

# GENDER AND PRACTICE

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ADVANCES IN GENDER RESEARCH VOLUME 28

# **GENDER AND PRACTICE: KNOWLEDGE, POLICY, ORGANIZATIONS**

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# GENDER AND PRACTICE: INTRODUCTION TO KNOWLEDGE, POLICY, ORGANIZATIONS

Vasilikie Demos, Marcia Texler Segal  
and Kristy Kelly

## ABSTRACT

*In the introduction to this second volume on gender and practice, the editors show how practitioners from around the world are engaged in the work of gender equality. They summarize the 12 chapters that constitute the volume and explain how they relate to the sub-themes of knowledge, policy, and organizations; to each other; and to the chapters in AGR 27, the first volume on gender and practice.*

**Keywords:** Feminist/gender knowledge; feminist/gender policy; feminist/gender organizations; feminist/gender practice; gender practitioners; theory

Throughout the world feminists are engaged in a systematic struggle for gender equality. They are guided by their understanding that social life is not simply gendered, but that it is hierarchically gendered, and therefore must be deconstructed. Practice is that understanding put into systematic action. In this volume on Gender and Practice: Knowledge, Policy, Organizations, authors in Brazil, Canada, Cameroon, France, Mexico, Nigeria, Uganda, Vietnam, and the United States talk about their myriad practices. For example, Caroline (Carly) Manion, an education consultant, discusses the intersections and implications of gender, race, and class in her field, and Lúa Xuân Đoàn examines the impact of tourism on the lives of women in Vietnam, while Susan Hagood Lee considers

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“Opportunities for Feminist Social Change at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women” (CSW) session.

This volume is a companion to *Advances in Gender Research (AGR) 27, Gender and Practice: Insights from the Field*, and references to it will be made. The table of contents to *AGR 27* appears in the appendix to this introduction. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 on the attainment of gender equality by 2030, is touched on by chapters in both volumes. While the three themes identified in *AGR 28* are different from the three in *AGR 27*, the two volumes complement each other. Training, a theme in *AGR 27*, for example, is also discussed in the chapter by Mangheni and her colleagues, and in *AGR 27*, Barbara Kirsh’s chapter on being a feminist applied sociologist in a nonprofit testing and research organization, fits in well with the chapters in the current volume on organizations.

Preparing these two companion volumes has been a challenging and enlightening experience. Among the co-editors, Vasilikie Demos and Marcia Texler Segal are primarily academicians with a modest amount of experience in practice work, while Kristy Kelly effectively divides her time at the university and in the field. Our contributors include some primarily based in the academy, but most spend their time and gain their insights as practitioners. Working with some involved virtual travel across continents, time zones, and language barriers. Finding the right balance between scholarly and experiential presentation required communication, negotiation and compromise. For some, though they had plenty of experience writing technical reports, their inclusion in these volumes represents their first academic publication.

The themes of knowledge, policy, and organizations each relate to one another and to practice. As indicated above, knowledge in the practice of gender means an understanding of gender and its place in society. Theory is knowledge that guides action. Theory is antecedent to action, but can come out of action as it is reflected upon to further inform practice, or to revolutionize it resulting in praxis. The joining of theory to action is never as anticipated in that practice must accommodate existential realities. Further, at the base of contemporary gender knowledge is the idea that gender equality is an intersectional phenomenon, and that true liberation takes place by eliminating all systems of oppression (hooks, 1984) including class, sexual orientation, and disability.

Gender policy is ubiquitous, often assumed, and many times unwritten. It is generated by all societal institutions including marriage and the family and the economy through various governmental and non-governmental vehicles. Gender knowledge, scientifically based or not, informs policy, and policy structures practice which can then result in the production of more theoretical knowledge. Thus, as noted by Lihua Wang (2012) the neoliberalist idea that poor rural Chinese women could be emancipated by participating in the market economy in part informed the Happiness Project which involved extending micro-credit to them for the purpose of going into small business, typically animal husbandry or vegetable production. Wang notes that far from liberating women, the project, launched on a foundation of patriarchy, meant that women were lent a



double-shift: in addition to their work as “virtuous wives” and “good mothers,” they were expected to provide for their families through their businesses. Wang observed what had been accomplished through the project was a feminization of the family. Critical of this “woman only” approach to development, Wang urges a re-examination of the prevailing feminist research. Failure to anticipate the impact of projects meant to empower women in their use of time and other responsibilities is addressed in this volume by both Alloatti and Thierry.

Organizations, those complex sets of interrelationships rationally designed to accomplish a specific purpose, are the means by which feminist practices can be sustained over time. Greater than the individual, they can outlive the individual. More powerful than the individual, they can provide backing, both financial and in terms of reputation, for individual as well as mass action. Feminist organizations – that is, organizations that strive to eliminate gender inequality – represent applied gender knowledge. They have their own gender policies for themselves, but they are also active in constructing gender policy outside of themselves through such vehicles as rallies, protests, and lobbying.

As indicated above, the chapters in this volume are organized according to three major themes. In this introduction, each of the themes is further discussed in terms of its relevance to the chapters associated with it. In addition, chapter summaries are provided along with their respective themes, and as appropriate connections among them and to the chapters in the previous volume are drawn.

## **GENDER AND PRACTICE: THE PLACE OF KNOWLEDGE**

Regarding gender knowledge, Rita Nketiah, the Knowledge Management Specialist at the African Women’s Development Fund, has observed (2019):

While there is an old adage that “knowledge is power”, insofar as knowledge arms you with the capacity to make better, more informed choices in the world, power also determines who and what can be known and who is allowed to be a “knower”; in this way, power is knowledge. Much of the work of feminist intellectuals, then, has been to disrupt all the ways in which institutionalized patriarchy has denied, invisibilized and exploited the very necessary and long-standing intellectual work of women and minoritized communities.

