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Practising gender, queering theory

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Abstract

The development of a 'practice turn' in International Relations promises to reconstitute IR theory around the study of embodied practices. Despite occasional references to Judith Butler's work, the contributions of feminist and queer theory are under recognised in existing work. In this piece I note the distinctive approach to gender as a practice represented by Butler and other feminist/queer theorists for its emphasis on intelligibility and failure, particularly the importance on 'competently' practising gender in order to established as an intelligible subject. Given the centrality of 'competency' in 'practice turn' literature, theorising practice from the perspective of 'gender failures' sheds light on the embedded exclusions within this literature. To demonstrate the stakes of this critique, I discuss airport security practices, a growing area of interest to IR scholars, in terms of the experiences of trans- and gender non-conforming people. I argue that such practices ultimately complicate success/failure binaries. I conclude by considering the political stakes of practising theory in IR and how competency in theory is similarly marked by the exclusion of feminist/queer work.

Keywords

Gender; Queer Theory; Practice; Embodiment

> If at first you don't succeed, failure may be your style.
>
> Quentin Crisp[1]

The 'turn to practice', both in IR theory and in sociological theory, is meant as a correction to what is perceived as an overly linguistic conception of culture and discourse in social theory, lacking attention to patterned embodied actions.[2] The call to take seriously what actors actually *do* is

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[1] Quentin Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant* (New York: Plume, 1968), p. 196. Also quoted by Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 96.

[2] See, inter alia, Iver B. Neumann, 'Returning practice to the linguistic turn: the case of diplomacy', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 31:3 (2002), pp. 627–51; Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Vincent Pouliot, 'The logic of practicality: a theory of practice of security communities', *International Organization*, 62:2 (2008), pp. 257–88; Ted Hopf, 'The logic of habit in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 16:4 (2010), pp. 539–61; Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice: The Politics of NATO-Russia Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Didier Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of practices, practices of power', *International Political Sociology*, 5 (2011), pp. 225–58; Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International practices', *International Theory*, 3:1 (2011), pp. 1–36; Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Anna Leander,

crucial, and is represented in a number of important recent critical interventions in IR theory. In terms of feminist international relations, focusing on practices as they have been understood in recent IR scholarship lack revelatory force: as Vivienne Jabri has pointed out, feminists such as Ann Tickner, Cynthia Enloe, and Katherine Moon have long focused on lived experience and have rewritten international relations in terms of everyday, intimate relations that are structured by, and reproduce, gendered social relations.[3] To this list we could also add works by Dubravka Žarkov, Laleh Khalili, Christine Sylvester, Megan Daigle, among others,[4] reinforcing Erik Ringmar's recent suggestion that there is nothing truly new about the study of practices in International Relations,[5] at least as it pertains to feminist work.

Work self-consciously contributing to the 'practice turn' in International Relations theory has by and large neglected this vast literature on gender and social practices. This matters beyond the question of gendered reading and citational practices in IR and political science more broadly that neglect women's work and feminist/queer scholarship.[6] Despite being one of the most cited social theorists

'The promises, problems, and potentials of a Bourdieu-inspired staging of international relations', *International Political Sociology*, 5 (2011), pp. 294–131; Damiano De Felice and Francesco Obino, '"Editors" Introduction: Weaving the theories and practices of International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 40:3 (2012), pp. 431–7; Inanna Hamati-Ataya, 'IR theory as international practice/agency: a clinical-cynical Bourdieusian perspective', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 40:3 (2012), pp. 625–46; David J. Karp, 'The location of international practices: What is human rights practice', *Review of International Studies*, 39:4 (2013), pp. 969–92; Erik Ringmar, 'The search for dialogue as a hindrance to understanding: Practices as inter-paradigmatic research program', *International Theory*, 6:1 (2014), pp. 1–27; Christian Bueger, 'Pathways to practice: Praxiography and international politics', *European Political Science Review*, 6:3 (2014), pp. 383–406; Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger, 'The play of international practice', *International Studies Quarterly*, 59:3 (2015), pp. 449–60; Sebastian Schindler and Tobias Wille, 'Change in and through practice: Pierre Bourdieu, Vincent Pouliot, and the end of the Cold War', *International Theory*, 7:3 (2015), pp. 330–59; Jorg Kustermans, 'Parsing the practice turn: Practice, practical knowledge, practices', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 44:2 (2016), pp. 175–96; Vincent Pouliot, *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); David M. McCourt, 'Practice theory and relationalism as the new constructivism', *International Studies Quarterly*, 60:3 (2016), pp. 475–85; Kavi Joseph Abraham and Yehonatan Abramson, 'A pragmatist vocation for International Relations: the (global) public and its problems', *European Journal of International Relations*, 23:1 (2017), pp. 26–48.

