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Chinese Proverbs: How are Women and Men Represented?

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Chinese Proverbs: How are Women and Men Represented?

Jackie F. K. Lee

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Abstract

Chinese proverbs, a mode of language that children encounter in their early stage of learning, are important tools with which to instil values and transform the social order. Any biases hidden in them may affect children's self-images and their perceptions of others. The present study examines the images of men and women represented in Chinese proverbs as found in a dictionary published in Hong Kong. Despite the absence of the under-representation of women, gender inequality is evident in the stereotypical depiction of women, who are described as dependent on and submissive to men, and who are valued for their physical charm, chastity, domestic roles and ability to bear sons to continue the family line. For men, on the other hand, values are placed on their talents, friendship building and such personal attributes as bravery, modesty and kindness. Men's fondness for women is neutrally or positively portrayed as unrestrained or romantic, reflecting the sexual objectification of women. Male supremacy is also evident in the common use of masculine generic constructions and male-firstness in Chinese proverbs.

Keywords: Chinese, gender, Hong Kong, proverbs, stereotyping.



Proverbios Chinos: ¿Cómo están Representadas Mujeres y Hombres?

Jackie F. K. Lee

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Resumen

Los proverbios chinos, un modo de lenguaje que los niños y las niñas se encuentran en su etapa inicial de aprendizaje, son herramientas importantes con las que inculcar valores y transformar el orden social. Cualquier sesgo oculto en ellos puede afectar a la propia imagen de los niños y las niñas y sus percepciones de los demás. El presente estudio analiza las imágenes de hombres y mujeres representadas en los proverbios chinos que se encuentran en un diccionario publicado en Hong Kong. A pesar de la sub-representación de las mujeres, la desigualdad de género es evidente en la representación estereotipada de las mujeres, que se describen como dependientes y sumisas a los hombres, y que son valoradas por su encanto físico, la castidad, los roles domésticos y capacidad de dar a luz hijos para continuar la línea familiar. Para los hombres, por el contrario, los valores se colocan en sus talentos, la creación de la amistad y los atributos personales tales como la valentía, la modestia y bondad. La afición de los hombres por las mujeres se retrata de manera neutral o positiva como incontrolable o romántica, lo que refleja la cosificación sexual de las mujeres. La supremacía masculina también es evidente en el uso común de las construcciones de masculino genérico y en primer lugar en los proverbios chinos.

Palabras clave: chino, género, Hong Kong, proverbios, estereotipo.

Language and culture are intertwined and are not separable (Abdollahi-Guilani et al. 2012; Okon & Ansa 2012). Proverbs from the folk are ‘the mirror of a culture’ (Ennaji, 2008, p. 168), as they can reflect the customs, traditions, values, opinions and beliefs of a particular society. They emanate from people’s experiences, mentality and ways of thinking at a certain point in time. The rich linguistic data found in proverbs enables us to study the cultural beliefs and social values of a society, including its attitudes towards the two genders.

The word ‘proverb’ is interpreted in a broad sense in this paper, including maxims, popular sayings and idioms. The aim of this paper is to examine the images of women and men that are mirrored in Chinese proverbs. It includes a discussion of whether the identity of the two genders constructed in Chinese proverbs reflects their roles in contemporary Hong Kong society, and how teachers can help promote gender equality when teaching Chinese proverbs to young learners.

Proverbs and Thought

Many proverbs are short, well-known random sayings taken from literature, history and famous people like philosophers. They address different aspects of life, including education, work, human aspirations, personal concerns and relationships. Since proverbs are generally regarded as truths and serve as advice for people, they are important tools with which to instil values and transform the social order. Fasiku (2006, p. 51) remarks that proverbs constitute ‘a powerful rhetorical device for the shaping of moral consciousness, opinions, and beliefs’.

The cultural concepts and norms of the language are imparted to children during their learning of a language. Some proverbs have been passed on from generation to generation for hundreds or thousands of years. If they include biased representations of different races, age groups and the two genders, these biases or stereotypical views can have insidious impacts on children’s development in various ways, including distorting their self-image and their images of other people. The present study is based on the principle of linguistic relativity, popularly known as the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis or Whorfianism (Whorf, 1956), which underpins that the structure and lexicon of a language can influence how a person perceives

and conceptualizes the world. Language embodies people's interpretation of reality and can influence their thoughts about reality (Lucy, 1997; Tohidian & Mir Tabatabaie, 2010). Regular encounters with a word or phrase can have an impact on our habitual thought (Lucy, 1992).

Proverbs, in their concise forms, provide us with rich linguistic data to examine the cultural beliefs and social values of a society. In general, a proverb becomes popular if the social experience depicted in the saying corresponds with social expectations. Zhang (2002) observes that almost every aspect of women's lives is depicted in Chinese proverbial lore. There are proverbs representing the traditional cultural expectations of women concerning their behaviours and familial roles, and emphasizing the gender hierarchy of male control over women. In contrast, there are very few proverbs depicting the male gender role. It seems that women were traditionally subject to society's close scrutiny and were expected to behave according to the norms and social values presented in proverbs.

Previous studies on the representation of women in proverbs include Storm's (1992) analysis of Japanese proverbs, Ennaji's (2008) examination of Moroccan Arabic and Berber proverbs and Hussein's (2009) investigation of Ethiopian, Sudanese and Kenyan proverbs. These studies revealed that many proverbs represent an archaic discourse on women, that women are relegated to a secondary position, being confined to private spaces, families and marriage and that women are portrayed as both physically and intellectually fragile. Hussein (2009) concluded that there are strong intertextual and intercultural threads between proverbs and the representation of women's roles, statuses and identity, and that the linguistic resources, as found in proverbs, are used to perpetuate inequality.

Gender representation in Chinese proverbs has also been discussed by some scholars (e.g. Yang, 2001; Zhang, 2002; 乙常青 2007; 李莉、王晶 2010; 李福唐 2009; 錢進 2003; 羅振 2009), who focused on the portrayal of women rather than men. The writers argue that many Chinese proverbs discriminate against women and relegate them to a lower position than men. These proverbs attach importance to women's beauty, chastity and to women resigning themselves to their destiny. Most of these discussions, however, are based on the authors' introspection regarding some proverbs rather than on objective, systematic studies. The few proverbs selected for discussion by the writers themselves may include subjective biases.

Forms of Gender Inequality

To conduct a systematic, objective study of gender representation in Chinese proverbs, it is deemed important to understand in what forms gender inequality can appear in such discourse. An overt type is quantitative imbalance. As found in other genres, the under-representation of women in school texts (e.g. Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000; Hellinger, 1980; Lee, 2014b; Lee & Collins, 2008; Porreca, 1984) and the predominance of males as central figures in TV commercials (Siu, 1996) suggest that some people still hold to the traditional view that women are of lesser importance than men.

Another form of gender inequality is gender stereotyping. Traditionally, men are regarded as the chief breadwinners of the family, and women are expected to be the homemakers and are engaged mainly in the domestic domain to look after the family. Such stereotypical thinking is present in different genres. Previous textbook studies show that men are commonly depicted as occupying a wider range of social and occupational roles and that females are more likely to be portrayed in domestic and nurturing domains (e.g. Au, 1993; Cincotta, 1978; Law & Chan, 2004; Lee & Collins, 2008, 2009, 2010). In a similar vein, analyses of Hong Kong advertisements have found that women are stereotyped as subordinates, homemakers and sex objects (e.g. Association for the Advancement of Feminism, 1993; Fung & Ma, 2000; So & Speece, 1991).

Gender stereotyping may also be revealed in the personal attributes associated with the two genders. In previous textbook studies, women are generally presented as affectionate and emotional, associated with adjectives such as *afraid* and *annoyed* (e.g. Hartman & Judd, 1978; Lee, 2014a), and are described mainly in terms of their age and appearance (*x years old, little, old, young, beautiful, pretty, tall*) (Carroll & Kowitz, 1994; Lee, 2014a). On the other hand, men are more likely than women to be portrayed as aggressive, argumentative and competitive (Evans & Davies, 2000), and associated with physical and mental strength (*tall, big, heavy, strong and brave*), and with wealth and success (*rich, poor and important*) (Carroll & Kowitz, 1994; Lee, 2014a).

Another common manifestation of sexism in the English language is the ‘generic’ use of masculine pronouns (*he, him, his*), and of *man* and *man-*

compounds in reference to people in general or to people whose gender is unknown. Examples of sexist language can be found in some English proverbs, for example: *Every man has his price; The bad workman blames his tools*. In Chinese, gender inequity is also manifest in the non-parallel use of gendered nouns. For example, nouns with the semantic feature <+masculine> such as 子 (child/son), 兒 (child/son) and 孫 (grandchild/grandson) are the unmarked category, meaning that they can be used in reference to people in general, as in 子子孫孫 (generation after generation; descendants). In contrast, the character 女 (daughter) is used exclusively for females. The non-parallel use of the gendered nouns reinforces the myth that ‘Man will always be the standard against which Woman is measured’ (Farris, 1988, p. 278).

Non-parallel gender representation can also be found in the order of presentation at the syntax level. The Confucian social order relating to the propriety of relationships has been embedded in Chinese word order. The grammatical rule normally requires that the male-gendered term precedes the female-gendered term (Ettner, 2002), which reflects male supremacy. According to Farris (1988, p. 297), the classical injunction ‘婦者，後人也’ (Women are those who come afterwards) is still observed in the Chinese language and culture of today. While the English language also has the conventionalized practice of putting a male-gendered constituent first in paired expressions, the prescribed order is less strictly observed in English than in Chinese. Reversion of the order usually results in an ungrammatical expression in Chinese (Ettner, 2002). Compare 男女平等 (Men and women are equal) and *女男平等 (Women and men are equal); 父母 (father and mother) and *母父 (mother and father); 夫妻 (husband and wife) and *妻夫 (wife and husband). While the female-first versions are deemed ungrammatical in Chinese, they are acceptable in English. The subordinate status of women in Chinese society is clearly apparent from the highly invariable male-female word order.

The Present Study

Proverb learning plays an important part in Chinese education in Hong Kong. The Curriculum Development Institute (2002, 2004) recommends that the learning of Chinese proverbs should be integrated into the key learning

area of the Chinese language at the primary level. Questions on proverbs can be found in the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA).¹ For example, in the 2012 assessment for Primary 6 students, students had to evaluate the appropriateness of using 一索得男 (having a son at the first birth) and 喜獲麟兒 (the joy of having a son) on a birth-congratulation card (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2012). Considering the importance of proverb learning in one's schooling, it is deemed important for educationalists and learners to understand the hidden meanings that proverbs may convey. Nevertheless, so far, scant attention has been paid to the construction of gender in Chinese proverbs in Hong Kong. Although there are writings on the representation of women in Chinese proverbs (e.g. Yang, 2001; Zhang, 2002; 乙常青, 2007; 李莉、王晶, 2010; 李福唐, 2009; 錢進, 2003; 羅振, 2009), they are based on the writers' introspection on some Chinese proverbs used in Mainland China. So far, there has been hardly any systematic research in this field conducted in Hong Kong. Further, the writings tend to overlook the representation of men. To fill these gaps, the present study made a comparison between the depictions of women and men in the proverbs found in a children's dictionary published in Hong Kong, with the aim of uncovering any hidden gender inequalities that exist in them. It is hoped that the study will heighten the awareness of educationalists and learners of the gender bias and inequality present in some proverbs and of the need to develop strategies for addressing the problem.

In view of the common forms of gender inequality that exist in different media (e.g. Association for the Advancement of Feminism, 1993; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000; Fung & Ma, 2000; Lee & Collins, 2008; So & Speece, 1991), the following research questions pertaining to Chinese proverbs were examined in the study:

1. Are there more proverbs depicting men than women?
2. How are women and men portrayed in proverbs?
3. How are gendered nouns used generically?
4. Are men always presented before women when both appear in a proverb?

Methodology

The proverbs examined in the study were taken from a dictionary entitled *新編成語辭典* (禰文杰, 2004), which was published by Sesame Publication in Hong Kong. According to a bookshop that specializes in the sale of primary school textbooks (personal communication, 19 April 2011), this dictionary is popular among primary pupils in Hong Kong. At the time of the study, a number of primary schools had this dictionary in their school library for students' use. According to Sesame Publication, the dictionary is one of the company's best sellers and has had reprints every year. The dictionary comprises of approximately 6,500 proverbs. The preface states that through this dictionary, people of all ages can have a better understanding of Chinese cultural heritage and can express themselves more effectively with the appropriate use of the proverbs.

To investigate Research Question 1 concerning the number of proverbs depicting the two genders, all the gendered proverbs were identified and classified based on whether the description was about men, women or both (see examples in Table 1). Only around 4% of all proverbs matched the criteria. To answer Research Question 2 on how women and men are portrayed in proverbs based on the images or gendered roles created, the proverbs relating to women or men were classified into these categories: appearance, age, obedience, chastity, sexual desires/affection, talents/character, marriage/family, family care, friendships and brotherhood/sisterhood, negative image and others. The same proverb could be assigned to more than one category. For example, the proverb 美人遲暮 (a beauty in her old age) was categorized as a proverb on 'appearance' and on 'age'. Regarding Research Question 3 on generic constructions, the study included an investigation of the use of 'masculine' or 'feminine' generic words in Chinese proverbs. Finally, to examine the order of mention for Research Question 4, the study included an examination of the order of gendered words when both women and men appear in a proverb.

The investigator read the dictionary twice in order to identify the relevant proverbs and classify them according to the codes presented above. Intensive training was given to a research assistant, who helped to enter and crosscheck the data. The inter-rater reliability was 0.93.

Findings

Research question 1: Are there more proverbs depicting men than women?

Unlike some previous textbook studies which found female under-representation (e.g. Hellinger, 1980; Lee & Collins, 2008; Porreca, 1984), the present study echoed Zhang's (2002) study and revealed a higher representation of women than men in Chinese proverbs. As Table 1 shows, 144 proverbs depict women, and 86 depict men. Nevertheless, if the proverbs depicting physical appearance are excluded from the analysis, there is a more balanced representation of men and women in the proverbs studied, with the ratio being 76:63.

Table 1
Gendered proverbs

Gender	Example	Frequency
Men	難兄難弟 a well-matched pair of brothers 文質彬彬 well-mannered and soft-spoken (of men)	86
Women	紅顏薄命 a beautiful woman has a short life 河東獅吼 a shrewish wife	144
Men and Women	結髮夫妻 husband and wife by the first marriage 善男信女 devout men and women	33

Research question 2: How are women and men portrayed in proverbs?

Appearance

As shown in Table 2, over half of the proverbs depicting women describe their appearance (81 out of 144), compared to only ten proverbs describing men's countenance. This suggests that female beauty holds a high social value. Another difference that was noted was that while men's charm lies in their manner and talents, the beauty of women is associated with their

tenderness, shyness and body parts (see proverbs (1)–(13)). Plant and fruit are the common metaphors used to describe women, as in (1) 出水芙蓉 and (2) 櫻桃小口. This finding echoed Hegstrom and McCarl-Nielsen’s (2002) study of metaphors, which found that a flower was used to describe women significantly more than it was for men.

Proverbs depicting women’s attractive appearance:

- (1) 出水芙蓉 as a lotus breaking the surface
- (2) 櫻桃小口 a small, cherry-like mouth
- (3) 閉月羞花 being so beautiful that the moon hides its face and flowers feel ashamed at the sight of her
- (4) 沉魚落雁 female beauty captivating even fish and birds
- (5) 含情脈脈 with loving eyes and deep tenderness
- (6) 嬌羞答答 lovely, tender and shy
- (7) 雍容華貴 elegant and poised, dignified and graceful
- (8) 玉手纖纖 the slender hands (of a pretty woman)
- (9) 明眸皓齒 bright eyes and white teeth

Proverbs depicting men’s attractive appearance:

- (10) 氣宇軒昂 having an imposing appearance
- (11) 文質彬彬 well-mannered and soft-spoken
- (12) 一表人才 a fine-looking man with talents
- (13) 風度翩翩 graceful bearing

Table 2
Types of proverbs

	Men	Women
Appearance	10	81
Age	1	12
Chastity	0	6
Obedience	0	4
Sexual desires/affection	17	10

	Men	Women
Talents/character	23	10
Marriage/family	40	31
Family care	0	3
Friendships and brotherhood/sisterhood	13	0
Negative image	19	18
Other	11	15

Age

Table 2 shows that there are 12 proverbs referring to women's age, but only one referring to men's (村夫野老 rustic, middle-aged and elderly village men). This disparity conveys the message that age, which is closely associated with one's appearance, concerns women more than men. An analysis of the proverbs reveals that women's beauty is deemed important whatever age they are, as can be seen in the following proverbs describing the different age groups of women and their physical attraction:

- (14) 含苞待放 be in bud, meaning 'in early puberty'
- (15) 豆蔻年華 a blooming girl, a maiden of thirteen years old
- (16) 徐娘半老 a charming woman in middle age
- (17) 美人遲暮 a beauty in her old age

Obedience and chastity

Traditionally, Chinese women were expected to preserve their honour and the honour of their family. As seen in Table 2, proverbs about obedience and chastity are exclusively associated with females, with a total of 10 proverbs based on these attributes. The oppressive and prejudicial attitudes towards women are captured in the maxims of (18)–(21) below. Proverb (18) 三從四德 reveals the inferior status of, and the absolute obedience demanded from women in ancient China: A woman was required to follow the three obediences (obeying her father before marriage, her husband during marriage, and her sons in widowhood) and to maintain the four

virtues (fidelity, charm, propriety in speech, and efficiency in needlework and household chores). Proverb (19) 冰清玉潔 refers to the expectation of unmarried girls to be as clean and pure as ice and jade. Proverb (20) 一馬不被兩鞍 reveals the traditional thinking that a widow had to be faithful to her deceased husband and could not remarry. Proverb (21) 三貞九烈 holds the value that, to a woman, preserving her chastity is very important.

(18) 三從四德 the three obediences and the four virtues

(19) 冰清玉潔 as clean as ice and as pure as jade, meaning ‘pure and noble, being a virgin’

(20) 一馬不被兩鞍 a horse doesn’t have two saddles, meaning ‘a widow does not remarry’

(21) 三貞九烈 a woman’s preservation of her chastity

Sexual desires/affection

As opposed to the social sanctions on women’s chastity, men’s sexual desires or affection for women are more positively portrayed in Chinese proverbs. A total of 17 proverbs describing men’s sexual desires or affection were found in the dictionary (see Table 2). Although there are several proverbs carrying negative connotations about men’s loose morals and promiscuity, as in (22) 拈花惹草 and (23) 問柳尋花, the majority are neutral or positive proverbs, as in (24)–(27).

(22) 拈花惹草 pick flowers and attract weeds, meaning ‘be fond of women and promiscuous’

(23) 問柳尋花 rove among willows and flowers, meaning ‘be loose in sexual relationships, visit brothels’

(24) 醇酒美人 pure strong wine, pretty woman, meaning ‘love good wine and pretty women’

(25) 憐香惜玉 pity and cherish a fragrant, jade-like woman, meaning ‘be fond of women’

(26) 金屋藏嬌 keep a mistress in a splendid abode

(27) 拜倒石榴裙下 throw oneself at a girl’s feet

Meanwhile, the present study found six proverbs about women’s sexual conduct and four about their affection for men in the dictionary examined. As opposed to the tendency to depict men’s sexual interests in a neutral or

positive way, the proverbs on women's sexual pursuits are more pejorative, as seen in proverbs (28)–(31).

- (28) 水性楊花 as changeable as water and willow flowers, meaning 'a woman of loose morals'
- (29) 殘花敗柳 withered flowers and willows, meaning 'women who have lost their virginity and/or who are loose in sexual relations'
- (30) 搔頭弄姿 stroke one's hair in coquetry, referring to the seductive act of a woman
- (31) 神女生涯 the life of a prostitute

The study shows that men's sexual desires are more openly and positively portrayed in Chinese proverbs, whereas the same drives in women tend to be restrained by social conventions, and if they are revealed, they are usually negatively described. The larger number of proverbs depicting men's sexual desires further implies that women are commonly portrayed as men's sex objects in Chinese proverbs. The findings echo Cameron's (1992, p. 208) 'sexual double standard': while women should have no sexual desires, men should be insatiable.

