Gender & Sexuality: Review essay on teaching gender and sexualities (Part 2)

Intersectionality
- an approach to embedding gender processes into specific historical, cultural, and economic/political contexts.
Amina Mama's Notes on Gender stress the historical specificity of the operation of gender, and Oyewumi considers carefully how this operation was, and is, placed within the organization of different societies: where and when is "*gendering*" a central political and cultural force? How, for example, does "*gendering*" interact with the dominance of class construction, or the weight of colonial influences?

We can begin to answer this question by returning to the theoretical model of "*sex*" and "*becoming gendered*". If we ask seriously about the way in which class constructions, for example, influence the process of "*becoming gendered*", we could imagine "*class*" as a colour which we could place holistically over the model we've been using to describe the predictions which flow between '*sexing*' a baby and "*gendering*" a human being. That would mean that every aspect of the model (how someone lives in relation to labour, authority, performance, and sexuality, as a result of their identification as "*boy/man*"/"*girl/woman*") would be influenced by the operation of class in the society.

Very simply put, class is a social system which seeks to organize labour, through a hierarchical relation to what is classically termed ownership of the means of production. The system organizes people in the interests of those who are "*owners*", and these interests are best served through the accumulation of capital in systems where the majority sell their labour for much less than the worth of the products that labour creates. Ownership of the means of production (land, corporate systems of financing, technical equipment, mass material, etc) is restricted, through the operation of class systems, to a minority.

Putting the "*colour-of-class*" over the sex/gender model, therefore would involve recognizing that class itself creates divisions between people (and rationalizes those divisions as "*normal*"). In most countries, for example, a tiny minority of the population hold ownership of the means of production, a slightly larger group live with relative independence over their own labour and have access, as a result, to multiple resources, and the majority of the population struggle to sell their labour at minimal wage, are unemployed, or access informal trading as a way of surviving.

What would these realities mean for understanding gender? Perhaps the easiest way to think about this would be to explore "*class*" through certain opportunities which get organized via class in such as the provision of electricity, access to safe water (inside a domestic structure), access to services (medical services, legal services, educational services), protection from the climate, opportunities for mobility. If someone was born, for example, into an environment without electricity, how would that impact upon a "*gendering process*"?

Obviously, one would need to know more about the context in which there was no electricity to develop a complex response to the question. However, it is clear that without electricity

other resources need to be found to ensure light and warmth are available. It is likely that the organization of work will include work around the collection of sources for fuel, and that responsibilities for this will be allocated. Gender is likely to be one of the lines around which this organization occurs. In villages without electricity, the work of collecting fuel, heating water and food, and ensuring that the domestic space is as warm as possible is usually allocated to women. So is the work of collecting water, and using water in all spaces (for domestic purposes and for subsistence farming). In environments where getting heat and light occur through the use of electricity, there are no gender roles assigned to switching on lights, running bath water, or ensuring that there is water in the geyser (gender roles may get assigned to certain forms of labour associated with the use of electricity - cooking, housecleaning, paying electricity bills, etc). This is just a simple example to show how "becoming gendered" involves the practical, day-to-day, realities which flow from class systems.

In countries where class structure has been intricately dependent on racialization (like South Africa), and upon racism, it is extremely difficult to separate talk about class from talk about race. It is important that we do make this separation because constructions of race, and the way in which these constructions have been deployed in order to legitimize massive and complex discriminations, infuse most of the contemporary societies. Constructions of race - "*becoming racialized*" — are as powerful as constructions of gender, and in some cases it has been argued that they are more powerful than constructions of gender. Some historians of apartheid - at all levels of "*voice*" - argue, for example, that the sheer weight of the oppressive legal and economic machinery of the South African government concretized "*race*" as a central meaning for all people whose lives were caught up into the tight mesh of control fuelled by apartheid's policies. Being racialized as "*black*" by the apartheid government had devastating effects on every aspect of daily life: economic opportunity, mobility, education, recognition as a citizen of the country you were born into, and so on. Being racialized as "*black*" also structured avenues of opposition to these policies, and provided the platform for political and cultural celebrations of un-colonized and independent "*blackness*" (such as you can find in Steve Biko's I Write What I Like in the early 70's). Others argue that "*being gendered*" (as a man or a woman) interacted very intimately with "*being racialized*" for South Africans living under apartheid - in terms of labour, for example, it was people gendered as "*men*" who were forced into migrant labour, while people gendered as "*women*" were expected to stay with their children, attempting to create independent livelihoods out of nothing, separated from husbands and fathers for eleven months of the year. There are more contemporary writers (Sisonke Msimang, and Shireen Hassim) who agree with this perspective, arguing that in contemporary South African, the way you become "*a person*", the way you become integrated into meaning, identity, and possibilities for survival within South African involve all the experiences which flow from racialization, from "*becoming gendered*", and from questions of culture, class, and sexuality.

