Gender Theory in World Politics: Contributions of a Nonfeminist Standpoint?

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While critical feminist theories of international relations (IR) have generated a burgeoning literature on gender in world politics, mainstream international relations theory remains largely silent on gender. This is an unfortunate state of affairs because mainstream scholars both deprive themselves of an important conceptual instrument and deprive knowledge on gender of nonfeminist insights. Although incorporating gender (and sex) would enrich all strands of IR theory, the absence of gender analyses within the emerging literature on norms and identities is particularly conspicuous. If reality is socially constructed and material outcomes depend largely on shared beliefs, the ubiquity and salience of beliefs about sexual difference in areas relevant to IR are worthy of study.

The books discussed here provide illustrative maps of the current terrain in approaches to gender in IR, while demonstrating the gaps within feminist thinking on the subject and the possibilities for generating meaningful dialogue with nonfeminist scholars. IR feminists, most recently exemplified by Ann Tickner’s *Gendering World Politics*, argue that epistemological and normative differ-
ences prevent the mainstream from “taking gender seriously.” Yet feminist IR also contributes to this marginalization by resisting the co-optation of gender as an explanatory framework separate from feminist normative commitments.

The edited book on gender and armed conflict, *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?*, illustrates some of these discursive tendencies within feminist approaches to gender. While ostensibly about *gender*, the contributions actually focus on *women* and their struggles: there is little effort to broaden the scope of *gender* in such a way as to draw in diverse perspectives. While attempting to transcend the stereotype that women are always victims in armed conflict, many of the articles nonetheless rely on normative assumptions that women’s empowerment (rather than promoting gender equality per se, or understanding the character of armed conflict) is the raison d’être of the research.

The question for “mainstreaming” gender in IR is how to put the analytical category of *gender* to work on topics that are not specifically feminist, without undermining the IR feminist agenda. In *War and Gender*, Joshua Goldstein attempts such a synthesis. His work compiles substantive knowledge on how *gender* and the war system constitute one another. But his goal is not to understand, problematize, or alleviate women’s subordination. Instead, he analyzes the gendered underpinnings of the war system to identify leverage points for social and political change. This ambitious project breaks new ground in setting the stage for “conventional” empirical analyses of gender in world politics, but it does not situate gender firmly within conventional IR theory.

To engender dialogue, it would seem that conventional gender theory must be both “conventional” and “theory.” How do we build an integrated framework in such a way as to complement, rather than co-opt, critical feminist theories of gender? I conclude by advocating the integration of gender into “conventional constructivist” literature on norms and identities in world politics.

**Gendering World Politics: A Feminist Project?**

In many ways, *Gendering World Politics* exemplifies feminist IR at its best. It is understandable, grounded in empirical references, and semantically consistent. Tickner speaks to the IR community on its own terms while deconstructing such “gendered” ideas as the state, the nation, and anarchy. She demonstrates the diversity and recent evolutions within IR feminist thought and in the context of the changing issues in the broader discipline. Tickner emphasizes security, political economy, and democratization, and uses a “gender lens” to challenge nearly all the key assumptions in international theory and discourse.

Tickner informs the topic by what she has always framed as a puzzle: the seeming inability of “conventional IR” to engage meaningfully with feminists. She begins the book with theory: far more than a discussion of feminism, she provides a concise summary of the entire disciplinary landscape of IR. Feminist approaches are situated on the critical side of the continuum and in contrast to
conventional IR, with its commitment to empiricism, data-based methods, value-neutrality, and substantive assumptions of states operating under anarchy (p. 149). Critical approaches (including postmodernism, critical theory, historical sociology, and normative theory) see different realities and draw on reflective and interpretive epistemologies. All critical theory contains an emancipatory agenda, as does feminism, yet feminism is distinctive insofar as all feminists “use gender as a central category of analysis” (p. 5).

While IR feminists have defined gender in different ways (and often inconsistently), Tickner views gender primarily as an analytical category. She is not referring to coding male and female, as the label is sometimes misappropriated by terms like the “gender gap” and the “gendered division of labor.” Hers is a social constructivist view of gender that locates “genderedness” in the distributions of ideas regarding men and women—the cultural attributes associated with masculinity and femininity—that prop up the world system. Understanding how it operates—by channeling men and women disproportionately into different institutions, by devaluing attributes and behaviors associated with the feminine, and by underwriting discourses of international affairs—is a key component of understanding world politics per se. “Gendering is a mechanism for distributing social benefits and costs; therefore it is crucial for analyzing global politics and economics” (p. 134).

