Feminism and international relations have been linked academically for a little more than a decade, yet feminist IR still barely qualifies as legitimate international relations. Relegated to its own corner within the “third debate,” as just one more post-positivist challenge, it seems on the whole that its charges against mainstream international relations need not be answered or even acknowledged. There seems, in fact, to be a consensus among those without a particular personal interest in feminist goals that feminism is irrelevant, that it pertains neither to “real life” politics nor to the study of “real” politics, and that it is itself “political.” Academic feminism is thus labeled as ideological and irrelevant to IR in the same way that women’s gendered experience is to “real” world politics.[1]

What the IR mainstream seems to dismiss, however, is that this is the very charge leveled against it: the key feminist critique of IR claims that “real”-ism and other “objective” inquiry is power laden and thus ideological. IR, having been a recent construct of Western origins, originally peopled almost exclusively by men, has presented a simplified picture of the “real” world, telling a story which supports and maintains certain power interests. The Machiavellian claim by realists—that they deal with the world as it is, not as some believe it should be—ignores the fact that even describing the world as “it” is requires focusing on some things to the exclusion of others. It requires making some actors the focus of inquiry and not others. It requires judgments about what is important enough to require analysis,
what is relevant, or in other words, what counts as political knowledge. This political knowledge then supports a certain version of “reality.”

Such political knowledge is assumed to be gender neutral—not allowing gendered considerations into the field of analysis and not biased in any gendered way. What the feminist IR literature of the last decade shows, however, is that the very ways in which international politics is conceived, and thus the way it is studied, has arisen out of gendered understandings of the world. In other words, politics and IR are not gender neutral—rather, they are dependent upon gendered constructions.

The flip side of arguing against the ideological/gender neutrality of IR is to argue that feminist theory is indeed relevant to international politics. I do so by suggesting that recent attempts to synthesize feminist theory, to deconstruct the key concepts of mainstream IR, and to construct real-life alternative ethics with which to approach international political interaction help to provide us with a more complete, though by no means total, picture of international relations. Feminism’s normative orientation is openly acknowledged, of course, and at its most basic level, it aims to end the oppression of half the world’s population. In a more universal sense, it seeks to undermine gendered worldviews which support oppressive and inegalitarian practices on a global scale.

My objective here is to provide an overview of feminist challenges to IR, for to treat the feminist challenge as a single, unified, monolithic system of thought is to misrepresent the nature of feminist conversations. Still, it is striking the degree to which feminist theories, even those normally at odds with each other, seem to lend themselves to various syntheses in a critique of traditional IR. So, while I will present my case in such a way as to emphasize commonalities for the sake of those not familiar with feminist critique in general, I do so not to silence some voices within feminism but rather to illuminate how feminist perspectives are relevant to “real world” concerns—that the feminist contention that “the personal is political” is also true in the converse: the political is also personal and not so far removed from our daily lives as some would have us think. For example, V. Spike Peterson argues that foundational concepts such as ‘sovereignty’ are particularly masculine as well as Western:
It was in the Athenian context that specifically Western constructions of the state, security, representation, sovereignty, and the "sovereign subject," public and private, and "what constitutes the political" were established; these constructions—and the metaphysics they presuppose—profoundly shaped modern state formation, and they continue to "discipline IR."[2]

There is a common thread, then, that links women’s everyday lives with world politics: the same basic concept—gender relations—which structures oppressive practices in the "private" structures oppression in the "public." In other words, the distinction itself must be challenged for it is such "givens" that make gender oppression possible. Therefore, feminist scholars deconstruct and analyze from a gender perspective the concepts of, for example, national security, realism, and even IR as an academic discipline. In addition, the focus of analysis extends from the experience of women to gender relations as a whole, the latter of which has allowed for sharper analytical insight into the construction of masculinities.

My task, then, is to argue that constructions of masculinity, particularly the hegemonic Western model, are connected to both the marginalization of women in world politics and feminism in IR. Further, I argue that the two realms are not entirely distinct, for each shapes and supports the other. Finally, in doing so, I aim to present and explicate a variety of feminist approaches or themes, making the case for the relevance and radicalness of feminism in IR.

**Gender: A Social Construction**

The most fundamental, entrenched assumptions we make about politics are those we believe to be non-political, or "natural." Such an assumption is generally made about the roles and characteristics of men and women in the world—about gender. It is both precisely because this assumption is so deeply embedded in the way we see the world that IR and other political disciplines see it as outside the proper scope of the field. It is also, however, because IR and other disciplines are so unwilling to critically examine this assumption that feminist scholarship must do so. Indeed, perhaps a discussion of just what is meant by "gender" is in order before any discussion of critique can begin.

Gender, as differentiated from sex, refers to the socialized identities of masculinity and femininity—what it means within a certain culture and at a certain historical time to be a
man versus a woman; these are the traits we assign to women and men rather than the biological sexual traits with which they are born.[3] This is where the controversy begins: in dominant ideologies, gender prescriptions are often conflated with biological sex and argued to be attached to or caused by “natural” difference rather than being socially constructed. Feminism makes the opposite argument; in order to meet the perceived needs of the society, as defined by the interests of some in maintaining unequal power relations, certain groups of people are categorized in certain ways, usually according to their current function, be it motherhood, providers of sexual services, et cetera.

That which is deemed “natural” (which differs according to what culture one happens to be born into) is considered irrelevant to politics, or as “prepolitical.” This begs the question of just what constitutes politics, however. If one considers the focus of politics to be the power exercised within social relationships between groups of human beings, such a move is itself very much political, for the very fact of making something non-negotiable (or non-political) is achieved through power. [4]

In fact, throughout history, unequal power relations have been justified by grounding arguments in what is sometimes called the “naturalness fallacy.”[5] Perhaps the most familiar example, the slave trade in North America was justified according to a natural inequality between the races. The fact of the unequal power relations, which is translated into unequal influence over social, cultural, economic, and other political resources was taken to be evidence of the natural superiority of one race over the other. The same holds true with gender, as certain traits have been both assigned to women and at the same time devalued. The particular traits assigned to gendered roles have changed over time with historical circumstances and have at times both intersected with and opposed the traits assigned to other dominated groups; for example, depending upon the power interests involved, women have been portrayed as both uncivilized and as civilizing forces, as both driven by the passions and as sexually chaste. In most cases, the sex roles prescribed by femininity and masculinity position those groups deemed feminine as inferior to those deemed masculine.
As Peterson and Runyon explain, the gender relationship is not one of categories which are simply different,[6] as for instance, food is a different energy source than gasoline. Rather, to be masculine means not to be feminine. One cannot exist without the opposing other. While food can be characterized as food without referring to gasoline, masculinity cannot be described except as it relates to femininity. In culturally particular terms, Peterson and Runyon explain that “the dominant masculinity in Western culture is associated with qualities of rationality, ‘hardheadedness,’ ambition, and strength. To the extent that a man displays emotionality, ‘softheadedness,’ passivity, and weakness, he is likely to be identified as nonmasculine, which is to say, ‘feminine.’ Similarly, women who appear hardheaded and ambitious are often described as ‘masculine.’[7] In addition, the traits associated with men and masculinity are valued over the traits associated with women and so form a hierarchical relationship. This is not to say that all men are valued more highly than all women, but simply that the traits we assign to masculinity are more esteemed than traits we assign to femininity.[8]

Whitworth explains that “meanings about gender are maintained and contested through the practices and struggles of actors engaged in relationships with each other and the institutions in which they are involved.”[9] Therefore, gender is pervasive in political institutions, including the institutions through which knowledge is made and transmitted. It is for this reason that, in order to understand gender, one cannot simply analyze women and their activities. Likewise, one cannot study politics (a male dominated activity) by analyzing the men involved and later “adding on” women[10] (a function to which some mistakenly attribute women’s studies). Once we acknowledge that the construction of particular masculinities and their opposing femininities underlies or is foundational to a certain conception of politics, that in which the actors are men, the values and norms are masculine, the assumed “reality” of a world view which ignores gender is called into question.