Among the goals of this volume is the exploration of the sources of gender-related knowledge, how it is produced, acquired, transmitted, and how it can be used to promote gender equity and equality. The chapters in this first section explore where and how gender knowledge becomes institutionalized. They discuss the spaces where missing gender-related knowledge and practice can be created. They offer an intersectional look at the producers and transmitters of knowledge and the gendered hierarchal structures of organizations that sponsor work in the field. Authors show how practitioners can draw gendered knowledge from project participants and also how they may influence it or miss opportunities to do so by failing to model gender equity in their own organizations and teams. Identifying gaps in data and methods, they show how decisions are made about what knowledge is required and how it is organized. They also point out how crucial gender knowledge can be ignored in the pursuit of other goals or

lost by focusing narrowly on a predetermined range of outcomes. Finally, they point to the need to infuse gender-based knowledge within change agencies. The chapter by Mangheni and her associates in the next section of this volume as well as chapters in the companion volume by Ramona Ridolfi and her associates and by Peggy Spitzer Christoff and Jamie M. Sommer illustrate how to train project staff to recognize and collect gender knowledge, and they supply the kinds of questions that should be asked in order to build a gender knowledge base.

In “Exploring Spaces, Limits, and Future Possibilities for Feminist Perspectives on Knowledge Management in International Development and Beyond,” Åsa Corneliusson demonstrates how gender practitioners can begin to add gender to the traditionally male- and technology-dominated field of knowledge management (KM). Working with a team from one UN agency, she co-organized a Gender Café or interactive webinar with the Society for Gender Practitioners (SGP) to assist the agency in including gender-based knowledge in its required KM plan.

Promoted beyond the agency and SGP and attesting to the interest in the topic, the event drew over 500 registrants with a large number actively engaged verbally or through on-line chat in four breakout rooms. Using responses from participants, Corneliusson demonstrates how ideas traveled in the temporary space created by the Gender Café. Her chapter defines and discusses KM, the relationship of knowledge to practice and policy and the need for gendering them. Emphasizing her conception of gender as performative, reiterative, intersectional, and context-dependent, she explores the politics of using a gender versus feminist approach to social problems and considers how gender practitioners working within institutional contexts negotiate the political realities they face.

The chapter relates to the others in the section by exploring the relationship between knowledge and practice. The participants in the Gender Café may have included the kind of consultants surveyed and interviewed by Manion. Alloatti’s findings, and also those of Thierry in the next section, demonstrate the sorts of problems that occur in places where knowledge production has not traditionally been gendered. The chapter contributes to those on policy with a discussion of the reciprocal relationship between the formulation of a problem and the policy intended to address it; gender should be included in both. There is a direct link between this chapter and the one by Hartley and her associates in the organization section as SGP is the organization they created. More broadly, Corneliusson’s chapter relates to the organizational ones in that they deal with places where the application of gender-based knowledge and the success of its traveling throughout is critical to the achievement of objectives and goals.

Caroline (Carly) Manion’s chapter “Exploring the Intersections and Implications of Gender, Race, and Class in Educational Consulting” introduces the under-researched, yet growing field of education consulting. Through a mixed-methods study, she examines how education consultants understand their work – both through privilege and disadvantage – with respect to who they are, where they are located, what they do, with whom they work, and what their experiences reveal about the working conditions and outcomes associated with

contract work. The central argument made, based on the findings from an online survey and interviews with consultants, is that identity and social positioning are significant factors shaping who secures contracts and the nature and value of such experiences for individuals' personal and professional development, as well as their professional contributions and impact overall. Manion's chapter shows that identity and social position are believed to be influential as enabling and constraining factors on education consultants' work experiences. The vast majority of participants expressed such beliefs, regardless of who or where they were located. While geographic location emerged as pivotal in shaping who had access to consulting opportunities, intersections with socioeconomic status, class, ethnicity, and age were thought by participants to either further marginalize them or enhance their consulting opportunities and experiences.

Manion's chapter contributes to understandings of how knowledge about gender, along with race, class, global location, and age shape how education consultants perceive their ability to find work and have their work valued by clients. Her chapter reveals the world of consulting – which one could argue is a knowledge production field – is itself shaped in ways that view knowledge from the Global North as “international” despite those from the Global South having greater ties and experience in contexts similar to those in which their knowledge as consultants is deployed.

In “The Challenge of Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: A Critical Analysis on the Importance of Subjective Measurement and Context,” Magali N. Alloatti focuses on what we know and do not know about women's economic empowerment (WEE), seeing the topic as both a goal of development programs and a field of critical study and knowledge production. The typical assessment of a development project asks only whether the stated measurable goals have been met. This type of analysis may identify technical flaws, but fails to advance knowledge of empowerment as a concept or a process. Alloatti continues with a discussion of empowerment based on the work of Naila Kabeer (1999, 2005, 2016, 2017) and Sarah Mosedale (2005), stressing that empowerment must involve options that are recognized by the members of the target population and that those options have consequences and are embedded in a social context. Context and options may include possible non-economic impacts of economic change, for example, women's loss of flexibility or the ways in which households distribute financial gains. This leads her to emphasize the necessity of gathering situation-specific subjective, that is qualitative, data in order to accurately measure WEE.

Through a detailed examination of three recent reports from the field focusing on how each measures empowerment and discussing the ways in which each takes up the question of measurement, Alloatti supports her contention that despite the more limited generalizability and higher cost of subjective measurement, it is impossible to place WEE in site-specific context and completely evaluate a given project or improve future project design without such data. Her chapter contributes to the advancement of gender-based knowledge by successfully integrating theory, methodology, and practice.

Lilian Nkengla-Asi, O. Deborah Olaosebikan, Vincent Simo Che, Sergine Ngatat, Martine Zandjanakou-Tachin, Rachid Hanna, and P. Lava Kumar,

authors of “Gender Norms and Their Implications for Banana Production and Recovery in West Africa,” conducted sex-disaggregated focus group discussions with 120 farmers and 24 key informants in 6 villages in Nigeria and Cameroon. Their goal was to understand how gender norms and relations might impact the attempt to contain the spread of banana bunchy disease, which threatens to wipe out a valuable local crop that has the potential to become a source of economic development. This chapter demonstrates clearly how critical it is to gather detailed gender-based data. Tables show how gender norms and practices such as division of labor and time allocated to activities differed from village to village and country to country. Context was often a critical factor. For example, in Nigeria public opinion prevents women from preparing land for farming because men who allow their wives to do heavy labor are considered lazy or wicked. Selling of farm produce at markets is basically a women’s activity, but national policies can have an impact as well. In Nigeria men can sell produce at the farm gate, while in Cameroon it can only be sold at markets. Men have far more leisure time in all the villages, but spending it in market squares or bars actually affords them access to information and contacts that women might also find useful. Gender norms impact decision making as when women have uncertain land tenure and decide to plant crops with short growing seasons for fear the right to use a piece of land will be taken away from them with little warning. The multiple authorship of this chapter reflects the complexity of addressing what at first may seem like a technical agricultural problem. A team in several locations with a range of skills including agricultural and gender expertise as well as language fluency is required.

