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# **What is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to IR's Methodological Questions**

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## **Abstract**

Methodological issues have constituted some of the deepest sources of misunderstanding between current IR feminists and IR theorists working in social scientific frameworks. IR theorists have called upon feminists to frame their research questions in terms of testable hypotheses. Feminists have responded that their research questions cannot be answered using social science explanatory frameworks. Deep epistemological divisions about the construction and purpose of knowledge make bridging these methodological divides difficult. Frequently, feminists ask different questions from those typically asked in IR. Claiming that knowledge is never neutral, many feminists see their work as situated and emancipatory. These epistemological standards lead feminists to very different methodological perspectives and many IR feminists have drawn on methods that are rarely taught to students of IR. Asking different questions and using evidence from the everyday lives of women, IR feminists have drawn on ethnographic, narrative, and cross-cultural methods, to name a few. Drawing on some recent IR feminist case studies, this paper will analyze and assess how these methodological orientations are useful for understanding the gendering of international politics, the state and its security-seeking practices and its effects on the lives of women and men.

Robert Keohane has challenged feminists to come up with a research program using “scientific method in the broadest sense.” (Keohane, 1998).<sup>1</sup> Keohane outlined a possible research program for International Relations (IR) feminists focused on a variant of the popular democratic peace theory.<sup>2</sup> He suggested that feminists investigate whether countries with highly unequal gendered hierarchies would behave differently internationally from those with less unequal social structures at home. In other words, are more gender equal societies less inclined to fight each other? Keohane proposed that feminists investigate this question, or others, using the basic method of social science: make a conjecture about causality; formulate that conjecture as an hypothesis consistent with established theory; specify the observable implications of the hypothesis; test for whether those implications obtain in the real world; and report one’s findings, ensuring that one’s procedures are publicly known and hence replicable to other members of a particular scientific community which he identified as the IR community of scholars.<sup>3</sup> This, Keohane claimed, would be “the best way to convince nonbelievers of the validity of the message that feminists are seeking to deliver.” (Keohane, 1998:196-7)

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

Keohane’s suggestions for a feminist research program using this basic social scientific method have some similarities with what Sandra Harding terms “feminist empiricism,” an epistemology that argues that sexism and androcentricism in existing research are social biases correctable by stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms of scientific inquiry. (Harding, 1986:24) While she would not define herself as an empiricist, Harding argues that feminist empiricism is appealing because it leaves unchallenged the existing methodological norms of science; this

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<sup>1</sup> This short piece “Beyond Dichotomy: Conversations Between International Relations and Feminist Theory,” was written in response to my article, “You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements Between Feminists and IR Theorists” (Tickner, 1997)

<sup>2</sup> This was prompted by my suggestion that the degree of inequality of gender relations within states might influence their external security seeking behavior (Tickner, 1997:628).

<sup>3</sup> Keohane’s use of the term “method” is closer to my definition of methodology below. He refers to this methodology as “*the* (italics added) basic social science method.” I would argue it is *one* such methodology and is the one generally employed by US IR scholars working in the scientific tradition. In this paper, I use the term “social science” to refer to this particular type of work. I am aware that there are many IR scholars outside this tradition, who would also refer to their work as social science as well as many who come out of more humanistic, interpretive traditions. I also realize that this is not necessarily the dominant methodology outside the US.

<sup>4</sup> For a fuller elaboration on Keohane’s articulation of social scientific methodology for IR see, King, Keohane and Verba (1994). This definition of a positivist methodological framework assumes no necessary difference between the methodologies of the natural sciences and the social sciences.

means that it would be easier to gain acceptance for feminist research in the broader social scientific community – or, as Keohane puts it, it would be the best route for convincing IR non-believers, using the social science methodology that he advocates, of the validity of feminist IR research.

In the five years since Keohane issued his challenge to feminists to build a research program using neopositivist methods, IR feminist empirical research, which took off in the mid 1990s, has continued to grow; yet the majority of it has not followed the path that Keohane suggested – formulating hypotheses and providing evidence that can be used to test, falsify or validate them. With some exceptions which I will discuss below, IR feminists have employed a variety of methods, most of which would fall into methodological frameworks that have variously been described as postpositivist, reflectivist, or interpretivist.<sup>5</sup> Supporting a diversity of theoretical approaches and methods with which to ask quite different questions from those normally asked by IR, many IR feminists have chosen not to work within a feminist empiricist framework. Therefore, it is probably the case that IR feminists have not convinced those whom Keohane described as “IR nonbelievers” of the validity of their research. Nor would they want to claim to have produced a cumulative research program.<sup>6</sup>

In this paper I undertake three tasks related to these feminist methodological preferences with particular emphasis on the state and its security-seeking practices. I chose this focus because it deals with an issue at the core of the discipline. First, I elaborate on four distinctive features of feminist methodology which I construct by drawing on the work of feminists in the disciplines of sociology, philosophy, history, political theory, and anthropology, disciplines in which feminism has had a longer history than in IR, a history which includes rich and diverse literatures on methodological issues. I distinguish between the term “methodology,” a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed, and “method,” a technique for gathering and analyzing evidence (Harding, 1987:2-3).<sup>7</sup> Following Harding, I argue that there is no unique feminist research method; feminists have drawn upon a variety of methods, including ethnography, statistical research, survey research, cross-cultural research, philosophical argument, discourse analysis, and case study. What makes feminist research unique, however, is a distinctive methodological perspective or framework which fundamentally challenges the often unseen androcentric or masculine biases in the way that knowledge has traditionally been constructed in all the disciplines. I then discuss two examples of IR feminist empirical scholarship which

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<sup>5</sup>There is a body of IR research on gender and women that does use conventional social scientific methodology although not all of these authors would necessarily define themselves as feminists. There have been studies of the effect of gender equality on public opinion, on foreign policy and on violence as well as studies of the effect of the gender gap in voting on foreign policy and the use of force. See for examples, Gallagher (1993); Brandes (1994); Tessler and Warriner (1997); Caprioli (2000); Caprioli and Boyer, (2001); Eichenberg, (2003). Caprioli and Boyer (2001) cite a number of studies from political science, business, communications, and psychology as examples of feminist scholarship that uses social scientific methodology. It is, of course true that feminists from a variety of disciplines have used conventional scientific methodology. However, this is not the methodology used by a majority of IR feminists much of whose work fits more closely with the methodological perspectives that I discuss in this paper.

<sup>6</sup>Of course, I cannot (and should not) speak for all IR feminists. There is a large diversity in their views, not only on methodological preferences, but also on whether IR feminists should continue to engage with the mainstream of the discipline, given the hegemony of social scientific IR, at least in the United States.

