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## How to Wield Feminist Power

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Feminism means engaging with power. Feminists have rallied against patriarchal power in order to undermine it, but they also have come together to empower themselves and challenge existing arrangements. Indeed, like all human agents, women have wielded power in various feminized roles throughout history. What is new in the contemporary era is the fact that there is not just women's power, but feminist power. That is, power that has been generated from, and is wielded through, feminist activism.

This power encompasses, on the one hand, the ability of feminist politics to produce change. On the other hand, it increasingly also comprises institutionalized power resulting from the way in which feminism has enlisted the state for its purposes. Feminists have achieved changes in laws to bring about gender equality. They also have institutionalized practices of affirmative action and, more recently, gender mainstreaming.

Such institutionalization entails a feminist knowledge transfer that meets the criteria outlined in the Introduction to this collection to different degrees. I have argued elsewhere that, for the most part, it can be interpreted as a "governmentalization" of feminist knowledge in the Foucauldian sense (Foucault, 1991, 2008); that is, feminist knowledge has been turned into expertise so that it becomes available for the government of conduct (see also Everett, 2009; Prügl, 2011a). In a related manner, scholars have suggested that the application of expertise has de-politicized feminist struggles, posturing as objective, neutral, and above the fray, while gutting feminism of its partisan passion (see, for instance, Wetterer, 2002). Yet others have taken governmental feminists to task for failing to reflect on the ethics of their practices. For example, in her assessment of the application of gender expertise in training, Bunie Sexwale (1996, p. 59) has suggested that "one of the most disturbing aspects of dominant 'gender training' is the utter refusal and lack of responsibility in adhering to any ethics and a complete disregard for ethical questions which have been debated, negotiated and by now broadly established within Women's Studies." In other words, the knowledge transfer we observe in much existing gender expertise has entailed a loss of feminist commitments.

Research summarized in this book shows that Sexwale's lament and the one-sided framing of gender expertise as a form of governmentality may be more pessimistic than warranted. Feminist ethics motivate many gender trainers; yet, gender expertise is only weakly professionalized. As a result, there are few explicit standards that orient the deployment of gender expertise, and the extensive debates about ethics in feminist research and teaching, that have animated scholars in the field of Women's/Gender studies, rarely make it into the practices of gender experts. Sexwale's warning is a reminder of the importance of thinking about gender training – and indeed of any effort to produce social change – as an exercise of power with ethical implications. And like any profession, gender experts and trainers need to develop standards of professional ethics that guide their exercise of power.

In this chapter, I take up shifting standpoints. On the one hand, I adopt the standpoint of gender experts in governmental contexts in order to explore what it would mean for them to wield power in a feminist way. In other words, I shift from the position of an observer of power as a productive force in the Foucauldian sense to that of an “empathetic cooperator” (see Sylvester, 1994) who recognizes gender experts as competent agents able to reflexively engage with their environment. In this understanding, power is not only a generative principle embedded in discourse but also a resource for agency. This orientation allows me to become normative and ask not only “how do feminists use their newly-found power?” but also “how *should* they use such power?” Following Sexwale, I recall that feminist expertise has a home in an academic discipline, that is Women's Studies or Gender Studies. I shift my standpoint to that of an academic, teaching and researching in this field, which allows me to draw on the feminist knowledge produced therein. While a minority of gender experts today have degrees in Women's or Gender Studies (Bergmann, 2006; Thompson, 2014), there is a substantial body of feminist thinking about ethics and methodology that has been developed there, and experts that self-identify as feminist often draw on such thinking. Here, I employ feminist ethics and merge this with theories of deliberative democracy to suggest a set of principles to guide the application of gender expertise.

Gender experts face highly contradictory demands that result from their position in governmental agencies, on the one hand, and their relationship to feminist movements, on the other. They gain authority by adopting a veneer of neutrality, of standing above politics, of adhering to traditional scientific standards of objectivity, of being able to provide rational solutions and offering techniques that accomplish results. They are effective as administrators and have authority as advisors precisely because they adopt these tools and style themselves as technical and detached (Abbott, 1988; Evetts, 2003; Wilensky, 1964). But, despite appearances to the contrary, expertise is inherently political as it affects people and populations profoundly and in

ways that are not always predictable. Judging the effects of gender expertise, therefore, needs an ethical yardstick, and wielding feminist power requires ethical guidelines.