The chapters in this section offer an intersectional look at who the producers and transmitters of knowledge are, highlighting the impact of gender, ethnicity, and age on the selection of educational consultants, including gender experts, and the gendered hierarchal structures of organizations that sponsor work in the field. Authors show how workers can draw gendered knowledge from project participants and also how they may influence it or miss opportunities to do so by failing to model gender equity in their own organizations and teams. Identifying gaps in data and methods, they show how decisions are made about what knowledge is required and organized. They also point out how crucial gender knowledge can be ignored in the pursuit of other goals or lost by focusing narrowly on a predetermined range of outcomes. Finally, they point to the need to institutionalize gender-based knowledge within change agencies. Chapters in the other sections of this volume address policy and organizational issues that may facilitate or impede the success of projects striving for gender equity and equality.

The chapters described here approach gender-based knowledge as both an essential element in change practice and as a field of study. They look critically at the relationships of gender-based knowledge and knowledge-providers to power on multiple levels. From a commitment to equality and equity, they question the sources, uses and institutionalization of such knowledge. They are actually part of a growing global movement stimulated in large part by the desire to implement the SDG #5 on gender equality. Platforms for gender knowledge and practice are beginning to appear on-line. Some, such as the UN’s Convention to Combat Desertification’s Gender Action Plan, address very specific questions,<sup>1</sup> while

others are more global. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development for example, offers a plethora of resources in German and English including their own gender action plan, a pool of multi-lingual gender consultants, a tool kit including definitions and processes for mainstreaming and managing gender in projects, basic gender data from various sectors, and brief descriptions of country- and region-specific projects demonstrating best practices.<sup>2</sup> The European Institute for Gender Equality similarly offers definitions, toolkits, and statistics as well as a discussion hub.<sup>3</sup>

A variety of useful articles and documents are currently accessible on the International Institute for Sustainable Development Gender Knowledge Hub. For example, the article reporting the 2019 signing by 50 nations of a declaration to create gender-responsive standards and technical regulations as a step toward implementation of SDG #5 (Wahlén, 2019) includes the following statement that, if applied in virtually any situation or institution, would address the concerns highlighted by the contributors to this section, and indeed, to this volume.

Signatories therefore express their resolve to work towards gender-inclusive standards in development organizations, gender balance at all levels within wider infrastructure, and enhanced expertise to create and deliver gender inclusivity. Signatories pledge to make standards and standards development gender-responsive by affirming the Declaration, working towards gender balanced/representative and inclusive standards development environments, creating gender-responsive standards, and creating gender-responsive standards bodies. Signatories pledge to proactively implement a gender action plan for their organization and to track progress, collect and share data, success stories and good practices.

## GENDER AND PRACTICE: THE PLACE OF POLICY

The chapters in this section address policy issues on multiple levels. Lúa Xuân Đoàn addresses the impact of national policies on regional development, the environment, the livelihood options of minority communities, and the licensing of guides, which has implications for the security of tourists. Debora Thome and Byron Villacís compare census policies in neighboring countries showing how planning and practice are impacted. Anne-Françoise Thierry addresses policy within agencies that interact on the global scene by funding projects. She suggests that if gender equity is not a policy at every level from the board, to top and middle management, to teams in the field, gender-based data will not be collected and gender-based goals will never be established or properly assessed. Both Corneliusson and Alloatti in the Knowledge section make similar points. Margaret Najjingo Mangheni, Hale Ann Tufan, Brenda Boonabana, Peace Musiimenta, Richard Miiro, and Jemimah Njuki evaluate programs for gender training showing that having a policy to include gender is not enough if the training does not include both gender and agricultural experts learning together; that too is a policy matter.

In her chapter summarized above, Corneliusson draws on the work of Carol Bacchi (see [Bacchi & Eveline, 2010](#) for a summary) to discuss the reciprocal relationship between problem and policy. Bacchi's feminist, post-structural approach is to work backward from the established or proposed policy to ask how the problem it addresses is constituted. What are the assumptions behind a policy to

increase tourism in ethnic minority communities (Đoàn) or behind the mandate for training (Mangheni et al.) or to support women's involvement in activities traditionally engaged in by men (Thierry) or to select gender-related questions for a national census (Thome & Villacís)? How are the targets represented? What are the outcomes and for whom? What has been omitted or ignored? Could the problem be thought of and the policy formulated in a different way? Are there biases implicit in the policy? The observations of the contributors here achieve some of the benefits of this approach in retrospect showing how minority people have been exoticized or lost means of livelihood, how not all gender training protocols are equally effective, how differences in the resources available to women with different family structures have been ignored or how census questions may reflect symbolic power rather than national priorities. However, practitioners formulating or critiquing policy proposals might do well to approach them in this manner.

In "Monitoring Gender Data and Evaluating Differential Effects to Reduce Inequality," Anne-Françoise Thierry uses her own field experience and information as well as data available in reports from Projeto de Apoio à Pequena Agricultura Comercial in Sao Tome e Principe, to interrogate every phase of a rural development project from design to conclusion. In so doing she demonstrates the need for and importance of gender-disaggregated data, and she points to the importance of paying attention to gender at each phase of a project in order to ensure women's inclusion and address gender inequalities. She is interested in identifying the background conditions a project should address, the planning and operationalization of a gender strategy within the broader project, and the monitoring and evaluation of the results. For the project at hand, increasing women's involvement and benefits from cooperatives dealing with four export crops: pepper, coffee, cocoa, and organic cocoa, initial considerations include the facts that Sao Tome e Principe is among the very poorest nations, that there are great gender disparities in assets and education, and that a significant proportion of households are characterized by *de facto* unions and composed of women and children. She observes that a gender-sensitive value chain analysis, which was not performed, would have yielded more specific data to be used in planning. Also missing according to Thierry were an explicit gender strategy and the identification of an individual with responsibility to focus on gender and equality. She observed that in monitoring and evaluation, the category "women" was undifferentiated and the issue of inequality largely unaddressed. Regarding policy recommendations that can be applied to any project and that would have been beneficial here, she notes the need for greater expertise in gender and in qualitative and quantitative data analysis; more gender balance on project teams and in agency staff, including in leadership positions; greater involvement of institutional actors whose ownership would contribute to sustainability; and greater attention to the gendered differential effects that specific social actions may have. This chapter reaches similar conclusions with others that argue for more detailed gender data at all stages putting most emphasis on the generation and analysis of data rather than on the specific questions to ask.

