

What Is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions

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Methodological issues have constituted some of the deepest sources of misunderstanding between International Relations (IR) feminists and IR theorists working in social scientific frameworks. IR theorists have called upon feminists to frame their research questions in terms of testable hypotheses. Feminists have responded that their research questions cannot be answered using social science explanatory frameworks. Deep epistemological divisions about the construction and purpose of knowledge make bridging these methodological divides difficult. These epistemological standards lead feminists to very different methodological perspectives. Asking different questions from those typically asked in IR, many IR feminists have drawn on ethnographic, narrative, cross-cultural, and other methods that are rarely taught to students of IR, to answer them. Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary scholarship on feminist methodologies and some recent IR feminist case studies, this article analyzes and assesses how these methodological orientations are useful for understanding the gendering of international politics, the state and its security-seeking practices and its effects on the lives of women and men.

Robert Keohane (1998) has challenged feminists to come up with a research program using “scientific method in the broadest sense.”¹ Keohane outlined a possible research program for International Relations (IR) feminists focused on a variant of the democratic peace theory. He suggested that feminists investigate whether countries with highly unequal gendered hierarchies would behave differently internationally from those with less unequal social structures at home. In other words, are more gender equal societies less inclined to fight each other? Keohane proposed that feminists investigate this question, or others, using the basic “method” of social

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¹ Keohane issued this challenge in his response to my *ISQ* article, “You Just Don’t Understand” (Tickner, 1997).

science:² make a conjecture about causality; formulate that conjecture as a hypothesis consistent with established theory; specify the observable implications of the hypothesis; test for whether those implications obtain in the real world; and report one's findings, ensuring that one's procedures are publicly known and hence replicable to other members of a particular scientific community that he identified as the IR community of scholars. This, Keohane (1998:196–197) claimed, would be “the best way to convince non-believers of the validity of the message that feminists are seeking to deliver.”

Keohane (1998:195) described himself as a “neopositivist,” who acknowledges that “scientific success is not the attainment of objective truth, but the attainment of wider agreement on descriptive facts and causal relationships, based on transparent and replicable methods.”³ While recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed since the questions we ask and the methods we use reflect our preoccupations as members of particular societies at particular times, Keohane urged scholars to seek to widen intersubjective agreement about important issues. He insisted that researchers must strive to be as objective as possible. Keohane remained committed to an essentially positivist methodological framework that assumes that the social world is amenable to the kinds of regularities that can be explained by using causal analysis with tools borrowed from the natural sciences and that the way to determine the truth of statements is by appealing to neutral facts.⁴

Keohane's suggestions for a feminist research program using this conventional social scientific methodology have some similarities with what Sandra Harding terms “feminist empiricism,” an epistemology that argues that sexism and androcentricism in existing research are social biases correctable by stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms of scientific inquiry (Harding, 1986:24). While not an empiricist herself, Harding claims that feminist empiricism is appealing because it leaves unchallenged the existing methodological norms of science; this means that it would be more easily accepted in the broader social scientific community—or, as Keohane puts it, it would be the best route for convincing IR non-believers, using the social science methodology that he advocates, of the validity of feminist IR research.

In the intervening years since Keohane issued his challenge to feminists to build a research program using neopositivist methods, IR feminist empirical research, which took off in the mid-1990s, has continued to grow; yet the majority of it has not followed the path that Keohane suggested—formulating hypotheses and providing evidence that can be used to test, falsify or validate them. With some exceptions which I will discuss below, IR feminists have used a variety of methods, most of which would fall into methodological frameworks that have variously been described as post-positivist, reflectivist, or interpretivist.⁵ Feminist empirical

² What Keohane calls “method” I call “methodology,” which I define below. Keohane refers to this methodology as “*the* (italics added) basic social science method.” I would argue it is *one* such methodology and the one generally used by U.S. IR scholars working in the scientific tradition. In this article, I use the term “conventional social science” to refer to this particular type of work. While, for purposes of responding to Keohane's challenge, I shall engage with this type of work, which I shall henceforth refer to as “IR research,” I am aware that there are many IR scholars outside this tradition, who would also refer to their work as social science as well as many who come out of more humanistic, interpretive traditions. I also realize that this is not necessarily the dominant methodology outside the United States.

³ In a recent communication with the author, Keohane says he now prefers to describe himself as a “scientific realist” rather than a “neopositivist.” Keohane rightly claims that he has always favored multiple methods, especially qualitative and historically sensitive ones, and he emphasizes the importance of descriptive as well as causal inference. However, in this article, I focus on Keohane's (1998) reply to my (1997) article in *International Studies Quarterly* in which he proposed a causal, social scientific study of the democratic peace.

⁴ For a fuller elaboration on Keohane's articulation of social scientific methodology for IR see King et al. (1994). This definition of a positivist methodological framework assumes no necessary difference between the methodologies of the natural sciences and the social sciences.

⁵ There is a body of IR research on gender and women that does use conventional social scientific methodology, although not all of these authors would necessarily define themselves as feminists in the epistemological sense in which I am using the term. There have been studies of the effect of gender equality on public opinion, on foreign

research has been situated in critical, constructivist, or post-modern rather than empiricist frameworks. Therefore, it is probably the case that IR feminists have not convinced those whom Keohane described as “IR non-believers” of the validity of their research.⁶

Part one of this article explains why I believe IR feminists have, for the most part, not followed the empiricist route. I elaborate on four distinctive features of feminist methodology that I construct by drawing on the work of feminists in the disciplines of sociology, philosophy, history, political theory, and anthropology—disciplines in which feminism has had a longer history than in IR, a history that includes rich and diverse literatures on methodological issues. I distinguish between the term “methodology,” a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed, and “method,” a technique for gathering and analyzing evidence (Harding, 1987:2–3).⁷ I argue that there is no unique feminist research method; feminists have drawn upon a variety of methods, including ethnography, statistical research, survey research, cross-cultural research, philosophical argument, discourse analysis, and case study. What makes feminist research unique, however, is a distinctive methodological perspective that fundamentally challenges the often unseen androcentric or masculine biases in the way that knowledge has traditionally been constructed in all the disciplines.

In part two, I discuss two examples of IR feminist empirical scholarship that exemplify these methodological perspectives. I chose them because each focuses on the state, a central unit of analysis in IR, and security, a central concept in the discipline. Each of the chosen authors makes use of methods not typical of conventional IR social scientific research. As I shall show, these IR feminists’ methodological sensitivities—sensitivities that complicate efforts to construct the type of research program for which Keohane is calling—parallel those of feminists in other disciplines. Drawing on the previous methodological discussion and my chosen case studies, the third part of the article offers some observations on the problems of and possibilities for the use of quantitative methods. While I am aware that conventional social scientific IR uses both quantitative and qualitative methods, I focus on quantitative methods of the type that would be required to answer the research question that Keohane illustratively posed to IR feminists.

1. Feminist Perspectives on Methodology

In contrast to Keohane’s commitment to a broadly defined scientific methodology, feminists claim no single standard of methodological correctness or “feminist way” to carry out research (Reinharz, 1992:243), nor do they see it as desirable to construct one. Many describe their research as a journey, or an archeological dig, that draws on different methods or tools appropriate to the goals of the task at hand rather than to any prior methodological commitment, that is more typical of IR conventional social science (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991:102; Reinharz, 1992:211;

policy and on violence, as well as studies of the effect of the gender gap in voting on foreign policy and the use of force. See for examples, Gallagher (1993), Brandes (1994), Tessler and Warriner (1997), Caprioli (2000), Caprioli and Boyer (2001), and Eichenberg (2003).