[3] Vivienne Jabri, 'Gender', in Rebecca Adler-Nissen (ed.), *Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking Key Concepts in IR* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 148–64, citing J. Ann Tickner, 'Feminism meets IR: Some methodological issues', in Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True (eds), *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 19–41; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989); and Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

[4] Dubravka Žarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-Up of Yugoslavia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Laleh Khalili, 'The gendered practices of counterinsurgency', *Review of International Studies*, 37:4 (2011), pp. 1471–91; Christine Sylvester, 'War experiences/war practices/war theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 40:3 (2012), pp. 483–503; Megan Daigle, *From Cuba With Love: Sex and Money in the Twenty-first Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Lauren Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[5] Ringmar, 'The search for dialogue'

[6] See Christine Sylvester, 'Anatomy of a footnote', *Security Dialogue*, 38:4 (2007), pp. 547–58; Kelly M. Kadera, 'The social underpinnings of women's worth in the study of world politics: Culture, leader emergence, and coauthorship', *International Studies Perspectives*, 14:4 (2013), pp. 463–75; Daniel Maliniak, Ryan Powers,

of all time,[7] Judith Butler and her work on performativity and gender usually merit a footnote or very brief mention in key works constituting the practice turn, if mentioned at all.[8] This is in contrast to the pantheon of (overwhelmingly male-identified) social theorists such as Bourdieu, Goffman, Latour, de Certeau, Peirce, James, Dewey, and Weber, cited by diverse scholars as inspirations for the 'practice turn' writ large. Practice theory may constitute the 'big picture' of IR[9] or a 'diverse family'[10] but is it apparently not large or diverse enough for feminist and/or queer approaches.

Perhaps this neglect is due to the association of Butler's work with feminist and queer theories, which are often taken as niche areas of IR theory rather than issues that concern the practice of IR theory as a whole. However, Butler's work is arguably not only deeply political in her theorisation of subjects of gender and desire, but also of great significance for theorising practices and the embodied subject more broadly.[11] Rather than seeing a divide between earlier 'textualist' work that later develops into a theory of practice[12] that aligns Butler's work with 'ideational' theories that practice turn theorists attempt to overcome, there is a great deal of theoretical continuity in Butler's theorisation of the political subject and its relationship to what she calls the performative, and therefore to practice. Butler's project, from her early work on Beauvoir and 'becoming a body'[13] to the materialisation of embodiment as related to gender performativity[14] and her more recent work that addresses more explicitly political questions of war and violence[15] as well as the performative affects of bodies assembling in the public sphere[16] have addressed the conditions that create and sustain 'liveable lives',

and Barbara F. Walter, 'The gender citation gap in International Relations', *International Organization*, 67:4 (2013), pp. 889–922; Nicola J. Smith and Donna Lee, 'What's queer about political science', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 17:1 (2014), pp. 49–63.

[7] Smith and Lee, 'What's queer'.

[8] Such as in Bueger and Gadinger, 'The play of international practice'; Adler and Pouliot 'International practices'; Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*; Leander, 'The promises, perils and potentials'; and Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations'. Exceptions that contain somewhat longer discussions of Butler's work include Roxanne Doty, 'Aporia: a critical exploration of the agent-structure problematique in International Relations theory', *European Journal of International Relations*, 3:3 (1997), pp. 365–92 (a piece that has been retrospectively interpolated into the canon of 'the practice turn'); Raymond Duvall and Arjun Chowdhury, 'Practices of theory', in Adler and Pouliot (eds), *International Practices*, pp. 335–54, and discussed as an important caveat to practice in Hopf, 'The logic of habit'.

[9] Adler and Pouliot (eds), *International Practices*, p. 1.

[10] Bueger and Gadinger, 'The play of international practice', p. 2.

[11] For overviews of Judith Butler's contribution to political theory and International Relations, see Cynthia Weber, 'Performative states', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 27:1 (1998), pp. 77–95; Lene Hansen, 'The Little Mermaid's silent security dilemma and the absence of gender in the Copenhagen School', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29:2 (2000), pp. 285–306; Moya Lloyd, *Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Samuel Chambers and Terrell Carver, *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008); Smith and Lee, 'What's queer'; and Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence*.

[12] cf. Bueger and Gadinger, 'The play of international practice', p. 6.

[13] Judith Butler, 'Gendering the body: Beauvoir's philosophical contribution', in Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (eds), *Women, Knowledge, Reality* (Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman, Inc, 1989), pp. 253–62.

[14] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999 [orig. pub. 1990]); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[15] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004) and Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009).

[16] Judith Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

or subjects recognisable as such. Butler's work is not only important to consider in reference to IR's practice turn because Butler is one of the foremost feminist/queer theorists of the past several decades. Even more importantly, her work entails a distinctive approach toward power, practice, embodiment, and 'the subject', which makes questions of gender and desire central to the question of what it means to become a subject in the first place. As such, what follows is less the addition of a 'feminist' or 'gender' element or variable to 'the practice turn' as it is currently practised in IR[17] than a feminist/queer theory inspired 'insurrection on the level of ontology',[18] which questions whose lives are real and how reality is made, as well as how 'practice theory' is made in International Relations. As approaches to feminist and queer theory are diverse, I do not purport to offer a definitive 'feminist/queer theory of practice', rather, I argue that Butler and other feminist/queer theorists offer a distinctive analytical tools to inform how we think about embodied practices as well as practice theory more generally.