Thus, exposing and calling into question the gendered assumptions of IR is precisely what many feminist critics of IR aim to do. The goals of introducing gender analysis into IR include not only making women visible in world politics but also “transforming”
conceptions of politics itself by showing that some basic IR assumptions, once destabilized, can no longer be unproblematically assumed.[11]

**Real-ism: A Gendered Worldview**

One of these problematic assumptions, according to Steans,[12] is that state autonomy and power as the central concerns of realism are based upon a human nature assumption,[13] but that with the onslaught of the positivist methodological challenge, realism was given “the aura of truth” associated with the natural sciences. Steans argues that realism obscures social understanding (especially unequal relations) through its “reification” of the state, and that it is a masculinized conception of the state. The significance of this is that through a values hierarchy, a single perspective acts through power to constitute a single reality. Quoting Inis Claude, she adds that this has made the acceptance of the realist paradigm “a test of the intellectual virility and manliness of the field.”[14]

Steans builds upon her critique of state-centric thinking and connects the discipline to world politics by showing how gender is implicated in the building of national identity, in which boundaries are circumscribed in order to determine who is counted as a citizen and who is not. Such examinations call into question the assumption that there does in fact exist “nations” or identities which can be unproblematically represented by the state. Gender is useful here because it has historically been a primary criterion by which people have been excluded from world politics. To focus on the state as actor, then, is yet another act of power which works to exclude some political relations from the realm of politics.[15] This is an important critique because realism’s very claim to represent “real politics” determines what counts as real politics.

Similarly, by showing how gender is used to construct nationalist identity and the costs it imposes on women by doing so (for example, as symbolic woman, woman as the bearer of culture, et cetera), she further makes her case for de-reifying the nation-state, as national identity-making involves “the institutionalization of gender differences.” [16] A good example of this might be how India’s state formation included placing women under
the jurisdiction of religious “family law” rather than guaranteeing them rights as citizens. Oppressive divorce and marriage practices can then be defended under the rubric of “culture.” Women have no recourse because culture becomes defined in terms of how men control women (and class or caste distinctions as well).

Feminist scholarship seeks to expose bias and patterns of exclusion within all dominant IR theories and activities. For example, Steans argues that what is considered to be “economic” activity often does not include the work that women do.\[17\] Ignoring women’s unremunerated work hides from view inequalities and in doing so helps to legitimate or naturalize them. Feminist theory in this regard, then, aims to come up with inclusive definitions of what counts as work. \[18\]

Another example of how even challenges to the mainstream can be subject to feminist critique can be found in IPE; even critical political economy subsumes gender under class (Marxism, for example), and so feminists seek to make visible the global economic effects of restructuring on women in particular. For example, women constitute a good deal of the cheap labor which drives TNCs into the Third World \[19\] Import-led growth, debt policies, and development policies have specific negative effects on women as well. \[20\] The UN program, Women in Development (WID), for example, was inappropriately focused upon liberal inclusion for women in “development” rather than upon the actual circumstances of women’s lives.\[21\] It is in this area that a postmodern perspective might become useful—one that is sensitive to local context rather than the universal “condition” of third world women.

A transformed conception of politics, then, would necessarily counter the claim of IR academics to be concerned only with what is ‘real’ with the charge that by focusing too narrowly on male dominated “state” activity they are operating under the guise of “theorizing” the real world while in reality quite often fulfilling the functions of tacticians and strategists; by claiming objectivity while refusing to consider gender, they are at the least biased actors supporting, legitimizing, and thus perpetuating a particular construction of world politics based upon a masculinist model.
A caveat is perhaps in order here: a critique of mainstream IR and realism in particular is not meant to suggest that such theorizing has had no value and that it has not served certain purposes; focusing security concerns on balances of power during the Cold War, for example, can be considered a rational response to a sense of insecurity made urgent through a convergence of particular historical circumstances. What it does suggest, however, is that the act of defining international politics in terms of state actors maneuvering within an Hobbesian, anarchical, dangerous arena is implicated in the rise of tensions which came to be known as the historical “Cold War” period.

Put simply, perceptions and interpretations guide political actions, even if those actions are claimed to be simply rational. “Rational” political actions which assume a hostile world help to perpetuate a hostile world. Therefore, from a feminist perspective, or even more generally, a post-positivist perspective, realist and even liberal theorists are reacting to a certain set of historically particular assumptions about “the world”—assumptions which have been derived from historically particular world views, constructed by particular experiences and particular modes of thinking.

Within the historical context of modernity, hegemonic power has been wielded not only by men, but disproportionately by western men and westernized men. It is a major feminist contention, then, that the state of IR and world politics reflects not the inevitable human nature of men per se, but rather reflects masculinities and femininities and the relationship between them. It is important to the feminist project to remember that these gender relations have themselves been socially constructed. This is a crucial distinction, for what has been constructed, after all, is subject to both deconstruction and reconstruction. And deconstruction—or systematically taking apart and challenging fundamental IR assumptions and categories—and reconstruction—envisioning how alternative modes of thinking about politics can widen the scope of political possibilities—together encompass perhaps the most fundamental tasks for feminist IR theorists.

Reclaiming the Stories: Where are the women?
Sylvester sketches out ways in which feminist analysis has attempted to loosen the stranglehold of current power interests over the official study of IR.[22] In other words, feminism objects to what has been constructed as “real” by offering alternative perspectives. One of the ways in which this is done is that stories are appropriated and retold from other perspectives. One approach by which feminists have challenged the “stories” told about international politics is by asking the question, “Where are the women?”[23] The purpose of doing so is to include women’s actions under the rubric of international politics.