⁶ Of course, I cannot (and should not) speak for all IR feminists. As in IR more generally, there is diversity in views on methodological preferences among feminist scholars. For purposes of this article, I define IR feminist research as research that uses gender as a category of analysis and, for the most part, follows the methodological guidelines that I develop below. IR feminists have been defined as “a group of scholars who read and refer to each other’s work” and who identify themselves as scholars of international relations (Locher and Prügl, 2001:115). Following *The American Heritage Dictionary* (3rd ed., 1994), I define “empirical” as “guided by practical experience and not theory.” I distinguish it from “empiricism,” which the dictionary defines as “employment of empirical methods as in science.” Feminists, whose methodological perspectives I am describing, generally reject empiricism.

⁷ Within what I have defined as “method,” discussions do take place of technique-specific methodological assumptions.

Charlesworth, 1994:6; Sylvester, 2002).⁸ In contrast to the social scientific method articulated by Keohane—initially specifying hypotheses that are open to subsequent testing, feminist knowledge-building is an ongoing process, tentative and emergent; feminists frequently describe knowledge-building as emerging through conversation with texts, research subjects, or data (Reinharz, 1992:230).⁹ Many feminist scholars prefer to use the term “epistemological perspective” rather than methodology to indicate the research goals and orientation of an ongoing project, the aim of which is to challenge and rethink what we mean by “knowledge.” Rather than producing research that is likely to convince one’s disciplinary colleagues, as Keohane urges, many feminist scholars emphasize the challenge to and estrangement from conventional knowledge-building because of the tension of being inside and outside one’s discipline at the same time. Given that feminist knowledge has emerged from a deep skepticism about “universal” knowledge claims, which, in reality, are based primarily on men’s lives, feminist knowledge is constructed simultaneously out of disciplinary frameworks and feminist criticisms of these frameworks. Its goal is nothing less than to transform them and the knowledge to which they contribute. Feminist inquiry is a dialectical process—listening to women and understanding how the subjective meaning they attach to their lived experiences are so often at variance with meanings internalized from society at large (Nielsen, 1990:26). Much of feminist scholarship is both transdisciplinary and avowedly political; with the goal of bringing about change, it has explored and sought to understand the unequal gender hierarchies, as well as other hierarchies of power, which exist in all societies, to varying degrees, and their effects on the subordination of women and other disempowered people.¹⁰

Four methodological guidelines inform feminist research perspectives: a deep concern with which research questions get asked and why; the goal of designing research that is useful to women (and also to men) and is both less biased and more universal than conventional research; the centrality of questions of reflexivity and the subjectivity of the researcher; and a commitment to knowledge as emancipation.¹¹ I realize that not all these guidelines are unique to feminism. Reflexive and emancipatory knowledge-building has a long history in critical/hermeneutic traditions.¹² What is unique to feminism, however, is a commitment to asking feminist questions and building knowledge from women’s lives—a commitment that, feminists believe, has wider implications that have the potential to transform existing knowledge frameworks.

⁸ This stands in contrast to one of King et al.’s (1994:16) criteria for choosing a research question: “explicitly locating a research design within the framework of the existing social scientific literature.”

⁹ In her biography of biologist Barbara McClintock, Keller (1983) describes McClintock’s method for researching the transmutation of corn as letting the plants speak rather than trying to impose an answer. Keller talks about McClintock’s “passion for difference” rather than looking for similarities in her data. This tolerance and, indeed, preference for ambiguity contrasts with conventional social science.

¹⁰ “Third-wave feminism,” which began in the early 1990s and was reacting against treating “woman” as an essentialized universal category, has emphasized the different positionality of women according to class, race, culture, and geographical location. IR feminists who emphasize difference and this type of intersectionality might reject attempts to generalize about knowledge from women’s lives. While I agree with these cautions about generalization, I make the assumption that it is possible to construct some generalizable answers to the questions addressed in this article.

¹¹ The following section relies heavily on Harding (1987), Fonow and Cook (1991), and Bloom (1998), but it is striking the extent to which much of the work on feminist methodology and feminist research implicitly or explicitly raises these same issues.

¹² Feminist knowledge-building is closer to what Habermas describes as the historical-hermeneutic sciences than to the empirical-analytic sciences. Whereas the goal of the empirical-analytic sciences is prediction, and hence control, hermeneutic sciences are geared toward producing self-reflective knowledge, the goal of which is emancipation. For an extended discussion of these issues, see Habermas (1971:Appendix).

a. Feminist Research Asks Feminist Questions

A research project should pose a question that is “important” in the “real world” (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994:15; Van Evera, 1997:97). Feminists and IR scholars would probably agree on this statement but disagree as to the definition of what is “important.” They would also have conflicting views of what constitutes the “real world.” However, Sandra Harding has claimed that conventional western scientific progress is judged not on the merit of the questions that are asked but on how questions are answered. It is not in the origin of the scientific problem or hypothesis, but rather in the testing of hypotheses or the “logic of scientific inquiry” that we look to judge the success of science (Harding, 1987:7), a standard that is close to that articulated by Keohane. On the other hand, feminists counter that, from their perspective, *the questions that are asked*—or, more importantly, *those that are not asked*—are as determinative of the adequacy of the project as any answers that we can discover.

The questions that IR has asked since the discipline was founded have typically been about the behavior of states, particularly powerful states and their security-seeking behavior, given an anarchical international environment. Much of the scholarship in international political economy and international institutions has also focused on the behavior of the great powers and their potential, or lack thereof, for international cooperation. These questions are of particular importance for the foreign policy interests of the most powerful states.¹³ A recent IR research question has focused on the effects of political institutions and forms of governance on the prospects for international peace. Much of this research has supported or challenged the claim that democracies are less warlike, at least in their relations with other democracies (Russett, 1993).¹⁴ The question that Keohane poses—whether relative gender equality is likely to have an effect on states’ security-seeking behavior—is a variant of this type of question. It is an important one and it is already being addressed. For example Caprioli (2000) has demonstrated that, according to her measures, domestic gender equality has a pacifying effect on state behavior at the international level (see also Caprioli and Boyer, 2001). This line of research is an important addition to the IR literature that is seeking to understand how domestic democratic institutions shape states’ foreign policies. The questions it asks are state-centric and are designed to provide answers about interstate behavior; the methods it uses emerge out of conventional empirical social science.

Most IR feminists have asked very different questions and used different methodological perspectives within which to provide their answers. While they may seek to understand state behavior, they do so in the context of asking why, in so many parts of the world, women remain so fundamentally disempowered in matters of foreign and military policy. For example, rather than speculate on the hypothetical question as to whether women *might be* more peaceful than men as foreign policymakers, IR feminists have focused on the more immediate problem as to why there *are so few* women in positions of power.¹⁵ Why have wars predominantly been fought by men and how do gendered structures of masculinity and femininity legitimate war and militarism for both women and men?¹⁶ Feminists have also investigated the problematic essentialized association of women with peace, an association that disempowers both women and peace (Sylvester, 1987;

¹³ I am aware that IR has asked other questions about different issues, such as human rights and social movements. Nevertheless, questions coming out of a statist ontology remain at the core of the discipline.