I argue that principles for the ethical conduct of gender experts can be derived from theories of deliberative democracy and from feminist methodology. Theories of democracy lead me to suggest that wielding feminist power should be approached as engaging in debate and struggle (see Ahikire, 2007, p. 40) that respond to principles of rational and un-coerced deliberation among equals and should produce institutional spaces where such deliberation is possible. Principles of feminist methodology and ethics complement these because they provide additional attention to hierarchies and difference and append to the democratic demand of inclusiveness a demand for reflexivity with regard to power relations.

The chapter is structured as follows: I first problematize the role of expertise in the policy process, illustrating the way in which both administration and expertise defy the image of political neutrality and are suffused with power. Second, I draw on the theory of deliberative democracy, its critiques by feminists, and insights from feminist methodology in order to develop four sets of principles for feminist conduct in government. Finally, I discuss the way in which gender mainstreaming can become an institutional site for fostering democratic deliberation and put forth a plea for more empirical research on the way gender experts already incorporate feminist principled conduct in their work.

## Experts and politics

The idea that expertise can be separated from politics is intrinsic to an attitude of philosophical realism that postulates a reality beyond perception and social construction. In a policy context, this attitude translates into the understanding that expertise provides objective background knowledge which allows policymakers to take informed decisions. It assumes that the problem precedes the policy, that experts find solutions, and that policy adopts these solutions in order to respond to the problem. Critical policy studies have contested these assumptions on various grounds. Mary Hawkesworth (1988) has shown that much policy analysis relies on empiricist commitments which separate facts from values, and perception from observation, leading to a de-politicized scientism in the service of technocracy. She pleads instead for a policy science in the service of democracy. Similarly critical of positivist attitudes, Carol Bacchi (1999) has proposed that the formulation of policy problems is not neutral. The way problems are defined is already political, and the framing of the question imposes a particular solution. In this sense, the solution precedes the problem as much as vice versa, and it makes sense to approach policy processes as constant negotiations over the meaning of the policy problem.

If knowledge is an intrinsic part of the policy process, and if this knowledge is indeed constantly negotiated, then it makes little sense to hermetically separate processes of policymaking from those of policy implementation, as is the practice for part of the field of Political Science. Here, policymaking is imagined as an aggregation of private interests (in liberal theory) or an assertion of the public good (in republican theory). Democracy is imagined to reside in the quality of policymaking processes. But once a policy or law has been formulated, this apparently leaves the realm of policymaking and becomes an object of implementation, carried out by bureaucracies in a more or less rational fashion. Policy moves from the realm of democratic decision-making – and thus the play of politics – into the realm of public administration. Here, in the Weberian ideal type of bureaucracy, politics is suspended in favour of the rational application of rules. And if a distortion of rational administration is diagnosed – such as in the unthinking application of standard operating procedures or in bureaucratic politics (see Allison, 1972) – this is portrayed as an aberration from the rational ideal.

But Bacchi's Foucauldian approach to government tells us that administration is intrinsically political, that it is a site of the play of power. This is so because administration is embedded in discursive commitments that produce specific rationalities and elicit the application of certain technologies of government. Governmentality, the art of governing through the application of knowledge, produces a range of power effects including, for example, the fixing of objects, the authorization of subjects, the hemming in of options, and the normalization of identities. In this understanding, knowledge in the form of expertise constitutes the core of government, and it unfolds its power through a range of technologies, of which gender training is an example.

In the Foucauldian conceptualization of the place of knowledge in administration, the rule of experts tends to produce a self-referential logic of governmentality that cannot be captured through the language of democracy (Ferguson, 1994; Kennedy, 2005). And indeed, the expectation that experts will be objective implies that they treat scientific knowledge as a positive reflection of reality, blinding them to its political effects. For gender experts, the question thus becomes how to negotiate power in a discursive environment wedded to methodological positivism.