Talents and character

This study recorded a total of 23 proverbs about men's talents and character, and 10 about women's. Men's qualities, which include bravery, modesty and kindness, are highly esteemed in Chinese proverbs, as shown in the following examples:

- (32) 謙謙君子 a modest, self-disciplined gentleman
- (33) 赳赳武夫 a valiant, gallant man
- (34) 仁人君子 a kindly man of high character
- (35) 血性男兒 a man who has a strong sense of justice and is ready to help the weak

Among the few proverbs about women's talents and character, one says 女子無才便是德 (a woman without talents is virtuous), which reflects the traditional belief that women should not display talents so as not to outperform men. When women demonstrate talents, they are often depicted as 'masculine'. The following are some examples:

- (36) 女中丈夫 as a man among the womenfolk
- (37) 巾幗鬚眉 a woman who acts and talks like a man

(38) 有鬚眉氣 having manly qualities (of women)

Marriage and families

Table 2 shows a more balanced portrayal of the two genders with regard to marriage and the family (40 for men, 31 for women). Nevertheless, as seen in proverbs (39) 大家閨秀 and (40) 小家碧玉, women's physical attraction is an important quality that is mentioned, regardless of their family backgrounds. In contrast, as seen in proverbs (41)–(45), the important qualities for men are their wealth and noble blood. Their physical attributes are not portrayed at all in the maxims about their families.

(39) 大家閨秀 an elegant girl of a wealthy family

(40) 小家碧玉 a pretty girl of humble birth

(41) 世家子弟 the son of an aristocratic family

(42) 公子王孫 blue-blooded young men

(43) 千金之子 the son of a wealthy family

(44) 紈褲子弟 the son of a wealthy family who does not attend to his proper duties

(45) 膏粱子弟 the son of a rich and important family

A woman's major role, as portrayed in some proverbs, is to get married. In the Confucian hierarchical social order, a wife was subordinate to her husband. Some proverbs reflect this hierarchy and show overt discrimination against women. Women were taught to exercise self-sacrifice and to accept their destiny. Women's powerlessness and passiveness are clearly reflected in the following two sayings:

(46) 嫁雞隨雞，嫁狗隨狗 When a woman is married to a rooster, she has to stick with a rooster; when she is married to a dog, she has to stick with a dog

(47) 夫唱婦隨 husband sings, wife follows

A woman's value in a traditional Chinese family appreciated with her producing male offspring to perpetuate the family name. As Mencius, a famous philosopher, said: 不孝有三，無後為大, meaning 'there are three major offences against filial piety, and of these the lack of posterity is the greatest'. Corresponding to this cultural value, the study found some proverbs depicting the joy of having a baby boy, as seen in (48)

一索得男 and (49) 弄璋之喜. Proverb (50) 伯道無兒, in contrast, depicts the misfortune of not having a son.

(48) 一索得男 having a son at the first birth

(49) 弄璋之喜 the joy of having a baby boy (who is given a jade to play with)

(50) 伯道無兒 a man without a son; feeling sorry for a family without a son

(51) 弄瓦之喜 the joy of having a baby girl (who is given a tile to play with)

Gender discrimination is clearly evident in the different metaphors employed in the proverbs about the birth of a baby boy and a baby girl: proverb (49) 弄璋之喜 compares a baby boy to a precious ‘jade’, whereas (51) 弄瓦之喜 compares a baby girl to a ‘tile’. The different metaphors clearly reveal the unequal treatment of the two genders as soon as they are born.

Family care

It is also noted that some proverbs reflect the traditional gender stereotype that the importance of women lies in their domestic work at home, as seen in (52) 侍奉箕帚 and (53) 巧婦難為無米之炊. No corresponding proverbs about men’s domestic duties were found in the study. The proverb 男耕女織 (men plough and women weave) indicates that while a man’s job was to earn a living by doing farm work, women were expected to stay indoors weaving and taking care of the family.

(52) 侍奉箕帚 perform one’s wifely duties such as cooking and cleaning

(53) 巧婦難為無米之炊 Even a good housewife cannot cook a meal without rice

Friendships and brotherhood

While a woman’s role, as depicted in Chinese proverbs, was confined to the domestic domain, men’s sphere went beyond their married life. This study recorded a total of 13 proverbs about the importance of men’s friendships and brotherhood (see some examples below). No corresponding proverb about women’s friendships or sisterhood was found.

(54) 四海之內皆兄弟也 Within the four seas all men are brothers

- (55) 手足之情 brotherly affection (as close as hands and legs)
- (56) 稱兄道弟 treat each other as brothers; call each other brothers
- (57) 難兄難弟 a well-matched pair of brothers; two of a kind
- (58) 煮豆然其 boil beans with beanstalks, meaning ‘a fight between brothers’

Negative images

The study found some proverbs that project overt negative images: 19 for men and 18 for women. While those about men mainly concern their lack of talents (e.g. (59) 庸夫俗子), and indulgence in sexual relations (e.g. (60) 遊蜂浪蝶), the proverbs presenting females pejoratively degrade women in different ways. Women are portrayed as gossipy, nosy and loud, as found in (61) 三姑六婆, (62) 村婦罵街, (63) 枕邊告狀 and (64) 河東獅吼. Proverbs (65) 婢學夫人, (66) 老嫗能解 and (67) 婦人之仁 suggest that women are ignorant, incapable and foolishly kind. Some others are about women’s unappealing appearance, as in (68) 色衰愛弛 and (69) 鬢亂釵橫, while some describe how women behave by flirting with men, as in (70) 妖聲妖氣.

- (59) 庸夫俗子 ordinary men without talents or knowledge
- (60) 遊蜂浪蝶 a loafer who has lust for women
- (61) 三姑六婆 women of the lower classes in old China with disrespectable professions, meaning ‘gossipy and nosy women’
- (62) 村婦罵街 village women bawling in the street
- (63) 枕邊告狀 speak ill of others on the pillow, meaning ‘a wife speaks ill of others to the husband’
- (64) 河東獅吼 lioness’s roar, meaning ‘having a shrewish wife’
- (65) 婢學夫人 a maid learns to act as her mistress, meaning ‘not able to learn despite efforts’
- (66) 老嫗能解 intelligible even to a senile woman, meaning ‘simple enough for everyone to understand’
- (67) 婦人之仁 the kindness of women, meaning ‘petty kindness’
- (68) 色衰愛弛 When a woman gets less pretty, love for her is less
- (69) 鬢亂釵橫 messy sideburns and loose hairpin, meaning ‘untidy (of women)’
- (70) 妖聲妖氣 evilly coquettish voice

To conclude this section about how women and men are portrayed in Chinese proverbs, the study has revealed overt gender biases. Traditionally, women are expected to be beautiful, honourable to the family, faithful and submissive to men. They are recognized through the domestic roles that they play in the family, and are negatively depicted as being foolish, nosy and loud. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be portrayed in a positive or neutral way with regard to sexual desires. They are described as talented, brave and kind. Wealth and the public sphere are the domains of men.

Research question 3: How are gendered nouns used generically?

The study recorded a total of 52 proverbs using literally masculine words for generic metaphoric meanings, but only four proverbs using feminine words for the same purpose. The gap reflects the ‘male-as-norm’ ideology. Examples include Proverb (71) 醉翁之意不在酒, in which the noun phrase 醉翁 is no longer confined to a drunken old man. Instead, it refers to ‘drunken people in general’. Likewise, while 子 can refer to ‘son’ and 孫 ‘grandson’, maxim (72) 子子孫孫 refers to ‘descendants’. The following show some examples of masculine generic constructions.

- (71) 醉翁之意不在酒 The intention of the drunken man lies not on the wine, but on other purposes, meaning ‘having an ulterior purpose’
- (72) 子子孫孫 sons and grandsons, meaning ‘descendants’
- (73) 望子成龍 hope a son will become a dragon, meaning ‘hold high hopes for one’s child’
- (74) 以小人之心度君子之腹 gauge the abdomen of a gentleman with a villain’s heart, meaning ‘being suspicious of others’
- (75) 僧多粥少 There are too many monks and too little gruel, meaning ‘cannot meet the needs of people’

The few proverbs using feminine words generically reveal the semantic denigration of females. For example, (76) 老嫗能解 ‘simple enough for everyone to understand’ implies that old women are ignorant and (77) 婦人之仁 ‘showing wrong kindness’ reflects the stereotypical perception of women as naive and simple. Objectification of women could be seen in Proverb (78) 賠了夫人又折兵, which literally means the loss of a wife and soldiers, and refers to ‘great losses’ metaphorically. This saying

demonstrates that women were traditionally treated as men's property and could be used as a commodity for transaction by their husbands.

- (76) 老嫗能解 intelligible even to a senile woman, meaning 'simple enough for everyone to understand'
- (77) 婦人之仁 a woman's kindness, meaning 'petty kindness'
- (78) 賠了夫人又折兵 lose a wife as well as soldiers, meaning 'great losses'

Research question 4: Are men always presented before women when both appear in a proverb?

The findings of this study indicate that 24 proverbs follow the order of the male preceding the female and only six have the order of 'female-before-male'. Some examples are shown below.

Male-first proverbs:

- (79) 公說公有理，婆說婆有理 an old man says he is right, and an old woman says she is right, meaning 'one says one is right'
- (80) 男盜女娼 men as robbers and women as prostitutes
- (81) 才子佳人 a gifted scholar and a pretty girl

Female-first proverbs:

- (82) 怨女曠夫 women and men who are not yet married
- (83) 妻離子散 be separated from one's wife and son, meaning 'with one's family broken up'
- (84) 陰陽怪氣 female-male mystifying, meaning 'queer; eccentric'
- (85) 一決雌雄 to decide who is female and who is male, meaning 'to fight a decisive battle'

Among the few proverbs with a 'female-before-male' order, Proverb (83) follows the generation/age order (妻離子散 loss of the wife and the son). Two involve the term 陰陽 'female-male' (as in (84) 陰陽怪氣), and two others involve the term 雌雄 'female-male' (as in (85) 一決雌雄). Ettner (2002, p. 39) mentions the phonological constraint of 'qing-before-zhuo' ('voiceless preceding voiced initial') as the reason for non-compliance with the semantic rule of 'male-firstness' for the two terms 陰陽 and 雌雄.

Discussion

Proverbs portray social values and mirror attitudes. The present study found that sexist beliefs are deeply entrenched in Chinese proverbs in various ways. Regarding Research Question 1 about the number of proverbs portraying women and men, it was found that there were more Chinese sayings describing women than men. Nevertheless, over half of the proverbs about women depict their physical attributes. If these are excluded, a fairly balanced number of proverbs portraying men and women exist. This finding suggests that, traditionally, femininity is equated with glamour and physical charm. Gender stereotypes are further revealed in the attempt to answer Research Question 2 about how women and men are portrayed in Chinese proverbs. The study shows that while the value in men is placed on their talents, personal character and friendship building, the beauty in women lies in their physical appearance, chastity, submissiveness to men, nurturing and caring for the family and son-bearing to continue the family line. Some Chinese proverbs have locked women into the role of mother and wife in the domestic sphere, and they have to be submissive and faithful to their husbands.

Do the gender stereotypes and inequalities witnessed in Chinese proverbs, which mirror the history and culture of traditional Chinese society, still exist in contemporary Hong Kong? While the high value placed on women's physical attraction can still be found through such media as educational materials and advertisements (Chan & Cheng, 2012; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2009; Lee & Collins, 2008), with the advancement of Hong Kong society, it is no longer appropriate to view modern Hong Kong women through the traditional attributes. Improvements in their educational and training opportunities have resulted in an increasing number of women participating in economic activities and gaining increasing financial independence. According to the Census and Statistics Department (2014), the increase in the labour force was more significant for women than for men from 1986 to 2013: a rise of 880,400 (or 89.3%) for women and 278,700 (or 16.3%) for men. The growth in the female labour force is partly attributable to the increased number of foreign domestic helpers working in Hong Kong households, marriage postponement and an increased prevalence of unmarried women. From 1981 to 2013, the median

age at first marriage for women was postponed from 23.9 to 29.1, and during 1986 to 2013 the number of never-married women increased by 62.9%. Meanwhile, the number of divorces increased substantially from 2,062 in 1981 to 22,271 in 2013. The number of remarriages of the bride increased from 1,956 (or 4.5% of the total number of marriages) in 1986 to 13,036 (or 23.5%) in 2013.

The unequal treatment of boys and girls reflected in some Chinese proverbs is also diminishing in reality. It is pleasing to find that many parents nowadays treat daughters and sons equally. Statistics show that females receive equal educational opportunities to males, with the former making up more than half of the students (52.3%) attending post-secondary education in 2011 ([Census and Statistics Department, 2014](#)). Valuing sons over daughters is commonly regarded as conservative and outdated in contemporary Hong Kong. Having said that, some traditional beliefs that are passed down through old sayings are still entrenched in some people's minds. The concept of 'male superiority and female inferiority' is evident in some people's preference for sons over daughters. For example, a tycoon who had a burning desire for grandsons was featured in a news report regarding his prayers in a temple for male offspring ([Headline Daily, 25 April 2007](#)). His wish was realized when one of his sons found a surrogate to bear triplet boys. It was noted in a news report that 'the pressure of producing male offspring' was then removed ([Lee, 2010, p. 1](#)). The presence of conflicting modern and traditional ideologies reveals changing social values in present-day Hong Kong.

Regarding Research Question 3 on the generic use of gendered words, the presence of several proverbs using feminine words figuratively to demean women manifests gender inequality. Meanwhile, the inbuilt bias of 'male-as-norm' in a number of Chinese proverbs exacerbates the problem of gender inequality. In order to address the bias, newly coined proverbs using feminine words to replace masculine generic constructions, to include women explicitly can be found in contemporary Chinese. For example, the counterpart of the proverb 望子成龍 (hope a son/child will become a dragon) is 望女成鳳 (hope a daughter will become a phoenix). Although the latter has not yet been formally entered into dictionaries, it is not uncommonly used in Hong Kong society. A WiseSearch² of Hong Kong newspapers found 229 instances of 望女成鳳, compared with 2,185

instances of 望子成龍 in the period from 2009 to 2013. Other examples of newly coined proverbs using feminine words as a substitution for the traditional masculine generic words are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Proverbs using masculine generic words and their feminine counterparts.
WiseSearch 2009–2013*

Proverb	Gender	Frequency
望子成龍 (hope a son/child will become a dragon, meaning ‘long for a child to succeed in life’)	masculine	2,185
望女成鳳 (hope a daughter will become a phoenix)	feminine	229
知子莫若父 (no one knows a son/child better than the father)	masculine	22
知女莫若母 (no one knows a daughter better than the mother)	feminine	10
父慈子孝 (a kindly father and a son/child with filial piety)	masculine	246
母慈女孝 (a kindly mother and a daughter with filial piety)	feminine	11

Research Question 4 concerns the order of mention when a female and a male are referred to in a proverb. The findings confirm the traditional ‘male-first’ norm, though it is occasionally violated when the respect for seniority and the phonological constraint of ‘qing-before-zhuo’ are observed. In contemporary Hong Kong, with the higher status of women and people’s increased gender awareness, newly coined proverbs reversing the word order and the meaning are sometimes found. One such example is the co-existence of the traditional proverb 夫唱婦隨 (husband sings and wife follows) and the newly coined proverb 婦唱夫隨 (wife sings and husband follows). A WiseSearch for these two proverbs shows 660 occurrences of the former and 158 of the latter in Hong Kong newspapers in the five-year period from 2009 to 2013.

Proverbs are one register of language that plays an important role in transmitting cultural values and shaping one’s thoughts, including gender attitudes and identities. Attention should be paid to the biased images of women and men that exist in some proverbs. To avoid perpetuation of gender inequality in the learning of Chinese proverbs, children could be given opportunities to critically evaluate the representation of the two

genders, the male-as-norm order and the coinage of new proverbs which use feminine words as substitutes for masculine words. School education should include the acknowledgement of demographic changes, especially women's increasing economic status and independence.

Conclusion

It is commonly believed that proverbs provide advice and wisdom about personal and public matters through the social norms and beliefs presented. The present study, however, found that not all proverbs offer good advice, as there are some that carry within them gender discrimination and stereotypes. It was found that although women are not under-represented in Chinese proverbs, over half of the proverbs describing women are about their physical attributes, implying that a woman's importance lies in her physical beauty. While men are treated with a focus on features such as talents, bravery, friendships and sexual desires, women's sphere is their family. They are submissive to men and are portrayed as men's sex objects. These traditional images and stereotypes, nevertheless, do not accurately represent the status of women in Hong Kong today. The present study also found the prevalence of masculine constructions and the male-first convention in Chinese proverbs. Hussein (2009) suggests that sexist proverbs that denigrate women should be discouraged so as to improve the unhappy conditions of women. From my perspective, a better resolution to the problem would be to encourage learners to critically evaluate the sexist proverbs and heighten their awareness of the coinage of new proverbs in the media so that children may come to understand the Chinese culture and the thinking of previous generations on the one hand, and appreciate the evolution and emancipation of women over time on the other. According to Ennaji (2008), proverbs are imbued with culture, and are worth studying, provided that learners do not take the gender-biased proverbs for granted. It is deemed important for educationalists and parents to pay attention to the hidden gendered messages and help children to develop a heightened awareness of the undesirability of the gender-biased features in some proverbs so as to promote a gender-fair society.

A limitation of the present study is that the investigation was confined to one dictionary, the results of which were based on the proverb entries

selected by the writer and the publisher. Despite this limitation, the findings of the study confirmed the introspection of some writers and revealed the various ways that gender biases are hidden in some traditional proverbs. Further studies involving corpus studies of how proverbs are used in contemporary Chinese and a deeper investigation of people's attitudes towards sexist proverbs could enhance our understanding of the development of Chinese proverbs and how language changes in response to societal changes.

Notes

¹ TSA is an assessment for Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 students to provide the Hong Kong Government and school management with information on school standards in the key learning areas of English, Chinese and Mathematics.

² WiseSearch is a database that covers the key newspapers and publications from leading Hong Kong newspaper publishers. It includes the daily delivery of 7,000 new articles on local and global issues (*Wisers*, 27 September, 2014).

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Cuerpos Femeninos / Territorios Feminizados: Las Consecuencias de la Conquista en las Mujeres Mapuce en Neuquén

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Female Bodies / Feminized Territories: The Conquest Consequences in Mapuce Women in Neuquén¹

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Abstract

The undeniable indigenous presence in the province of Neuquén, in the Northern Patagonia region of Argentina, has resulted in a vast number of academic productions on the subject, however, mapuce² women have been invisibilized systematically. Even, sometimes, gender studies have sinned of Eurocentric view for not expliciting in their analysis the links between different dimensions and shape traversing the reality of these other subaltern. We consider that non-white women suffer a situation of oppression, present for centuries, as a consequence of the gender, ethnicity and class intersection, as well as colonialism and patriarchy founding of the Nation State. As such, in this article we propose to reflect on some Academy omissions, casting light on these other stories little told from political science and local gender studies. To do this, we will use information obtained from our fieldwork in communities (lofce) Mapuce. Thus, we propose to consider the consequences that brought the conquest and colonization of the traditional social order and how this has impacted on the current situation of indigenous women.

Keywords: gender, mapuce women, native people.

Cuerpos Femeninos/Territorios Feminizados: Las Consecuencias de la Conquista en las Mujeres Mapuce en Neuquén¹

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Nacional del Comahue.*

Resumen

La innegable presencia indígena en la provincia de Neuquén, región norte de la Patagonia Argentina, se ha traducido en una vasta producción académica sobre el tema, sin embargo las mujeres mapuce² han sido invisibilizadas de manera sistemática. Incluso, muchas veces, los estudios de género han pecado de eurocéntricos por no haber explicitado en sus análisis la vinculación existente entre diversas dimensiones que atraviesan y configuran la realidad de estas otras subalternas. A nuestro entender la situación de opresión a la que se ven, desde hace siglos, sometidas las mujeres no-blancas responde a los intercrucos entre género, etnia y clase, como así al colonialismo y patriarcado fundantes del Estado-Nación. Por lo dicho, en el presente artículo nos proponemos reflexionar en torno a ciertas omisiones de la academia, echando luz sobre estas otras historias poco contadas desde la ciencia política y los estudios de género locales. Para ello, haremos uso de información obtenida de nuestro trabajo de campo en comunidades (lofce) Mapuce. De esta manera, nos proponemos reflexionar sobre las consecuencias que trajeron la Conquista y posterior colonización sobre el ordenamiento social tradicional y cómo esto ha impactado en la realidad actual de las mujeres indígenas.