¹⁴ Russett and other IR scholars’ work on the democratic peace emerge out of Kant’s ideas about the peacefulness of democracies. See Doyle (1983).

¹⁵ Speculation on this issue was undertaken by Fukuyama (1998). For a critique of his argument, see Tickner (1999).

¹⁶ As Goldstein (2001) claims, it is remarkable how many books have been written on war and how few of them have asked the question as to why wars are fought predominantly by men.

Tickner, 2001:59). Rather than uncritically assume the state as a given unit of analysis, IR feminists have investigated the constitutive features of “gendered states” and their implications for the militarization of women’s (and men’s) lives (Peterson, 1992; Enloe, 2000). But the basic questions that remain are why, in just about all societies, are women disadvantaged, politically, socially, and economically relative to men and to what extent is this because of international politics and the global economy? Conversely, in what ways do these hierarchical gendered structures of inequality support the international system of states and contribute to the unevenly distributed prosperity of the global capitalist economy? Although Marxists may be cited as the legitimate precursors concerning such issues, these are questions that, in this form, have rarely been asked in IR; while IR scholars would not deny that they are important questions, they would probably deem them at best tangential to the core subject matter of the discipline.

The “message that feminists are seeking to deliver” is, therefore, a more profound challenge to the discipline than Keohane implies; moreover, the questions that feminists deem important are typically not adequately answerable within a conventional social scientific framework. Feminist questions challenge the core assumptions of the discipline and deconstruct its central concepts; many of them are constitutive rather than causal.¹⁷ Working from the discovery of the gendered biases in state-centric security thinking, feminists have redefined the meaning of (in)security to include the effects of structural inequalities of race, class, and gender. Similarly, on the bases of theoretical critiques of the gendered political uses of the public/private distinction, feminists have rearticulated the meaning of democracy and have tried to reconstitute its practice to include the participation of women and men in all the political and economic processes that affect their daily lives (Ackerly, 2000:178–203). While not rejecting in principle the use of quantitative data, feminists have recognized how past behavioral realities have been publicly constituted in state-generated indicators in biased, gendered ways, using data that do not adequately reflect the reality of women’s lives and the unequal structures of power within which they are situated. For this reason they rely on hermeneutic, historical, narrative, and case study methodological orientations rather than on causal analysis of unproblematically defined entities and social relations. Importantly, feminists use gender as a socially constructed and variable category of analysis to investigate these dynamics.¹⁸ They suggest that gender inequality and other social relations of domination and subordination have been among the fundamental building blocks on which, to varying extents, the publicly recognized features of states, their security relationships, and the global economy have been constructed and on which they continue to operate to varying degrees.

In contrast to an ontology that depicts states as individualistic autonomous actors—an ontology typical of conventional social science perspectives on IR and of liberal thinking more generally—feminist ontologies are based on social relations that are constituted by historically unequal political, economic, and social structures.¹⁹ Unlike conventional social science IR, which draws on models from

¹⁷ Causal questions, such as “does *x* cause *y*?” aim to explain changes in the state of some variable or system. Constitutive questions ask how the properties of a system are constituted. Constitutive questions ask “how possible?” or “what?” Wendt (1998:105).

¹⁸ I define gender as a set of socially constructed characteristics that are typically associated with masculinity and femininity. Characteristics associated with an “ideal type” or “hegemonic” masculinity, such as autonomy, rationality, and power, are generally preferred by both men and women over characteristics such as dependence, emotionality, and weakness, associated with femininity. Importantly, gender is not just about women; it is about relations between men and women, relations that are generally hierarchical and unequal. Gender hierarchies, including subordinated masculinities, intersect with, and are compounded by, other hierarchies such as class and race.

¹⁹ This is an important reason why a convergence between post-positivist feminisms and naturalistic social scientific methodologies is so problematic. There is, of course, a wide variety of IR scholarship that also draws on sociologically oriented methodologies. See, for example, Hobden and Hobson (2002).

economics and the natural sciences to explain the behavior of states in the international system, IR feminists have used sociological analyses that begin with individuals and the hierarchical social relations in which their lives are situated. Whereas much of IR is focused on factors that explain the behavior of states, feminists are motivated by the goal of investigating the lives of women within states or international structures in order to change or reconstitute them. Given these different ontological presuppositions and emancipatory goals, evaluation of feminist research according to the scientific standards articulated by Keohane is problematic.

b. Use Women's Experiences to Design Research that Is Useful to Women

A shared assumption of feminist research is that women's lives are important (Reinharz, 1992:241). "Making the invisible visible, bringing the margin to the center, rendering the trivial important, putting the spotlight on women as competent actors, understanding women as subjects in their own right rather than objects for men—all continue to be elements of feminist research" (Reinharz, 1992:248). Too often, women's experiences have been deemed trivial or only important in so far as they relate to the experiences of men and the questions they typically ask.

An important commitment of feminist methodology is that knowledge must be built and analyzed in a way that can be used by women to change whatever oppressive conditions they may face. When choosing a research topic feminists frequently ask what potential it has to improve women's lives (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991:101). Feminists study the routine aspects of everyday life that help sustain gender inequality; they acknowledge the pervasive influence of gender and understand that what has passed as knowledge about human behavior is, in fact, frequently knowledge about male behavior (Cook and Fonow, 1990:73). What is called "common sense" is, in reality, knowledge derived from experiences of men's lives, usually privileged men. Importantly, "male behavior" and "men's lives" are highly dependent on women and other subordinate groups playing all kinds of supportive roles in these lives and behind this behavior: for if there were only (privileged) men, their lives would surely be different. Designing research useful to women involves first deconstructing previous knowledge based on these androcentric assumptions.

Feminist research represents a paradigm shift in the Kuhnian sense in that it sees women, rather than just men, as both the subject matter and creators of knowledge. This leads to anomalies or observations that do not fit received theory. For example, the periodization of history and our understanding of the timing of progressive moments do not always fit with periods that saw progress for women (Nielsen, 1990:19–21). Joyce Nielsen outlines the way in which androcentric theories have been used to explain the origins of human society. By focusing on "man the hunter," theorists associated man's [sic] origins with productive rather than reproductive tasks. Men were seen as responsible for organizing human life and women's roles as gatherers and reproducers were completely ignored. These partial stories are not good science since they rely only on knowledge about men's lives (Nielsen, 1990:16–18). They negate the claim that science is a foolproof procedure that relies on observation to test theories and hypotheses about the world (Nielsen, 1990:16–18). A distinctive feature of feminist research is that it uses women's experiences as an indicator of the "reality" against which conventional hypotheses are tested and unconventional questions are formulated (Harding, 1987:7).²⁰ Feminists also claim that knowledge based on the standpoint of women's

²⁰ I realize that there is a problem with talking about "women's experiences." Too often, they have been generalized and essentialized from the lives of western middle-class women. This tendency reproduces the problem

lives, particularly marginalized women, leads to more robust objectivity, not only because it broadens the base from which we derive knowledge, but also because the perspectives of “outsiders” or marginalized people may reveal aspects of reality obscured by more orthodox approaches to knowledge-building.²¹

Designing IR research of special use to women involves considerable paradigm shifts. While the role of women as reproducers, caregivers, and unpaid workers has been largely ignored in conventional economic analysis, it is central to feminist concerns. Marilyn Waring has documented how national income data ignore reproductive and caring tasks. She describes the daily routine of a girl in Zimbabwe who works at household tasks from 4 am to 9 pm but who is officially classified as “economically inactive” or “unoccupied” (Waring, 1988:15–16). Yet national income concepts, variables, and empirical data, which ignore these reproductive and caring tasks, are used by political elites to make public policy. Although the home has been defined as a feminine space devoid of work since the industrial revolution, women in the home are engaged in various productive and reproductive tasks, such as domestic service, homework, and caring and reproductive labor. These paid and unpaid tasks are crucial to the maintenance of the global capitalist economy (Chin, 1998; Prügl, 1999).