In particular, I argue that 'the practice turn' through feminist/queer contributions toward theorising the practice of gender highlights the need to theorise the stakes of failure and incompetence.[19] I argue the practice turn has tended to focus on *competent* practices, ignoring and obscuring acts and bodies deemed 'failures' at the expense of a richer appreciation of the relevance of certain practices in international political life. In fact, bodily styles that 'fail' (as in the epigraph by Quentin Crisp) may turn out to be more interesting than those that succeed. Butler's concept of performativity simultaneously involves enacting norms and the possibility of disrupting norms of gender and desire. Understanding performativity as the practice of gender involves clarifying the role of intelligibility and repetition in Butler's work, concepts that make clear the stakes of theorising 'failure', as Butler and other queer theorists have done. In order to illustrate the stakes of this discussion, I discuss an example of a gender 'failure' in the experiences of trans- and gender non-conforming practices of gender in airport security practices, an area of increasing critical interest in International Relations. In discussing the 'problem' of practising gender in airport security assemblages, I argue that certain practices of gender can complicate the way in which gender as well as success and failure are understood in binary terms. I conclude by questioning the terms by which 'practice turn' scholars establish their own competence in the field of IR in terms of neglect or 'gentrification' of feminist/queer approaches.

I. Failure

Taking Butler seriously as a theorist of 'practice' opens space for a more rigorous assessment of the stakes of success and failure in 'the practice turn'. In the practice turn literature in IR, success and

[17] For critiques of adding 'gender' or 'sexuality' variables in IR, see Cynthia Weber, 'What's So Queer About IR? Or Beware the Sexuality Variable', Millennium Conference: 'Gender and International Studies: Looking Forward' LSE, 13–14 September 1998 and Cynthia Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity as International Relations method: Developing queer International Relations theoretical and methodological frameworks', *International Studies Quarterly*, 60:1 (2016), pp. 11–23; Terrell Carver, Molly Cochran, and Judith Squires, 'Gendering Jones: Feminisms, IRs, masculinities', *Review of International Studies*, 24:2 (1998), pp. 283–97; Charlotte Hooper, 'Masculinities, IR and the "gender variable": a cost-benefit analysis for (sympathetic) gender skeptics', *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999), pp. 475–91.

[18] Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 33.

[19] Following Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore, 'Introduction: Trans-, trans, or transgender?', *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, 36:3–4 (2008), pp. 11–22 and Laura J. Shepherd and Laura Sjoberg, 'Trans- bodies in/of war(s): Cisprivilege and contemporary security strategy', *Feminist Review*, 101:1 (2012), pp. 5–23; I use 'trans-' rather than 'transsexual' or 'transgender' because it leaves open the question of what suffix follows and suggests an adjective rather than a noun in order to prevent the stabilisation of some people as concrete beings and others as 'crossers'.

failure usually revolve around questions of competency. Much of the key literature in the practice turn makes the issue of 'competence' central, even constitutive, of what a 'practice' is. Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot insist that 'practices are competent performances'[20] and that 'practice is more or less *competent* in a socially meaningful and recognizable way'.[21] This is essential to how Adler and Pouliot understand practice because of the need for an audience to appraise the performance and its (in)competence. Similarly, Iver B. Neumann defines practices as 'socially recognized forms of activity, done on the basis of what members learn from others, and capable of being done well or badly, correctly or incorrectly'.[22] Janice Gross Stein's argument is that standards of competency can changed for communities of practice, such as aid communities in her example, when new problems arise that challenge existing knowledge.[23]

But what then, of embodied performances that fail to meet these standards of competence in the first place? Are these irrelevant or simply not interesting enough to take seriously in International Relations theory? Or rather, as I suggest, are 'unsuccessful' or 'incompetent' practices being systematically marginalised and under-theorised? Feminist and queer theory has a distinctive contribution to make to theorising the stakes of success and failure in embodied practices. Butler's work is crucially instructive, for it insists that the norms that constitute 'success' in a practice necessarily also constitute failure. Certain practices – certain bodies – are excluded from ontologically 'mattering' through the process of subject formation, though they haunt the subject by becoming its 'constitutive outside'.[24] Furthermore, feminist and queer work such as Butler's helps us understand the practices that all individuals must undertake to be subjects are governed by gendered and heteronormative standards of competence. Butler writes: '[t]he normative force of performativity – its power to establish what qualifies as 'being' – works not only through reiteration, but through exclusion as well. And in the case of bodies, those exclusions haunt signification as its abject borders or as that which is strictly foreclosed: the unliveable, the nonnarrativizable, the traumatic.'[25] Here, the consequences of failure, or of being an incompetent practitioner of gender are made clear: one will fail to be intelligible as a human subject deserving of the same regard as more 'competent' actors. This is not so much a matter of a subject performing gender poorly, but of certain subjects not being recognised at all. One 'exists not only by virtue of being recognized, but in a prior sense, by being *recognizable*'.[26] For Butler, the question of failure is a question of ontology: the abject beings who

[20] Adler and Pouliot (eds), *International Practices*, p. 6.

[21] Ibid., p. 7.

[22] Neumann, 'Returning practice', pp. 630–1, citing Barry Barnes, 'Practice as collective action', in Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (eds), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 25–6.

[23] Janice Gross Stein, 'Background knowledge in the foreground: Conversations about competent practice in "sacred space"', in Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 87–107. Erik Ringmar ('The search for dialogue') has also recently critiqued Adler and Pouliot for insisting upon the competency of practices as a way of distinguishing between practices and performances. The distinction Ringmar makes between performances as intentional acts designed to be judged by an audience and practices that constitute everything that we do regardless of audience is useful for pointing out the inconsistencies in the way various scholars have interpreted what 'practices' are, but the intentional/unintentional distinction is resisted by Butler, whose notion of performativity disavows the idea that gender is an intentional practice by a wilful agent.