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

exemplify these methodological perspectives and which are asking questions about the state and its security-seeking practices.<sup>8</sup> Each of the chosen authors makes use of methods not typical of IR social scientific research. As I shall show, IR feminists' methodological sensitivities parallel those of feminists in other disciplines, sensitivities that complicate efforts to construct the type of research programs for which Keohane is calling. Drawing on the previous methodological discussion and the analysis of my chosen studies, the third part of the paper offers some observations on the problems that feminists have raised with respect to the use of quantitative methods of the type that would be required to answer the kind of research question that Keohane illustratively posed to IR feminists.

### **Feminist Perspectives on Methodology**

In contrast to Keohane's commitment to a broadly defined scientific methodology acceptable to a community of scholars – in this case a community of IR scholars, feminists claim no single standard of methodological correctness or “feminist way” to do research. (Reinhartz, 1992:243); nor do they see it as desirable to construct one. Many describe their research as a journey, or an archeological dig, that draws on different methods or tools appropriate to the goals of the task at hand, or the questions asked, rather than to any prior methodological commitment more typical of IR social science (Reinharz, 1992:211; Charlesworth, 1994:6; Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991:102).<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the scientific method articulated by Keohane – initially specifying hypotheses that are open to subsequent testing, feminist knowledge-building is an ongoing process, tentative and emergent; feminists frequently describe knowledge-building as emerging through conversation with texts, research subjects, or data (Reinharz, 1992:230).<sup>10</sup> Many feminist scholars prefer to use the term epistemological “perspective” rather than methodology to indicate the research goals and orientation of an ongoing project, the aim of which is to challenge and rethink what is claimed to be “knowledge,” from the perspectives of women's lives. Rather than producing research that is likely to convince one's disciplinary colleagues as Keohane urges, many feminist scholars emphasize the challenge to and estrangement from conventional knowledge-building due to the tension of being inside and outside one's discipline at the same time. Given that feminist knowledge has emerged from a deep skepticism about knowledge which claims to be universal and objective but which is, in reality, knowledge based on men's lives, such knowledge is constructed simultaneously out of disciplinary frameworks and feminist criticisms of these disciplines. Its goal is nothing less than to transform these disciplinary frameworks and the knowledge to which they contribute. Feminist inquiry is a dialectical process – listening to women and understanding how the subjective meaning they attach to their lived experiences are so often at variance with meanings internalized from society at large (Nielsen,

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<sup>8</sup> Following *The American Heritage Dictionary* (third edition, 1994), I define “empirical” as “guided by practical experience and not theory.” I distinguish it from “empiricism” which the dictionary defines as “employment of empirical methods as in science.” Feminists, whose methodological perspectives I am describing, generally reject empiricism.

<sup>9</sup> This stands in strong contrast to one of King, Keohane and Verba's criteria for choosing a research question “explicitly locating a research design within the framework of the existing social scientific literature” (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994:16).

<sup>10</sup> In her biography of biologist, Barbara McClintock, Evelyn Fox Keller describes McClintock's method for researching the transmutation of corn as letting the plants speak rather than trying to impose an answer. Keller talks about McClintock's “passion for difference” which she emphasizes over looking for similarities in her data (Keller, 1983). This tolerance and, indeed, preference for ambiguity is in sharp contrast with conventional social science.

1990:26) Much of feminist scholarship is both transdisciplinary and avowedly political; it has explored and sought to understand the unequal gender hierarchies, as well as other hierarchies of power, which exist in all societies, and their effects on the subordination of women and other disempowered people with the goal of changing them.<sup>11</sup>

Four methodological perspectives guide much of feminist research: a deep concern with which research questions get asked and why; the goal of designing research that is useful to women (and also to men) and is both less biased and more universal than conventional research; the centrality of questions of reflexivity and the subjectivity of the researcher; and a commitment to knowledge as emancipation.<sup>12</sup>

### *Feminist Research Asks Feminist Questions*

According to Sandra Harding, traditional social science has typically asked questions about nature and social life that certain (usually privileged) men want answered (Harding, 1987:6). In her later work, Harding traces the relationship between the development of modern western science and the history of European colonial expansion. Challenging the claim to value-neutrality of modern science with respect to the questions it has asked, she argues that European voyages of discovery went hand in hand with the development of modern science and technology – Europeans who were colonizing the world needed to know about winds, tides, maps and navigation as well as botany, the construction of ships, firearms, and survival in harsh environments. Research topics were chosen, not because they were intellectually interesting, but in order to solve colonialism’s everyday problems. Harding also examines and supports the validity of non-western scientific traditions, such as those originating in China, India, Africa and the pre-Colombian Americas, thereby offering support for post-Kuhnian and post-colonial claims that there is no one “true” scientific method. While Harding is not arguing for cognitive relativism since she does not believe that all claims that science makes are equally accurate, she does argue that other cultures have used different methods and assumptions about the world to arrive at equally plausible explanations (Harding, 1998:39-54).

In a different context, Harding argues that conventional western scientific progress is judged not on the merit of the questions that are asked but on how questions are answered. It is not in the origin of the scientific problem or hypothesis, but rather in the testing of hypotheses or the “logic of scientific inquiry” that we look to judge the success of science (Harding, 1987:7), a standard that is close to that articulated by Keohane. Feminists counter, however, that *the questions that are asked* – or, more importantly, *those that are not asked* – are as determinative of the adequacy of the project as any answers that we can discover.

A research project should pose a question that is “important” in the “real world” (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994:15; Van Evera, 1997:97). Feminists and IR scholars would probably agree on this statement but disagree as to the definition of what is “important.” They would also have

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<sup>11</sup> “Third-wave feminism,” feminism which began in the early 1990s and which was reacting against treating “woman” as an essentialized universal category, has emphasized the different positionality of women according to class, race, culture, and geographical location. IR feminists who emphasize difference and this type of intersectionality might reject attempts to generalize about knowledge from women’s lives as discussed in this paper.

<sup>12</sup> The following section relies heavily on Harding (1987); Fonow and Cook (1991) and Bloom (1998) but it is striking the extent to which much of the work on feminist methodology and feminist research implicitly or explicitly raises these same issues.

conflicting views of what constitutes the “real world.” The questions that IR has asked since the discipline was founded have typically been about the behavior of states, particularly powerful states and their security-seeking behavior, given an anarchical international environment. Much of the scholarship in international political economy and international institutions has also focused on the behavior of the great powers and their potential, or lack thereof, for international cooperation. These questions are of particular importance for the foreign policy interests of the most powerful states. More recently, IR has been focusing on questions about the effects of political institutions and forms of governance on the prospects for international peace rather than on structural determinants of state behavior. Much of this research has centered on supporting or challenging the claim, made by Bruce Russett, that democracies are less warlike, at least in their relations with other democracies (Russett, 1993).<sup>13</sup> The question that Keohane poses – whether relative gender equality is likely to have an effect on states’ security-seeking behavior is a variant of this type of question. It is an important one and it is already being addressed. For example Mary Caprioli has demonstrated that, according to her measures, domestic gender equality has a pacifying effect on state behavior on the international level (Caprioli, 2000: see also Caprioli and Boyer, 2001).

