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## Women in International Relations: Sediment, Trends, and Agency

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Not quite 15 years ago, the International Studies Association (ISA) sponsored an investigation into the status of women in the profession. Most of the conclusions were not too far from what Daniel Maliniak, Amy Oakes, Susan Peterson, and Michael Tierney report in this issue: Women are underrepresented among academics in political science as a whole, and especially in the field of international relations. They also are underrepresented in higher academic ranks. Although they publish at about the same rate as their male counterparts, women's work is far less likely to be cited or mentioned as influential in the field. The "Women in International Relations" study by Maliniak and his coauthors shows that not much has changed — or has it?

### Stirring the Sediment

Some of what the study's authors report reflects the continuing effects of the state of the discipline one and even two generations ago. In the 1970s, when the first of the second-wave feminists<sup>1</sup> were coming out of graduate

1. "Second wave" refers to the second wave of feminism, generally dated as having begun in the early 1960s in response to Betty Friedan's manifesto *The Feminist Mystique* (1963) and as reactions to the treatment of women in the Civil Rights movement (e.g., Evans 1979).

school, they hit the job market during a time of retrenchment. Faculty hired to fill the demand for college-bound boomers found themselves underemployed as college-age cohorts contracted (Dresch 1983) and draft deferments for college students were ended. Both caused enrollments to fall. Jobs were scarce and it was difficult for women and minorities to get them because, in spite of antidiscrimination laws, informal, institutional, and unintentional patterns of sex and race discrimination in hiring persisted (Jenifer 2005, 10).

For women who did get jobs during the 1970s and 1980s, few employers had consistent policies that took life-cycle demands into account. It was unheard of to stop the tenure clock for new mothers, and requests for family-friendly class scheduling were seen as unjustifiable special pleading. As a result of an ongoing campaign by a broad coalition of citizens and groups to make “family values” more than a slogan in political campaigns, things are beginning to change (Press 2007). The result is a somewhat more level playing field for women than existed when rights were measured solely by a “reasonable man” standard (Forell and Matthews 2000). Even so, female employees continue to battle expectations based on gender stereotypes (Rosen 2007). Discrimination persists as well, not only in higher education but also in law firms and Fortune 500 companies (e.g., Giampetro-Meyer 2006; McCabe 2003).

The pioneers also encountered a chilly climate; they had fewer role models and mentors than their male colleagues, and many experienced discrimination directly. This is part of the reason why the Maliniak et al. study shows that women continue to lag behind men. Franklyn Jenifer (2005) argues that there is a chicken-and-egg problem to increasing the number of women and minorities in higher education. A positive result is contingent not only on women getting hired but also on their being able to stay, that is, on their being accepted as equals, granted tenure on the same bases as men, and promoted. Federal antidiscrimination laws dealt more effectively with hiring than retention. Patricia McCabe (2003), an attorney working for the American Association of University Women’s legal defense fund, reports that discrimination against women in higher education has not ceased and may even be growing. Getting in but not staying in means that fewer women are represented in higher faculty ranks and in top administrative positions (Jenifer 2005). All of these help to explain why women in academia are still younger on average than their male counterparts, and why fewer occupy top positions.

Women are relatively scarcer in IR than they are in other fields of political science. One explanation for this relative scarcity could be found in the masculinism embedded in IR and security professions, which is complicated to trace. Helen Caldicott's book *Missile Envy* (1984) located the U.S.-Soviet arms race in the context of Freud's concept of penis envy, a psychologically driven competition to prove which government was more masculine. Just how deeply masculinist perspectives permeated these fields was revealed by Carol Cohn in a pathbreaking 1987 article in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Cohn had conducted fieldwork at an unnamed "center of nuclear strategic studies" and an unnamed "university defense studies center" as a result of attending a summer workshop on nuclear strategic analysis (Cohn 1987, 17). During her year as an "anthropologist" among "defense intellectuals," she discovered the power of language to shape what people believed was possible, necessary, and empowering for national defense: Sexy jargon and esoteric codes kept participants from appreciating that what they were doing every day was contemplating nuclear armageddon.

