Gendered and feminist inequalities: A review and framing notes

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Abstract

This article provides a brief review and mapping of the critical field of inequality studies in both general and gender-feminist-specific terms. The article approaches the topic by interrogating the meanings associated with inequalities and then turns to the gendered and feminist scholarship to assess the relevance of an evolving literature in providing a lens, both conceptual and empirical, within which African theorisations also accrue. The argument centres on limitations that arise when overdetermining the economic and fiscal at the expense of the social, structural and political, providing some illustrations about the attributes of gendered and feminist inequalities that move beyond the economic. The article opts for a social inequality framework in order to understand the complex and contested spaces and zones within which the feminisation of inequalities are located, positioned and interpreted.

Keywords: inequalities; social inequalities; gender; feminisation of inequalities; African theorisations

Introduction

"An equal world is an enabled world. How will you help forge a gender equal world?" is the campaign theme for International Women's Day 2020.[1] Shaped by a strategy of collective individualism (that is, that we are all parts of a whole), the thinking that individual actions, dialogues and conversations, behaviour and mindset modification can have an impact on larger society is a rallying call. It is a necessary appeal, demanding that we all take action. But despite global gains in gender equality (induced in part by the Sustainable Development Goals framework), there is unfinished business with gender inequality as an apex item in this battle. However, beyond 8 March, the world has become exceedingly disengaged and perhaps somewhat disenabled for other reasons.

Our collective attention has turned to another effort, this time against a pandemic that has torn across the globe. As we write, our world, economies, nations, societies, and communities have slowed down, fuelled by COVID-19[2] that has transcended borders, ethnicities, identities, and indeed genders. The world has, to a large extent, come to a grinding halt with lockdowns to contain the spread and physical social distancing regulated by countries and laws as it is exercised in various geopolitical spaces. Thinking about the broader context of gender, equality generally (and perhaps gender equality more specifically) is surpassed in several ways by a virus that has disrupted (and has wreaked havoc) in our lives in unimaginable ways. Life, living, fear, panic, anxiety and compassion have taken on new meanings in a deeply divided tussle between pre-existing vulnerabilities (unemployment, mass poverty, health disparities and gross inequalities) and the instinct for survival, all of which have far-reaching and overwhelming consequences for gender too.

As we write during this time, social grant recipients in South Africa had their opportunity to draw their money and have some shopping done, yet these are often the elderly and frail (mainly women) from our rural hinterlands, that show up visible inequalities when compared to their urban counterparts. Add to this conundrum that several women were equally compelled to leave the queues as the grant system went offline, to repeat their onerous journey the following day. South Africa's rural communities, in particular, have an underfunded infrastructure, compounded in our current context with poor and neglected healthcare systems. A growing concern during this time is that many healthcare workers lack the full spectrum of protective gear and layoffs are a distinct reality for many vulnerable workers (often domestic workers, farmworkers, and women in particular). In the broader context of these brief vignettes, the underlying challenge remains the fact that women and girls are disproportionally affected because of pre-existing norms that render them at risk because of gender-based violence, financial insecurity, and differential care (even though the science says that men are hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic).

While this issue and its approach took shape pre-COVID 19, we cannot overlook how this global pandemic reinforces and exacerbates the problem of gender inequality, and it may be the case that a future set of arguments in *Agenda* will need to pay attention to this issue to further develop critical analysis about inequalities that are masked by broader social struggles. This issue of *Agenda* is published against the backdrop of another edition titled 'Gender and the Economy in Post-apartheid South Africa' (2019), drawing attention within a specific feminist economics lens to changes and challenges 25 years since democracy that either directly and tangentially also resonate with ideas contained in this edition (see Posel and Cassale, 2019).

Inequalities as topic and subject of gender

'Inequality' is a word that carries weighty hues and shades of meaning (Atkinson, 2015; Piketty, 2014, 2020; Seekings and Nattrass, 2008; Soudien *et al*, 2019; Stiglitz, 2012; Tilly, 1998) and is complex in its iterations (Schwalbe *et al*, 2000) as a crisis (Walby, 2015) and it is both local (Carmin and Agyeman, 2011; Segal and Chow, 2011) and unequivocally global (Boatcaˇ, 2016; Christiansen and Jensen, 2019; Sernau, 2017; Walby, 2009). At a basic level, it mobilises denotations that call into conversation the meaning of inequity, unevenness, disproportion and the lack of fair and just treatment. In other words, equality is one of the most potent of human ideals. It is a consummate social concern and therefore has ideological and emotive relevance as it captures the nature and meaning of society, and emphasises to a large extent how society is structured (see for example, Mapadimeng, 2012 for an extended discussion of how sociology has engaged inequalities in the South African context). We motivate in this article that inequalities are tangible and intangible, shaped by systems of stratification that are mediated through structural, institutional and individual processes.