This line of research is an important addition to the literature that is seeking to understand how domestic democratic institutions shape states’ foreign policies. The questions it asks are state-centric and are designed to provide answers about inter-state behavior; the methods it uses emerge out of traditional empirical social science. However, most IR feminists have asked very different questions and used different methods to answer them. While they may seek to understand state behavior, they do so in the context of asking why, in so many parts of the world, women remain so fundamentally disempowered in matters of foreign and military policy.<sup>14</sup> Rather than speculate on the hypothetical question as to whether women *might* be more peaceful than men as foreign policymakers, they have concentrated on the more immediate problem as to why there are *so few* women in positions of power.<sup>15</sup> On issues of war and peace, feminists have asked why wars have been predominantly fought by men and how gendered structures of masculinity and femininity have legitimated war and militarism for both women and men;<sup>16</sup> they have also investigated the problematic essentialized association of women with peace, an association which, many believe, disempowers both women and peace (Sylvester, 1987: Tickner, 2001:59). Rather than uncritically assume the state as a given unit of analysis, feminists have investigated the constitutive features of “gendered states” and their implications for the militarization of women’s (and men’s) lives (Peterson, 1992: Enloe, 2000). But the basic question that has most concerned IR feminists is why, in just about all societies, women are

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<sup>13</sup> Russett’s and other IR scholars’ work on the democratic peace emerge out of Kant’s ideas about the peacefulness of democracies. See Doyle (1983).

<sup>14</sup> This difference of focus was made clear to me at a conference on women’s rights that I attended in 1999 to which IR theorists, some of whom did research on the democratic peace theory and feminists working on human rights were invited. The feminists were less concerned with inter-state behavior and more concerned with issues of social justice, particularly gender justice. They were also less willing to make generalizations about women and about states. For further discussion of the methodological implications of these differences see Tickner (2001:126-130).

<sup>15</sup> Speculation on this issue was undertaken by Francis Fukuyama (1998). Feminists would claim that such speculation is a distraction from the real issues facing women. For a critique of Fukuyama’s conservative conclusions which were that men should be kept in power in western democracies in order to be able to stand up to security threats from other parts of the world, see Tickner (1999).

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

disadvantaged, politically, socially and economically relative to men and to what extent this is due to international politics and the global economy. Conversely, they have also asked in what ways these hierarchical gendered structures of inequality may actually support the international system of states and contribute to the unevenly distributed prosperity of the global capitalist economy. Although Marxists may be cited as the legitimate precursors concerning such issues, these are questions which, in this form, have never been asked by social scientific IR; while IR scholars would not deny that they are important questions, they would probably deem them at best tangential to the core subject matter of the discipline.<sup>17</sup>

The “message that feminists are seeking to deliver” is, therefore, a more profound challenge to the discipline than Keohane implies; the questions that feminists define as important are typically not answerable within a traditional social scientific framework. Feminist questions are challenging the core assumptions of the discipline and deconstructing its central concepts; many of them are constitutive rather than causal.<sup>18</sup> Feminists have sought to better understand a neglected but constitutive feature of war – why it has been primarily a male activity and what the causal and constitutive implications of this are for women’s political roles given that they have been constructed as a “protected” category (Kinsella, 2003). They have investigated the continuing legitimation of war itself though appeals to traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. Working from the discovery of the gendered biases in state-centric security thinking they have redefined the meaning of (in)security to include the effects of structural inequalities of race, class and gender. Similarly, on the bases of theoretical critiques of the gendered political uses of the public/private distinction, they have rearticulated the meaning of democracy to include the participation of individuals in all the political and economic processes that affect their daily lives (Ackerly, 2000:178-203). While not rejecting in principle the use of quantitative data, feminists have recognized how past behavioral realities have been publicly constituted in state generated indicators in biased gendered ways, using data that does not adequately reflect the reality of women’s lives and the unequal structures of power within which they are situated. For this reason they have relied more on hermeneutic, historical, narrative and case study methodological orientations rather than on causal analysis of unproblematically defined empirical patterns. Importantly, feminists use gender as a socially constructed and variable category of analysis to investigate these dynamics.<sup>19</sup> They have suggested that gender inequality as well as other social relations of domination and subordination have been among the fundamental building blocks on which, to varying extents, the publicly recognized features of states, their security relationships, and the global economy have been constructed and on which they continue to operate to varying degrees.

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<sup>17</sup> Although Keohane (1998) asserted that, in my article to which he was responding I was asking whether countries with unequal gender hierarchies behave differently from those with less inequality at home, my question was slightly different and closer to these feminist issues – that gendered structures of inequality must be examined and understood in order to understand and prescribe for women’s (and certain men’s) security. (Tickner, 1997:628).

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the difference between constitutive and causal questions see Wendt (1998).

<sup>19</sup> I define gender as a set of socially constructed characteristics that we typically associate with masculinity and femininity. Characteristics associated with an “ideal type” masculinity, such as autonomy, rationality and power, are generally preferred by both men and women but are characteristics to which few men actually conform. Importantly gender is not just about women; it is about relations between men and women, relations that are generally hierarchical and unequal. Gender hierarchies intersect with, and are compounded by, other hierarchies, such as class and race.

Rather than working from an ontology that depicts states as individualistic autonomous actors - an ontology typical of social science perspectives on IR and of liberal thinking more generally - feminists start from an ontology of social relations in which individuals are embedded in, and constituted by, historically unequal political, economic, and social structures.<sup>20</sup> Unlike social science IR, which has drawn on models from economics and the natural sciences to explain the behavior of states in the international system, IR feminists have used sociological analyses which begin with individuals and the hierarchical social relations in which their lives are situated.<sup>21</sup> While social science IR has been quite system-determined or state focused, feminist understandings of state behavior frequently start from below the state level - with the lives of connected individuals. Whereas much of IR is focused on describing and explaining the behavior of states, feminists are motivated by the goal of investigating the lives of women within states or international structures in order to change them. Given these different ontological presuppositions, evaluation of feminist research according to the scientific standards articulated by Keohane is particularly problematic.