Cohn reports that she had always found Caldicott's hypothesis to be "an uncomfortably reductionist explanation" of the Cold War arms race (1987, 18). Indeed, Cohn expected to have to eavesdrop on her colleagues to catch them sexualizing their theories and scenarios, but she need not have worried. Even guest lecturers were not at all self-conscious about using sexualized, romantic, and paternal imagery to describe nuclear strategy, nuclear tactics, and nuclear war (1987, 18–19). What surprised Cohn even more was how readily she adapted to and adopted the jargon of the people with whom she worked. This shocked her so much that she reports having shifted her attention from absorbing information about nuclear strategy to "understand[ing] more about how the dogma I was learning was rationalized," and then to speculat[ing] on what "an alternative reality [would] look like" (1987, 22–23).

Cohn could have been writing about the dilemma of some female students contemplating a specialty in IR during the relatively straitlaced era of the Cold War. Could they imagine themselves being treated as the intellectual partners of men in this environment? Could they speak in a language that described the development and deployment of lethal weapons in lightly euphemized, woman-belittling images of sexual intercourse? Undergraduate women during that era occasionally discussed with me their discomfort at the language used in some of their IR classes. A few were disturbed by normative assumptions that they

would see the world solely through the eyes of an aggressor and not also through the eyes of potential victims and “collateral damage” (also Cohn 1987, 23). Although more than half of the female graduate students I taught until the mid-1990s were present or former members of the military, most shared this values perspective with the civilian students. Several military members speculated that sexualized language and profanity were both intended to ensure that the best jobs in the military would remain a masculine preserve (for supporting evidence, see Webb 1979).

## Trends

However we assess the impact of the language of defense intellectuals, a feminist language has since evolved that challenges it on every level. Feminist “(re)visions” of familiar IR theories (e.g., Peterson 1991) exposed both their gendered assumptions and what one theorist called the “quagmire” created by foreign policies that failed to confront their many internal contradictions (Grant 1992). By the end of the 1990s, variations on Caldicott’s hypothesis were guiding investigations of world politics as an arena in which ego-driven nations and policymakers depicted as masculine sought to dominate opponents cast as feminine or effeminate.<sup>2</sup> It also offered insights into IR as a site of struggles for dominance among subsets of masculinist scholars and practitioners. My favorite book from this period is the collection edited by Marysia Zalewski and Jane Parpart (1998). Even its title, *The “Man” Question in International Relations*, is a feminist critique of masculinist international relations qua politics and masculinist IR qua theory. The masculinities it challenges are assailed most tellingly from within: by Charlotte Hooper’s analysis of international relations practice as a system of generating and policing acceptable masculinities; Carol Cohn’s deconstruction of male hysteria (the properly masculine term is *orkheia*) triggered by gays in the military; and perhaps the most threatening of all, Craig Murphy’s typology of gendered roles in strategic policy, which showed that some of the most iconic masculine roles, like “the good soldier,” are actually feminine (also Showalter 1985, 167–94). Even the cover photo

2. This behavior persists in U.S. discourse in right-wing media whose interlocutors castigate opponents of the Iraq war as gay or effeminate. See, for example, Glenn Greenwald, “National Review’s New Tough Guy, Mark Hemingway,” *Salon*, posted 5 September 2007, accessed 30 September 2007 at <http://www.salon.com/opinion/greenwald/2007/09/05/hemingway/>.

challenges an image of masculinity highly cherished by ideologues: It shows British gunners called from a rehearsal of a Christmas program to man a coastal antiaircraft battery during an attack dressed in, well, dresses. (The photo was suppressed by wartime censors.)

The critical literature produced by a growing number of feminist IR scholars was highly unlikely to appear in “mainstream” IR journals, as Maliniak and his coauthors report. Meanwhile, female-authored and coauthored articles on other topics found their way into these forums only to meet another kind of marginalization: They rarely were cited (also Tétreault et al. 1997). Nevertheless, feminist scholarship flourished, appearing in specialized journals like *Women and Politics* and *Signs*, policy and law journals like the *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, and journals like *Alternatives* that welcome critical theory from a wide range of perspectives. Book publishers, including university presses, have always been hospitable to good scholarship. Journals like *Citizenship Studies*, the *Review of International Political Economy*, *Global Environmental Politics*, and *Globalisations*, among several others established more recently, are widely recognized as intellectual forums and publication outlets for active scholars in growing subfields insufficiently represented in mainstream journals.