Inequalities are also deeply ingrained in public discussions because it is generated by social structures in our society and has insurmountable bearing on our social identities (see Therborn, 2006). The language, assumptions and attributes of inequalities are also often most entrenched in racial, ethnic and gender relations, but also in intersectional relationships to other markers such as, for example, class and sexuality. In other words, 'inequalities' is also perhaps best understood in its plural form to signify and illuminate the patterns, architecture, barriers, stereotypes and indeed the limits it induces into the social world that demand change, repair and correctives.

The location and position of 'inequalities' within gender and feminist discourses is profound and has shown up significant developments. Central to the gender and feminist project in its historical evolution is the premium placed on equality, yet increasingly equality has evolved into the broader challenge of difference. Increasingly, social difference has shown itself to be a key effect of inequality and attention is assigned to the shifting, changing, troubling and indeed transformation of the unequal distribution of power between men and women, as well as heteronormativity. In other words, gendered problems have progressively shown the feminisation of inequalities.

Many writers are concerned with the ways in which constructions of social difference shape both material inequalities and inequalities of recognition (see, for example, Honneth, 1996; Fraser, 1995; Phillips, 1999; Brah, 1992; Anthias, 1998, 2001). 'Gender inequalities' recognise that men and women are not equal and place the premium on how gender affects and constructs people's living experiences. Key is the social reality that gender inequality is experienced differently across cultures, contexts and geopolitics and is shaped by education, life expectancy, personality, interests, family life, careers, and political affiliations. Beyond the multifaceted strands of feminisms and its waves, as an idea, as a political project and as an intellectual lens, transnational feminisms have been deeply attuned to the values of freedom, equality and justice in changing women's positions in society because of the systemic disadvantages manifested by patriarchal power. We must recall the deep insights by Mitchell (1975) that patriarchy works in devious ways (also at the unconscious) as an ideological mode of production that transforms us into gendered individuals apart from economic power.

Inequalities have been the social and political ground informing pioneering feminist work (see for example, Acker, 2006; Alexander and Mohanty, 1997; Bennett, 2007; Collins, 2000; Coltrane and Adams, 2000; Boserup, 1970; Davis, 1983; Mies, 1986; Mohanty, 2003; Ridgeway, 2011). Established studies have represented the agile and dynamic practices of power that are active and visible (yet sometimes hidden), but consistently perpetuated and legitimated in a number of domains. Often these domains are represented by the domestic sphere, care work and emotional labour (see Duffy, 2011; Fish, 2006; Goody, 1976; Lutz, 2011; Molyneux, 1979; Noddings *et al*, 1996; Parreñas, 2001; Reddy *et al*, 2014; Romero and Pérez, 2016; Therborn, 2004; Williams, 2018). They are also represented in educational contexts (Acker, 1994; hooks, 2000; Pascall and Cox, 1993; Stoll, 2013). They are also highly visible with respect to sexuality (Bem, 1993; Burke, 2016; Epprecht, 2013; Ferguson, 2020; McDermott, 2011; Tamale, 2007); identity politics (Farris *et al*, 2014; Ferguson, 2020; Newman, 2012); violence (Johnson, 2008; Lanier and Maume, 2009; Yodanis, 2004); political presence and participation (Dahlerup, 2013; Fernandes, 2018; Ford, 2018; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2010; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Krook, 2009; Lorber, 2012; Paxton and Hughes, 2013; Razavi, 2009; Tremblay, 2007, 2012); in health (Annandale and Hunt, 2000; Graham, 2007; Vigen, 2006; Watkins-Hayes, 2019; Wilkinson, 2005); in law and justice (Dorling, 2010; Hunter, 2008; Kumar, 2017); in policy (Ghosh, 2013; Razavi, 2009); in science (Harding, 2006). More importantly, digitisation, automation and technological changes have brought about shifts in occcupational structure, timing and patterns of work with differences in outcomes for men and women (see for example, Milkman, 2016; Charles and Grusky, 2004; Hilbrecht *et al*, 2008; Piasna and Drahokoupil, 2017; Rubery, 2015).