The puzzle is why so few theorists interested in understanding the world are willing to accord to gender the causal and constitutive role it plays. Tickner argues that even as feminism is increasingly paid lip service and given a respectable nod by the “mainstream,” a healthy engagement between feminists and others is still absent. For Tickner, this can be explained by the gendered nature of the discipline itself, the masculinism of conventional approaches, and very different agendas that feminists and conventional scholars bring to the discipline. Certainly some of this is accurate. But the answer Tickner does not consider lies in the paradox of IR feminism itself. Although she implicitly offers gender as an explanatory theory of world politics, she simultaneously locates gender in IR feminism (pp. 5, 11). If gender theory is inherently feminist, then feminist theory, as a critical theory concerned with emancipation, is explicitly normative: “the key concern for feminist theory is to explain women’s subordination . . . and to seek prescriptions for ending it” (p. 11; also pp. 63, 137).

If gender is seen as synonymous with feminism, this suggests that to take gender seriously means to subscribe to the prescriptive agenda of feminism, an

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1 The converse is not so obvious: all IR feminists have not relied on gender as an analytical category; some simply focus on women, and as Tickner describes, the earliest phase of IR feminism took precisely this “add women and stir” approach. One might speak of gender feminists and nongender feminists. The issue here is that there seem to be few examples of nonfeminist gender theory. By this, I mean scholarship
implication that surely plays a role in silencing comments about gender by those who do not self-identify as feminists within the discipline. Moreover, it does not logically follow: the explanatory claim “gender matters” need not constitute a feminist prescriptive claim and in fact can do the opposite. For example, the claim that beliefs about sexual difference affect social behavior underlies antifeminist arguments for the exclusion of women from nuclear submarine duty.

Framing gender analysis as feminism, in which Tickner is not the only participant, has reduced incentives for scholars not committed to feminism to take gender seriously. The mainstream IR scholar, even if s/he finds arguments about gender compelling, faces an apparent choice between adopting feminist theory to study gender (migrating from establishment to fringe) or joining in the collective marginalization of gender as an explanatory variable and feminism as a normative perspective. Scholars who have engaged or even used gender in their work without subscribing to the feminist agenda have received an icy reception from feminists. It may be, in addition to the limited interest from the mainstream Tickner cites, that not all feminist scholars are as open-minded as Tickner about the utility of cross-turf dialogue. Perhaps this is one impediment to conversations about gender with nonfeminists that Tickner has underemphasized.

The need to fit scholarship on gender into the axiological mold of feminist theory not only has kept nonfeminists out, but also has affected both the substance of IR gender research and its discursive structure. Women’s subordination and victimization is too often assumed by feminists rather than examined that utilizes gender in analysis while lacking one or both other components of feminist theory: an emphasis on women and a critical/interpretive epistemology. See Adam Jones, “Gender and Ethnic Conflict in Ex-Yugoslavia,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17 (1994), which uses gender as critique but emphasizes men’s in addition to women’s issues; and Laura Miller and Charles Moskos, “Humanitarians or Warriors: Race, Gender and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope?” *Armed Forces and Society* 21 (1995); Mary Caprioli, “Gendered Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research* 37, No.1 (2000); Mark Tessler et al., “Further Tests of the Women and Peace Hypothesis,” *International Studies Quarterly* 43, No. 3 (1999). These authors use gender as an instrument in empirical, explanatory analysis within a conventional IR agenda.


contextually, and there is little substantive work on how gender constrains the life chances of “people called men” in different contexts or affects political outcomes more generally. A reading of Tickner’s text, with an eye to the hidden assumptions within feminist discourse, reveals a perpetuation rather than a questioning of certain gender stereotypes. This is indicative not so much of Tickner’s substantive summary but of the linguistic and philosophical structure of the feminist subfield.

For example, the notion that women but not men are located as caretakers (pp. 50, 106) is a gendered construction that should be destabilized, perhaps through an emphasis on “parents” rather than “mothers.” The trope “civilians now account for about 90 percent of war casualties, the majority of whom are women and children” (p. 6) is a gendered construction of the “civilian” that flies in the face of, among other things, refugee statistics and the widespread targeting of civilian men and boys for massacre in armed conflicts around the world. Men as gendered subjects seldom appear in feminist work: of the now numerous IR feminist books on “gender and world politics,” almost none deal explicitly with men and masculinity. When “masculinities” are dealt with, they are conceptualized as a social problem; conversely, “femininities” have been greatly undertheorized, often dropping out of phrases like “men and masculinities . . . and women” (p. 134).