**Liberal Feminism: A Matter of Exclusion**

One method by which the IR story is retold occurs when liberal feminists seek to use the dominant discourse of human rights to raise the status of women in the world through liberal international institutions such as the United Nations. Liberal feminists, for example, (those who believe that reason is the foundation for “innate” rights, [24] have pointed out the seemingly obvious exclusion of women from both academic IR and as acknowledged actors in world politics. Thus, liberal feminism, according to Whitworth, questions the extent to which a discipline dominated by men, focusing on political actions initiated by men, can claim to be “gender neutral.” The aim of such questioning has been to make room for female voices within the discipline and to broaden the field of study to include some women acting in politics.[25]

Other ways in which liberal scholars seek out the presence of women in international relations is by documenting inequality within existing structures. Besides institutional inequality, Tomasevski argues that human rights within supposedly sovereign states is an area in which women are treated unequally.[26] As a liberal, she assumes that the notion of human rights is a sufficient concept from which to argue for women’s equality. Rather than focus on the inequality itself, as merely a description of women’s condition, Tomasevski argues that it is the “denial of equal [human] rights which demands action: “The human rights of women as workers, prisoners, or refugees should be (but more often are not) equal to those of male workers, prisoners, or refugees.”[27] Therefore, her critique does not call so much for a fundamental rethinking of international relations so
much as raising the status of women within the system. Such a critique questions the gender neutrality of the human rights systems and organizational frameworks in place, claiming that neutrality too often translates as a “disregard of women.”[28] Such an approach, then, seeks to make visible the discrimination through which women, in practice, are not included under the umbrella of “human.” As such, liberal feminist critiques call for the enforcement of already existing values such as freedom and equality, arguing that they should be applied to all women as well as all men.

The strength of such an approach is that the language of rights has legitimacy and has been used historically to include the excluded. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established after World War II, human rights has taken on the function of a universal norm, with most members of the international community at least professing to agree with its basic principles. While there is much interpretive disagreement as to which rights should take priority, labeling injustice “human rights abuses,” as Tomasevski points out, “gives it an importance that simply calling it unfair cannot give.”[29]

Some might argue, however, that this is a knife which cuts two ways: on the one hand, an international notion of rights allows for a cross-cultural critique of oppressive religious and cultural practices from which women suffer. On the other hand, the notion of rights, in practice, has been largely dominated by the Western interpretation which focuses on human rights as civil/political rights. Such a hegemonic Western perspective tends to be dismissive of the direst needs of the world’s poor, and as Beckman and D’Amico note, feminist literature on human rights speaks to the perspectives of women who statistically constitute one of the poorest groups in the world by focusing on the more substantive economic and social rights.[30]

While some other feminist approaches would charge such a liberal/socialist approach with failing to address how the very construction of gender helps to sustain an unjust international system, few would disagree that such studies provide valuable empirical evidence of the actual suffering of real women. While some types of suffering may seem like localized problems—for example, the legs being chopped off of an unwilling child bride in Nigeria, or the epidemic level of wife battering in the U.S.[31]—an unwillingness to
define violence against women as a political concern but rather a cultural or even private matter has the effect of legitimizing such violence. In that sense, then, even liberal feminist critique seeks to unearth and expose what is taken to be prepolitical. Recognizing power inequalities divided along lines of gender has helped to include women within the umbrella of human rights in international political organizations (the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, for example). Exposing the unequal rights of women to form labor unions in free-trade zones, for example, provides increased chances for redress to actual women, but also provides solid evidence of oppression from which other types of feminist critiques can proceed.

Standpoint Feminism: Politics From a Different Perspective

Even more than the liberal critique, which extends the subject boundaries of international political inquiry, more radical feminisms dig deeper into the background of international political activity to ask the question, “Where are the women?” Sylvester suggests that feminist standpoint theory is useful in this regard, which simply means that politics often looks different from marginalized positions within the system. Using the work of Cynthia Enloe to illustrate her point, Sylvester notes that women are always inside international relations through their work in the practice of its politics—as diplomats’ wives and secretaries, as assemblers of commodities for export, as tourists bringing foreign exchange to the nearly empty tills of third world countries and dirty laundry for poor handmaids to wash, as consolers of soldiers based far from home, and wearers of khaki (1983) — if we choose to see them there. She states the problem as learning “how the conduct of international politics has depended on men’s control of women . . .” [32]

Enloe, whose groundbreaking work began the task of connecting women’s concrete lives to an international context, attempts to answer this question by bringing to the foreground that which is deemed by mainstream IR as being irrelevant to politics. While making use of the liberal paradigm which brings women into the picture, she does so not simply to include women in international concerns, but also to explode the assumption that there are certain “givens” about the world which is separate from the workings of world politics.

For example, Enloe brings into sharp focus the taken for granted backdrop to international military activity—women’s activity—whether it be articulated in terms of their roles in international economic activity (as primarily consumers whose participation helps
to maintain stratified relationships between parts of the world) or their more direct but even less examined roles in maintaining a military base through the supporting roles of diplomatic wives, base girlfriends, and even as prostitutes.

In this way, the naturalness fallacy, which presumes that the social world operates in certain ‘given’ ways according to laws of nature loses some of its potency and thus its inevitability when world politics can be shown to fall into the same web of practices as the ordinary lives of everyday people. Enloe suggests that:

> The presumption that something that gives shape to how we live with one another is inevitable, a ‘given,’ is hard to dislodge. It seems easier to imagine that something oozes up from an indeterminate past, that it has never been deliberately concocted, does not need to be maintained, that it’d [sic] just there. But if the treeless landscape [after a bombing campaign] or all-women typing pool can be shown to be the result of someone’s decision and has to be perpetuated, then it is possible to imagine alternatives. ‘What if . . .?’ can be a radical question.

With the ultimate goal of showing how “power infuses all international relationships.”[34] Enloe demonstrates that masculinity and femininity are both manipulated and reinforced for the sake of power interests. The preservation of “traditional” categories “has required the daily exercise of power—domestic power, national power, and . . . international power.”[35] Enloe argues that military alliances are held together through maintaining a “camouflage of normalcy” between a military base and its foreign host. By managing gender relations, governments seek to keep resentment for the base at a minimum. For example, in order to quell the potentially "dangerous trend" in World War II Britain of white women pairing up with U.S. black soldiers, Churchill’s cabinet actively sought to have the U.S. send black women soldiers to Britain as companions for black soldiers.[36]

Enloe’s objectives are straightforward: by broadening the scope of inquiry to include the concrete details of women’s lives, to examine decisions of real people, to give as much credence to women’s experience of nationalist movements, for example, as that of the “emasculated” men in whose name nationalist politics are legitimized, she aims to paint a clearer, more complex, and thus more realistic picture of how international politics actually works. Such a task involves not just portraying women as victims, though Enloe acknowledges that most of the world’s women clearly lack control over power and resources within the international system. Indeed, in order to better grasp the complexity
of international politics, she stresses the importance of acknowledging that women’s cooperation has also been central to oppressive international practices such as colonialism:

British, American, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese women may not have been the architects of their countries’ colonial policies, but many of them took on the roles of colonial administrators’ wives, missionaries, travel writers and anthropologists in ways that tightened the noose of colonial rule around the necks of African, Latin-American and Asian women.[37]

The very fact, then, of bringing to light some of the ways in which world politics does not happen within its own “anarchical” realm, a place mythologized to be somehow separate from the realm in which actual people interact, has the effect of destabilizing the notion of the “state” as an autonomous actor, a “given” which is so foundational to realist IR theory.