Margaret Najjingo Mangheni, Hale Ann Tufan, Brenda Boonabana, Peace Musimenta, Richard Miiro, and Jemimah Njuki find that the most effective

gender training program for non-gender agricultural researchers is one that is transformational both for the researcher and for the research itself. In “Building Gender Research Capacity for Non-specialists: Lessons and Best Practices from Gender Short Courses for Agricultural Researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa,” Mangheni et al. used a scoping method to identify four gender training programs in East Africa. They found that the programs were successful in raising awareness of the place of gender in agricultural research and development and in conveying the difference between the concept of “sex” and that of “gender,” but that the programs were less effective in facilitating a deeper understanding of gender as gender inequality as well as in providing the “space” for self-reflection and transformation that could bring about that understanding. In their analysis of a fifth program, Gender Responsive Researchers Equipped for Agricultural Transformation, in which Mangheni et al., themselves, are engaged, they showed how training inter-disciplinary teams of social scientists and bio-physical scientists together meant the development of mutual respect for the fields of each and for one another as well as a broader capacity for solving actual problems; a phased delivery of learning with time in the classroom and in the field allowed trainees to reflect and question their own positionality and test some of the ideas they learned in class; mentoring provided trainees with support as they conducted research. Informed by the feminist theory they learned in the classroom, the trainees were able to directly discuss gender inequality in agriculture research.

A major social policy implication of Mangheni and her colleagues’ work is that training of agricultural researchers must go beyond the surface of gaining gender awareness and understanding of basic terms. In order for real changes to occur in the field, agricultural researchers must develop a deeper understanding of gender as gender inequality. Such an understanding occurs only with enough time to reflect and to apply ideas. It comes with a transformation in the way in which agricultural research is conducted, and it comes in working together across disciplinary lines.

In “Gender Politics in Latin American Censuses: The Case of Brazil and Ecuador,” Debora Thome and Byron Villacís examine the last century of the Brazilian and Ecuadorian censuses to better understand the process of including or rejecting questions related to gender. They specifically consider what arguments are used in the process of selecting questions. Their chapter reveals how inclusion or exclusion of questions that identify (implicitly or explicitly) the gender conditions of the population depend on historical, economic, political, and social contexts. They argue that the inclusion of the topic does not respond to convergence mechanisms embedded in the economic or political developments in the region, which are predictable or dependent of a hypothetical historical unidirectionality. In other words, there is not a single path or convergence of development associated with the modernization of statistical systems. Moreover, they do not depend on unique forces such as the economic or political factors exclusively. Each country has its conditions and contexts that build the power to measure gender according to specific contingencies. In this sense, the social forces of each moment, geography, institutional context, or condition of social participation,

are the aspects that allow advances or setbacks concerning the production of census statistics with a gender perspective.

Their chapter contributes understandings to how gender shapes what policies are developed and how they are interpreted in the context of census-taking and interpreting. Without gender as an explicit indicator for census taking, the gender conditions of the population remain invisible. Their chapter also reveals that context matters in how to better organize for taking gender into consideration, and in how data are interpreted and reported.

In "A Gender Analysis of Tourism's Impact on the Livelihoods of H'mong and Red D'ao Women in Vietnam," Lúa Xuân Đoàn assesses the impact of policies related to the use of tourism as a development strategy from the perspective of ethnic minority women in Lao Cai Province, Vietnam. Initially these women were poised to take advantage of the interest in trekking and eco-tourism given their knowledge of the area, fluency in English and skill at the traditional clothing embroidery that was in demand by foreign visitors. As alternative forms of livelihood became more precarious, some women became the principle earners of their households through these skills. When the government took more control of the tourism industry, the H'mong and Red D'ao people and their cultural practices were exoticized to encourage tourism. At the same time the government began to consider the interests of the majority Kinh people in the area and the needs of internal as well as international tourists leading to greater land use for hotels for luxury tourism and accessibility via better roads. These development activities reduced the land available for rice growing and for trekking and are seen by some as detrimental to the environment. New regulations required guides to pass licensing exams in written Vietnamese and prevented women from selling embroidery on the streets. Đoàn describes initiatives taken by minority women including the establishment of the cooperative Sapa Sisters Trekking Adventures and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Sapa O'Chau to provide training and income for tour guides and craftswomen. Her interviewees share their experiences with these organizations. She also describes some associations and businesses initiated by local members of the majority group and new income-producing activities such as home stays and herbals baths that seek to expand options for local women. She finds that despite the personally disempowering consequences and threats to the environment of development tourism, the women she interviewed believe it can bring economic advantages. The chapter includes several photos by the author.

The relationship between practice and policy is a complex one. In the beginning section of this volume authors discuss gender-related knowledge showing that its presence or absence has far-reaching policy implications. In the final section authors discuss the building of organizations that can influence institutional policies at all levels by pointing to needs and gaps and advocating for change. The need to develop gender policy and to infuse gender knowledge, gender training and gender practice is becoming more widely recognized by governments and NGOs worldwide. Many relevant policies can be found online. Some of the contributors to this volume are based at Makerere University in Uganda, and there is a chapter about pedagogy there in the preceding volume. The gender



policy of Uganda can be found online.<sup>4</sup> Many chapters refer to the UN SDGs and policies for several UN agencies are available online. Policies for agencies as diverse as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies,<sup>5</sup> Watershed Support Services and Activities Network,<sup>6</sup> the African Development Bank,<sup>7</sup> ActionAid UK,<sup>8</sup> and BRAC, an NGO in Bangladesh<sup>9</sup> are easily accessible. NAMATI, an organization that supports grassroots legal empowerment includes in its library of online documents a sample organizational gender policy developed by S M Sehgal Foundation, an Indian NGO focused on rural development.<sup>10</sup>

The available policy documents are as diverse as their sources. The sample on the NAMATI site, for example, is designed for grassroots organizations and is brief and basic. Some documents are more aspirational than implementable and some are more available in print and online than on the ground. An issue that many of our contributors address is the failure to use the experiences of practitioners to design, evaluate, and revise strategies for implementation. Another issue our contributors highlight is the failure of organizations and institutions to model their own gender policies and goals by incorporating gender equity at all levels from boardrooms and administrative offices to field teams, classrooms, and training venues. Practitioners also lament lack of support for gender policies when gender is not fully incorporated into project goals and data gathering, gender experts are marginalized within project teams and no one is assigned to monitor gender-related concerns.