A second trend whose effect has been to broaden the mainstream arose from rebellions spearheaded by graduate students that attracted some full-dues-paying members of professional associations to their cause. The Perestroika movement in American political science and the movement for postautistic economics, headquartered in France, challenged methodological and other hegemonies dominating their respective disciplines. They also challenged unwritten rules that seemed to discriminate against particular subfields and research methodologies in the acceptance of articles by the national associations’ flagship journals. Both groups targeted these journals as discriminatory gatekeepers. Perestroikans even requested that membership fees collected by the American Political Science Association, which include payment for APSA periodicals, be allocated by each member to pay for subscriptions to the APSA *and/or* non-APSA journals of her or his choice. In the IR subfield, ISA responded to these concerns by addressing them directly with journal editorial boards, and by establishing journals focusing on formerly neglected areas like foreign policy and interdisciplinary research.

A third trend is the expansion of the concept of international studies charted by new ISA sections, each with entitlements to representation on

programs at annual meetings that vary with section memberships and annual meeting participation. Feminist theory and gender studies was added in 1990, despite initial reluctance from the then-executive director. Other sections representing equally disenfranchised research agendas have been added since, including one on human rights and another on qualitative methods. These sections confer the imprimatur of professional associations on disciplinary pursuits regularly belittled by masculinists as both lacking in rigor and focused on “softer” issues than the ones they write about.

### Agency

I have no reason to believe that discrimination against women and minorities, and discrimination against feminist theory and “feminine” methods and topics of inquiry, have gone away. There is a gentle implication in the Maliniak et al. article that strategies for women should include cracking these lingering barriers rather than undermining them. I agree with that perspective and yet, at the same time, I think that there are many more avenues to professional development and peer recognition available to women now than there were in the not-so-distant past. What I address here are strategies aimed at junior women who seek both to overcome gender barriers and to engage the issues they regard as most interesting and important.

It is almost impossible to recommend a foolproof strategy for choosing a graduate school because of the mobility of desirable scholars, their tendency to go on leave moments before you arrive, and the likelihood of finding that many people are ahead of you in the line waiting to get the person you want most to chair a thesis or dissertation. There are some institutional cultures, however, in which graduate students are likely to be better instructed and guided by most members of the faculty, places where students have more opportunities to do everything from attend conferences to work on projects and where their contributions are likely to receive public recognition and rewards. Consequently, shopping for a graduate school should include not simply a troll through catalogues to find interesting programs and famous faculty, but also an equally assiduous effort to learn what the educational environment is like in practice, especially for female students, and what students currently in these programs have to say about their experiences. Prospective students should ask particularly about the quality of advising, such as whether it includes

guidance toward opportunities for professional development during their years of study and personal contacts likely to be helpful after graduation. I also would ask whether students in the program are aware of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, or relationships between students and faculty that they regard as unfair to the student involved and/or to her or his peers.

Similar issues should be at the forefront of the minds of women interviewing for their first tenure-track jobs. Some universities offer more support to junior faculty than others: reduced course loads during the first or second year; research funding; student assistants; money to attend conferences; and woman-friendly policies such as child care, humane scheduling, and course assignments in one's field(s) of expertise and/or interest. There is likely to be some difference between the support a faculty member receives at a liberal arts college as compared to support available from a large university, but the difference may be less than meets the eye. A prospective hire should check the curriculum vitae of potential colleagues to see how well they reflect the kinds of work she hopes to do after she is hired, and also talk with faculty from other departments about institutional support.

An applicant might get a job offer from a place that, upon reflection, seems unlikely to provide those kinds of support she deems most necessary for her professional development. It is a hard choice, but it is probably better to turn the job down than take it and find that initial assessment to be correct. Just in case, apply for post-docs, internships in government and at policy institutions, visiting positions, and fellowships as alternatives in case the job market for tenure-track positions should prove disappointing, and hope for better luck next year.

Mentors are even more important to junior faculty than to graduate students. Some universities or departments are "proactive" and assign mentors to new faculty members. From my experience, this is seldom as helpful as it should be. Some departments pay mentors, which may lead chairs to allot new faculty to cronies. Others assign new faculty to be mentored by individuals who are not very productive in other ways. Regardless of how mentors are allocated, some people simply are better at this task than others, and sometimes mentors and protégées have divergent interests or just do not get along. Harassment also can be an issue, by mentors or chairs, and regardless of sex.

