1996 (Jeffery 1997, 1–2), Catherine Campbell was the first in our database to draw attention to connections between violence and masculinity:

Analyses of South African violence have failed to take explicit account of the fact that the conflict has almost always taken the form of men fighting men. The aim of this paper is to point to a crisis in masculinity amongst working-class African men. (Campbell 1992, 614)

The focus on masculinities and violence was further developed over the 1990s by a range of writers, many of who came together in two collections edited by Robert Morrell, namely a special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (Morrell 1998) and the edited collection *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Morrell 2001). While contributions to these volumes were all informed by and engaged with the theorising of foreign scholars such as Australian Raewyn Connell, American Michael Kimmel and Briton Jeff Hearn, they simultaneously drew on and developed local theorising. That there were contributions from a range of foreign nationals who had spent more (or less) time in South Africa, as well as from South Africans who had trained or were training elsewhere, further underlined the dialectic between local and global, as did the publishing collaboration – taking advantage of changes in technology that saw ideas and texts transmitted instantly to the other side of the world – between the University of Natal Press and Zed Books in London and New York. Desiree Lewis noted in a supplementary text, as early as 2001, “essentialist evocations of geographical, national or racial criteria as decisive grounds for defining ‘African feminism’ are increasingly untenable in this globalizing world” (Lewis 2001, 4).

2005–2014

As illustrated by Figure 1, 2005 marked the beginning of almost exponential growth in publication captured by our dataset. An important component of an explanation for this massive expansion lies, we suggest, in the growing theoretical sophistication of earlier research and its convincing demonstration of how all social and historical processes are gendered. While we acknowledge that the database is not comprehensive, it does show that disciplines such as African languages, architecture, biblical studies, development studies, geography, law, library studies and management were increasingly exploring questions of gender after 2005. There is evidence as well of more inter, cross and multi-disciplinary research with questions around gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS, for instance, attracting attention from a range of disciplines. While new and emerging research foci reflected contemporary concerns around gender and emerging technologies, new media, climate and environment and transgender identities, existing fields of research deepened over this period. Feminism, the search for gender equality and women’s organisations and questions of representation continued to appear as

common research subjects. There was major growth in work exploring hetero as well as non-conforming, sexualities and men and masculinities (see for example Bateman 2011; Bhana, Morrell, Hearn and Moletsane 2007; Hunter 2005; Reid 2006). Volumes such as Graeme Reid and Liz Walker's *Men Behaving Differently* (2005), Ouzgane and Morrell's *African masculinities* (2005) and Shefer, Ratele, Strelbel, Shabala and Buikema's *From Boys to Men* (2007) – another volume not found in the database – continued to challenge the socially constructed disciplinary, geographical and other binaries by drawing on work from historians, geographers, anthropologists, sociologists and so on; both inside and outside South Africa (see Gqola 2009).

In considering changing patterns of research, an unmistakable feature of our graph is the decline after 2010 that becomes precipitous after 2011. Here we can only speculate that this is perhaps not an accurate reflection of reality; that perhaps the growing sophistication of gender analysis has seen the relevance of our search categories diminish, that perhaps the terms we used (“gender”, “masculinity/femininity”) no longer appear in titles, even as research continues to employ a gendered lens. In considering work on masculinities, for example, recent work by South African psychologist Kopano Ratele (2013a, 2013b; see also 2008) that is important for our argument in this paper, simply does not appear in the database. In this recent writing, Ratele foregrounds local realities to test the limits of the concept of hegemonic masculinity for South African (and global) scholarship. Drawing on the work of local historians, sociologist and anthropologists, Ratele (2013b) engages the work of global authorities to explore some of the problems associated with setting up “traditional” (i.e. heteronormative) masculinities in opposition to homosexual and other non-conforming masculinities in contexts where processes of imperialism, colonisation and missionary work have seen homosexual behaviours written – quite recently – out of cultural practice (see also GALZ 2008). While such work is clearly relevant to our consideration of the relationship between Southern and Northern scholarship, it simply does not appear in the database.

CONCLUSION

Using an archive of gender publications we have shown that the gender domain of knowledge in South Africa had assumed substantial proportions by the late twentieth century. This research inevitably reflects the long history of colonialism and the tensions that it produced both internally (in terms of class, race and ideological divides) and externally, in terms of its relationship to the metropole. But these conditions provide the context that is critical to the contribution of South African gender scholars to global knowledge. South Africa has been of interest to scholars precisely because of its specific history, with the transition to a post-apartheid era capturing world attention and research interest precisely because these developments have been so unexpected and carry such global significance. It is the richness of the context and theorising about that context that has seen South African gender research integrated into global scholarship

through research collaboration and exchanges with Northern-based scholars, and through publication in international journals and volumes. Demonstrating the viability and growing confidence of local scholarship, the sheer volume of publications disrupts relationships of inequality between “core” and “periphery”. While the scholarship we survey testifies to the influence of Northern theorising, it also demonstrates that the relationship between North and South is not linear or dependent and undermines claims that Africa is a site of unprocessed data, a theoretical *tabula rasa*.

We started this paper by referring to the work of Andy Dawes in which he advocates an approach of “eco-culturally sensitive interventions” and in so doing disputes other interpretations that see a binaried distinction between indigenous and (neo)colonial knowledges. In this review we have shown that South African gender researchers engage in debates that occur in the North, borrow from Northern theory but also mould theories and concepts so that they give analytical insight. In this process, they show eco-sensitivity and remind global scholars that the best work is often done when there are major issues at stake and knowledge has to be forged in a way that addresses these issues.

Gender research in South Africa and by South Africans is voluminous. In this sense it is authoritative and original, providing insights and lessons that reach beyond the sub-continent. Raewyn Connell identifies this particular contribution:

... 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. (Connell 2014, 9)

The achievement of gender sociology in the South and in South Africa is to employ an intersectional analysis that insists on diversity. This work is frequently driven by concerns for social justice that has both national and global implications for knowledge production.

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