Feminist methodology may provide one path out of this conundrum. Feminist critiques of the pervasive biases and silences in presumably objective scholarship have led to an extensive questioning of positivist methodologies. Feminists have developed alternative approaches that distinguish themselves by the kinds of questions asked, by recognizing the positionality of the knower, by problematizing the constellation of power in research encounters, and by being explicit about the purpose of knowledge creation

(for overviews, see Naples, 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; and Tickner, 2006). These methodological imperatives recognize the normative content of knowledge creation, generating a kind of “strong objectivity” (Harding, 1993) that problematizes the role of the knower – the academic scholar as much as the policy expert. Loath to abandon its emancipatory project to a Foucauldian imaginary of self-referential processes, feminist methodology thus postulates a responsible agent held to account by the methodological standards of the profession.

If one looks at processes of policy implementation through the lens of feminist methodology, the meaning of expertise changes. It no longer holds the status of conveying a singular truth, but encompasses a recognition and interpretation of a multiplicity of situated truths – including of truths emerging from social movements – and making them the subject of deliberation. Putting expertise at the service of deliberative processes thus requires a reformulation of the role of experts. Writing on policy processes in the environmental sphere, Frank Fischer (2009) has suggested that the role of the expert should not be that of a one-time translator of technical knowledge, but of a mediator who interprets knowledges precisely in order to facilitate public deliberation. In his understanding, the policy process should be conceived of as an ongoing cycle of deliberation, which offers an opportunity to advance democracy by providing space for authentic engagement between different political forces and discourses (see also Hawkesworth, 1988).

If one accepts Fischer’s proposal, the gender experts’ conundrum of exercising governmental power while conducting themselves ethically may be looked at in a different light. As facilitators of deliberation, gender experts may contribute to enhancing the democratic legitimacy of government more broadly. I am thus proposing that the work of gender experts be judged not only by the quality of its outcomes but also by the quality of the processes experts engage in and make possible. Such an approach is justified because, in complex systems, it is invariably difficult to control the way ideas proliferate and morph to produce outcomes that may or may not approximate those that were intended. Yet, such systems can be configured in ways that allow experts to conduct themselves in a principled fashion. That is, to teach, conduct research, analyse, and foster change in a way that conforms to feminist ethics and ideals of deliberative democracy. The assumption is that the democratic quality of inputs, paired with the application of principles from feminist methodology, will improve the quality of outputs.<sup>1</sup>

This approach can address Sexwale’s complaint about the dearth of ethics in the application of gender expertise. However, it is unlikely to respond to the charge that the governmentalization of feminist knowledge de-politicizes feminist movements and/or amounts to an exercise of power.

All it can do is to make the exercise of such power more conscious by recognizing the political character of expertise. Moreover, it may make the exercise of such power more legitimate by contributing to a democratization of government. My proposal is addressed to gender experts who identify as feminists, and who look to feminism to provide them with guidance in their wielding of power. Not all gender experts share this interest – many identify as professionals in a different field, such as, for example, development economics, law, or public health. In this sense, this proposal is a political intervention in a contested space. My purpose is to develop a set of specifically feminist principles for gender experts to follow.

### **Principles of conduct for feminist gender experts**

The meaning of democracy has become intensely contested in the context of an increasingly complex and interdependent world. Does the image of a sovereign people governing themselves still capture social reality when global constraints – from economic imperatives to political commitments – hem in political choices? How can governments remain legitimate when they appear captured by powerful interests, while failing to solve the urgent problems of our times – from climate change to financial stability? These doubts and questions have led to an extensive discussion of the meaning of democracy in an interdependent world, and of the way in which government should be reorganized to regain both effectiveness and legitimacy. The theory of deliberative democracy has proven popular in this context. On the one hand, it promises to unlink democracy from the conceptualization of a political community, the basis of a republican notion of democracy. On the other, it offers respite from the liberal idea of democracy that prescribes putting in place political institutions to achieve a compromise among individuals and interest groups.

