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ARTICLE

Gender, Intersectionality, and Global Social History

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Abstract

One of the most fruitful concepts of recent social analysis has been that of intersectionality, the idea that the nature of oppression is multiplicative rather than additive, and that no one identity – race, class, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and so on – should be considered apart from other identities, but is always materialized in terms of and by means of them. Although it was developed out of the US experience, intersectional epistemology has been dynamic and mobile, as scholars have not simply used social groupings drawn from the Western past and present but have elaborated social categories taken from local understandings as well. This article analyses some recent examples of gendered world history that also take other social hierarchies into account, and assesses how these help us better understand global processes that transformed societies. It begins with a place and time where global entanglements led quite clearly to the emergence of new social groups, the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas, and then more briefly examines this process in other parts of the early modern colonial world.

Scholarship that presents itself as global, world, transnational, imperial, international, overseas, or entangled history, or as *histoire croisée* or *Transfergeschichte*, has generally been less interested in social structures than in issues rooted in political, economic, technological, and military history.[1] Among the social structures that have received relatively little attention from world/global historians have been those associated with gender and sexuality. Conversely, historians of gender and sexuality have been comparatively thin on the ground among those who regularly examine issues on a global scale.[2] They generally choose to study individuals, families, circles of

[1] For a discussion of this issue, see 'Forum: social history, women's history, and world history', *Journal of World History*, 18 (2007), pp. 23–68.

[2] For comments on these tendencies from historians of women and gender, see Judith P. Zinsser, 'Women's history, world history, and the construction of new narratives', *Journal of Women's History*,

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friends, and other small groups, and have been worried that these would get lost in large-scale narratives that tend to emphasize impersonal processes.

Studies of gender and sexuality that use 'global' or 'transnational' or 'world' to describe their scope are often comparative rather than synthetic, generally edited collections with chapters or articles on different parts of the world. They examine gendered social categories such as 'palace women' or 'citizens' or 'the modern girl' that emerged in different parts of the world, with comparisons in the introduction, but also highlight differences and the need to pay attention to local contexts.[3] Similarly, a recent forum by seven authors in the *American Historical Review* on transnational sexualities includes references to hundreds of studies, but the forum is organized by region, and most of the studies it cites stay within one nation or even within one city.[4]

One reason for this lack of intersection between global and gender history is the tendency in world/global history to emphasize connections and convergence, whereas gender history has spent much more time on *divergence*, making categories of difference ever more numerous and complex.[5] Gender historians have emphasized that every key aspect of gender relations – the relationship between the family and the state, the relationship between gender and sexuality, and so on – is historically, culturally, and class specific. Today, historians of masculinity speak of their subject only in plurals, as 'multiple

12 (2000), pp. 196–206; Bonnie Smith, 'Introduction', and Margaret Strobel and Marjorie Bingham, 'The theory and practice of women's history and gender history in global perspective', in Bonnie Smith, ed., *Women's history in global perspective* (Urbana, IL, 2004); Mary Louise Roberts, 'The transnationalization of gender history', *History and Theory*, 44 (2005), pp. 456–68; Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, 'World history and the history of women, gender, and sexuality', *Journal of World History*, 18 (2007), pp. 53–68, and 'Crossing borders in transnational gender history', *Journal of Global History*, 6 (2011), pp. 357–79. For comments by historians of sexuality, see Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, 'Global identities: theorizing transnational studies of sexuality', *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 7 (2001), pp. 663–79; Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey, eds., 'Thinking sexuality transnationally', special issue of *GLQ*, 5 (1999); Leila J. Rupp, 'Toward a global history of same-sex sexuality', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10 (2001), pp. 287–302. For remarks on this from a world historian, see Patrick Manning, *Navigating world history: historians create a global past* (New York, NY, 2003), pp. 208, 210.

[3] Anne Walthall, ed., *Servants of the dynasty: palace women in world history* (Berkeley, CA, 2008); Anne Epstein and Rachel Fuchs, eds., *Gender and citizenship in historical and transnational perspective: agency, space, borders* (London, 2017); Kathleen Canning and Sonya O. Rose, eds., *Gender, citizenships and subjectivities* (Malden, MA, 2002); Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, and Tani Barlow, eds., *The modern girl around the world: consumption, modernity, and globalization* (Durham, NC, 2008). See also Karen Hagemann and María Teresa Fernández-Aceves, eds., 'Gendering trans/national historiographies: similarities and differences in comparison', special issue of *Journal of Women's History*, 9 (2007); Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönpflug, eds., *Gender history in a transnational perspective: networks, biographies, gender orders* (London, 2014). This is also true of the new series of short books from Routledge, 'Focus on Global Gender and Sexuality', which began publication in 2018; all of these books focus on a particular area, sometimes quite a small one.

[4] 'AHR forum: transnational sexualities', *American Historical Review*, 114 (2009), pp. 1250–353, which includes articles by Margot Canaday, Marc Epprecht, Joanne Meyerowitz, Dagmar Herzog, Tamara Loos, Leslie Peirce, and Pete Sigal.

[5] On convergence in world history, see David Northrup, 'Globalization and the great convergence: rethinking world history in the long term', *Journal of World History*, 16 (2005), pp. 249–67.

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masculinities' appear to have emerged everywhere, just as have multiple sexualities in the works by historians of sexuality.[6] Because of this, Mathew Kuefler and I decided to use the plural in the four-volume *Cambridge world history of sexualities* we edited, published in spring 2024.

Another reason is the powerful materialist tradition in world/global history, with its countless studies of commodities and their production, transport, and use. Women's history also initially had a strong materialist wing, with many studies of labour systems and political movements, but since the linguistic/cultural turn of the 1980s and the development of gender history, more attention has been paid to representation, meaning, and discourse, which has also characterized the history of sexuality.[7]

A third reason is the continued focus in much world history on political and economic processes carried out by governments, institutions, and commercial leaders.[8] Most of the people involved were men, but how gender shaped their experience has not been evaluated. By contrast, with its roots in the 'new social history' of the 1970s, women's and gender history has instead emphasized the agency of ordinary people, the ability of individuals and groups beyond white male elites to act, make choices, and intentionally shape their own lives and the world around them to some degree. Debates about agency have recently focused particularly on enslaved people and on objects, but debates about women's agency that first began in the 1970s have continued as well.[9] For example, Lynn Thomas and Joan Scott have critiqued the limitations of what Thomas terms 'agency as argument', the fact that the primary conclusion of too many studies is simply that a certain group of women had agency.[10]

[6] On multiple masculinities, see the Palgrave Macmillan series 'Global Masculinities' or many other titles, including: Stefan Dudnik, Karen Hagemann, and Josh Tosh, eds., *Masculinities in politics and war: gendering modern history* (Manchester, 2004); Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morell, eds., *African masculinities: men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present* (London, 2005); John Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain: essays on gender, family, and empire* (Harlow, 2005). On sexualities, see the interdisciplinary journal *Sexualities* or many other titles, including: Mark McLelland and Romit Dasgupta, *Genders, transgenders and sexualities in Japan* (Malden, MA, 2005); Saskia Wieringa, Evelyn Blackwood, and Abha Bhaiya, *Women's sexualities and masculinities in a globalizing Asia* (London, 2009).