[24] Charlotte Epstein fluently discusses this constitutive lack in the process of becoming a subject in terms of the structure of the subject in her piece 'Who speaks? Discourse, the subject and the study of identity in international politics', *European Journal of International Relations*, 17:2 (2011), pp. 327–50.

[25] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 188.

[26] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: The Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

fail to count as subject.[27] This is not quite the same as a subject who is already recognised as such whose actions are deemed to be 'out of place' as in the example Raymond Duvall and Arjun Chowdhury give of Nikita Khrushchev famously banging his shoe at the United Nations.[28] Neither is it the same as the 'stigmatisation' Rebecca Adler-Nissen describes using both Goffman and Bourdieu's approaches to beliefs that certain people should be avoided as they are regarded as polluted, and as a mark of relative social position.[29] It is failure to be recognised as a subject at all.

'Failure' is a theme for other queer theorists as well: Judith Halberstam and Lee Edelman[30] have separately argued that success in heteronormative, capitalist societies too easily equates with particular forms of reproductive maturity, consumption, and wealth accumulation. Queer theory has, in recent years, turned to theorising 'failure', something, as Halberstam quips, 'queers do and have always done exceptionally well'.[31] Queer failure, as Cynthia Weber notes, is a figuration rather than a literal strategy; as such queer failure exposes 'the limits of certain forms of knowing and certain ways of inhabiting structures of knowledge'.[32] Failure here suggests the limits of 'practice turn' theorising in IR to take feminist/queer theory seriously and as such, a failure to think its own terms of competency and success. This article's epigraph, which has served as an inspiration for Halberstam's work, links failure to bodily 'styles' or practices and, given Crisp's status as queer icon, gender and sexual deviance. Same-sex desire and trans- embodiment are both associated with failure, impossibility, and loss.[33] This is, in Butler's terms, not only a loss, but also a form of melancholia, the loss that cannot be grieved because it was never recognised as a loss in the first place.[34] And yet, 'failure' to live up to norms of success that discipline behaviour can be a source of pleasure, and a way of resisting disciplinary norms. The practice turn as it is currently constituted in IR equates intelligibility with success and therefore 'incompetent' practices remain unintelligible. While successful practices of gender may appear to be natural under the domain of the heterosexual matrix, lives and bodies whose practices of gender do not conform to these norms risk failing into the realm of unintelligibility and even inhumanity in their failures.

What of the bodies that 'fail' to practice gender? Butler locates the possibility of change within the possibility of discourse's failure; that it might be taken received or taken up in ways that are unpredictable (as in the title of her 1997 book *Excitable Speech*). As regulatory regimes are sustained by reiteration, making claims on behalf of abjected or 'unintelligible' bodies is part of a way to contest the cultural unintelligibility of certain bodies.[35] Abjected bodies make themselves felt in culture particularly by contesting and reshaping the terms of cultural intelligibility. The politics of Butler's theory of performativity is a 'politics of insurrection' as Lisa Disch argues.[36] It is precisely certain *incompetent* practices that fail to property embody the norms of gender that can call attention to the indeterminate or unstable nature of certain taken-for-granted practices that appear to be natural or self-evident.

[27] See also Lloyd, *Judith Butler*, pp. 74–5.
[28] Duvall and Chowdhury, 'Practice of theory', p. 340.
[29] Rebecca Adler-Nissen, *Opting Out of the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[30] Halberstam, *Queer Art*; Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
[31] Ibid., p. 2.
[32] Cynthia Weber, 'Why is there no queer international theory?', *European Journal of International Relations*, 21:1 (2015), p. 37; see also Halberstam, *Queer Art*, pp. 11–12.
[33] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[34] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
[35] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 191.
[36] Lisa Disch, 'Judith Butler and the politics of the performative', *Political Theory*, 27:4 (1999), p. 547.

Drawing on James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State*,[37] Halberstam notes that unintelligibility – failing to be recognised by prevailing power structures – can be a source of political autonomy. Failure to be recognisable or classifiable can be a source of resisting the discipline and hegemonic discourses, as any number of anti-capitalist and subaltern movements can attest to.[38] In literature associated with 'the practice turn', Friedrich Kratochwil's mention of the potential subversion of technically competent practices may ironically be the closest example of this concept. Kratochwil notes that working 'by the rule book' can be an effective means of sabotage, as practices that are technically competent according to strict rules can nonetheless be practised with the intention of failure if 'unwritten' rules are not followed. Similarly, following 'best practices' can be an effective way of avoiding criticism even if the intended goal remains unachieved or the strategies deployed are counterproductive.[39] These are both types of practices that complicate the relationship between competence and incompetence, success and failure speak to practices of gender embodied by some trans- and gender non-conforming people. However, before I elaborate on this last point, it is necessary to describe precisely what a feminist/queer perspective on embodied practices can contribute to the politics of success and failure in terms of the intelligibility of the subject.