John Dryzek describes deliberative democracy's core notion as follows: "outcomes are legitimate to the extent that they receive reflective assent through participation in authentic deliberation by all those subject to the decision in question" (2010, p. 23). The significance of this reformulation becomes visible when juxtaposing it against other formulations of democratic legitimacy. For liberal theorists, such legitimacy lies in the guarantee of the fundamental rights of the individual. For republican theorists, it derives from the assent of "the people", the ethico-political substance of a citizenry with a shared cultural background that has entered into a social contract. Against these conceptualizations, the theory of deliberative democracy locates the source of legitimacy entirely in democratic procedures. That is, "in the rules of discourse and forms of argumentation that borrow their normative content from the validity basis of action oriented to reaching understanding" (Habermas, 1996, pp. 296–297). In doing so, the theory avoids the difficulty of linking the legitimacy of government to a bounded

*demos* in an increasingly globalizing world, and the difficulty of postulating abstract, universal principles of morality, which precede any empirical social and cultural interaction.

For various reasons, thinking of democratic legitimacy as a matter of procedure is attractive for the purpose of developing principles of conduct for gender experts. First, to the extent that democratic legitimacy is a matter of procedures, it is not logically attached to the institutions of democratic decision-making codified in constitutions. Instead, it also becomes applicable to the various “new state spaces” and “networks of governance” that have sprung up together with the reorganization of governmental authority. These include multilevel systems of government, such as the EU. They also encompass, for example, internationally funded projects and programmes where politics and meanings from different geographical scales intersect. Because gender expertise is often invoked as part of international efforts towards gender mainstreaming, experts frequently operate in precisely such spaces and networks (Brenner, 2004; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Hooghe and Marks, 2003; Prügl, 2011b). Second, because the notion of deliberative democracy does not rest on the assumption of predefined, abstract rights, it opens up debates around “difference” and “diversity”. Scholars have criticized the fact that gender mainstreaming does not have a clear definition of gender equality (True and Parisi, 2013). However, rectifying injustices requires that the meaning of equality be opened up for debate. Inclusive deliberation can be transformative precisely to the extent that it is open to unsettling accepted notions of equality (Squires, 2005, p. 380).

Finally, deliberation is a particularly appropriate path towards arriving at decisions in circumstances where expert knowledge is “contested”. Such contestation has motivated a turn towards deliberative democracy in environmental studies. Here, expertise has increasingly met counter-expertise, and the impacts of expert solutions on populations have become a matter of considerable acrimony (see, e.g., Fischer, 2009). Feminist knowledge is similarly contested. Yet, whereas in the environmental arena arguments are about the validity of empirical evidence, and the effectiveness of contemporary economic organization, the problem of gender inequality ultimately amounts to a contestation of the constitutive rules of societies and cultures. As such, it garners resistance from a broad range of often unorganized social forces (see Lombardo and Mergaert in this book). Thus, perhaps more than in the case of environmental expertise, the application of gender expertise invites processes of deliberation, of a joint effort of creating meaning, rather than an encounter with positivist evidence.

A consideration of writings on deliberative democracy, paired with feminist critiques and insights from feminist methodology, leads me to propose four sets of principles. These should guide the wielding of feminist power in a way that fosters democratic deliberation and counteracts the de-politicization of feminist knowledge. These principles are: rational

deliberation across difference; non-coercion, equality and feminist social criticism; inclusiveness; and reflexivity. I will now briefly discuss each principle in turn.

### **Rational deliberation across difference**

Deliberative democracy is about reaching understanding, or arriving at decisions, in a way that relies on rational discourse and argumentation. Democratic decision-making is thus imagined not as an aggregation of individual interests (the liberal view), but as a rational exchange between individuals who have in mind broader principles or the public good. In the process of deliberation, it is expected that all are open to changing their point of view as a result of the quality of the arguments put forward.

