

Gender Analysis and African Social Sciences in the 1990s

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Since the mid-70s, there has been increasing interest in what some still call "the woman question". From the (more-or-less) complete ignoring of women we now have a spectrum of interests ranging from courses on women in society to specializations on women in sociology, political science, economics, history, agriculture and geography, with even a whole (sub?) specialization to itself, *Women in Development*. Robertson states in her review of African women's history that:

Much of the literature on African women is in the form of articles, but since 1976 over 30 monographs on women from Morocco to South Africa and half again as many collections of articles in book form, as well as special issues of journals have been published¹.

As many commentators have noted, the situation has moved through several distinct phases: from the total neglect of women, or, (at most) treating women in brief asides or footnotes; to a sustained critique of this gap; to the "adding on" of women, and just occasionally to the recognition of gender relations as a category that requires not simply the tacking on of women at the end of analyses but the reconceptualization of other categories in order to be able to make adequate analyses of the whole.

The study of women in general and African women in particular has contributed to the breadth and depth of knowledge and theorizing of African realities in a number of diverse ways - quite apart from the obvious fact of recalling to mind and insisting that account be taken also of a majority of the people in Africa. It has demonstrated the importance of women not simply as passive breeders, but also as economic agents, (in farming and trading particularly), and, as active in creating new developments, in resistance to oppression and occasionally in collusion with oppression also. It has added fuel to the questioning of assumptions about the beneficial nature of the colonial experience and the development of capitalism and "modernization" in Africa, by demonstrating that for most women these processes have most frequently meant a decrease in economic autonomy,

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1 Robertson, C. 1987, "Developing Economic Awareness: Changing Perspectives in Studies of African Women 1976-1985", *Feminist Studies* 13:1 (97-135) p. 101. See reference for some of these.

access to resources, status and security. It has contributed to the de-mythologizing of both the Merrie Africa and the backward, uncivilized primitive Africa theses through investigations as to women's positions in pre-colonial Africa - which turn out to have been neither a happy complementarity with men's roles, nor the dumb beast of burden remarked on by the early anthropologists.

By considering women's unremunerated work as "family labor" on men's cash crops, in "subsistence activities" (from growing and processing food crops to the provision of water and fuel), and in "domestic labor" (from child-care to cooking and cleaning), it has aided the realization that wage-labor and labor directly in commodity production are not the only forms of work which exist or which contribute to surplus value. It has facilitated the realization that the 'dual sector' thesis or the rigid distinctions between the so-called 'formal' and 'informal' sectors are not tenable, as women (and men) and capital transfers move between these alleged sectors constantly and sometimes operate in both together. It has improved our understanding of socialism by refusing to take for granted an easy or automatic equation of socialism and women's liberation. It has also been among the factors that are leading to a questioning of the nature of class relations with the realization that due to the characteristic African economic autonomy between women and men, as well as on what men are doing, so called "gender-neutral" forms of analysis and theoretical categories have been shown to be gender-biased against women.

Furthermore the study of the social relations of gender has fundamentally challenged both the simple economic determinism of some variants of Marxism and the consensualist Durkheimian tradition. Neither model can account for gender relations. Against economic determinism it can be demonstrated that ideological valuations are themselves historically built into production relations and even into the definition of the "economic" itself. While consensualist models founder against the evidence from feminist historians particularly that "the consensus" is itself highly contested and a matter of struggle and power relations. In contributing to the appreciation of the complexity of ideology and culture and their inter-relationships with "the material", gender analysis highlights the significance and necessity of considering ideology, subjectivity, consciousness, and their roles in (for example) political activity, production relations, or the individual, democratic processes and the State.

The focus on women and gender relations has been generally characterized by a multi-disciplinary approach, with work being done by and in collaboration with sociologists, political scientists, historians, economists, geographers, demographers and virtually any social science discipline one cares to think of. Finally, it has contributed much to the creative development and use of methodologies and multiple techniques (including,

for example, life histories, group discussions and interviews, participatory research as well as, or sometimes instead of, the more usual survey questionnaire, or participant observation).