Palabras clave: género, mujer mapuce, pueblos originarios.

El Pueblo/Nación Mapuce conforma una unidad política, lingüística y cultural, ubicada a ambos lados de la Cordillera de Los Andes y del centro al sur de los actuales Estados de Chile y Argentina. De modo que el Pueblo Mapuce se constituye como una Nación; la misma abarca diversas identidades regionales. Dichas identidades se constituyen a partir de la ubicación espacial-territorial de acuerdo al *Meli Wixan Mapu* (los cuatro puntos de la tierra). En consecuencia, el término *Mapuce* hace referencia al conjunto de identidades regionales que comparten una cultura histórica y una misma lengua (Odhpi, 2008). Actualmente, en *Puelmapu* (Argentina) la mayor concentración demográfica se ubica en la provincia de Neuquén, región norpatagónica argentina. De hecho, según datos del Censo Nacional realizado en el año 2010, la población indígena (y sus descendiente/s) suma un total de aproximadamente cuarenta y cinco mil habitantes, distribuidos en cincuenta y siete comunidades (solamente algunas cuentan con el reconocimiento formal-personería jurídica- por parte de las autoridades estatales).

La evidente y significativa presencia indígena en la región norpatagónica se ha traducido en una vasta producción académica, fundamentalmente historiográfica y antropológica, sobre la temática, sin embargo, las mujeres mapuce han sido invisibilizadas de manera sistemática por la academia occidental y, predominantemente, patriarcal. Indudablemente, el universalismo etnocéntrico occidental ha penetrado al conocimiento en todas sus esferas y, por ello, persiste una marcada tendencia al predominio y desarrollo de ciertos feminismos hegemónicos, dotados de un conocimiento insuficiente de las mujeres no-blancas, de las “otras subalternas” (Mohanty, 2008). Como ha expresado Rosalía Paiva: “[e]l concepto de género es patrimonio de las ciencias sociales como categoría de análisis y su construcción teórica es parte de un proceso social y académico distante de los Andes” (Bidaseca & Vazquez Laba, 2010, p. 3).

A propósito de este desencuentro entre la teoría y la *praxis* de los feminismos latinoamericanos, las mapuce identifican dos puntos nodales. En primer lugar, la necesidad de romper con la tendencia universalizante basada en la identidad individual propia de occidente, como contraposición a una construcción identitaria del “ser mujer indígena” desde la identidad colectiva. Y, por otro lado, señalan como irrelevante la distinción entre espacio público y privado dentro de la matriz de pensamiento mapuce, en la

cual la concepción temporal-espacial se inscribe en lo comunitario y cíclico (Valdez & Pereyra, 2004). Pues previo al proceso de colonización y conquista bajo el proyecto étnico del criollaje argentino (Di Pietro, 2012), la organización ancestral socio comunitaria-territorial del Pueblo/Nación Mapuce se estructuraba, fundamentalmente, en torno al principio de la *complementariedad* entre género y generaciones.

La mal llamada Conquista del Desierto, y posterior colonización, logró desarticular el ordenamiento ancestral/tradicional mapuce e imponer, a través del terror étnico (Segato, 1998) y de género, un sistema moderno/colonial de género basado en la heteronormatividad, el dimorfismo sexual y el patriarcado (Lugones, 2008). Ergo, la organización social fue racializada y jerarquizada de acuerdo a las demandas y exigencias del naciente modo de producción capitalista. En resumidas cuentas, la raza como patrón de poder permitió que las mapuce, las *zomo*, fueran reinventadas como “mujeres” al servicio del capitalismo eurocentrado y global. Y, a pesar de los siglos transcurridos, dicho proceso de domesticación (Mendoza, 2010, p. 7) continúa vigente y se materializa a través de la violencia contra las mujeres, la feminización de la pobreza y otros fenómenos emergentes a la luz del capitalismo neoliberal.

Por lo dicho, en el presente artículo nos proponemos, a partir de nuestra formación en ciencia política, y con aportes de los estudios de género, describir cómo eran las relaciones inter e intra genéricas en el Pueblo/Nación Mapuce previo a la Conquista y, a partir de ello, entender las transformaciones que se sucedieron *a posteriori* de la colonización *wigka* (blanco-conquistador). Para ello haremos uso de fuentes orales recientemente entrevistadas durante nuestro trabajo de campo realizado en diferentes comunidades mapuce. Pues el presente documento se enmarca dentro de nuestra tesis doctoral, la cual consiste en una investigación cualitativa basada en la aplicación del método etnográfico³ y el análisis de documentos claves (fuentes secundarias), como por ejemplo: noticias periodísticas, informes técnicos, entre otros. De modo que, tal como hemos adelantado, en este artículo haremos uso de información obtenida *in situ* y, a su vez, de valiosos aportes hallados durante nuestro proceso de indagación teórica.

Por tanto, en el primer título del presente trabajo nos proponemos describir en qué consiste el principio de la dualidad y complementariedad en

el marco de la filosofía y cultura mapuce. Luego, en la siguiente sección, nos detendremos especialmente en los impactos que tuvo la Conquista del Desierto sobre los cuerpos-territorios de las mujeres mapuce, entendidos como espacios de disputa política. Así, finalmente, aproximaremos algunas ideas a modo de cierre con el ánimo de invitar al debate acerca de la situación actual que encuentra a las mujeres indígenas en contextos de conflicto en los que se intersecta la discriminación por razón de clase, género y etnia. Pues, a nuestro juicio reflexionar sobre estos procesos históricos nos permite conocer y comprender la realidad actual que atraviesan las mujeres mapuce, en un escenario colmado de conflictos sociales y políticos.

Hijas de la tierra

La complementaridad como elemento medular de la cosmovisión y cultura mapuce

Para comenzar es preciso advertir que a lo largo de la historia de la humanidad los seres humanos han construido marcos de referencia conceptuales a partir de la observación de las características de su universo inmediato –espacio, tiempo y materia-. Por tanto, la cosmovisión es en tanto parte de un contexto socio-cultural determinado, de tal forma que “las cosmologías que el hombre ha construido en diversas épocas y lugares reflejan inevitablemente el medio ambiente físico e intelectual en el cual ha vivido, incluyendo por sobre todo los intereses y la cultura de la sociedad particular a la cual él ha pertenecido” (Robertson citado en Grebe *et al*, 1972, p. 1). Dicho esto, podemos avanzar en torno a uno de los aspectos fundantes de la cultura y cosmovisión mapuce -y clave para nuestro análisis-: el territorio.

En términos generales el territorio puede ser definido como el espacio culturalmente construido a través del tiempo. Esto significa que el territorio es toda porción de naturaleza simbólica y empírica modelada por una determinada sociedad, sobre la cual ésta reivindica derechos y garantiza a sus miembros la posibilidad de acceso, control y uso de los recursos que allí se encuentran. En este sentido la territorialidad es un fenómeno colectivo que resulta de la histórica y múltiple articulación establecida entre naturaleza y sociedad en contextos específicos (Barabas, 2008). En otras palabras, podemos decir que la territorialización es un fenómeno histórico y cultural, y

por ello existen diversos modos de entender, vivir y pensar al territorio (Zambrano citado en Espinoza-Damián, 2010, p. 25-26).

Particularmente en el caso que nos ocupa, la cultura y cosmovisión mapuce, el territorio es entendido como una construcción social que surge a partir de las relaciones sociales y de producción; de esta manera son las relaciones sociales las que definen las formas de organización espacial y de apropiación del territorio. Se trata de un espacio socializado y culturalizado, portador de significados, que es parte del sistema social y, a su vez, condiciona su funcionamiento (Odhpi, 2008). Dentro de la concepción filosófica del Pueblo/Nación Mapuce, la noción de *Mapu* no se acota al suelo o a la tierra, entendida como mera materia, sino que implica un concepto integral donde cada *Newen*, cada vida, es *Mapu*. A raíz de ello, surge la identidad particular de cada ser, de allí deviene el original nombre de *Mapunce*, el cual significa “gente parte, gente enraizada en el *Mapu*” (CMN, 2010, p. 102).

La organización territorial mapuce se basa en el *Az Mapu* (leyes de la naturaleza/ordenamiento), tiene su origen o inicio en cada *lof* (comunidad) y continúa en un *Kiñe Az Mapu* (entidad territorial) a modo de subsistema o parte fundamental del *Waj Mapu* (Odhpi, 2008). El *Waj Mapu* es una noción compleja que refiere al ordenamiento circular de las vidas que componen esta gran energía, la cual podría ser traducida como “cosmos”. Según los/as *Kimce* (sabios), el *Waj Mapu* se encuentra formado por diversas dimensiones, tales como el *Wenu Mapu*, *Naq Mapu* o *Pvjv Mapu*, *Ragiñ Wenu Mapu* y *Miñce Mapu*. Varios/as antropólogos expertos en cosmovisión mapuce, han explicado cómo estas dimensiones pueden ser representadas como plataformas (verticales) superpuestas en el espacio, las cuales fueron creadas en orden descendente en tiempos del origen. Según estos/as estudiosos, entre ellos/as la etnógrafa M. Esther Grebe (1972), para los y las mapuce el mundo natural es una réplica del mundo sobrenatural.

Algunas de las dimensiones que componen al *Waj Mapu* sólo pueden ser conocidas por quienes se desempeñan como *Pu Maci* (CMN, 2010). A su vez, se pueden identificar cuatro plataformas del bien y en oposición a éstas se presentan zonas oscuras, plataformas del mal, representadas por el caos y el desorden. El *Wenu Mapu*, cuya traducción literal es “espacio de arriba”, es la dimensión o el espacio donde se reproducen espiritualmente todas las formas de vida del *Naq Mapu*. Allí conviven diversas fuerzas que dan vida y

orientan a los seres humanos sobre cómo mantener el equilibrio y la armonía en constante interacción con los demás elementos de *Waj Mapu*. Por su parte, el *Naq Mapu* o *Pvju Mapu* es una dimensión dual, porque se trata de un espacio inmaterial y cósmico, y al mismo tiempo es la dimensión en la que nos movemos y desarrollamos cotidianamente los seres humanos. El *Ragiñ Wenu Mapu* es “la dimensión del medio”, allí existen espacios denominados *Ayon* y se generan los distintos tipos de vientos ([Maci Caniullan en CMN, 2010, p. 59](#)). Por último, el *Miñce Mapu*, el subsuelo o dimensión de abajo, es el lugar en el cual se encuentran los minerales, y otras fuerzas (a veces destructivas) capaces de manifestarse en el *Naq Mapu*.

Como observamos la visión cósmica del Pueblo Mapuce es dualista y dialéctica, puesto que de la tensión constante entre los opuestos (*Wenu Mapu* y *Miñce Mapu*) surge el equilibrio en la tierra. Tal como dicen Grebe, Pacheco y Segura: “la verdadera polaridad tiende a la unión; y la conjunción de dos fuerzas opuestas en una condición necesaria para lograr el equilibrio cósmico dualista” (1972, p. 3). Vale agregar que la “plataforma cuadrada terrestre” constituye la tierra de las cuatro esquinas (*Meli Wixan Mapu*), cuyo punto de referencia es, aparentemente, el ciclo solar diario⁴. De esta concepción –horizontal– del cosmos se derivan dos tipos de órdenes espaciales: uno ético y otro ceremonial ([Grebe et al, 1972](#)). También a los puntos cardinales se les asigna un orden jerárquico, guiado por la dupla bien-mal y por el movimiento circular contrario a las agujas del reloj a partir del Este. De este modo observamos que “el principio dual también se expresa en la concepción del universo y la naturaleza, por ejemplo en la mítica *kay-kay vilu* y *treng-treng vilu*, *pehuen wentru/pehuen domo*, y así sucesivamente la distinción de parejas en los seres vivos” ([Citarelli y Painemal citadas en Catricheo & Huentequero, 2013, p. 60](#)).

Todo indica que es en el espacio del territorio comunal donde se generan y re-generan socialidades, allí se territorializa/corporiza el discurso, las narrativas sobre las relaciones sociales y de género ([Espinoza-Damián, 2010](#)). En este sentido, el territorio es una pieza fundamental para comprender la organización social, inter e intra genérica, en la sociedad mapuce libre, es decir previo a la Conquista *wigka* (blanco-conquistador). La concepción comunitaria del territorio y el trabajo colectivo como componente articulador del entramado socio-productivo caracterizaron a esta

etapa de la historia mapuce en la cual primaba una concepción del ser *zomo*⁵ (mujer) y ser *wenxu* (varón) diferente a la dominante en occidente. Al respecto, Ziley Mora indica que en la concepción mapuce el concepto-idea de ser mujer entiende a “*Domo* como el principio que despierta, dirige y proporciona solidez al proyecto inacabado del hombre” (Catricheo & Huentequero, 2013, p. 60).

Entonces, observamos que como sostienen Catricheo y Huentequero (2013): “el principio de complementariedad, paridad y reciprocidad mapuche toma significancia en el sentido que el principio masculino y femenino no es posible su existencia, de uno sin el otro” (p. 60). A lo fines de nuestra inquietud, es menester no perder de vista que en todas las culturas las relaciones de género tienen raíces estructurales (división del trabajo) e institucionales (normas y reglas) que guían la distribución de recursos y oportunidades dentro de la sociedad y entre varones y mujeres en particular. Estas normas de género se construyen, también, a nivel simbólico, ya que se sustentan y reproducen en las concepciones, mentalidades e imaginarios colectivos (Bonder, 2012, p. 141). En relación a esto, una referente, educadora y conocedora de la cultura mapuce entrevistada nos comentó lo siguiente:

En tiempos de cazadores y recolectores los hombres salían a buscar los alimentos [...] se dice que nosotras las mujeres hablamos más, incluso eso debe estar en nuestra información genética, porque los hombres tenían que salir a cazar y para cazar tenían que estar en silencio y las mujeres no. Las mujeres tenían que quedarse con sus hijos y obviamente en comunicación permanente, hablando, comunicándose. Los hombres estaban mucho tiempo afuera y las mujeres mucho tiempo adentro con los hijos, entonces obviamente la crianza de los chicos estaba a cargo de la mamá. Pero no porque las mujeres no podían salir a cazar, seguramente lo hacían, pero más lo hacían los hombres. (P.P, entrevista personal, 09 de agosto de 2012)

A partir de este relato podemos identificar una división de roles en términos de género. Es necesario mencionar que dichos roles son comportamientos aprendidos a través del proceso de socialización y que pueden ser flexibles o rígidos, complementarios o conflictivos (Bonder, 2012, p. 139). Al interior de la sociedad cazadora-recolectora, en el caso

mapuce, el varón era quien cargaba con la responsabilidad de garantizar la alimentación familiar mediante la caza, sin embargo algunos autores aseguran que la agricultura a menor escala también era una actividad de valor. Y en esta labor agrícola las mujeres desempeñaban un importante papel, aunque siempre bajo los preceptos del trabajo colectivo-comunitario. Esto explica, de alguna manera, la estrecha vinculación presente entre el ser femenino mapuce y la tierra como fuente de vida, como dice Mora: “[e]lla es [la mujer mapuce] la prolongación fecunda del vientre de la Tierra y la aliada mágica de todo el orden natural” (1992, p. 27).

El trabajo agrícola ligó estrechamente la mujer mapuche con la naturaleza. La indujo a conocer los secretos de la tierra, de las yerbas, de los frutos, de los tiempos de vida y maduración. Aprendió a domesticar plantas y animales, a apreciar sus frutos, sus olores, sus sabores y sus propiedades sanatorias. Surgió así un lazo entre la mujer y la tierra, que era de sabiduría experimental y magia de complicidad. Al punto en que fue ese vínculo el que se convirtió en el misterio simbólico de la cultura mapuche. La tierra no fue sólo una metáfora de la fertilidad femenina, o viceversa, ya que fue el espacio concreto donde, día a día, el trabajo de las mujeres convertía la fertilidad de la tierra en la vida de todos. (Rosenbluth, 2010, p. 13)

En consecuencia podemos presuponer que al interior del pueblo Mapuce existía una asignación de roles basados en el trabajo colectivo y la *complementariedad*, lo cual los convierte en roles flexibles y susceptibles de modificaciones de acuerdo al contexto. Estamos en condiciones de sospechar, entonces, siguiendo y parafraseando a Rita Segato, que en el pueblo Mapuce libre existía un orden de género diferente al propuesto por el mundo moderno occidental y, en consecuencia, cuando esa modernidad/colonial se aproximó a las comunidades, lo modificó peligrosamente (2011, p. 34). Cabe agregar que ya Friedrich Engels, hace muchos años, suponía una primitiva división del trabajo entre los sexos en las sociedades -precapitalistas- que se estructuraban sobre una visión comunitaria de la propiedad.

En el caso mapuce si bien se observa una división sexual del trabajo y, por ende, se percibe al ámbito de lo “doméstico” como propio de las mujeres, lo cierto es que la concepción originaria de dicho espacio era

sustancialmente diferente a la propuesta por el capitalismo moderno. Tal como ya anticipamos, y según afirman Valdez y Pereyra (2004), la separación entre el espacio público y el privado es una distinción irrelevante dentro de la matriz de pensamiento mapuce, en la cual la concepción temporal-espacial se inscribe en lo comunitario y cíclico. Así, vemos cómo la modernidad/colonial, tras la Conquista, no sólo se tradujo en la subordinación social de las mujeres no-blancas sino que también las expulsó de los espacios de toma de decisiones, de los espacios de poder.

A propósito de cómo era el tradicional ordenamiento de las relaciones inter a intra genéricas, resulta pertinente resaltar que la cultura mapuce se basa en la oralidad; por ello resulta difícil corroborar cómo eran dichas relaciones previo a la llegada de los conquistadores. La lengua mapuce, *mapuzugun*, encierra un vasto contenido simbólico, filosófico, ideológico y cultural, imposible de ser traducido de manera exacta al castellano. A pesar de ello, nuestro trabajo de campo nos ha permitido conocer, por medio de sus relatos, cómo creen/recuerdan/saben que era aquel ordenamiento ancestral. Sobre este punto algunas de nuestras entrevistadas nos han comentado lo siguiente:

Si hablamos desde nuestra cosmovisión, obviamente tenemos que referirnos a lo que nosotros entendemos, como Pueblo Mapuce, como nuestras leyes, en nuestro idioma el *Az Mapu*, lo que implica el ordenamiento circular y horizontal de todas las vidas. Incluidas las personas, porque somos parte. A partir de eso, todos los elementos, todas las vidas del *Waj Mapu* se organizan respondiendo, de alguna manera, su organización básica digamos respetando género y generación, los adultos y los jóvenes, varones y mujeres [...]. Esto está dicho dentro de nuestra propia concepción espiritual, podríamos decir [...]. Lo que también implica, de alguna manera, la complementariedad o lo opuesto complementario que funciona de esa manera, entonces para entender cuál es el rol de la mujer, cuál es el rol de los hombres hay que entender la complementariedad. (P.P, entrevista personal, 09 de agosto de 2012).

Estas palabras nos permiten constatar la perdurabilidad a lo largo de los años que ha logrado la noción de *complementariedad*, como fundamento de la cosmovisión y cultura ancestral originaria. La complejidad espiritual de este pueblo se erige sobre el reconocimiento de diversos elementos de la

naturaleza, “[n]o se cree en un ser superior por lo tanto no hay seres inferiores, por ello constituimos por miles de años una sociedad horizontal y circular” (Millán en Bidaseca & VazquezLaba, 2011, p. 129). Pues, como ya hemos insinuado, se trata de una matriz de pensamiento espiralado (Gavilán, 2008), construida de forma colectiva, y notablemente antagónica al modelo lineal dominante en occidente.

Tal como detallamos al comienzo de este apartado, el principio de la dualidad es un elemento medular de la cultura mapuce, puesto que históricamente este pueblo se organizó de acuerdo al *Az Mapu* (leyes de la naturaleza). Y así, según el pensamiento tetrádico del ser mapuce, cada *Newen* (fuerza del cosmos) se organiza según los cuatro elementos que lo conforman y dan origen: *Kuse* (anciana), *Fvca* (anciano), *Vjca Zomo* (joven mujer) y *Wece Wenxu* (joven varón). De esta forma, la unidad y el equilibrio sólo son posibles a partir de la complementariedad entre género y generaciones. Aquí vale subrayar, nuevamente, que se trata de una perspectiva dialéctica del ser mapuce, la cual también ha sido históricamente plasmada en el instrumento sagrado, el *kultun*.