Another way in which feminists challenge mainstream IR’s ability to define politics is by offering what Sylvester calls revisions of war and peace narratives.[38] Coming from within a peace studies perspective, Betty Reardon, for example, rather than challenging the focus on peace, instead challenges the definition of the term.[39] In an expanded, “positive” conception of peace meant to replace the notion of peace as an absence of war, Reardon extends the definition of peace to encompass the lives and well being of individual people. She charges that a perspective on peace which insists upon military build-ups in order to prepare for a later period of war contributes to suffering. People in developing nations particularly are hard hit by military spending that eats up scarce resources that could otherwise be used for food and healthcare. The oppression of women is closely linked to poverty, with women being the “sole support for so many of the world’s families.”[40] When real people suffer from structural policies, peace studies researchers call this structural violence, a concept originally developed by Johann Galtung.[41] Thus, women’s rights are inseparable from international peace, for as Wetzel argues, “the elimination of domination, discrimination, oppression, and exploitation of women is the first step in countering the destructive dynamics between nations.”[42]

Another example in which feminist scholars attempt to re-tell the stories of war and peace can be found in Sharoni’s work.[43] Here she challenges the dominant story of the Middle-East conflict between Israelis and Palestinians by going beneath the headlines to show the largely invisible history of alliances (as well as conflicts) between Israeli and
Palestinian women. While she does not exaggerate the cooperation between the two groups of women, Sharoni does suggest that cross-national interests between groups have overlapped at times. For example, in labor movements, Palestinian men and Israeli women working in factories shared similar class (labor) interests at one time. Works such as this contribute to understanding the complexity of international events which do not readily show up in discourses dominated by talk of formal peace accords and stone-throwing.

*Postmodern Feminism: The Problem of Universal Claims*

Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, postmodern perspectives challenge the story, or the “grand narrative” by which IR assumes that a male perspective can stand in or be the reference point for all perspectives. In traditional IR, as in politics in general, man’s experience is held to be objective, universal, or representative of humanity, thereby guaranteeing both the marginalization of women in world politics and of feminist perspectives in IR and other academic disciplines. This is best illustrated within the feminist IR context by taking a closer look at how masculinities and femininities are constructed not in isolation, but within a certain tradition of thought.

Western political thought has tended to problematize women. That is, in seeking to universalize the experience of man, there is always left the question, “what is to be done about the woman problem?” Where the experience of women does not fit with that of man, it is assumed to be some aberration inherent in femaleness rather than inherent in the way we conceive of and construct gender. As an alternative approach, then, some feminist scholarship has sought to problematize man, to ask the “man” question in IR. Included in this set of studies are several male voices which provide insight into masculinity from within masculinity. Perhaps the best way to start, however, is to explain postmodern feminism.

Contrary to liberal and standpoint theories, postmodern feminism reflects a “diminishing belief that the exclusion of women can be remedied by converting them into subjects.” As Zalewski points out, focusing on woman as woman has led to the destabilizing postmodern critique of woman rather than a solidarity among women. That
is, difference has been occluded, and it has also been shown that to be a woman does not mean to be a feminist. For example, Margaret Thatcher and Madeline Albright, two of the few women to reach a high level of political power, could hardly be considered as feminist. Such a charge has been explained in terms of socialization and power dynamics:

when a woman is let in by the men who control the political elite it is usually precisely because that woman has learned the lessons of masculinized political behavior well enough not to threaten male political privilege. Indeed she may even entrench that privilege, for when Margaret Thatcher or Jeanne Kirkpatrick uses her state office to foment international conflict, that conflict looks less man-made, more people-made, and thus more legitimate and harder to reverse.[46]

While such an explanation may satisfy some types of feminist thinkers, postmodern feminists would argue that such an explanation does not negate the danger of conflating all experience into that of a single perspective. As such, postmodern feminists present an ongoing challenge to standpoint feminists and others who seek to universalize their own perspective. The differing experiences of nonwestern women help to illustrate the point that O’Gorman and Jabri make when they suggest that feminists should be careful not to buy into the same sort of oppositional, ethnocentric categories which are so central to western IR.[47]

Steans explains postmodern feminism as that which challenges what is called the Enlightenment project, which is seen to be inherently oppressive through its manipulative use of the discourse of universal reason and equality for the sake of power interests:

The Enlightenment has been presented as a period in which mankind has been liberated from ignorance, the whole process of rational and scientific discourse characteristic of the ‘modern’ age has been deeply entrenched with bias and has excluded the experiences of many groups. Discourse, which in simple terms means the language which is used to construct social meaning and intersubjective understanding, is never innocent. Those in positions of power are more likely to be heard. Their ‘truths’ are more likely to be accepted. [48]

Therefore, simply placing “woman” in the place of man in world politics, showing how politics looks from where “she” stands, runs the risk of silencing some women whose experience conflicts with “hers.”[49] By taking into account that gender forms only part of the picture and that class, race, placement in the international system, et cetera also are places wherein power operates, feminists can be less likely to simplify the picture for the sake of their own interests.
The postmodern perspective is controversial for its rejection of reason and emancipation for all women. Whitworth, for example, takes the position that this argument is politically paralyzing and irresponsible to the feminist project. Mainstream IR scholars, even those sympathetic to feminist goals, are even more skeptical of a perspective which rejects all objective bases for the truth of knowledge. Robert Keohane, a prominent IR scholar, rejects such a position: “I object to the notion that because social science cannot attain any perfectly reliable knowledge, it is justifiable for students of society to ‘obliterate the validity of reality.’” While it is not my intention to choose one best feminist position, it can certainly be argued that the postmodernist critique of reason helps to shed some light on the systems of thought in which masculinities are constructed.

In order to examine gender constructions and their effect on world politics and IR, I turn now to a series of studies and essays compiled in a book entitled, *The Man Question in International Relations*. This collection of studies seeks not so much to question realist man's state-centric view but to question the hegemony of man in a broader sense both in international relations and in international politics. So one useful way in which to bring IR men into the discussion, besides welcoming their contributions, is to make masculinity (which underlies the gendering of IR) the focus of inquiry. This is, in any case, what feminist theorists such as Peterson and True have in mind as they seek to expose IR’s “simultaneous reliance on and refusal to theorize hegemonic masculinities.”

**Hegemonic Masculinity**

Hegemonic masculinity is a term used to denote the concept which posits that male power is maintained by creating a dichotomous, hierarchical value system through which devalued traits are associated with femininity and valorized traits are associated with masculinity. As noted earlier, for example, modern gender roles created a public/private split. Peterson and True go further than attributing this split to gender, though, instead linking it to a whole tradition of gendered thought.