In the course of these developments it has become clear however, that focussing on women alone is no more an accurate representation of social and economic phenomena than a focus on men alone (though as a corrective to provide data it may still be necessary for some while to come, given the decades of neglect). At the level of theory, this exclusive concern with women has meant the (continued) marginalization of studies on women from "mainstream" social science. At the level of policy and practice, there has been (again) the marginalization of women's interests into "women's projects" isolated from the rest of development planning, poorly funded and seldom taken seriously. There is also the realization that there cannot be an undifferentiated category of women. There can also be hierarchies among women, and between some women and many men, as well as evidence of the wide variety of situations that women may find themselves in when considering the whole of Africa. And yet many common themes do appear when making comparisons. Hence it is being increasingly recognized that the focus of analysis must be the social relations of gender (rather than "women" or "men"). That is on the relations between women and men as they are expressed in terms of power, economics, ideology and so forth, and, as they interact with other social and economic relations to define the positions of both women and men, the spaces within which they act to change or maintain social systems, and which also impact on the broader and more abstract processes of capital penetration and accumulation, imperialism, production and so on.

Nonetheless, despite the interest in women, it is still most often the case that any issue relating to women and gender relations is left completely out of consideration. For instance, in a recent study entitled *The Crisis in African Agriculture*² the gender division of labor and the role of women in agriculture is almost completely ignored - this in the continent where it has been estimated that women do some 60-80% of agricultural labor³. The way in which African economies were integrated into the world capitalist system is and was not solely a question of imperialism. It also developed in concurrence with and through the increased exploitation of women's labor, given their subordinate positions within gender relations in Africa⁴. And not

2 Gakou, M.L., 1987, *The Crisis in African Agriculture*, London, Zed Books and the U.N. University, Third World Forum.

3 UNECA, 1974, *The Changing and Contemporary Roles of Women in African Development*, Addis Ababa, ATRCW.

4 See for example Kitching G., 1980, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite Bourgeoisie, 1905-1970*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

inconsiderable part of the decline in nutritional levels have been as much due to the loss of women's rights to use land to men, as of male peasants to kulaks, given that in most of Africa women are specifically responsible for the provision of food⁵. Women's lower access to productive resources and to land related to the way in which the penetration of capital and increasing commoditization interacts with pre-existing gender divisions of labor, relations between men and women and their differential relations to power, labor and control, and this has had a definite impact on agricultural productivity and on food staple provision in Africa⁶. Although Gakou recognizes that the agricultural division of labor in the Casamance was, of course, linked to the relations of domination between women and men in the framework of the family, the men looking after the crops that brought in money and ensured their power, and the women looking after the food crops that ensured the food supply⁷,

he considers this issue to be unworthy of his attention. He bemoans the loss of the "extended household" and ignores the differential impact that the project had on women and on men. But any adequate study of the crisis in African agriculture and food provision must also take these factors into account, before feasible solutions can be proposed.

Similarly Nyong'o's recent⁸ collection of articles on popular struggles and democracy has not a single article relating to women's movements, nor even are women indexed. For instance, in discussing agricultural producers in Uganda, Mamdani somehow overlooks the fact that many of these "direct producers" not only own no land, but also have their labor and its products at least partially controlled by others - in the persons of husbands, through their 'voluntarily' entering into marriage (with its generally subordinate relation of wives to husbands). Their relationships to husbands, to the rural

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- 5 See for some examples: Bukh J., 1979, *Village Women in Ghana*, Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies; Muntamba S.M., 1982, "Women and Agricultural Change in the Railway Region of Zambia: Dispossession and Counter-Strategies" in Bay E. (ed) *Women and Work in Africa*. Boulder Westview Press (83-104); Kandiyoti, D., 1985, *Women and Rural Food Production Systems: Problems and Policies*, Paris, UNESCO; Tadesse, Z., 1986, "Women and Rural Development in Africa: An Overview", *AAWORD Occasional Paper Series 2* (22-27); Whitehead, A., 1981 "I'm Hungry Mum": The Politics of Domestic Budgeting" in *Of Marriage and the Market*, Young, K. Wolkowitz, C. and Mc Cullagh, R. (eds) London, CSE Books (88.111).
 - 6 See, for instance, Crehan, K., 1984, "Women and Development in North Western Zambia: From Producer to Housewife": Women's Role in a Pilot Resettlement Scheme: *Review of African Political Economy* 27/28 (51.66); AAWORD, 1986, Seminar on Research on African Women: What Type of Methodology? *AAWORD Occasional Paper Series 1* and *Women and Rural Development in Africa*, *AAWORD Occasional Paper Series 2*.
 - 7 Gakou, M.L., op. cit., p. 50.
 - 8 Nyong'o P.A., 1987, "Introduction" to *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, P.A. Nyong'o (ed), London, Zed Books, U.N. University, Third World Forum (14-25).

rich (a very few of whom may also be women), or to the state is not dealt with at all. But can it be automatically assumed to be the same? Campbell's article on challenges to the apartheid regime similarly fails to consider the resistance put up by the women at crossroads and the lessons to be drawn from their initial organization and the failures of the subsequent (male) leadership.