This idea has resonated with feminist theorists, but there also have been important critiques. Iris M. Young has argued that by assuming unmarked individuals entering a deliberation, and thus denying difference, the model becomes implicitly exclusionary. It may recognize that coercion can come from economic dependencies or domination, but it ignores the “internalized sense of the right one has to speak or not to speak, and [...] the devaluation of some people’s style of speech and the elevation of others” (Young, 2006, p. 122). Furthermore, Young has criticized the masculinity of a focus on rational deliberation with its implied antagonistic posturing of opposing arguments and with its elevation of reasoning over other forms of communication.

But rather than rejecting the notion of deliberative democracy, Young builds on it in order to suggest that difference does not have to be an obstacle to finding agreement. Rather, it can be a resource for public reason. She suggests an opening up to multiple forms of communication, such as, for example, narration. She also proposes a somewhat different notion of understanding than that put forward by Habermas. Understanding across differences does not imply identification; rather it means that

there has been a successful expression of experience and perspective, so that other social positions learn, and part of what they understand is that there remains more behind that experience and perspective that transcends their own subjectivity.

(Young, 2006, p. 128)

Young’s proposal connects to various concepts feminist theorists have introduced to capture communication across difference – from the notion of empathetic cooperation proposed by Christine Sylvester (1994) to the world travelling described by Maria Lugones (1987). In the ideals proposed by these theorists, genuine encounters that recognize difference require that the self must be open to a change, not just of points of view but also of being.



Accounting for difference in rational deliberation would have to include this insight.

### **Non-coercion, equality, and feminist social criticism**

According to theorists of deliberative democracy, authentic deliberation should be free of coercive influences, so that logic and reason prevail over power plays. It needs to be driven by speech that is truthful and sincere. The selective presentation and manipulative framing of issues is considered contrary to authentic deliberation. Moreover, all need to be treated as equals in making proposals, criticizing them, and giving assent.

The principles of non-coercion and equality resonate well with feminist critiques of power. Yet, feminists have noted the utopian character of these requirements in the face of the pervasive reality of women's subordination. Brooke Ackerly (2000) has discussed the matter from the perspective of Third World women. In a context full of coercion, how could environments be generated that allow Third World women to participate in an un-coerced and equal fashion? Ackerly argues that feminist social criticism logically complements a theory of deliberative democracy to the extent that such criticism is a necessary prerequisite for attacking power inequalities, and thus for creating the circumstances for un-coerced deliberation. Indeed, social criticism – as visible in Third World women's activism – has as one of its goals the promotion of deliberation. Other goals include the promotion of institutional change and the promotion of inquiry.

Ackerly proposes a methodology for social criticism that consists of three parts. Namely, it should include deliberation as a means of inquiry; foster sceptical scrutiny of elitist, coercive, and exclusionary or potentially exploitative values, practices, and norms; and develop a set of criteria for evaluating values, practices, and norms (Ackerly, 2000, p. 18). The emphasis on procedure, and specifically on deliberation, reappears here in an enlarged image of deliberative democracy. That is, one addressed not only to governance networks that link the state and civil society but one that infuses deliberation into civil society itself. And in these deliberations, critique and challenges to practices of domination take on a central role. Ackerly develops a quasi-universal set of evaluative criteria (following the work of Martha Nussbaum) that, substituting for the liberal language of rights, provide the basis of critique for existing practices and pave the way for transformation. In her interpretation, deliberative democracy becomes possible once it allows for feminist social criticism that is itself deliberative, sceptical, and follows a set of evaluative maxims.

Ackerly's insights are relevant for considering a broad range of feminist change practices, including those in government. They bring to the foreground the importance of critique, while specifying deliberation as a process and goal, and providing a set of standards by which to measure outcomes.

Her standards raise important questions for existing training practices – from making training mandatory (arguably a form of coercion) to exploring how social criticism can be included in a training context.

## Inclusiveness

The principle of inclusiveness is not central to all theorizations of deliberative democracy. However, Gutmann and Thompson (2004) assert that deliberation can be understood as democratic only as long as it is inclusive. In other words, the broadest number of people affected by a decision should be consulted in deliberative decision-making.