[7] For an overview of the history of sexuality as a field, see Mathew Kuefler, 'The history of the history of sexuality', in Mathew Kuefler and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *The Cambridge world history of sexualities* (4 vols., Cambridge, 2024), I, pp. 1–22.

[8] In my nine years as one of the three editors of the *Journal of Global History* (2011–20), over half the article submissions we received were about transnational institutions, and very few were in cultural or social history, despite our efforts as editors to solicit them.

[9] On the agency of enslaved people, see Walter Johnson, 'On agency', *Journal of Social History*, 37 (2003), pp. 113–24; Cornelia Hughes Dayton, 'Rethinking agency, recovering voices', *American Historical Review*, 109 (2004), pp. 827–43; Jessica Millward, 'On agency, freedom and the boundaries of slavery studies', *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (2013), pp. 193–201. On the agency of objects, see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network-theory* (Oxford, 2005); Andrew M. Jones and Nicole Boivin, 'The malice of inanimate objects: material agency', in Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry, eds., *The Oxford handbook of material culture studies* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 291–309; Ian Hodder, *Entangled: an archaeology of the relationships between humans and things* (London, 2012).

[10] Lynn M. Thomas, 'Historicising agency', *Gender & History*, 28 (2016), pp. 324–39; Joan Wallach Scott, *The fantasy of feminist history* (Durham, NC, 2011). 'The agency dilemma: a forum', *American*

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Ultimately, both Thomas and Scott do not reject the concept of agency, however, but instead assert that historians must be open to its different, historically contingent forms, a search that should take scholars even further beyond elites.

Despite this lack of connection in the past, however, scholarship that draws on both world/global history and the history of gender and sexuality is beginning to appear.[11] Some of this new scholarship is also intersectional, explicitly or implicitly utilizing the concept that first emerged in the writings of Black left feminists that the nature of oppression is multiplicative rather than additive and that no one identity – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and so on – should be considered apart from other identities. Although it was developed out of the US experience, intersectional epistemology has been dynamic and mobile, connecting with Third World and transnational feminist analysis. Scholars have not simply used social groupings drawn from the Western past and present, but have elaborated social categories taken from local understandings as well.

The idea that multiple forms of oppression interact and combine was part of the thinking of feminist groups that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, which is not surprising, as so many founders of women's liberation had been active in the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, the latter both anti-racist and anti-imperialist. Socialist feminists expanded Marxist analysis of labour exploitation in production to examine paid and unpaid household labour, through which working-class as well as wealthier men benefited from the unpaid work of their female family members.[12] In addition, prosperous women benefited when they could hire poorer women – usually women of colour and foreign born – for childcare and housecleaning. Even before the 1960s, Black left feminists such as Louise Thompson Patterson wrote about the 'triple exploitation' of race, gender, and class.[13] Feminists of colour analysed what Frances Beal of the Third World Women's Alliance termed the 'double jeopardy' of being both Black and female.[14] In 1977, the Black lesbian feminist

Historical Review, 128 (2023), pp. 883–937, with contributions by six historians, also poses the question about whether agency is 'an indiscriminately expanded category'.

[11] Surveys of gender in world history with guides to recent scholarship include Peter Stearns, *Gender in world history* (3rd edn, London, 2015); Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender: a world history* (New York, NY, 2020); Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in history: global perspectives* (3rd edn, Hoboken, NJ, 2021). For examples of gender history on a range of scales, including the global, see Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *A companion to global gender history* (2nd edn, Hoboken, NJ, 2021).

[12] For a good review of this line of thinking that highlights the role of class within intersectional analysis, see Linda Gordon, '"Intersectionality", socialist feminism and contemporary activism: musings by a second-wave socialist feminist', *Gender & History*, 28 (2016), pp. 340–57. For a discussion that brings together class and sexuality, see Helen Smith with Mathew Kuefler and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, 'Class in the history of sexuality', in Kuefler and Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *Cambridge world history of sexualities*, I, pp. 206–26.

[13] Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for freedom: Black women, American Communism, and the making of Black left feminism* (Durham, NC, 2011).

[14] Frances Beal's 'Double jeopardy: to be both Black and female' was originally published as a pamphlet in 1969 and was then included in Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is powerful: an anthology of writings from the women's liberation movement* (New York, NY, 1970).

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Combahee River Collective asserted in a statement mostly written by Barbara Smith: 'We are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based on the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives.'[15] In 1989, the critical race theorist and feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw called this synthesis of oppression 'intersectionality'.[16] The concept and word slowly spread into other academic fields and, eventually, into public consciousness.[17] From its roots in the women's movement, intersectional feminism has always been activist, and now it has become a way that people describe themselves on their Facebook pages, X or Tumblr posts, buttons, and T-shirts. Many sport a quotation from Flavia Dzodan, a writer who lives and works in Amsterdam, taken from her 2011 blog post on Tiger Beatdown: 'My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit.'

Along with moving from academia into popular culture, intersectional epistemology has also become increasingly global, analysing (and critiquing) structures of power and oppression that arise from a variety of situations. To Barbara Smith's Big Four (race, class, gender, and sexuality), scholars have added religion, age grades, ethnicity, and other factors as key social structures operating in the societies they study, past and present. They have also subtracted one or more of the Big Four, arguing, for example, that gender as it is understood in the West was not an important category of analysis or oppression in many sub-Saharan African societies, or that certain Southeast Asian groups had non-dichotomous understandings of sexuality and gender, or that class has little value as an analytic concept in distinguishing elites and non-elites in whatever place and time they study.[18]

In this more global intersectional scholarship, Third World and transnational feminism have provided key theoretical insights. Both Third World feminism, which developed in the 1970s, and transnational feminism, which developed in the 1990s, critique the underpinnings of colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism, including those that contributed to the rise of Western feminism in its various waves.[19] Transnational feminist scholars have criticized

[15] Combahee River Collective, 'The Combahee River Collective statement' (1977), in Barbara Smith, ed., *Home girls: a Black feminist anthology* (Piscataway, NJ, 1983), p. 264.

[16] Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'De-marginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), pp. 139–66.

[17] Recent surveys of intersectional scholarship include Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, eds., 'Intersectionality: theorizing power, empowering theory', special issue of *Signs*, 38 (2013), and Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (London, 2016).

[18] On gender in Africa, see Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmi, *The invention of women: making an African sense of Western gender discourses* (Minneapolis, MN, 1997). On Southeast Asia, see Sharyn Graham Davies, *Challenging gender norms: five genders among the Bugis in Indonesia* (London, 2006); Michael Peletz, *Gender pluralism: Southeast Asia since early modern times* (London, 2009); Raquel A. G. Reyes and William G. Clarence-Smith, eds., *Sexual diversity in Asia, c. 600–1950* (London, 2012).