It requires a lot of thought, and skill, to explore contexts as though race, class, and gender matter. Without such skill, however, understanding gender is likely to be a one-dimensional process, and vulnerable to over-generalizations based on the realities of a single context. Intersectional approaches to gender are valuable in building up a rich image of how, and where, political dynamics work to open up, and close down, space and opportunity.

Ayesha Imam describes intersectionality like this:
The crucial question is how to understand the interweaving of class, gender, imperial relations, etc. One mode of doing so has been to see it in terms of race relations plus class relations plus gender relations. This has been criticised for leading to the setting up of hierarchies of the oppressed, which are helpful neither to understanding nor to political practice…. For most … class, race, and gender are simultaneous forces, both interwoven and recursive upon each other. As Brewer puts it … the mode of analysis is not "*race + class + gender" but "race X class X gender*"… in any particular situation, the interweaving of class, race, and gender forms a context which is constituted of the melding (melting, welding, blending together) of these relationships…

Imam's theory of intersectionality expresses an approach to understanding gender that refuses to prioritize one social force (race, class, gender) over another, in the interests of creating the richest possible analysis.

It would however be important to recognize that Imam's choices of relevant forces is itself determined by context. She looks at "*race*", "*class*", and "*gender*" here. In some contexts, these might not be the most relevant dynamics in explaining how a particular society operated. In India, for example, caste and religious affiliation have played, and continue to play, critical political roles; in many African counties, race is less economically and politically powerful than ethnicity; we have seen, in Oyewumi's chapter, how lineage and seniority may have played defining roles in shaping pre-colonial Yoruba society. In any context, then, it is first going to be important to consider which social forces interact most forcefully to create conditions for life within that society, and then to explore the way in which becoming gendered interacts with those forces.

Intersectional analysis of gender allows for in-depth exploration of subjectivity: the complex sense of "*self*" through which negotiation with the world is possible. Secondly, intersectional analysis of gender allows for examination of political actions, and movements, which are often organized in relation to solidarities formed through the interests of a particular "*class*," "*race*" and/or/together with "*gender*".

Linking concepts of gender with sexualities
An article by Mumbi Machera which explores the interactions of 'becoming gendered' as an African girl in many different contexts and sexuality starts by asking what we mean by sexuality?

She suggests:
"*The term sexuality elicits images of belongingness, physically and emotionally. Sexuality is a complex term with multifaceted meaning referring to deep emotional feeling as well as to issues of power and vulnerability in gendered relationships……the scope of sexuality is socially constructed - i.e. sexual feelings and behaviour are influenced and constrained by cultural definitions and prohibitions rather than by physical possibilities…*
Sexuality is a socio-political arena constantly reshaped through cultural, economic, familial and political relations, all of which are conditioned through prevailing social organizations… in Africa, male and female sexualities have been patterned by cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity.. female sexuality is often seen as something to be contained and controlled"

She also suggest that in many African contexts, femininities and womanhood get constructed through gender in ways that repress women's access to control over their own sexual bodies, desires, and experiences. Many of her arguments hold water but there are also tensions in many contexts around the meaning of femininity and sexuality. In some ways, it is true that femininities involve clear norms around the ways in which "*women*" should enact their sexual desires, and these norms do often constrain women's access to choice around reproduction, safe sex, and the meaning of looking '*sexy*". There are also debates about these norms, so that we find the shows like "*Sex in the City*" are popular (these celebrate young (wealthy) women's right to sexual pleasure, knowledge and choices), Nollywood movies which show women in charge of their sexual life even if sometimes these women are also 'punished' in the story lines) and modernized rituals of '*becoming women*' which celebrate women's sexuality.

Charmaine Pereira's definition (see bibliography) suggests this:
What are the interconnections between sexuality, culture and identity? And what makes sexuality strategic to strengthening gender and women's studies in Africa? Sexuality is an integral part of the experience of being human yet its visibility in academic discourse in Africa is relatively recent. Its strategic import in gender and women's studies teaching and curricula lies in the way it draws attention to the failure of analyses and interventions that rely solely on unitary levels of understanding of "the way things are". Such approaches are unable to address the ways in which social realities are embedded in multiple levels of complexity

simultaneously. For example, this could mean addressing social issues - such as sexual violence perpetrated against women - simply at the level of "the state" or "the family", without considering the implications of the "sexual" at the level of emotionality, subjectivity and social relations (such as age, race, class, ethnicity, religion) or at other institutional levels, such as communities, religious bodies, customary authorities, educational institutions and so on.