### *Use Women's Experiences to Design Research That Is Useful to Women*

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

An important commitment of feminist methodology is that knowledge must be built and analyzed in a way that can be used by women to change whatever oppressive conditions they face. When choosing a research topic feminists frequently ask what potential it has to improve women's lives (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991:101). This means that research must be designed to provide a vision of the future as well as a structural picture of the present (Cook and Fonow, 1990:80). Feminists study the routine aspects of everyday life that help to sustain gender inequality; they acknowledge the pervasive influence of gender and acknowledge that what has passed as knowledge about human behavior is, in fact, frequently knowledge about male behavior (Cook and Fonow, 1990:73). Feminists claim that what is called "common sense" is, in reality, knowledge derived from experiences of men's lives, usually privileged men. Importantly, "male behavior" and "men's lives" are highly dependent on women and other subordinate groups playing all kinds of supportive roles in these lives and behind this behavior: for if there were only (privileged) men their lives would surely be different. Designing research useful to women involves first deconstructing previous knowledge based on these androcentric assumptions.

Joyce Nielsen suggests that feminist research represents a paradigm shift in the Kuhnian sense in that it sees women, rather than just men, as both the subject matter and creators of knowledge.

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<sup>20</sup> This is an important reason why a convergence between post-positivist feminisms and social scientific methodologies is so problematic. There is, of course, a wide variety of IR scholarship that also draws on sociologically oriented methodologies. See for example, Hobden and Hobson (2002).

<sup>21</sup> This evokes a spatial image of a network of connected individuals, rather than states as billiard balls or autonomous actors (Prügl, 1999:147).

This leads to anomalies or observations that do not fit received theory. For example, the periodization of history and our understanding of the timing of progressive moments do not always fit with periods that saw progress for women. (Nielsen, 1990:19-21) Nielsen outlines the way in which androcentric theories have been used to explain the origins of human society. By focusing on “man the hunter” man’s [sic] origins were associated with productive rather than reproductive tasks. Men were seen as responsible for organizing human life and women’s roles as gatherers and reproducers were completely ignored. Nielsen claims that these partial stories are not good science; it follows, therefore, that objectivity depends on the positionality of the researcher as much as the method used, a claim that contradicts the depiction of science as a foolproof procedure that relies on observation to test theories and hypotheses about the world (Nielsen, 1990:16-18). To this end, Sandra Harding claims that a distinctive feature of feminist research is that it uses women’s experiences as an indicator of the “reality” against which conventional hypotheses are tested and unconventional questions are formulated (Harding, 1987:7). Feminists have also claimed that knowledge based on the standpoint of women’s lives, particularly marginalized women, leads to more robust objectivity, not only because it broadens the base from which we derive knowledge, but also because the perspectives of “outsiders” or marginalized people may reveal aspects of reality obscured by more orthodox approaches to knowledge building.<sup>22</sup>

Designing IR research of use to women involves considerable paradigm shifts. While the role of women as reproducers, caregivers, and unpaid workers has been largely ignored in conventional economic analysis, it is central to feminist concerns. Marilyn Waring has documented how national income data ignore reproductive and caring tasks. She describes the daily routine of a girl in Zimbabwe who works at household tasks from 4am to 9pm but who is officially classified as “economically inactive” or “unoccupied” (Waring, 1988: 15-16). Yet national income data, which ignore these reproductive and caring tasks, are used by political elites to make public policy. Feminists have highlighted the role of domestic servants and home workers; although, since the industrial revolution the home has been defined as a feminine space devoid of work, feminists have demonstrated how women in all of these various productive and reproductive roles are crucial to the maintenance of the global capitalist economy (Chin, 1998; Prugl, 1999). Making visible that which was previously invisible has led IR feminists to investigate military prostitution and rape as tools of war and instruments of state policy (Moon, 1997; Enloe, 2000). This not only leads to redefinitions of the meaning of security but to an understanding of how the security of the state and the prosperity of the global economy is frequently dependent on the insecurity of certain individuals’, often women’s lives. In bringing to light these multiple experiences of women’s lives, feminist researchers also claim that the research they conduct cannot, and should not be separated from their identities as researchers.

### *Reflexivity*

As Sandra Harding has claimed, most feminist research insists that the inquirer be placed in the same critical plane as the subject matter. “Only in this way can we hope to produce understandings and explanations which are free of distortion from the unexamined beliefs of social scientists themselves” (Harding, 1987:9). In contrast to conventional social scientific

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<sup>22</sup> For an elaboration on this idea as it pertains to Black feminist thought see Patricia Hill Collins (1991:36). Collins defines Black feminist intellectuals as “outsiders within”.

methods, Harding believes that acknowledging the subjective element into one's analysis, which exists in all social science research, actually increases the objectivity of the research. Similarly Mary Margaret Cook and Judith Fonow reject the assumption that maintaining a gap between the researcher and the research subject produces more valid knowledge; rather they advocate a participatory research strategy that emphasizes a dialectic between the researcher and the researched throughout the project (Cook and Fonow, 1990:76). Joyce Nielsen talks about knowledge creation as a dialogic process that requires a context of equality and the involvement of the researcher in the lives of the people she studies (Nielsen, 1990:30). Feminists also struggle with the issue of power differentials between the researcher and her subjects.

What Reinharz refers to as a "reflexive attitude" has developed in reaction to androcentric research with its claims to value neutrality. Personal experience is considered an asset for feminist research; many feminist researchers describe in their texts how they have been motivated to conduct projects that stem from their own lives and personal experiences.<sup>23</sup> Often the researcher will reflect on what she has learnt during the research process, on her "identification" with the research subjects, and on the personal traumas and difficulties that the research may have involved. In her research on the in/security of Mayan women in Guatemala, Maria Stern-Pettersen reflects on her ethical obligation to her research subjects and her attempts to co-create a text in which the narrators can claim authorship of their own stories. This re-writing of (in)security using the voices of marginalized lives constitutes a political act which can challenge dominant and oppressive ways of documenting these lives (Stern-Pettersen, 1998:75). Many feminists who conduct interview research acknowledge an intellectual debt to British sociologist Ann Oakley who proposed "a feminist ethic of commitment and egalitarianism in contrast with the scientific ethic of detachment and role differentiation between researcher and subject." (Reinharz, 1992:27; see also Bloom, 1998) Whereas personal experience is thought by conventional social science to contaminate a project's objectivity, feminists believe one's own awareness of one's own personal position in the research process to be a corrective to "pseudo-objectivity." Rather than bias they see it as a necessary explanation of the researcher's standpoint which serves to strengthen the standards of objectivity, resulting in what Sandra Harding has called "strong objectivity" or "robust reflexivity" (Reinharz, 1992:258; Harding, 1991:142; Harding, 1998:189). Many feminists also believe in the necessity of continual reflection on and critical scrutiny of one's own methods throughout the research project allowing for the possibility that the researcher may make methodological adjustments along the way (Ackerly, 2000). For feminists, one of the primary goals of this commitment to experiential and reflexive knowledge-building has been the hope that their research project might contribute to the improvement of women's lives, at least in part through the empowerment of their research subjects.