De nuevo, resulta pertinente advertir que esta visión basada en la complementariedad no es exclusiva del Pueblo/Nación Mapuce, puesto que numerosos pueblos originarios –de América e incluso de África- comparten rasgos similares. Hace ya varios años que diferentes autoras feministas de distintas latitudes, entre ellas Gerda Lerner (1990), aseguran que en numerosas poblaciones no-occidentales la asimetría sexual no suponía relaciones de dominación o subordinación, sino que implicaban una mirada basada en la complementariedad. Al respecto, también Silvia Federici (2010) ha opinado: “[a]ntes de la conquista, las mujeres americanas tenían sus propias organizaciones, sus esferas de actividad reconocidas socialmente y, si bien no eran iguales a los hombres, se las consideraba complementarias a ellos en cuanto a su contribución a la familia y la sociedad” (p. 343).

Si todo es dos, es que dos estaban ahí desde el principio, no hay principio sin dos. Esta idea originaria implica equilibrio, igualdad de valor y no homogeneidad. Para la generación de cualquier cosa dos son necesarios, porque la generación es dialógica, es un “ponerse de acuerdo”, es construir armonía, mantener un “balance fluido”. Trasladada a la realidad femenina-masculina, que no es sino una de

las múltiples dualidades creadoras, implicaría una importancia igual de las mujeres y los hombres. (Gargallo, 2014, p. 81)

A raíz de todo lo dicho cabe que nos preguntemos: ¿es válido y posible analizar a los pueblos indígenas en términos de género?⁶ En este sentido, la pensadora María Lugones (2008) nos acerca a la idea del igualitarismo ginecrático y no-engenerizado como forma de organización social en las sociedades no-blancas y, a partir de ello, sugiere que las diferencias de género fueron impuestas como consecuencia de la colonización y el capitalismo eurocentrado y global. En otras palabras, la modernidad/colonial “engenerizó” al conocimiento y a las relaciones sociales, lo cual significa que, en el caso que nos toca, las *zomo* (hembras mapuce) y los *wenxu* (machos mapuce) fueron transformados -mediante un violento proceso de “civilización” y evangelización- en “mujeres” y “varones”, y de esta forma equiparados a los varones y mujeres occidentales, blancos/as, burgueses/as y, fundamentalmente, heterosexuales. También la pensadora Francesca Gargallo (2014) en sus reflexiones sobre la complementariedad y las consecuencias de la conquista, afirma lo siguiente:

La primera incidencia del estrato genérico colonial sobre esta visión dual de todo lo que es vivo o tiene espíritu (las montañas, las plantas, las aguas, los animales, los seres humanos) es la imposición de una heteronormatividad [...] acompañada de una jerarquía sexual que hace de la complementariedad un servicio que las mujeres les deben a los hombres, una forma sacralizada y, por ende, inmutable, de sumisión”. (2014, p.81).

Para continuar, debemos decir que María Lugones agrega que al transformarse las “hembras” (*zomo*) en “mujeres” se las excluyó de la arena pública creada, también, por la modernidad/colonial. Aquí retomamos lo que marcábamos arriba, el espacio doméstico fue reinventado y reinterpretado, como esfera privada, a la luz de los intereses del modo de producción capitalista. Así, también fueron reinventadas las mujeres no-blancas, quienes “pasaron a ser concebidas como animales a ser concebidas como símiles de mujer en tantas versiones de ‘mujer’ como fueron necesarias para los procesos del capitalismo eurocentrado global” (Lugones, 2008, p. 45). Desde entonces, como ya hemos adelantado, el sistema de género moderno/colonial

hegemónico se sustenta principalmente sobre el dimorfismo sexual, la heterosexualidad entendida como norma y el patriarcado.

Resulta interesante observar que, según algunos de los relatos que pudimos recoger en el trabajo de campo, dentro de la tradicional organización social mapuce se practicaba la poligamia. Esta forma de organización de la vida social y sexual fue condenada y prohibida a partir de la conquista y, su correlato, evangelizador. Sobre esto nos interesa resaltar principalmente dos cuestiones. Por un lado, de acuerdo a las explicaciones dadas por diferentes antropólogos especialistas en el tema, podemos decir que la poligamia servía como política económica para ampliar el dominio territorial⁷ (Mora, 2011). Y, por otro lado, marcar que la proscripción de la poligamia contribuyó notoriamente a la desarticulación de la organización socio-territorial mapuce y, como afirma Federici (2010), constituyó otra fuente de degradación para las mujeres. Pues, “de la noche a la mañana, los hombres se vieron obligados a separarse de sus mujeres o ellas se vieron obligadas a convertirse en sirvientas al tiempo que los niños que habían nacido de estas uniones [eran] clasificados [como ilegítimos]” (Federici, 2010, p. 344).

La familia monógama, como hace años explicó Engels (1884), es una institución creada para garantizar la herencia de la tierra, la propiedad privada; por ende es un pilar fundamental para el correcto desarrollo capitalista. En su clásico libro, *El origen de la familia, la propiedad privada y el estado*, el autor subrayó la vinculación entre la disolución de las anteriores relaciones de parentesco basadas en la propiedad comunal y el inicio de la familia nuclear como unidad económica. Vinculado a esto Lerner asegura: “[a] controlar la sexualidad femenina mediante la exigencia de una castidad premarital y el establecimiento del doble estándar sexual dentro del matrimonio, los hombres se aseguraron la legitimidad de su descendencia y garantizaron así su interés de propiedad” (1990, p. 13). En consecuencia, los cuerpos-territorios de las mujeres (incluida su sexualidad) han sido utilizados como elementos estratégicos para el devenir del capitalismo.

La sexualidad libre que ejercía el Pueblo Mapuce antes de la Conquista fue transformada y posteriormente quebrantada. Relacionado a esto una de nuestras entrevistadas nos explicó, desde su entender, algunas de las consecuencias de la Conquista sobre la sexualidad y la vida social mapuce:

El pueblo mapuce incluso tenía control de la natalidad y programaba, de alguna manera, cuándo se podía tener a una hija o hijo, o sea en el sentido del control con la luna y todas las relaciones con la naturaleza. En el tiempo de guerra, ¿cuál fue la gran decisión que tomó el pueblo mapuce? De tener hijos varones, entonces se programaban digamos los nacimientos de hijos varones, porque se necesitaban *konas* [jóvenes, guerreros] para mandar al frente de la guerra. Eso significa, digamos que se vayan a la lucha, aunque hubo mujeres, pero la gran mayoría obviamente eran varones. Esto de tener que parir hijos varones luego de la guerra lo que quedó es una idea confundida, si se puede decir, de tal manera que hasta el día de hoy llega esto de que cuando nace una mujer entonces hay como una disconformidad, porque nace una mujer. (P.P, entrevista personal, 09 de agosto de 2012).

Este fragmento descubre varias cuestiones de nuestro interés. Primero, la entrevistada asegura que el Pueblo Mapuce contaba con conocimientos ancestrales que le permitían contar con herramientas idóneas para la planificación familiar. Sobre esto, Mora cuenta que: “un antiguo secreto para ‘tener un hijo varón’ prescribe la infusión de cuatro flores de maíz (el cuatro *-meli-* es el número sagrado de la tetrada divina) bebida por la madre durante nueve lunas seguidas (el nueve *-ailla-* ¿en analogía con los nueve meses de embarazo? Es, como todo número impar, masculino y es, ‘el número de la salud’ por antonomasia)” (1992, p. 64). Lo importante aquí es observar que en el período de guerra era prioritario contar con población masculina, como señala nuestra informante, para librar la batalla. Sin embargo, también para la guerra eran necesarias las mujeres, pues “los grandes *kona* [...] antiguamente llevaban a sus mujeres al campo de batalla porque ante su vista, ellas les hacían ‘parir la victoria’” (Mora, 1992, p. 28).

Así, vemos cómo la guerra implicó una transformación también en la sexualidad mapuce, visto que tradicionalmente los *logko* tenían cierta preferencia por contar con mayor cantidad de hijas mujeres porque éstas eran la base y fuente de su poder, tanto material como espiritual (Mora, 1992). En este sentido, muchos autores/as consideran que el sistema de parentesco tradicional mapuce era una fuente de oprobio, debido a que el intercambio de mujeres implicaba un beneficio también económico (lo que conocemos como dote). Más allá de las distancias epocales y geográficas, Lerner, en relación a este tipo de situaciones asevera: “las mujeres eran

intercambiadas o compradas en matrimonio en provecho de su familia; más tarde se las conquistaría o compraría como esclavas, con lo que las prestaciones sexuales entrarían a formar parte de su trabajo y sus hijos serían propiedad de sus amos. En cualquier sociedad conocida los primeros esclavos fueron las mujeres de grupos conquistados, mientras que a los varones se les mataba” (1990, p. 58).

A partir de aquí podemos observar cómo la conquista, en un primer momento, implicó una nueva función reproductiva de las mujeres, y ésta *a posteriori* se convirtió en una nueva función reproductora de fuerza de trabajo. Este proceso se multiplicó tras la derrota mapuce, cuando las mujeres fueron juzgadas bajo los principios católicos y condenadas a ser máquinas generadoras de nuevos trabajadores. El reparto de niños/as indígenas, para el trabajo y/o para satisfacer los deseos de paternidad/maternidad insatisfechos, fue (y aún es) una práctica extendida dentro de las clases sociales acomodadas de la Argentina. Esto nos permitiría pensar que durante este proceso de expropiación del cuerpo-territorio los *wigka* gozaron de una *plusvalía sexual étnica* (Carosio, 2011). En este sentido, lo que se cosifica, o mejor dicho, lo que se convierte en mercancía es la sexualidad femenina y su capacidad reproductiva, como afirma Lerner: “[l]a opresión y la explotación económicas están basadas en dar un valor de mercancía a la sexualidad femenina y en la apropiación por parte de los hombres de la mano de obra de la mujer y su poder reproductivo, como en la adquisición directa de recursos y personas” (1990, pp. 58-59).

Las transformaciones socio-territoriales sufridas a partir de la Conquista y posterior colonización fueron, ciertamente, una expresión del nuevo régimen que dejó por sentado el predominio de lo masculino sobre lo femenino (Seifert, 1996). En otras palabras, desde ese momento la relación “etnia- género- sexo- clase- colonialismo” aseguró la opresión patriarcal como mecanismo de jerarquización y explotación social. A continuación, nos proponemos describir algunos de los impactos de la conquista y posterior colonización sobre la realidad de las mujeres mapuce, especialmente en la relación cuerpo-territorio.

Fugitivas del desierto
Los cuerpos femeninos como espacios/territorios de poder

Neuquén es un paisaje que, en el imaginario social, está asociado al desierto. El desierto patagónico es producto del imaginario del viaje imperial, y se fue constituyendo como el lugar ideal donde actualizar fantasías masculinistas y heterosexistas.
(Flores en Yapert, 2007)

El fin de la historia del Pueblo/Nación Mapuce en libertad en *Puelmapu* (actual Argentina) llegó en pleno estreno del Estado Nacional, cuya misión era promover el modo de producción capitalista a lo largo y ancho de todo el incipiente país, lo cual únicamente sería posible mediante la sanción de leyes y el uso del monopolio legítimo de la fuerza. En la embrionaria Argentina, como en el resto de América Latina, el Estado moderno se construyó a partir de un sistemático y violento proceso de racialización de la vida sociopolítica (Quijano, 1999). Dicha racialización logró jerarquizar a las sociedades en base a una clasificación social asentada en la distinción entre el “uno” blanco, burgués, varón, europeo, civilizado y asalariado y el “otro” no-blanco, feminizado, salvaje y excluido de las relaciones asalariadas. En este sentido la teoría de la colonialidad del género sostiene que el patrón global del capitalismo inaugurado por la Conquista de América utilizó la diferencia de género entre las razas para marcar la exclusión del “otro” racial del dominio de la especie humana (Di Pietro, 2012). Desde entonces, las clases dominantes han asumido el poder de identificar, cuantificar, jerarquizar, nominar, asignar fronteras y posiciones sociales con arreglo a identidades étnico-raciales (Guerrero citado en Pequeño Bueno, 2007, p. 29).

La expansión del flamante Estado Argentino implicó la invención de Patagonia, pues el ensanchamiento de la(s) “frontera(s)” refería, en ese caso, a una ampliación territorial e ideológica. Esto significa que Patagonia además de ser pretendida en términos económicos, se proyectaba como límite entre la civilización y la barbarie (Lenton, 2010, p. 31). Es preciso, en consecuencia, no perder de vista que la Patagonia como región ha sido una construcción ideológica-política, como dice Adrián Moyano: “la invención de Patagonia y más aún de la dupla Pampa-Patagonia, implicó la apropiación de la región y su integración al ideario nacional argentino” (2013, p. 10). Lo

llamativo de este proceso es que nada implicaba el uso del poder coercitivo del Estado si consideramos que el territorio a “integrar” era un desierto, entonces: ¿qué había que conquistar si no acaecía resistencia? A lo largo de numerosas páginas de la historia oficial se presenta como una verdad irrefutable la idea de que Patagonia, y por ende Neuquén, constituía un gran *desierto* hasta la llegada del Ejército Argentino. De más está decir que esto es un mito que justificó y validó el genocidio de los pueblos y naciones indígenas que habitaban estas tierras desde tiempos remotos. Sobre esta idea, el historiador Pedro Navarro Floria detalla:

En relación con el territorio de la ‘barbarie’, Sarmiento adhirió a un ambientalismo no determinista según el cual el *desierto* engendraba al *salvaje*, conformando ambos elementos un par inseparable, un verdadero complejo o sistema de vida alternativo al orden propugnado. De este planteamiento del *desierto fecundable* como cuestión social deriva directamente, en el caso argentino, una conceptualización del *desierto como programa político*, programa consistente en *vaciar el desierto* primero discursivamente, representándolo como *territorio disponible*, y después materialmente, conquistándolo por el sometimiento o por el reemplazo de su población indígena o criolla⁸. (2002, p. 140)

Nos interesa destacar, en primer lugar, que construir al desierto como “programa político” implicó, como dice el autor, en un primer momento vaciarlo discursivamente. Para ello, entendemos que fueron útiles las estrategias que presentaron a los y las mapuce como indígenas provenientes de Chile, es decir, como extranjeros. De este modo, la afamada y aún vigente Teoría de la Araucanía emergió como argumento legitimador de las políticas expansionistas de Avellaneda y Roca. Esta –presunta- extranjería mapuce alimentó y reprodujo a lo largo de los años la invisibilización y la negación de la población indígena en Argentina. Todavía hoy los y las mapuce son colocados, en numerosas oportunidades, como ilegales en el territorio que los conoció libres y los vio redimir numerosas batallas contra los conquistadores. Por otro lado, la idea de “desierto fecundable” es muy sugestiva porque revela un marcado proceso de feminización de los

territorios, acorde a las pretensiones expansionistas del Estado (masculino), la Patria (patriarcal y colonial) y, en efecto, del capitalismo. Los territorios y las territorialidades indígenas fueron feminizados, por tanto vistos como fecundables y susceptibles de ser penetrados, conquistados, expropiados y sometidos. Asimismo, la idea dominante que valió como justificación de la conquista -y posterior colonización- apeló a la Nación, vista como una mujer/diosa “herida en su territorialidad por bárbaros que le impiden gozar de lo que le pertenece” (Lenton, 2010, p. 34).

Estas ideas dan cuenta de una doble feminización territorial: la del desierto, exhibido como una hembra a conquistar y someter, y la de la Nación (unicultural), figurada a través de una visión idílica de una mujer blanca y civilizada privada de sus derechos por bárbaros, es decir, una *cautiva*. Claramente, esta feminización ha sido expresión de arreglos étnicos-raciales, ya que ha puesto de manifiesto la estrecha relación entre *cuerpo-género* e *identidad étnico-racial*. De hecho toda América ha sido figurada históricamente en un cuerpo de mujer. La metáfora del Nuevo Mundo ha presentado a estos territorios como espacios vigorosos y naturales, propicios para ser descubiertos y explotados por el masculino poder de los conquistadores (Pequeño Bueno, 2007). No es casual, entonces, que éstos hayan nombrado de manera femenina, “Patagonia”, a esta región del mapa, pues como dice Fonseca (s/f) la nominación es, asimismo, un acto de posesión.

Así, la mal llamada Conquista del Desierto iniciada en 1879 y encabezada por el entonces ministro de guerra, Julio, A. Roca, tuvo como misión expandir las fronteras nacionales “sobre la margen izquierda de los Ríos Negro y Neuquén, previo sometimiento o desalojo de los indios bárbaros de la pampa” (Art. Nro.1, Ley Nacional 947). A partir de ese momento el *desierto* comenzó a percibirse como un “desierto transformable”, como dice Navarro Floria, “[a]l mismo tiempo que seguía siendo un ‘desierto’ poseído por los ‘salvajes’ y por eso devaluado, abandonado, improductivo, inseguro, inculto, también comenzaba a ser visto como una tierra contenedora de tesoros ‘encerrados en sus entrañas’ [...] como fuente copiosa de rentas” (2002, p. 142). Fue así que el desierto se convirtió en un espacio prometedor, en un elemento indispensable para alcanzar el tan evocado progreso.

A raíz de esto la política estatal que condujo a la Conquista de nuevos territorios, con el fin de expandir la producción agropecuaria, implicó la puesta en marcha de mecanismos de terror. Esto no resulta sorprendente, pues como alega Nestor Kohan: “el mercado nunca funciona solo, sino que el mercado presupone relaciones de poder y relaciones de violencia [...] el mercado presupone violencia” (2006, p. 1). Por esta razón, no es casual que en plena Conquista, los cuerpos de las *zomo*, las mujeres indígenas, hayan sido objetos preciados y útiles para el despliegue de las técnicas de poder y de las relaciones de poder capitalistas (Federici, 2010). La sexualidad vertida a través de la inseminación del cuerpo-territorio femenino fue una expresa manifestación de apropiación y dominio territorial, de esta forma el control *wigka* fue inscripto en los cuerpos de las mujeres mapuce (Segato, 2004), cuerpos-territorios en los que se sucedieron batallas políticas y culturales.

En este sentido es imperioso resaltar que la sexualidad femenina, como ya dijimos, también fue cooptada por el nuevo régimen. La conquista y colonización de los cuerpos femeninos implicó, entre otras cosas, el fin de una etapa de autonomía en la que las mujeres indígenas decidían sobre su sexualidad y su capacidad reproductiva. La criminalización de ciertas prácticas por parte de la Iglesia Católica expropió a las mujeres de esos saberes y, de esta forma, las privó de su integridad física y psicológica. De tal forma la maternidad fue degradada a la condición de trabajo forzoso, como dice Federici: “hacer de la sexualidad un objeto de vergüenza, tales fueron los medios a través de los cuales la casta patriarcal intentó quebrar el poder de las mujeres y su atracción erótica” (2010, p. 69). Igualmente, los actos de violencia sexual e, incluso, el mestizaje fueron instrumentos de destrucción cultural progresiva, cuyo apoyo estaba dado y legitimado en el nuevo orden social a instalar. Es más, algunos protagonistas de aquella época llegaron a proponer el mestizaje como una política para la purificación de la sangre y la total desaparición del “salvajismo indígena”. El punto aquí es que en todo acontecimiento bélico, como código implícito, las mujeres y los niños/as son considerados un botín anexo al territorio conquistado. Al respecto, es ilustrativo el episodio recogido por la referente mapuce Moira Millán:

Dicen que lo *winka* llegaban a los tiros, disparaban contra toda la gente mapuche, así dice que quedo mi tía loca, pofo taba la pobre tía, que dicen que tenía su bebé recién nacido y como estaba débil por el

parto y casi ni comida se iban enfermando y muriendo en el camino, así dice que ella iba bien mal con su hijito meta llorar, arrastraba pié pa caminar, y retrasaba a toda la gente entonces vino un *winka* que estaba a caballo, un soldado y le pidió su bebé, y ella se lo dio porque pensó que iba a llevarlo por delante en el caballo, y el soldado tiró la criatura a los perros que tenían, dicen que tenían mucho perro bien malo que usaban para cazar a los mapuche y así lo mataron al hijo de la tía a mordiscones, la tía se volvió loca después de eso. (2011, p. 131)

Sin ir más lejos la prensa de la época se hacía eco de este proceso, ejemplo de ello es el diario El Constitucional de Mendoza, en el cual en 1879 se publicaba: “[s]e espera hoy una remesa de chusma indígena, compuesta de unas 200 mujeres y niños, que será repartida entre las personas que lo soliciten para su servicio” (citado en Nagy, 2008, p. 12). Aquí se observa cómo el Estado –y el capital- se apropió de los cuerpos de las mujeres (y los/as niños/as). Pues, como argumenta Silvia Federici, en toda sociedad capitalista “el cuerpo es para las mujeres lo que la fábrica es para los trabajadores asalariados varones: el principal terreno de su explotación y resistencia” (2010, p. 29). Sin embargo, es menester decir que el ensangrentado escenario que configuró el “desierto patagónico” también fue bastión de la resistencia indígena, pues a pesar de los olvidos y omisiones de la academia local y regional, lo cierto que la “gente de la tierra” (*mapuce*) nunca estuvo dispuesta a doblegarse ante el sable y la cruz, al menos no tan fácilmente⁹.