More directly, a focus on sexuality connects intellectual and political agendas regarding bodies and the sexualised ways in which gendered bodies are differently treated in and beyond "sexual" arenas; emotional, sensual and psychological experiences of desire, pleasure, pain, intimacy, fulfillment and otherwise; the practices of sexual partners and how the "il/legitimacy" of gendered partners, practices and relationships gets defined by whom, from micro- (e.g. psychic) to macro- (e.g. state) levels; and the meanings and relations of giving and/or exchange, monetary or otherwise, within which sexual encounters are embedded. Sexuality is thus articulated with the ways in which gendered human beings become defined within particular, singular identities and the cultural frameworks that give meaning to such constructions at given historical moments.

These two definitions reveal that sexualities can get explored in many different ways, and there is one particularly prevalent split in research and writing about gender and sexuality. One the one hand, there is exploration about individuals as sexual beings; on the other hand, lies the recognition that sexuality is a realm of political, social, and cultural organization, in which knowledge, norms, meanings, and possibilities are constructed, contested, and controlled. Sexuality is a term which describes the way in which human sexual energy becomes part and parcel of psychological, social, cultural and political life. The terrain thus becomes one in which it is possible to explore connections between gender and sexualities in multiple ways. In the remainder of this review essay, some of the key areas explored by African feminist writers, activists, policy-makers and researchers are described

Thinking about approaching the term 'sexuality'.
Because, as Pereira tells us, it is only in the past ten years that debates about the links between gender and the politics of sexuality have become foregrounded within policy and activism in many African contexts, it is useful to break the term down into different components in order to explore the complexities of '*being sexual/performing sex*' in different historical and cultural contexts:

- Sexual desire
- Sexual behaviours
- Sexual capacity
- Sexual orientation
- Sexual fantasies
- Sexual knowledge
- Sexual ideologies/beliefs
- Sexual experience/s
- Sexual identity

Each of these terms deserves unpacking in order to get a rich perspective on what '*sexualities*' mean. Historical context, place and cultural norms influence what each term might entail, and gender plays a very powerful role in influencing the shape of people's sexual experiences, knowledges, behaviours, and beliefs.

In contemporary debates about sexual orientation, for example, the term refers predominantly to the sex/gender of the person to whom someone's sexual desire gravitates (in other contexts - past and present - issues of religion, race, ethnicity and national origin also might play a role here - South African apartheid legislation was draconian around policing '*cross-racial*' sexual desire and sexual relationships; there are still many parts of the world in which playing out your sexual desire with someone of the '*wrong culture*' or '*wrong ethnicity*' or '*wrong religion*' will ensure stigma and even legal punishment). Integrating the term '*gender*'

into '*sexuality*' through the recognition that becoming gendered always involves predictions about sexuality (desire, behaviour, relationships) means that heterosexuality is part of those predictions. The assumption that '*becoming gendered*' as a '*man*' or a '*woman*' entails heterosexuality is so powerful that it can be thought of as a political system in its own right.

This is called: **Heteronormativity**

Heteronormativity is the '*generalization*' of the idea that becoming gendered should lead to heterosexuality on the part of people gendered as '*men*' and as '*women*'. This generlaization means that heterosexuality is '*naturalized*' and other ways of linking becoming gendered to sexuality are '*pathologized*'. This generalization means that '*heterosexuality*' comes to involve systemic and political power over other forms of sexual relationships, cultures, and ideas. There are some theorists who identify sexual orientation/sexuality as a force with the same kind of political potential as class, caste, or race. In the model we noted that becoming gendered involves a set of predictions about sexuality - heterosexuality is considered normative, and within that (**a**) "*women*"-people are assigned particular responsibility for reproductive labour (**b**) gender impacts heavily on what kinds of heterosexual behaviour is possible/conventional for "*women*" and for "*men*".

This approach to sexual orientation/sexuality would see homosexuality as a refusal (consciously so, or not) to co-operate with gender norms, and a route to the development of alternative masculinity or alternative femininity. This is certainly one useful way of thinking about sexuality, and a clear route to the connection between '*gender*' and '*sexuality*'.In a later section of this review, material on African activist engagements with lesbian and gay realities are covered.