Many of the articles in the book refer to ideological offensives by the state and the manipulation of religious, ethnic and other sectarian ideologies with their divisive and demobilizing effects, but none consider either the extremely pervasive sexist ideologies in general, or even the specific fundamentalist offensive which holds women responsible for all the ills in society evident in (for example) the Makola market destruction in Ghana, the state round-up of women in Zimbabwe, the so-called War Against Indiscipline in Nigeria, and so on⁹. But does it not occur to any of the authors that these ideologies (and state actions) are part of the means through which women are scapegoated (by men as well as by the bourgeois state) and hampered in organizing to struggle for their democratic rights?

Of course it might well be retorted that the reason for this is that no articles on women were submitted, despite appeals to women to write them. But this answer is part of the problem itself. Issues concerning women or gender are left to women to research and write on and to teach. Gender issues are still rarely seen by male researchers as something that concerns themselves or the world in general. And yet, the "global social democracy" hoped for by Nyong'o, or, the need for participatory democracy spelt out by Goulbourne, or, Wamba's definition of democracy as "the free collective and individual exercise of speech by the entire community and each of its members"¹⁰ - do they not also include the fifty per cent of the population who are female? As Walby¹¹ points out, the arena of gender politics is wider than that of conventionally defined class or party politics and it impacts on them (can a revolution succeed without mobilizing women's support and participation? Why whether and how women's interests are or are not defined as part of the field of overt struggle itself needs to be explained, not taken for granted). And men also are actors in gender politics (whether for or against women's interests).

Let me discuss briefly the directions such an analysis might take via the consideration of one area in Africa. Analyses of rural life and production in

9 See Imam, A., 1985, "Ideological Manipulation, Political Repression and African Women: AAWORD in Nairobi", *AAWORD Occasional Paper Series 2* (216-124).

10 Wamba, Wamba-dia, 1987, "The experience of Struggle in the People's Republic of Congo in *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, P. Anyang' Nyong'o (ed), London, Zed Books, U.N. University, Third World Forum (96.112) P. 99.

11 Walby, S., 1988, *Gender Politics and Social Theory*, *Sociology* 22:2 (215-232).

Northern Nigeria most frequently refer to household production as a system whereby men farm together under the control of the senior man, the produce of which is consumed or sold to pay taxes and/or buy consumption goods for *Gandu* members and their dependents (while having also individual plots of which produce is individually appropriated). The processes of capital penetration are increasingly resulting however in poor men farming singly and/or hiring themselves out to fewer and fewer rich peasant. Surplus is appropriated through taxation on agricultural (mostly indirect) production and mercantile relations of exchange. In an area where few (if any) women are independent cultivators and/or do any on-field labor, this amounts to a characterization of the economy in which women do not exist except as dependent wives.

This is due to a number of inter-related theoretical assumptions and problems. First, while production may include both use and exchange values, economic theory has concerned itself with that part of production which deals with exchange, or to which at least an exchange value can be assigned in a relatively unproblematic fashion. Thus only that human activity which is directly related to exchange value (in effect monetary remuneration in some form) and commodity production has been treated as work. This together with a narrow conception of agricultural production/labor as including only on-field labor has meant that the labor in cooking, child-care, cleaning, fuel and water provision, shelter provision, gathering, producing goods for own consumption, and so on (lumped together as "subsistence activities") have often simply not been regarded as activities which have important implications in, and, need to be integrated into analyses of economic relations¹². When they have it has been in terms of a subsistence or pre-capitalist mode of production or natural economy which subsidizes production for exchange and therefore capital accumulation¹³.

This mode of analysis has been often termed gender neutral in that it is irrelevant as to who does these forms of subsistence activities. In fact, since the division of labor in many societies is such that it is women who undertake most unremunerated labor, it is gender biased - against women.