In what has been termed ‘binary logocentrism,’ “freedom, reason, autonomy, and disinterested objectivity” are thought to be public (read: male) traits. The private (female) was thought to contain the opposite: “necessity, affect, dependence, and embodied
The significance of this is not just that women were or are assigned devalued traits, but that this sort of dualistic thinking is characteristic of modern masculinity. This conceptual model, they argue, denies any commonality between the "opposite" categories, and indeed takes for granted that they are opposites at all. The danger of this sort of thinking and identifying is that one's thinking is severely constrained, that it contributes to "dangerous" simplifications (one need only think of Marx and his monocausal revolution), and as a result, complex social phenomena are obscured.

This thinking is characteristic in Western thought, having its roots in the Enlightenment, and critiquing its limitations has been the force behind the work of postmodernists, including many feminist strands. When thought is freed from rigid categories whose very construction represents a "male-as-norm" perspective, marginalized peoples are able to envision new possibilities for politics altogether rather than simply trying to prove that they too have the valued qualities. In addition, applying this critique to IR is especially relevant because IR is a bastion of male dominance, and so is characterized by such dichotomous thinking.

Once this thinking is exposed as gendered, the question of what is to be valued as politics becomes more than just a given; it becomes a gender issue, a power issue. Masculine activities constituted as the "main story" such as "war, diplomacy, global finance" become subject to critique. Exposing gendered thinking allows one to push into the foreground the unimportant "background": "the realities of women, non-elite men, children, and nature." Much of feminist scholarship then aims to make visible the invisible role of gender in world politics as well as in a certain masculine notion of "international relations." Foucault himself might agree with such a strategy, for according to him, modern power must conceal itself in order to be efficacious. Once this power is exposed, an unwillingness to analyze gender relations as power relations can then come to be recognized as a conservative political strategy rather than as an objective inquiry into "reality."

Hooper, in true postmodern spirit, denies even the existence of a single masculinity. That is, in attempting to show the masculine character of IR, she notes the fluid and
changing character of masculinity, positing that there is no single masculinity but rather several masculinities which are in contest with each other and at the same time have power over women. It is interesting that Hooper is here refusing to think within the dichotomous categories set up in favor of masculinity, but rather insists upon overlapping pluralities. She notes, in fact, that there are four types of masculinities that have historically been mapped, and that there are variants within these four types. The notion of hegemonic masculinity, though, means that only one type rules at a time, until it is contested and loses power.

The power of hegemonic masculinity lies in its ability to “force [men] to negotiate their identities in relation to practices and relationships informed by hegemonic masculinity,” such as sports or other activities which mark one as masculine.[59] This is not a conscious practice, and Hooper points out that “elites are just as likely to be implicated in the dissemination of cultural hegemony through their participation in a system of meaningful practices that reproduce and confirm their own identities. Men’s compliance is likely because there are policing measures attached to masculinity, namely, the “threat of feminization.”[60] The most extreme cases of this would be found in the homosexual countertype.[61] Hooper connects masculinity to IR through the imagery used in realist discourse—the “other” who is implicated in security threats against the “sovereign man” (the state), is often not only demonized, but feminized, for example.

The “threat” of feminization is perceived as such in part because Western political thought has a long history of devaluing those things associated with femaleness. Starting with Plato and Aristotle, the public has been valued as the site for politics while the body and those things associated with its maintenance have been devalued as a private concern. It is no coincidence that women have been chosen to exist primarily within the realm of the body (the private), for they have been portrayed as the carriers of the “unruly passions” which threaten to disrupt the public, the site of politics.[62]

This has a direct bearing on IR, for as Sylvester points out, certain definitions of national interest were constructed out of these basic ideas. Just as human lust must be
contained in certain spheres (which are divided according to gender), so too must lust for power be contained within a sphere in which states seek “interest defined as power.”[63]

Closely related to this notion of hegemonic masculinity as it is opposed to other masculinities and femininities is the relationship between western IR and what we now call the developing nations. For example, in the same way that women have been associated with the passions, with unruly nature, with uncivilizing forces, so too have colonized peoples been associated with “nature.” The result of this, as Carolyn Merchant points out, is that during early colonial times “nature, women, blacks and wage laborers were set on a path toward a new status as ‘natural’ and human resources for the modern world system.”[64] Such domination may have changed forms (from slavery to cheap raw materials and sweatshop labor, for example, but as Jabri and other postmodern feminists point out, the global system as constructed benefits those in the West.[65] Powerful western cultures control the “systems of knowledge and power, thus making it even more difficult to have non-western voices heard.”[66] This is due partly to the Western ideal of masculinity because, as Mosse explains, masculine traits have historically “symbolized the ideals of a society.”[67] Ideals support certain values, which in turn support a certain mode of life. Thus ideals are infused with power; and as Mosse points out, in times of social anxiety and change, masculinity will try to defend itself.

Since feminists argue that Western conceptions of masculinity dominate both IR and world politics, mainstream IR helps to support and to shape this hegemony by upholding its ideals. It is not surprising, then, that IR marginalizes feminist voices which seek to challenge these ideals or to expose masculine bias. Closely related to this is the way in which nonwestern perspectives are affected by IR; that is, their voices have been largely ignored, and they have thus sought to create their own discourses.

Thus, acknowledging that “international activities reflect and shape gender relations”[68] also requires the acknowledgement that power structures relationships between groups of people and thus groups of women in the world. This overlapping or intersecting of types of oppression is not so much an additional concern of feminism as it is an integral part of feminist critique. The reason is that a certain conception of politics
arises from a certain way of thinking about and looking at the world. Politics is infused with ideology after all, a good definition of which is provided by Sargent: ideology seeks to simplify the world, to provide an orientation for shaping institutions and otherwise acting in the world based upon a certain set of attitudes and beliefs.[69] It is in this sense, then, privileged groups who have dominated both world politics and the discipline of IR can be said to share in an ideology whose values and attitudes include a strong tendency toward domination.

Indeed, the results of such thinking are reflected in the historical way in which colonized societies have been treated as resources to be “managed” for the interests of the more powerful industrialized nations. This means that nonwestern women, as postmodernists would predict, perceive their fundamental needs differently than Western women. As Thomas points out, then, for nonwestern women, security concerns such as a fair and stable international monetary system and a system for the fair exchange of goods (by fair I mean a system which is not weighted to advantage one side of the exchange over the other) may be a more pressing international political concern to them than the balance of power between hegemonic states.[70] Such a difference in perception leads us to one of the most important feminist critiques of IR concepts—that of security.