## **GENDER AND PRACTICE: THE PLACE OF ORGANIZATIONS**

The three chapters which make up the organizations section of this volume discuss feminist action as it is practiced through the vehicle of an organization, that is, through the coordinated action of a collection of people directed toward the goal of gender equality.

Anne Scheer and Vidhya Prakash's chapter, "Advancing Women's Rights from Within: The Story of the Alliance for Women in Medicine and Science," is based on interviews with three key leaders of the organization. Scheer and Prakash note the story of the alliance began in 2015 when one woman related to her mentor, Prakash, her concern over how to manage being a new mother while a resident at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. Admitting that she, too, had an issue with work-life imbalance, Prakash, along with Susan Hingle, another member of the medical school faculty and associate dean, started an informal group: Women in Medicine (WIM). WIM was meant to provide a safe space for women residents and faculty to talk about their struggles. The group produced a newsletter, and initially met in the home of Prakash.

WIM eventually became the Alliance for Women in Medicine and Science (AWIMS) and a part of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at SIU. It became more formalized, complete with an executive committee, an advisory board, and a director. Scheer and Prakash attributed the success of AWIMS to

the gender-conscious climate of the broader society as well as the support from the dean of the medical school. They show that the concerns and issues of women residents, doctors, and scientists are similar to those of other women. These include salary equity, promotion challenges, and work–family balance. They also show that addressing these issues cannot be successfully accomplished on an individual level, but rather, are made possible by individuals organizing. Similar to Kris De Welde, Marjukka Ollilainen and Catherine Richards Solomon’s chapter in AGR 27, they show how gender equality in the academy does not occur overnight, but through the support of those in a position to make critical decisions.

In their chapter, “Creating a Global Feminist Organization: Applying Theory to Practice,” Angela Hartley, Nicole Figot, Leah Goldmann, Christina Gordon, Kristy Kelly, Karine Lepillez, and Kenneth Boÿenah Nimley speak as gender professionals who joined together to create the Society of Gender Professionals (SGP). Hartley et al., whose chapter is also a product of a collectivist writing endeavor, discuss the obstacles they encountered and the struggles they experienced in establishing the organization. In their attempt to follow the feminist principle of a non-hierarchical structure, the authors also known as the “start-up team” found opposition in the US government’s legal requirement for a non-profit that it have officers. Complying with this requirement on paper, but unofficially maintaining that officers were equal to non-officers, the start-up team noted that, contrary to what they intended, members inserted hierarchy and directed more of their communication to official “officers” than to non-officers. Their attempt, too, of bringing more language diversity into the organization was challenged as the amount of document translation needed was overwhelming. In addition, the unreliability of technology presented an obstacle to full participation in SGP from the Global South.

What Hartley et al. are attempting to do, mainly through their non-paid work, is to bring a feminist sensibility to the world—an awareness of gender differences and an understanding of gender inequality and its intersections as wrong, as well as the idea that oppression in terms of gender or other dimensions of inequality has no place in the world. Reflection is a major part of the team’s modus operandi. It is aware of its privileged identity as people of the Global North and English speaking, and is concerned that in “starting-up” SGP, the team not remain in leadership of it. While Hartley et al. reveal the difficulties of changing the world, they end their chapter with a continued commitment to feminist principles and the sense of “lessons learned.” Their chapter points to feminism not as an accomplishment, but as a process needing continued attention. The chapter by Scheer and Prakash and that by Hartley et al. show the development of a feminist organization from its beginning. A major difference between the two organizations is that while both have feminist purposes, the authors/founders of SGP are more reflective in creating an overtly feminist organization that is collectivistic in structure.

Susan Hagood Lee uses her experience as a feminist practitioner as well as her understanding of the United Nations (UN) literature to discuss “Opportunities for Feminist Social Change at the United Nations Commission on the Status of

Women.” Her focus is on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) session, held at the UN each year in March. She notes that each session has a theme and that sessions begin with the Zero Draft of the Agreed Conclusions, the document that will, once it is added to and deleted from, establish global norms for girls and women on the theme. In addition to the nation-state representatives who have a voice in the high-level meetings, also representing girls and women are the advocates from the numerous NGOs from around the world. Lee notes that these individuals meet with the official or nation-state representatives (governmental missions) at the high-level meetings; sit in on these meetings; add their voices at side-events; and sponsor and participate in parallel events, meetings held off UN premises. More informally, these individuals may be able to convey their message through chance conversations while waiting in a line to register for the session, for an event, etc.

Lee conveys the complexity of CSW and the importance of an understanding of this complexity before attending its annual session. Her practice is as a feminist activist, one who volunteers to better the life for women and girls, as opposed to Barbara Kirsh in AGR 27, who as an employee, worked *within* the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to further feminist change, and to Prakash and her colleagues, who worked to institutionalize AWIMS. Similar to Kirsh who details how she brought about changes in the ETS, Lee describes ways in which NGO representatives to the CSW session can influence the content of the Agreed Conclusions, statements that establish global gender norms. Both deal with macro-level matters: Kirsh shows her concern that standardized tests be fair by gender, race, disability status and other dimensions of inequality while Lee provides a template for feminist action at the CSW.

The establishment of feminist organizations is a major way in which feminism can be practiced and sustained. The Alliance for Women in Medicine and Science (AWIMS), the Society of Gender Professionals (SGP), and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) each addresses SDG 5 on gender equality. The first two of these were founded since 2015, and the third, CSW, has been in existence since 1946, the year the United Nations was born. Of the three organizations only SGP claims an explicit feminist identity. Both AWIMS and CSW can be described as having a feminist *approach* to organizational structure in line with Haijing Dai’s (2014) observation of women-led non-governmental elder homes in China.

Each of the organizations defines gender inequality as a structural issue. It is a long-established truism that woman’s traditional role of mother has constrained her ability to work outside the home, thereby putting her in an unequal relationship with men. In their study of Australian women in upper management, Jennifer Rindfleish and Alison Sheridan (2003) found that the mother/executive role was a major barrier to movement into senior management positions. Similarly, Scheer and Prakash identify this issue as the impetus for the establishment of AWIMS, noting that the structural problem of managing child care calls for a structural solution.