Para cerrar, debemos decir que las *zomo mapuce* fueron reinventadas como mujeres y, por tanto, atravesadas por múltiples formas de discriminación y subordinación que las colocan una compleja situación de opresión, tanto al interior de sus propias comunidades como ante la sociedad no-mapuce y al Estado. Algunas autoras de origen mapuce, como Catricheo y Huentequero afirman que las relaciones inter genéricas –varón/mujer- en la actualidad deben ser leídas y analizadas como “un marco que ha sido trastocado por diferentes situaciones de influencia de la cultura occidental” (2013, p. 62). En esta dirección se orienta el siguiente título, en el cual buscamos aproximar una serie de reflexiones finales a modo de síntesis e invitación al debate, pues nuestro propósito es profundizar estas líneas de estudio en futuros trabajos, siempre a la luz de nuestro trabajo *in situ*.

Notas de cierre e invitación al debate De la complementariedad a la violencia machista

Como hemos podido observar a lo largo de estas páginas, la implantación del sistema de género moderno/colonial modificó sustancialmente el ordenamiento ancestral indígena basado en el principio de la dualidad y complementariedad entre género y generaciones. A partir de entonces, y como consecuencia de ello, los territorios y las territorialidades indígenas se han transformado en expresiones de desigualdad de poder por razón de género, etnia y clase. Los impactos de la Conquista y posterior colonización no solamente afectaron y se imprimieron en la realidad de las mujeres indígenas sino también en los varones, quienes en muchos casos se convirtieron en cómplices de la violencia machista, es decir, en beneficiarios de los dividendos del patriarcado.

A fin de comprender con mayor agudeza lo que decimos es preciso no perder de vista que en la lógica moderna de la Europa del siglo XVIII las mujeres (todas) eran consideradas como representaciones incompletas e inferiores, y de la misma manera, en las colonias los varones indígenas fueron hombres (muchos) feminizados y subordinados por hombres (pocos) blancos y occidentales. Dicha subordinación racial fue paulatinamente normalizada e institucionalizada, a tal punto que de hecho las Leyes de Indias consideraron expresamente a los/as indígenas como seres menores de edad. De tal manera, la violencia ejercida por los *wigka* (blanco-conquistadores) sobre los hombres indígenas, sirvió para (re)afirmar un tipo de masculinidad hegemónica y así anular a los *otros* en su condición de *otros*. Las diferentes manifestaciones de violencia no fueron más que una forma de eliminar aquellos obstáculos que imposibilitaban el pleno acceso, goce y ejercicio del poder. Estas conductas violentas fueron posibles debido a la existencia de una concreta desigualdad de poder entre las partes. Los episodios de terror y violencia extrema, como el genocidio indígena, constituyeron intercambios entre varones con el fin de establecer fronteras y exclusiones tangibles y simbólicas.

Es menester aclarar que la noción de *masculinidad* no puede ser definida fuera del contexto en el que están insertos los varones, pues se trata de una construcción cultural que se reproduce socialmente. En este caso, la masculinidad es producto de la desigualdad genérica moderna/colonial, ya

que parte de una mirada dicotómica del par “varón-mujer”. Afirmamos esto en base a que todas las culturas, como el caso de las indígenas, que no tratan a mujeres y varones como portadores de tipos de personalidad polarizados no incorporan a la concepción de masculinidad, según la noción europea -y norteamericana- (Conell, 2003). Fue así que la colonización, a través de sus instituciones y prácticas políticas, permitió la configuración e instauración de una masculinidad hegemónica, garantizada y sustentada en complejas y variadas prácticas y relaciones de complicidad inter e intra genéricas.

De esta manera, desde entonces, los varones mapuce se han visto, por un lado, beneficiados del orden de género imperante y, por otro lado, han ocupado un espacio de subordinación frente a los varones blancos-occidentales. En consecuencia podríamos decir que en la actualidad los varones indígenas vivencian una masculinidad hegemónica al interior de sus comunidades y organizaciones y, al mismo tiempo, una masculinidad subordinada dentro del tejido social occidental. Cuando decimos esto pensamos, por un lado, en cómo los varones indígenas son copartícipes y reproductores del sistema de género moderno/colonial, mientras, paralelamente, padecen los estereotipos y prejuicios sexistas y racistas vigentes en la sociedad no indígena. Ejemplo de ello suelen ser las frases populares que asocian a las conductas delictivas o violentas con la pertenencia étnica de las personas, es decir, frases o refranes que imprimen prejuicios racistas y clasistas.

A modo de epílogo de este apartado podemos decir que el machismo y la violencia machista han sido formas de relacionarse aprehendidas y perpetradas durante largos años de patriarcado y androcentrismo (Ramos, 2006). En palabras de Norma Fuller (1998), el machismo es una forma particular de organizar las relaciones de género en sociedades caracterizadas por el predominio de marcadas diferencias étnicas y raciales. Pues como ha sintetizado Gargallo: “no hay dominación sin violencia contra las colonizadas ni hay clasificación racial y étnica de una población que no opere en el ámbito de lo sexual” (2014, p. 79). Lamentablemente, según los relatos que hemos recogido podemos decir que nos son pocas las comunidades mapuce que se ven opacadas por un elevado nivel de violencia contra las mujeres, puesto que “el sistema de géneros que se sostiene en la supremacía masculina, en la actualidad, ya es inseparable del orden

normativo que muchos pueblos originarios reivindican en su renovada identificación nacional” (2014, p. 79).

Indudablemente, la violencia machista, en todas sus formas y modalidades, ha colocado durante décadas a las mujeres indígenas en una profunda situación de subordinación y exclusión, sin embargo, en los últimos años las mapuce han logrado romper el silencio. Es innegable que a partir de la década de los noventa los pueblos originarios han comenzado una larga lucha en defensa de sus derechos colectivos y, en dicho marco, el Pueblo/Nación Mapuce no ha sido la excepción. En la provincia que nos atañe, Neuquén, fue el afamado conflicto Pulmarí en 1995 el que dio origen a un proceso de recuperación identitaria y territorial que todavía no ha encontrado fin. En ese contexto de lucha colectiva en defensa de territorio, autonomía e identidad las mujeres emergieron en la escena pública como nuevas actrices políticas. El desafío continúa siendo, a nuestro criterio, superar los obstáculos propios del sistema de género hegemónico. Por este motivo pensamos que la propuesta de un *Kvme Felen*¹⁰ Mapuce (sistema de vida autónomo) puede ser útil para “recuperar” parte de la historia negada, una historia diferente a la propuesta por occidente y, de ese modo, re-pensar las relaciones inter e intra genéricas.

Notas

¹ Una primera versión de este trabajo fue presentado en el VII Seminario Internacional Políticas de la Memoria durante los días 7, 8 y 9 de octubre de 2014 en la ciudad de Buenos Aires, Argentina. Asimismo, es menester señalar que este trabajo se encuadra dentro de un proyecto de investigación, correspondiente a nuestra beca doctoral de CONICET y a nuestra tesis del Doctorado en Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, ambos dirigidos por el Dr. Fernando Lizárraga y co-dirigidos por la Dra. Gloria Hintze.

² En el presente documento se utiliza el término “mapuce” (sin h intermedia e igual en plural y singular) según el grafemario Ragileo.

³ Las comunidades mapuce de la Provincia de Neuquén, región norpatagónica argentina, visitadas hasta el momento son: Plácido Puel, Puel, Aigo, Puel Pvjv, Newen Mapu, Millain Currical, Mellao Morales, Currumil, Paicil Antriao, Ñorquinko y Niengeihual. Al momento de realizar las visitas de campo hemos empleado la técnica conocida como “bola de nieve”.

⁴ Esther Grebe y su equipo han señalado un paralelismo con el *Popul Vuh*, libro sagrado en el que se señalaba: “[h]abiéndose echado las líneas y paralelas del cielo y de la tierra, se dio fin perfecto a todo, dividiéndolo en paralelos y climas. Todo puesto en orden quedó cuadrado y repartido en cuatro partes como si con una cuerda se hubiera todo medido, formando cuatro esquinas y cuatro lados” (1972: 6).

⁵ *Domo o zomo*: sujeto mujer en la lengua mapuce.

⁶ Sugerimos la lectura de los trabajos de autoras como Francesca Gargallo (2014), Julieta Paredes (2008, 2011), Rita Segato (2011) entre otras.

⁷ Llamativamente la poligamia como una práctica tradicional mapuce, apareció en muy pocas de las entrevistas realizadas, lo que nos conduce a pensar que Engels tenía razón en cuanto a que “la poligamia es un privilegio de los ricos y los poderosos” (1884: 68). Podemos presuponer, entonces, que solamente eran polígamos ciertos varones con prestigio y riqueza (*Ulmen*), por ello la poligamia era una demostración y, al mismo tiempo, una estrategia para detentar poder.

⁸ Cursivas del autor.

⁹ Véase Moyano, Adrián (2007, 2012).

¹⁰ La noción de *Kvme Felen* puede ser entendida como análoga al “Buen Vivir” propuesto por otros pueblos indígenas.

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The Leadership Preferences of Women Leaders Working in Higher Education

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The Leadership Preferences of Women Leaders Working in Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the emic concepts and self-perceptions of leadership of women working in South African Higher Education institutions (HEIs). The study uses a phenomenological-hermeneutical research approach and qualitative methods to analyse twenty-three semi-structured interviews and data from observations in organizations. Findings show that women in HEIs in South Africa prefer associating leadership with certain characteristics which correspond to their core values of human existence. These core values are seen to influence the actions of women in leadership positions in HEIs. Based on their self-perceptions, women leaders use mindfulness which is characterized by various self-competencies, defined attitudes, spirituality at work and certain management practices. However, women leaders also feel that their mindful practices seem to be misunderstood in a highly competitive higher education (HE) environment in South Africa.

Keywords: women, leaders, academia, leadership, South Africa, education, mindfulness, self-perceptions, spirituality.

Las Preferencias de Liderazgo de las Mujeres Líderes en Educación Superior

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Resumen

El propósito de este estudio ha sido el explorar los conceptos emic y de auto-percepción del liderazgo de las mujeres que trabajan en Instituciones de Educación Superior en Sudáfrica (IES). El estudio utiliza un enfoque de investigación fenomenológico-hermenéutico y métodos cualitativos para analizar veintitrés entrevistas y datos semi-estructurados a partir de observaciones en estas instituciones. Los resultados muestran que las mujeres de las IES de Sudáfrica prefieren asociar el liderazgo con ciertas características que corresponden a valores fundamentales su existencia. Dichos valores parecen tener influencias en las acciones tomadas por estas mujeres. Sobre la base de sus autopercepciones, las mujeres líderes utilizan su concienciación, caracterizada por diversos auto-competencias, actitudes definidas, la espiritualidad en el trabajo y ciertas prácticas de gestión. Sin embargo, las mujeres líderes también sienten que sus prácticas parecen ser mal entendidas en el entorno altamente competitivo de la educación superior en Sudáfrica.

Palabras clave: mujeres, líderes, academia, liderazgo, Sudáfrica, educación, concienciación, auto-percepciones, espiritualidad.

Leadership is a highly researched and dynamic area which has strong practical implications for organisations. Studies have focused on how leaders should lead (Thomas & Strümpf, 2003), what leadership styles and ways of leading organisations are contributing to successful organisations and employees (Pircher-Friedrich, 2007), and which qualities of leadership are experienced as positive and supportive in coping with complex challenges in the workplace (Siddique, Aslam, Khan & Fatima, 2011).

South African leaders and organisations are riddled by challenges of the post-Apartheid era. These include radical changes in equity legislation, a call for a more gender-balanced and culturally diverse work force, as well as the need to stay globally competitive whilst managing communication and organisational issues (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010). The South African constitution emphasises a non-racial and non-sexist democracy. However, South African leaders, particularly in institutions of higher education, are challenged by complex societal and educational issues, ranking from social and gender inequalities (Teferra & Altbach, 2004), experiences of marginalisation and the exclusion of women in leadership positions in HEIs (Mama, 2003).

Recent research has highlighted on the one hand the important role of women in leadership in the African context (Darkwah, 2007). On the other hand, it has also been emphasised that women's health issues are still neglected and that women are still in the process of optimizing their health and wellbeing across cultures (Alexander, LaRosa, Bader, Garfield & Alexander, 2014). Women therefore need to focus on resources to deal with work related challenges, whilst concomitantly staying healthy (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Baxter, 2012; Mayer & Van Zyl, 2013). In this regard, women leaders in South Africa have been acknowledged as holding a resonance-building leadership style, consisting of adaptive communication skills, mentoring abilities, collaboration and qualities of cooperation (Van Wyk, 2012) which might contribute to managing health and well-being in organizations. Besides others, mindfulness has been described as a strong resource of a healthy state of cognitive openness, curiosity, and awareness (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Mindfulness has been presented as a fundamental coping strategy for women (Ando, Natsume, Kukihara, Shibata & Ito, 2011; Christopher, Chrisman & Trotter-Mathison, 2011),

which Mayer, Surtee and Barnard (2015) associate with concepts of workplace spirituality and meaningfulness in women leaders. Mindfulness is therefore seen as a prominent resource for women to deal with contemporary challenges in their workplaces (Nelson & Burke, 2000).

The South African Context

The concept of gender and of women in South Africa requires a consideration of the social, as well as the cultural history of this context. During apartheid South Africans were categorised according to four racial categories, namely African, Coloured (being defined as a mixed race (Adhikari, 2005)), Indian and White. According to Posel (2001), Whites were classified as being superior to the other racial groups and led the country's political and economic power for several decades. In the post-apartheid era, these racial categories were redefined in the Employment Equity Act (Department of Labour, 1998). Twenty years after the end of apartheid, South Africa is still undergoing complex transformation processes on various levels of society including the re-articulation of the concepts of race and gender (Mayer, 2011; Mayer & Barnard, 2015 in press).

Leadership

Leadership is a well discussed term and concept which is defined as a process in which an individual consciously influences individuals, teams and groups within an organisational context (Rosenstiehl, 2001). Leadership also includes the ability of leaders to motivate others to reach the aims of the organisation through influencing others through personal relationships (Amos, 2012). Leadership aims at creating healthy organisations (Mayer & Boness, 2013; Wolf, Huttges, Hoch & Wegge, 2010). Hable-Hafenbrädl (2013) point out that leaders need professional, as well as emotional and soft-skill competencies which contribute to the ability to resolve conflicts and accept criticism. Other authors (Pircher-Friedrich, 2007) emphasise the importance of sustainability, meaningfulness, mutual trust and acceptance, respect and dignity in leadership approaches to make a leader successful. Recently (Dierendonk, 2010), servant leadership has been described as a successful type of leadership which is based on the

motivation to lead with a need to serve and display servant leadership. Personal characteristics and culture are positioned alongside the motivational dimension. Servant leadership is demonstrated by empowering and developing people; by expressing humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship; and by providing direction.

Fechler (2012) adds that leadership also needs to include active communication, transparency, openness, resource orientation, self-care and acknowledgement. Beechler and Javidan (2007) have pointed out that in a globalised work environment, leaders should be able to understand global complexity (intellectual capital), hold a positive psychological profile (including attributes of passion, hope and resilience), psychological capital and participate in social networks with shared meanings (social capital). The last should be associated with flexibility, collaboration, listening and adaptability (Werhane, 2007; Werhane, Posig, Gundry, Powell, Carlson & Ofstein, 2006).

Mayer and Barnard (2015 in press) have pointed out that particularly in HEIs in South Africa, employees are challenged by transformation processes. A strong and empathetic leadership style is needed to transform the conflictual challenges of the past in contemporary organizations. Other authors highlight that particularly in those societal situations, visionary leadership is needed that communicates a clear vision and a future image of the collective within the organisation whilst persuading individuals and groups involved to contribute to its realization (van Knippenberg & Stam, 2014).

According to Good and Sherrod (2001) women in particular are challenged in contemporary organisations by having to deal with discriminatory practices, gender inequality as well as rallying for a gender-sensitive understanding of leadership and career paths. Despite this, the number of women continues to increase in leadership (Mostert, 2009) and executive level positions (Kinneer, 2014). However, the literature on women and leadership often focuses on women in business (Mayer & Van Zyl, 2013), women's leadership styles (Gouws & Kotzé, 2007), and on women in government as South Africa is one of the leading countries with relatively high numbers of women in parliament (Goetz & Hassim, 2003). However, the investigation of South African women in leadership in the HE

context has remained limited (Mayer, Barnard & Surtee, 2014; Pearson, May & Mayer, 2014).

Mindfulness in Leadership

The concept of mindfulness is associated with spiritual traditions (Cashwell, Paige Bentley & Bigbee, 2007) and particularly with the Buddhist tradition (Baer, 2003). Mindfulness is defined as a multilayered construct that is connected to cognition, awareness and emotion (Sauer, Walach & Kohls, 2011). A mindful person is aware of the present moment as well as of her/his actions and interactions. Atkins (2008) emphasises that a mindful person is non-reactive and is also able to understand and apply multiple perspectives to self and to others. Schmidt (2004) also highlights that mindfulness is aligned with an accepting and non-judgmental attitude, as well as non-attachment, gentleness and kindness. A quantitative research study on the mindfulness of women in academia (Louw, Mayer & Surtee, 2014) has highlighted that this cohort in comparison to women holding executive and consultant positions score lowest on mindfulness. The research data also pointed to the following trends: women with a doctorate degree scored lower on mindfulness than women with a Masters or honours degree; women who were married had higher mindfulness scores than those who were single or divorced; Coloured women had the highest mindfulness scores, followed by White, and African women respectively; and women who defined themselves as spiritual or as being Buddhist scored higher than the other participants in this study.

Purpose and Objective

The purpose of this study is to explore emic leadership concepts and self-perceptions of women leaders working in South African HEIs. The article aims to investigate the following key research questions:

- What characteristics do women leaders situated in South African HEIs associate with leadership?
- How do these women leaders perceive themselves in terms of their own leadership?

The study aims at contributing to qualitative, in-depth and emic empirical research on women's classification of leadership and their perception of their own leadership qualities.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A phenomenological (hermeneutic) research approach (Gummesson, 2000) characterises this study's research paradigm. It adopts an explorative and descriptive research methodology by using a social constructivist perspective (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

Sample

Using convenient and snowball sampling processes twenty-three women from the HERS-SA (Higher Education Resource Services, South Africa) network, were invited to participate in this study. HERS-SA is a non-profit organisation promoting and advancing the leadership development and career advancement of women working in higher education.

The diverse sample comprised women leaders in academic and support service positions who were employed in seven HEIs across South Africa. They came from four race groups as defined in the Employment Equity Act (Department of Labour, 1998) consisting of eleven White, four Coloured, five Indian and three African women.

Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and by observations made in the respective HEIs. The semi-structured interviews were conducted via Skype, telephonically or face-to-face. The duration of the interviews ranged from between 30 minutes to an hour. The interview questions focused on exploring the women's leadership experiences and their resources to lead within their HEIs. Questions were, for example: "Please describe your concept of life-orientation at work", "What personality is needed in leadership positions?", "How do you perceive yourself in terms of being a leader?", "How are gender, personality and leadership connected?", "How do you define mindfulness?", "How are mindfulness, gender and leadership connected?"

The semi-structured interview questions were developed following an extensive literature review of managing and leading in South African organizations (e.g. Mayer, 2008, 2011) and gender and women in South Africa (Mayer & Van Zyl, 2013).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, based on predetermined semi-structured research questions.

