

# Knowledge production from Africa: challenging heteropatriarchies

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# Southern theory

Relationship between Europe and Africa has been one of core-periphery for the last six centuries.

- ❖ relations of extraction, exploitation, authority, exclusion, hegemony, patronage, appropriation, and cultural imperialism
- ❖ it began with slavery in 15<sup>th</sup> century, and persisted through colonialism, post-colonialism and up to today through globalisation
- ❖ Knowledge production has also followed this pattern

# Discourses and values

Over time these Northern-based discourses have sprung roots in Africa

- ❖ Religion: Christianity and Islam
- ❖ Legal systems
- ❖ Governance systems
- ❖ Biomedical discourses
- ❖ Academic discourses

# Values underpinning discourses

- ❖ Ontologically based on individualism
- ❖ Structured gender stratification: Northern heteropatriarchies meet African heteropatriarchies
- ❖ Positioning of individuals as sinners, criminals and sick

## Sexism multiplied

- ❖ Northern: Heteronormativity inscribed in family relationships through sex ascriptions
- ❖ Split between the public and the private
- ❖ African: Family roles as gendered responsibilities and obligations

## Gendered families in same-sex practices

- ❖ Colonialism fragmented African kinship relationships
- ❖ Evidence of same-sex families where gender roles remain intact: *Hungochani* (Epprecht), *Tommy Boys* (Morgan & Wieringa)

# Human rights and identities

- ❖ Post-colonialism brought human rights framework which ensures rights based on individual identities
- ❖ HR discourse has not succeeded in eroding values underpinning religious, biomedical, legal discourses
- ❖ 'Old' values permeate cultural practices

# Discrimination as belief system

- ❖ Heteronormativity, racism, disablism etc. are deeply held belief systems, and are values which imbue cultural practices
- ❖ Singular identities foreground differences between people, and often succeed in perpetuating and creating Others



## Moving towards inclusivity

- ❖ We need a discursive framework which accommodates everyday life, the interdependencies of people, and affective relationships (Ubuntu; Feminist Ethic of Care)
- ❖ Begin to see social categories as relational: class, race, power, gender, sex, sexuality – and find the equivalent of a Human Rights framework for RELATIONSHIPS

## What we're up against

- ‘Global’ (northern) cultures, which become glocalised
- ❖ extreme individualism
- ❖ consumerist sexualities
- ❖ perpetuation of gender inequalities – pornography, fashion, media
- ❖ perpetuation of gender inequalities through cultural discourses

# What would 'rights' look like in Africa?

- ❖ Judicial (justice) framework which acknowledges relationships
- ❖ Academic discourse which acknowledges relationships as affective, especially in families
- ❖ Cultural discourses which foreground care and responsibility as values for relationships

# Creating African theories

Academics collude in building Northern theories:

- ❖ Universities value Northern journals as ‘international’ (African parochial?)
- ❖ Academics must publish in Northern journals for recognition
- ❖ Need for own journals, open access
- ❖ Solidarity. We need to cite colleagues from Southern sources – the theory is there, we must find it.