[19] Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds., *Scattered hegemonies: postmodernity and transnational feminist practices* (Minneapolis, MN, 1994); Ranjoo Seodu Herr, 'Reclaiming Third World feminism:

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single-pronged analyses that focus only on gender, highlighted multiple and complex vectors of power, and underscored the importance of respecting the agency and voices of women of colour. Drawing on postcolonial history and theory, they have examined processes of subordination, the impact of global migration on families, individual and institutional cross-border networks and dynamics, gendered and sexualized nationality, and many other topics.[20] Research influenced by queer theory has explored ways that states produced (and continue to produce) sexual and gender identities, often at their borders when they let in, or do not let in, individuals identified as belonging to a certain group, such as 'the homosexual' or those who challenge the 'natural' gender order of male and female to present themselves as trans.[21]

In her recent discussion of intersectionality, Vrushali Patil highlights the disproportionate amount of intersectional scholarship that still focuses on the Global North, especially the United States, along with its predominate focus on one community or country and inattention to cross-border dynamics. 'Thus', she notes, 'complications in how intersectionality shapes international, regional, and global forces, processes, institutions, and organizations, as well as connections between these scales and more local scales, remain largely unexamined.'[22] This is certainly true, though to some degree her conclusions – like all conclusions – are based on her methodology, which started with a keyword search for 'intersectionality' in OCLC databases. I would suggest that along with some scholarship on non-US topics that has been explicitly intersectional – that is, situating itself theoretically within the development of the concept and using that word – there is also scholarship that has been implicitly so, investigating ways in which two or more social systems operate together in shaping structures of power, but not necessarily describing this as intersectional.

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or why transnational feminism needs Third World feminism', *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, 12 (2014), pp. 1–30. The interdisciplinary journal in which Herr's article appeared, *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, which began publication in 2000, is the best place to see the newest directions in transnational feminist scholarship.

[20] Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcon, and Minoo Moallem, eds., *Between woman and nation: nationalisms, transnational feminisms, and the state* (Durham, NC, 1999); Pamela Sharpe, ed., *Women, gender, and labour migrations: historical and global perspectives* (New York, NY, 2001); Valentine M. Moghadam, *Globalizing women: transnational feminist networks* (Baltimore, MD, 2005); Amanda Lock Swarr and Riacha Nagar, eds., *Critical transnational feminist praxis* (New York, NY, 2010); Laura Briggs and Robyn C. Spencer, eds., 'Radical transnationalism: reimagining solidarities, violence, empires', special issue of *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, 18 (2019); Eileen Boris, Sandra Trudgen Dawson, and Barbara Molony, eds., *Engendering transnational transgressions: from the intimate to the global* (London, 2021).

[21] Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler, eds., *Queer diasporas* (Durham, NC, 2000); Martin Manalansan and Arnaldo Cruz-Malave, eds., *Queer globalizations: citizenship and the afterlife of colonialism* (New York, NY, 2002); Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry denied: controlling sexuality at the border* (Minneapolis, MN, 2005); Carolyn Herbst Lewis, *Prescription for heterosexuality: sexual citizenship in the Cold War era* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010).

[22] Vrushali Patil, 'From patriarchy to intersectionality: a transnational feminist assessment of how far we've really come', *Signs*, 38 (2013), 853.

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One place where it is relatively easy to see various social hierarchies intersecting are laws about intermarriage and other sexual relationships between social groups, and how these were constructed, maintained, ignored, subverted, and challenged. Such laws began with the world's earliest written law codes in the Ancient Near East and continue to today. Whether in ancient Babylon or modern Brazil, they draw lines between social groups – slave and free, noble and commoner, high elite and middling elite, native and newcomer, Black and white, and many others – making heterosexual relations between these groups non-normative, that is, prohibiting them or disadvantaging the children born from them.[23] (Only recently have we stopped labelling such children 'illegitimate'.) Thus, they are one of the earliest and longest-lived methods of what we would now call 'class formation'.

Because the concerns of the elite men who wrote them revolved primarily around the inheritance of privilege and property, laws only regulate heterosexual relations that could produce children. Later various moral, political, and religious concerns would be added to such laws, and in some places same-sex relations would be regulated as well, but this was not as pressing a matter. Laws and rules about inter-group sexual relations were generally written in gender-neutral terms, but their enforcement was often highly gendered, with the behaviour of women in more elite groups the most closely monitored and of men in elite groups the least. Women and men also had differing opportunities to ignore and contest them.

Laws about sexual relations between groups also changed as local and global processes transformed societies. As Jennifer Boitten has commented with respect to laws regarding racial groups, 'authorities regulate sex across the colour line in continuous reaction to contemporaneous geopolitical and sociopolitical realities'.[24]

This article examines one particular place and time where global entanglements led to sexual relations that created new social groups and new attempts to regulate these, the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas. These social groups are generally described as 'racial hierarchies', but class figured in them as well, or at least a social hierarchy involving wealth, land ownership, and family background did, whether one chooses to call this class or not. Sometimes, these sexual relations created families, and sometimes they did not or were prohibited from doing so, which put the women and children involved at a disadvantage. But they also often created affective ties that could provide women and children with opportunities. Thus, sex, race, class, and gender all shaped these hierarchies. After discussing the Spanish and Portuguese colonies, the article will then more briefly examine other colonial settings.

[23] On the Ancient Near East, see Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, eds., *Gender and law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Sheffield, 1998). On modern Brazil, see James N. Green, 'Sex in twentieth-century Rio de Janiero', in Kuefler and Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *Cambridge world history of sexualities*, III, pp. 532–52.

[24] Jennifer Boitten, 'Sexuality and race: representations, regulations, and sentiment', in Kuefler and Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *Cambridge world history of sexualities*, I, p. 227.

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In analysing the development of new social groups in early modern colonies, the article will touch on the spread of Christian ideas and institutions, a global process that certainly transformed societies, though never quite as much as its proponents hoped it would. For several decades now, I have been thinking about the impact of the spread of Christianity on sexuality in the first era of globalization.[25] Gender and race are prominently entwined in this process, but class is interwoven as well. Incorporating religion might seem to be a departure from the understanding of class in E. P. Thompson and the labour and social history he inspired, in which class is so firmly rooted in the means of production, but Thompson also saw class as cultural, as 'embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms'.[26] Plus, he was the son and grandson of missionaries, and wrote his last book on the ways dissident religious ideas inspired William Blake, so perhaps it is not such a break.

The older model of the spread of Christianity regarded this expansion as a process of spiritual conquest, but that model has been replaced by one that emphasizes cultural blending, indigenization, hybridity, creolization, and syncretism.[27] Newer scholarship situates this process of negotiation and mixing within the context of colonial conquest and enormous power differences, so it is not overly celebratory, but it recognizes European, African, Indigenous, and mixed-race people as actors.[28] The same is true of scholarship on cultural encounters in the Iberian colonies and the Atlantic more broadly, which stresses connections, entanglements, accommodation, and blending by all the peoples of the Atlantic world rather than simply conquest or resistance.[29] Thus, we would expect the social hierarchies that developed in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies to also be syncretic to some degree, and they were.

[25] My *Christianity and sexuality in the early modern world: regulating desire, reforming practice* (London) came out in first edition in 2000 and in third edition in 2020.

[26] E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (Harmondsworth, 1980), 9.

[27] For examples, see William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the sacred: priests and parishioners in eighteenth-century Mexico* (Stanford, CA, 1996); Ines G. Zupanov, *Missionary tropics: the Catholic frontier in India (16th–17th centuries)* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005); James A. Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the missions* (New Haven, CT, 2004); Robert C. Galgano, *Feast of souls: Indians and Spaniards in the seventeenth-century missions of Florida and New Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM, 2005); David Rex Galindo, *To sin no more: Franciscans and conversion in the Hispanic world, 1683–1830* (Stanford, CA, 2017); Nancy Farriss, *Tongues of fire: language and evangelization in colonial Mexico* (New York, NY, 2018).

