

Foucauldian Feminism: the Implications of Governmentality

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Foucauldian discourse has been received with varying degrees of enthusiasm within feminist circles. Some authors (e.g. Balbus, 1988; Di Leonardo, 1991; Hartsock, 1990) see a Foucauldian stance as incompatible with feminist theory, while others (e.g. Grimshaw, 1993; Hoy, 1988; McNay, 1992; Sawicki, 1988) advocate a positive relationship between Foucauldian discourse and feminism. And then there are those theorists (e.g. Burman, 1990) who stand between these two positions, stating that while Foucault offers useful insights and methods to feminists, it can also be dangerous.

Some of the differences in response have to do with particular readings of Foucault, or with which period of his writing is focussed upon (Deveaux, 1994). His early works centred on the analysis of historically situated systems of institutions and discursive practices. In his methodological treatise, the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1972) outlined his analysis of discourse. He later moved beyond the attempt to work out a theory of rule-governed systems of discursive practices (which, in many respects, came close to structuralism), and utilised the genealogical method which allowed him to “thematize the relationship between truth, theory, and values and the social institutions and practices in which they emerge” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. xxv). In his genealogical works (seen, for example, in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*) he isolated components of present-day political technologies and traced them back in time. He concentrated on the relations of power, knowledge and the body in modern society. Foucault’s genealogical studies tended to focus on the micro-physics of power, on the techniques and practices conducted between individual human subjects within localised institutions. An objection was raised not only by feminists (see later discussion) but also by the Marxist left that his attentiveness to the specifics of power left more globalised issues in politics untheorised (Gordon, 1991). Partially in response to this, Foucault started his work on governmentality which he introduced in a series of lectures in 1978 (Foucault, 1991; Gordon, 1991). He argued that the same style of analysis which he used to study the installation of power in everyday relations and practices could be applied to techniques and practices of governing populations of subjects. In his last works, Foucault (1985, 1986) turned his attention to the formation of subjectivity, and what he called the “techniques of the self”.

It appears that while Foucault’s thoughts on governmentality have been used by some feminists in their research and analysis (e.g. Ruhl, 1999), theoretical debates on the usefulness of governmentality for feminism are in relatively short supply. There is a concentration on his intermediary works on disciplinary technology and bio-power, his later works on resistance and techniques of the self, and his interviews. This ellipsis is possibly due to the fact that his lectures on governmentality were unpublished until the 1990s, and are available largely from secondary sources (Gordon, 1991; Dean, 1994a, 1994b, 1999). In this paper we explore the notion of governmentality, grounding the concept in work conducted by the first author in adolescent sexual and reproductive health. We argue that Foucault’s work on governmentality provides feminists with a broad-ranging and incisive theoretical tool for the analysis of gendered relations on a micro- and macro-level.

FOUCAULT AND FEMINISM

Foucault himself never explored the relationship his work had with that of feminist writers, nor did he examine the implications of his work in gendered terms. When he commented on the women's movement, it was in passing, as in one of his interviews: "The real strength of the women's movement is not that of having laid claim to the specificity of their sexuality and the rights pertaining to it, but that they have actually departed from the discourse conducted with the apparatuses of sexuality" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 219). Some authors have criticised Foucault for his gender blindness and "covert androcentricity" (Soper, 1993, p. 29). For example, he does not consider how the treatment of male and female prisoners differed and how these differences related to dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity. While this may be true, what we should concentrate on, we believe, are the implications of Foucauldian discourse for feminism, rather than criticising Foucault for not embarking on a gendered project. There are some striking points of convergence between Foucault's work and the broad field of feminism (McNay, 1992; Sawicki, 1988, 1991) including:

- a focus on sexuality as a key area of political struggle;
- an expansion of the political to include social domination;
- a critique of biological determinism, humanism, and the search for a scientific "truth";
- a critical stance concerning human sciences insofar as they have participated in modern forms of domination;
- an analysis of the politics of personal relations and everyday life;
- a critique of the rational subject.

There are several reservations regarding the usefulness of a Foucauldian framework for feminism, including the epistemological concerns that Foucault's work tends towards nihilism and relativism. In this paper we concentrate on the argument that Foucault's focus on micro-politics leaves overall structures of domination unanalysed (Alcoff, cited in Sawicki, 1991; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 1993).