II. Practices of gender

What is at stake in considering gender a practice, particularly a practice one can fail at? Feminist/queer theory provides us with conceptual tools that can both help us to better theorise the stakes of success and failure as well as to rethink the ways in which practices are conceptualised in IR more broadly. First, if gender is considered a practice, it is a practice in which the 'participants' are understood not as a select few who have been taught or initiated into a field of practice, such as diplomacy, but can be said to constitute all of humanity. The norms for gender differ across time, space, and social location, but it is a consistent feature of social life around the world and is also deeply connected to questions of embodiment. Butler's famous concept of performativity describes the construction of identity as a practice. Butler writes, '[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.'[40] Practice turn theorists similarly emphasise the body as the site through which practices are performed. Adler and Pouliot, for example, argue that practice is form of embodied action that 'rests on *background knowledge*, which it embodies, enacts, and reifies all at once'.[41] Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger insist that a core commitment of practice theorists is 'bodies are the main carrier of practices'.[42] Gender as a 'repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts' certainly would appear to align Butler's theory of gender with much of the work of the practice turn in its emphasis on habituated practices of the body. However, to understand the different dynamics between inside and outside that are (re)produced through practice

[37] James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[38] See also James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

[39] Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Making sense of "international practices"', in Adler and Pouliot (eds), *International Practices*, p. 40.

[40] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 33. Butler is not the only social and/or feminist theorist to make this point about gender as a practice. See also Candice West and Don H. Zimmerman, 'Doing gender', *Gender and Society*, 1:2 (1987), pp. 125–51; R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 65, for example.

[41] Adler and Pouliot (eds), *International Practices*, p. 8, emphasis in original.

[42] Bueger and Gadinger, 'The play of international practice', p. 5.

between Butler's theory and the way practice is generally theorised in IR requires greater explication of gender practice in terms of intelligibility and repetition.

Butler's concept of performativity is regularly misread in two contradictory, yet telling, ways that are useful for explicating its uniqueness as well as its usefulness in practice theory. Butler's performative theory of gender has frequently been critiqued as overly individualist and agentic by those who read her as if she is suggesting practising gender is no more difficult than changing clothes,[43] while at the same time is also considered by others to be too structural and determinist. For Butler, the concept of performativity encompasses both the norms that structure intelligible genders as well as the bodily practices that enact gender in ways that are inseparable: 'performativity describes both the processes of being acted on and the conditions and possibilities for acting and that we cannot understand its operation without both of these dimensions'.[44]

The concept of intelligibility is crucial for understanding how Butler's work departs from an individualist or voluntarist frame. The performativity of gender in Butler's work has always been situated within 'a highly rigid regulatory frame'.[45] '[Gender] is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint.'[46] For Butler, what *appears* to be a self-authored practice of gender can only be practised in reference to social norms and meanings that have no single author. While practices of gender are diverse, Butler emphasises the role of intelligibility for denoting a gender practice as a success or failure, with the stakes being one's ability to be recognised as a subject. 'Gender … figures as a precondition for the production and maintenance of legible humanity.'[47] Because one's intelligibility as a subject requires a certain kind of performance, it is less a choice than a compulsory practice and citation of a norm.[48]

The terms of intelligibility, especially in Butler's early work, are norms of sex and gender, particularly of heterosexuality. Norms of heterosexuality stabilise the apparent naturalness of sex, gender, and sexuality through a 'grid of intelligibility' that creates the limits of which 'practitioners' are to appear as proper 'practitioners', that is, subjects. Butler writes, 'Intelligible genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire.'[49] What Butler described as the 'heterosexual matrix' is premised on the belief that those designated males are supposed to act masculine and desire females, and those designated as females are supposed to act feminine and desire men. Any such 'break' between sexed embodiment, gender performance, and desire is foreclosed as non-normative and 'unreal'. Certain ways of being cannot exist if gender doesn't follow from sex or desire from sex or gender.[50] Thus, practising

[43] Two leading proponents of practice theory in IR reference Butler's work in this manner, which is consistent with Bourdieu's somewhat misleading reading of Butler's work, particularly from *Masculine Domination*: Leander, 'The promises, perils and potentials', and Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations'. In Bourdieu's view, genders are inscribed on bodies against a gendered social structure and are not 'simple roles that can be played at will (in the manner of drag queens)' and because genders 'do not spring from a simple effect of verbal naming' they 'cannot be abolished by an act of performative magic'. Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2002 [orig. pub. 1998]), p. 103.

[44] Butler, *Performative Theory*, p. 63.

[45] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 33.

[46] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.

[47] Ibid., p. 11.

[48] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 231.

[49] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 17.

[50] Ibid. Queer theorists have also critiqued binaries of homosexual/heterosexual or gender non-conforming/gender normative as being insufficiently attuned to the multiple and complex sites of inclusion and exclusion. 'Homonormative' theories critique the tendency of activism on behalf of gender and sexual minorities to focus

gender in some relationship to these norms of sex and gender is unavoidable, because we do not create the normative context in which we find ourselves.