[28] James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: culture, kinship and religion in the African–Portuguese world, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003); Tracy Neal Leavelle, *The Catholic calumet: colonial conversions in French and Indian North America* (Philadelphia, PA, 2011); Edward E. Andrews, *Native apostles: Black and Indian missionaries in the British Atlantic world* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); David Tavárez, ed., *Words and worlds turned around: Indigenous Christianities in colonial Latin America* (Boulder, CO, 2017); Mark Christensen, *Nahua and Maya Catholicisms: texts and religion in colonial central Mexico and Yucatan* (Stanford, CA, 2018).

[29] See, among many, John K. Thornton, *A cultural history of the Atlantic world, 1250–1820* (Cambridge, 2012). On mixing more generally, see Peter Burke, *Cultural hybridity* (London, 2009).

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Turning from historiography and theory to my case-study: colonists brought with them ideas about social difference and hierarchy formed in Europe. Late medieval European chroniclers and lawmakers writing in Latin used words such as *gens* and *natio* to refer to groups that differed according to language, traditions, customs, family line, kindred, and laws. 'Nation' and 'people' continued to be commonly used words to describe human differences in the early modern period, though 'colour' and 'complexion' were used as well.[30] In English, the word 'race' was also used to describe national groupings – the French race, the Spanish race – or other social groups, such as 'the race of learned gentlemen' or 'the race of mankind'. Recently, some medieval historians have argued that 'race' was invented in the middle ages, though others point to the early modern period as the time when people began thinking of humans as divided into a small number of groups based on continent or place of origin, skin colour, facial features, and other physical or behavioural characteristics, thus creating the modern notion of 'race'.[31]

Commentators recognized that traditions, language, and customs could change, however, and some began to describe differences also in terms of 'blood' – 'German blood', 'English blood', and so on – which made difference heritable.[32] Blood was also used as a way to talk about position in the social hierarchy, especially for nobles, who were understood as having 'noble blood', and taught to be concerned about their blood lines. Membership in these groups was to be maintained by endogamous marriage, and sexual relationships that crossed lines prohibited or viewed as aberrant, particularly if they involved women from whatever group was viewed as superior and men from a group deemed inferior. In 1366, for example, the English rulers of Ireland forbade marriages between the descendants of English immigrants and native Irish in the Statutes of Kilkenny, and also required those of English background to speak English, wear English-style clothing, ride in an English manner, and generally act English, on pain of losing their land.[33] In terms of social position, those of 'noble blood' were prohibited from marrying commoners in many parts of Europe, and sometimes even nobles whose status

[30] Roxann Wheeler, *The complexion of race: categories of difference in eighteenth-century British culture* (Philadelphia, PA, 2000); Sujata Iyengar, *Shades of difference: mythologies of skin color in early modern England* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004).

[31] On race in the middle ages, see Geraldine Heng, *The invention of race in the European middle ages* (Cambridge, 2018), and Cord J. Whitaker, *Black metaphors: how modern racism emerged from medieval race-thinking* (Philadelphia, PA, 2019). On early modern ideas of race, see John D. Garrigus and Christopher Morris, eds., *Assumed identities: the meaning of race in the Atlantic world* (Arlington, TX, 2010), Antonio Feros, *Speaking of Spain: the evolution of race and nation in the Hispanic world* (Cambridge, MA, 2017), and works listed in other notes.

[32] Newer scholarship on this includes Jean E. Feerick, *Strangers in blood: relocating race in the Renaissance* (Toronto, 2010); Christopher H. Johnson et al., eds., *Blood and kinship: matter for metaphor from ancient Rome to the present* (New York, NY, 2013); Bonnie Lander Johnson and Eleanor Decamp, eds., *Blood matters: studies in European literature and culture* (Philadelphia, PA, 2018).

[33] James Muldoon, *Identity and difference on the medieval Irish frontier: degenerate Englishmen, wild Irishmen, middle nations* (Gainesville, FL, 2003).

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was too different from their own, though of course there were ways to get around this for male members of the elite, as there always are.

Religious beliefs also came to be conceptualized as blood in late medieval Europe, with people regarded as having Jewish blood, Muslim blood, or Christian blood. The most dramatic expression of this in Europe was in the *reconquista* Iberian peninsula, where 'purity of blood' – having no Muslim or Jewish ancestors – became an obsession, as descendants of converts were viewed as tainted because their religious allegiance was carried in their blood. Laws restricted the activities of 'New Christians' – converts and their children – including marriage and other sexual relations.[34] Describing differences as blood naturalized them, making them appear as if they were created by God in nature rather than by humans inventing social hierarchies.

After the Reformation, Christian blood was further subdivided into Protestant and Catholic blood. Children born of religiously mixed marriages were often slightly mistrusted, for one never knew whether their Protestant or Catholic blood, or their Calvinist or Lutheran blood, would ultimately triumph.[35] Such mistrust was often gendered. The city council of Lutheran Strasbourg, for example, prohibited women from marrying Calvinists, 'because she would let herself be led into error in religion by her husband and be easily led astray', though it allowed men to, 'because he can probably draw his spouse away from her false religion and bring her on to the correct path'.[36] Not only did blood carry religious identity, but so did other bodily fluids. Fathers choosing a wetnurse for their children took care to make sure she was of the same denomination, lest, if he was a Catholic, her Protestant blood turn into Protestant milk and thus infect the child with heretical ideas.[37]

Europeans brought their ideas about difference with them to the Americas, but they were not entering empty lands, as the Indigenous peoples of what became the Spanish colonies had their own systems of social difference, linked to family and sometimes to blood. Like Europeans (and like most other peoples of the early modern world), the Taino – the original inhabitants of much of the Caribbean – made social distinctions between nobles and commoners, a status passed down through family lines. Taino were ruled by leaders the Spanish called *caciques* – a word derived from the Taino word *kasikɛ* – nobles whose power came from their inherited position, the amount of people and land they controlled, and networks of alliances based on family and matrimonial ties.[38] (In other words, exactly like the Habsburgs.) Other Indigenous peoples in Meso- and South America had similar hierarchical, heritable social systems:

[34] Ragnhild Johnsrud Zorgati, *Pluralism in the middle ages: hybrid identities, mixed marriages, and plural identities in medieval Iberia* (London, 2011); Simon Barton, *Conquerors, brides, and concubines: interfaith relations and social power in medieval Iberia* (Philadelphia, PA, 2015).

[35] David Luebke and Mary Lindemann, eds., *Mixed matches: transgressive unions in Germany from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (New York, NY, 2014).

[36] Strasbourg, Archives municipales, Akten der XXI, 1631, fol. 40r (my translation).

[37] On breast milk, see Jutta Gisela Spierling, ed., *Medieval and Renaissance lactations: images, rhetorics, practices* (Burlington, VT, 2013).

[38] Kathleen Deagan, 'Reconsidering Taino social dynamics after Spanish conquest: gender and class in culture contact studies', *American Antiquity*, 69 (2004), pp. 597–626.