For feminists, inclusiveness is a central value, most consistently expressed in writings on feminist methodology. Identifications of pervasive bias in mainstream scholarship have led feminists to acknowledge that all truth claims are situated, that is that they emerge from particular contexts, experiences, and political struggles (Haraway, 1988; Hartsock, 1998; Smith, 1987). From this realization, feminists have derived a strong methodological norm of inclusiveness. This norm encompasses a number of aspects. First, scholarship needs to be attentive to the diversity of knowledges that exist, and it needs to make visible and give voice to this diversity. Among the diverse knowledges which feminist scholarship pays particular attention to are those considered marginal and often silenced. Thus, feminists study from the bottom-up and look at the world through situated lenses. Second, when studying local knowledges, the norm requires a collaborative partnership with those who have such knowledge (Ackerly and True, 2010). This allows feminist research to advance practical knowledge that fosters understanding, and emancipatory knowledge that makes visible the political positions of those at the margins. Third, truth emerges from collective validations rather than positivist yardsticks. Scholarship is exercised in a community, and it is only by participating in the debates of a community that claims to truth can be ascertained, even if this is always only in a preliminary and partial fashion (Tickner, 2006, p. 27; Weldon, 2006). The principle of inclusiveness is thus indicative of a wide range of practices encompassing both the relationship of the researcher to the researched and of researchers towards each other.

In her book *Inclusion and Democracy*, Young (2000; see Chapter 3 especially) applies these feminist methodological principles to fleshing out deliberative democracy. She starts from the presumption that group-based positionality invariably gives greater power and voice to some. Accordingly, procedural rules that posture as impartial often result in bias. She therefore suggests that communicative democracy needs to go beyond inclusion, in order to also affirm the particular social group position that is relevant to an issue and to draw on the situated knowledge of people in such positions. This would allow everyone to enlarge their understanding by moving beyond parochial interests. A feminist methodological principle, that is the

understanding of knowledge as situated, informs Young's proposal for a consideration of difference. She elevates this principle over reified constructions of group identities: What matters is not skin colour, or sex, or even political constructions of groups in the spirit of identity politics. Instead, what should matter in deliberative contexts are the different experiences that people derive from living different social positions. Deliberation that validates such knowledges may, on the one hand, arrive at an objectivity that overcomes the partiality of all insight. On the other hand, it may make it much more difficult to arrive at consensus. Indeed, Young questions whether the objective of deliberation needs to be consensus in the form of mutual identification. Rather, just solutions to political problems may be achieved through coordination and cooperation that allow for a continuation of difference.

The principle of inclusiveness developed in feminist methodology, and in feminist critiques of deliberative democracy, thus incorporates two distinct insights. The first links inclusiveness to difference; the second insists on the inclusiveness of individuals, and, perhaps more so, of the situated knowledge of diverse experiences. Inclusiveness, moreover, signals an attention to difference in knowledge, but also to processes of participation. That is, to the formation of partnerships that allow for better understanding and to collective validations of knowledge.

## Reflexivity

Feminist methodology puts forward another principle not typically picked up in theories of deliberative democracy, that is the notion of reflexivity (nevertheless, see Dryzek, 2006). "Reflexivity" is a term with many meanings, variously associated with the current phase of modernity (Beck, 1992), social constructivism, post-positivist methodology, and emancipatory ethics. In the field of International Relations, references to reflectivism, or the "reflexive turn", often have indicated a change of ontology in scholarship that approaches international phenomena as socially constructed (Hamati-Ataya, 2012; Keohane, 1988). A reflexive world precludes the scholarly conceit of being able to identify the laws according to which this world ticks. Instead, it invites a critical interrogation of the way in which this world has come into being.

Many feminists have not stopped at recognizing the social world, and therefore gender relations, as reflexively produced, but have insisted that researchers themselves are part of the social world they study and that scholarship contributes to the construction of the world. This, in turn, has methodological implications. Feminists have insisted that reflexivity in scholarship needs to be acknowledged and fostered because of the multiple relationships of power that research is embedded in. First, scholars need to reflect on the power relations that may arise from their own location

in the Global North, or their belonging to privileged status groups defined by race, class, or gender. Second, scholars need to reflect on the epistemic power they wield. This results from their ability to frame questions, define categories, and devise methods that others are asked to respond to, and from their ability to interpret and thus construct realities through their writings (Ackerly, 2008). A recognition of this power demands that those who are in the business of creating knowledge take responsibility for the effects that their truth claims make possible (Stern, 2006). Bacchi and Eveline (2010) follow this line of argument when they suggest that feminists working in policy should interrogate their representations of problems in a reflexive manner, so that they become aware of unexamined assumptions, silences in the way problems are framed, and potentially deleterious effects resulting from such assumptions and framings.

