

vehemently seeks to displace. Is it realistic to relegate sex to insignificance? Pantelidou Maloutas reminds us, however, that the deconstruction of sex does not entail its obliteration. Rather, what it seeks to eliminate are inflexible sex/gender stereotypes by emphasizing their contingent nature. Only thus can democracy become “substantial” with regard to gender, an ethical and political imperative (p. 104).

This book heralds the enormous diversity among/within women through its theoretical propellants of postmodernism and utopia. Pantelidou Maloutas selectively appropriates different nuances of postmodernism, “rendering eclecticism particularly appropriate in an endeavor combining theoretical and political aims” (p. 8). It is the spirit of postmodernism, however, that infuses the author’s examination. Her analysis seeks to move us beyond essentialist conceptions toward a visualization of multiplicity, ambiguity, and fluidity in our subjective identities. The book thus stands as an important rejoinder to feminist critiques that maintain that postmodernism has little “real” political valency beyond dissipating all our foundational claims. Pantelidou Maloutas makes an important contribution to this debate by employing postmodernism to illuminate the paradoxes in our political goals and help us envision a more just, equal, and democratic society. Postmodernism is harmonized with a utopian vision of a social order in conceptualizing a different gender-relations system to call for a substantial “deepening” of democracy, a deconstruction of today’s reality for a reconstructed tomorrow: “This reality will change only if the subjects are freed of their dichotomous gender, a process that will also alter the terms of their participation in the political process, since it will necessarily concern participation in *transforming* and no longer in preserving it, and for that reason, will also promote the development and the deepening of democracy itself” (p. 100, emphasis original).

Yes! A celebration of democracy’s potential for a hope-filled, truly emancipatory feminist future.

***Feminist Inquiry: From Political Conviction to Methodological Innovation.*** By Mary Hawkesworth. New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers University Press. 2006. 286 pp. \$25.95.

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In this book, Mary Hawkesworth draws together into an integrated discussion an immense amount of the complex, interdisciplinary research

on methods and epistemology accomplished in the past few decades by feminist scholars.

*Feminist Inquiry* elaborates analytical tools premised on antifoundationalist approaches to knowledge that feminists have developed to understand gendered, sexed, and raced forms of oppression and inequality. Hawkesworth begins with a discussion of the errors exposed by feminist critiques of mainstream Western epistemological frameworks. Feminists have demonstrated how foundationalist approaches to knowledge—whether they follow a Platonic path of seeking out what is essential or true beyond the appearance of things, or a rationalist/empiricist approach that assumes the transparency of what is given and the reasonable person's capacity to assert comprehensive truths about any given phenomenon—elide the political and contingent quality of all processes of knowledge production. Following Sandra Harding and other feminist epistemologists, Hawkesworth argues that acknowledging the flawed assumptions underlying traditional Western approaches to knowledge, whether metaphysical or positivist in nature, can redeem objectivity and create a better “science” and a more just, inclusive, and critical body of knowledge.

Hawkesworth persuasively builds an argument for an antifoundationalist approach to knowledge production. What does she mean by antifoundationalist? She builds her understanding of this approach through critical discussions of feminist standpoint theory and intersectionality, distinguishing her version of antifoundationalism from what she describes as a radical relativism practiced by postmodern thinkers. She says, “In contrast to the antifoundationalist claim that all our ideas about the world and our experience of it are mediated by theories, which are humanly created or “socially constructed,” some postmodernists suggest that all reality is socially constructed” (p. 71). This is a form of “linguistic idealism” that concedes the existence of only that which is brought into linguistic circulation. Hawkesworth's antifoundationalism suggests that while knowledge of the empirical, objective world is always already mediated, that world remains other than its existence in discursive relations. Because it remains other, knowledge can be more or less objective, but not exhaustively perspectival, an approach she identifies with linguistic constructionism.

With respect to objectivity, Hawkesworth critiques those feminists who conflate objectivity with the objectification of women, suggesting ethical and intellectual grounds on which we should abandon objectivity. These feminist critiques have identified the biased and inherently value-

laden quality of traditional forms of research. However, she argues that these insights should encourage us not to dismiss objectivity but to develop a better understanding of and commitment to cognitive practices that create better knowledge. This entails a capacity for self-critique and reflection on the part of the researcher, who must always be willing to review the limits of his/her field of vision, method of inquiry, and results at any given moment of inquiry. It entails an ability to keep sight of multiple perspectives in the process of coming to one's own conclusions about a given phenomenon. Hawkesworth's redemption of objectivity holds the researcher to difficult standards: "In lieu of a simple method, it calls for cultivating sound intellectual judgment. It demands a level of sophistication that can be cultivated only by sustained study across an array of disciplines. It presupposes a reconceptualization of the relation between inner self and external world. Moreover, it demands the expansion of the scientific and philosophical communities to encompass formerly excluded groups" (p. 97). This book will help feminists continue to revise "Scope and Methods" courses, which will look quite different as we take up her challenge.