New faculty should seek their own mentors informally, whether or not they are provided with official mentors by their departments or universities. They should make an effort to get to know people in their departments who share their intellectual interests and perhaps even their

pastimes. They should seek advice from their chairs and from more than one senior colleague in order to get the broadest possible perspective on departmental culture and what they will have to do to get tenure — faculty handbooks notwithstanding, this is seldom a transparent process. Working with more than one senior colleague increases transparency in the department, at least. It also reduces the likelihood of a wide range of abuse, while it encourages senior faculty to look out for the interests of junior colleagues more generally. Junior women should avoid situations where they are likely to be compared to junior men, and try to carve out an independent niche based on their particular strengths, rather than occupying one peopled by colleagues in similar situations.

Because so many faculties have few senior women and because senior men sometimes feel uncomfortable advising young women, junior women should also seek mentors among senior scholars at other institutions, male and female, who work on the same or similar issues. These are the people who constitute the professional networks that offer opportunities to participate on panels, contribute to edited volumes, find external support for future projects, and learn about other job prospects. They are sources of advice and even consolation. It should not be a comfort to learn that someone has suffered through the same miserable experience one is going through, but it usually is.

Other choices get more deeply into intellectual interests and the development of a research agenda capable of carrying a junior woman to tenure and associate professors to higher ranks. When I was an assistant professor, I had two research agendas: the international oil industry and gender. My first published piece was related to my dissertation on Arab oil-exporting countries. It appeared in *International Organization* and the editor had solicited it after hearing me present it at a professional meeting. But as Maliniak and his coauthors detail for female scholars generally, I found it difficult to get my early gender work published in any outlets that the men in my department had ever heard of. And as the authors note with regard to women's publications on other topics, my work on oil and interdependence, including the article in *IO*, was rarely cited; when one of my books was included as the basis for a review essay on international energy markets, the analysis it contained (which included a mathematical model connecting spot prices to contract prices), was barely mentioned (Wilson 1987).

This is not the same world that today's new female graduates are entering. As a result of trends I noted earlier in this essay, there are many more opportunities for female scholars with interests that diverge from the male mainstream to find intellectual mentors and partners of both



sexes and to participate in professional meetings likely to introduce them to others willing and able to help them achieve their career aspirations. These are the individuals most likely to cite a junior woman's publications because they share common membership in an epistemic community strengthened by regular face-to-face encounters on panels, in section meetings, and on committees and boards. Engagement in professional associations should be a priority for junior faculty, who will find it easier than they might have imagined to be elected to positions in their sections, excellent venues for meeting the most productive scholars in their subfields, the persons with whom intellectual interchange is likely to be most satisfying.

Editors and editorial boards are sensitive to demands to expand the variety of topics and methodologies represented in journals, and editorial teams at high-profile journals are often eager to see work from women, including papers applying feminist theory. Their most consistent lament is that they receive few submissions, for example, in the area of gender and politics. This is another chicken-and-egg situation. Should a junior faculty member facing many demands, who already has had to steal the hours needed to revise a conference paper from other pressing tasks, take a chance on sending it out to a top journal only to have it rejected? This is where feedback from mentors acquired through engagement in professional associations can be most helpful. These are the individuals who know what issues and approaches particular journals are interested in, and they are likely to be members of editorial boards who have reviewed similar articles and know how they fared. If such persons are approached for advice about where to submit a piece, their counsel can be viewed with confidence — not as a guarantee of acceptance but as an indication that the perceived risk is probably less than the author anticipates. They also are likely to offer helpful suggestions about how to tailor an already good paper more closely to the journal's concerns.

Many journal boards now make a point of recruiting reviewers from a broad range of specialties, and editors of very good journals often are willing to give explicit advice and assistance to authors regarding revisions for resubmission. In terms of publication outlets, today there are many more professional journals that alert colleagues will have heard of, and several of these are interdisciplinary and/or focus on less mainstream subspecialties. When hopeful authors send their papers to one or two senior colleagues before submitting them to journals, they should request critical comments and advice about the best place to

submit them. These requests should be explicit so that they will not be mistaken for pleasantries, but the author should leave space for a very busy person to decline in order to retain the ability to go back to that individual later with a similar request. Be sure to address at least some of the comments when the paper is revised, and acknowledge the advice in your notes.