Where the term “gender violence” is used to mean “violence against women” (p. 114), other forms of gender violence—such as against gays, against male partners by women or men, or against children deemed “illegitimate” by a patriarchal system—are rendered invisible, thus truncating the use of gender analytically. When “family violence” is portrayed as violence against women


and children, it obscures abuse of children at the hands of female adults (pp. 63, 113).

The fact that, as Tickner writes, “feminists have been reluctant to take on the question of paid domestic service . . . since it is women who usually employ, and often exploit, other women” suggests the quandary that feminists encounter as simultaneously normative and explanatory researchers. Writing with a declared agenda for promoting the interests of all women, feminists run up against empirical and theoretical difficulties when the results of gender in operation conflict with their normative agenda. Tickner’s comments on the “democratic family,” for example (p. 123), have important implications not just for husband/wife relations, but also for the license women may take with their children. Therefore, it may not follow that understanding gender and overcoming the hierarchies it generates may always coincide with promoting the liberties of women or the “satisfaction of women’s needs” in every context.8

If IR feminism is focused more on some areas of political life than on others, this should not be read as an indictment of the subfield. Like other critical theorists, feminists would be the first to emphasize that no theory is value-neutral and detached from its political agenda. If feminist theory is for the purpose of exposing, addressing, and ending women’s subordination, it will naturally be constructed and channeled in accordance with that agenda. This is not a criticism of feminism (for this agenda is entirely legitimate) so much as it is a challenge to the monopoly of feminist IR on gender studies in IR theory. It is not for feminists to change more than is digestible within the emancipatory framework to which they are committed, but it is the task of those not writing within that framework to recognize and appropriate gender as an analytical instrument, separate from feminism as a critical discourse, within the scope of their own analyses.

Yet many feminists are skeptical of the possibility of nonfeminist gender theory. Such developments have been seen as attempts to “co-opt feminist analyses and to accommodate women within the prevailing conception of IR [that] feminists must resist.”9 This sentiment has been echoed repeatedly in feminist work, especially in response to those few nonfeminist attempts to bring gender into the mainstream. According to this perspective, attempts to incorporate feminism into the mainstream “can be understood as an attempt to favor (certain parts of) the mainstream by dividing and conquering the new opposition.”10

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10 Craig Murphy, “Seeing Women, Recognizing Gender, Recasting International Relations,” International Organization 50 (1996), p. 530. See also Christine Sylvester,
Research on gender in IR faces a conundrum. Feminist approaches—while rich, diverse, and a much needed critique—are substantively narrow as their emphasis is women in world affairs rather than international politics itself. Yet scholars working in nonfeminist traditions face disciplinary barriers to appropriating “gender” in conventional frameworks. Given the significance of gender in world politics and some of the limitations to feminist approaches described above, there are two questions for IR feminists and the broader community: Can IR feminists adjust their frameworks to generate more inclusive analyses while retaining their focus on women’s emancipation? Can nonfeminist scholars interested in gender create a space for generating their own theories of gender in world politics while engaging with rather than substituting for the insights of feminist theory?

Two recent books provide clues. The collection edited by Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark begins by questioning some of the stereotypes in earlier IR feminist work on gender. The editors wish to go beyond the essentializing of women as victims and men as perpetrators of violence, a view that they argue denies women agency, as well as obscures the complexity of gender in armed conflict. The book “aims to contribute to a more comprehensive, global understanding of the complex roles, responsibilities and interests of women and men, whether as victims, perpetrators or actors, in armed conflict and political violence” (p. 4).

A promising agenda, but how well do the chapters in this book actually follow through? Of all the articles, only one chiefly concerns men and masculinity; only two have a roughly balanced gender analysis that emphasizes the effects of armed conflict on the well-being of both men and women. Although “gender” is in the title, it seems that women and women’s mobilization remain the dependent variables. Lip service is given to the notion that gender affects men equally or that men may be victims as well as perpetrators. But disproportionately little empirical work here concerns men, children, or gender as it affects any other aspects of the war and peace process; and comments such as the goal being “a peaceful existence for women” (Simona Sharoni, p. 99) or “although war affected men and women alike, for women the losses are innumerable” (Ibanez, p. 117) are hidden among the talk of theoretical advancement.

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11 See Zarkov’s chapter, “The Body of the Other Man,” on the portrayals of male war rapes in the Croatian press during the Balkans wars. This chapter addresses men as both victims and perpetrators and provides explanatory analysis of how gender constructs militarized ethnicity.