**Security: Whose?**

Another way in which the IR story can be retold is through critiquing some of the concepts which the discipline takes for granted. One of the central concepts of traditional IR, that of “security,” has been critiqued through a feminist lens, most notably by J. Ann Tickner.[71] Tickner, a pioneering feminist IR theorist, argues that the masculine construction of IR is particularly evident in the subfield of national security studies. The elite academic world of “national security” (a concept which dominates actual foreign policy) is not only peopled by men analyzing the actions and decisions of men, but Tickner argues it is premised solely upon masculine experiences of the world. One of only three women out of sixty IR academics in a security seminar in the early eighties, Tickner explains that women’s experiences and voices have been blatantly excluded from discussions of security.
Security is traditionally defined in terms of “high politics” with war and mass weaponry its primary concerns. The abstract states are the only relevant actors, and strategic violence (or the threat of violence) defines what is most “real” in *Realpolitik*: “We are socialized into believing that war and power politics are spheres of activity with which men have a special affinity and that their voices in describing and prescribing for this world are therefore more likely to be authentic.”[72] It is because we have learned to associate state security with “manly” traits such as “toughness, courage, power, independence” that we buy into the state as protector of its citizens in the same way that men are portrayed as protectors of their women.[73]

What is wrong with this notion of security is that it not only reinforces and legitimates a patriarchal system by valorizing masculine characteristics, but that it also fails to adequately provide security in a concrete sense. That is, individuals and humanity at large suffer from “insecurities” related to military conflict and from economic and environmental conditions which cannot be separated from international politics but that nonetheless remain unacknowledged within this paradigm. As Tickner points out, the inclusion of women’s perspectives in IR does more than simply add in women for the sake of being inclusive. It also may help us to “reformulate these [fundamental IR] concepts in ways that might allow us to see new possibilities for solving our current insecurities.”[74]

Closely related to the study of security within a feminist context is the critique of militarization. The military is an important focus for feminist IR because, in addition to simply excluding women from politics and citizenship based upon gender, citizenship has also been linked to and defined in terms of the military “warrior hero”: “In the West masculinity, virility and violence have been linked together in political thought through the concept of the warrior hero.”[75] Military service has, of course, traditionally excluded women, but even more than that, it has inscribed a protector / protected relationship between men and women, or soldiers and the women at home.[76]

In addition, Steans argues that the military is an important area for feminists to analyze because it is the site of incredible forces of violence, with men having clearly monopolized this power. Her analysis compares several feminist perspectives and shows
that there is a divide between those who want access in order to gain power and those
who want to critique the masculine hierarchy of values altogether.[77]

The question she explores, then, through comparing the works of several feminist
theorists is this: is the state, in its essential connection to military power, a vehicle for
patriarchal domination or can it be used for emancipatory purposes? She points out works
which show that various military masculinities are violently opposed to femininity
(examples) and also that women directly experience war as much as men. Steans
suggests then, that perhaps feminist efforts are better directed toward alternative peaceful
institutions in order not to perpetuate suffering and death for the sake of a liberal “equal
opportunity.”[78]

Steans also builds on the notion that state security cannot be assumed to cover that of
individuals, and implicates IR in the construction of security; the discourse she argues, is
inherently oppositional and therefore a vehicle by which threats are created and insecurity
is perpetuated. Militarism comes back into the discussion here as well, because the
military is after all, the focus of security, and military spending impacts women indirectly.
[79] Perhaps most importantly, however, is the connection Steans makes to the inherent
inhumanity of militaristic thinking and that the security of individuals requires directing
attention and resources away from national security toward global security (resource
depletion, environmental concerns, poverty crises).[80]

Why then, with all of the evidence and arguments implicating IR as a discipline,
are IR men able to simply ignore feminist critique and go on with business as usual?
Steve Smith ponders the reasons for this widespread refusal of men in academia to
engage in a feminist conversation.[81] Telling, perhaps, of the discomfort with which men
deal with the subject, even one apparently in sympathy with feminist goals, is that Smith
first speaks in depth about his own struggle in how to approach the “problem” of gender.
He then, however, gives us valuable insight into “IR man’s” perspective on feminism.

He explains that first, feminism seems like a very personal attack to male academics
rather than a legitimate perspective. He notes, however, that many simply do not read
enough to understand the perspective. Second, IR men are so entrenched in realism that
the feminist concerns do not even cross into their domains. Feminists are considered, as I
earlier feared, “irrelevant to most scholars.”[82] Finally, in speaking about a prominent IR
scholar’s flippant dismissal of feminist IR as not having the impact to actually change the
general direction of the discipline, he reminds us that feminist IR is fundamentally opposed
to traditional IR. It does not simply want to be included within a male category; it wants to
transform it into something it is not. And that, it would seem to those in power, is simply
unacceptable.

More than simply threatening IR as a discipline, though, Smith seems to claim that
feminism is revolutionary: “In talking about masculinity we are doing something far more
radical than confining our analysis to women or gender. . . we are calling into question the
entire state apparatus.”[83] He notes, accordingly, that to bring masculinity into the
agenda is to directly confront power and “risks an incredible backlash, since any move to
point to the socially constructed nature of masculinity axiomatically undermines the
‘naturalness of the existing power divisions between men and women.”[84] Incredibly, he
notes that most male IR academics, positivistic in their outlook, see their work as gender
neutral, and so those who want to analyze gender are “irrelevant or ideological.”[85]

While this “straight from the other side” revelation should not come as a surprise, it
should call into question the legitimacy of a system of knowledge whose primary method
of defending its ideas is to refuse to engage its critics. In academics, at least, one would
expect there to be an interest in groundbreaking ideas. The fact that there is a basic
power struggle at stake does not escape the establishment, however.

Still, it may be that there is yet another take on the role of masculinity which may help
explain its relative non-concern with feminist critique. That is, realist IR, still the dominant
perspective in world politics, may be more focused on its more immediate challengers. To
add a new twist to an old story, Ashworth and Swatuk present the familiar struggle
between liberalism and realism in terms of the struggle over hegemonic masculinity.[86]
Using the idea once more of “fractured” or multiple masculinities, it is argued that the first
debate represents a contest over whether realism or liberalism is the more manly, with
manliness defined in terms of “real and objective” and womanliness defined in terms of that which is “subjective and normative.”[87] At the core of the struggle over what is real is that realism insists it is “aggressive human nature,” and liberalism insists it is the “powers of rational man.”[88]

Realist masculinity is traced back to conservative (aristocratic) politics. Contrary to some Realpolitik explanations, however, these authors do not speak in terms of a direct relationship to Hobbes and Machiavelli (instrumentalism), but instead speak of realism’s origins as arising from a moral imperative for the aristocrat in protecting his “family/community” from outside attack. There was a code of honor which defined the prevailing masculinity of the time, which over time was displaced by liberal masculinity, which “constructed rules of justice that were right for all people at all times.”[89] Along with these masculinities or ideal type men came certain forms of government and societies, and so it was the hope of liberalism that reasonable men would extend the liberal order to international relations. As the authors note, the failure of liberalism to prevail, at the hands of a “conservative-inspired, hypermasculinist, reformulated paradigm” was a victory for realism, and liberals were accused of being “failed men” or “feminine” and thus emasculated by their defeat.[90]

It is interesting, the authors note, that each claimed to be “value-free” (rational versus instrumental reason) in that both reject morality as a feminine concern.[91] For liberalism, “morality is regarded as merely an offshoot of what it is rational to do,”[92] yet realism sought to challenge “uninformed moralizing.”[93] Perhaps this explains, then, the vehement rejection of feminism by both liberalism and realism, for it is openly normative in character. It seems that in order to assert dominance, a paradigm must claim to be objective, normatively neutral. The only other alternative, it would seem, is to change masculinity itself.