MICRO- AND MACRO-LEVELS OF POWER

In his intermediary works, Foucault stressed the importance of formulating and studying the question of power relations in terms of "power at its extremities . . . where it becomes capillary" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 96), i.e., in the everyday lives, actions and interactions of people. Rather than studying the intentional aspect of power (which group has it and what is their aim?), Foucault's project was to investigate the *practices* of power—"where it installs itself and produces real effects" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 97). Power, according to Foucault, is not exercised from the exterior; it is not *possessed* by an individual, class or group, nor is it *centralised* in the law, economy or the state. Rather, it is immanent to everyday relationships including economic exchanges, knowledge relationships, sexual relations, etc. In other words, "micro" does not mean a simple miniaturization of forms but rather mobile and non-localizable connections. Power is not essentially repressive—it "incites, it induces, it seduces [and] passes through the hands of the mastered no less than through the hands of the masters" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 71). Foucault's emphasis on the micro-strategies of power has been criticised by some feminists as failing to provide the tools with which to analyse overall structures of domination (Alcoff, cited in Sawicki, 1991; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 1993). For example, Ramazanoglu & Holland (1993) argue that feminists will not find in Foucault a "means of specifying the links between men's exercise of power in particular sexual encounters, and male power more

generally” (p. 244). Foucault’s acknowledgement, they state, of the cleavages between concentrations of power is only intermittent. Furthermore, there is an explanatory gap between power in its capillary form and these concentrations of power. This criticism indicates a lack of familiarity with Foucault’s work on governmentality (possibly unavailable to the authors at the time of writing, as the summary and comment on his lectures was published by Gordon only in 1991). Nevertheless, we feel that this interpretation even of Foucault’s intermediary work (before his work on governmentality was more widely available) is somewhat misleading. Foucault did not deny that micro-level practices of power are taken up in global or macrostrategies of domination. He merely refused to privilege a centre of power which then permeates into the everyday lives of people. Instead, he proposed conducting an “*ascending* analysis of power, starting . . . from its infinitesimal mechanisms . . . and then see[ing] how these mechanisms of power have been—and continue to be—invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 99). Deleuze (1988), in his book on Foucault, expresses this as the relation between power and government, which are molecular or microphysical relations around a molar agency, e.g. the Father in the case of the family, Money, Gold or the Dollar in the case of the market. Thus, the fact that power is not held by any person or group and does not operate from a centre does not mean that people and groups are positioned equally within it or that global forms of domination cannot be spoken about. For feminism this means that enmeshment in patriarchal culture can be acknowledged. Nevertheless, this does not mitigate the fact that men have a higher stake in maintaining institutions within which they have historically occupied dominant positions (Bordo, 1993). A Foucauldian feminist need not resist the empirical claim that male domination has appeared in almost all societies; s/he would not desist from the naming of patriarchy. What s/he would object to is the attempt to deduce this from a general theory and to privilege one site of domination or one site of resistance. Instead, s/he would see power as “exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations” (Foucault, 1978, p. 94). S/he would stress the variety of ways in which effects of male domination are produced and gendered identities are constituted. In his endeavour to debunk the unidimensional juridico-discursive notion of power (that sees power as essentially repressive, possessed by an individual, class or group and centralised in the law, economy or the state), Foucault emphasized the microphysics of power in his intermediary works. His work on governmentality does not represent a break from this emphasis, but rather provides the balance required to intersect micro- and macro-level analyses. Foucault’s intermediary works have provided feminists with some of the theoretical tools needed to shift their analyses of power from a structural definition to one in which power *relations* and the power/knowledge nexus become focal. Furthermore, his analysis of how power is installed in everyday (including domestic) interactions has allowed feminists to theorise exactly how the personal is political. Foucault’s work of governmentality extends this repertoire by augmenting the analysis of power at a micro-level to the myriad of ways in which power operates at a macro-level. Foucault indicates that modern government is exercised through an ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations and tactics (Foucault, 1991). It is a complex system, employing a variety of modes to achieve particular ends (e.g. the oppression of women). This dissection of the multiplicity and the interconnection of micro- and macro-strategies of power could become an important tool in feminist inquiry and practice.

GOVERNMENTALITY

In this section we outline Foucault's work on governmentality. We ground our theoretical discussion by illustrating, in brief, a feminist application thereof to the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health. We consider this (adolescent sexual and reproductive health) to be an important domain of feminist inquiry as various underlying assumptions concerning the nature of gendered adolescence, adolescent (hetero)sexuality, family formation and function, and motherhood are invoked in discursive and social practices concerning sexual or reproductive teenagers. Political issues, such as gender relations, education, population control and welfare, undergird discussions on adolescent sexual and reproductive health, although these are mostly not explicitly acknowledged. In his lectures on governmentality Foucault attempts to "cut the Gordian knot of the relation between micro- and macro-levels of power" (Dean, 1994a, p. 179) by applying the same type of analytic on the macro-level that he had earlier applied to the micropowers—one which emphasises *practices* of government. Foucault used the terms government and governmentality in inter-related ways. He defined government as the "conduct of conduct" (Gordon, 1991, p. 2) or, in other words, as an activity which aims to shape, guide or affect the behaviour, actions, and comportment of people. The "conduct of conduct" occurs at multiple, interwoven levels. It concerns the self relating with the self, private interpersonal relations that involve some sort of control or guidance, relations within social institutions, and relations concerned with the exercise of political sovereignty (Gordon, 1991). Thus governmentality is simultaneously individualising and totalising. On the one hand, governmentality is simultaneously subjectivising (i.e. it concerns itself with the constitution of individualised subjectivity) and objectivising i.e. through the operation of bio-power the individual is transformed into an object or docile body). On the other hand, the individual is implicated in large-scale normalising structures and regulatory controls. Governmental analysis, thus, attempts to interlink the micro-effects of power (e.g. self-technologies) with the macro-strategies of power without privileging one or the other (see later discussion). Foucault defined the term "governmentality" as the rationality or art of government, which he explained as a way or system of knowing and thinking about the nature of the practice of government. Foucault (1991) indicated that governmentality marks the emergence of a new form of thinking about and exercising power. The development of the science of government emerged in response to (1) the re-centring of the economy on a different plane from that of the family, and (2) the emergence of the problem of the population. The family disappeared as a model of government and as the site of production. Instead, population, its welfare, the improvement of its wealth and health, its capacity to wage war and engage in labour, etc. became the goal of government.