Lee identifies two structural measures taken toward women’s equality in the context of the United Nations at the time of its birth. Members of the Inter-American Commission on Women, an organization already in existence when the

United Nations was founded, and their allies succeeded in having language recognizing women and men as equals in the preamble of the UN constitution, and they succeeded in establishing CSW as an independent entity within the United Nations. A third structural measure taken by CSW of on-going global proportions is the outcome document produced at the end of the CSW yearly session. This document, the Agreed Conclusions, is the consensus reached by nation-state officials on matters discussed throughout the session. Its structural significance lies in the fact that the document establishes global norms in support of gender equality.

Not all feminist organizations develop in the same manner. For example, [Thomas \(1999\)](#) observes that feminist women's health centers that began as collectivities grew and became professionalized and bureaucratized. In time they fell into three types of organizations: feminist bureaucracies in which power rested with an individual or a board; participatory bureaucracies in which staff had some input into decisions; and collectivist democracies in which there was a minimal division of labor and important decisions were made by the whole. Scheer and Prakash described AWIMS' development into a formal organization with Prakash as the director, other initial members of the group as the executive committee, and leaders in the School of Medicine making up an advisory board, thus indicating its evolution into a feminist bureaucracy. Two ways in which SGP's commitment to its collectivist orientation has been challenged are through its growth to a membership of just over 1,500 people in two years and by the US federal government's requirement that it assume offices. Its structure is approximating that of a participatory bureaucracy.

Lee notes that size has also become an issue for CSW, a bureaucratized organization. The CSW session that is held every year for two weeks in March has been growing in participation. The increase in NGO representatives globally who attend has meant that more voices can be heard on matters of gender, but at the same time, it is difficult to find places for all the NGO representatives to meet. In addition, high-level meetings held during the session that were once opened to NGO representatives, are no longer, indicating a declining influence of NGOs.

Related to issues of structure and size is that of the distribution of power. To adequately address challenges to feminist organizational structure globally, as indicated above, the connection between power and knowledge must be acknowledged, particularly as gender intersects with diverse inequalities ([Grosser & Moon, 2019](#)). For SGP the equal distribution of power is of major concern as are the related issues of privilege and intersectionality. Conscious of its location in the Global North, the start-up team is concerned that it does not dominate the organization. It sees the organization as listening to voices from across the globe and hearing from people of diverse statuses and locales, but faces the challenges of language, technology, and geography.

Microaggressions are a manifestation of an unequal distribution of power. Carly Manion whose chapter is discussed above noted that education consultants are judged not by their expertise, but according to their identities including their geographical location, with people from the Global South judged less favorably than those from the Global North. As AWIMS has evolved it has become aware

of gender inequality as intersectional, and has been particularly concerned with the negative treatment Muslim doctors sometimes receive from patients.

Change toward gender equality occurs incrementally, rather than all at once. At least in STEM fields, it is the linear addition of women faculty that makes the difference in department climate, not a critical mass of women (Hillard, Schneider, Jackson, & LaHuis, 2014). The establishment of AWINS is another way in which change is promoted in a STEM field. In its beginning AWINS met outside the university in the home of Prakash, but in time, it became anchored in the School of Medicine where it went on to expand and appeal to faculty and staff throughout the university, thereby making gender inequality visible university wide. In addition to life–work balance, mentoring and gender inequality in promotions became a focus of the organization. AWINS is clearly working toward bringing gender equality to SIU, at the least. Yet, AWINS faces some challenges. The future of additional funding for the many functions of the organization is unclear. The organization has been advised by similar organizations elsewhere that it must have “buy-in” from men as it is men who are often in key positions to support the organization’s programs; at the same time, it has not been able to attract many men to it.

Despite the challenges it faces, SGP’s rapid growth speaks to the need gender professionals round the globe have for support. Its concern that less privileged individuals not be left behind speaks to its commitment that gender inequality, as it is intersectionally defined, be eliminated.

CSW’s historical birth in the first half of the twentieth century means that this United Nations organization has seen many changes. Its age, however, does not mean its irrelevancy. Despite challenges it faces, it is the premier gender norm-setting source globally. Whether or not individual nation states comply with the outcome document, the Agreed Conclusions, of CSW sessions, the world is aware of their state of compliance and conveys its approval or disapproval.

A conclusion we draw from these chapters is that gender praxis is difficult and gender practitioners work hard. Another is that there is still much work to be done in infusing and diffusing gender in the places where practice is planned and policy proposed – work that must precede, accompany, and follow gender praxis in the field.

## NOTES

1. See: <https://knowledge.unccd.int/topics/gender>.
2. See: <https://www.genderingermandevelopment.net/gap-ii2.html>.
3. See: <https://eige.europa.eu/>.
4. See: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/44607199/Uganda-Gender-Policy-1>.
5. See: <file:///C:/Users/testpc/Documents/AGR%2028/gender-policy-red%20c.pdf>.
6. See: [wassan.org/about\\_wassan/gender\\_policy.htm](http://wassan.org/about_wassan/gender_policy.htm).
7. See: <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Policy-Documents/10000003-EN-THE-GENDER-POLICY.PDF>.
8. See: [https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc\\_lib/119\\_1\\_gender\\_policy.pdf](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc_lib/119_1_gender_policy.pdf).
9. See: [http://www.brac.net/sites/default/files/Gender%20Policy\(English\).pdf](http://www.brac.net/sites/default/files/Gender%20Policy(English).pdf).
10. See: <https://namati.org/resources/sample-organizational-gender-policy>.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Gender and Practice: Introduction to Insights from the Field**

Marcia Texler Segal, Kristy Kelly and Vasilikie Demos

#### **PART I EDUCATION**

##### **Chapter 1 Feminist Leadership in the Academy: Exploring Everyday Praxis**

Kris De Welde, Marjukka Ollilainen and Catherine Richards Solomon

##### **Chapter 2 Teaching and Learning Gender and Its Practices in the School of Education, Makerere University, Uganda**