Data Analysis

The following five-step process of content analysis posited by Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Kelly (2006, 322–326) were used to analyse the interviews: step 1: familiarisation and immersion; step 2: inducing themes; step 3: coding; step 4: elaboration; and step 5: interpretation and checking.

Categories and codes were (re)constructed using categorisation and coding methods in the content analysis process. This led to elaboration on and interpretation of the data. Data generated from observation contributed to the interpretation of information and is implicitly included in the research findings and interpretation. Inter-validation processes were used (Yin, 2009, 45).

Qualitative Research Criteria

Qualitative research criteria (Gummesson, 2000, 157) were applied, such as credibility, transferability, trustworthiness and confirmability (Mayer, 2011).

The clear and structured description of this research may lead to the qualitative research criteria of credibility, as well as to the transferability and trustworthiness of the research from the perspective of the reader (Creswell, 2003).

Ethical Considerations

The research study followed clearly defined research ethics. Individual informed consent was provided by all participants and participants were assured anonymity, confidentiality and the freedom to withdraw during the interview process. Ethical approval was provided by a research committee at Rhodes University in South Africa.

Research Findings

Biographical Data

Twenty three women in the HERS-SA network voluntarily participated in this study (see Table 1) and provided their conceptualisation of leadership.

All participants are South African citizens; three are African, four Coloured, five Indian and eleven White. Thirteen women held academic positions and ten work in support services positions. They are based at seven different HEIs in South Africa.

Table 1
Biographical data

Group	Total	Academia	Support Services
Black	3	1	2
Coloured	4	2	2
Indian	5	5	0
White	11	5	6
Total	23	13	10

Leadership: Types, Core Values and Actions

The data indicates that women leaders in HEIs in South Africa prefer to associate leadership with certain types (see table 2). These different types of leadership in turn are valued and applied in their daily work, to their core beliefs as being leaders and to their actions. Three women refer to types of leadership such as servant leadership, another three mention visionary leadership, two women each refer to peaceful leadership, a balanced leadership between authoritative and laissez-faire leadership, and charismatic leadership.

Table 2
Leadership Types

Leadership Types	Interviewees	Total
Servant leadership	I 18, W14, W19	3
Visionary leadership	C23, I17, B12	3
Peaceful leadership	C13, I22	2
Balanced authoritative and laissez-faire leadership	C13, W15; I18	2
Charismatic leadership	C3	1

In general, the findings show that women leaders did not derive their preferred leadership typology by drawing on general and broader conceptualisations of this term. Instead, they described their own personal core values and the actions that they take based on the preferred leadership types they mention. Additionally, the women leaders also refer to the

application of mindfulness which they regard as a seminal aspect of leadership. An Indian participant emphasises (I18):

Leadership is having a concept of spirituality which is based on values. You watch what you do... as a leader you have to serve. Being mindful. Mindfulness is caring for people, caring for the environment, having empathy in your heart towards other things, and looking after things as well to serve the people.

This statement illustrates that leadership types are strongly interlinked with core values and spirituality. It appears that this participant does not primarily see servant leadership as a definition that needs to be clinically emulated, but rather a leadership quality that is derived from her personal and individual strong values of empathy, mindfulness, caring and looking after others, and to serve them (Table 3). The foundation of the core values that form part of her personality then led her to the concept of servant leadership which she prefers to apply at work.

Other participants highlight the importance of vision in leadership (visionary leadership), of a peaceful and non-violent, empathetic leadership (peaceful leadership), a balanced leadership that integrates aspects of the concepts of authority and laissez-faire leadership styles (balanced leadership), as well as leadership that is based on the leader's charisma (charismatic leadership).

Core Values of Women Leaders in HE

Across the board women leaders in this study regard respect as a main value in leadership. Respect is followed by the value of open-mindedness which allows one to see the possibilities which open up in the work context. Another shared common value is that of caring. Four White and one African woman highlight that caring about colleagues and others in general is important to them in leadership contexts. They see themselves as respectful and open-minded care-givers. Thereby, leadership is seen as visionary work that requires reflection of the context, the person as a whole, and bringing a certain kind of openness which makes the leader approachable.

An African participant emphasises:

The ability to lead people in a way that will make them see the bigger picture. Like having a vision and knowing where you want

to take your unit or your organization. I also view humility...The reason is, we find most of the time people in higher positions tend to be proud, and sort of high up there – unreachable by the people they lead. That makes life very difficult for those that follow them. They can't even approach them for any help. If people are humble enough and approachable then it's easy for the people they lead to come to them any time they experience challenges and know that even if they will not come up with a solution, they will at least give them a shoulder to cry on.

This participant provides a picture of a caring, humble, approachable and open-minded leader that she herself strives to become. If leaders appear in a human way, leaders will be approached with expectations not to always get a rational solution, but also to gain emotional support.

In addition to these, it is important for the women leaders in this study to be career-driven, to value the whole person, be transparent and to deliver quality work. For two women additional important values include the need to work hard, the personal freedom to be a leader and to share leadership.

Table 3
Core values

Core values	Interviewees	Total
Respect	W15, W5, C19, C23; I17, I18	6
Open-mindedness	W11, W19, W27; B12, B29	5
Caring	W10, W11, W15, W16; B12	5
Career-driven	C5, C23; I18	3
Dignity, Humbleness, Humility	C23, B12, B29	3
Value whole person	C23, B12	2
Transparency	W3, I22	2
Quality work	C23, W10	2
Work hard	W15, W19	2
Freedom	C23	1
Share	B29	1

Parallel to the described core values, participants also highlight the leadership actions (Table 3) that are important in leadership. The majority of participants feel that supporting people is one of the key actions to be taken up in leadership. For these women leaders it is important to support others.

For other participants, it is important for leaders to excel academically in an HE context. Leaders are seen as mentors and guides, and they must be able to deal with complexities and transcend problems. Furthermore, leaders are expected to take ownership whilst they are leading and also to manage administration. A White participant explains:

So what you've got to do as a leader is to be mindful. I think when people come in is to say: OK I'm now listening to what so-and-so is saying to me. Let me try and think of what that person's needs are and what they are doing, rather than having this at the back of my mind. It's quite hard, because I find myself sometimes thinking whatever you say now...and I listen more carefully... Listen more carefully to what the person is saying. Look at them of course, that's just a given, and clear your mind of other things.

This leader describes how she shifts her attention from herself towards the other. She applies strategies of active listening, exploring the needs of the other, looking at the person for creating a deep interpersonal contact and understanding.

A Coloured participant (C28) describes her personal actions in a leadership role:

Well, the first thing that comes to mind is really the ability to be self-reflective because I think that many of the issues related to how we resolve conflict is also related to how we deal with ourselves – our responses to particular issues and so on. So I think an important leadership trait is that one of self-reflectivity, and I think the second one is very close to my idea of self-reflectivity, is the ability to step into your power – take ownership and step into your power. Because very often I've seen, particularly as women and this is a gendered comment I'm making now, we intuit things, we understand, we know what's happening, we know what should be done, but we are not able to step into our power and ensure that it happens. And again, there might be a whole range or reasons related to that, so those for me would be important personality traits.

This leader describes two main actions: she self-reflects and then steps into her own power and takes ownership of her actions and the situation. This participant therefore recognises the tendency of women in leadership

to take ownership and “step into their power” and believes that these leadership traits needs to be harnessed by all women leaders.

Table 4
Leadership actions

Actions	Interviewees	Total
Support people	I18, I22; B12, B29; W5, W7, W15, W10, W19	9
Excel academically	C3, C23, I17, B12	4
Mentor/ guide	B12, B29, W6	3
Deal with complexities	W15, I9, B12	3
Transcend problems	B12, C23, I22	3
Take ownership & lead	W19, I22, C28	3
Manage administration	W5, W27	2

For other participants, it is important that whilst being a women leader to also excel academically, to mentor and guide others, to deal with complexities and complex situations, transcend problems and manage administrative tasks.

Mindfulness in Leadership

Mindfulness is connected to self-competencies, to a certain kind of attitude, to spirituality in the workplace, as well as a management of mental, spiritual and a physical mindfulness.

The concept of mindful leadership comprises a practical component of self-competence. The concept of mindful self-competence includes the ability to reflect, to be emotionally competent, to contextualise, to stay balanced, understand others and listen carefully. Even the application of intuition and creativity across all participants is associated with mindfulness in leadership. Three White participants highlight that setting boundaries in a mindful way is very important to them.

A White participant states (W6):

I think that mindful leadership is being very aware of how, with the other person you are dealing, how they click, trying to work out how to best deal with that person. If it’s a difficult person trying to work out in your mind what makes him difficult. Being mindful you need to know what is going on in somebody else’s life. And I think being mindful is not to take things personally... so you’ve got

to be mindful of the fact that there could be other things happening that you know absolutely no knowledge of.

This forgoing narrative shows that for this woman leader the relationship component is highly important to mindfully deal with the other to resolve problems. To know how to deal with another person, this leader highlights – as others do in their interviews –one needs to know the broader context of a person’s life to know how to deal with them.

Table 5
Mindfulness leadership

Mindfulness			
Self-competencies (65 statements in total)	Reflect	W14, W15, W6, W10, W11, W19; C13, C23, C28, C29; I17, I22, B21	13
	Emotional intelligence	I18, B21, B29, B12, W3, W10, W11, W19, W15, W16, W5, W6	12
	Contextualise	C13, C23, C29; W15, W6-2, W10, W19; I18, I22-4, B29, B12	11
	Keep balance	W19, B21, C8, C13, C28, I9, I18	7
	Understand others	B12, B21, B29; W19, I22, C28	6
	Listen carefully	I22, B12, W5, W6, W10, W15	6
	Define boundaries	W14, W16, W10, W5	4
	Apply intuition	C28, B12, W19	3
	Creativity	C8, C28, W19	3

Table 5 continued

Mindfulness			
Attitude (53 statements in total)	Awareness	W14, W15, W5, W6, W19; C8, C23, C16, C28, I17, I18, I26, B12, B21, B29	15
	Consciousness	I22; C8, C23, C28, B29, B12, W3, W5, W6, W14, W19	11
	Present moment	W7, W10, W14, W3, W19, C8, C16, B21	8
	Needs-orientated	I18, W7, W16, W10	4
	Positive	W15, W6, B29, B12	4
	Caring	I18, B29, W19, C28	4
	Focus	B21, W16, W19, I9, I17	5
Spiritual mindfulness (20 statements in total)	Connection to higher power	B12, B21, B29-3; C3, C23, C29, W7, W27, W15	9
	Prayer & meditation	C8, I9, I22, W10, W11	5
	Walks	C23, W15	2
	Writing & Journaling	C8, W19	2
Management (19 statements in total)	Tackle issues	B21, I22, W6, W7, W10	5
	Play political games	W5, W6	2
	Apply ethics	W10, W11, B12, I22	4
	Deal with diversity	W10, W16, B12; I22	4
	Decision-making	W7, C8, C13, I22	4
Bodily mindfulness (3 statements in total)		C23, I17, I22	3

Mindfulness is connected to a certain attitude in leadership with regard to the self-perception of women leaders. For them, being a leader means being aware and conscious and leading in the present moment. They suggest however, that leaders also need to be a needs-orientated, as well as have a caring and focused attitude.

The concept of mindful leadership includes further on the spiritual and transpersonal component of leadership which goes beyond individual, organisational and societal concepts, a kind of spiritual mindfulness which is expressed through a connection to a higher power, prayer and meditation,

walks in nature, writing and journaling. An African participant highlights the importance of mindfulness for leaders (B29):

I cannot see anyone who's a leader who does not have a very strong spiritual base. I cannot see such a leader. Because the norms that you put in and the principles that you put in as a leader, as a manager, speaks directly to trends defined in a spiritual being. For example, as a leader you need to share, you need to guide, you need to mentor, you need to support. You need to provide so much in resources. If you are not guided by understanding what it means to anyone to achieve their goals, that they need to be appreciated first. You can provide all that but if you do not appreciate them, you're not appreciating their thinking, their thoughts, their work, it might actually not help them to achieve the goal which is work related. Their self-esteem might be so low that they cannot even perform in any way while they have the capacity to perform, but they are not encouraged by the leader because the leader that doesn't see the importance of a spiritual being. You know it's a bit of a difficult question.

One interviewee (W11) describes her way of using visualisation to be mindful at work, particularly in conflict situations:

I'll just hear them out and they were really going on and on and eventually I thought, 'well, think about something nice' and I thought about myself being on the ocean sailing. I was still listening to them, but I was trying to think of something I enjoy so that I wouldn't just get completely bogged down and drowned by this person's ranting and raving. And it actually did help me to keep calm. I think finding a way to keep calm is very important.

The use of visualisation opens up both positive emotions and strategies to deal with difficult and challenging situations in leadership contexts and to react mindfully to be outwardly calm during interpersonal interactions.

Moreover, women leaders are of the opinion that their management needs to be based on a management practice that includes tackling issues in the workplace in a mindful way, applying ethical considerations, dealing with diverse and mindful decision-making. However, mindfulness in the workplace is not only related to positive connotated concepts, but also to negatively perceived elements of managing power struggles and politics in

the workplace. Two White participants highlight that a female leader has to be considerate of how to play the game of politics in the workplace to protect herself from harm or bullying. W5 emphasises:

You've got to know how to play the game. It sounds so cruel and it sounds so harsh, but if a woman comes into leadership without being able to play the political game and without knowing the political environment, and I don't mean in party politics, I mean institutional politics...you have to know, number one, even getting there, you've got to know who your competitors are, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and you've got to work damn hard to make sure you out perform them...

The other thing that somebody told me many years ago, and it's the most truthful thing I've ever heard; when you work with top management you work with personalities and with people, and if you don't understand that you will not succeed because you do. People in top management have something different about them in terms of their ego, and you've got to be perceptive enough to read that personality to relate to them in terms of their personality rather than anything else, and that's the kind of mindfulness a woman needs to have.

This participant highlights how it is important for women to be mindful and to understand the politics in the work context to relate to other colleagues in top management and to communicate with them in a mindful way.

Last but not least, the data shows that participants seem to struggle when applying their leadership preference within the HE context. One Coloured leader (C28) who connects to the feminine side of mindfulness expresses her concern around the use of a feminine leadership style in a competitive environment:

I think mindfulness is a very feminine stance. I'm not talking about feminine as in sex, but a feminine attitude, so sometimes that softness, that gentleness of being mindful is misunderstood in a hard, cut throat competitive environment such as higher education. I was absolutely amazed in my early days to see how competitive the environment is, and I must say I tend not to be competitive. I tend to be as hard working and as productive as I can but I'm not competitive. That sometimes freaks me out, with people, you know

you notice in meetings and so on, people will say things, not because they are contributing to the conversation but, but because they are competing for favour or whatever.

This participant believes that mindful leadership tends to be misunderstood in HE, by being seen as a ‚soft‘ or ‚weak‘ leadership response in a highly competitive environment. For this participant mindfulness is compatible with hard work, competition and productivity even though it is viewed to the contrary by others.

Discussion

As previous studies have focused on how leaders should lead (Thomas & Strümpf, 2003), what leadership styles and ways of leading organisations are contributing to successful organisations and employees (Pircher-Friedrich, 2007) and which qualities of leadership are experienced as positive and supportive to cope with complex challenges in the workplace (Siddique, Aslam, Khan & Fatima, 2011), women leaders in this study also refer to specific aspects to leadership types, values and actions.

As mentioned by Dierendonk (2010), servant leadership can support global leaders to be successful, three participants in this study also refer to servant leadership and to the social and developmental dimension of leadership. In addition, three other participants refer to visionary leadership and highlight the importance of the future in leadership (as emphasised in the literature (van Knippenberg & Stam, 2014), particularly with regard to South African legacy issues and the transformational leadership that is needed (Mayer & Barnard, 2015 in press). Further on, participants in this study aim for peaceful and balanced leadership which is related to general leadership concepts aimed at sustainability, meaningfulness, acceptance and respect, as described by Pircher-Friedrich (2007). Participants also refer to their leadership as being strongly connected to their values and to spirituality. Leadership values, as well as leadership practices emphasized by the participants support the assumption of Fechner (2012) that leadership needs to include active communication, transparency, openness, resource orientation, self-care and acknowledgement. Women leaders in this study are aware of these core concepts of leadership and go with this trend.

The core values of underpinning the approach of participants' leadership reflect the three capitals of global leaders, previously introduced by Beechler and Javidan (2007). Participants refer to the importance of intellectual capital in terms of being career-driven; being hard-working and contextual applications of understanding leadership within a certain global, local or cultural context. However, participants refer as well to the importance of a leader holding and projecting a positive psychological profile in terms of being respectful, open-minded, humble and transparent. Participants emphasise that their leadership is characterised by the concepts of dignity, humbleness and freedom which provides them with psychological capital. This positive psychological capital is strongly related to social capital, due to the fact that these positive concepts (for example, respect and dignity) include the social component of leadership values. Participants also speak directly of the importance of social capital in leadership – which seems to be of major concern to them – and which is addressed in their core values, such as that of valuing the whole person and caring which includes the concepts of listening and collaborating, as mentioned by Werhane (2007) and Werhane et al. (2006).

In parallel to the described core values, participants also highlight the leadership actions of which the majority of actions described falls into the category of social capital in leadership (Beechler & Javidan, 2007), such as supporting people, mentoring and guiding people, taking ownership and leading. However, the intellectual capital in leadership actions is also important, by excelling academically, dealing with complexities and transcending problems. In terms of described leadership actions, examples of positive psychological capital are not mentioned. Through the application of these leadership actions, participants try to deal with experiences of discrimination, gender inequalities and barriers to their personal career paths, as described in the literature (Good & Sherrod, 2001).

In terms of the concept of mindfulness, it is connected to self-competencies, to a certain kind of (positive and empathetic) attitude, to spirituality in the workplace, as well as to the way a mental, spiritual and physical mindfulness is managed. Generally, mindfulness seems to be a strong resource in the workplace for participants, as previously mentioned by Nelson and Burke (2000). Mindful self-competencies are the base for

mindful leadership practices which refer to competencies of reflection, emotional intelligence, contextualisation practices and different ways of being empathetic, intuitive and creative.

However, mindfulness for women leaders in this study is also expressed in a mindful manner, which is often referred to in the literature as being aware, and being present moment oriented and conscious (Sauer, Walach & Kohls, 2011). In the literature (Cashwell, Paige Bentley & Bigbee, 2007) mindfulness is associated with spirituality, but by participants this is not particularly referred to as a Buddhist tradition as in Baer (2003). Participants highlight further on that mindfulness is a powerful tool in management, as for example, in managing ethics, diversity or decision making and that they do not only refer to mindfulness with regard to emotion, cognition and awareness as emphasised by Sauer, Walach and Kohls (2011), but also with regard to their physical body. Women leaders in this study thereby go beyond the assumptions and statements in the literature on mindfulness at work. For them mindfulness is not only limited to cognition, awareness and emotion. It rather more includes the mindfulness that manifests in their physical body and the bodily awareness of their feelings and intuition. Women leaders in this study are fully conscious that mindfulness as a leadership concept can be totally misunderstood in a highly competitive context of HEIs. Whilst mindfulness emphasises the feminine side of leadership in terms of applying a gentle and soft approach, it is important to be very aware of the highly competitive culture in HEIs where a mindful approach might be misunderstood and interpreted as a sign of weakness.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to explore emic leadership concepts and self-perceptions of women leaders working in South African HEIs, by referring to the question of what characteristics women leaders situated in South African HEIs associate with leadership, and how these women leaders perceive themselves in terms of their own leadership.