Gender and feminist analysis has dedicated much to the area of gender regimes as key to understanding variations in gender equality (Nanda, 2014; Spade and Valentine, 2014). When

extended to the issue of gender inequality, issues such as occupational sex segregation and gendered employment choices show how perspectives and perceptions about skill and women's employment options have frequently been shaped by prior decisions about the gendered responsibility for housework, care and caregiving (Elias, 2004). For instance, McCall and Orloff (2005:160-161) argue that the broader economic context has often been downplayed by gender scholars, and greater interrogation is required in respect of varieties of capitalism that shape gender inequality, which these authors maintain could "provide a united framework for explaining all dimensions of gender inequality". The problem, however, with such an approach is that it tends to restrict and limit focus largely to the gendered division of labour, primarily paid labour in occupational gender segregation but also in the household (see also McCall, 2001). Class and gender therefore become largely foregrounded in respect of income distribution and redistribution (see Korpi, 2000). While relevant, our view in this edition is that a broader perspective is required to understand the nature and patterns of gender inequality that do not sanitise social divisions that shape, navigate and inflect gender inequalities.

We have noted that Nobel economics laureate Amartya Sen (1992:28) posed a question a while back in response to the idea that inequality is not purely economic (in other words, usually measured as income inequality). He asked the question "Equality of what?" by emphasising that inequality can be much more than just income inequality, and directed attention to three different categories of equality: equality of income or other financial assets; equality of welfare; and equal rights and liberties that help to broaden the framework for thinking about the meaning of inequalities beyond economics.

We have been concerned as editors that this issue had to be shaped in a way that does not misrecognise the economic determinants (Ferber and Nelson, 1993; Szołtyzek *et al*, 2017; Raday, 2019), nor downplay the gendered division of labour (see Bose, 2015; Branisa *et al*, 2013; Dorius and Firebaugh, 2010; Karamessini and Rubery, 2013; Klasen and Wink, 2003; Korpi, 2000; Milanovic, 2005; Nelson, 1996; Seguiro, 2000; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993; Walby, 2015). Rather, this themed edition directs our attention to broader intersectional domains beyond the purely economic and fiscal (i.e. the human, social, cultural and indeed broader structural dimensions, including power) that demonstrate stratifying effects that reinforce inequalities shaped by gender ideologies. Structural (particularly gender and class) dimensions of inequalities seem to take centre-stage in arguments about gender inequalities (Krishnan, 2005).

Inequalities are also produced in advertising that stifles career progression, including homophilic practices (Crewe and Wang, 2018; Grow and Deng, 2014) in the broader media that impact gender, where women are subjected to inequalities as creatives – their various roles in the film industry, and in their creative labour – how their roles often rely on patterns of discrimination and exploitation (see, for example, Banks and Milestone, 2011; Conor *et al*, 2015; Gill, 2014; Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Jones and Pringle, 2015; Servaes and Oyedemi, 2016; Smith, 2009). Global reproductive health inequalities are also highly gendered (Corea, 1985; Gupta, 2011; Scott *et al*, 2012) and racialised (Pande, 2014, 2016; Roberts, 1997).

Inequalities are also narratively induced in the stories we tell as they are structured and produced at cultural, organisational and personal levels in dialectic ways to organise and construct social exclusion, generating othering and social stratification from an interpretive sociological perspective (Harris, 2001, 2004; Kusow and Mohamed, 2015) but also through

literary, linguistic, anthropological and visual representations (Finnegan, 2003; Grosvenor and Hall, 2011; Hymes, 2004; Shaviro, 2020; Yuen, 2017).

The above examples frame inequalities within the centre-stage of debate, discussion and engagement from a gendered and feminist perspective. Beyond the advances of feminist consciousness (see Collins, 2000) and in spite of the differentiated contexts, since the 1960s key elements remain central to underpin gendered inequalities. They remain to be a recognition of discrimination, the construction of experiences and the building of collective identity.