There are other ways of seeing at once that being gendered as a man or as a woman would have an impact on different aspects of sexuality. For example, "*sexual knowledge*" is likely to be highly mediated by gender. It remains the case that sex education programmes in schools which offer this (see Florence Muhanguzi and Fatima Chege's work), present '*sexual information*' as biologically based information which privileges reproduction as "*sexuality.*"

Knowledge about sexuality is also mediated by religion, in which there are norms about men and women and how they should engage sexually (again, with a focus on reproduction, and in Christianity, on the idea that sex itself is sinful). Peer engagement, cultural norms, access to the media and internet, and personal experiences will all involve gender as a key element of knowledge building, both in terms of what is "*known*" about men and women, in terms of their sexual roles, responsibilities and identities and in terms of who is '*supposed*' to know what. In the same way, sexual experiences will be highly mediated by gender at every level. A clear example of this is the vulnerability of people gendered as women to sexual violence, and the widespread lack of recognition that in contemporary contexts, women's sexual pleasure is a very under-researched area in African contexts. Despite the efforts of research centres such as the ASRC to foreground issues of sexual pleasure, there is still much more writing on women's experiences of pain and disempowerment through their sexuality than there is about their experiences of pleasure, adventure, and power. Patricia McFadden (see [Feminist Africa 2, 2003](#)) argues that this lack of theory and activism connecting feminist agendas to the power of the erotic damages visions of what could be possible for the transformation of gender dynamics in African contexts. An example of the influence of gender on men's sexual experience might be the pressure on young men to prove their masculinity through the overt and public display of their heterosexual prowess. This is something Richard Sswakiryanga's piece on young men at the University of Makerere discusses, and Rob Pattman's work on masculinities at the University of Zimbabwe and at the University of Botswana also names (see article).

At every level through which sexualities are woven into human life, gender mediates the experiences, meanings, possibilities, representations and visions of what constitutes '*the sexual*'. However, given that gender itself is constructed through multiple relations with class, culture, time, and context, it is often useful to explore the links between gender and sexuality

under a particular theme, which can help a teacher ground an approach to the area historically and empirically. This review essay cannot (yet) offer material on all the spaces in which gender and sexuality could be explored: culture, globalization, militarism, health, activisms, law, arts, religion, development, media, history and archaeology, urbanization, conflict, education, and so on. What emerges in all these areas are political dynamics, routes towards the corralling and shaping of power, which deploy gender and sexuality as a means of social control and as a means of ensuring that material, political, and symbolic power accrues to a minority of a population. While this may be seen as too broad an overarching generalization, introductory unpacking of gender and sexuality within a few key areas below will illustrate the point. What this means is that any teaching in the area needs to be aware that the material is deeply political, and likely to raise controversies.

Gender, sexuality, and colonialism
As Charmaine Pereira's [2] bibliography (attached) suggests, in contemporary African contexts, even where colonialism covered a relatively short period of time (such as in Nigeria and in Zimbabwe) it is critical to understand that colonialisms, of different kinds, involved gender and sexuality in ways which influence contemporary realities. They did so in different ways. Firstly, the histories of colonialisms brought (mostly) European men with particular concepts of gender and particular ideas about women and men's sexual roles, about what constituted '*moral*' forms of sexual behaviour, and about ideas which linked religious ideologies to notions of purity, through which all sexuality was through of as dangerous, and only reproductive sex in non-polygamous marriage gained the blessing of the colonial gaze. These colonial ideologies impacted strongly on the terrains and peoples they engaged with, resulting in active policies to change and control the sexual cultures and gendered norms they encountered. These policies included heavy proscriptions against rituals of femininity and masculinity (circumcision and initiation ceremonies), legislation against polygamy, notions about appropriate dress and behaviour, control of mobility (especially women's mobility), the domestication of women's roles economically and politically, and the introduction of concepts around '*civilization*' and '*hygiene*' which sought to control and manage colonized bodies. Policies, direct and indirect, of racialization created ideas about '*miscegenation*', and policed sexual interaction between settlers and indigenous people in powerful ways. The colonial gaze sexualized both indigenous men's and women's bodies in ways which simultaneously exoticized them as '*excessive*,' "*primitive/animal like*", and '*other*'. Yvette Abrahams has written of this is her historiography of Sarah Baartman, whose experience remains an iconic example of English colonial brutality.

In addition, the increasing power of colonial languages over education, and all state systems, pushed languages full of poetry, sayings, and ritual wealth concerning gendered meanings of sexuality in all its forms, into the background of '*what mattered*' as knowledge. And, of course, colonial systems of health management, while they certainly brought valuable tools around immunization against certain diseases and support for the treatment of others into African contexts, also introduced '*family planning*' as a form of fertility control, in ways that included forced sterilization.