Making visible that which was previously invisible has led IR feminists to investigate military prostitution and rape as tools of war and instruments of state policy (Moon, 1997; Enloe, 2000). This not only leads to redefinitions of the meaning of security but also to an understanding of how the security of the state and the prosperity of the global economy are frequently dependent on the insecurity of certain individuals, often women’s, lives. In bringing to light these multiple experiences of women’s lives, feminist researchers also claim that the research they conduct cannot, and should not, be separated from their identities as researchers and their efforts to reconstitute their own identities and relationships in a more equitable fashion.

c. Reflexivity

Most feminist research insists that the inquirer be placed in the same critical plane as the subject matter. “Only in this way can we hope to produce understandings and explanations which are free of distortion from the unexamined beliefs of social scientists themselves” (Harding, 1987:9). In contrast to conventional social scientific methods, Harding believes that acknowledging the subjective element in one’s analysis, which exists in all social science research, actually increases the objectivity of the research. Similarly, Cook and Fonow (1990:76) reject the assumption that maintaining a gap between the researcher and the research subject produces more valid knowledge; rather they advocate a participatory research strategy that emphasizes a dialectic between the researcher and the researched throughout the project. Feminists struggle with the issue of power differentials between the researcher and her subjects.

What Reinharz refers to as a “reflexive attitude” has developed in reaction to androcentric research with its claims to value neutrality. Personal experience is considered an asset for feminist research; in their texts, many feminist researchers describe how they have been motivated to conduct projects that stem from their own lives and personal experiences.²² Often the researcher will reflect on what she

that feminists have with androcentric knowledge. Postcolonial feminists have been important in challenging and critiquing these tendencies. For an early example, see Mohanty (1991).

²¹ It is frequently the case that those who are subordinated or marginalized have a greater understanding of the lives of their oppressors than vice versa. For an elaboration on this idea from the standpoint of Black feminist thought, see Collins (1991:36).

²² This stands in contrast to King et al.’s (1994:15) statement that, “[P]ersonal reasons are neither necessary nor sufficient justifications for the choice of a topic. In most cases they should not appear in our scholarly writings.”

has learnt during the research process, on her “identification” with the research subjects, and on the personal traumas and difficulties that the research may have involved. For example, in her research on the in/security of Mayan women in Guatemala, Stern-Peterson (1998:75) reflects on her ethical obligation to her research subjects and her attempts to co-create a text in which the narrators can claim authorship of their own stories. This re-writing of (in)security using the voices of marginalized lives constitutes a political act that can challenge dominant and oppressive ways of documenting these lives. Many feminists who conduct interview research acknowledge an intellectual debt to British sociologist Ann Oakley, who proposed “a feminist ethic of commitment and egalitarianism in contrast with the scientific ethic of detachment and role differentiation between researcher and subject” (Reinharz, 1992:27; see also Bloom, 1998). Whereas personal experience is thought by conventional social science to contaminate a project’s objectivity, feminists believe one’s awareness of one’s personal position in the research process to be a corrective to “pseudo-objectivity.” Rather than bias they see it as a necessary explanation of the researcher’s standpoint that serves to strengthen the standards of objectivity, resulting in “strong objectivity” or “robust reflexivity” (Harding, 1991:142; Reinharz, 1992:258; Harding, 1998:189). Many feminists also believe in the necessity of continual reflection on and critical scrutiny of one’s own methods throughout the research project, allowing for the possibility that the researcher may make methodological adjustments along the way (Ackerly, 2000). For feminists, one of the primary goals of this commitment to experiential and reflexive knowledge-building has been the hope that their research projects might contribute to the improvement of women’s lives, at least in part through the empowerment of their research subjects.

d. Knowledge as Emancipation

“Feminism supports the proposition that women should transform themselves and the world” (Soares quoted in Ackerly, 2000:198). Since many feminists do not believe that it is possible to separate thought from action and knowledge from practice, they claim that feminist research cannot be separated from the historical movement for the improvement of women’s lives out of which it emerged (Mies, 1991:64). If the aim of feminist research is to empower women, then the researcher must be actively engaged in political struggle and be aware of the policy implications of her work.²³ Pursuing social change involves uncovering “practical knowledge” from people’s everyday lives. This type of knowledge-building has parallels with participatory action research. Stephen Toulmin contrasts participatory action research, which he claims grows out of Aristotelian ethics and practical reasoning, with what he terms the High Science model with its Platonic origins, a model that is closer to conventional social scientific IR. The product of participatory action research is the creation of practical knowledge that emphasizes the improvement of practice rather than of theory. Toulmin sees the disciplines closest to this type of research as being history and anthropology with their traditions of participant observation that grow out of local action, the goal of which is changing the situation (Toulmin, 1996).

Feminists frequently engage in participant observation. They are generally suspicious of Cartesian ways of knowing, or the High Science model, which depicts human subjects as solitary and self-subsistent and where knowledge is obtained through measurement rather than sympathy. Feminists tend to believe that emotion and intellect are mutually constitutive and sustaining rather than

²³ Of course, social scientific IR is also concerned that its research be prescriptive and useful for policy purposes, see Van Evera (1997:17–21). But since feminism has been engaged in understanding and seeking to overthrow oppressive social hierarchies that subordinate women, the policy implications are typically more radical.

oppositional forces in the construction of knowledge (Code, 1991:47). Maria Mies contrasts feminist research, which she claims takes place directly within life's processes, with what she calls an alienated concept of empiricism where "research objects" have been detached from their real-life surroundings and broken down into their constituent parts (Mies, 1991:66). She describes her research among rural women workers of Nalgonda, India, as sharing as far as possible their living conditions and allowing them to carry out their own research on the researchers. Her findings were translated into Telugu so that they could be used for the betterment of the society. Mies claims that this reciprocal exchange of experiences gave these women so much courage that they could tackle problems of sexual violence in new ways and come up with different solutions, thereby getting beyond their victim status (Mies, 1991:73; see also Ackerly, 2000:ch.1).²⁴ Conventional social science IR would rightly claim that its knowledge-building is also a contribution to the betterment of society; indeed, IR scholars from all methodological perspectives have been driven to ask research questions that can help find ways to diminish violent conflict and enhance cooperation. Nevertheless, the ideal research practice of conventional social science IR is to remain detached and, to the greatest extent possible, value-neutral and separate from political action.²⁵

2. Using these Methodological Guidelines: Some Feminist Examples

These four methodological guidelines, typical of feminist research, stand in contrast to the methodological criteria for social science research outlined by Keohane. Their emphasis on designing questions that are useful for women's lives, their insistence that objectivity can be strengthened through acknowledgment of the subjectivity of the researcher, and their explicit linking of theory with social action and social change do not accord with the criteria for a successful research program as outlined by Keohane. While most of them are drawn from the work of scholars in disciplines, such as anthropology and sociology, whose subject matter is focused on studying human social relations rather than statist international politics, the degree to which many IR feminists have demonstrated similar methodological sensibilities is nevertheless striking.