What emerges for us in reviewing a good selection of the critical field in gender and feminist studies is that discussions mobilised around gender suggest and reveal an inherent complexity of multiple intersectional inequalities, a growing body of concern in the critical gender and feminist literature (see, for example, Acker, 2000; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Bhopal, 1997; Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Brewer *et al*, 2002; Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991; Gamson and Moon, 2004; Jakobsen, 1998; McCall, 2001, 2005; Mohanty, 1991; Walby, 2009; Walby *et al*, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Despite variations in perspectives and contexts, in their diverse arguments the insights in these studies draw out, against the grain, compelling perspectives that indicate "inequalities mutually shape each other rather than mutually constitute other at the point of intersection" (Walby *et al*, 2012:237).

The papers assembled in this edition similarly build on an interesting and developing body of work in gender and feminist scholarship from a variety of contexts (see, for example, Bezbaruah, 2015; Brueggemann, 2012; Calasanti and Slevin, 2001; Hicks, 2017; Miller, 2008; Pettit and Hook, 2012; Rydstrom, 2010; Yu, 2009). Inspite of the evolving body of knowledge, we maintain that there is under-attention to the more direct problem of inequalities in the gendered and feminist literature in the African context, although a growing body of rich and voluminous work[3] has provided deep and rich insights into gendered and feminist struggles (often centring on inequalities).

As guest editors for this *Agenda* special issue, we enter this conversation as feminists concerned about how inequalities can curtail our advancement, our progress and our transformation of society. This issue focuses on describing, interpreting and analysing how inequalities are inscribed and reified. In tackling inequalities in a scholarly set of arguments, we are also interested in transforming social structures and systems that produce inequalities. Contributions direct attention to the visible and visceral presence of inequalities in various social problems. The contributors to this special issue serve as a reminder of *how* women (and some men) – in spite of the challenges – are engaged in mobilisations and challenges that address material concerns that are often silenced and erased. In this issue we explore the nexus between inequality and lives of women, and the issue highlights the continued challenges that women in particular confront in the face of multifaceted struggles of inequality related to not only race, class, gender, sexuality and nation, but so much more.

African perspectives on gender and feminist inequalities

How can a single special issue volume encompass all aspects about inequalities? Our view is that this is not possible, yet a brief, multidimensional canvassing of gendered and feminist inequalities can help us navigate some important ideas to provide a framework to understand and interpret a topic that is often neglected in African contexts. However, some significant work is taking place in the economics domain (see, for example, Posel, 2014).

When soliciting papers for this special issue we were open to a range of topics that scholars, activists and policy makers were grappling with, where research in this area is geared. We received quite a few papers and several were excluded at various stages in assembling the edition. However, some dominant themes arose without in any way homogenising perspectives featured in this edition. The bulk of the papers focus upon and cut across a number of gendered and feminist sites requiring intervention in which questions of inequality have direct and/or circuitous bearing. Collectively the authors in this edition highlight how social, structural and institutional inequality shape gender. As indicated earlier, our purpose in compiling the edition was to move beyond a dominant focus on economic and fiscal inequality but to rather turn to contributions that foreground social inequalities in their broadest manifestations.

The issue represents a broad sampling of ideas on gendered and feminist inequalities and builds on multiple scales of inequalities that contribute in several distinctive ways. First, they, approach exclusion from diverse angles. Second, they examine varied contexts that are not limited to region, context and identity. Third, they consider inequalities beyond their production by seeking ways to explain the durability, persistence and limits of such inequalities. In broad brushstrokes, the issues, topics and ideas represented address: obstetric violence, social media, television, history, cultural practices, aging, environment, agriculture, SDGs, and music. Authors use a variety of qualitative methods, from the theoretical to the empirical. This variation in coverage demonstrates how important the topic of gender inequalities is from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

Jessica Dutton and Lucia Knight's 'Reproducing neglect in the place of care: Normalised violence within Cape Town midwifery obstetric units' approaches obstetric violence as a form of mistreatment towards a person during their maternity care, with specific attention paid to a person's autonomy during childbirth. Their arguments engage how the South African health system maintains and reproduces gendered inequalities, particularly through what they term patient neglect as a form of reproductive governance.

In their open forum 'An examination of social media as a platform for cyber-violence against the LGBT+ population', Simangele Mkhize, Reema Nunlall and Nirmala Gopal explore the online experiences of cyber-violence with regard to the LGBT+ population in relation to gender discrimination, informed by the concept 'heteronormative hegemony'. Key to their findings is the infiltration of heterosexual individuals into the space created by the LGBT+ population, suggesting an increased risk of cyber-violence, and that the right to privacy and security is often compromised. In their arguments, violence and hate are common denominators as attributes of inequalities.