Secondly, resistance against colonialism, which took many forms, also deserves exploration in terms of how questions of gender and sexuality played out in the creation of strategies to undermine or attack colonial power. There are examples of this throughout colonial histories, such as is described in Lynn Thomas's [3] "*Ngaitana!' I Will Not Be Circumcised*" which analyses the rebellion of girls in Meru, 1956, against the colonial proscriptions against female circumcision (at the time, also being supported by the local men's council). Later forms of resistance have included the formation of guerilla armies, protests against particular laws or policies, and negotiation. Especially where the formation of underground and/or guerilla armies was involved, gender norms changed in some ways to allow the participation of women into guerilla movements (such as in Uganda, and Zimbabwe), but retained notions of masculinity which put those very same women combatants at risk of sexual assault. In addition, discourses of liberation movement resistance included encouragement of reproduction (as a way of combating settler efforts to '*control*' population) and men guerilla fighters' sexual prowess was expected as part and parcel of heroism. This has been written

about for South African guerillas in Umkhonto we Sizwe, one of the resistance armies, by Raymond Suttner. And, as in colonial economies, families were broken up by the demands of struggles against colonialism, and this too, had impacts both on new options for sexual liaisons and marriages, new exposure to different climates and sexual norms (what was possible in London for someone in exile as part of a resistance movement might look very different from what was possible in her or her own national context). It also had impacts on family lives in other ways - wives may have gone for years without seeing their husbands (in detention, underground, in faraway army activity - Njabulo Ndebele's novel, The Cry of Winnie Mandela, explores this), or children could have grown up with growing through the sexual/gendered initiations normal in their contexts. Overall, whatever the shape of the colonial period for a particular country, it is important to explore the impact of ideologies, laws and policies, and institutions (including hospitals and education) on changing gendered and sexual norms.

Gender, sexuality and the 'post-colonial' state
It would be important to explore what kinds of re-gendered processes took place after "*flag independence*". There are diverse historical trajectories of different African nations, but perhaps one can approach the idea of the '*post-colonial state*' by outlining a number of questions that facilitate analysis and comparison across nations. The first question is what kind of colonialism had existed prior to flag independence. British, French, Belgian and Portuguese colonialisms had conquered different geographical swathes of the continent, leaving varying legacies in their wake. Secondly, there is the question of what had happened after flag independence. This could be broken down into a number of more specific questions: what kind of state was in place - military, civilian, monarchical?; what kinds of societies existed - '*traditional*', '*modern*'; what kinds of men were in power and what kinds were in the opposition; what were women's relations to the state - resistant, autonomous, aligned e.g. in women's wings affiliated to political parties. Finally, there is the question of how global forces - such as the international financial institutions, the UN Decades for Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as religious revivalism - have played out in particular national contexts. All these questions highlighted different kinds of forces impinging on the forms of masculinity and femininity and sexualities found in any given national context.

It is also critical to note the significance of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which influenced the shape and ideologies of many post-colonial states. While on the one hand, motherhood became part of much nationalist rhetoric about the new state, changing economic times brought with them changing male identities. Andrea Cornwall, in the context of Ado-Odo that she explored, suggests ideals of masculinity were shifting away from the notion of '*man as controller or provider*'. Instead, masculinity in certain instances was becoming reconfigured in ways that shunned authority and control, whilst notions of love and care were gaining ascendance. Elsewhere, the linkages between love and money were the focus of attention, as in the reading by David Mills and Richard Ssewakiryanga. '*No Romance without Finance*' explores the social power of money and the material power of love in intimate relations among students at the University of Makerere, pointing to the fluidity of gender in economies of dress, exchange and performance.

In a number of African contexts, unlike the North, issues of women's rights were taken up in ways that did not partition political rights from organizing around violence against women, or the assertion of sexual freedom. In part this had to do with the fact that many post-colonial states embarked on legislation reform around issues of gender equality. Pushed both by the criteria of the World Bank and the IMF for loans and, differently, by growing feminist and gender activism, the experiences of being gendered in ways that deprived women of access to land, rights, education, and safety propelled legal activism. This can be seen in the history of an organization such as WLSA (Women's Law in Southern Africa) which worked in seven SADC countries (excluding South Africa) for changes around the legal status of women.

NGO's simultaneously began to work holistically on issues connecting gender, sexuality, violence, and the right to a public voice. Sister Namibia is an example of an organisation that did this, working in an integrated manner on all of these issues. The question of sexual rights

or freedom, and what this meant, relied upon feminist analysis of women's bodies, processes of gendering as well as sexual and political liaisons. At the same time, the priorities for struggle were shaped by considerations of differences among women in their levels of education, religious affiliation and notions of morality.

The consideration of the postcolonial state also needs to take up certain other issues - questions of war and militarization, questions of development, and questions of globalization form part of what could be explored as critical dimensions of understanding the contemporary politics of gender and sexualities.

Gender, sexuality, and development
The dominant approaches to gender and development between the 1970's and 1990's ignored the issue of sexuality almost completely. Whether theorists drew on a WID, WAD, or GAD (see the Gender and Development materials) approach, '*women*' were seen primarily through economic lenses which positioned them either as '*outside*' production (and needing to be recognized as '*inside*'), central to production (in the household and beyond), and/or part of heterosexual dyads and family networks.