I shall now discuss two "second generation" feminist IR texts, exploring their methodological orientations as well as the research methods they use.²⁶ I have chosen these two as exemplary of the kind of methodological orientation I have outlined because each is concerned with theorizing the state and its security-seeking practices—one from a political/military standpoint, and the other from a political economy orientation. Katharine Moon's *Sex Among Allies* deals with national security policy, an issue central to IR, but through the lens of military prostitution, a subject not normally considered part of the discipline. Christine Chin's *In Service and Servitude* deals with issues of development and the international political economy, but it does so through an examination of the lives of female domestic servants in Malaysia and state policies with respect to regulating their lives. Both these scholars

²⁴ For a reflective account of her own research on the UN Peacekeeping mission in Cambodia that problematizes this issue of empowering research subjects, see Whitworth (2001).

²⁵ I use the term "value-neutral" to describe a social scientific tradition going back at least to Weber, which, while it acknowledges that research is always motivated by a commitment to certain values, recognizes that "the investigator . . . should keep unconditionally separate the establishment of empirical facts and his [sic] own practical evaluations . . ." (Weber, 1949:11). For further elaboration on Weber's views on value-neutrality, see Ringer (1997:ch.5). For a generation of IR discipline-defining IR scholars coming out of the experience of the value-corrupted knowledge claims of fascist Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, such a commitment is understandable. Values motivate all kinds of negative as well as positive outcomes, an issue with which feminists need to engage further.

²⁶ "Second generation" is a term that has come to be used in feminist IR to refer to empirical case studies that have followed "first-generation" feminist critiques of IR theory which challenged the assumptions, concepts, and methodologies of the IR discipline from a variety of feminist perspectives. There is, of course, considerable overlap. Many first generation feminists are engaged in empirical work and vice versa.

start their research from the lives of some of the most marginalized, disempowered women and demonstrate how their lives and work impact on, and are impacted by, national security and the global economy. Both use ethnographic methods and participant observation to conduct in-depth case studies, methods not typical of IR.²⁷ Both express the hope that their research will help improve the lives of the women they study as well as expose hierarchical, exploitative social structures upon which states and their security policies are built.

a. Sex Among Allies

In *Sex Among Allies*, Katharine Moon takes up a little examined subject and one not normally considered part of the discipline of IR—prostitution camps around U.S. military bases in the Republic of Korea during the early 1970s. She argues that the clean-up of these camps by the Korean government, which involved imposing health standards on and monitoring of women prostitutes, was directly related to establishing a more hospitable environment for American troops at a time when the United States was in the process of pulling its troops out of Korea as part of the strategy, articulated in the Nixon Doctrine, to place more of the U.S. security burden on regional allies. Through an examination of relevant United States and Republic of Korea government documents and interviews with government officials and military personnel in both states, Moon links efforts to certify the health of prostitutes to policy discussions between the two states about the retention of military bases at the highest level. The challenge for Moon is to show how prostitution, a private issue normally considered outside the boundaries of international politics, is linked to national security and foreign policy. In so doing, she asks questions not normally asked in IR such as what factors helped create and maintain military prostitution and for what ends? She also questions the accepted boundaries that separate private sexual relations from politics among nations and shows how prostitution can be a matter of concern in international politics and a bargaining tool for two alliance partners who were vastly unequal in conventional military power (Moon, 1997:13). Moon demonstrates how private relations among people and foreign relations between governments inform and are informed by each other (Moon, 1997:2).²⁸

Moon's analysis led her to rethink the meaning of national security. Claiming that it was the desire of the Korean government to make a better environment for American troops, rather than an effort to improve the conditions under which prostitutes lived and worked, that motivated the government to improve the conditions of the camps, Moon demonstrates how the government's weakness at the international level vis-à-vis the United States caused it to impose authoritarian and sexist control at the domestic level. Moon's evidence supports the broader feminist claim that the security of the state is often built on the insecurity of its most vulnerable populations and their unequal relationships with others, in this case on the lives of its most impoverished and marginalized women. Ironically, while many of these women felt betrayed by the Korean government and its national security policies, many of them saw the state as their only possible protector against the violence they suffered at the hands of U.S. soldiers. Lack of protection was blamed

²⁷ Of course, qualitative case studies are also carried out in social science IR. In fact they are the subject of King, Keohane and Verba's methodological text. However, such case studies usually use structured focused comparisons or process-tracing methods.

²⁸ In a personal conversation with this author, Moon described her work as being at the intersection of IR and comparative politics. She noted that her research has been more widely recognized in comparative politics and attributed it to the fact that comparative politics asks questions different from IR. Much of IR feminist empirical research is situated at this intersection although most of these scholars would claim IR as their intellectual training ground.

on the weakness of their own state.²⁹ Moon concludes that the women saw national sovereignty, or the ability to stand up to the U.S., as a means to empower their own lives (Moon, 1997:158). Moon's study challenges the conventional meaning and composition of national (in)security practices; it also challenges us to think about how the relational identities of states are constituted and how often policies deemed necessary for national security can cause insecurity for certain citizens.

Moon's choice of research topic carried considerable personal risk. In reflecting on her role as researcher, Moon speaks of how her frequenting of shanty towns during her research meant that she herself became morally suspect. She was cautioned about publishing her work lest people question her moral character. Getting women to speak was difficult, and Moon frequently had to use intermediaries because of the feeling of shame that talking about their experiences evoked in many of these women. Many of them had little concept of the structure of a research interview and frequently expressed the view that their opinions were unimportant and not worth recording. Moon states that she did not aim to provide likely-to-be-distorted (by the Korean state) statistical evidence but to show, through narrating the women's lives, how heavily involved they were in U.S./Korean relations and thus of importance to international politics. While she aims to say something new about state security practices and international politics, one of her principal goals is to give voice to people who were not considered as having anything worthwhile to say, thereby helping to improve their lives. She talks of her work as helping to lift the curtains of invisibility of these women's lives and "offer these pages as a passageway for their own voices," thus allowing them to construct their own identities rather than having them imposed on them by societal norms and taken-for-granted definitions—definitions that are often imposed when conventional data are used (Moon, 1997:2). Moon concludes that the expansion of the definition of political actor to include individuals without significant resources or control over issues—those not normally defined as actors by IR—can challenge governments' claims to their exclusive definitions of national interest and national security (Moon, 1997:160).

b. In Service and Servitude

Christine Chin's text examines the importation of Filipina and Indonesian female domestic workers into Malaysia, beginning in the 1970s, and how their labor supported a Malaysian modernization project based on an export-led development model in the context of the neoliberal global economy. She asks two basic questions of her study both of which are linked to women's lives: first, why is unlegislated domestic service, an essentially premodern social institution with all its attendant hardships, increasingly prevalent in the context of constructing a modern developed society by way of export-led development? And second, why is there an absence of public concern regarding the less-than-human conditions in which some domestic servants work (Chin, 1998:4)? To answer these questions, Chin rejects a "problem-solving" approach which, she claims, would focus on explaining foreign female domestic labor as a consequence of wage differentials between the labor-sending and labor-receiving countries; instead she adopts what she terms a