12 Emphasis added by author.
Despite Cynthia Cockburn’s remarkably coherent explanatory framework, articulated in the first chapter, few of the chapters follow through on a systematic analysis of gender. Instead, most of the authors confuse sex and gender (pp. 10, 30, 92). What is left is a great deal of descriptive research on sex-differentiated behavior, impacts, and issues in armed conflict but little explanatory analysis of how gender (identities, beliefs, and discourses) constructs these outcomes or how best to target those attitudes for change.

The book remains a solid feminist description of women’s troubles, with some attention given to the conjoint difficulties men face and a positive spin on how women can mobilize to create solutions. For example, Sharoni’s chapter on women activists on both sides of the Northern Ireland conflict and in Palestine examines variation in the impact of national struggles on women’s liberties. Donny Meerten’s analysis of displacement in Colombia celebrates women’s coping strategies as a buffer against the struggles of urban existence. Urvashi Butalia’s work on women’s feminist and antifeminist mobilization in India both undermines the idea of a generic pan-female solidarity and explains the paradox of female support for bloody communalism and suttee. These chapters indeed move feminist work on political violence beyond simple formulas, capturing situational nuance and providing new puzzles and new answers.

Yet the book does little to generate an inclusive agenda for showing how gender affects political outcomes in general. Thus the book, while an excellent contribution to scholarship on women, leaves out much that could have been discussed pertaining to gender as it affects not women per se, but patterns of armed conflict and political violence generally.

Where the Moser and Clark book tries to transcend feminist biases while retaining a focus on women, Goldstein brings feminist theories to bear on the “conventional” agenda of IR: the war system. His task is not to critique or engage but to test hypotheses: sociocultural versus sociobiological approaches to explaining male predominance in organized warfare.

_A War and Gender_ does not read like Francis Fukuyama’s facile argument about the relative utility of one side in the nature/nurture debate. Goldstein sees value in both approaches and wishes to capture the interplay between sex and gender, between biology and culture, which are both interdependent and mutually constitutive: “biology provides diverse potential, and cultures limit, select and channel them” (p. 2).

Goldstein compiles, sorts, and analyzes evidence for or against a long list of hypotheses drawn from evolutionary biology and feminist theories (essentialist and constructivist). His survey is remarkably thorough, accounting both for sex differentiation in the location of human beings in institutions of war and peace

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and for the gendered cultural constructions that sustain them. The work will be important in placing “gender” in the feminist sense on the agenda of those interested in understanding the social dynamics of warfare. Moreover, War and Gender will become an important teaching resource in undergraduate IR courses, which may do more than anything to mainstream concepts of gender in the discipline.

Goldstein’s work is groundbreaking as an example of how gender as an explanatory instrument may be combined with a conventional IR agenda using empirical science rather than interpretivism. He avoids engaging with current theoretical debates, but his work demonstrates that the disjunction Tickner identifies is one between feminism and conventional IR, not between gender theory and IR. According to Goldstein, gender can and should be deployed in conventional analysis to understand precisely the “real world issues . . . of war in and between states” that feminists wish to push beyond.14

Yet this work is only a first step toward integrating gender as a theory into conventional IR. On the subject of how gender may best intersect with contemporary debates, Goldstein has little to say. He represents a voice in an emerging “conversation” but does not lay out parameters for the conversation itself. Relative to the complexity of feminist approaches to gender, Goldstein’s analytical framework seems oversimplified.

For example, while his hypotheses can be categorized according to whether they assign causal value to culture or biology, Goldstein denies that these are separate analytically. In using “gender to cover masculine and feminine roles and bodies alike” (p. 2), he is doing reflectively what many writers and policymakers do subconsciously. This enables Goldstein to provide some important insights, such as destabilizing the notion that biology is deterministic and cultural malleable: “In truth, scientists understand, control and change biology much more easily . . . than social scientists or politicians understand and control culture and social relationships, including gender and war” (p. 131). Laying out the multiple points of overlap between bodies and ideas is an important contribution because so much literature continues to posit a false dichotomy between them. Nonetheless, the distinction between sex and gender remains important for operationalizing the two, and the intelligibility of Goldstein’s analysis, particularly to the lay reader, suffers as a result of this conflation.