12 Beneria, L., 1981, "Conceptualizing the Labor Force: The Under-estimation of Women's Economic Activities in *African Women in the Development Process*, Nelson, N. (ed) London, F. Cass (10.28); Dixon, R., 1982 "Women in Agriculture: Counting the Labor Force in Developing Countries, *Population Development Review* 8:3 (539-566); Anker, R., "Female Labor Force Participation in Developing Countries: A Critique of Current Definitions and Data Collection Methods, *International Labor Review* 122:6 (709-723).

13 Meillassoux, C., 1981, *Maidens, Meal and Money*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (First published 1975 as *Femmes, Greniers, et Capitaux*, Paris, Maspero; Wolpe, H. (ed), 1980, *The Articulation of Modes of Production: Essays from Economy and Society*, London, Routledge.

And an important point to be made here is that gender division of labor itself has important consequences for production and surplus appropriation, given that labor bottlenecks have commonly been identified as a major constraint to increased production and households with few men are associated with poverty, so that even in terms of its own concerns with value this mode of analysis is inadequate. And furthermore it must be recognized that gender relations position men as well as women.

But in rendering women and women's work invisible, it also continues to be informed by and legitimate the ideological assumptions about women as mere appendages of men and men as 'breadwinners'. Thus not only is the unremunerated labor of women (or men or children) inadequately considered, but it has also resulted in: the ignoring or underestimation of the situations and extent to which women do in fact work on-field (on particular crops as remunerated laborers, for example)¹⁴, ignoring women as economic agents working independently, or, acknowledging it as an addendum unrelated to the rest of the analysis¹⁵, assuming women therefore to be (unproductive and) dependent by not taking into account women's financial contributions, never mind unremunerated labor¹⁶ or, difficulty in theorizing women's role/contribution to household maintenance and reconstitution where women's independent income is recognized to exist¹⁷. And these issues have had, and continue to have, grave implications for the types of development policies and projects being planned and implemented in Northern Nigeria¹⁸. We need a theory of household economy and reconstitution that takes into account all forms of labor and divisions of

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- 14 See for example, the various estimates of women's work made by Hill, P., 1972, *Rural Hausa: A Village and a Setting*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Norman D. W. and al., 1972, "An Economic Survey of Three Villages in Zaria Province", *Samaru Miscellaneous Papers* 37 IAR/ABU; Jackson, C., 1985 "The Kano River Project in *Women's Roles and Gender Differences in Development: Cases for Planners*, New York, Population Council/Kumarian Press; Longhurst, R., 1982, "Resource Allocation and the Sexual Division of Labor: A Case Study of a Moslem Hausa Village in Northern Nigeria" in Beneris (ed) *Women and Development: The Sexual Division of Labor in Rural Societies*, New York, Praeger (95-117).
 - 15 Hill, P., op. cit. and Watts, M., 1983, *Silent Violence: Food, Famine and the Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
 - 16 Norman, D.W. et al, op. cit.; Shenton R., 1986, *The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria*, London, James Currey.
 - 17 Matlon, P.J., 1979, "Income Distribution among Farmers in Northern Nigeria: Empirical Results and policy implications", *African Rural Economy Paper* 18, Michigan State University; Watts, M., op. cit.
 - 18 See Jackson, C., op. cit., Imam, A. 1988(b), "Households and the Crisis in Africa", paper to AAWORD/CODESRIA seminar on The Crisis in Africa and Women's Visions of the Way Out, Dakar, August 8-11

labor, intra-household relations and responsibilities by gender, as well as production and exchange relations with reference to abstract capital¹⁹.

This necessitates a closer examination of the gender division of labor. In much research, it is assumed to be due to the biological requirements of reproduction, or, taken as an unproblematic (and unchangeable) given²⁰. Others have taken it as inherent in factors such as production technology, demographic pressure on land, environmental factors like water availability²¹. Yet others relate it to tradition or religious prescriptions about women's mobility, sometimes referring to environmental factors as conditioning rather than determining it²². However, the Muslim Nigerian Hausa share tradition, pre-colonial history, religion and a very similar environmental context with Muslim Nigerian Hausa where women are not secluded and the gender division of labor includes women's on-field labor. Animist Nigerian Hausa live in the same environmental conditions and yet have a division of labor in which women farm. Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria also have a division of labor in which women farm and travel widely to trade. Thus, none of these seem to be in themselves a sufficient explanation in the context of the Nigerian Muslim Hausa - we must seek a more complex form of explanation, such as those elaborated by Edholm *et al*²³, Beneria²⁴, Middleton²⁵ which attempt to relate reproduction requirements and the control of reproduction, the surplus production and necessary labor distinctions, occupational specialization, power relations and ideological/cultural evaluations and subjectivities of gender groups.