Alice Merab Kagoda

##### **Chapter 3 Gender Audit as Research Method for Organizational Learning and Change in Higher Education**

A. S. Cohen Miller and Jenifer L. Lewis

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PART I

KNOWLEDGE

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# CHAPTER 1

## EXPLORING THE SPACES, LIMITS, AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND

Åsa Corneliussen

### ABSTRACT

*Departing from an online interactive Gender Café on the topic of Knowledge Management (KM), jointly hosted by a UN agency and the Society of Gender Professionals, this chapter seeks to provide gender practitioners and others with practical examples of how to “gender” KM in international development. Through analyzing the travel of feminist ideas into the field of KM with inspiration from Barbara Czarniawska’s and Bernard Joerge’s (1996) theory of the travel of ideas, the chapter explores the spaces, limits, and future possibilities for the inclusion of feminist perspectives. The ideas and practical examples of how to do so provided in this chapter originated during the café, by the participants and panellists. The online Gender Café temporarily created a space for feminist perspectives. The data demonstrate how feminist perspectives were translated into issues of inclusion, the body, listening methodologies, practicing reflection, and the importance to one’s work of scrutinizing underlying values. However, for the feminist perspective to be given continuous space and material sustainability developing into an acknowledged part of KM, further actions*

*are needed. The chapter also reflects on future assemblies of gender practitioners, gender scholars and activists, recognizing the struggles often faced by them. The chapter discusses strategies of how a collective organizing of “outside–inside” gender practitioners might push the internal work of implementing feminist perspectives forward.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge Management; international development; feminist theory; gender practitioners; translation; monitoring and evaluation

In June 2018, I had the opportunity to conduct a fellowship with a UN agency at the headquarters in New York City. At the time, the team had the privilege to join were in the process of writing a global Knowledge Management (KM) strategy. The process was startled by the report of the 2016 Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System’s recognition of knowledge as a comparative advantage and valuable and strategic core asset for UN agencies, urging the agencies to develop KM guidelines and strategies. Interestingly, knowledge is also specifically referred to as what makes co-operation between the UN member states possible in the twentieth century.

The United Nations System is the generator and catalyst of a special kind of knowledge – one that is based on values. It is knowledge that makes cooperation possible among Member States—irrespective of their size and location—in so many areas of high complexity and diversity. Knowledge is acquired from lessons learned together with new ideas and concepts. (Dumitriu, 2016, p. 3)

As our work moved forward, the team came to reflect on the importance of feminist perspectives on KM and how this could possibly be integrated into the forthcoming strategy, and KM in international development more broadly. Earlier research has shown that there could be several entry points for gender and feminist perspectives to KM as neither institutions, organizations, nor knowledge are gender or power neutral (Acker, 1990; Narayanaswamy, 2016). To explore these feminist perspectives, the UN team partnered with the Society of Gender Professionals (SGP) and organized an interactive Gender Café (online webinar). This chapter demonstrates the travel of knowledge and illustrates what a gender/feminist perspective to KM could look like in practice, bringing back an internal perspective on the KM practices in the UN system itself.

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The literature in the field of KM reflects a dichotomy between information processing and information technology (IT) and a community network approach (J. E. Ferguson, Mchombu, & Cummings, 2008). This division is evident in the definition of KM provided by Mats Alvesson and Dan Kärreman (2001).

Division of interest in the field of knowledge management in the exploitation of knowledge through technical means versus the exploration of knowledge, which heavily focuses on people and interactions (in which case IT may, or may not, be enabling). (p. 1004)

This might be a reflection of the fact that KM originated within the business sector (J. E. [Ferguson et al., 2008](#)). However, there are many other definitions of KM. [Julie E. Ferguson \(2008\)](#) and her co-authors share their view:

knowledge management should be considered as relating primarily to the social processes and practices of knowledge creation, acquisition, capture, sharing and use of knowledge, skills and expertise, and not to the technological component of this which needs to support the social processes and practices. (p. 8)

This definition sheds light on social processes and practices and the importance of incorporating knowledge of these in one's KM work and practice. Julie E. Ferguson, Kingo Mchombu, and Sarah Cummings critique the extensive focus of knowledge strategies on methodologies, good practices and tools. Instead they stress the importance of investigating organizational processes from a knowledge perspective, identifying how the knowledge on an individual level can be harnessed also at an organizational level. For KM to be successful, knowledge strategies need to be intimately entangled with organizational goals and objectives (see also [Hagmann & Gillman, 2017](#)). Other crucial factors for a successful establishment of KM are believed to be a nurturing culture and the establishment of learning by doing (Bhatt, 2001).

## **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Knowledge is recognized as an essential asset and tool for improving the overall performance by the majority of development organizations, including the United Nations system ([Glovinsky, 2017](#)). Steve Glovinsky stresses that most UN agencies describe themselves as knowledge units. However, few successful examples of effective KM initiatives within the UN are available leaving KM to still be considered a challenge. Glovinsky argues that this could perhaps be because of the transformations that a successful KM initiative requires. In the following quote [Glovinsky \(2017\)](#) shares his view of the relation between KM and the UN development system. "The world badly needs the UN development system to be the best that it can be. Transforming it through KM could make that happen" (p. 4).

Interestingly, in the development context KM is often translated into IT projects or information management ([Hagmann & Gillman, 2017](#)). Jürgen Hagmann and Helen Gillman stress that the development sector today has seen an increasing demand for better delivery results including the use of measurable data, which to some extent also meant a stronger focus on knowledge. This development has led to a more collective focus on knowledge and to the growth of networks and partnerships. Even though KM is often mainstreamed in many organizations there is a lack of recognition of the need for KM. In line with Glovinsky's observation of the lack of transformations required, [Hagmann and Gillman \(2017\)](#) stress:

The complexity and systemic nature of KM require behaviour change among individuals, and broader changes in organizational strategies and processes, making it too complicated for many,

and downright threatening for others. KM cannot be separated from organizational change and development, and the “trick” is to get the mandate to make the changes necessary to be a learning organization. (p. 5)

As the quote above demonstrates, KM implicates an internal focus on organizational structures, processes and behaviors entangled with broader organizational changes. This chapter is situated in international development, which means that it is somewhat difficult to draw strict boundaries between internal and external knowledge flows. In *Management of knowledge for development: meta-review and scoping study*, J. E. Ferguson et al. (2008) stress the importance of knowledge to development work, arguing that the development organizations do not yet appreciate the potential and strategic importance of knowledge. Their working paper is dated but is supported by more recent research analyzing the role of knowledge in the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Agenda 2030 has been celebrated and embraced for its transformational visions and strategy, however, criticism has also been directed toward it. Some of the criticism brought forward by scholars has been directed toward the Agenda’s marginal attention to knowledge, knowledge societies and local knowledges. The dominant discourse on knowledge societies, identified as present at the level of implementation of the goals, is a “techno-scientific-economic discourse” (Cummings, Regeer, de Haan, Zweekhorst, & Bunders, 2017, p. 735). This is important as it steers how knowledge is thought to be a part of international collaboration and its role in reaching the SDGs. Sarah Cummings and her co-authors stress that the SDGs reflect the broader battleground that currently surrounds knowledge societies and knowledge. They stress that the efforts taken to achieve the agenda might be unsuccessful unless the goals and implementation work are able to harness the “transformational power of knowledge” (p. 741).