The family, however, emerged as "an element internal to population, and as a fundamental instrument in its government" (Foucault, 1991, p. 99). The incisiveness of this interconnection of governmentality, the population and the family (and hence the micro- and macro-strategies of power) is illustrated in some of the discursive constructions of adolescent reproduction. Teenage pregnancy and childbearing is often depicted as a matter of national concern as early reproduction threatens economised security by contributing to demographic disaster (a concern expressed mostly in "developing" countries such as South Africa) or by depending on welfare (an issue in more "developed" countries). Interlinked with this are concerns about the

personalised outcomes of early reproduction for the children as well as for the mothers. These include such things as maternal poverty and child neglect and abuse. Thus, concerns are multi-layered. Humanitarian interest is taken in the individual life trajectories of the mothers and children, but this is interwoven with concerns about the social and national (population-wide) effects of these outcomes (cf. Macleod, 1999a, 1999b). The net result is the establishment of institutions (e.g. youth centres), procedures (e.g. sexuality education courses), analyses, reflections and calculations (e.g. research on teenage pregnancy) and tactics (see later discussion), all of which are aimed at reducing the threat of early reproduction to not only the individual child and mother but also the population. Furthermore, the family operates as a “fundamental instrument” (Foucault, 1991, p. 99) in the government of adolescent sexuality and reproduction in that dominant discourses of the family are utilised to produce pathologised readings of adolescent reproduction. The pregnant teenager or single parent family defy the deployment of normalised familial and gendered relations. They fracture conjugal authority by reproducing out of wedlock, as well as the developmental imperative of age-specific tasks by having children early. This opens the space for them to be positioned as, for example, inadequate mothers. These pathologised readings (provided in no small part by expert investigation) in turn form part of the appeal to national concern. Present forms of government have, according to Foucault, their roots in the disciplinary problems of utility and docility, ancient Christian notions of pastorship, a reason of the state, the science of police and the advent of liberalism (Gordon, 1991). The mechanisms of power in modern governmentality form a complex and irreducible ensemble of the rationality and techniques of sovereignty, security, discipline and government. As space is limited we shall discuss disciplinary technology, pastorship, liberalism, and security, and ground our discussion of the theory with extracts from interviews regarding adolescent sexual and reproductive health conducted with health service providers at a regional hospital in South Africa. These interviews were conducted by the first author with service providers working in the Youth Health Centre (YHC), the School Health Services (SHS), the high risk Antenatal Clinic (ANC) and the Termination of Pregnancy (TOP) Clinic of the hospital. Preventive programmes (such as sexuality education in the schools and contraceptive counselling) are instituted, *inter alia*, to manage the risk of teenagers conceiving. The “curative” aspects (ante-natal care, termination of pregnancy, counselling by a social worker) are about the management of a new set of risks which the error (pregnancy) invokes. The focus here is on the prevention either of future problems regarding the child or of further error on the part of the mother.

In these governmental institutions and procedures we have what Donzelot (1993) calls the socialisation of risk. Fate, fortune, destiny, which are individual matters over which little control can be exercised, are replaced with risk, the combination of factors over which the collective may exercise vigilance and management. The socialisation of risk operates in this case in the collective’s contribution to taxes which allow for the establishment of the YHC, SHS, ANC and TOP clinic. These centres, clinics and services represent the collective’s insurance against the risk of teenagers contributing to social problems and demographic disaster through early reproduction. The health service provider becomes the insurer of the physical, emotional and social well-being of the adolescent and her child, as well as the protector of the common good. The management of risk is achieved not only by the collective’s investment in institutions of health and welfare, however, but also by installing risk management at the individual level. The health service providers

employ a variety of governmental techniques (including disciplinary surveillance, the incitement to technologies of the self, pastoral power, liberal individualisation and the provision of the confessional space) to render the adolescent and her family responsible for overseeing their own conduct and the associated personal risks.