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commoners, nobles, and leaders, for whom the Spanish also used the word *cacique.* From colonial era sources, it appears that elites were endogamous, just as they were in Western Europe.[39]

Among at least some Mesoamerican people, including the Mexica (Aztecs) and the Maya, rulers were understood to have special blood, and rituals developed in which they shed blood to ensure the harvest and success in battle.[40] Among the Maya, this included queens as well as kings. Among the Mexica, rituals involving human blood, including human sacrifice, increased in frequency and size in the fifteenth century, and became more associated with men. Male war captives were seen as the most pleasing to gods, favoured over enslaved men and women. Thus, the Mexica, like the Spanish, were used to thinking about blood as a powerful force inherent in a person, related to social standing and to some degree to gender.

Given deep suspicions among elites in Iberia about any kind of mixing, the Spanish and Portuguese crowns hoped to keep Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous peoples apart in their American colonies. The gender balance among both European and African immigrants made this impossible, however, and authorities quickly gave up. Sexual relationships involving European and African men and Indigenous and African women produced a wide variety of mixed-race children. The response of colonial authorities was to create an ever more complex system of categories, called *castas*, for persons of mixed ancestry. In most Spanish American colonies, about a quarter of the population was *casta* by the end of the eighteenth century. (The majority of the population remained Indigenous.) The Catholic church and Spanish officials defined as many as 15 or 20 different categories and combinations that were in theory based on place of birth, assumed geographic origin, and status of one's mother, with a specific name for each one: 'mestizo', 'mulatto', 'caboclo', and so on.[41] New laws passed after 1763 in the French Caribbean colonies set out a similar system, with various categories based on the supposed origin of one's ancestors.[42]

The various *castas* and the relationships among them were clearly delineated in treatises and by the eighteenth century in paintings produced primarily for a Spanish audience that showed scenes of parents of different *castas* and the children such parents produced: *India + Spaniard = Mestizo; India + Negro = Lobo; India + Negro = Zambo* and so on. Because they were meant to be decorative, paintings often showed marital couples that rarely existed, such as a European woman with an African or fully Indigenous man. They showed

[39] Peter B. Villella, '"Pure and noble Indians, untainted by inferior idolatrous races": native elites and the discourse of blood purity in late colonial Mexico', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 91 (2011), pp. 633–63.

[40] Linda Schele and Mary Ellen Miller, *The blood of kings: dynasty and ritual in Maya art* (New York, NY, 1992); Caroline Dodds Pennock, *Bonds of blood: gender, lifestyle, and sacrifice in Aztec culture* (London, 2008).

[41] Magal M. Carrera, *Imagining identity in New Spain: space, lineage, and the colonial body in portraiture and casta paintings* (Austin, TX, 2003).

[42] Doris Lorraine Garraway, *The libertine colony: creolization in the early French Caribbean* (Durham, NC, 2005).

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men, women, and children wearing clothing and with objects that represented their imagined ancestral group, and with postures and gestures viewed as appropriate to their gender, which did not vary much from painting to painting. Thus, they referenced norms of acceptable masculinity and femininity along with commenting on racial mixture. By portraying society as made up of marital couples and their children, *casta* paintings created models of heterosexuality and nuclear households that were very different from the realities of colonial life. Thus, in legal and other texts and in art, colonization discursively produced social categories that were in theory rooted in the embodied experiences of men and women, but sometimes relied more on the imagination of writers and artists.

The *casta* system built on earlier Iberian notions of purity of blood. Just as the blood of *conversos* and their children was tainted, so was that of Indigenous Americans. Loyalty to traditional beliefs was often described by Spanish colonial writers as the result of a 'bad seed that has grown deep roots and has turned itself into blood and flesh [in the Indians]…a vice that comes in the blood and is suckled as milk…[through which] the customs of parents and ancestors are converted into nature and transmitted through inheritance to their children'.[43] Thus, the more Indigenous blood one had, the greater the danger. Here, the author also worries about Indigenous milk, although this was less often a concern than it was for European Protestants, perhaps because European-background families relied so much on Indigenous, African, and mixed-race wetnurses. The system was not simply one of difference, but also hierarchy, with the amount of Indigenous and/or African blood one had a determinate of status, at least in theory.

Determining the proper *casta* in which to place actual people was not as easy as setting these out in theory, however, for the treatises and paintings were attempts to impose order on a confused and fluid system, not a description of reality. In some cases, the system became untethered to people's actual origins. Asians who came across the Pacific in the Manila galleons were generally called 'chinos', though most were not Chinese, but enslaved people from the Indian subcontinent or Southeast Asia. Over time, the category 'chino' came to be viewed as a type of mixture of African and Indigenous, and chinos came to be treated under the law as Indigenous, vassals of the Spanish crown after 1672. This meant that their Asian origins were often forgotten, but also that they could no longer be held as slaves.[44] In practice, the category in which one was placed was to a large extent determined by how one looked, with lighter skinned mixed-ancestry persons often accorded a higher rank than darker, even if they were siblings. Many historians have thus termed the social structure that developed in colonial Spanish America, including the Caribbean (and later in the French Caribbean) a 'pigmentocracy' based largely on skin colour, combined with facial features and hair texture.

[43] Also de la Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para párrocos de indios* (1668), quoted and translated in Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, 'New world, new stars: patriotic astrology and the invention of Indian and creole bodies in colonial Spanish America, 1600–1650', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), p. 65.

[44] Tatiana Seijas, *Asian slaves in colonial Mexico: from chinos to Indians* (Cambridge, 2015).

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But, as intersectional and transnational feminist theory, historical research, and our own experiences make clear, one hierarchical system is always interwoven with others, and sometimes these work at cross-purposes. Since one's ability to marry or inherit, enter a convent or the priesthood, or attend university relied on official determination of ancestral purity, individuals not only passed as members of a higher group, but also sought to officially 'whiten' their social status in order to obtain privileges in society. They could do this most easily with money. In many areas, families of property and status bought a *gracias al sacar* – a royal exemption that allowed them to be considered descendants of Europeans, regardless of their particular ethnic appearance and ancestry. In frontier areas of Spanish America, or during times of political and social transitions, family members classified their children as 'Spanish' or 'Castellano' on baptismal records, often in open defiance of the presiding priest's observations about the actual appearance of the child. The Catholic church officially forbade Indigenous, African, and mixed-race men from becoming priests, but then decided that those with only a quarter native ancestry would be considered 'Spanish', and also occasionally granted licences (for a fee) that made other mixed-race men 'white'. In addition, individuals might define themselves, or be defined, as belonging to different categories at different points in their life. They might move from Indian to mestizo to Spanish and back again, or sometimes identify themselves simply by status, with no mention of ethnic background.[45] Thus, this racial hierarchy was complicated by class, or at least by access to money.

Spanish authorities also tended to recognize the power and privileges of Indigenous leaders who co-operated with them, giving them the title *cacique* and sometimes even the noble honorifics *don* and *doña*, and giving male leaders entailed estates called *cacicazgos*, which included land and subject labour. Thus, much of the Indigenous social structure was maintained, at least for those willing to support Spanish colonial authority, and particularly the men among them.[46] In the theory of the *casta* system, purely Indigenous people ranked lower than those who had some Spanish blood, but *cacique* status trumped that, particularly when this was reinforced by what had always marked nobles in Spain: land ownership. Noble blood was noble blood.