Gendering, for Butler, is a process of becoming a body that is signifiable to others. Norms of sex and gender matter, because they foreclose, often violently, the kinds of lives that are liveable. Butler refers to the violence of foreclosing possibilities for liveable lives as 'normative violence'. 'To the extent that gender norms … establish what will and will not be intelligibly human, what will and will not be considered to be "real", they establish the ontological field in which bodies may be given legitimate expression'.[51] This is the key point at which Butler's work can be read as not only about practices of gender and sexuality, but also, as she clarifies in her 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble*, as a political intervention aimed questioning the terms of liveability in a context in which so many lives have been deemed unreal, and, in the face of their violent demise, ungrieveable.[52] Butler argues that before a subject can lead a 'liveable life' they have to be recognised as viable subject. Norms of sex, gender, and sexuality define which bodies will be 'culturally intelligible'; lives that do conform to these norms will be unrecognisable, illegitimate, and unreal; they will not 'matter'. Butler makes the point that this critique does not only extend to norms of sex and gender, but to 'all kinds of bodies whose lives are not considered to be "lives" and whose materiality is not understood to "matter"'.[53]

Thus, a key distinction between practice theory as it has been discussed in IR and Butler's feminist theorisation of gender as a practice is that gender is not practised by a pre-given subject, rather, gender *constitutes* subjects. Butler asks, 'to what extent does the body *come into being* in and through the mark(s) of gender?'[54] The distinction between performance and performativity, for Butler, is that performances are actions undertaken by a pre-given subject, while the performative contests the notion of a subject outside of the practice itself. One becomes a subject through literally becoming *embodied*, that is, inhabiting a body that is recognisable according to some normative

on issues such as marriage equality and the right to serve in militaries as striving to assimilate to the norms of broader heterosexist society, which primarily benefits white, middle- to upper-class men, to the detriment of women, people of colour, and trans- people, and also seek to align progressive policies in relation to gay, lesbian, bi, and trans- communities with greater 'civilizational' status in relation especially to African and Middle Eastern peoples. See also Lauren Wilcox, 'Queer theory and the "proper objects" of International Relations', *International Studies Review*, 16:4 (2014), pp. 612–15; Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

[51] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xxiii.

[52] Butler, *Precarious Life*. For more on Butler's concept of normative violence and political theory/international studies, see Samuel A. Chambers, 'Normative violence after 9/11: Rereading the politics of Gender Trouble', *New Political Science*, 29:1 (2007), pp. 43–60; Samuel A. Chambers and Terrell Carver, *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), and Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence*.

[53] Judith Butler, 'How bodies come to matter: an interview with Judith Butler', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 23:2 (1998), p. 281. In recent years, a social movement in the US against the unjust and unpunished police killings of black people known as 'Black Lives Matter' (a phrase first used by an queer black American woman activist, Patrisse Cullors who co-founded the Black Lives Matter movement with Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi) asserts the 'mattering' of lives that are treated with violence, brutality, and neglect. While the question of race is not central to Butler's work in the way that gender and sexuality is, in *Bodies that Matter* and in other works Butler's analysis leads her away from the theoretical prioritisation of sexuality and gender to more complicated maps of power and embodied practices that note the importance of race in structuring gender and sexuality, such that 'heterosexuality does not have a monopoly on exclusionary logics' in Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 112. See also Butler, *Frames of War*; Butler, *Performative Theory*; and Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 92–5.

[54] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 8.

standards. Gender, for Butler is less about embodying a practice, than a *practice of embodiment*; that is, becoming a body that is recognisable.

Because of the role of gender in constituting subjects *qua* subjects, gender is a practice that is differentiated from much of the work of the practice turn in IR that focuses on limited groups or communities with specialised knowledge. The emphasis of many 'practice turn' works on the practices of diplomats and/or bureaucrats in international organisations[55] emphasises the relative autonomy of different 'communities of practice', as well as reinforcing existing definitions about the proper objects of IR theorising. Adler writes, 'Membership in communities of practice also constitutes identity 'through the forms of competence it entails' where competence refers to practice performance'.[56] Another example is Morten Skumsrud Andersen and Iver B. Neumann's model of practices consists of 'letting the participants in a practice specify what the practice consists of'[57] including the use of the participant's own concepts. The use of the term 'participants' here suggests that there are also non-participants in this particular practice. Gender is thus a different *kind* of practice: while there are certainly specific 'communities of practice' in which the norms for practices related to gender and sexuality differ, the practice of gender more generally is not confined to specific groups. Gender is a 'constitutive constraint' of being a subject, as 'bodies only appear, only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regularly schemas'.[58] Whether or not one is recognisably practising a gender or not, for Butler, bodily life entails a relationship with norms, particularly norms of gender and sexuality.

While Butler's theory of gender as performative emphasises the normative background that shapes what kinds of gender practices are intelligible, her concept of performativity also cannot be reduced to habituation or to a role that constrains action, a problem that haunts some practice theory in IR (especially that influenced by Bourdieu).[59] For Butler, gender is something one *becomes*, but never fully *is*; as gender only exists through a repetition of acts, one can never fully or completely embody this norm. Here, we can also see echoes of Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'.[60] Butler refers to gender as 'a corporeal style' and gendered bodies as 'styles of the flesh'.[61] Bodies come to be intelligible through the embodying of norms, through literally 'acting them out' in the body through repetitive practices. Such a bodily style refers not to a single foundational act, but crucially, the repetition of such acts, and Butler also elides any distinction between the performativity of language and of bodily acts. Butler writes, 'performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects

[55] Pouliot, 'The logic of practicality'; Pouliot, *International Security in Practice*; Pouliot, *International Pecking Orders*; Iver Neumann and Ole Jacob Sending, *Governing the Global Polity: Practice, Mentality, Rationality* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010); Adler-Nissen, *Opting Out*.