Disciplinary Technology, Surveillance and Bio-power

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) traces the emergence of what he calls disciplinary technology. Prior to the 18th century, the sovereign's power was displayed through public torture. The law represented the will of the king, with torture representing the activation of the king's power on the body of the criminal. During the 18th century, a group of humanist reformers proposed that crime be seen as a breach of contract in which society as a whole was the victim. Punishment would mean redressing the wrong done and assisting the transgressor in resuming his/her rightful place in society. The body was no longer tortured and dismembered, but trained, exercised and supervised. The torture meted out as punishment in sovereignty meant that only the most heinous of crimes were checked. Humanist reform introduced a "more finely tuned justice" (Foucault, 1977, p. 78) in which "lesser" crimes and misdemeanours could be identified and dealt with accordingly. For their system to work, in order for the authorities to assist in the reformation and rehabilitation of the criminal, an intimate knowledge of the individual was required. A "closer . . . mapping of the social body" (Foucault, 1977, p. 78) was needed.

Disciplinary technology has as its aim the regulation and normalisation of subjects. Although the individual ostensibly has more formal rights than previously, there is less room for deviance and disorder. Disciplinary technology operates through hierarchical observation and normalising judgement. Measurement and observation produce a knowledge in which it is possible to classify each subject in a system of gradated, hierarchical intervals. For example, the practices of research (investigation, observation, evaluation, analysis, calculation, codification, representation, etc.) produce a positive knowledge of the "normal" and of the pregnant teenager. Pregnant and non-pregnant teenagers are measured and compared regarding their biological precociousness, their psychological functioning, their cognitive capacities, their reproductive knowledge, their moral development, their social relations, their family formation and functioning, and their socio-economic status. Each subject—the "normal", the high-risk potentially pregnant, the pregnant, and the mothering teenager—is gradated in a system of biological, psychological, moral, familial and social functioning. Surveillance is an integral part of the production and control of disciplinary technology. The authority (be it the warder, the school teacher, the health service provider) exercises a gaze over the inmates of the institution. This gaze is premised on normalising judgements concerning the behaviour of, for example, female teenagers. These judgements are embedded in dominant discourses of, for example, the nature of adolescence and femininity. Surveillance becomes powerful by extending itself to self-reflection and self-consciousness and, in this way, becomes one of the mechanisms linking the macro-issues of gender oppression with the micro-level of gendered practices and relations:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end up interiorising to the point that he (sic) is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising surveillance over, and against himself (Foucault, 1980c, p. 155).

As the individual invests in the tenets of a normalising judgement (e.g. normal behaviour and feelings during pregnancy), so s/he begins to exercise vigilance with regard to his/her own behaviour, monitoring whether what s/he does fits the norm. Regulation thus becomes self-regulation as the person subjects him/ herself to an internalised surveillance. This surveillance turned self-surveillance is linked to what Dean (1994) refers to as governmental self-formation, which he conceptualises as “the ways in which various authorities and agencies seek to shape the conduct, aspirations, needs, desires, and capacities of specified categories of individuals, to enlist them in particular strategies and to seek defined goals” (p. 156). These self-strategies require “the elaboration of certain techniques for the conduct of one’s relation with oneself” (Rose, 1996, p. 135), or technologies of the self. Rose (1996) delineates three forms of self-technologies—relating to the self epistemologically (know yourself), despotically (master yourself) and attentively (care for yourself).

Technologies of the self are practised, firstly, under the authority of some system of “truth” and, secondly, under authoritative persons from the theological, psychological and pedagogical disciplines. The following extracts demonstrate how authorities may incite self-technologies of despotism. In these extracts two of the health service providers interviewed are discussing sexuality education provided at the YHC and at schools:

Extract 1

A: Tell her about the dangers of early sex. What should she avoid (.) Like the privacy (.) which is important. I like that very much. They will never do that in public. It’s you (.) female (.) who will give him privacy (.) and once you are together (.) and then the trouble starts.

Extract 2

B: We will give them [boys] information and such things (.) and explain the pregnancy (.) and how pregnancy occurs (1) explain the menstrual cycle so a lot of them has that information. (1) It will help them in the end, because there are safe periods. If they really can’t make it, how they use the safe periods.