²⁹ Moon notes that this finding is quite at odds with feminist suspicions of the state, which she dates back to Virginia Woolf's famous indictment of the state's role in war-making. Moon claims that Woolf's indictment is quite middle-class and western. Those who challenge state sovereignty usually live in wealthy countries and are socially, intellectually, and economically empowered enough to talk about opting out of the state (Moon 1997:158). The high level of awareness of Moon's subjects about the national security policies of the Korean state supports the claim that marginalized people have a deep level of understanding of the privileged world of which they are not a part. See footnote 21.

critical interdisciplinary approach.³⁰ According to Chin, problem-solving lacks historicity and divides social life into discrete, mutually exclusive dimensions and levels that have little bearing on one another. Chin's preference for a critically oriented methodology is based on her desire to examine the relationship between domestic service and the developmental state and its involvement with all levels of society from the household to the transnational. The goal of this examination is to expose power relations with the intention of changing them (Chin, 1998:5).

Chin asks how is it that paid domestic reproductive labor—usually performed by women—supports, shapes, and legitimizes the late-twentieth-century developmental state. As she notes, there has been much work on the Asian “developmental state” and its mechanisms of coercive power but little work on how the state has used policies that regulate transnational migrant domestic labor as part of this coercive strategy. Using a Gramscian framework, Chin claims that the developmental state is not neutral but an expression of class, ethnic, racial, and gender-based power that it exercises through both coercion and cooptation of forces that could challenge it. The state's involvement in regulating domestic service and policing domestic workers in the name of maintaining social order is not just a personal, private issue but one that serves this goal, as the state can thereby provide the good life for certain of its (middle-class) citizens through repressing others. Since proof of marriage and children is necessary in order for middle-class families to be eligible for foreign domestic workers, domestic service is an institution through which the state has normalized the middle-class adoption of the nuclear family (Chin, 1998:198). Winning support of the middle-class family by promoting policies that support materialist consumption, including the paid labor of domestic servants, has helped to lessen ethnic divisions in Malaysia and increased loyalty to the state and hence its security.

Chin (1998:17–18) questions the assumption, implicit in economic theory, that capitalism is the natural order of life; she claims that critical analysis is designed to deconstruct this objective world and reveal the unequal distribution and exercise of power that inheres in and continues to constitute social relations, institutions, and structures. Thus, many of the questions that Chin asks in her research are constitutive rather than causal. She rejects causal answers that rely solely on economic analysis of supply and demand to explain the increase in the flow of foreign domestic servants into Malaysia in the 1970s and 1980s, in favor of answers that examine the constitution of the developmental state as a coercive structure that gains its legitimacy through seeking support of the middle classes for its export-oriented development at the expense of poor women's lives.

Chin is explicit in positioning herself in the context of her work. She tells us that she came to her study through her own background as a member of an “upper class Malaysian Chinese extended family . . . whose family members were served 24 hours a day by nannies, housemaids, and cooks” (Chin, 1998:xi). Having been motivated to carry out this research after witnessing the abuse of a neighbor's Filipina servant, Chin lived in various neighborhoods of Kuala Lumpur where she could observe working conditions and where she heard many stories of mistreatment and abuse. She spoke with activists who counseled these workers and began to reflect on her own privileged status and the tensions between her class status and being an academic researcher. She had to confront the relationship between domestic service and the political economy of development, a relationship made irrelevant by the dominant discursive practices that characterized a western, mainstream education on global politics.

³⁰ Chin is following Cox's (1981:129–130) famous distinction between problem-solving theory which, according to Cox, accepts the prevailing order as its framework, and critical theory, which stands apart from that order and asks how it came about with the goal of changing it. Keohane (1998:194) rejects this distinction in favor of a continuum.

Chin's research grew out of her reflection on her own privileged status, her witnessing of the exploitation of those she studied, and her determination to do something about it. She observed how her subjects' everyday lives helped shape decision making at the national level as well as how their lives were affected by transnational forces beyond their control (Chin, 1998:22). While many of the employers with whom she spoke did not see how the research could be of intellectual interest, some of the workers asked Chin to publish her work so that the world could know about the harsh conditions under which they worked and lived. Chin (1998:xvii) acknowledges that coming to know this world forced her to rethink the relationship between theory and practice. She also speaks of constructing her own identity as a scholar as the interviewing stage of the project progressed. Questioning "common sense," as well as conventional economics, Chin suggests that the ultimate objective of her study is to help ascertain potentialities for emancipation from the constraints of seemingly natural social relations, institutions, and structures (Chin, 1998:27). She also defines her project as emancipatory insofar as it attempts to undo received epistemological boundaries and "social data" collection practices that ignore or silence marginalized voices and fail to present social change in all its complexities (Chin, 1998:29).

Chin describes her research method as "a non-positivist manner of recovering and generating knowledge" (Chin, 1998:20). She contrasts this with feminist empiricism, which, as I claimed earlier, may correct for certain androcentric biases, but risks distilling the complexities of social life into a series of hypotheses that can be labeled as truth (Chin, 1998:20). While acknowledging the usefulness of attitudinal surveys, Chin worries that they may constrain an understanding of the complexities of various forces that shape the performance and consumption of reproductive labor. Chin conducted her research through archival analysis and open-ended interviews, relying on fieldwork notes as evidence. This narrative method allowed Chin's subjects, like Moon's, to recount their lives in their own words and speak about any issue they pleased, thereby constructing their own identities and challenging identities that had been constructed by others. Chin reflects critically on the interview process as it proceeds; she notes how frequently employers would try to co-opt her by establishing a common relationship. She also reflects on the need to be continually questioning what she had previously taken for granted in everyday life, lending support to the epistemological position, supported by many feminists, that there is no social reality out there independent of the observer.

Like many IR feminists, Chin and Moon reject conventional social science methodology outlined by Keohane in favor of qualitative (single) case studies that rely on more empathetic, interpretive methodologies. They use open-ended ethnographic research that relies on narrative accounts of the lives of women at the margins of society, accounts that they prefer over statistical analysis of government-generated data, in which the experiences that Chin and Moon documented are barely reflected. Indeed, no state agency could be convinced to acknowledge the systematic existence of such problems associated with prostitution and the maltreatment of women, let alone collect and publish comparable data on their magnitude.³¹ With the goal of making certain women's lives more visible, these studies begin their analysis at the micro-level and analyze issues not normally

³¹ Katharine Moon emphasized this point in a personal conversation with this author. She first envisaged conducting a comparative case study of several countries but found that, since data were practically non-existent, it would have been an impossible task. She emphasized that much of feminist IR is beginning the trench work and compilation of data needed before comparative case studies can be undertaken. These challenges contrast with Van Evera's (1997:79) advice to students selecting a Ph.D. dissertation topic—to choose data-rich cases. Van Evera asserts that the more data we have, the more questions we can answer. But feminists are more concerned with the questions that are *not* asked because of the lack of data.

considered part of IR. Looking for meaningful characterizations rather than causes, they seek to understand the foreign policies of states and international politics more generally through the telling of stories of lives rendered insecure by states striving to increase their own security or wealth. Moon documents the Republic of Korea's authoritarian behavior with respect to certain citizens as a necessary response to its weak and dependent position vis-à-vis the United States. Looking to promote internal stability and economic growth, Malaysia sought to increase the material welfare of certain of its citizens, including certain middle-class women, at the expense of the security of other women's lives. These are nuanced findings that could not be discovered through the use of conventional political or economic indicators.