Reproductive health has long been a development concern, but even here the focus has been on women as mothers, rather than on women as people whose sexuality included fertility and the issue of control and choice over reproduction. Access to contraception in some contexts have radically changed women's relationship to the meanings of reproduction, but there are also countries (such as apartheid South Africa) in which forced sterilization and government sponsored programmes to inject contraceptives into poor women have formed part of state strategies around population control. In addition, of course, there are many cultural and religious contexts in which contraception is frowned upon. The politics of reproductive health and rights deserve a separate review (see Gender and Health).

In the late 90's, and the 21st century, issues of sexuality have moved more centrally onto the '*development*' stage. This has been propelled by three main forces. Firstly, the need to combat the transmission of HIV has radically altered the face of '*development*' discourses, forcing conversations about offering women access to micro-credit schemes or improving girls' access to education to recognize the dynamics of sexuality at play in every level of society. The politics of development have been forced to engage proactively with the meaning of constraints and controls over women's sexualities, the meaning of transactional sex in the management of poverty, and the impact of multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships. At the same time, national and international discourses on sexual health and rights, spurred by the 1994 Population Council Conference in Cairo (see below) have encouraged debate about the salience of sexuality in thinking through issues of access to reproductive health, challenges around sexual violence, and the meaning of non-heterosexual desire and relationships.

The IDS have produced valuable material which seeks to summarize some of the ways in which traditional development concerns (such as access to clean water, or electricity) can be integrated into work on gender and sexuality. There has been a slow take-up of such ideas, overall, with the exception of the outpouring of material on HIV and AIDS, which is universally understood as a huge development challenge and one critically engaged with the politics of gender and sexuality. The material on this is too vast to cite, and the bibliogtaphy by Pereira begins to hint at the range and complexity of issues which can be explored.

Alongside literature on the politics of gender and sexuality around HIV transmission has also emerged literature on new sexual cultures and options, which arise as a result of globalization, and the ways in which trans-national mobilities can create new zone of sexual norms, for men and for women. Sandra Manual's book on youth sexual cultures within Maputo (see the CODESRIA website) is an excellent example of research which began with an interest in HIV transmission among youth and grew into a fascinating study of emerging norms around gendered and sexual heterosexual interactions in an urban environment which encourages pleasure, multiple partnership, and a rejection of traditional values. This is an exciting arena in which to conduct research, and one in which - where students are open to

discussion - teaching could allow for the exploration of the emergence of 'new' interactions between gender and sexuality in rapidly changing worlds.

A final theme here might want to explore the concept of transactional sex in depth. Often linked with issues of economic migration and the negotiation of poverty, forced or consensual transactional sex is part and parcel of a world in which sex as a commodity offers both opportunities and dangers. Trafficking remains a reality throughout the world, and is especially prevalent in Southern Africa, across the borders of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, into South Africa. Africans are also trafficked beyond the continent according to MAPODE, of Zambia, and sex-tourism is part of tourist activity in places as far apart as Senegal and Zanzibar or Mombasa.

Gender, sexualities, and culture
It is difficult to even begin to define '*culture*' without foregrounding the link between gender processes and their implications for how sexualities are shaped. What is critical to note is that much dominant discourse on '*African cultures*' has a tendency to describe engagements with gender and sexuality in negative terms, and in terms which relegate the notion of transforming genders, through engagement with sexual potential and ideologies, to a timeless zone called '*tradition*'. This zone then becomes separated from contemporary experiences, collectively identified as '*modernity*'. As Sylvia Tamale suggests ([Feminist Africa 5, 2005),](#) this is a naïve and unhelpful discursive move, and can make the discussion of what is meant by '*culture*' and how this entails sexually-oriented embodiment of many kinds fraught with difficulty. On the one hand, there are debates about the relationship between religious or customary '*cultures*' and practices identified as harmful to the health, dignity, and/or sexual well-being of women (such as Female Genital Cutting, or widow inheritance — see Stella Nyanzi [4] et al's work here for an example of research in Uganda). On the other hand, as Tamale's work points out, the '*culture*'/'*modernity*' divide obscures the ways in which contemporary opportunities meld with what is valued about (for example) sexual initiation practices for women (or for men), and ignore the realities of multiple and simultaneous engagements with different '*codes*' of gendered and sexual norms.

Rather than rehearse material on FGM, virginity testing (see Fiona Ross's article on this in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa), polygamy, or widow inheritance (important as these practices are in the debates on gender, sexuality, and culture), it is useful to integrate consideration of contemporary cultural vehicles into the classroom. This would include taking the media seriously, especially print advertisements, television dramas, and popular music. Where the internet is available, and students have access to cellphone technology (such as MixIt), other opportunities to discuss '*culture*' are created. It is these forms of representation about '*norms*', desirability, respectability, and status which shape gender and its engagement with sexualities much more dynamically than is often acknowledged. It is critical to engage '*culture*' as living social energy, policed and empowered by different interests (especially economic ones), and simultaneously, rebelled against and rejected through the adoption of '*alternative*' norms.