Hawkesworth reviews the criticisms of standpoint theory as developed by post-Lukascian scholars. This standpoint theory suggests that the social positioning of knowers determines the truth of the knowledge they produce, in a more or less exhaustive fashion. Georg Lukacs argued that epistemic authority, a more complete vision/version of the world, lies with those who create the world, the working class. Nancy Hartsock's classic text, *Money, Sex and Power* (1983), reintroduces standpoint theory as feminist epistemology, arguing that women potentially have the more complete vision as they are not only creating but reproducing the world. Critiques of Hartsock's thinking suggest that the presuppositions about the relationship among social positioning, identity, and knowledge lead to an implicit hierarchization of epistemic privilege and an unwarranted conflation of experience and truth-claims.

Alternatively, Hawkesworth suggests that standpoint theory should be understood as an analytic tool, an approach that encourages the scholar to mediate among and between competing perspectives otherwise confined by their own ideological vision. She says that "the juxtaposition of competing theoretical accounts illuminates the role of social values in cognition, an illumination that has important implications for an adequate understanding of objectivity" (p. 206). In the end, I do not find this a persuasive or helpful conceptual transition. While she develops an otherwise helpful discussion of feminist inquiry, Hawkesworth ultimately

conflates theory with method. This becomes clear as she suggests that standpoint theory as an analytical tool should review the traditional feminist typology of conservative, liberal, socialist, black, postmodern (etc.) feminisms, and how each interprets policy questions (in this case, welfare policy), thus making visible the social and political values immanent to each and in need of critical assessment. However, these feminisms are not “standpoints.” Socialist and postmodern feminists do not similarly premise their knowledge claims on subject positioning, nor do black feminists who prioritize the intersection of race and gender or conservative feminists who reify traditional norms of femininity as they interpret social policy. Furthermore, I do not know why we are calling Hawkesworth’s analytic approach (which I identify as a method) standpoint theory (which I identify as a theory of cognition).

The notion of a standpoint has a rich intellectual and political history that is elided by turning it into a “method.” In the context of feminist inquiry, I think it is crucial to be clear as to what is method and what is theory, while acknowledging that the distinction is often and rightfully blurred. We might remember that Judith Butler does not claim performativity as a method but as a theory of sex/gender. It may be, as Hawkesworth suggests, functionalist in its reliance on a heterosexist psychoanalytic theory of gender production. But it does not claim to do the work of method for feminists. It does offer original insight into how to denaturalize sex/gender and argues persuasively (I think) that gender may, after all, be a matter of psychically inflected habit, rather than naturally cultivated identity.

The same discussion could apply to Hawkesworth’s deployment of intersectionality. Intersectionality is an invaluable critique of essentialist claims about the significance of sex/gender in defining social reality. To bring it to bear in empirical discussions of policy is an extremely complex, but necessary, project. Intersectionality as a theory is a work in progress. It has generated an enormous amount of discussion about whether and how it moves feminist and critical theory forward. Identifying the insights available thus far for interpreting what the author calls the racing-gendering of Congress is helpful, and makes quite clear the distances we must travel in identifying, exposing, demonstrating, and transforming the interlocking systems and relations of oppression that perpetuate inequality and injustice. However, whether a theory can be instrumentalized in the study of experience should not be a litmus test as to its legitimacy. There needs to remain a space for theorizing that may or may not have anything to do with its application in terms of method.

*Feminist Inquiry* is an extremely important contribution to discussions of theory and method within women's and gender studies and within feminism at large. Hawkesworth moves scholarship in these studies forward as she carefully delineates the terms on which intellectual inquiry, knowledge production, and progress toward social justice might cross paths. As well, her work will inspire further discussion of the relationship between theory and method, which, after all, sustains its own political dynamic and complicity with injustice.

***Challenging Parties, Changing Parliaments: Women and Elected Office in Contemporary Western Europe.*** By Miki Caul Kittilson. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 2006. 190 pp. \$64.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

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This is an ambitious book that takes a comprehensive and multi-method approach to understanding the question of women's participation in parliaments. Miki Caul Kittilson proposes a gendered-institutions argument that focuses on political parties as the key mechanism for increases in women's parliamentary representation. She moves away from supply arguments that place the onus on women to run by instead focusing on how parties can be transformed to encourage women to run. She argues that women will be most effective in their efforts to gain a political foothold where they "recognize favorable conditions within the party and party system, and where they devise context-contingent strategies for inclusion" (p. 2).

In an extensive and timely literature review, Kittilson conscientiously places her work within the context of the literature on women's parliamentary representation. She starts by pointing out the limitations of comparative studies that place a large emphasis on electoral rules. She points out that while explanations looking at the favorability of proportional representation over single-member plurality systems are persuasive in static cross-national comparison, they lose leverage when making cross-temporal comparisons. While many Western European electoral systems have remained stable over the past 20 years, the number of women in office has increased. The other dominant explanation in comparative studies focuses on changing attitudes toward women: as nations adopt