Both studies attempt to have their research subjects claim their own identities through the telling of their own stories. They see this as a way of rejecting the identities that society has bestowed upon these women, identities that often form the basis of state policies that may render their lives more insecure. Both authors use gender as a category of analysis to help them understand how individuals, families, states, societies, and the international system are constituted through, and in resistance against, hierarchical and often oppressive power relations. While neither of them makes specific reference to the literature on methodology that I outlined in part one, the degree to which their methodological sensitivities parallel these more general feminist research practices is striking.³²

3. Quantitative Research: Problems and Possibilities

As these two case studies have demonstrated, fitting women and other marginalized people into methodologically conventional quantitative frameworks has been problematic. Many of the experiences of women's lives have not yet been documented or analyzed either within social science disciplines or by states. Traditional ways in which data are collected, categorized, and analyzed do not lend themselves to answering many of the questions that feminists such as Moon and Chin raise. The choices that states make about which data to collect is a political act; yet the data that are available to scholars and, more importantly the data that are not, shape which research questions are answered and even which questions are asked. Marilyn Waring describes how national accounting systems have been shaped and reshaped to help states frame their national security policies—specifically to understand how to pay for wars.³³ Political decisions about public policy are made on the basis of data that policy elites choose to collect (Waring, 1988:302). In national accounting systems no value is attached to the environment, to unpaid work, to the reproduction of human life, or to its maintenance or care, tasks generally undertaken by women (Waring, 1988:3–4). Under the guise of value-free science, the economics of accounting has constructed a reality, which believes that “value” results only when individuals (predominantly men) interact with the marketplace (Waring, 1988:17–18).

Mies (1991:67) also argues that quantitative research methods are instruments for structuring reality in certain ways. Under the guise of “objectivity,” statistical procedures can serve to legitimize and universalize certain power relations because they give a “stamp of truth” to the definitions upon which they are based. For example, the term “male head of household” came out of a definition of a traditional western, middle-class, patriarchal family, but it does not correspond with present reality given that a majority of women either work in the waged sector to

³² The one exception is that Chin does reference Sandra Harding's work on methodology.

³³ Waring (1988:55) makes reference to a claim by statistical historians Joseph Duncan and William Shelton that a 1941 paper entitled “Measuring National Income as Affected by War,” by Milton Gilbert, was the first clear published statement of the term gross national product (GNP).

supplement family income or are themselves heads of households. However, it is a term that has been used, either explicitly or implicitly, in national accounting procedures and by international aid agencies and thus has had significant consequences for women's classification as workers, receivers of social benefits, or refugees. Women's work, often unpaid, as farmers, workers in family businesses, and caregivers is frequently overlooked in the compilation of labor statistics. The female domain of production and reproduction that provides the necessary infrastructure for the male world is largely invisible and unconceptualized (Acker, Barry, and Esseveld, 1991:134).³⁴ Redefinitions of labor to include reproductive and caring labor would not only make women's work more visible, it would also give us a deeper understanding of the workings of the global economy that could not function as it does without this substantial body of unremunerated work.³⁵ Feminist wariness with respect to statistical analysis results both from a realization that the questions they ask can rarely be answered by using standard classifications of available data and from an understanding that such data may actually conceal the relationships they deem important.³⁶

These concerns, along with the methodological predispositions described in the first part of this article, raise important issues concerning statistical measures of gender (in)equality, measures that are important for answering the research question asked by Keohane as to whether states with highly unequal gendered hierarchies would behave differently internationally from those with less unequal domestic social structures. Since Keohane raised this question in 1998, there have been attempts to answer it using quantitative methods. For example, Caprioli and Boyer (2001) have used quantitative social science data and statistical methods—the International Crises Behavior data set and multinomial logistic regression—to investigate whether there is a relationship between domestic gender equality and states' use of violence internationally. Gender equality is measured in terms of the percentage of women in parliament and the number of years that women had the right to vote at the time of the beginning of the conflict. Their results show that, according to their measures of gender equality, the severity of violence used by states in international crises decreases as domestic gender equality increases.³⁷

Caprioli and Boyer admit that social equality is difficult to measure cross-culturally (see also Caprioli, 2000:164). They agree that, as yet, there are no measures to gauge social pressures associated with gendered role expectations that keep women from certain employment opportunities or out of positions of political power (Caprioli and Boyer, 2001:56).³⁸ In order to be able to demonstrate empirically that women's leadership would have any effect on foreign policy, certain

³⁴ According to UNDP's "rough estimates" in 1995, if unpaid activities were valued at prevailing wages, they would amount to \$16 trillion or about 70% of world output. Almost 69% of this figure represents women's work (Beneria, 2003:74).

³⁵ Peterson (2003) has begun this task with her reconceptualization of the global economy in terms of the reproductive, virtual, and productive sectors.

³⁶ For example, even if cross-national aggregate conventional measures of wages and work conditions were available, they would not give an adequate picture of the degree of gender inequality and gender oppression demonstrated in the Chin and Moon case studies. It is the case, however, that statistics, often UN statistics, have been used by some feminists for political purposes even as these same data have been critiqued by other feminists, both for their incompleteness and their tendency to homogenize women.

³⁷ This research builds on Caprioli (2000) and also on Tessler and Warriner (1997), who showed a positive correlation between favorable attitudes toward gender equality and favorable attitudes toward peaceful conflict resolution by both women and men in certain states in the Middle East. See also Eichenburg (2003), who investigates the extent to which gender differences have the potential to be a significant factor in the political decisions of states to use military force.

³⁸ This caution is supported by Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris's empirical study of global attitudes toward gender equality, which stresses the importance of cultural barriers over structural and institutional ones when explaining the lack of women in positions of political power (Inglehart and Norris, 2003:133). They conclude that understanding why women do better in attaining political power in certain societies than others, even those with similar political systems, has proved elusive using existing aggregate data (Inglehart and Norris, 2003:144). The

feminists have argued that there would need to be significant numbers of women in leadership positions—30% has sometimes been mentioned. Indeed, Caprioli and Boyer (2001:507) admit that lone female leaders may be pressured to act more aggressively than their male counterparts in order to legitimize their leadership positions. They also refer to the difficulty of measuring the impact of female leaders—leaders who may be constrained by operation in male structures—on policy outcomes. This kind of impact is hard to demonstrate with conventional correlational data. While Caprioli and Boyer feel that these obstacles do not hinder their basic finding—that the severity of violence used by a state in an international crisis decreases as domestic gender equality increases—many feminists would see these problems of measuring gender equality as too serious to allow for such claims to be made, given that the social processes lying behind these correlations remain unexamined.