[56] Emanuel Adler, 'The spread of security communities', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14:2 (2008), p. 201, citing Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[57] Morten Skumsrud Andersen and Iver B. Neumann, 'Practices as models: a methodology with an illustration concerning Wampum diplomacy', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 40:3 (2012), p. 470.

[58] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. xi.

[59] For more on the distinction between Butler's concept of performativity and habituation, see Hopf, 'The logic of practice'.

[60] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Howard Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 267. A slightly different translation of this famous quotation serves as first epigraph to the first chapter of Butler's *Gender Trouble*.

[61] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 177.

through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration."[62]

The issue of repetition is so important to performativity because practices are not sovereign in their ability to create or reproduce meanings. This is why Roxanne Doty's frequently cited point about the indeterminacy of the 'play of practice' is so crucial, yet so often misunderstood by practice theorists who cite it.[63] In her piece that locates practices as key to agent/structure debates in IR, Doty insists upon the cultivation of 'an appreciation of the intrinsically ambiguous and open-ended nature of practice' and 'eschew[ing] attempts to locate the source and meaning of practices in some determinable center, e.g. an unproblematically given subject or generative structural principles'.[64] The indeterminacy of practices is not merely one of a list of disparate commitments that a flattened-out group of 'practice theorists' hold,[65] nor is it at all clear this commitment is held by all or most self-identified practice theorists, especially given that this relates to the performativity of practices in the constitution of subjects, that there is 'no doer before the deed'. However, this point is central to the very possibility of change, which has been a sticking point for practice theorists in IR, and a point of criticism for feminist scholars of Bourdieu as well.[66] For Adler and Pouliot, while there may be some 'wiggle room' for agency, 'the performance of practice goes with, and constitutes, the flow of history'.[67] Neumann and Pouliot, Pouliot, and Schindler and Wille locate the possibility of change in *hysteresis* in which the habits and dispositions acquired in one *habitus* become ill-suited for the present conditions, as they are viewed by the actors themselves, denoting both a change in circumstances and/or a realisation of the limitations of particular practices.[68]

Butler's concept of performativity has a distinctive approach to how change might be possible; a possibility itself related to failure. For Butler, drawing on Derrida, the possibility of subversion is embedded within language itself, and similarly, within the nature of meaning-making practices be they linguistic or otherwise bodily.[69] It is precisely within the speech-act itself (and as Butler has been quite clear on, other performatives such as bodily actions) that possesses the potential for speech acts to fail and thus expose the indeterminacy, instability, and contingency of naturalised bodies.[70] It is not precisely 'patterned' which implies a copy of an original or at least a great deal of regularity. This is similar to Duvall and Chowdhury's argument that 'the possibility of polysemy is a structural necessity of practice', since practice always take place within multiple and differentiated systems of meaning.[71] Butler writes,

> If one 'is' woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered 'person' transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is

[62] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. xiv–xv.
[63] Doty, 'Aporia'.
[64] Ibid., p. 376.
[65] Cf. Bueger and Gadinger, 'The play of international practice'.
[66] Duvall and Chowdhury, 'Practice of theory'; Ringmar, 'The search for dialogue'; Schindler and Wille, 'Change in and through practice'. For a feminist example, see Jabri, 'Gender'.
[67] Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*, p. 7.
[68] Iver B. Neumann and Vincent Pouliot, 'Untimely Russia: Hysteresis in Russian-Western relations over the past millennium', *Security Studies*, 20:1 (2011), pp. 105–37; Pouliot, *International Security in Practice*; Schindler and Wille, 'Change in and through practice'.
[69] Roxanne Doty's poststructuralist reading of the agent-structure problem in International Relations makes a similar point in her insistence of the indeterminacy of 'play' to practices and how 'practices overflow that which can be accounted for in purely structural or agentic terms'. Doty, 'Aporia', p. 377.
[70] Butler, *Excitable Speech*.
[71] Duvall and Chowdhury, 'Practices of theory', p. 345. See also Doty, 'Aporia', p. 385.

> not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities.[72]

As there are many ways in which gender might be practised, the meaning of what a 'competent' practice entails is subject to revision and change.

The possibility of change exists because the body does not just '*enact* the past', it is not simply the 'sedimentation of speech acts by which it has been constituted'.[73] The body is in excess to the social demands placed upon it. Butler locates this excess, the way the body 'remains uncontained by any of its acts of speech'[74] as what is missing from Bourdieu's account of the bodily *habitus*. This is a key distinction between Butler's work, and Bourdieu's, who is more commonly cited as an influence among IR practice theorists, yet is recognised as quite structuralist, as his work mainly concerns the reproduction of social power through practices.[75] Bodies, as the site of the performance of practices, 'never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is compelled'.[76] This is precisely what opens the door to what can be called 'queer' in the sense that acts that may seem to comply with norms can have unintended consequences.[77] Butler writes, capturing the dual sense of performativity, that 'although gender norms precede us and act upon us (that is one sense of their enactment), we are obligated to reproduce them, and when we do begin, always unwittingly, to reproduce them, something may always go awry (and this is a second sense of their enactment)'.[78] The fact that practices never fully embody norms presents us with the possibility that norms may be practised and embodied with variation, rather than being fully reproduced.