Three features emerge in the above extracts with regard to the gendering of the self technology of despotism concerning sexual relations, viz. control of access to he body; avoidance of particular situations; and the hydraulic sex drive. In the first extract adolescent women are warned of the “dangers of early sex” which is paired with an encouragement to patrol men’s access to their body. This type of warning is not extended to males (instead they are “informed”), and the incitement to control of sexual bodily access is absent. In order to implement access control, female teenagers are incited to employ the strategy of avoidance. Males are only partially encouraged in avoidance. They are informed that “if they really can’t make it”, then they may have sex, but in the “safe” period. The gendered nature of the hydraulic hypothesis concerning sexuality is evident here. Males are depicted as more at the mercy of their sexual desires than females. Thus, control of sexual urges, the patrolling of access to the body, and the avoidance of particular sexualised situations and relations are firmly placed in the domain of female rather than male mastery of the self. These incitements to gendered self-technologies rely, however, on macro-level dominant discourses and invoke normalised assumptions concerning femininity, sexuality and gendered relations. Of course, the success of these incitements depend on the extent to which

the females advised in these self-technologies invest in the premises of the underlying normalising assumptions.

Bio-power is the word which Foucault coined for the operation of disciplinary power on the body. It has two inter-related aspects. The first is the control of the human species in the form of the population (i.e. the macro-level); the second is control of the body (i.e. on the micro-level). In the first, bio-power represents “the endeavour . . . to rationalize problems presented by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birth rate, longevity, race” (Foucault, 1997, cited in Dean, 1999, p. 99). In the second, bio-power divides the body into units that are taken up separately and subjected to precise, calculated and repetitive training. The aim is control and efficiency of operation both for the part and the whole. “Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (Foucault, 1977, p. 138). Foucault calls the latter the docile body.

The field of teenage pregnancy is immanently conducive to the exercise of bio-power. Firstly, the teenager’s body is divided into reproductive organs (which need to be monitored and treated both in a state of pregnancy and non-pregnancy), and sexual organs (which go through certain “physical growth” stages, and to which access must be patrolled). Secondly, the concern with the rate of teenage pregnancy leading to the possibility of welfare dependency and the creation of an “underclass” or, alternatively, demographic problems is bound up with control of the “population”. The latter concern translates into a concern with the former, viz. gaining an understanding and intervening with regard to the adolescent’s body.

Bio-power represented Foucault’s first foray into the links between the microphysics and macrophysics of power (Gordon, 1991). He reintroduced the theme of bio-power or bio-politics in his 1978 lectures on governmentality, indicating that modern biopolitics generates a new kind of counter-politics. Biopolitics represents an example of what Foucault calls the “strategic reversibility” (cited in Gordon, 1991, p. 5) of power relations—the ways in which governmental practices can be turned into loci of resistance. Indeed, some feminist writers have referred to teenage childbearing as an “alternative life course” (Geronimus, 1991), implying a resistance to and disruption of normalised life trajectories and dominant reproductive discourses on the part of these adolescents. The issue of resistance will be discussed more fully later in the paper.

Pastoral Power

Pastoral power is a form of power which has Hebraic roots but which only reached its full elaboration in the early Christian writings (Dean, 1994a). On the one hand, the politician, leader or authority is represented as a shepherd who is accountable for all members of the pastorate; s/he gathers and guides the flock, ensures their salvation through his/her kindness, and is devoted to knowing the flock as a whole and in detail. On the other hand, obedience, self-control, personal submission, mortification and a renunciation of the self and the world by the flock are encouraged. It was through institutional Christianity that the notions of pastorship, the care of others, and a dynamics of self-decipherment and self-renunciation were fully developed. Self-technologies thus feature in pastoral power as well but are linked to the macro-

strategies of government through guidance and care, rather than surveillance and normalising judgement as in disciplinary technology.

The deployment of pastoral techniques by the service providers mentioned above is evidenced in the following extracts, in which service providers discuss counselling teenagers seeking contraceptive advice (Extracts 3 and 4) and parents bringing their adolescent daughters for termination of pregnancy (Extract 5) or ante-natal care (Extract 6).

Extract 3

C: I would like to ask from her why she stays there [with her boyfriend]. [] And to enlighten her that it is not right to stay with a man before marriage.

Extract 4

D: They rely on us. They used to ask deep questions of which they can't ask if it was a parent (.) you know /ya/. So you must be a friend to them.

Extract 5

E: We told her that "What you did to the child is wrong".

Extract 6

C: I did try to calm her [] "pray to God".

The responsibility of the pastor is to guide the members of the flock. S/he knows what is good for them (like getting married—Extract 3) and thus can arbitrate concerning the moral correctness of actions and indicate the correct path in cases of incorrect action (Extract 3). Guidance takes place mostly through the technique of care. For example, in Extract 4 the service provider indicates that she is helpful and dependable. Recalcitrance is anticipated, however, in which case the pastor's job is to chastise the perpetrator. In Extract 5 the service provider chastises a mother for forcing her daughter to take tablets that could induce an abortion. Various other techniques are utilised in pastoral care and guidance including comfort and supplication to a higher power (Extract 6). Power thus is installed on the micro-level in disciplinary technology and pastoral power through very different interactional practices (surveillance and normalising judgement versus guidance and care). However, in order for scientific normalising judgement and for pastoral moral arbitration and guidance to perform their work they both need to draw on dominant (i.e. macro-level) patriarchal discursive constructions of gendered subjectivity and gendered relations (e.g. Extract 3). How these constructions are presented will differ. For example, disciplinary technology may reinforce men's conjugal authority in arguments concerning the detrimental economic, social and emotional outcomes of single parenthood (thereby normalising the nuclear family) rather than through an appeal to the moral correctness of marriage. Whichever way, men's conjugal authority is reproduced and maintained.