Moreover, Goldstein sets up male predominance in organized fighting as a constant rather than exploring what variation exists. He then seeks to explain it by referring to configurations in physiology and culture that actually do vary greatly. What is lacking is reference to specific research agendas within mainstream theory: the democratic peace, ethnic conflict, nuclear proliferation, collective security. Goldstein has demonstrated the breadth of intersections among

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14 Tickner, Gendering World Politics, p. 138.
sex, gender, and the war system and has demonstrated that objective empirical theory on gender is possible in IR. But gender as an analytical category must also be welded to the mainstream IR agenda of explaining variation in international political outcomes. The remaining section sketches such a possible marriage of explanatory gender theory with “conventional constructivism.”

TOWARD “GENDER CONSTRUCTIVISM” IN IR?

Paraphrasing Sandra Whitworth, Tickner claims theories that incorporate gender must satisfy three criteria: “1) they must allow for the possibility of talking about the social construction of meaning; 2) they must discuss historical variability; and 3) they must permit theorizing about power in ways that uncover hidden power relations” (p. 27).

Nothing in this formula requires gender theories to be explicitly normative, as Tickner and others claim feminism must be (p. 2). Moreover, although Tickner begins by situating all IR scholarship on norms and social values in IR as “constitutive” versus “explanatory” theory (p. 27), much of the social constructivist work on norms and identities actually claims to share an epistemological framework with those traditions Tickner considers conventional while possessing the ontological orientation that Whitworth claims is necessary for gender theory. 16

If gender as an explanatory framework is to be incorporated into mainstream IR epistemologies, conventional constructivism—or what Tickner later calls “bridging theories” (p. 46)—appear to be the obvious entry point. Scholars such as Ronald Jepperson, Peter Katzenstein, and Alexander Wendt are committed to an identity-based ontology but, according to Tickner, “stay within the traditional security agenda, a focus on states and explanatory social science” (p. 45). Given constructivism’s emphasis on norms and identity in world politics, it is surprising that this school has not already begun to build on feminist gender theories; this may reflect, as Tickner argues, a systematic gender bias.

Yet it does not result from theoretical incompatibility. This variant of constructivism is ontologically suited to studying gender norms and identities, as a


16 See Jeffrey Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in IR Theory,” World Politics 50 (1998), pp. 324–348. See also Ted Hopf’s distinction between “conventional” and “critical” constructivism: “The Promise of Constructivism in IR Theory,” International Security 23 (1998), p. 181. Because all critical theories take for granted that reality is socially constructed, the label “constructivism” is redundant for critical theory. I use the term only to refer to conventional or “bridging” social theories of IR.
specific component of the broader category of social relations composing world politics. While Locher and Prugl correctly have pointed out that constructivists would epistemologically approach gender in a different way than feminists, it does not mean, as they conclude, that constructivists must incorporate feminist epistemologies to study gender. It only means that the two sorts of gender theory will be somewhat different; the study of gender norms and international policy should be no more an epistemological problem for constructivists than the study of nuclear weapons taboos or humanitarian intervention. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink’s examination of the spread of women’s suffrage as a norm of civilized society may be an example of such scholarship—a work that is absent from Tickner’s bibliography of scholarship on gender. This is less a matter of inherent incompatibility than of feminists and constructivists overcoming the notion that gender studies is a feminist preserve.

What could this explanatory gender theory look like, and how could it contribute to understanding gender and world politics? It could do so in three ways: conceptually, substantively, and analytically.

**Conceptually**, a conversation between nonfeminist and feminist gender theories would help refine much of the loose and inconsistent terminology pertaining to gender as a concept. For example, one outcome of such a conversation might be to clarify the sex/gender distinction. Much feminist theory routinely conflates these two concepts, either for theoretical reasons or because of the way gender has been appropriated in colloquial usage. Yet to destabilize the

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19 Postmodern scholars in particular claim that the category of “male” or “female” is more a social than a biological reality, and to define sex as biological and only gender as social is to ignore an important role gender plays: the construction of male/female difference. For example, “it is the firmly held belief that there are two and only two sexes that explains the relative ease with which initial sex assignment is achieved.” See Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker, “Power, Inequality and the Accomplishment of Gender,” in Paula England, ed., *Theory on Gender, Feminism on Theory* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993), p. 135.

20 This includes coding “male vs. female” to operationalize gender and using terminology such as “gendered” to describe sex distributions rather than distributions of ideas. For example, see Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993), p. 45; Mary Meyer and Elisabeth Prugl, *Gender Politics in Global Governance* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), p. 25; Peter Beckman, “Realism, Women and World Politics,” in Francine D’Amico and Peter Beckman, eds., *Women, Gender and World Politics* (Westport Conn.: Bergin and Harvey, 1994), p. 26.
assumption that embodied men and women correlate to gendered ascriptive and prescriptive notions, it seems that sex and gender must be discussed separately in scholarly literature.