In the field of Public Administration, Cunliffe and Jun (2005) have taken a similar approach to problematize both the conduct of the administrator and the power commitments evident in the knowledge used. They distinguish an attitude of self-reflexivity from critical reflexivity. Building on a humanistic perspective, they have proposed self-reflexivity as an attitude of reflection on our ways of being and acting in the world, including our role in the construction of organizational and social life. Drawing on critical theory, post-structuralism, and post-modern ideas, they see critical reflexivity in efforts to unsettle “the assumptions underlying theoretical, moral, and ideological positions as a basis for thinking more critically about academic, organizational, and social practices” (Cunliffe and Jun, 2005, p. 228).

For experts working in bureaucracies, a reflexive attitude can help foster democratic deliberation in a context of bureaucratic rationality by self-consciously, and critically, interrogating both organizational processes and epistemic commitments. Such reflexivity helps to identify power in hegemonic discourses that stifle voices from the margins, and in bureaucratic routines that reproduce hegemonies unthinkingly. Feminist gender trainers and experts tend to be keenly aware of such power mechanisms, but are frequently alone in their posture. There is a dearth of institutional spaces that foster a collective habit of reflexivity and that counteract the various forms of power-laden common sense that invariably emerge in the formulation of expertise, and in practices of knowledge transfer.

### **From theory to practice**

Gender mainstreaming, the projects, programmes, and policies intended to bring about gender equality, including gender training, can be approached as sites for the democratization of governance. This proposal follows the insights of Judith Squires (2005), who has encouraged an engagement of gender mainstreaming with theories of deliberative democracy. She suggests that “the emphasis that deliberative democrats place on inclusion and

dialogue offers rich resources to counter the technocratic tendencies in the integrationist model of mainstreaming” (Squires, 2005, p. 381). Instead of bureaucratically absorbing the gender equality agenda into existing policies without changing these policies, Squires suggests that gender mainstreaming be transformative. It should not stop at integrating gender equality into existing power structures or at reversing these power structures to revalorize feminine values. Instead, it should produce cultural change. This would entail politicizing existing norms, and displacing existing commitments, such as the dichotomy between equality and difference. Gender mainstreaming is more likely to become transformative in this way if it is deliberative. It would approach various stakeholders as citizens, transmitting civil society debates into formal arenas of political decision-making. And rather than simply wanting to aggregate the preferences of such citizens, it would seek to facilitate transformative dialogue between them.

Given the fact that feminist ideas have been influential in developing gender mainstreaming, it is not surprising that many deliberative democratic principles already are part of the practices of gender experts and gender trainers, and that, therefore, gender mainstreaming carries within it the seeds of transformation. For example, a review of gender training manuals in the security sector shows that gender experts tend to be highly attuned to the principle of inclusiveness. Thus, many of the manuals surveyed in one project emphasize the need for the extensive participation of stakeholders (Prügl, 2010). Many gender trainers are also acutely aware of the need to recognize difference beyond superficial nods to tolerance. Thus, they strive to create training contexts that are non-coercive, and in which participants are treated as equals. Moreover, there is evidence of considerable reflexivity among feminist gender experts regarding the uses and dangers of “strategic framing”, or instrumental argumentation, and indeed an explicit engagement with a commitment to reflexivity (see, for instance, Ferguson and Moreno in this book; Eyben and Turquet, 2013). Yet, not all gender experts are committed to feminist ethical principles, and even where they are, there is a dearth of institutionalized spaces that allow such principles to flourish.