Liberalism

The advent of liberalism saw a transformation in the relationship between knowledge and government. Foucault characterises it as "a doctrine of limitation and wise restraint" (Gordon, 1991, p. 15). Society is seen as generating its own order and

prosperity, as constituting a quasi-nature, in accordance to which the affairs of humans must be governed. Spheres such as “civil society” or “the economy” are construed as outside direct political authority, having natural forces and relations intrinsic to them that must be respected by the authorities (Dean, 1999). Furthermore, state action is limited with regard to political subjects, whose individual rights, desires and needs cannot be dictated to by governments. These rights and liberties are simultaneously external to liberal political authority and necessary for its operation. Liberal modes of government act on “the governed as a locus of action and freedom” (Dean, 1999, p. 15). Freedom becomes a technical means of securing the ends of government through action, or the “conduct of conduct”, at a distance, and through the incitement to governmental self-formation. Consider the following extracts in which the service providers discuss counselling (Extracts 7, 9, 10, 11) and sexuality education programmes (Extract 8).

Extract 7

D: She is having a right to live, and also a right to decide.

Extract 8

F: There are many topics that they cover, but according to the need of that particular group

Extract 9

D: Respect that teenager. She is unique from other teenagers [] You have to accept them as they are.

Extract 10

A: You need to empathise [in counselling] You need to show that person that you are there and you are listening.

Extract 11

C: They tell you where the problem is and you find out from them which is the best way to solve the problem.

One of the principle techniques of liberalism is individualisation in which the individual is accorded rights (Extract 7), uniqueness (Extracts 8 and 9), and obliged to be free (Extract 7). The liberal humanitarian’s task is to respect, accept (Extract 9) and empathise (Extract 10) with the person. S/he provides the space within which the teenager may render herself truthful to herself (Extract 10). Within this confessional space the teenager is permitted to confess the problem, and then to labour to find the solution or incited in governmental self-formation (Extract 11). Power operates here through the normalisation of the solutions and of the “true” self towards which the teenager is incited to labour. These solutions and the self are known intricately and in-depth by the expert. Rose (1992) links expertise (in particular the psy-sciences) with liberalism’s rationality of government which seeks ethical techniques that simultaneously allows humans to conduct themselves as subjects of freedom and subjects of society. Expertise has “made it possible for us to dream that we can order our individual and collective existence according to a knowledge/technique that fuses truth and humanity, wisdom and practicality” (Rose, 1992, p. 367). It is through expertise that the apparently “public” issue of rationalities of government are linked in

liberalism to the “private” question of how one should behave, how one “conducts” one’s own conduct.

Security

Foucault conceptualised apparatuses of security as “those institutions and practices concerned to defend, maintain and secure a national population and those that secure the economic, demographic and social processes that are found to exist within that population” (Dean, 1999, p. 20). He saw security as a specific principle of political method and practice, distinct from law, sovereignty and discipline. However, it is able to combine in various modes with these other practices. For example, under liberalism, liberty is a condition of security. The liberal task of setting into place forms of regulation that allow and facilitate natural regulation comprises “the setting in place mechanisms of security . . . mechanisms or modes of state intervention whose function is to assure the security of those natural phenomena, economic processes and the intrinsic processes of population” (Gordon, 1991, p. 17).

Foucault ascribed three general traits to the method of security. Firstly, it deals with series of possible and probable events; secondly, it evaluates through the calculation of comparative cost; and thirdly, it prescribes “not by absolute binary demarcation between the permitted and the forbidden, but by the specification of an optimal mean within a tolerable bandwidth of variation” (Gordon, 1991, p. 20). Sovereignty takes as its object territory, discipline the body of the individual, and security the “ensemble of the population” (Gordon, 1991, p. 20).