Craig Murphy, in fact, focuses on doing just that by identifying several ways in which men have found their niches within masculinity, particularly within the context of the military.”[94] Murphy adopts the view that there are several masculinities within the military and that each are suited for different tasks. What is also interesting here is the narrative
form as well as the content of his work: Murphy speaks not from a “scientific” analytical perspective, but from his personal recollections and experiences as a child growing up in a military family. The very fact of using personal anecdotal evidence is subversive of “objectivity” valued by hegemonic masculinity.

Second, Murphy identifies one type of “devalued masculinity” as that of the mediator—one who finds nonviolent ways in which to express the dominant values of the “good soldier: courage, competence, and a deep sense of responsibility.” He associates this masculinity with the new breed of male scholars who are sympathetic to feminist scholarship. The significance of this “good soldier” masculinity, however, is that it is inherently hierarchical: “In a world that defines masculinity in great part as being competent, as being in charge, one of the virtues required of a good soldier is unswerving loyalty.”

Therefore, it is intrinsic to the model of masculinity that to uncover one’s subordination within a masculine order is to lose one’s illusion of being in control. Thus, critical reflection on such things threatens the very core of masculine identity; it threatens self-annihilation. This is unlike femininity, which for women, is like an albatross they cannot seem to get rid of in spite of the fact they know it exists as an artificial construct (witness, for example, the obsession with Western standards of feminine beauty, despite the fact women know that these things are an identity trap).

Part of the problem with trying to change masculinities (or trying to create new ideas of what it means to be a man) is that the gendered balance of power will remain. This specific example of masculinity at work in the military exemplifies my point. Steve Niva examines the Gulf War in terms of putting forth a New World order, but he characterized this New World order in terms of masculinity. Starting from the assumption that masculinity “has required the daily exercise of power—domestic power, national power, and . . . international power” in order to maintain its presence Niva builds upon much feminist scholarship to show that the Gulf War, in its remasculinization of “American manhood” in the wake of the Vietnam War and the accompanying sexual revolution,
sought to both stabilize gender roles and to “revive a masculinity that could reinforce and legitimate a more aggressively militarized foreign policy.”[98]

At the same time, however, Niva argues that it was a new masculinity, a more feminized masculinity that was put forth. He points out that Bush, Powell, and Schwarzkopf all exuded “cuddly” images about their concern for the troops.[99] The danger of this new, gentler masculinity, however, is that it can criticize more obviously hypermasculinities and deflect criticism while still retaining control over “the major institutions, decision-making bodies of international authority and power.”[100] Such analysis also suggests that to attempt to simply change masculinity (or sex roles) is not a feminist solution, for it does not necessarily mean gaining power. It is beginning to seem, then, that it is the very notion of the dichotomous split between femininity and masculinity—the fact that they are opposed—which is at the root of the problem.

**From Deconstruction to Reconstruction**

Jill Steans, author of *Gender and International Relations: An Introduction* provides a useful overview which helps to wrap up the goals of feminist IR.[101] They are, first, to show how feminist concepts and theories can be used to look differently at the usual IR concepts; second, to challenge mainstream IR, primarily realism, in order to show that realist objectivity is constructed through power, and third, to show that the state is not *the* political subject, but that women are subjects as well; finally, to show that the focus on gender can be related to real and concrete issues addressed in IR.

This chapter thus far has focused on deconstructing and challenging IR as it stands. In order to be truly a useful, alternative way in which to view international politics, however, it must set about the task of reconstruction, to attempt to connect theory to practice. A good example of an initial effort to construct a feminist alternative can be found in the care ethic.

Fiona Robinson, in *Globalizing Care*, seeks then to reconstruct what feminism has attempted to deconstruct.[102] In asserting a feminist ethic of care borne out of the feminine experience, Robinson attempts to revalue those values denigrated by
masculinity. The basis for the ethic of care is Carol Gilligan's groundbreaking work in which she seeks to discredit Lawrence Kohlberg's assertion that girls scored lower on a moral development test. Gilligan, in a psychoanalytic empirical study, showed that women had a different way of ethical decision-making than men, which reflects their more relational identities. Whereas men looked to context-free, universal principles, or rules, for guidance (labeled the ethic of justice), women tended to view the "right" decision according to the specifics of the situation and the effects upon the relationship. Thus, men considered a moral being to be one who followed the rules, and women considered a moral being to be one who made a caring decision.

The critiques of Gilligan's ethic of care were that it essentialized women, leaving them open to the conservative charge that women are naturally different and thus suited for certain roles. In addition, feminists argued that once women's roles changed, the ethic associated with their position would disappear. Charges concerning the care ethics widespread applicability, however, focused upon its affective and private character. For example, Buzan suggests that the care ethic amounts to "an invitation to dispense with morality and replace it with nepotism, favouritism, and injustice."

Robinson answers to three charges, specifically: first, that care is specific to females and so not suitable as a public ethic; second, that care means dispensing with all notions of justice; and third, that the care ethic is a "personal, private, and hence parochial morality which is ill-equipped to address wider social and political concerns." In order to overcome these objections, she uses revised versions of the care ethic put forth by Ruddick and Tronto.

The significance of Ruddick's work, *Maternal Thinking*, for Robinson is that the experience of motherhood, which is associated with the care ethic, provides an important position from which to "criticize the destructiveness of war and begin to invent peace." From Tronto, she takes a revised version of the care ethic, which in its original formulation, Tronto states, was simply a feminine way of coping with the oppositional positioning to masculinity—"a survival mechanism for women who are dealing with oppressive conditions." Tronto puts forth a "critical version" which is used by
Robinson to assert that care is not opposed to justice per se, but only to an atomistic ontology which denies interdependence. It is precisely for this reason that care is suitable as a global ethic, for it is capable of taking into account context and the particularities of concrete people in concrete situations. In addition, as Kittay notes, it can be used institutionally, as an ethic to guide decision-makers in “considering what social and economic structures are necessary to permit continuous, caring, human relationships especially responsive to those most dependent on such care.”[108] What caring entails is not an emotional feeling, but rather a responsibility to examine contextually moral problems with the aim of identifying how social structures exclude and marginalize, and how relations deteriorate “so as to cause suffering.”[109]

In order to actually see this at work, in “real” politics, so to speak, one has to go all the way to the last chapter of the book, in which Robinson immediately goes from “issues” to contexts, claiming the need not to separate too clearly theory from practice. In the matter of humanitarian intervention, for example, Robinson provides a step-by-step picture of the process of care which would differ from a list of principles by which to act (the apparently orthodox approach). Rather than focusing on the atrocious actions which gave impetus for intervention, she states that the “normal social relations” would need to be examined, that the “processes of exclusion and marginalization” would be scrutinized in order to find out why the breakdown occurred. Refusing to take a state-centric focus would be central to such an approach.[110]