### *Knowledge as Emancipation*

"Feminism supports the proposition that women should transform themselves and the world" (Soares quoted in Ackerly, 2000:198). Since many feminists do not believe that it is possible to separate thought from action and knowledge from practice, they claim that feminist research

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<sup>23</sup> This stands in strong contrast to King, Keohane and Verba's statement that, "[P]ersonal reasons are neither necessary nor sufficient justifications for the choice of a topic. In most cases they should not appear in our scholarly writings." (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994:15)

cannot be separated from the historical movement for the improvement of women's lives out of which it emerged (Mies, 1991:64). The aim of much of feminist research has been the empowerment of women; many feminists believe that the researcher must be actively engaged in political struggle and be aware of the policy implications of her work.<sup>24</sup> Feminist scholarship is inherently linked to action and social change (Reinharz, 1992:175). To this end feminism focuses on uncovering "practical knowledge" from people's everyday lives. This type of knowledge-building has parallels with Stephen Toulmin's description of participatory action research. Toulmin contrasts participatory action research, which he claims grows out of Aristotelian ethics and practical reasoning, with what he terms the High Science model with its Platonic origins, a model that is closer to social scientific IR. The product of participatory action research is the creation of practical knowledge with the emphasis on the improvement of practice rather than of theory. Toulmin sees the disciplines closest to this type of research as being history and anthropology with their traditions of participant observation which grows out of local action, the goal of which is changing the situation (Toulmin, 1996).

Feminists frequently engage in participant observation. They are generally suspicious of Cartesian ways of knowing, or the High Science model, which depicts human subjects as solitary and self-subsistent and where knowledge is obtained through measurement rather than sympathy. Feminists tend to believe that emotion and intellect are mutually constitutive and sustaining rather than oppositional forces in the construction of knowledge (Code, 1991:47). Maria Mies contrasts feminist research, which she claims takes place directly within life's processes, with what she calls an alienated concept of empiricism where "research objects" have been detached from their real-life surroundings and broken down into their constituent parts (Mies, 1991:66). She describes her research among rural women workers of Nalgonda, India as sharing as far as possible their living conditions and allowing them to carry out their own research on the researchers. Her findings were translated into Telugu so that they could be used for betterment of the society. Mies claims that this reciprocal exchange of experiences gave these women so much courage that they could tackle problems of sexual violence in new ways and come up with different solutions, thereby getting beyond their victim status (Mies, 1991:73; see also Ackerly, 2000: ch.1). She claims that she would never have gained these insights about how these practical solutions emerged from her project by using conventional research methods. While social science IR would rightly claim that its knowledge-building is a contribution to the betterment of society, the research model to which it aspires is to remain detached and, to the greatest extent possible, value-free and separate from political action.

### **Evidence of these Methodological Perspectives in Feminist IR**

These four methodological perspectives, typical of feminist research, stand in contrast to the methodological criteria for social science research outlined by Keohane. Their emphasis on designing questions that are useful for women's lives, their insistence that objectivity can be strengthened through acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the researcher, and their explicit linking of theory with social action and social change, do not accord with the criteria for a

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<sup>24</sup> Of course social science IR is also concerned that its research be prescriptive and useful for policy purposes. See Van Evera, (1997:17-21). But since feminism has been engaged in understanding, and seeking to overthrow, oppressive social hierarchies that have resulted in the subordination of women, the policy implications of its work are much more radical.

successful research program as outlined by Keohane. While most of these methodological predispositions that I have outlined are drawn from the work of scholars in disciplines, such as anthropology and sociology, whose subject matter is focused on studying human social relations rather than statist international politics, it is, nevertheless, striking the degree to which many IR feminists have used similar methods and expressed similar methodological sensibilities. Starting their research from women's lives has taken IR feminists well outside the normal boundaries of the discipline.

With this background in mind, I shall now discuss two "second generation" feminist IR texts, exploring their methodological orientations as well as the research methods they use.<sup>25</sup> While I realize that I cannot do justice here to a very rich and diverse literature, I have chosen these two as exemplary of the kind of methodological orientation I have outlined and because each is concerned with theorizing the state and its security-seeking practices. Katharine Moon's *Sex Among Allies* deals with national security policy, an issue central to IR, but through the lens of military prostitution a subject not normally considered part of IR. Christine Chin's *In Service and Servitude* deals with issues of development and global political economy but it does so through an examination of the lives of female domestic servants in Malaysia and state policies with respect to regulating their lives. Both these scholars start their research from the lives of some of the most marginalized disempowered women and demonstrate how their lives and work impact on, and are impacted by, national security and the global economy. Both use ethnographic methods and participant observation to conduct in-depth case studies, methods not typical of IR. Both express the hope that their research will help to improve the lives of the women they study as well as expose hierarchical exploitative social structures upon which states and their security policies are built.

### *Sex Among Allies*

In *Sex Among Allies*, Katharine Moon takes up a little examined subject and one not normally considered part of the discipline of International Relations - prostitution camps around US military bases in the Republic of Korea during the early 1970s. She argues that the clean-up of these camps by the Korean government, which involved imposing health standards on and monitoring of women prostitutes, was directly related to establishing a more hospitable environment for American troops at a time when the United States was in the process of pulling its troops out of Korea as part of the strategy, articulated in the Nixon Doctrine, to place more of the US security burden on regional allies. Through an examination of relevant United States and Republic of Korea government documents and interviews with government officials and military personnel in both states, Moon links efforts to certify the health of prostitutes to policy discussions between the two states about the retention of military bases at the highest level. The challenge for Moon is to show how prostitution, a private issue normally considered outside the boundaries of international politics, is linked to national security and foreign policy. In so doing, she asks questions not normally asked in IR such as, what factors helped create and maintain military prostitution and for what ends? She also questions the accepted boundaries that separate

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<sup>25</sup> "Second generation" is a term that has come to be used in feminist IR to refer to empirical case studies that have followed from "first generation" feminist critiques of IR theory which challenged the assumptions, concepts and methodologies of the IR discipline from feminist perspectives. Second generation feminist IR has also undertaken empirical research on men and masculinity. See for example, Hooper, (2001).

private sexual relations from politics among nations and shows how prostitution can be a matter of concern in international politics and a bargaining tool for two alliance partners who were vastly unequal in conventional military power (Moon, 1997:13). Moon demonstrates how private relations among people and foreign relations between governments inform and are informed by each other (Moon, 1997:2).<sup>26</sup>