## PROBLEMATIZING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The relationship between knowledge and development has been problematized by many. Not only is knowledge intimately entangled with power (Foucault, 1977), knowledge has also constructed immensely powerful categories and discourses about development and the Global South. Powerful interests have determined rightful ways of knowing (see Escobar, 1995) establishing a hierarchy in whose knowledge is acknowledged as such (Narayanaswamy, 2019). This is important for this chapter as KM in itself may be a site of exclusion of different ways of knowing or different ways of dealing with knowledge, thus not named KM.

In 1998, the World Bank released a World Development Report, *Knowledge for Development*, stressing that one of the key barriers to development in the Global South was access to information and knowledge. This initiated a renewed focus on the role of knowledge in aid and development at the time. The World Bank received extensive criticism for promoting a knowledge paradigm as a technical and market-driven approach where knowledge was to be transferred from the Global North to the Global South, understood as *less developed*

(Narayanaswamy, 2013). However, the idea around knowledge transfers, put forward by the World Bank, was absorbed by development practice, where, as Narayanaswamy notes, the need for knowledge remains an unquestioned assumption within international development. Whether there is a need for the disseminated knowledge provided by the development institutions is thus not investigated. The evaluation practices that are actually in place are more likely to simply measure that the knowledge is made available, rather than engaging with the demand or evaluating whether the provided knowledge made any difference.

In Narayanaswamy's opinion, the values underpinning the report from 1998 and knowledge for development initiatives such as K4Dev tend to frame global inequality as a problem of unequal access to knowledge. Large development initiatives, non-governmental organizations and organizations focus on disseminating knowledge to the Global South upholding the belief that if knowledge is only available individuals will make informed choices out of poverty and marginalization. This approach does not only put responsibility on the individual but also treats information as an isolated entity and with no recognition of "embedded inequalities in both existing market structures and in the mainstream knowledge infrastructure, increasing the access to, and the volume of, information produced is not inherently valuable" (p. 1075).

Problematic aspects of knowledge for development are also highlighted by John Briggs and Joanne Sharp (2005) who argue that the failure of top-down development has led to an increased interest in indigenous knowledges. Taking a postcolonial perspective, Briggs and Sharp offer a critical reading of the new-found interest in the inclusion of indigenous and/or local knowledge, arguing that development actors and institutions fail to engage with alternative perceptions of development. Indigenous knowledge is rarely interrogated and is more understood as a consensual knowledge that is waiting to be tapped into. J. E. Ferguson et al. (2008) question the intentions of KM initiatives by development organization, shedding light to political and ethical problems it brings with it. Are KM for development initiatives able to recognize power structures? What is the objectivity, validity and relevance of the knowledge that is provided by development organizations? (J.E. Ferguson et al., 2008).

The focus of organizational science epistemology in the twentieth century has shifted toward a more collective one, acknowledging that knowledge is intimately entangled with human interaction. Information gains meaning and knowledge gains value, through the ways in which people use it (J. E. Ferguson & Cummings, 2008). As social interaction becomes more acknowledged it is also important to implement a focus on hierarchies and power dynamics within these social relations.

## **FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Feminists have shed light to the connection between location, body and knowledge for decades. Critiques have historically been directed toward science for its

exclusion of women, bringing forward new ways of understanding objectivity (see Haraway, 1988; [Harding, 1992](#); [Smith, 1987](#)). Feminists have also called for the acknowledgment of the material of knowledge ([Barad, 2007](#)), stressing the material consequences of both science and knowledge ([Hekman, 2010](#)). As a gender practitioner, I entered the world of KM with these perspectives in my backpack. The insight of the importance of social relations, made me more certain of the relevance of feminist perspectives to the different levels of KM in the UN and beyond. Minu [Ipe's research \(2003\)](#) reflects on knowledge's dependence on social relationships between individuals. Her data demonstrate that social relationships and power equations within organizations affect how individuals share, create and use knowledge, suggesting that human resource scholars partner with technologists to identify informal and formal knowledge-sharing processes. My own interest in how feminist perspectives might transform KM emerged from personal experience of feeling unsafe in various rooms and how I noted that it impacted my ability to take up space. These experiences made me aware that feeling safe in certain spaces, especially your workplace, is of major importance to if and how, individuals are able to share and receive knowledge. I also knew that informal power dynamics such as those involving the intersections of race, gender, function, sexuality and so on affect individuals' ability to feel safe in different spaces. It could therefore be argued that the question of who is privileged enough to feel safe in a room, is entangled with key components on knowledge sharing, urging a feminist perspective to be applied to its practices and systems. It goes without saying that there is also the need to scrutinize how institutional practices in which knowledge flows are taking place are already gendered (see [Acker, 1990](#)).

Prior to describing how the inclusion of feminist/gender perspectives to KM could look in practice I will enter ongoing key discussions within the community of gender scholars and professionals. These issues concern the inclusion of feminist theory in institutions, the realities of gender practitioners and the entanglements of global feminisms and human rights discourse.

## **GENDER PRACTITIONERS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

KM came out of the corporate world where knowledge is viewed as a commodity and with a focus on technology. There is an alternative view that is more social process-centered. A feminist perspective on KM takes into account that all processes, institutions and practices are gendered. The problem is that within the international development sphere gender expertise may be thought of in limited contexts such as external programing ([L. Ferguson, 2015](#)). Gender experts may be marginalized and gender concerns may evaporate in the process of translation into practice. Feminist perspectives are fit/forced into various ideological, social, political and economic frameworks. Human rights discourse is more powerful than feminist discourse and so the latter is often pragmatically translated and negotiated into the former. Gender practitioners have to align with normative, that is, business/economic frameworks of empowerment and