Security operates in adolescent sexual and reproductive health in a number of ways. The management of risk serves as a governmental tactic of security as it represents efforts to deal with the possible and probable events following sexual intercourse, conception and birth. Sexuality education programmes are run to manage the possibility or risk of adolescents either engaging in sex or conceiving. Should a teenager be pregnant, counselling, ante-natal care, adoption services and termination of pregnancy facilities are provided to manage the probability or risk of negative physiological, psychological, emotional and social consequences for the mother and child. These programmes are legitimated through the implicit calculation of the comparative cost of providing services (which represent a tax burden) and not providing them (which would result in a threat to national and social security in terms of demographic difficulties, poor mothering practices, lack of gainful employment on the part of the teenager etc.). The optimal mean (the third trait of security) in terms of adolescent sexuality is abstinence from sex. However, sexual intercourse and even pregnancy lie within the acceptable bandwidth, but carry with them a different set of management tactics than does non-coital behaviour. Put simply, if the teenager is a virgin, there is the danger of the desire for sex, and thus sexuality education programmes recommend “say no”. If she is sexually active, there is the possibility of pregnancy, and thus programmes extend their input to the use of contraceptives. If she is pregnant, there are potential physical and emotional complications in the pregnancy, and thus professional medical and psychological assistance is indicated. If she is mothering, the child is probably at risk, and therefore professional assistance and maternal education are required. These traits of security will combine in various ways with pastoral, disciplinary and liberal power relations in the government of the sexual and reproductive lives of adolescents.

GOVERNMENTALITY, FEMINISM AND RESISTANCE

In this section we examine some of the implications of Foucault's work on governmentality in terms of feminist political practice. Feminism has centrally defined itself as an emancipatory project, whether in political practice or academic critique. Feminist critics of Foucauldian theory argue that emancipatory politics is not possible within a Foucauldian framework (Balbus, 1988; Deveaux, 1994; Di Leonardo, 1991; Harding, 1990, 1992; Hartsock, 1990; Hawkesworth, 1989). There are three main charges against Foucault in this regard, viz. nihilism, relativism and the omnipresence of power. Space does not allow a full exploration of the first two and readers are referred to Fraser (1989), Grimshaw (1993), Hekman (1990), Hoy (1988), Lather (1992), McNay (1992), Ramazanoglu (1993) and Sawicki (1988, 1991) for comprehensive responses to these concerns. Instead, we shall concentrate on the third issue, viz. the omnipresence of power. Because of his emphasis on the microphysics of power, power in Foucauldian terms is everywhere, say critics, and thus ultimately nowhere. Short of abolishing modern society altogether, social improvement is impossible, as successful resistance means simply changing one discursive identity for another, thus creating new oppressions.

While Foucault shied away from political programmes and activities that were based on grand theory, his writings were clearly political. Deleuze puts it in this rather disrespectful way:

Three centuries ago certain fools were astonished because Spinoza wished to see the liberation of man [sic], even though he did not believe in his liberty or even in his particular existence. Today new fools, or even the same ones reincarnated, are astonished because the Foucault who had spoken of the death of man took part in political struggle (Deleuze, 1988, p. 90).

Foucault's central political statements are those pertaining to resistance. Power, in Foucauldian terms, does not mean disciplinary or repressive power only, but also liberatory power. Foucault points out that power coexists with resistances to it. Resistance is both an element of the functioning of power and a source of its perpetual disorder (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). This is in direct contrast to the liberal notion of freedom as juxtaposed or opposite to power. Importantly, Foucault does not define power as the overcoming of resistances. When resistances are overcome, power relations collapse into force relations and the limits of power have been reached.

In Foucauldian terms resistance takes the form of reverse or subjugated discourses and practices subverting hegemonic discourses and practices. These subjugated knowledges include those of the psychiatric patient, the hysteric, the midwife, the housewife, the teenage mother etc. Foucault does not see resistance as radical rupture or overt revolution. There is "no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt" (Foucault 1978, p. 96) but rather shifting points of resistance that "inflame certain parts of the body, certain moments in life" (Foucault, 1978, p. 96). What governmentality adds to this is the possibility of identifying and resisting concentrations of power. This does not mean a reversal to a "single locus of great Refusal", but rather that alliances of shifting points of resistance around concentrations of power become a possibility.

The implication of this in terms of feminist political practice is that such practice becomes a matter of alliances rather than one of unity around a universally shared interest (Allen & Baber, 1992). We would more rightly talk of the practice of feminisms. Within this politics, the aim is not to overcome differences in order to achieve political unity. Rather it is to use difference as a resource around which to establish multiple points of resistance to the myriad of micro- and macro-level gendered relations of inequality and domination. The commonality around gendered relations remains, but one strategy of resistance is not privileged over another. Feminist-informed governmental analyses may provide the intellectual grounds for holding diversity within commonality (i.e. making the links between micro-level practices and strategies of resistance and macro-level concentrations of power, e.g. patriarchy). This means that the practice of feminisms need not collapse into something in which anything goes. On the basis of specific theoretical analyses of particular struggles generalisations can be made, and patterns in power relations and the effectiveness of various strategies identified.

In “The Subject and Power”, Foucault (1982) proposes a “new economy of power relations” in which the starting point is the forms of resistance to various forms of power. These forms of resistance have features in common, viz.: they are transversal, not being limited to particular countries, parties or economic forms; they struggle against power effects; they are “immediate” struggles in that they focus on issues closest to hand; they question the status of the individual whether by asserting the right to be different or by criticising the separation of the individual from the community; they oppose the effects of power which are linked to knowledge; they are a refusal of abstractions which determine who one is. Foucault advocates this type of resistance as an antidote to our modern forms of power:

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political “double bind”, which is the simultaneous individualisation and totalisation of modern power structures. . . . We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries (Foucault, 1982, p. 785).

