

BSA Decolonising Families and Relationships Event

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De-centring maternal trajectories: a study of intergenerational triads under adversity in Colombia

Abstract

The paper addresses maternal trajectories from an under-researched population. It looks at adolescent and young mothers with grandmothers as heads of households, living in peripheral and violent neighbourhoods (*barrios*) in Cali, Colombia. Although sociological literatures have addressed maternal trajectories, the psychosocial and sociocultural realities of mothers living in adverse contexts in the South remain largely under researched or submerged. To this end, decolonial thinking integrated with feminist, psychosocial and sociocultural approaches enables a vision of subjectivities in context, applied in this study by rendering visible the intergenerational and complex trajectory of women from their own maternal place. Conducting a pre-birth (T1) and post-birth (T2) qualitative longitudinal design, data include interviews with mothers (n=35 at T1 and n=21 at T2), grandmothers (n=15 at T1 and n=12 at T2) and community/public stakeholders (n=17). Transcripts were coded and analysed thematically in NVivo11. An intergenerational lens to maternal dynamics reveals how the dyad expands into an intersubjective triad with the grandmother as a central supportive figure and controller. The study offers an empirical model going from disruption, tensions and power relations to adaptability often based on lateral family support structures, whilst setting it wider into Latin American feminist politics of recognition. The paper then acknowledges a second reflexive triad of 'North-South-North' with a narrative joining the decolonial feminist call to address the structural, unequal gender dimension which hinders practices and opportunities for mothers in Latin America and more generally in the Global South.

Bio

Natalia Concha-Arango is a Research Officer at the London School of Economics (LSE) working in a UKRI-Colciencias project exploring the impact of an NGO intervention on mental health, social capital and positive life trajectories for people who experienced the armed conflict in Colombia. Natalia completed her PhD at LSE in sociocultural psychology, where she explored the psychosocial and sociocultural dimensions of maternal trajectories in Colombia. Her research interests centre on maternal and family dynamics beyond heteronormative assumptions, as well as youth trajectories shaped by contextual adversity. She has worked as a qualitative researcher in a PAHO-funded project on reproductive health in Colombia and in an IDRC-grant on youth violence led by El Colegio de México. Prior to embarking on her PhD, she worked conducting policy-based research on diversity and inclusion programmes for UK government departments, local authorities, the NHS and national charities.