The study shows that female leaders refer to concepts of servant leadership, visionary leadership, peaceful leadership, balanced and charismatic leadership, all of which correspond to their personal core

values. These core values are key to their leadership preference and are based on holistic, human and career-driven values. In conclusion, female leaders in this study refer to leadership by referring to categories of global leadership which include the concepts of intellectual, positive psychological and social capital. The data shows that these women leaders apply their values in their leadership actions on all three conceptual levels. These leadership actions include social interaction, academic and administrative performance, as well as the transformation of problems, ownership and managing complex challenges. Finally, for women leaders in HEIs their mindful leadership in the workplace is characterized by a display of certain self-competencies, including, a particular set of attitudes, spiritual mindfulness, and management that is tackled in a mindful way. For these female leaders, mindfulness is therefore based on mental, spiritual and physical concepts that impact on their leadership. However, mindful leadership seems to be often misunderstood and rarely valued by people situated in a highly competitive HE environment.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the extent that it is a qualitative study which uses only a limited number of participants out of the HERS-SA network. It is further on bound to the phenomenological and hermeneutical research paradigm which aims at an emic and deep understanding of the content of research, not at producing generalizable results.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

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Women Transcending “Boundaries” in Indigenous Peacebuilding in Kenya’s Sotik/Borabu Border Conflict

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Women Transcending “Boundaries” in Indigenous Peacebuilding in Kenya’s Sotik/Borabu Border Conflict

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Abstract

Opinion and understanding on the consequences of violent conflict on women, and the importance of their participation in peacebuilding processes is varied. What exactly are women’s roles in violent conflict transformation and peacebuilding? What can be done to enhance women's role and contribution to peacebuilding processes? This study addresses these and other questions concerning women’s experiences of and responses to violent conflict. Drawing from the human needs approach, the study explores grassroots women’s engagement of peacebuilding through the promotion of social capital as both a public and private good. Based on an ethnographic case study of Kenya’s Sotik/Borabu cross-border conflict, the study explores how women have (re)discovered, (re)formulated, (re)framed and (re)adapted their traditional gender roles for peacebuilding, empowerment and development. The adopted indigenous conflict resolution approaches, knowledge and citizen peacekeeping are playing a prominent role in reappraising and building sustainable peace. Individually and collectively, women contribute to peacebuilding in many ways; though their contributions are often neglected because they take avant-garde forms, occur outside formal peace processes or are considered extensions of women’s existing gender roles.

Keywords: women, cross border conflicts, peacebuilding.

Mujeres Trascendiendo Límites en el Proceso de Paz Indígena de Sotik/Borabu (Kenia)

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Resumen

La opinión y comprensión de las consecuencias de los conflictos violentos entre las mujeres y la importancia de su participación en los procesos de paz es variada. Este estudio aborda las experiencias de las mujeres y sus respuestas ante conflictos violentos. A partir del enfoque de las necesidades humanas, el estudio explora el compromiso de las mujeres de base en la construcción de la paz a través de la promoción del capital social. A partir del estudio etnográfico del conflicto transfronterizo Sotik / Borabu (Kenia), se explora cómo las mujeres han (re)descubierto, (re)formulado, (re)enmarcado y (re)adaptado sus roles tradicionales de género para la consolidación de la paz, el empoderamiento y desarrollo. El enfoque, conocimientos y mantenimiento de la paz ciudadana tomados en la resolución del conflicto indígena adoptado están desempeñando un papel destacado en la nueva valoración y la construcción de una paz sostenible. Individual y colectivamente, las mujeres contribuyen a la consolidación de la paz en muchos aspectos; aunque sus contribuciones a menudo no se toman en cuenta porque toman formas vanguardistas, realizan procesos formales de paz o se consideran parte de su rol de género.

Palabras clave: mujeres, conflictos fronterizos, construcción de la paz.

Strides and efforts continue to be made to bring women to the forefront as agents of peace and positive societal change, the world-over. Injecting women's voices in peace processes not only assures that their needs will be met, but also that underlying social issues that might have contributed to the outbreak of the conflict will also be addressed. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 adopted in October 2000 calls all actors involved in peace processes to adopt a gender perspective for stronger prospects of sustainable peace. The resolution specifically reiterates the important role of women's participation, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. The Resolution holds out a promise to women across the globe that their rights will be protected and all barriers to their equal and full involvement in the maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace and security will be removed. Further, UNSCR 2106 passed on 24th June 2013, highlights sexual violence and other atrocities including rape, sexual slavery and torture, forced pregnancies and other forms of sexual abuses committed against women in conflict-prone regions. The resolution affirms the centrality of gender equality and women's political, social and economic empowerment to efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

However, women remain mere token presences within peacebuilding processes. They continue to be absent from formal peacebuilding processes. In Sub-Saharan Africa, "women and girls are repeatedly excluded when ceasefires and peace accords are reached" (Mazurana & Proctor, 2013, p. 16), in countries which have been characterized by violent conflict and state failure in the past. Increasingly, for women to begin to play a significant and a major part in formal peacebuilding processes and decision-making, they should be empowered to be less of victims and onlookers, and instead take concrete steps against violent conflict. What exactly are women's roles in violent conflict transformation and peacebuilding? What can be done to enhance women's role and contribution to peacebuilding processes? This research explored perceptions, values, opinions, practices and attitudes concerning violent conflict, response and coping mechanisms, women's roles as agents and/or victims and their contributions to peacebuilding processes. The research focuses on grassroots peacebuilding efforts of

women of Sotik/Borabu border, a rural region to the south-western part of Kenya, where violence dominates.

Research Methodology

The isolated, marginalized and silenced voices of women in Kenyan society necessitated the researcher to institute trust, mutual respect and a sense of intimacy with the participants. These argued for the use of qualitative methodologies, which enabled the researcher to interact with the participants, in both designed and natural settings, through flexible conversations, meetings and activities.

Durkheim's Solidarities

Drawing from Durkheim's twin approaches of mechanical and organic solidarities, the study explores women's engagement in peacebuilding on Kenya's Sotik/Borabu border, through the promotion of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1983), as both a public and private good. Durkheim (1893) delineates the societal functions that lead different types of societies to maintain their integrity, coherence and more importantly, order. He examined differentiation of divisions of labour between traditional and modern societies, upon mechanic and organic solidarities:

Social life comes from a double source, the likeness of consciences and the division of labour. Individuals are socialized in the first case, because, not having any real individuality, they become, with those whom they resemble, part of the same collective type. In the second case, because, while having a physiognomy and a personal activity which distinguishes them from others, they depend upon others in the same measure that they are distinguished from the others, and consequently upon the society which results from their union. (p. 226)

According to Durkheim (1893), traditional societies are knit together by the mere fact there is very little differentiation in the type of labour or occupation held by their members. Therefore, their solidarity emanates from the similarity and sense of community and mutual likeness.

Consequently, while each individual is highly autonomous, the social norms leading to collective consciousness are prevalent and powerful. In fact, legal systems in traditional societies do not allow deviant behaviour and encourage uniformity in behaviours and beliefs. Thus, interrelations are bound to common consciousness and punitive law (Turner, Beeghley & Powers, 1998). On the other hand, high levels of labour differentiation, foster organic solidarity and individual consciousness. Because the division of labour lead members of a given society to specialize and undertake different social roles, they become united through their dependence upon one another. It is this mutual dependence, which arises from the division of labour that provides sustainable social cohesion.

While traditional mechanical societies are mostly kinship based, modern societies enjoying organic solidarity are more diverse and dominated by economic and governmental relations (Turner, Beeghley & Powers, 1998). Through their interdependence, people participate in high levels of interaction, which increase solidarity and the formation of norms. Quoted by Halpern (2005, p. 5), Durkheim states that, “a nation can be maintained only if, between the state and the individuals, there is interposed a whole series of secondary groups near enough to the individuals to attract them strongly in their sphere of action and drag, in this way, into the general torrent of social life.” There, therefore, needs to be a balance between the individual and the community. When labour differentiation and individual consciousness are pushed to the extreme, anomie occurs, which is when the division of labour ceases to produce solidarity (Durkheim, 1893). The motivations for cooperation between members of a modern society a la Durkheim are clear: organic solidarity is based on the principle of interdependence, norms and interaction networks. Interdependence implies a certain level of trust that other members of the community will not defect.

Popularized by Coleman (1988) (who is credited for the expression “Social Capital”), and Putnam (1995), social capital has been defined as the rules, obligations, norms and sanctions of cooperation, reciprocity and trustworthiness embedded in social networks, social relations, social structures and a society’s institutional arrangements. Social capital governs a society’ character, and allows for the facilitation of collective action (Halpern, 2005; Woolcock, 2000; Putnam, 2000). The many variables of social capital are embodied in formal institutions and informal networks. It

is manifested through membership in social networks, density of membership, heterogeneity of groups, extent of meeting attendance, capacity of networks, participation in decision-making, trust and reciprocity, strength of norms, extent of external ties, and/or types of networks (Grootaert, Oh, & Swamy, 2002; Fukuyama, 1995). For its valued “resources embedded in social networks and, as accessed and used by actors” (Lin, 2001, pp. 24-25), social capital is a key ingredient for collective action, and institutional efficacy leading to sustainable socio-economic development. Therefore, as a resource for facilitating the acquisition of human capital (Coleman, 1988), for building “civic virtue” (Putnam, 2000), and as a form of interpersonal trust, social cohesion and norms of reciprocity, social capital, is an essential indicator, condition and pillar of successful peacebuilding.

Social Capital as a Public Good

Social capital as a public good is conceptualised as the virtues embedded in the norms, networks, and trust shared by a community (Halpern, 2005; Putnam, 2000). It is the investment in mutual recognition, and acknowledgement manifested by levels of solidarity, associational memberships and reproduction of groups. The group level analysis stems from Durkheim’s view of social relations as it “explores the elements and processes in the production and maintenance of the collective asset” (Lin, 2001, p. 32). As a public good, social capital, enables people to overcome collective action problems and to work together towards a common goal (Rothstein, 2000).

Social Capital as a Private Good

Social capital as private good is premised on institutions and networks, allowing individuals and communities to share information, reduce transaction costs and access resources such as informal credit (Knowles, 2006; Grootaert, Oh, & Swamy, 2002; Isham, 2002; Barr, 2002; Van Bastelaer & Howard, 2006). Social capital as private good acknowledges the potential positive externalities of social trust for the group. It is conceptualized as the investment in social networks, which allow individuals to access and use resources embedded in those social networks (Lin, 2001). The social networks facilitate flow of information, reduce

transaction costs, exert influence on individuals, give individuals social credentials, and reinforce identity and recognition. Social capital as a collective good confounds norms and trust as capital and is divorced from the individual interactions. The focus is on networks instead of other components of social capital, such as trust and norms. As a private good, social capital focuses on whom people know; the strength, character and intensity of the ties, and what access those relationships provide. For example, the size and density of an individual's network, and also the resources (material or emotional) that the network makes available to that person (Halpern, 2005).

Social Capital as both a Private and Public Good

Social capital as both a private and public good is crucial for the demarcation between bonding and bridging. Bonding (integration or strong ties) refers to the strength of reciprocal ties between individuals in a community, while bridging (linking or synergy) refers to associations across social cleavages (Halpern, 2005). Societies have different levels and combinations of bonding and bridging, and clearly societies with high bridging and bonding have higher levels of development and democratization (Woolcock, 2001).

Fukuyama (2001, p. 5) argues that, "in-group solidarity [bonding] reduces the ability of group members to cooperate with outsiders and often imposes negative externalities on the latter". He claims that traditional groups lack "weak ties" which would allow them to participate in multiple groups. Both bridging and bonding (density and closure) are important characteristics of social capital as a collective good as problems of collective action for development cannot be solved with bridging alone (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001). In the case of Sotik/Borabu region which has suffered the negative externalities of violent conflict, the very fabric, or bond, of the communities has often been shattered.

Linking Bonding and Bridging

Bonding and bridging are linked in a strategy that begins with the rational person receiving incentives to contribute to collective action (O'Brien, Phillips & Patsiorkovsky, 2005, p.1042). Bridging takes a variety of forms and “public policy decision-making is important in influencing the advantages or disadvantages of indigenous social capital “(bonding).” “Linkage” (or synergy), refers to relations between different strata of society such as state-community or relationships between communities or institutions with unequal resources or power (Colletta & Cullen, 2000; Szreter, 2004). This for example, recalls Durkheim’s call for the filling of space between the individual and the state. While bridging and bonding refer mostly to horizontal relationships, linking addresses vertical relationships such as civic engagement and political responsibility. Putnam (1995) and Woolcock (2001) emphasize the impact of horizontal engagement on vertical synergy and, political and economic institutions efficiency.

Social Capital and Peacebuilding

The goals of peacebuilding are not merely the cessation of hostilities, but geared towards more sustainable, participatory and associative peace (Jeong, 2005). Sustainable peace is grounded in support for economy-centred peacebuilding (Collier, Hoeffler, Elliot, Hegre, Reynal-Querol, & Sambanis, 2003; Woodward, 2002; Verkoren & Junne, 2004), polity-centred peacebuilding (Sambanis & Doyle, 2006; Paris, 2004), and society-centred peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997). Pragmatically, all different aspects of stabilization and development such as security, rule of law, governance and democracy, economic development, and social well-being must be promoted and prioritized (USIP, 2007). Social networks within communities are instrumental institutions in conflict transformation and peacebuilding, allowing for the alleviation of collective action problems, the improvement of welfare through the diffusion of economic and social benefits on multiple levels, and most importantly for the reconstruction of social fabrics and reconciliation. Peacebuilding frameworks must address the “restoration and rebuilding of relationships.” Contending parties, (perpetrators and victims), have to (re)learn how to coexist and cooperate,

(re)build their society, and foster solidarity, without which institutions, whether formal or informal, cannot be sustained.

Drivers for Violence

Boulding (2000) describes a form of dialectical tension as present in any society, with the manner in which people negotiate or manage that tension determining whether they live in a peace or a warrior culture. For Boulding (2000, p. 2), every person is born with the need to bond with, be close to, and be accepted by others. Equally, every person is also born with the need for autonomy and to be separate from others. When people hold ‘the need for bonding and autonomy in balance—nurturing one another, engaging in many cooperative activities, but also giving each other space’—then they form and find the conditions for peace culture. However, when the situation is characterized by power struggles and/or by patterns of domination, then warrior cultures take primacy. Boulding further argues that neither culture exists in a ‘pure’ form. What then are the conditions or events on the Sotik/Borabu border that shift the culture of apparent peace to that of a warrior?

Despite sharing different dialects, traditions and cultures, and notwithstanding the simmering tensions, the Kipsigis and Abagusii (or Kisii) who live on the Sotik and Borabu border, respectively, have co-existed in relative harmony ever since. Even so, the precise roots of the intermittent border conflicts have multiple and interconnected triggers and underlying contributors, running into years or even decades old. However the immediate triggers of the violence, on the Sotik/Borabu border in particular and Kenya in general, are the real and/or perceived political contest differences (electoral politics), often exacerbated by the frequency of the historical cattle-rustling along the common border. Cases of cattle raiding on the Sotik/Borabu border continue to take lives, undermine livelihoods, and discourage both public development and private sector individual investment.

Electoral politics in Kenya is largely about competition between ethnic groups, as campaigners emphasize the ethnicity of the candidates and their parties (Tostensen, 2009). Political elites are known to stoke ethnic tensions to mobilize political support among their ethnic kinsmen. They capitalise on ethnic, tribal and/or clan nationalistic identities to advance their

aggressive policies of inciting ‘their people’ against their neighbours on a ‘we-versus-them’ socio-political-economy of classification. Deepened local grievances, like cattle-rustling, are used by these politicians to cause and strengthen ethnic divisions and animosities in their electoral constituencies. Mokua (2013a) argues that frustrations from unmet expectations (real or perceived), combined with ethnic identity rivalries and consciousness, strongly influence political activities and therefore justify and fuel existing tensions on genuine community grievances and trigger violence. These motivations are lent fertile ground by the prejudices of stereotypically branding each other’s culture as less of a civilisation, which have evolved and escalated over time, into perceptions of mutual distrust and suspicion, deliberate disinformation and misinformation.

Many of the long-standing grievances and failures of governance are linked to, among others, a culture of impunity, land grievances, corruption, ethnic tensions, weak institutions, and regional and socioeconomic inequality. Many of these tensions have remained inadequately addressed, by the successful post-independence governments, leading to violent explosions. At the dawn of independence, African leaders not only ascended to government structures which had been intended to preserve the colonial administrative legacy but also inherited from the colonialists scarce national resources, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate human resource capacity, inadequate capital, inadequate education and health facilities, among others, as tools to govern the newly independent state. As the scramble for the control of scarce national resources and facilities intensified, ethnicity and patronage became the main vehicles through which the dominance and preservation of power as well as resources could be achieved (HRW, 2008).

This has meant that political contests are all the more charged because of what is at stake. Those who achieve political power benefit from widespread abuses including impunity for political manipulation and sanctioning of violence, criminal theft of land, and the corrupt misuse of public resources—indulgences which occur at the expense of groups who are out of power. After gaining power, political elites are known to reward their ethnic kinsmen and supporters, through appointments to political offices and with jobs in the public service, the military and with the allocation of public land as political patronage (KNCHR, 2008). For the

communities involved therefore, their candidate and/or party gaining political office is understood as ‘a struggle for their survival.’ If political power is obtained, the perception is that access to sparse resources is guaranteed, and if not, marginalisation and exclusion is reckoned to follow.

This has led the public to believe that a person and/or political party associated with their own ethnic tribe and/or clan must be in power, both to secure for them benefits and as a defensive strategy to keep-off other ethnic groups, should these take over power, from taking jobs, land and other entitlements. All of these has led to the acquisition of political power being considered both by politicians and the public as a zero sum game, in which losing is seen as hugely costly and is not accepted. Ethnic clashes are accordingly, fomented and sanctioned during election-times, when political opponents need to be intimidated, displaced or murdered, so that they are rendered unable to vote freely, or not at all. This gives electoral advantage to the ethnic group and electoral candidate sponsoring the violence (Hansen, 2009).

Despite some reforms in the country and international judicial proceedings against suspected organisers of the 2007/2008 post-elections violence, including the current President, Uhuru Kenyatta, and his deputy, William Ruto, high-ranking politicians who have been consistently implicated in organizing political violence have never been prosecuted in a Kenyan court of law and continue to operate with impunity. Widespread failures of governance are therefore at the core of the violent explosives expressed in the wake of every electoral cycle (HRW, 2008). Consequently, the urgent need for coordinated responses from all stakeholders and at levels for support of point-of-conflict capacities and intervention strategies.

Women and Violent Conflict

Men and women experience many of the same or similar phenomena during violent conflict; loss of livelihoods and assets, displacement, physical and mental injury, torture, the death and injury of loved ones, sexual assault and enforced disappearance. Nevertheless, how they experience these phenomena and the levels of vulnerability are influenced by their gender roles. This is because men and women are differently embodied, symbolize different things to their communities and those that attack them, are targeted differently and their injuries have different social and livelihood

impacts, have different responsibilities in their families and communities and thus end up to be harmed differently. They also have different livelihood opportunities, access to the cash economy, and ability to claim, own and inherit property, all of which impact the resources they can access to aid their survival and recovery. All of these factors influence women' (in)ability to survive and recover from violent conflicts.

Consequently, while women remain a minority of combatants and perpetrators of violent conflicts, they increasingly suffer the greatest harm. Women' marginalization, coupled with the violence of conflict and its gendered dimensions, often leads to increased women' vulnerability, reduced access to resources, livelihood inputs and basic services, increased family and social responsibilities, restricted mobility, unequal access to protective services and legal mechanisms, inadequate political power, and particular kinds of loss, violence and evils.

Documented cases of terrible abuses against women during periods of violent conflicts in Kenya abound. From the numerous women who suffered sexual violence and other forms of abuse, to the many killed, maimed and systematically raped during the 2007/2008 post-election violence. The Commission of Inquiry into the 2007/2008 Post-Election Violence (CIPEV, 2008, p. 248), reports that of the 653 victims of sexual violence whom the Nairobi Women's Hospital was able to offer comprehensive services, "524 or 80% suffered from rape and defilement, 65 or 10% from domestic violence with the remaining 10% from other types of physical and sexual assault. The majority of the patients were women, even though the hospital treated a small number of males who had been sodomized and subjected to other forms of sexual brutalization".

This is not to suggest that women are passive victims of conflict. Rather, it is the very fact of violent conflict and the impacts on women, their families, their community and the society that spurs women to take peacebuilding actions. Natsios (2001, par. VII), writes that women "are not passive spectators in civil wars, rather, they are active participants. They assume new roles and responsibilities both during and after conflict." They, "valiantly look after their families in the most trying of circumstances. They shoulder new economic burdens and responsibilities and play vital roles in the community." Women are faced with the overwhelming task of keeping families together after displacement, sustaining livelihoods by providing

food, clothing and shelter for their families, in what is in most instances destroyed infrastructures. Many women are left widowed and their children orphaned after conflict. Women who survive these atrocities often live with the vivid and terrifying images in stress and trauma for the rest of their lives (Maja, 2006). In these estimations, women are survivors, demonstrating remarkable perseverance and initiatives in the tragic conditions of violent conflict.