While the general approach may be labeled “standpoint” and thus be rejected by postmodernists, such an attempt to re-envision a global ethic aims to avoid the same “reductive” trap as the orthodox discipline. While I agree that detached principles can produce distorted “justice,” I think that ultimately, any sort of contextual care ethic, as described within this book, can only be an initiative or policy direction adhered to by specific institutions for which it has been more clearly defined. This flexibility is perhaps a strength but also a weakness which would allow the content of the ethic to be used in paternalistic ways.
This brings us back to the realist issue of power: that is, why would decision-makers, who we have learned are for the most part indoctrinated into hegemonic masculinity, be compelled to work toward the solution which most produces a framework within which caring relations would be supported? The biggest obstacle for actually changing the state of the world seems to be that, unlike what Marx believed, the world slate cannot be wiped clean. We must work with what is here, which is not to say that value systems and ways of thinking cannot move gradually. In any case, the nature of feminism is to be critical and experimental. Possibilities for reconstruction do not include one overarching theory (due to the varied nature of feminist epistemological commitments), but Steans suggests that we can view feminist standpoint as just one role of many for feminism.[111] In addition, she suggests ways in which feminism can be compatible with both mainstream liberalism and Marxism, the two major ideologies of the late 20th century.

The scope of this chapter, on the other hand, focuses on introducing a somewhat coherent “feminism” as a whole by showing the ways in which scholars have attempted to detangle the thought processes and ways of knowing in which male dominance is embedded. So, in a sense, the further away from concrete concerns of real women some feminist strands of inquiry gets, the closer they seem to come to penetrating the reality (or realities) which underlies and supports inequality. I suggest that this widening in scope of feminist theory shows a maturing, a ripening of feminist thought rather than a preoccupation with abstractions. This is not to say that reconstructive efforts such as the care ethic do not need to be grounded more concretely in real-life situations.

As for the future of feminism, it seems the male perspective and the study of masculinity can add valuable insights into the nature of power and identity. If the threat of self-annihilation is stronger with men (the de-manning of men), then feminism will have to take into account strategically that it is not enough to expose the social constructedness of gender, but will also have to work to subvert the binary oppositional conception of gender, such as the authors did in asserting many masculinities. Breaking down the dichotomies would itself seem to allow real people, women and men as well as groups and “nations,”
more space in which to negotiate identities, values, and economic concerns. In other words, a less oppositional world may allow for redefined notions of peace and security to take root.

Finally, the study of the military as it relates to the production of masculinity and femininity seems to be a ripe area for more study. The question remains to be answered whether masculinity is essential to the mission of the military, that is, if the military can be reconceived in a non-gendered way; and if not, if the link between masculinity and violence can be lessened. This assumes, of course, that the state is not going to go away anytime soon, and that the state by extension means that a violent military is here to stay.

**Conclusion**

Feminism seeks to uncover not only unequal power relations between men and women, but the role of masculinities (and gender relations more generally) in shaping world politics. The critique of the discipline as both the site of the expression of masculinity and its creation is compelling evidence that there can be no clean separation between politics and the people who study and explain them.

Finally, it should be stressed that feminism does not seek to pit itself against men per se. Steans notes that there are commonalities of purpose amongst the different post-positivists. The central purpose is, of course, to challenge and destabilize the central tenets of positivism, which presumes that there is an objective world waiting to be discovered. Post-positivists, including most feminists, stress the socially constructed nature of existence. It is precisely because reality is constructed, they presume, that power relations are not fixed and inevitable, but changeable.

**Notes**


For further discussion of the naturalness fallacy as it relates to gender within the context of modernity, see Linda Nicholson, *The Play of Reason: From the Modern to the Postmodern*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 25.


Ibid. 7.

For example, some may argue that Western women are privileged as compared to Nonwestern men. Such an argument does not invalidate the feminist perspective, but rather it illuminates the fact that gender constructions intersect with and are embedded within other relations of power such as those of class and race. For instance, Nonwestern women, in occupying Nonwestern constructions of femininity, are disempowered *vis a vis* both Western and Nonwestern masculinities as well as Western femininities. The transformation of such practices of exclusion are at the heart of feminist critique, which is why feminism is better characterized as a plurality of conversations rather than a single ideological system.


The problem with human nature assumptions, particularly within the context of claims to be “value free,” are that they are always borrowed from some metaphysical understanding of the world, and values are always embedded within these understandings.

Steans, *Gender*, 52.

Ibid. 64.

Ibid. 68.


Sylvester, “Feminist Theory,” online.

I borrow this phrase from Peterson, *Gendered States*; Also using the phrase is Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

(Steans, *Gender*, 17)

Beckman and D’Amico, *Women*.


Ibid. ix.

Ibid. x.

Ibid. x.

Beckman and D’Amico, *Women*.


Quoted in Sylvester, “Feminist Theory,” online.


Ibid. 2.

Ibid. 3.

Ibid. 69.

Ibid. 16.

Sylvester, “Feminist Theory,” online.


Ibid. 91.

See, for example, Johann Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 27.3, 291-305.


[49] Ibid. 5.


[54] Ibid. 18.

[55] Ibid. 19.

[56] Ibid. 20.


[59] Ibid. 34.

[60] Ibid. 35. Also, Eleanor O’Gorman suggests that men too are trapped within identities, but in “relatively more powerful subject positions.” “Writing Women’s Wars: Foucauldian Strategies of Engagement,” In Jabri and O’Gorman, *Culture*, 103.


For a thorough discussion of this point, see also Caroline Thomas, *In Search of Security: The Third World in International Relations*, (Boulder: Rienner, Wheatsheaf Books, 1987).


Whitworth, *Feminism*, 158.


Thomas, *Security*.

Tickner, *Gender*.

Ibid. 4.

Ibid. 6.

Ibid. 18.

Steans, *Gender*, 81.

See Judith Stiehm, ed., *Women and Men’s Wars*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983); Sharoni, *Gender*, also argues that women’s bodies are often the site of war.

Steans, *Gender*, 83-85.

Ibid. 103.

Ibid. 110-112.

Ibid. 127.


Ibid. 59.

Ibid. 64.

Ibid. 65.

Ibid. 67.


Ibid. 76.

Ibid. 76.

Ibid. 80.

Ibid. 82.
Carol Miller, “Women in International Relations,” in Grant and Newland, Gender, 69, notes that women were symbolically associated with morality and peace in international affairs during the time of the League of Nations, but were nonetheless kept out of decision-making.

Ashworth and Swatuck, “Masculinity,” 85.

Ibid. 84.

Craig Murphy, “Six Masculine Roles in International Relations,” in Zalewski and Parpart, The Man Question.

Ibid. 99.

Ibid. 102-103.


Ibid. 113-115.

Ibid. 118.

Ibid. 122.

Steans, Gender.


Ibid. 19.

Jean Bethke Elshtain (cited in Peterson, Gendered States, 152) also argues that we need both care and justice.

Robinson, Globalizing Care, 20.

Ibid. 20.

Ibid. 22.

Ibid. 144-45.

Steans, Gender, 160.