Furthermore in recognizing that not only gender structures but also ideologies are imbricated in socioeconomic relations, (such as those embodied in gender divisions of labor), we come to the question of ideologies, their determinants, and relationship to the material, however defined, and the whole vexed question of agency versus structure. Other

19 See Imam, A., 1988(a), "Rethinking the Household: Where Are We Now?" paper to CODESRIA/UNESCO/AWORD Seminar on Changing Household, Kinship and Gender Relations in Africa, Dakar; for critiques of existing theories of households, see Imam, A., 1988(b) *op. cit.*

20 For example Norman *et al op. cit.*

21 Boserup, E., 1970, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, London, George Allen and Unwin.

22 Hill, P., *op. cit.*; Smith, M.G., 1982, "Introduction" to Smith, M.F., *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Muslim Hausa*, Yale, Faber, Longhurst, R., *op. cit.*

23 Edholm, F., Harris, O., Young, K., 1977, "Conceptualizing Women", *Critique of Anthropology* 3:9/10 (101-130).

24 Beneria L., *op. cit.*

25 Middleton, C., 1979, "The Sexual Division of Labor in Feudal England", *New Left* 113/44 (147-168).

than in "tradition" versus "modernization" dichotomies, studies of the political processes of Islamization and a few media studies²⁶, the area of ideological construction and contestation in northern Nigeria has received rather little attention. Research which attempts to consider the inter-relationships of subjectivity, ideologies and social relations is practically non-existent and seriously needs to be explored.

In addition, the present division of labor among the Nigerian Muslim Hausa (heightened and rigidified by the increasing prevalence of wife seclusion) is a relatively recent development²⁷, mentions informants stating that women used to work on-field within their own lifetimes. The near universal seclusion of wives in northern Nigeria was certainly not a pre-colonial phenomenon, but although Hill dates the increase in seclusion from after the second world war, mention can be found of a definite increase in the colonial records of the 1930s²⁸. It has therefore to be seen and investigated as a specific historical construct.

As is evident from the summary exposition above, a concern with the structures of gender and production relations leads into a consideration of class and gender and their relationship to each other, as well as the ways in which their inter-relationships affect the processes and relationships involved in production, reproduction, accumulation and surplus extraction. However, consideration of these issues have then led to a recognition of the necessity to investigate also the nature of the relationship between culture/ideology and socioeconomic relations and processes. And this in turn raises the question of the relationship between agency and structure, and, of the nature of historical process. This, I hope, gives the contours of a challenging scope of explanation which could not have occurred without the inclusion of specific attention paid to gender analysis.

The increasing recognition of the need to analyze gender relations as a category in its own right throughout the social sciences must begin to make itself felt throughout the social sciences in the 1990s. And the point is that this should enable us to make analyses of social formations that are broader and more adequate to describe and explain the complex social realities in which we live. Because without this our practice and prescriptions cannot be

26 Paden, J., 1973, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*. Berkeley, University of California Press; Ibrahim, J., 1983, "The Political Economy of Mass-Media in Nigeria: A Case Study of Daily Times and New Nigerian, M.Sc. thesis, Zaria, ABU; Imam, A., 1987, "Ideological Manipulation, Political Repression and African Women. AAWORD in Nairobi, AAWORD Occasional Paper Series 2 (116.124); Lubeck P.M., 1986, *Islam and Urban Labor in Northern Nigeria*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

27 Hill, P., op. cit.

28 Watts, M., op. cit.

adequate to the task of developing Africa for the good and with the participation of all its people.

But there are obstacles. Considering my personal experience of researching, writing and teaching on gender²⁹ and comparing it with that of others in Africa and the Third World³⁰, and, with a recent report of the experience in Britain of teaching on gender in sociology courses ten years after the British Sociological Association (B.S.A) had established a committee "to assist in the realization of sex equality both within the association and within the discipline"³¹ affords considerable grounds for pessimism. The experiences are depressingly similar in each sphere, although I will touch on only two issues here.