[45] Joanna Rappaport, *The disappearing mestizo: configuring difference in the colonial new kingdom of Granada* (Durham, NC, 2014); María Elena Martínez, Genealogical fictions: limpieza de sangre, religion, and gender in colonial Mexico (Stanford, CA, 2011); Ben Vinson III, *Before mestizaje: the frontiers of race and caste in colonial Mexico* (Cambridge, 2017); Ann Twinam, *Purchasing whiteness: pardos, mulattos, and the quest for social mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford, CA, 2015).

[46] S. L. Cline, 'A *cacicazgo* in the seventeenth century: the case of Xochimilco', in H. R. Harvey, ed., *Land and politics in the Valley of Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM, 1991); John Chance, 'The caciques of Tecali: class and ethnic identity in late colonial Mexico', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 76 (1996), pp. 475–502; Peter B. Villella, 'Indian lords, Hispanic gentlemen: the Salazars of colonial Tlaxcala', *The Americas*, 69 (2012), pp. 1–36; Rik Hoekstra, 'A colonial *cacicazgo*: the Mendozas of seventeenth-century Tepexi de la Seda', *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 89 (2010), pp. 87–106.

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Church authorities supported this, limiting entrance to certain convents to 'pure-blooded' women from *cacique* families, along with those of European background, and excluding mixed-race people.

Just as money and family status both reinforced and worked at cross-purposes to racial hierarchies, so did sexual and other intimate connections. *Castas* were created through sex, but intimate relations could also upset or subvert them. Intimacy is a fraught subject in colonial settings, given the enormous power differences and often violence involved, but as Penny Russell comments:

> The fluidity and instability of colonialism produced pockets of intimacy, opportunity, erotics, and freedom, as well as of dominance. These were always informed by, even shaped by, the context of colonialism, and thus inherently problematic. But to ignore the way individuals managed those imbalances – finding livelihood, intimacy, and even pleasure or love in the interstices of the aggressive transformations wrought by colonization in all its forms – would be to ignore the history of how human beings continue to be human even in the bleakest of conditions.[47]

The intimate relations most likely to leave sources were long-term heterosexual ones. On the Upper Guinea coast, female entrepreneurs known as *nharas* or *signares* played key roles in trade, using their social status, kinship ties, and business acumen to become critical cultural and economic brokers between the African interior and the Atlantic coast, and eventually across the Atlantic.[48] They formed long-term sexual unions with Portuguese traders that were understood as marriages, receiving bride-wealth from their husbands rather than providing a dowry. The women acted as power brokers and business partners, connecting their husbands with regional trading networks in goods and slaves, and their mixed-race children, male and female, often continued as prominent traders, marrying each other or French and English traders who moved into the area. One of those *signares*, Anne

[47] Penny Russell, 'Colonialism and modern sexuality', in Kuefler and Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *Cambridge world history of sexualities*, IV, pp. 36–7. For an insightful introduction to this issue, see Chelsea Schields and Dagmar Herzog, 'Introduction: sex, intimacy and power in colonial studies', in Chelsea Schields and Dagmar Herzog, eds., *The Routledge companion to sexuality and colonialism* (New York, NY, 2021). Important studies of colonial intimacy include Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: race and the intimate in colonial rule* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); Ann Marie Plane, *Colonial intimacies: Indian marriage in early New England* (Ithaca, NY, 2002); Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Bodies in contact: rethinking colonial encounters in world history* (Durham, NC, 2005), and *Moving subjects: gender, mobility, and intimacy in an age of global empire* (Urbana, IL, 2009); Penelope Edmonds and Amanda Nettelbeck, *Intimacies of violence in the settler colony: economies of dispossession around the Pacific rim* (Cham, 2018).

[48] George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in western Africa: commerce, social status, gender, and religious observance from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century* (Athens, OH, 2003); Philip J. Havik, *Silences and soundbytes: the gendered dynamics of trade and brokerage in the pre-colonial Guinea Bissau region* (Munster, 2004); Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: urban life and politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington, IN, 2013); Lorelle D. Semley, *To be free and French: citizenship in France's Atlantic empire* (New York, NY, 2017).

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Rossignol (d. 1810), is a prime example of the possibilities of transatlantic commerce for free women of colour. She was critical in the development of Gorée, the French West African colony where she was born, and then brought her wealth and entrepreneurial expertise across the Atlantic to Saint-Domingue, where she purchased real estate and slaves.[49]

By the late sixteenth century, the majority of the population in the Caribbean was of African descent, mostly enslaved migrants from Upper Guinea and then Angola and their descendants. Before the rise of large-scale sugar plantations in the late seventeenth century, Africans, enslaved and free, played important roles in the urban economies of Saint-Domingue, Havana, Caracas, Cartagena, and Panama City, and their hinterlands.[50] Enslavers regularly freed and legally recognized their children with enslaved women, and often their mothers as well, and enslaved people negotiated or purchased their own freedom. Many free women of colour flourished, some even purchasing slaves themselves, as they saw this as a sign of wealth and social legitimacy.[51]

Mainland Spanish America also offered possibilities, as well as repression. In the cities of colonial Peru, thousands of enslaved women and men used legal claims and money to secure their freedom and that of their children, negotiating the legal categories of the *casta* system to their own advantage.[52] Mixed-race children and sometimes their Indigenous or mixed-race mothers travelled back to Seville and other parts of Spain, creating chains of migration and networks of obligation that went in all directions.[53] Enslaved women used clothing to assert their authority over their own bodies and visually challenge their place in colonial society.[54]

The Catholic church reinforced racial hierarchies through its institutions and personnel, but it also sought to incorporate children of mixed marriages into Christian society. Baptized people of all races, including those born out of wedlock or enslaved, had some legal rights in canon law and Spanish legal codes. Free people of colour could freely marry, and slave owners were expected to allow enslaved people to marry and to have the children baptized.

The church also offered possibilities for the creation of new groups that could shape social status. European, Indian, and African Christians formed

[49] Dominique Rogers and Stewart King, 'Housekeepers, merchants, rentières: free women of color in the port cities of colonial Saint-Domingue, 1750–1790', in Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell, eds., *Women in port: gendering communities, economies, and social networks in Atlantic port cities, 1500–1800* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 357–97.

[50] David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570–1640* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2016).

[51] Danielle Terrazas Williams, '"My conscience is free and clear": African-descended women, status, and slave owning in mid-colonial Mexico', *The Americas*, 75 (2018), pp. 525–54.

[52] Michelle A. McKinley, *Fractional freedoms: slavery, intimacy, and legal mobilization in colonial Lima, 1600–1700* (New York, NY, 2016); Rachel Sarah O'Toole, *Bound lives: Africans, Indians, and the making of race in colonial Peru* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2012).

[53] Jane E. Mangan, *Transatlantic obligations: creating the bonds of family in conquest-era Peru and Spain* (New York, NY, 2016).

[54] Robert S. Duplessis, *Clothing, commerce, and colonization in the Atlantic world* (Cambridge, 2015); Tamara J. Walker, *Exquisite slaves: race, clothing, and status in colonial Lima* (Cambridge, 2017).