Moon's analysis leads her to rethink the meaning of national security. Claiming that it was the desire of the Korean government to make a better environment for American troops, rather than an effort to improve the conditions under which prostitutes lived and worked, that motivated the government to improve the conditions of the camps, Moon demonstrates how the government's weakness at the international level vis-à-vis the United States caused it to impose authoritarian and sexist control at the domestic level. Moon's evidence supports the feminist claim that the security of the state is often built on the insecurity of its most vulnerable populations and their unequal relationships with others, in this case on the lives of its most impoverished and marginalized women. While many of these women felt betrayed by the Korean government and its national security policies, ironically many of them saw the state as their only possible protector against the violence they suffered at the hands of US soldiers. They believed that the lack of protection was tied to the weakness of their own state.<sup>27</sup> Moon concludes that the women saw national sovereignty, or the ability to stand up to the US, as a means to empower their own lives (Moon, 1997:158). In their eyes, Korea had never been treated as a sovereign state by the United States or other big powers; international institutions were deemed even more distant and difficult to deal with. Moon's study challenges the conventional meaning of national (in)security; it also challenges us to think about how the relational identities of states are constituted and how often policies deemed necessary for national security can cause insecurity for certain citizens.

Moon's choice of research topic carried considerable personal risk. In reflecting on her role as researcher Moon speaks of how her frequenting of shanty towns during her research meant that she herself became morally suspect. She was cautioned about publishing her work lest people would question her moral character. Getting women to speak was difficult and Moon frequently had to use intermediaries because of the feeling of shame that talking about their experiences evoked in many of these women. Many of them had little concept about the structure of a research interview and frequently expressed the view that their opinions were unimportant and not worth recording. Moon states that she did not aim to provide likely-to-be-distorted statistical evidence but to show, through narrating the women's lives, how heavily involved they were in US/Korean relations and thus of importance to international politics. While she aims to say something new about state security practices and international politics, one of her principal goals is to give voice to people who were not considered having anything worthwhile to say, thereby

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<sup>26</sup> Moon describes her work as being at the intersection of IR and comparative politics. In a personal observation she noted that her research has been more widely recognized in comparative politics. She attributes this to the fact that comparative politics asks different questions from IR.

<sup>27</sup> Moon notes that this finding is quite at odds with feminist suspicions of the state which she dates back to Virginia Woolf's famous indictment of the state's role in warmaking. Moon claims that Woolf's indictment is quite middle-class and western. Those who challenge sovereignty and talk about being world citizens live in wealthy countries and are socially, intellectually, and economically empowered enough to talk about opting out of the state (Moon 1997:158). The high level of awareness of Moon's subjects about the national security policies of the Korean state supports the claim that marginalized people may have a deep level of understanding of the privileged world of which they are not a part. See footnote 22.

helping to improve their lives. She talks of her work as helping to lift the curtains of invisibility of these women's lives and "offer these pages as a passageway for their own voices," thus allowing them to construct their own identities rather than having them imposed on them by societal norms and taken-for-granted definitions – definitions that are often imposed when conventional data are used (Moon, 1997:2). Moon concludes that the expansion of the definition of political actor to include individuals without significant resources or control over issues – those not normally defined as actors by IR – can challenge governments' claim to their exclusive definitions of national interest and national security (Moon, 1997:160).

### *In Service and Servitude*

Christine Chin's text examines the importation of Filipina and Indonesian female domestic workers into Malaysia, beginning in the 1970s, and how their labor supported a Malaysian modernization project based on an export-led development model in the context of the neoliberal global economy. Chin asserts that the global expansion of neoliberalism has gone hand-in-hand with the free trade in migrant female domestic labor throughout the world. She asks two basic questions of her study both of which are linked to women's lives: first, why is unlegislated domestic service, an essentially premodern social institution with all its attendant hardships, increasingly prevalent in the context of constructing a modern developed society by way of export-led development? And second, why is there an absence of public concern regarding the less-than-human conditions in which some domestic servants work? (Chin, 1998:4) To answer these questions, Chin rejects a "problem-solving" approach which, she claims, would focus on explaining foreign female domestic labor as a consequence of wage differentials between the labor-sending and labor-receiving countries; instead she adopts what she terms a critical interdisciplinary approach.<sup>28</sup> According to Chin, problem-solving lacks historicity and divides social life into discrete, mutually exclusive dimensions and levels which have little bearing on one another. Chin's preference for a critically oriented methodology is based on her desire to examine the relationship between domestic service and the developmental state and its involvement with all levels of society from the household to the transnational, the goal of which is to expose power relations with the intention of changing them (Chin, 1998:5).

Chin asks how is it that paid domestic reproductive labor, usually performed by women, supports and legitimizes the late twentieth century developmental state. As she notes, there has been much work on the Asian "developmental state" and its mechanisms of coercive power but little on how the state has used policies that regulate transnational migrant domestic labor as part of this coercive strategy. Coming out of a Gramscian framework, Chin claims that the developmental state is not neutral but an expression of class, ethnic, racial and gender-based power which it exercises through both coercion and cooptation of forces that could challenge it. The state's involvement in regulating domestic service and policing domestic workers in the name of maintaining social order is not just a personal, private issue but one that serves this goal, as the state can thereby provide the good life for certain of its (middle-class) citizens through repressing

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<sup>28</sup> Chin is following Robert Cox's famous distinction between problem-solving theory which, according to Cox, accepts the prevailing order as its framework, and critical theory which stands apart from that order and asks how it came about with the goal of changing it. See Cox, (1981:129-30). Keohane rejects this distinction in favor of a continuum (Keohane, 1998:194). As I stated in my reply to Keohane, I believe Cox's distinction is deeper and more fundamental than Keohane suggests (Tickner, 1998:207).

others. Since proof of marriage and children is necessary in order for middle class families to be eligible for foreign domestic workers, domestic service is an institution through which the state has normalized the middle class adoption of the nuclear family (Chin, 1998:198). Winning support of the middle class family by promoting policies that support materialist consumption, including the paid labor of domestic servants, has helped to lessen ethnic divisions in Malaysia and increased loyalty to the state and hence its security.

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

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

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

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

Like many IR feminists doing empirical research, Chin and Moon have rejected the basic social science methodology outlined by Keohane in favor of qualitative (single) case studies which rely on more interpretive methodologies.<sup>29</sup> They use open-ended ethnographic research that relies on narrative accounts of the lives of women at the margins of society, accounts which they prefer over statistical analysis of government-generated data. In that data on national security, development, and modernization, the experiences which Chin and Moon documented are barely reflected. Indeed, no state agency could be convinced to acknowledge the systematic existence of such problems associated with prostitution and the maltreatment of women, let alone collect and publish comparable data on their magnitude.<sup>30</sup> With the goal of making certain women’s lives more visible, Chin and Moon begin their analysis at the micro level and study issues not normally considered part of IR. Looking for meaningful characterizations rather than causes, they have sought to understand the foreign policies of states and international politics more generally through the telling of stories of lives rendered insecure by states striving to increase their own security or wealth. Moon documents the Republic of Korea’s authoritarian behavior with respect to certain of its citizens as a necessary response to its weak and dependent position vis-à-vis the United States. Looking to promote internal stability and economic growth, Malaysia sought to increase the material welfare of certain of its citizens, including certain middle-class women, at the expense of the security of other women’s lives. These are nuanced findings that could not be discovered through the use of conventional indicators.