Women in Peacebuilding

Violent conflict and the ensuing repercussions make it of imperative importance that women play a significant role in curbing the effects of violence, not only for themselves, but their families and communities. Women need to be actively included and involved in societal transformation and be the agents of change for peace, development, security and human rights. Yet, women have the least amount of access to resources and decision-making systems in order to make or even influence the decisions that would avert violent conflict. The difficulty of accessing formal peacebuilding inevitably leads women to tap into informal sectors where they are both creative and innovative in developing effective peacebuilding strategies. Their primary peacebuilding options are limited to working outside the formal system and influencing peace outcomes through the formation of connections, maintaining old and developing new social networks, sharing across ethnicities and interacting beyond geographical boundaries. It is the creation of these informal linkages and webs that lead women to play active roles toward peacebuilding. Through these initiatives women work not only to end violence but also address the underlying social, cultural, economic and political dynamics that contribute to the outbreak of violent conflicts.

Grassroots People-to-People Peacebuilding

This grassroots, citizen-based, people-to-people approach to peacebuilding brings attention to the need to end violent conflicts in a way that is perceived as less threatening to the dominant ethno-political culture. The approach does not challenge the dominant socio-political perspective, but rather accepts women's customary/traditional roles in society. By so doing, the approach provides women with confident spaces for engagement that

are not openly acknowledged and revealed in the dominant culture. Women are propelled to act within the confines of the role-zones that they know best and in which they are most comfortable. In their primary roles as wives, sisters, daughters and mothers, women interact with the people at the grassroots and build situations of trust. Yet, this does not preclude them from taking leadership positions and roles that are more overtly political. However, this traditional route seems to be the best option open to women engaging and influencing decision-making for peacebuilding. Their activities in those roles provide additional avenues within which women influence and do indeed exert pressure on the decision-making structures for peacebuilding. As Patrick and Aida (2003) admit, men may often still make the decision to go to war, but the extent of the constraints they face because of women's potential involvement in political processes can influence when they do so. Because of their traditional customary roles, women have a unique insight into the needs of a community and a special role to play in promoting the interests and aspirations of the citizenry.

The grassroots, citizen-based, people-to-people approach provides a women-centric perspective, on which women mobilise, assume and engage in peacebuilding activities based on their traditional cultural roles. Since every culture has unique strengths when compared to other cultures, attention to diverse peace traditions and contexts have the capacity to enrich practical peacebuilding. As Fry, Bruce, Bonta & Karlina (2009) contend, comparing the peace traditions of other societies contributes to the discovery of cross-cutting themes as well as positive precedents that help reinvigorate peace practices in other contexts. The Sotik/Borabu women achieve these through informal cross-border visits and/or exchanges, interactions, networking, connections and conversations, in which they share experiences, collaborate, relate, bond and dialogue. Through these informal peacebuilding processes women address the motivations, grievances and injustices that trigger violent conflict, work directly to change relationships and alter negative behavioural stereotypes, beliefs and attitudes.

Cultural Peace Resources

Culture, though not static, monolithic, or deterministic, is the matrix within which peacebuilding practices take form. In many respects, peacebuilding

is a process of cultural introspection and reconstruction a process of generating social dialogue that encourages critical reflection on existing realities, re-evaluation of present value priorities, and initiation of new shared meanings. An essential part of peacebuilding, therefore, is the meaning, relevance and applicability of known practices, values and beliefs. Every cultural community has its own 'local exceptionalisms'. These are distinctive ways, values, insights, and practices that contribute to the development of peace, human dignity, communal solidarity and harmony within cultural milieus, and which donate to a larger, 'mosaic' approach to peace based on inclusive intercultural dialogue (Mokua, 2013b). MacGinty (2008, pp. 128-129) argues for the potential of traditional and indigenous approaches of peace to engage the 'affective dimension of peacemaking' in a culturally appropriate manner, balancing the top-down, elite-focused aspect of conventional intervention programmes with a more genuinely participatory and bottom-up dynamic.

Being Africans, the Sotik/Borabu community take their beliefs from traditional African spirituality and cosmologies. The community's gender symbolic systems infuse women (and men) with cultural, religious and political meanings. In addition, different types of objects, rituals, beliefs, practices, traditional ideologies, actors and resources, are bequeathed with appropriate transcendental power, which remain significant if accessed. There are traditional African rites and practices in which people respond to, prevent, resolve and manage conflicts. These rituals, rites and practices invoke invisible powers and social sanctions in influencing behaviour, norms and character. One significant cultural belief and practice, is the sacredness, sanctity, awe and reverence of the woman's body and sexuality. Women through their bodies and sexual behaviours represent families, clans, ethnicities, civilisations, and therefore, delineate identities. Their sexual purity defines the honour and integrity of the community, the violation of which serves as a direct attack on and 'stains' the entire group.

The sacrosanctity of women's sexuality symbolized by the practice of tying their undergarments to a string and placing them strategically on the pathways to the war-fields are of vital cultural import. Lethal repercussions, predisposed in the form of a curse are spelt out for those who disregard and circumvent the paraphernalia/objects. In the objects are bestowed deep religio-cultural-psychological symbolic connotations. The general belief is

that none of the combatants who disregard the tools will come back from the war-field alive. For, they will have seen their mothers naked which is regarded as taboo in the local cultural context. The community believes in the invisible divine powers of these objects, and often this powers are exercised by apportioning rewards to those who show respect, reverence and awe, and vengeance and punishment, to those who disregard. The religio-socio-psychological symbolism of elder people's undergarments, for peacebuilding in an African cultural setting is one of significant value and meaning therefore.

Women's maternal roles and attachments are also exploited to produce peace and resolve conflicts. Women are often seen as vital to the production of the rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity and trust embedded in social relations, social structures and society's institutional arrangements that enable its members to achieve their individual and community objectives, which are in turn critical to the daily maintenance of communal life. Women, through labour as well as maintenance of day-to-day cooperative relationships and informal social networks, are indispensable to the maintenance of this order, both materially and socially. As Mostov (2000) emphasises, women are mothers, daughters and wives—symbols of purity, nurturers and transmitters of national values, and reproducers of a nation's warriors and rulers, but also symbols of territorial vulnerability and national defilement, as victims vulnerable to sexual, and physical invasion and contamination.

'Peace Markets'

Significant impetus is given to the women's informal peacebuilding activities in what Abdalla (2012) represents as 'peace markets.' Peace markets are market centres established in optimum locations along the Sotik/Borabu common border. For years they have represented ingenious cross-border commerce, trade, relationships, bonding and commodity exchange model, of how the two neighbouring communities preserve their common interests by circumventing the border's (in)security pressures, even in the intensity of a conflict. These common markets, from Chepilat, Tembwo, to Ndanai, are not only arcades and fairs of trade and commerce, but also epicentres of cultural civilisation, bonding, networking, sharing, discussions, dialogue and conversation. The market days of the peace

markets are always bubbling with activity as market-goers, mostly women, trade in goods and services, interact, and exchange pleasantries and friendships oblivious of their community's animosities. They all observe and respect each other's diversities, codes of conduct, practices, protocols and belief systems. The peace markets, therefore, provide an outstanding example of how the facts of geography, humanness and context remain superior and more sustainable to those of ethnic politics and identities.

Cross-Border Peacebuilding Committees

Evolution of the model of Peace Committees in addressing conflicts is perhaps one of the main successes of the peacebuilding processes in Kenya. Initially started as an informal structure composed of both male and female elders, the model has since been replicated in the whole country. This is a local community owned, low cost, socially acceptable, peacebuilding model that recognizes and appreciates the role of the citizenry, indigenous knowledge and expertise in conflict management, development, governance and peacebuilding.

The Sotik/Borabu Cross-border Peace Committees constitute representatives of both genders elected from both communities and the local state security actors. The committees are created not only to improve on cross-border governance and (in)security management through detailed border surveillance, but also to minimize conflicts. The committees act as arbiters for disputes between the rival ethnic tribes and groups, and provide a platform for cross-border community coordination and cooperation. The committees undertake regular cross-border conferences (baraza) that allow relationships and friendships to develop, establishing a "constructive dependency" among individuals, the two communities, cultural leaders, administrators and political authorities (Mokua, 2013a). The cycle of dependency so built, is relied upon for continued and potentially more meaningful partnerships, collaborations and cooperation.

A significant constituent of the Cross-Border Peacebuilding Committees are the gender and age specific peace meetings components, where women are making a prominent presence. The Sotik/Borabu Women Peace Drive and the Sotik/Borabu Women's Peace Meetings are case groups of such peace mediums formed and founded by women from both the Kipsigis and the Kisiis in response to the intermittent violence. In attempts to bring

women from both sides of the common border together, the forums do organise frequent cross-border peace meetings among and between women. During these meetings they discuss development, leadership, governance and (in)security concerns, and propose intervention programmes that would promote sustainable peace and development between and among the two neighbouring communities. Among the intervention activities proposed include, the advancement of cross-border commerce and trade, participating in cross-border religious and education activities, and promoting peace education in families and thus, making the family the foundation of peacebuilding. All of these efforts help to restore and sustain peace.

Microfinance for Peacebuilding

An essential part of enhancing peoples' welfare comes from increasing their economic opportunities and resources. Increased welfare improves people's possibilities to reach real freedom and enhances their capabilities to function (Sen, 1999). The use of microfinance in peacebuilding and in enhancing society's welfare is often seen as an effective strategy to advance development. Microfinance can help conflict-ridden societies rebuild their economies, families decrease their economic and food insecurity, and empower both women and men (Cheston & Kuhn, 2006; Woodworth, 2006). Microfinance provides resource opportunities to the poor (Marino, 2005), primarily women, who often have less access than men. Further, by targeting women, a less political client group is promoted providing opportunities for their increased role as peacebuilders (FDC, 1999). Targeting women is also more beneficial since increased women's income benefits the household and the community more than a corresponding increase in men's income (Snow & Woller, 2001). The Norwegian Nobel Committee in its motivation for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 acknowledges:

Micro-credit has proved to be an important liberating force in societies where women in particular have to struggle against repressive social and economic conditions. Economic growth and political democracy cannot achieve their full potential unless the female half of humanity participates on an equal footing with the male.

Merry-go-rounds as Peace Actors

Informal savings and credit economies are increasingly essential tools and instruments for women's peacebuilding efforts, socio-economic and political empowerment and development on the Sotik/Borabu border. The vitality and burgeoning of Rotating and Savings Associations (ROSCAS) popularly known as Merry-go-rounds (Chama in Swahili), can be attributed to the fact that they are owned and controlled by operators who are at the same time the beneficiaries. Formulated and given credence mainly at the 'peace markets,' the informal savings and credit economy are not a business strategy per se, but a way of life. The economy is interwoven into the web of the daily life of the participants, reinforcing deeply a sense of the spirit of community that binds individuals, ethnicities and communities together and promotes peaceful co-existence.

For the women, the merry-go-rounds are not only forums for savings and credit, but also spaces for encouragement, meeting and exchanging ideas, socialising, training, teaching, sharing and discussing common concerns and challenges. They enable women diversify livelihoods, connect, and discover help and strength from others with similar experiences. They are a 'moral community' whose economic activities are not defined and governed by market values and principles but by the interests of community, family and kinship society. The economy is guided and driven by the norms and values of reciprocity, mutuality and fairness, which are predicated, on the principles of high degrees of strengthening the spirit of community, feelings of ownership, trust, social capital (wealth) and quality of life. The economy is based on building up long-term relationships, and networks made up of families, friends, kinships, acquaintances and business associates that are grounded and cemented on the values of trust and reciprocity, as a way of banking on the future. The larger the network, the greater the accumulation of social wealth that the people can bank on. The 'moral community' emphasizes good neighbourliness and respectability, as highly valued and integral to the cohesion of families, clans, tribes and society.

The economy serves as a kind of rotary club, allowing members to network, exchange knowledge and information, and goodwill. The increased social networks strengthen social relations and understanding, facilitate reconciliation and contribute in the establishment of relationships

of trust and peace outside one's family, clan, tribe and community. As foundational spaces for training, learning and socialisation, the economy significantly boosts the independence, confidence, socio-status, courage, self-esteem and skills of women. This is because as Cheston and Kuhn (2006) contend, beliefs in ones' capabilities are noteworthy steps for increased equality and empowerment. Further, if this is followed by changed perceptions on stereotypical beliefs and behaviour on a peoples' cultural roles and capabilities, traditional discriminatory sensitivities might be redefined.

Another feature of the moral economy is that it combines income generating projects with other social welfare functions such as caring for the disadvantaged in society like, orphans, the disabled, the aged, the widows, pregnant teenagers etc. Thus, the economy's canons are a poignant statement of re-stating one of the common threads running through African philosophy of mutual sharing and co-dependence. Accordingly, the economy goes beyond culture, geography, history and societal identity, to be the platform upon which people, commerce and culture connect.

Cattle Rustling

Cattle-raiding across the common border continues to take lives, threaten (in)security, undermine livelihoods, and discourage both public development and private sector investment. Women across the border have through conferences (barazas), unanimously condemned the vice and appealed to the state law enforcement agencies to identify, apprehend and judge cattle-raiders as individual breakers of the law. Cattle-rustlers must take individual criminal responsibility for their actions, which are often used to generalise and stereotype on all members of a group, consequently drawing the two communities into wider ethnic violent conflict. They have also identified diversification of income generation opportunities as another important mechanism to safeguard and sustain peace, for cattle-raiders will find viable alternative sources of supporting their livelihoods.

Conclusion

The study has reaffirmed that violent conflicts are extremely gendered with women and men experiencing conflicts differently. Also, the role that

women play as peacebuilders is, in large measure, unacknowledged, undervalued and ignored. This limited perspective reinforces existing traditional gender inequality values and practices, positioning women as necessarily 'passive' and 'subservient' in the peacebuilding and development arenas. However, in addition to the unique organisational and leadership traits, a comprehensive gendered perspective also plays a crucial role in conflict response efforts, including fostering an empowerment approach and assisting in the alleviation of gender-centred violence.

For women's peacebuilding activism to endure and their agenda to continue to be felt, it is incumbent upon societies to create structures that provide spaces for women's on-going input, and for women peacebuilding activists to adapt to and participate in the existing male-dominated decision-making structures. In some cases, this might be through formal peacebuilding processes. In other cases, however, it might involve lobbying or finding ways to influence the peacebuilding processes from outside through informal organizations and grassroots people-centred mobilizations. Similarly, it is important that peacebuilding advocates enlist women in much more numbers, who will continue to crusade for peace and, participate in peacebuilding processes. In order to advance the causes of peace and women empowerment, women themselves must connect with, empower, equip and inspire one another at all levels of society. In these ways society will not only show commitment to peace, but will also create holistic responses to violent conflicts.

Developing appropriate models of peacebuilding must of necessity be rooted in respect and draw from indigenous knowledge, understandings and aspirations of peace, if the authenticity, commitment and worthy of peacebuilding are to be feasible. Viable and enduring peace springs from local cultural milieus and meanings. Tapping into the local mutual set of cultural attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and standards which give the concept of peace substance and legitimacy, provides the 'deep context' of eliciting shared visions and value priorities, and relating them to realities of conflict in a manner that is conducive to action on the ground.

Cultural eclecticism (Lederach, 1995) presents many opportunities for creativity and dynamism, through foundational concepts, values, knowledge and practices that can be understood and applied in new ways, and in different peacebuilding settings. Intercultural cross-fertilization therefore

presents workable solutions for sustainable peacebuilding. Bringing more voices to the table of peace, including women, is itself a process of acknowledging and respecting the many cultural diversities of peace, without which a greater whole in peacebuilding cannot be envisioned nor realized.

Lessons

Women make a qualitative difference to peacebuilding by enabling access to and fostering trust within and between communities. One of the most important lessons and experiences, from the case of Sotik/Borabu border, is the notion of people involvement, participation and inclusiveness that gives the silent majority of peacebuilders – women – a voice, and therefore, which needs to be more systematically and widely embraced, and integrated into peacebuilding practices. The creation of socio-political spaces for women to engage and to become empowered agents creating and reclaiming peace, are positive characteristics of the ways in which women can be integrated into peacebuilding processes.

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The Amazons. Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World

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Review

Mayor, A. (2014). *The Amazons. Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World*. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 9780691147208.

La imagen de la Amazona, la mujer guerrera de la Antigüedad que trasciende los roles de género llegando a prescindir totalmente de los hombres, genera especial interés. Consideradas figuras más legendarias que reales, diversos hallazgos en las últimas décadas han permitido constatar la existencia de mujeres guerreras del tipo amazona a lo largo de todo el Mediterráneo y de las estepas rusas, llegando hasta Asia. La obra de Adrienne Mayor, investigadora de la Universidad de Stanford, sintetiza todos estos descubrimientos y analiza en profundidad diversos aspectos concernientes a estas mujeres, en una tarea que ella misma califica de superficial. Para ello, emplea un amplio espectro de fuentes, no sólo literarias, sino también arqueológicas, geográficas, antropológicas y artísticas. Además, todo ello va acompañado de un extenso aparato gráfico.

La obra está dividida en cinco partes, incluyendo el prólogo. Éste, que lleva por título *Atalanta, the Greek Amazon*, esboza la pauta estructural del resto de las partes del libro. La autora comienza relatando el mito de Atalanta, así como las diferentes versiones que existen del mismo y el uso didáctico que se le pudo dar en Grecia. A continuación, analiza el papel que la figura de Atalanta ocupó dentro de las relaciones de género de la antigüedad griega. El prólogo se cierra con un resumen de lo que el lector va a encontrarse en el resto de la obra.

La primera parte de la obra propiamente dicha lleva por título *Who were the Amazons?* Se abre analizando la imagen que los griegos tenían de las

mujeres guerreras y de cómo ésta afectaba a los roles de género. Por otro lado, se ilustra el papel relevante que la literatura y el arte griegos concedían a las amazonas, y se rastrea el posible origen desde el que estas mujeres aparecieron en el mundo griego.

En la segunda parte, *Historical Women Warriors and Classical traditions*, se nos presenta un amplio estudio de los modos de vida de las mujeres guerreras de la Antigüedad. Se abre con un recopilatorio de los distintos trabajos arqueológicos que han permitido demostrar que, en las regiones asignadas a las amazonas, entre un 20 y un 40% de los esqueletos encontrados en tumbas pertenecen a mujeres guerreras. A continuación, Mayor analiza el lenguaje, vestimenta, folklore, y armas de las amazonas, y los animales de los que se rodeaban, así como las relaciones de género igualitarias existentes en las sociedades semi-nómadas de las que formaban parte.

La tercera parte de la obra, *Amazons in Greek and Roman myth, legend and History*, está dividida en siete capítulos, cada uno de los cuales analiza una pareja amazona-héroe griego -Hipólita-Hércules, Antíope-Teseo, Pentasilea-Aquiles, Taelestris-Alejandro- o bien distintos episodios de la historia griega y romana protagonizados por amazonas.

La cuarta parte, *Beyond the Greek World*, está dedicada a un repaso algo superficial por las mujeres guerreras ajenas a la esfera grecorromana, ampliando con ello el campo de visión tradicional de la historiografía dedicada al estudio de Grecia y Roma. Los capítulos de esta parte se encuentran divididos de acuerdo a cuatro zonas geográficas: el Cáucaso, Oriente Próximo, Asia Central y China.

Finalmente, la obra contiene un apéndice en el que se muestran más de 200 nombres conocidos de mujeres guerreras de la Antigüedad, una amplia bibliografía que no distingue entre fuentes primarias e historiografía actual, y un índice donde aparece cualquier referencia que la autora ha considerado que puede resultar útil al lector.

Si bien la amplia extensión y el gran número de personajes que se muestran hacen en ocasiones que la lectura resulte dificultosa, las constantes referencias al aparato bibliográfico y gráfico son de gran utilidad para enlazar unas partes del libro con otras. Se aprecian algunas erratas ortográficas, aunque son leves. Destaca la interdisciplinariedad con la que

se trata el contenido de la obra, acentuando su interés y convirtiéndola en útil tanto para historiadores como para arqueólogos e investigadores de las relaciones de género. Todo ello hace de él un estudio completo y de obligada consulta para quien desee introducirse en el tema de las mujeres guerreras de la Antigüedad.

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