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confraternities for men and women, almost always racially separate, and sometimes divided by occupation or parish; in some cities of New Spain, chinos had their own confraternities as well, as did specific sorts of mixed-race groups, such as *pardos* and *morenos.* Confraternities sponsored religious festivities, carried out public rituals, provided charity for the poor, or arranged hospital care and funerals for their members, thus serving as a sort of fictive family. Confraternities also shaped marital arrangements, as they frequently gave dowries to poor girls and women who wished to marry if they judged them 'honourable' and the potential husband acceptable. The activities and aims of confraternities were shaped by the cultural values of their members along with Christian teachings, though all served as agents of acculturation for new immigrants.[55] Confraternities provided not only religious fellowship, but opportunities for leadership, identity creation, and sometimes social mobility for both women and men.

None of this negates the enormous power of race in determining new social groups that developed in the Spanish colonies in the Americas, nor does it discount the violence of colonialism, in which the church was deeply implicated. But other hierarchies interwove with race, generally reinforcing racial hierarchies, but sometimes offering opportunities for people to alter their social status or create alternative social groups that gave their life meaning. This complexity would probably not have been surprising to people at the time, who viewed social status – *calidad* – not as fixed or unidimensional, but as resting on a precarious balance of physical, family, and moral judgements that frequently shifted over time. (In other words, as intersectional.) Money, land, and access to other resources – the perquisites of class – could lead to a change in status, and so could affective ties; perceived conformity or nonconformity to behavioural standards could as well, especially for women. Indigenous female holy women, such as the Mexican mystic Catarina de San Juan and the Iroquois holy woman Catherine Tekakwitha, were thought to have become white after death as a sign of their holiness, while women who engaged in magic were described as having black skin, whatever their ethnic origin.[56] Less extreme religious or moral behaviour could also change one's family's social standing,

[55] Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in colonial Mexico: absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole consciousness, 1570–1640* (Bloomington, IN, 2003), and *Colonial blackness: a history of Afro-Mexico* (Bloomington, IN, 2009); Nicole von Germeten, *Black blood brothers: confraternities and social mobility for Afro-Mexicans* (Gainesville, FL, 2006); Karen B. Graubart, '"So color de una cofradía": Catholic confraternities and the development of Afro-Peruvian ethnicities in early colonial Peru, *Slavery & Abolition*, 33 (2012), pp. 43–64.

[56] On women turning white, see J. Michelle Molina and Ulrike Strasser, 'Missionary men and the global currency of female sanctity', in Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf, eds., *Women, religion, and the Atlantic world (1600–1800)* (Toronto, 2009), pp. 156–79; Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff, eds., *Colonial saints: discovering the holy in the Americas, 1500–1800* (New York, NY, 2003); Allan Greer, *Mohawk saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford, 2006). On women viewed as having black skin, see Martha Few, *Women who live evil lives: gender, religion and the politics of power in colonial Guatemala* (Austin, TX, 2002); Joan Bristol, *Christians, blasphemers, and witches: Afro-Mexican ritual practice in the seventeenth century* (Albuquerque, NM, 2007).

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easily dragging it down and changing marriage and employment prospects even for distant cousins.

II

Early modern colonialism led to the development of new social groups everywhere. The French Caribbean had a hierarchical system modelled on the Spanish that was, like the Spanish, more fluid in reality than in theory. French law had fewer provisions to protect children born out of wedlock than did Spanish, but the Catholic church ensured that enslaved people were baptized, and the *Code Noir* of 1685 explicitly stated that enslaved people had a right to marry.[57]

In French North America, the population density of Europeans was low, and the number of white women very small, so there was extensive intermarriage and racial mixing. In the 1660s, the French crown briefly tried recruiting and paying young French women to join the unmarried men who constituted the majority of the French population in North America; some came, but not enough. Instead, official policy in New France in the seventeenth century became one of the assimilation of Native Americans through *Fransication* (Frenchification), through which they would be 'made French'. This policy included intermarriage between French men and Indigenous women; the French hoped that such marriages would promote the fur trade and strengthen ties between French and Native American communities and families. Cultural accommodation generally went in the other direction, however. Most marriages, if they occurred at all, were 'in the custom of the land', not in Catholic ceremonies, and French men adopted Indigenous customs.[58] Official policy therefore changed in 1716 to prohibit intermarriage in New France. Nonetheless, European men and Native American women continued to engage in sexual relations in western French North America and married in areas where intermarriage worked to the benefit of the local people.[59] Mixed-race individuals – Métis – emerged as a social group and developed their own distinct culture, which has continued to today.

In French colonial Louisiana, especially in and around New Orleans, Africans were part of this racial mixing. There was a brief attempt to transport women from France, but the women who came were often recruited from houses of detention so did not turn out to be the kind of wives officials or husbands wanted and the programme was stopped.[60] French Louisiana became an area

[57] Garraway, *Libertine colony*; Sue Peabody, *'There are no slaves in France': the political culture of race and slavery in the ancien régime* (Oxford, 1996); John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: race and citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (London, 2011).

[58] Saliha Belmessous, 'Assimilation and racialism in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French colonial policy', *American Historical Review*, 110 (2005), pp. 322–49; Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: material culture and race in colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia, PA, 2012).

[59] Kathleen DuVal, 'Indian intermarriage and métissage in colonial Louisiana', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 65 (2008), pp. 267–304.

[60] Jennifer M. Spear, '"They need wives": métissage and the regulation of sexuality in French Louisiana, 1699–1730', in Martha Hodes, ed., *Sex, love, race: crossing boundaries in North American*

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of great cultural and racial mixing, a situation that continued even after the area became part of the United States. As in Spanish America, wealth, family connections, intimate relations, and personal qualities cut across racial hierarchies to some degree, and some mixed-race people became quite wealthy.

While the Spanish, Portuguese, and French colonies in the Americas recognized racial mixture and generally developed hierarchies to regulate it, the British North American colonies and later the United States forbade interracial marriage and developed a dichotomous racial system, in which in theory one drop of 'black blood' made one Black. The initial British laws regarding sexual relations, from Virginia in 1662, distinguished between 'christian' and 'negroe'. But as Indigenous and enslaved people converted, religion became less useful as a means of differentiation and skin colour became more important. By 1691, the law in Virginia recognized two types of people: an 'English or other white man or woman', and a 'negroe, mulatto, or Indian man or woman'.[61] Such laws were passed in all the southern colonies in North America and also in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, some lasting until they were struck down by the US Supreme Court in 1967.[62]

Laws regarding intermarriage were usually framed in gender-neutral language, but what lawmakers were most worried about was, as the preamble to the 1691 Virginia law states, 'negroes, mulattoes, and Indians intermarrying with English, or other white women' and the resultant 'abominable mixture and spurious issue'. Such worries about 'spurious issue', that is, the out-of-wedlock children whose fathers might be Black or were in any case not the husband's, were grounds for restrictions on European-background women's mobility and activities. Thomas Jefferson, for example, sets out certain groups as excluded from having a political voice, among them, 'Women, who, to prevent depravation of morals and ambiguity of issue, could not mix promiscuously in the public meetings of men.'[63] (Jefferson had an intimate knowledge of 'ambiguity of issue', of course.) Though in practice lighter-skinned, mixed-ancestry individuals sometimes passed over without notice into the white world (including some of Jefferson's descendants), Protestant denominations generally restricted the religious and social integration of mixed-race children. The same was true in the British Caribbean, where, in contrast to Catholic colonies, enslavers were not required to allow enslaved people to marry or baptize their children.[64] Ideologies of racial dichotomy were so strong that only very rarely did wealthy men use their resources to

history (New York, NY, 1999), pp. 35–59, and *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans* (Baltimore, MD, 2009).