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<sup>29</sup> Of course, qualitative case studies are also an important part of social scientific IR and are the subject of King, Keohane and Verba’s methodological text.

<sup>30</sup> Katharine Moon emphasized this point in a personal conversation with this author. She said that when she first decided to pursue this topic, she envisaged doing a comparative case study of several countries but found that, since data were practically non-existent, it would have been an impossible task. She emphasized that so much of feminist IR is just beginning the trench work and compilation of data needed before comparative case studies can be undertaken. These challenges contrast with Steven Van Evera’s advice to students selecting a Ph.D. dissertation topic to choose data-rich cases (Van Evera, 1997:79). Van Evera asserts that the more data we have the more questions we can answer. But feminists are more concerned with the questions that are *not* asked because of the lack of data.

Both Chin and Moon deny the possibility of a reality independent of the researcher, and both attempt to have their research subjects claim their own identities through the telling of their own stories. They see this as a way of rejecting the identities that society has bestowed upon these women, identities that often form the basis of state policies that may render their lives more insecure. Both authors use gender as a category of analysis to help them understand how individuals, families, states, societies, and the international system are constituted through, and in resistance against, hierarchical and often oppressive power relations. While neither of them make specific reference to the literature on methodology that I outlined in part one, it is striking the degree to which their methodological sensitivities parallel these feminist research practices.<sup>31</sup>

### **Feminist Reservations about Quantitative Research**

These two cases, as with most feminist IR research, have avoided quantitative methods. In fact, many feminist researchers across the disciplines have manifested an open hostility to statistics and quantitative methods deeming them part of patriarchal culture's monolithic of "hard facts" (Reinharz, 1992:87). It is certainly true that, as my case studies have demonstrated, fitting women and other marginalized people into methodologically conventional quantitative frameworks has been problematic. Many of the experiences of women's lives have not yet been documented or analyzed either within social science disciplines or by states. The choices that states make about which data to collect is a political act. Traditional ways in which data are collected and analyzed do not lend themselves to answering many of the questions that feminists raise. The data that are available to scholars and, more importantly the data that are not, determine which research questions get asked and how they are answered. Marilyn Waring describes how national accounting systems have been shaped and reshaped to help states frame their national security policies – specifically to understand how to pay for wars.<sup>32</sup> In national accounting systems no value is attached to the environment, to unpaid work, to the reproduction of human life, or to its maintenance or care, tasks generally undertaken by women (Waring, 1988:3-4). Political decisions are made on the basis of data that policy elites choose to collect (Waring, 1988:302). Waring goes on to assert that, under the guise of value-free science, the economics of accounting has constructed a reality which believes that "value" results only when (predominantly) men interact with the marketplace (Waring, 1988:17-18).

Maria Mies also argues that quantitative research methods are instruments for structuring reality in certain ways; she claims that she is not against every form of statistics but rather its claim to have a monopoly on accurately describing the world. Statistical procedures serve to legitimize and universalize certain power relations because they give a "stamp of truth" to the definitions upon which they are based (Mies, 1991:67). For example, the term "male head of household" came out of a definition of a traditional western middle-class patriarchal family but does not correspond with present reality given that a majority of women either work in the waged sector to supplement family income or are themselves heads of households. However, it is a term that has been used, either explicitly or implicitly, in national accounting procedures and by international aid agencies and thus has had significant consequences for women's classification

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<sup>31</sup> The one exception is that Chin does make reference to Sandra Harding's work on methodology.

<sup>32</sup> Waring makes reference to a claim by statistical historians Joseph Duncan and William Shelton that a 1941 paper entitled, "Measuring National Income as Affected by War," by Milton Gilbert was the first clear, published statement of the term, Gross National Product (GNP) (Waring, 1988:55).

as workers, receivers of social benefits, and refugees. Women's work, often unpaid, as farmers, workers in family businesses, and caregivers is frequently overlooked in the compilation of labor statistics. Crime statistics underreport women's victimization in the private sphere, where most violent crimes go unreported. Feminist rejection of statistical analysis results both from a realization that the questions they ask can rarely be answered by using standard classifications of available data and from an understanding that such data may actually conceal the relationships they deem important.<sup>33</sup>

These concerns, along with the methodological predispositions that I discussed in the first part of this paper, raise important issues concerning statistical measures of gender (in)equality, measures that are important for the research question asked by Keohane as to whether states with highly unequal gendered hierarchies would behave differently internationally from those with less unequal domestic social structures. Since Keohane raised this question in 1998 there have been attempts to answer it using quantitative methods. For example, Mary Caprioli and Mark Boyer have used quantitative social science data and statistical methods – the International Crises Behavior data set and multinomial logistic regression – to attempt to answer the question as to whether there is a relationship between domestic gender equality and states' use of violence internationally. Gender equality is measured in terms of percentage of women in parliament and number of years that women had the right to vote at the time of the beginning of the conflict. While they admit that there have not been enough female leaders to establish any correlation between women's leadership roles and states' lessened use of violence, their results do show that, according to their measures of gender equality, the severity of violence used by states in international crises decreases as domestic gender equality increases.<sup>34</sup>

Caprioli and Boyer admit that social equality is difficult to measure cross-culturally (see also Caprioli, 2000:164). They agree that, as yet, there are no measures to gauge social pressures that keep women from certain employment opportunities or out of positions of political power (Caprioli and Boyer, 2001:56).<sup>35</sup> In order to be able to demonstrate empirically that women's leadership would have any effect on foreign policy, certain feminists have argued that there would need to be significant numbers of women in leadership positions – 30% has sometimes been mentioned. Indeed, Caprioli and Boyer admit that lone female leaders may be pressured to act more aggressively than their male counterparts in order to legitimate their leadership positions (Caprioli and Boyer, 2001:507). However, this kind of impact would be hard to demonstrate with conventional correlational data. Caprioli and Boyer also refer to the difficulty

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<sup>33</sup> For example, even if cross-national aggregate conventional measures of wages and work conditions were available, they would not give an adequate picture of the degree of gender inequality and gender oppression demonstrated in the Chin and Moon studies.