It could be argued that issues of religion also need to fall under this theme. For some, the terms '*culture*' and '*religion*' are so closely interwoven that it makes no sense to attempt to address '*culture*' without exploring issues of religion. This is particularly the case for African contexts in which the histories of Islam, combined with current state policies which privilege Sharia law and-critically - the complex differences of life within different Muslim countries and communities. It is also true that other religious forces (and the growth of popular and fundamentalist Christianities) have a profound influence on the meanings of gender and sexuality for those who adhere to the religions and also to those who do not adhere to the religion but share space, lives, and relationships with them. Religion is however a sensitive topic, and one in which it is often important that experts within the religion contribute to, and/or, lead the discussions of gender and sexualities where these are brought into classroom space. For this reason, we have created a separate section to offer resources on Gender and Religion to teachers.

It is impossible to ignore, within this theme, the prevalence of violence against women which seeks to abuse, humiliate, and damage through the use of force called '*sexual*' because the '*tools*' deployed involve the parts of the body conventionally thought of as 'sexual', and which carry deep and powerful meanings around that sexuality. This is violence perpetrated by people gendered as men (who use it against other men, and also against children). While many men would not dream of using such violence, it remains that case that masculinities tend to tolerate the potential for such violence within their shape. In many contexts, this potential becomes realized in such destructive ways that it is hard to imagine 'masculinities' without imagining a predeliction for sexual violence AS '*culturally justified*'. This is certainly the case in conflict zones, in prisons, and in South Africa. In other contexts, such as parts of Nigeria or Ghana, such masculine aggression may concentrate on controlling women's dress, or on public threats of punishment should women's independence seem to be contravening norms. These are generalizations, based on research on sexual harassment within tertiary educational settings in Nigeria (see the work of Initiative for Women's Studies in Nigeria), but they gesture towards institutional and urban '*cultures*' in which sexual violence against women is tolerated, and even - in some settings - encouraged discursively and by other means. The review on Gender and Violence has more on this idea.

Gender, sexuality, and activism
This is a huge and very exciting area. The strategies employed for political activism through the mobilization of "*women*" shift dramatically in different historical, social, economic, and cultural contexts. Some analyses of such shifts privilege identity politics as a key resource in understanding differences, tensions, and alliances, so that religious "*identities*", for example, or racialized ones, become central to the theorization of particular activist agendas or initiatives. Others are more interested in the contextual confluence of economic and political realities through which people gendered as "*women*" find themselves deprived of access to power, material resources, and/or political representation. In the past few years, there have been vibrant, critical discussions on the nature, shape and direction of "*women's movement*" organizing, and in African contexts, and much of this has included - or even prioritized - questions of sexualities.

The review would suggest there are four overarching debates which have circled continually through intellectual writing on "*women's movements*", activist organization at several levels, and within numerous fora - workshops, conferences, World Social Forum tents, small rooms and patches of shade in which planning, arguing, and celebrations have been undertaken. The first debate concerns the meaning of the state. Over the past four decades, considerable energy has been vested in the struggle to hold post '*flag-democracy*" states accountable to ideals of "*gender equality*" within political representation, state-based budget processes, and the delivery of resources and services. In terms of "*sexuality activism*" which has taken gender seriously, this has meant intensive focus on issues of legal reform around gender-based violence and on issues of delivery of services around reproductive health, or access to treatment and care of people who are HIV positive. However, where "*states*" themselves are corrupt, fragmented, in rapid transition, or organized through military rule, there has been debate about the value of this work, and its vulnerability to co-optation by interests far from feminist.

This debate is interlinked with a second: the meaning of the interaction between the North and diverse initiatives concerned with "*women's human rights,*" "*South-based feminisms,*" and "*gender-alert social justice*". As Aili Tripp suggests, "*The term 'transnational feminism" is sometimes used as shorthand for Western involvement in and influence on feminist movements globally*" (see Feminist Africa 4, 2004) and although (as she points out) this "*shorthand*" expresses only one dynamic of transnational feminist organizing, it is the dynamic which provokes difficult questions concerning integrity, sustainability, control, and longterm strategy.