[61] www.encyclopediavirginia.org/_An_act_for_suppressing_outlying_slaves_1691.

[62] Peggy Pascoe, *What comes naturally: miscegenation law and the making of race in America* (New York, NY, 2010).

[63] Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Samuel Kercheval (1816), in Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The works of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, NY, 1904), X, p. 46. The other groups he excludes are 'Infants [by which he means male children], until arrived at years of discretion' and 'Slaves, from whom the unfortunate state of things with us takes away the rights of will and of property'.

[64] Daniel Livesay, *Children of uncertain fortune: mixed-race Jamaicans in Britain and the Atlantic family, 1733–1833* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2018).

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increase the opportunities for or social standing of their mixed-race children, and when they did this was often in secret.

Dutch colonies varied in their social structures. In New Netherlands, inter-racial relationships were prohibited as early as 1638, and there is little evidence that they developed, which may have contributed to violence between the Dutch and Indigenous communities.[65] In the Dutch East Indies, authorities initially encouraged sexual relations and even marriage between European men and Indigenous women as a means of making alliances, cementing colonial power, and increasing the population.[66] There were limits to this acceptance of intermarriage, however. Rijkloff von Goens, VOC governor-general in the 1670s, supported mixed marriages, but then wanted the daughters of those marriages married to Dutchmen so that 'our race may degenerate as little as possible'.[67] (By 'our race', von Goens probably meant the 'Dutch race', as he worried about mixed marriages with Portuguese-background women as well.) By the second and third generations, many European men preferred women of mixed race rather than fully Indigenous women as marital partners. Some children from mixed unions assumed prominent positions in colonial society. For example, two of the sons of François Caron, who had worked for twenty years for the VOC and had five children with a Japanese woman, later became well-known ministers in the Dutch church. Other mixed-race children did not fare as well, remaining enslaved in plantation colonies or surviving by begging or petty crime in port cities.

Procreative sex between social groups continued in later colonial periods, of course, as European or other in-migrating men engaged in sexual relations with local women and children were born from these. But in the nineteenth century, both the relationships and the children came to be seen by imperial powers as even more problematic than they had been earlier. European leaders worried about stability in their empires, racial mixing, and what they termed 'racial survival' encouraged more white women to move to the colonies and hardened the laws regulating marriage between groups. As European empires in Africa and Asia grew larger, colonial powers regulated sex across the colour line more stringently, making it difficult for inter-racial couples to find a place where they could settle. Sexual relations involving European men and local women were generally seen as prostitution rather than marriage or another type of legally recognized relationship, and the children born from them had few rights.[68]

[65] Susanah Shaw Romney, *New Netherland connections: intimate networks and Atlantic ties in seventeenth-century America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2014).

[66] Jean Gelman Taylor, *The social world of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (2nd edn, Madison, WI, 2009); Charles H. Parker, 'Converting souls across borders: Dutch Calvinism and early modern missionary enterprises', *Journal of Global History*, 8 (2013), pp. 50–71.

[67] Quoted in Charles Boxer, *The Dutch seaborne empire, 1600–1800* (New York, NY, 1965), p. 221.

[68] On this, see, among many: Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the family in colonial India: the making of empire* (New York, NY, 2006); Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, sexuality and colonial modernities* (London, 1999); Adele Perry, *On the edge of empire: gender, race, and the making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto, 2001); Durba Mitra, *Indian sex life: sexuality and the colonial origins of modern social thought* (Princeton, NJ, 2020).

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At the end of the nineteenth century, nationalist and decolonizing movements began to shake Europeans' confidence in their superiority, and colonial leaders 'responded by clarifying the cultural criteria of privilege and the moral premises of their unity'.[69] As racial anxieties intensified, colonies came to be seen as places of moral danger, in which European men were vulnerable to seduction and degeneracy, which would threaten colonial authority and the purity of the race. Sexual activity had to be reined in through even more regulations than it had been earlier. As Philippa Levine comments in regard to the British empire,

> the regulation and management of sex were key to the maintenance of British superiority as an idea and in practice, a way of drawing and maintaining the line between master and subject…As the racial categories and powers of colonial societies became less assured, and local populations increasingly organized and resistant, colonial authorities intervened with growing anxiety and determination to regulate sex, its contexts, and consequences.[70]

Race came to be an even stronger determinant of status, lessening the possibilities for wealth, family, affective ties, and personal qualities to shape social hierarchies as they had in the early modern period.[71]

III

Scholars of intersectionality have asserted that it is a tool that can and should be used to examine and critique every social structure. I agree, but would also argue that it is particularly effective for certain times and places. The early modern Spanish and Portuguese colonies are one of these, as new groups were created through sexual relationships despite efforts to prevent this, groups that were shaped by complex interactions of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and other factors. The studies referenced in this article all examine at least some of these interlocking structures of power and categories of oppression, so are to some degree intersectional, even if they do not note this explicitly. Because they are examining colonial situations, they are attentive to global forces and cross-border dynamics as well, analysing global processes that transformed societies and created new social groups, the thrust of this special issue. Some of these studies are more attentive to gender

[69] Stoler, *Carnal knowledge*, p. 51.

[70] Philippa Levine, 'Sexuality, gender and empire', in Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and empire* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 134, 137.

[71] See David M. Anderson, 'Sexual threat and settler society: "Black perils" in Kenya, c. 1907–30', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38 (2010), pp. 47–74; Saheed Aderinto, *When sex threatened the state: illicit sexuality, nationalism, and politics in colonial Nigeria, 1900–1958* (Urbana, IL, 2014); Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French race: immigration, intimacy and embodiment in the early twentieth century* (Durham, NC, 2009); Carina E. Ray, *Crossing the color line: race, sex, and the contested politics of colonialism in Ghana* (Athens, OH, 2015); Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Undesirable: passionate mobility and women's defiance of French colonial policing, 1919–1952* (Chicago, IL, 2022).

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differences than others, but most do make some comparisons of the experiences of women and men.

However – and there is always a 'however' in conclusions – in her recent discussion of intersectionality, Linda Gordon comments: 'Of particular concern in reducing the potential of intersectionality as a concept is the neglect of class inequality.' She suggests a number of reasons for this, including the fact 'that racism may be more "visible" and more palpable than economic exploitation'.[72] Despite the attention to economic inequality in Occupy Wall Street, the *Mouvement des gilets jaunes*, and other recent protest movements, this neglect of class is there in both academic and activist uses of intersectionality and feminist transnational theory. As we think about ways to develop global social history into the future, we do not want to go back to analysis that focuses on only one type of social hierarchy and neglects others. Inequalities of wealth and power based on individual and familial relationship to the means of economic and cultural production (or however one chooses to define 'class') need to be part of this analysis. Those inequalities were handed down to children produced until very recently only through a sexual relationship between a man and a woman, so sex and gender need to be there as well.

[72] Gordon, '"Intersectionality"', p. 348.

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