Feminists claim that the lack of gender equality, which they believe exists in all states, albeit to widely varying extents, cannot be understood without reference to historical, gender-laden divisions between public and private spheres. At the time of the foundation of the modern western state, and coincidentally the beginnings of global capitalism, women were not included as citizens but consigned to the private space of the household; thus, they were removed both from the public sphere of politics and the economic sphere of production (Peterson, 1992:40–44). Women were not included in the original social contract by most contract theorists in the western tradition; rather, they were generally subsumed under male heads of households with no legal rights of their own (Pateman, 1988). This public/private distinction, upon which the modern western state was founded, has set up hierarchical gendered structures and role expectations, that impede the achievement of true gender equality, even in states where most legal barriers to women's equality have been removed. For example, when women enter the workforce, they do so with the expectation that they will continue to perform necessary reproductive and caring tasks, thus increasing their workload significantly because of this double burden. More importantly, this reinforces an expectation that may carry over into the types of paid employment, such as childcare and social services, considered most suitable for them. When women enter politics, particularly in areas of foreign policy, they enter an already constructed masculine world where role expectations are defined in terms of adherence to preferred masculine attributes such as rationality, autonomy, and power.

It is for such reasons that women continue to be under-represented in positions of political and economic power even in societies long committed to formal equality and equal opportunity legislation. Measures, such as women's participation in politics and percentage of women in the workforce, do not adequately capture the fact that states have been constituted historically as gendered entities with all the attendant problems that this has created for women. Gender inequality, therefore, is not a single variable that can be adequately indexed or measured statistically; rather, it is a historically contingent, complex confluence of socio-cultural power relationships, including associated subjective understandings.³⁹ Such relationships are not easily transferable into numerical data.

It is for these reasons that many feminists have chosen the qualitative case-study methods of the type that I have described—as well as other methods that can be

World Values Survey, on which their research is based, is an attempt to document and compare values cross-culturally using attitudinal surveys.

³⁹ These are “social facts” as opposed to “natural kinds.” Therefore, they require different types of explanation from those modeled on the natural sciences. Useful for this purpose is Ruggie's (1998:94) discussion of Polkinghorne's “narrative explanation,” a method of interrogative reasoning in which a dialectic process takes place between events that allow them to be grasped as parts of one story that is believable to others looking at the same events.

subsumed under methodological post-positivist labels.⁴⁰ This does not mean, however, that feminists should be averse to using quantitative measures of gender inequality and gender oppression in appropriate ways, as improved partial measures of these phenomena are becoming available.

Because of the efforts of women's international organizing, especially around the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985), the UN began to disaggregate data by sex thus helping to bring the plight of women to the world's attention. The United Nations Human Development Report of 1995 focused specifically on women and gender issues. In that report, the United Nations Human Development Programme (1996) first introduced its gender development index (GDI) based on gender differences in life expectancy, earned income, illiteracy, and enrollment in education. It also introduced the gender empowerment measure (GEM) based on the proportion of women in parliament and in economic leadership positions (Benería, 2003:19–20; Seager, 2003:12–13). While still crude indicators, the GDI and the GEM, do give us comparative cross-national evidence about the status of women relative to men, which can be used to conduct comparative analysis and to suggest directions for improvement.⁴¹ It is data such as these, which go beyond traditional categorizations of national accounts that support feminists' claims about gender inequality and help efforts to pressure states and international organizations to design and support public policies that are better for women and other disadvantaged people. They also provide evidence for transnational movements lobbying for the improvement of human rights. Economic data have also provided important evidence for the growing field of feminist economics and the large body of literature on gender in development (see e.g., Benería, 2003). Because of efforts by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the Statistical Office of the UN, a consensus has been reached about the need to measure unpaid domestic work through the use of time-use surveys (Benería, 2003:141).

Nevertheless, feminists, who are willing to use indicators of gender inequality and gender oppression descriptively, are often reluctant to take the next step in conventional explanatory social scientific quantitative analysis. Causally oriented explanations of gender inequality that depend on replicable observable regularities are not consistent with feminist understandings of gender as a socially constructed hierarchical relationship of power. Given their skepticism as to the adequacy of causally oriented statistical analyses for understanding or explaining such relationships, it is unlikely that most IR feminists will rely heavily on quantitative data to support and enhance their efforts to understand how states and the global economy are historically constituted as gendered structures and the implications this has for the lives and well being of their citizens.

4. Conclusion

In this article, I have offered some reasons why most IR feminists have chosen to conduct their research outside positivist social scientific frameworks. I have suggested that many of the questions they have posed are not yet answerable within such frameworks. While there is no such thing as a feminist method, there are distinct feminist perspectives on methodology that have emerged out of a deep skepticism about traditional knowledge, knowledge that is based largely on certain privileged men's lives and men's experiences. The two case studies that I discussed

⁴⁰ Feminists have been critical of case-study methods too as Chin and Moon's reflections indicate. Of course, second-generation IR feminists are also using other methods. For example, Hooper (2001) uses a textual analysis of *The Economist* newspaper to analyze masculinity in international relations.

⁴¹ Seager's (2003) *Atlas of Women in the World* provides a wide range of data on gender inequality in map form, much of it from UN and other international and regional organizations' data. See also UNIFEM (2002).

illustrate the parallels between IR feminists' methodological sensitivities and these methodological perspectives from other disciplines. These IR feminists are asking questions about the linkages between the everyday lived experiences of women and the constitution and exercise of political and economic power at the state and global level. Specifically, they seek to understand how gender and other hierarchies of power affect those at the margins of the system. Their findings reveal states constituted in gendered ways whose security-seeking practices frequently render the lives of their most powerless citizens more insecure. Such redefinitions of security challenge us to think about tensions between state and human security.

IR feminists are asking questions that have rarely or never been asked before in IR; moreover, as I have demonstrated, they are questions that probably *could not* be asked within the epistemological boundaries of positivist social scientific approaches to the discipline. Feminists share with other social constructivists an interest in constitutive questions; however, they are unique in asking questions about socially constructed gender hierarchies and the implications of these gender hierarchies for the behavior of states and the functioning of the global economy. Feminist answers to these questions demonstrate how gender is a pervasive feature of international life and international politics, the implications of which go well beyond its effects on women.

For these reasons, and others that I have discussed, in the foreseeable future at least, IR feminists are likely to favor hermeneutic and interpretive methodologies that expose and help explain these structural relationships. They are also likely to prefer methods that allow subjects to document their own experiences in their own terms. Frequently, these are experiences about which there are little available data since they have either been ignored or categorized in ways that deny their subjects their own identities. As more relevant data become available, it is likely that many feminists will use them to enrich their textured accounts of the lives of those who have not been previously considered as subjects of knowledge. Constructing knowledge from the standpoint of the outsider provides us not only with a wider perspective but also with a unique perspective on knowledge about insiders. Since it offers us a more complex picture of reality, practical knowledge, or knowledge from below, has the potential to extend the boundaries and even transform the discipline in ways that are beneficial for everyone.

While feminists have been skeptical of conventional social science methods for reasons I have illustrated, feminists have been open to combining methods and critically reflecting on which of them are the most useful tools for designing and implementing research that will have the most positive impact on women's (and men's) lives. It is likely that IR feminists will continue to take this pragmatic multi-method approach rather than adhere to the single logic of social scientific inquiry defined by Keohane. But these choices are not easy ones; in the United States they carry considerable professional risk as long as the power inequalities and differential reward structures remain so large between those who adhere to conventional social scientific methodologies and those who use alternative ones. Should we not ask on whose terms wider agreements about these methodological issues should be based?

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