Women are often pigeonholed as better teachers than men, and may find themselves with heavier teaching responsibilities. This is not necessarily a disaster. Faculty members should look at their students as natural resources: sources of provocative questions and sometimes even provocative answers. Undergraduate students with professional interests are delighted to work with faculty members on research projects without monetary compensation, in exchange for acquiring invaluable skills. The role of teacher-as-mentor also is rewarded by external funding agencies like the National Science Foundation. NSF encourages the incorporation of student volunteers and supports paid student assistants in grant projects. It also funds undergraduate and graduate students working full time on faculty research projects during summers.

The responsible exercise of agency is not limited to young women starting out on their careers. The shape of any professional community is a function of the behavior of the people in charge: the ones who teach, hire, mentor, publish, and reward in other ways. One reason that Maliniak and his coauthors find that women who do advance professionally often do so quickly could be because those women are not only willing to work very hard but also fortunate in encountering senior colleagues who are eager to help them on their way.

## Conclusions

It would be more than disappointing to learn that 20 years from now, the intellectual descendants of Maliniak, Oakes, Peterson, and Tierney will have found similar evidence of gender discrimination in political science and in IR. I am relatively optimistic that this will not happen. There really is a generational change in attitudes toward women as colleagues. It is visible in classrooms as well as in faculty lounges and professional meetings. We also are witnessing an enlargement of views regarding what is important to study in IR to encompass concerns formerly dismissed as “soft” or as “low politics,” and therefore second class. As a result of the agency of persons throughout the profession, our discipline

is becoming more inclusive intellectually. Another benefit of this change is that IR scholarship could become more relevant and therefore helpful to policymakers and, for similar reasons, contribute to a more democratic popular culture. Maliniak and his coauthors point out that there are gender gaps in research agendas, with women “appear[ing to be] more open to nontraditional topics and approaches ... and more likely to employ qualitative methods” (see p. 132). Women also are more likely than men to believe that political science research can be helpful to policymakers, and they do more research than men on issues of contemporary relevance such as human rights. These differences suggest strategies for bringing not only research results but also the practice of seeking and testing evidence before drawing conclusions to a larger audience. Writing for op-ed pages, blogs — my heroes on this front are Marsha Cohen and Helen Cobban — and online journals featuring short articles focused on issues that cross over into current events — an academic model can be found in *Merip Online* — allows researchers who investigate matters of contemporary concern to reach and inform general readers.

There is still professional competition between women and men, just as there is between majorities and minorities. It is reflected in politics and culture as opposition to affirmative action and gay marriage, and in resurgent assertions of “traditional” masculinity as an endangered anchor of values whose fall from dominance in society and the professions damages the entire social fabric (e.g., Brooks 2001; Wills 2006). I find this evidence reassuring. To me, it looks like a last-ditch defense mounted by individuals and groups who see the world changing in ways they do not like. Students of regime change know that the greatest fear of a former dominant class is that the new rulers will treat the old ones the same way the old ones had treated them. I am relatively optimistic that this will not happen over the issue of gender and sexuality in political science and IR. Inclusion is one of the organizing values of the new generation, which is why the numbers of women and minorities in the profession are increasing, even if more slowly than some would like. The new generation of women and minority scholars are in debt to the men and women of older generations who encouraged and brought them along. Political science departments and associations will be as contentious as ever, and some of this contention will reflect gendered resentment. But I am confident that 10 years from now, the impact of gendered resentment will be less noticeable in the career achievements of women in IR.

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## An Intersectional Analysis of International Relations: Recasting the Discipline

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### Introduction

In this essay we use a basic feminist analytical tool, *intersectionality*, to understand why we do not see more women across the spectrum and at all levels in the international relations field in the United States. Our intersectional analysis reveals that to understand why women are underrepresented in IR, we should not look harder at women in IR but rather at IR as a discipline.

Intersectionality — an analytical tool developed to study the imbrications of race and gender oppression in U.S. politics — can be used to analyze any context of intersecting systems of oppression. In this article, we focus on the intersection of gender, nation, and discipline in IR. Of course, feminists have given us other important intersections to consider. These intersections, particularly race and postcolonialism, are important subtexts and contexts of our argument. In fact, our argument reveals that in the essay "Women in International Relations" (this issue), the same move that renders women visibly *underrepresented* in the field of IR also renders race and postcolonial position invisible, even though minorities and people from the decolonizing global South are possibly *overrepresented in the category "Other."* We choose to interrogate the intersection of gender, nation, and discipline because it is *not* the intersection to which most U.S. scholars attend. With this focus, we can make use of some of the data collected by the Teaching, Research, and

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