The EU-funded QUING project is an exception that has explicitly served as an institutional site to foster the principles developed in this chapter. It has sought to enable reflexivity on gender training by facilitating communication among gender trainers, and the professionalization of gender training. An important outcome of this project has been the “Madrid Declaration on Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice”, which evokes the language of democracy to specify the goal of such training as contributing to a “gender equal democratic society”. Furthermore, it affirms the need for inclusiveness and reflexivity in the development of gender+ training. Adding a “+” to gender emphasizes a broad consideration of all types of intersectional difference.<sup>2</sup>

There is a need to move beyond simply critiquing the technocratic or governmental character of existing experiences with gender mainstreaming and gender training, towards recognizing complexities in practice, and assessing processes along a range of dimensions and principles. Empirical investigations should explore the way in which gender training constitutes an institutional site of democratic deliberation reflecting the principles outlined above. Such investigations would not be confined to probing the way individuals wield expertise. Perhaps more importantly, they would problematize the institutional infrastructure and discursive commitments in place, to enable conduct following deliberative and feminist principles. How does training have to be structured in order to guarantee rational deliberation across difference, encourage a non-coercive and equal environment, be inclusive, and foster reflexivity? How can projects and programmes be designed to become sites for enabling the application of these principles, and thus become conducive to unleashing feminist gender expertise? What innovative institutional sites have been generated already to accomplish these goals? The diverse institutionalizations of in-house and top-down gender training capacities, and the communities of practice described in the Introduction to this book, constitute interesting cases for assessing a feminist wielding of power along the yardsticks of feminist deliberation.

## Conclusion

How can gender experts remain legitimate in the face of critiques that fear, on the one hand, a de-politicization of the feminist movement and, on the other hand, the development of a new form of power to direct the conduct of people? How can they wield power in a way that affirms their professional credibility and authority, while at the same time remaining accountable to the movement? In this chapter, I suggest that it is possible to wield power in a feminist way if this wielding of power is principled. Theories of deliberative democracy and feminist methodology suggest four sets of principles that should guide feminist conduct involved in government. They are the following:

- rational deliberation across difference that is open towards a change in being;
- ensuring non-coercion and equality in deliberation, while enabling feminist social criticism;
- inclusiveness of diverse knowledges paired with working in a participatory manner, and in partnership, for collective validation;
- reflexivity vis-à-vis both processes and epistemic commitments.

This formulation of deliberative legitimacy pertains not only to the level of individual ethical conduct but also to institutional designs. Gender

experts are embedded in institutions that circumscribe their behaviour, but that can also be designed to advance the principles of gender-sensitive deliberative democracy. Institutionalizing principles of rational deliberation, non-coercion and equality, inclusiveness, and reflexivity may foster an application of gender expertise that produces transformation rather than administration, and that can be called democratic rather than technocratic. It can provide the conditions for a transformative practice of gender mainstreaming and knowledge transfer that begins to take seriously the dangers of feminist ideas being co-opted into hegemonic state projects.

There is good reason to believe that gender experts in many places already apply the principles developed here, and creatively put in place practices to generate spaces of deliberation by which to democratize international governance. There is a strong need for the empirical documentation and exploration of such practices. Built on feminist knowledge that has long engaged with the question of power, gender experts are uniquely positioned to provide a model for the engagement of scholars and experts with the state, and for bringing expert knowledge to policy practice in a way that advances democratic principles.

Making feminist knowledge a tool of government no doubt has de-politicizing implications for feminism as a movement and an oppositional force. It also conveys a measure of authority to feminism that allows it to participate in shaping the rules that define the world. If feminists want to move beyond critique, they cannot help but become a part of governmental power. As gender expertise is spreading and establishing itself, gender experts and academics alike are challenged to advance knowledge on how to wield governmental power in a feminist way, and release the transformative potential of feminist knowledge transfer.

## Notes

1. In other words, I privilege “input legitimacy” over “output legitimacy” (Scharpf, 1999).
2. For more information on the “Madrid Declaration on Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice”, please see [http://www.quing.eu/files/madrid\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.quing.eu/files/madrid_declaration.pdf).

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