Liberation, thus, is not seen as transcendence or global transformation, but rather as a freeing from the assumption that prevailing ways of understanding ourselves and others are necessary and self-evident (even, for example, as feminists as post-feminist theorists would argue). Through the retrieval of subjugated knowledge one establishes a knowledge of resistance and struggle. Foucault is committed to the possibility that these resistances might eventually combine to create a new (non-disciplinary) form of power and thus a “new politics of Truth” (Balbus, 1988, p. 145). This form of politics will be subject to changing interests and fragmented and partial identities.

Political analysis and criticism have in a large measure still to be invented—so too have the strategies which will make it possible to modify the relations of force, to coordinate them in such a way that such a modification is possible and can be inscribed in reality. That is to say, the problem is not so much that of defining a political “position” (which is to choose from a pre-existing set of possibilities) but to imagine and to bring into being new schemas of politicisation (Foucault, 1980c, p. 160).

In many respects the forms of resistance described by Foucault in “The Subject and Power” seem to describe immanently the feminist project. Feminists have always struggled against gendered power effects; they have taken up issues closest to women (mothering, sexual violence etc.); they have questioned dominant patriarchal understandings of the nature of women; they have undermined dominant forms of knowledge regarding gender relations. However, feminism has not always been transversal, nor has it always refused abstractions. African, other “third world” and “minority” feminists have criticised “Western” feminism for its privileging of middle class, “white”, urban concerns (Brydon & Chant, 1989; Roberts, 1984). Differences among women have been ignored, and the differential impact on women of classism, racism and heterosexism overlooked. To some extent this has to do with the methodological legacies which feminist scholars inadvertently took over from their teachers, viz. attempts, which have their origin in the Enlightenment, to reveal general, all-encompassing, abstracting principles which can lay bare the basic features of natural and social reality (Nicholson, 1990). Foucauldian-based feminisms holds the promise of overcoming these difficulties while retaining a central focus on gendered oppression. Teenage pregnancy represents a field of inquiry that intersects many issues closest to women, viz. mothering, sexuality, reproduction, the family etc. As such there is surprisingly little feminist engagement with the topic. Following the outline of Foucauldian feminisms above, we would envisage the feminist project relating to teenage pregnancy involving some of the following practices: (1) a deconstruction of the underlying taken-for-granted assumptions regarding mothering, the family, the adolescent, sexuality and reproduction that saturate scientific and popular discourse on reproductive adolescents; (2) a refusal of the depiction of reproductive adolescents as, for example, inadequate mothers, psychologically unstable, developmentally immature etc. as necessary or selfevident; (3) a location of adolescent sexual and reproductive practices within the historical and social specificities of localised settings while at the same time foregrounding gendered oppressions arising in these situations.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have argued for the utility of Foucault’s theorising on governmentality or the feminist endeavour. Although Foucault never denied that the micro-strategies of power may get taken up in macro-strategies of oppression, his work on governmentality fills the gap concerning the interconnectedness of micro- and macro-levels of power analysis. With governmentality Foucauldian feminists are afforded a theoretical tool with which to analyse the complexity of oppressive relations of power that may take on diverse forms in modern society. The intersection of governmental tactics deployed in sovereignty, disciplinary technology, liberalism, pastoral power and security in producing and fixing gendered relations means that feminist analyses of gendered oppression, as well as resistances formulated against this oppression, needs to be multi-faceted and thorough.

We turn, finally, to the application of such an approach in our country, South Africa. There is a large body of work on “women in developing countries”, but this does not necessarily engage feminist issues (Mohanty, 1991). We believe that a Foucauldian-based practice of feminisms does not overshadow the efforts of “third world” and minority cultures to establish their own identities and literatures as oppositional to the hegemonic influences of patriarchal and imperialist capitalism, a concern expressed

by Hartsock (1990). Instead it allows for the analysis of, and the practice of multiple sites of resistance against, the manifold ways in which both patriarchy and imperialist capitalism manifest themselves. Furthermore, a dynamic engagement with Foucauldian discourse may produce incisive analyses in the post-colonial era of the empire, as illustrated by Stoler (1995). Stoler creates a conversation with Foucault's (1978) *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, extending Foucault's thoughts with an analysis of the concepts and policies of imperial racism. Ultimately, of course, the radical nature of the Foucauldian endeavour must be judged on the basis of the effects it produces.

NOTE

1. While we acknowledge that the term feminism has been questioned by many women from developing countries on the grounds of cultural imperialism, we follow Mohanty (1991) in retaining the term, as South African women have always engaged with feminism, even if the label has been rejected in a number of instances.

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