A third debate concerns the fact that since the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, (and in some contexts, earlier), concerns long animating women's organizing - access to reproductive health and freedom from gender-based violence

- became embedded into new articulations which linked ideas about sexual health and rights to language addressing reproduction. The link between gender, culture, and sexuality is so intricate and so deeply naturalized within discourses of nationalism, the family, and - indeed - "*being human*" that women's organizing through recognition of sexuality as a political force has been challenging. As Amina Mama notes: "*On the global front, too, it has become clear that in the post-9/11 world, sexual politics - and the morality that underpins dominant discourses on sexuality - can no longer be relegated to the periphery of feminist analysis.*" (Mama, 2005:3 - see Feminist Africa 5) However, the terms in which "*sexualities*" become introduced into legal and political terrain remain contested - it is easier to insert conceptions of "*sexuality*" into frameworks of health than it is to discuss sexualities as sources of empowerment; constraint and "*management*" are often more audible as political approaches to sexuality than exploration or alliance-building across diverse "*sexual*" constituencies. Nonetheless, as suggested in the introduction, Africa-based debate on theoretical - and activist - engagement with local and continental struggles to understand the links between sexualities, gender, and socio-economic space is vigorous, nuanced, and valuable.

The fourth debate concerns the very existence of a "*women's movement*" (Essof, 2005; see Feminist Africa). In an era in which WTO policies, the U.S. war on Iraq, and increasing gaps between the world's wealthy and its poor, belie notions of "*progress*" or "*democracy*", there has been a powerful escalation of political protest, demanding alternatives. The place of gender justice within these protests, alongside the seeming intransigence of local gender oppressions, have led to serious reflection, analysis, and a desire for new beginnings, new strategies. Some voices have approached current political and economic contexts of complex gender injustices with renewed vigour, theoretical analysis which seeks to engage a wide array of local and transnational activists, and strategy which encompasses the streets and the screen.

The One in Nine Campaign of South Africa is a young organization which fits into this category, and speaking more continently, the African Feminist Forums have sought to bring energy into the meaning of challenging not simply the 'old' (neo-capitalism, the on-going and shifting forms of colonialism, which seek to '*drain*' African contexts of resources, weak and corrupt governance, and violence) but continually engaging '*the new*': the demand for bodily integrity, the quest for '*alternative worlds of transaction and exchange,*' and the need to create new alliances in the fight against sexual surveillance as a political weapon.

Gender and sexualities activism should probably be imagined archaeologically. It is one of the '*oldest*' areas of African feminist activism in the c20 (one thinks of Awa Thiam or Nawaal Sadaawi), in which the politics of sexuality were examined as part and parcel of hierarchized relations of gender and where the strategic focus often concerned women's rights to independent adulthood, to freedom from sexual violence, and to education beyond their '*reproductive roles.*" Activism in this area continues unabated. At the same time, however, new challenges have arisen, partly as a result simply of changing material conditions and partly as a result of deeper feminist vision. Thus the need to centralize the politics of gender within debates on the transmission of HIV emerged as a feminist imperative during the 90's.

And the need to take on board issues of gender-based violence within war took on an activist life of its own, post the Rwandan genocide, and continues to be a area of innovative and extraordinary work (see ISIS-WICCE, FAS). The question of sexual orientation towards people of one's own sex/gender was raised in the mid 1990's but it has not been until the twenty-first century that the politics of state, religious, and popular homophobia have come so powerfully on activist agendas. The oldest feminist organization here is Sister Namibia, in Windhoek, which has run a journal and a multitude of training and advocacy programmes on sexual and reproductive rights and health over two decades. The women in these projects have been centrally involved in the formation of the Coalition of African Lesbians, and there is a fragile but passionate network of progressive organizations across the continent fighting for equality between heterosexual and LGBTI people (see Behind the Mask and Genderdynamix)

This struggle deserves its own review, which will be uploaded shortly.
It is also within research that it is possible to witness activist engagement. The [African Regional Centre for Sexuality Resources](#) produces a Sexuality magazine, offers leadership trainings and seminars, and supports research. The internet itself is a major terrain of activism - the [Association of Progressive Communications Women's](#) projects have included initiatives such as Take Back the Tech!, Feminist Technology Exchanges, and the promotion of Digital Story-Telling as a form of activism around issues of gender and sexuality.
While legal activism around basic health rights (such as the right to choose abortion or have access to PEP after being raped) remains part and parcel of the agenda, new concerns around the interface between technology and trafficking or about the meaning of '*transitioning bodies*' are now within the playing field of African feminist activism on gender and sexuality. In terms of teaching, it will always be possible in a local context to link the '*traditional*' with the '*new*' - just as there remain NGOs courageously fighting to house battered women and/or care for HIV positive people, so there are simultaneously internet based campaigns which are accessible and empowering (provided internet itself is an option).

Northern here refers, from the perspective of an African country, primarily to countries like the U.S., the U.K., and those within the EEC. There is, of course, huge diversity among these, and the term "*Northern*" is used as an attempt to describe the overarching philosophical ideas so powerful within these regions. The homogenization does blur important debates and distinctions among these ideas.