Although operationalizing sex versus gender in this way does abstract away from some of the issues that postmodernists point to, and from certain anomalies in human biology, it usefully maps onto the constructivist distinction between “material forces” and “ideas.” For example, John Searle has distinguished between “brute facts” (objects that exist in the real world like tanks, nuclear weapons, or people with uteruses) and “social facts” like money, Christmas, marriage, or misogyny, which require intersubjective agreement on their existence and constitution.\(^{21}\) It is an empirical fact that human beings are divided into roughly two categories based on biological roles and reproduction; this would still be true whether gender ideologies that assign social importance to this distinction exist or not. The existence and nature of those gender ideologies are separate from the sheer physiology of humans; gender ideologies, institutions, and identities built on them are social facts.

That the social and material interrelate does not mean, as Goldstein insists, that the distinction is analytically irrelevant. It may be true, for example, that nuclear weapons would have no actual destructive power without institutional and social arrangements that make it possible to actually deploy them.\(^{22}\) But this does not mean that nuclear weapons are not objectively real. It is an analysis of the mutual interaction of the social and material worlds that is the task of constructivist IR in its critical and explanatory versions. An engagement of conventional constructivists with these operationalization questions is certain to generate interesting dialogue between mainstream and feminist IR.

**Substantively**, “gender constructivism” can fill some of the niches left by IR feminism mentioned above. Beyond expanding the study of gender to men, children, and nonfeminist women’s issues, nonfeminist social constructivists’ main niche to be filled is in generating a richer body of literature in which the international system is the dependent variable. Feminist IR has already created a large body of work to draw on in this capacity, emphasizing links between masculinism and militarism, the role of gender in constructing national identities and interests, the embeddedness of gendered thinking in foreign policy discourses and its influence on political action, and the importance of gender beliefs in sustaining the international political economy. But the key purpose of feminist theory is to investigate and argue for improvements in the well-being of women. As Tickner emphasizes, it is women, not interactions between states,

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that are the primary dependent variable in feminist IR (p. 139). Conversely, gender constructivists can use the analytical category feminists have developed to understand the IR agenda as conventionally defined.

A rich variety of questions pertinent to mainstream IR theory is possible. Were American women allowed to fight in the Gulf War for manpower reasons, to satisfy domestic women voters, or as a part of psychological warfare against the opponent’s male-dominated forces? Were these strategies effective, or does increasing hostility among allied Middle Eastern publics constitute a variety of “blowback” effect? Do the strategic advantages of shifts of sex composition of modern militaries outweigh the social and institutional challenges? How best can states uphold morale among soldiers programmed with militarized identities while successfully achieving the pacifist imperatives of humanitarian interventions? Can assumptions about gender embedded in international custom help explain patterns of intervention? How do gender relations influence the personality and the behavior of political leaders during international events? Is there no apparent relationship? How do sea changes in ideologies about gender relations change the political arena in which states must secure legitimacy?

**Analytically,** gender theory in IR would benefit from the development of distinctions between different causal and constitutive pathways by which gender affects world politics. Much of this also could map onto models used in conventional constructivism to explain how norms and identities operate. These could include distinctions among gender identity (individual beliefs about one’s masculinity or femininity), gender ideology (principled beliefs about relations between men and women), and gender structure (distribution of embodied men and women into social and political institutions). All three of these influence and are manipulated by gender norms (collectively held causal and prescriptive beliefs regarding gender roles), and all constitute and reinforce a global (but changing) gender regime. Specifying and generating explanatory models for how these interrelate in different contexts, with reference to specific issue areas relevant to studying world politics, can do much more than advance knowledge on women’s subordination. It can advance knowledge on IR itself.

If we accept that feminism is inherently critique but that gender per se is simply an analytical category, then scholarship on gender may—indeed must—be undertaken not only by feminists interested in “generating demands for change” (Cockburn, p. 16), but also by “conventional” scholars who wish to understand the world as it is. If we take the explanatory claims of IR feminism seriously—as I believe we must—then conventional IR theorists must recognize gender, whether or not they wish to be feminists, in the course of furthering their own agenda. This research should be undertaken in such a way as to complement and engage, rather than substitute for, feminist IR theory. Perhaps this could engender the substantive dialogue between feminists and “the mainstream” that Tickner so fervently seeks.