<sup>34</sup> This research builds on Caprioli (2000) and also on Tessler and Warriner (1997) who showed a positive correlation between favorable attitudes toward gender equality and favorable attitudes toward peaceful conflict resolution by both women and men in certain states in the Middle East. See also Eichenburg, (2003) who investigates to what extent gender differences have the potential to be a significant factor in the political decisions of states to use military force.

<sup>35</sup> In their empirical study of global attitudes toward gender equality, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris stress the importance of cultural barriers over structural and institutional ones when explaining the lack of women in positions of political power (Inglehart and Norris, 2003:133). They conclude that understanding why women do better in attaining political power in certain societies rather than others, even those with similar political systems, has proved elusive using existing aggregate data (Inglehart and Norris, 2003:144). The World Values Survey, on which this research is based, is an attempt to document and compare values cross-culturally using attitudinal surveys.

of measuring the impact of female leaders on policy outcomes, leaders who may be constrained by operating in male structures. While they feel that these obstacles do not hinder their basic finding - that the severity of violence used by a state in an international crisis decreases as domestic gender equality increases - many feminists would see these problems of measuring gender equality as too serious to allow for such claims to be made.

Feminists claim that the lack of gender equality, which they believe exist in all states albeit to widely varying extents, cannot be understood without reference to historical, gender-laden divisions between public and private spheres. As Spike Peterson and other feminists have pointed out, at the time of the foundation of the modern western state, and coincidentally with the beginnings of global capitalism, women were not included as citizens but consigned to the private space of the household; thus, they were removed both from the public sphere of politics and the economic sphere of production (Peterson, 1992:40-44). As Carole Pateman (1988) has documented, women were not included in the original social contract by most contract theorists in the western tradition; rather, they were generally subsumed under male heads of households with no legal rights of their own. Feminists would claim that this public/private distinction, upon which the modern state was founded, has set up hierarchical gendered structures and role expectations which impede the achievement of true gender equality even today in states where most legal barriers to women's equality have been removed. For example, when women enter the workforce they do so with the expectation that they will continue to perform necessary reproductive and caring tasks thus increasing their workload significantly due to the double burden. More importantly, this reinforces an expectation which may carry over into the types of paid employment, such as childcare and social services, considered most suitable for them. When women enter politics, particularly in areas of foreign policy, they enter an already constructed masculine world where role expectations are defined in terms of adherence to preferred masculine attributes such as rationality, autonomy and power. It is for these reasons that women continue to be under-represented in positions of political and economic power even in societies long committed to formal equality and equal opportunity legislation. Measures, such as women's participation in politics and percentage of women in the workforce, do not adequately capture the fact that states have been constituted historically as gendered entities with all the attendant problems that this has created for women.

It is for such reasons that many feminists have rejected quantitative methods and instead have chosen the qualitative case-study methods of the type that I have described - as well as other methods that can be generally subsumed under a post-positivist label. This should not mean that feminists are averse to using quantitative data in appropriate ways as indicators of gender inequality and gender oppression. Thanks to the efforts of women's international organizing, especially around the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), the UN began to disaggregate data by sex thus helping to bring the plight of women to the world's attention. The United Nations Human Development Report of 1995 focused specifically on women and gender issues. In that report, the United Nations Human Development Programme first introduced its gender development index (GDI) based on gender differences in life expectancy, earned income, illiteracy and enrollment in education. It also introduced the gender empowerment measure (GEM) based on the proportion of women in parliament and in economic leadership positions (Benería, 2003:19-20; Seager, 2003:12-13). While a crude indicator, the GDI and the GEM do give us comparative cross-national evidence about the status of women relative to

men.<sup>36</sup> It is data such as these, which go beyond traditional categorizations of national accounting, that can support feminists' claims about gender inequality and provide support for efforts to pressure states and international organizations to design and support public policies that are better for women and other disadvantaged people. They also provide evidence for transnational movements lobbying for the improvement of human rights. Economic data has also provided important evidence for the growing field of feminist economics and the large body of literature on gender in development (see for example Beneria, 2003). However, feminists, who are willing to use indicators of gender inequality and gender oppression, are often reluctant to take the next step in conventional social scientific quantitative analysis because of their skepticism concerning the methodological assumptions associated with conventional statistical procedures.

More generally, Toby Jayaratne and Abigail Stewart have argued that, while we must be particularly aware of ways in which quantitative methods have been used to distort women's experiences, it need not always be this way. This association is an historical one but not a logical one (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991:93). They emphasize the potential value of quantification while rejecting traditional procedures, such as bias toward male subjects, selection of topics, false claims of objectivity and universality, and over-generalization of results, that are antithetical to feminist values. Nevertheless, feminists must continue to ask questions about, and be skeptical of, the ways in which knowledge based on statistical evidence has been constructed. They must also continue to emphasize the ways in which the privileging of such knowledge, under the guise of objective, value-free science, has worked to hide oppressive hierarchies of power and strategies designed to overcome them.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper I have offered some reasons why most IR feminists have chosen to conduct their research outside positivist social scientific frameworks. I have suggested that many of the questions they have posed are not answerable within such frameworks. While there is no such thing as a feminist method, there are distinct feminist perspectives on methodology which have emerged out of a deep skepticism of traditional knowledge, knowledge that is based largely on certain privileged men's lives and men's experiences. The two case studies that I discussed illustrate the parallels between IR feminists' methodological sensitivities and these methodological perspectives from other disciplines. These IR feminists are asking questions about the linkages between the everyday lived experiences of women and the constitution and exercise of political and economic power at the state and global level. Specifically, they seek to understand how gender and other hierarchies of power affect those at the margins of the system. Their findings reveal states constituted in gendered ways whose security-seeking practices frequently render the lives of their most powerless citizens more insecure.

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<sup>36</sup>Joni Seager's *Atlas of Women in the World* (Seager, 2003) provides a wide range of data on gender inequality in map form, much of it from UN and other international and regional organizations' data.

<sup>37</sup>By this I refer to the fact that knowledge with an explicit emancipatory message is frequently judged to be "political" and, therefore, not objective. Of course, all knowledge is political and what is judged as "objective" frequently supports the status quo.

IR feminists more generally are asking questions that have rarely or never been asked before in IR; moreover, they are questions that probably *could not* be asked within the epistemological boundaries of positivist social scientific approaches to the discipline. For this reason, and others that I have discussed, in the foreseeable future at least, IR feminists are likely to favor methods that allow women to document their own experiences in their own terms. Frequently, these are experiences about which there is little available data since they have either been ignored or categorized in ways that deny their subjects their own identities. Constructing knowledge from the standpoint of the outsider provides us not only with a wider perspective but also with a unique perspective on knowledge about insiders. Since it offers us a more complete picture of reality, it has the potential to enrich and even transform the discipline in ways that are beneficial for everyone.

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

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