Maude Blose's interview, 'Stereotypes: Contribution of soap opera media text to women's identity construction', provides insights from a focus group from Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Her study demonstrates how media content, specifically soap operas, contribute to women's identities and how soap operas fail to promote aspects of women as being intelligent, independent, socially responsible and conscious, but instead insinuate, through certain characters, that women should be seen, materialised, consumed, and fantasised.

Thematised in relation to the creative industry, Gairoonisa Paleker's '"These things happen": Hashtag activism and sexual harassment in the South African film and television industries' profiles Sisters Working in Film and Television (SWIFT). She analyses their Public Announcement Service (PSA) films as discursive sites and texts in the context of digital

feminism and feminist activism against sexual harassment in the film and television industries.

Taking a historical lens into a bygone episode, Hlengiwe Ndlovu's perspective in 'Bodies that (do not) matter? Black Sunday and narratives of the death of Sister Aidan Quinlan in Duncan Village protest, 1952' details how the story of Black Sunday has been (and continues to be) told and written in ways that contribute to gendered inequalities, qualified through the erasure and silencing of the role of black womxn from historical (and township) struggles.

Tigist Shewarega Hussen's briefing 'Gendered inequalities and media representation: Social media contestations on Ethiopia's "gender-balanced" political leadership' explores reactions and responses of digitally active Ethiopian citizens on social media, particularly on Facebook and Twitter, in relation to the transformation of the historically male-dominated political landscape. Insights point to deep-seated unequal power dynamics and gender discourses in relation to 'first-appointed women' narratives and perceptions of citizens about women, politics and leadership.

In her article 'The 'normalisation' of sex selection within the families of Xhugxwala of King Sabatha Dalindyebo Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape, South Africa', Kholekile Hazel Ngqila provides an argument about cultural practices that 'normalise' sex selection. She maintains that the impact this has on the affected individuals results in the perception among some that they were born homosexual as a result of sex selection practices.

In their open forum 'Women in their full diversity? Provincial government responses to socio-economic exclusion of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women in Gauteng', Nazeema Isaacs, Ingrid Lynch, Celiwe Shabangu, Finn Reygan and Mudzunga Neluheni consider the extent to which existing policies engage socio-economic exclusion of sexual and gender minorities, and in particular, LBT women.

In 'Thoughts from the epi(Centre): interview with Mary Crewe', Vasu Reddy engages Crewe (a founding Director of a pioneering Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender) regarding the formative and shaping experiences with regard to family, gender arrangements, AIDS, and gender inequalities.

Neil Henderson and Jamil Khan, in their focus '"I will die if I have to go an old age home": Afrocentric options for care of older LGBT people in South Africa', explore the experiences of aging and care in the Western Cape and Gauteng, utilising a qualitative method where four focus groups were facilitated with 22 LGBT elders.

The open forum 'Gender and green jobs in agriculture' by Agnes A. Babugura examines the possibility of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa through green jobs creation in agriculture. The argument draws on available existing literature and case studies from African countries, confirming the hypothesis that a commitment to achieve gender equality should set a foundation for comprehensive, gender-responsive, and human rights-based green agricultural initiatives.

Cherith Sanger profiles in a feminist legal analysis in '*S v Mthethwa*: Justice for sex workers in the face of criminalisation?' that judgment and sentence has 'humanised' sex workers by sending the message to society that sex workers have the right to have their human dignity, equality and freedom respected, protected and fulfilled.

Liberty Matthyse's briefing 'Achieving gender equality by 2030: Transgender equality in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 5' engages the SDG 5 and questions whether it has any value-add for trans and gender-diverse persons in the context of ensuring that no-one is left behind in the rush to build an inclusive and sustainable future.

'A look at Egyptian women's marginalisation in recent history', an open forum by Dahlia M. Saaad El-Din, interrogates the role of Egyptian women in their struggle for rights and equality. What she describes as a silent history is also an argument about whether the employment of women in the highest positions of State is due to a genuine conviction of their role in society, or just political propaganda.