Although gender issues and material relating to women are being taught, it is generally either a specialist course taught by a woman or a small subsection "added on" to courses that otherwise ignore women and gender/feminist issues altogether. Often enough even these subsections are handed over to a woman to teach so that, with the male dominance of academia (both numerically and hierarchically - and in Africa the margins are wider than anywhere else), female staff are greatly overloaded (and underpaid, since their commitment is relied upon). As the B.S.A report puts it;

A common theme was the pressures on a small number of women staff to provide adequate coverage of gender, allowing male staff to continue to teach 'as if the world were made up only of men'³².

But it is not only teaching that is problematic. Another common theme is that while women are generally conversant with both the mainstream literature in their areas of interest and the feminist critiques or gender aware material, male academics and researchers tend to ignore the latter although it has been in existence for the past 15 years or more. Thus while recent work on women and gender is informed by debates and theoretical work regarding (for example) theories of underdevelopment, the impact of capital penetration on Africa (including on class formation), modes of production, or the relationships between ideology, economy, and subjectivity, men's work ("mainstream" thought) continues in its bland ignorance of feminist debates and advances.

29 Imam, A., 1985, op. cit.

30 Personal communications.

31 B.S.A. Standing Committee on the Equality of the Sexes, 1986, "Teaching Gender - Struggle and Change in Sociology". *Sociology* 20(3)(347.361).

32 *Ibidem* p. 354.

Little of this can be attributed to the chronic difficulty in Africa of acquiring material. Rather, because women cannot avoid sexism they tend to become aware earlier of the need to analyze gender relations. But since men are, by and large, on the favorable side in gender relations they can take it up or not at whim - and are often not simply indifferent but actually hostile to the analysis of gender. And since men dominate the control of teaching and research that may also make it difficult to get courses established, research proposals approved, grants made or study leave granted on issues related to gender, never mind integrating gender analysis into all aspects of social science teaching and research. Robert Connell suggests that it is because gender categories (unlike those of class) are so visibly connected to Biology and function in biological processes that it is;

therefore tempting and easy to fall back on biological explanations of any gender pattern. This naturalization of social processes is without question the commonest mechanism of sexual ideologies. That biological difference underpins and explains the social supremacy of men over women is the prized belief of enormous numbers of males and a useful excuse for resisting equality for the analysis of gender inequality³³.

Of course not all men are chauvinists any more than all women are gender aware (in fact it is sometimes the case that in order to 'make it in a man's world' women take on the themes and issues that men deem important and also derogue gender issues). But it does seem to be empirically the case that it is majorly women, with a few men, who push the cutting edge of not only women's studies, but also studies of gender relations.

The likely political and economic situation of Africa in the 1990s given little hope for improvement. The acceptance of IMF-type conditionalities continues to mean cutbacks in education, meaning both that even more disproportionately fewer women will have access to higher education and jobs in academia if they are so lucky, and, that research funds get tighter and tighter. Already in Ahmadu Bello University, for example, the number of women employed in the sociology department has dropped by 50% (from 4 to 2 out of 25 - it was never a high proportion, despite being the largest in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences). With over 1/3 of the staff having left for one reason or another, and a freeze on new recruitments, but student numbers increasing by 1/4 as a four-year programme is being instituted, courses are having to be dropped. One of those with a question mark against it was the one specialist course on women in society. And with the huge

33 Connell, R., 1985, "Theorizing Gender", *Sociology*, 19:2(260.272) p. 266; my insertion.

increase in workload it will not even be possible to "guest lecture" the subsections in other courses, as well as making it highly unlikely that leaves or grants will be given in the near future to pursue enquiries into gender relations.

The outlook is not totally bleak. The establishment and continued existence of organizations like the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) to aid and facilitate women researchers concerned with issues of gender and development has helped. And the recent adoption by CODESRIA of the principle that gender analysis must be considered in all research may begin to impress upon both men and women in social science of the importance of paying attention both to what women are doing, thinking and saying (as subjects of research, as researcher, as critics) and to the social relations of gender which affect both men and women. Nonetheless there is a dual challenge here. Those who have so far ignored gender relations must consider how they will have to re-think their analyses in the face of this, rather than closing their eyes in the hope it will go away if they ignore it. And those already working in this area must publish more (no article is ever perfect). It is important that the conservative political and economic climate foreseen for the 1990s does not become used as excuse for not progressing with these developments - for the good of not simply the development of social science, but that of Africa.

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