In her focus titled 'Are you a fisher or mussel collector?: Examining gendered identity markers in the small-scale fishing industry: Case studies from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa', Nokuthula Cele examines the role and participation of black working class women in the fishing industry, as well as the challenges they experience.

Finally, in Kwashirai Zvokuomba and Kezia Batisai's open forum piece, 'Veracity of women's land ownership in the aftermath of land redistribution in Zimbabwe: The limits of Western feminism', analyses the authenticity and genuineness of women's land ownership in resettled spaces. Her central argument is that land ownership by women may not only be understood by women's possession of ownership documents (e.g. title deeds, 'offer letter' and 'permits'), but a number of other factors that include totemic, clan, lineage and political relations.

Conclusion

'Gendered and feminist inequalities' arises from the sense that perspectives made under the banner of equality invite fresh lines of enquiry. Inequalities are complex matters and cut across different humanist and social fields. The papers in this edition reconfirm that addressing issues of inequality can create discomfort. Critical for us is the larger challenge of how enacting formal equality plays against enduring substantive inequalitities. In other words, in several contexts equality in terms of the law has not achieved significant redistribution or substantive equality (see Hunter, 2008).

We conclude, albeit tentatively, that gendered inequalities are largely embedded in durable cultural, social and human norms that warrant ongoing resistance, contestation and change. This issue centralised social inequalities in arguments that counter dominant narratives that minimise equality for women. In several ways, then, the papers in this issue contribute to African feminist and gendered theorisations of the interpretative process by elaborating on the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which inequalities are shaped, made and viewed, by bringing rich multidisciplinary insights to their analysis. Underlining the arguments is the question of power and privilege as they texture and construct inequalities in gendered terms. It is the case that gendered ideas about inequalities derive from events shaped by experiences and relationships that represent systematic distinctions about the domains and quality of life. We do not underestimate, for example, that experiences differ according to our status, role, position, national origin, sexuality and class. And at the risk of further homogenising divisions within social identities, it is the case that the poor experience inequalities far differently from the rich; that blacks experience inequalities differently from whites; that a prisoner may experience far differently from those who are not incarcerated.

Indeed, women undoubtedly experience inequalities qualitatively and quantitatively very differently when compared to men.

As indicated earlier, the special issue is not intended to represent an exhaustive engagement with the subject. In multiple ways more forms of inequalities exist than those highlighted here. Beyond their differences, a central thread in all papers indicates that gender inequalities remain at the heart of social change, and the authors offer critical and active resistance to social practices that engender inequalities. We hope that the papers assembled in this volume provide a point of departure, and that they will provoke further debates, discussion and engagement on gender inequalities. It is patently clear, though, that we have more unfinished work as gender and feminist scholars and activists to undo unequalities.

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Notes

1 International Women's Day is celebrated annually on 8 March around the world. It is deeply rooted in socialist history (see Kaplan, 1985). See Ruthchild (2012) for a compressed history of the day and its significance at a global level.

2 COVID-19 is a pandemic currently impacting the global world. The World Health Organization describes coronaviruses as "a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019". See https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019 (downloaded 9 April 2020). It is also reported in several sources that the virus greatly affects men more than women (see, for example, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/07/coronavirus-hits-men-harder-evidence-risk and https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/health/coronavirus-new-york-men.html (downloaded 9 April 2020)

3 There is an extensive critical field in African gender and feminist studies that addresses the broader social inequality dimensions of gender. The field is vast and covers a number of domains within inequalities (Southern African Research and Documentation Centre, 2000) that are not exclusively restricted to the following areas: violence (Abdallah, 1982; Green, 1999); mothering (Acholonu, 1995; Nnaemeka, 1997); work (Adepoju and Oppong, 1994); law and politics (Albertyn, 1996; Hale, 1997; Meintjes *et al,* 2001; Tamale, 1999); anthropology of religion (Amadiume, 1987, 1997; Badran, 1996; Karam, 1998); rurality and histories (Bozzoli, 1991; Bryceson, 1995, Walker, 1990); economics (Budlender, 2000); war, conflict and security (Cock, 1991; Jacobs *et al*, 2000); culture, literature and film (Foster, 1997; Kalu, 2001); development (Gordon, 1996); race, class and gender (Mama, 1995; Marks, 1994; McFadden, 1999; Meena, 1992; Mikell, 1997; Oyewumi, 1997, 2000).

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