This is closest to what Lene Hansen identifies as a poststructuralist approach to practices that seeks to build a project around the question of whether a specific practice (perhaps this is similar to what Butler means by 'performance') mobilises 'general practices', which are perhaps akin to the way in which Butler speaks of norms. This gap can be understood in terms broader than practices of gender: 'Even uncontested specific "routine" practices are crucial to the reproduction of general practice and we should therefore keep the relationship between specific and general practice open and examine the (potential) gap between them.'[79] This gap between the specific and general is particularly important when considered gender from an intersectional standpoint: not only is gender practice that can be 'failed' at, but it also is never practised in isolation of other embodied norms and practices.

Summarising Butler's theory of gender performativity in relation to 'the practice turn' in IR provides us with several insights into theorising practices. First, practices of gender are unavoidable; everyone is practising gender in a way that will be intelligible or not according to prevailing norms of sex and gender. This is directly related to the second point; that gender practices are not only given meaning

[72] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 3. Some readers may recognise the repetition of this citation from Hansen, 'Little Mermaid', p. 299 and Sylvester, 'Anatomy', p. 553 – two other pieces critiquing the exclusion of gender and feminist work from IR theories; in these cases, from critical approaches to security studies.
[73] Butler, *Excitable Speech*, p. 155.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Schindler and Wille, 'Change in and through practice'; Adler-Nissen, *Opting Out*, p. 59. Other 'practice turn' theorists cited are less structuralist than Bourdieu, such as de Certeau. See Neumannn, 'Returning practice'.
[76] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 2.
[77] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 8.
[78] Butler, *Performative Theory*, p. 31.
[79] Lene Hansen, 'Performing practices: a poststructural analysis of the Mohammad cartoon crisis', in Adler and Pouliot (eds), *International Practices*, p. 281.

by prior norms, but serve to create the basis for intelligible 'liveable lives'. The third point follows: gender only has meaning through its repeated practice, but it is not practised the same way in every instance. Gender as a practice is 'queer'; that is, it is unstable, with gaps and tensions between individual performances and the broader norm. The very instability of gender requires its reiteration through practice: this also implies the creation of 'constitutive others': those whose gender practices are unintelligible who also hold open the possibility for subversion and change in ways in which gender practices can be made intelligible.

III. Trans- bodies as failures?

An example of bodies that 'fail' to be recognised as subjects in IR are trans- and gender non-conforming bodies within biometric practices of security at borders. I discuss the experiences of trans- and gender non-conforming bodies as bodies that not only demonstrate the stakes of 'failure' to practise gender, but also as potentially subversive bodies that demonstrate the instability of dichotomies between 'success' and 'failure' in the first place. In the last decade or so, many scholars of International Relations, political geography, and related fields have drawn attention to the politics of 'biometric borders'[80] and the ways in which technological assemblages are used to categorised different bodies at state borders as a means of governing mobility and practising security against terrorism.[81] In the contemporary post-September 11th security milieu, trans-, genderqueer[82] and people whose gender presentation fails to conform to expectations, may be considered 'suspicious bodies', their 'failure' resulting in risks to personal safety and 'outing' but may also be considered a source of resistance to the imperative of regimes of securitisation.[83] As such, airport security practices become a crucial site for revealing the stakes of 'competence' in practising gender. Airport security practices order bodies according to a normative sex/gender regime that casts trans-, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people as threats and unruly bodies. These practices for sorting out 'safe' from 'risky' or 'suspicious' bodies depend upon gender being practised

[80] Louise Amoore, 'Biometric borders: Governing mobilities in the War on Terror', *Political Geography*, 25:3 (2006), pp. 336–51.

[81] See inter alia Benjamin J. Muller, '(Dis)qualified bodies: Securitization, citizenship and "identity management"', *Citizenship Studies*, 8:3 (2004), pp. 279–94; Peter Adey, 'Surveillance at the airport: Surveilling mobility/mobilising surveillance', *Environment and Planning A*, 36:8 (2004), pp. 1365–80; Charlotte Epstein, 'Guilty bodies, productive bodies, destructive bodies: Crossing the biometric border', *International Political Sociology*, 1:2 (2007), pp. 149–64; Mark Salter, 'Governmentalities of an airport: Heterotopia and confession', *International Political Sociology*, 1:1 (2007), pp. 49–66; Mark Salter (ed.), *Politics at the Airport* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Peter Adey, 'Facing airport security: Affect, biopolitics, and the preemptive securitisation of the mobile body', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27:2 (2009), pp. 274–95; Stephanie Redden and Jillian Terry, 'The end of the line: Feminist understandings of resistance to full-body scanning technology', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 15:2 (2012), pp. 234–53; Rocco Bellanova and Gloria Gonzalez Fuster, 'The politics of disappearance: Scanners and (unobserved) bodies as mediators of security practice', *International Political Sociology*, 7:2 (2013), pp. 188–209; Peer Schouten, 'Security as controversy: Reassembling security at Amsterdam airport', *Security Dialogue*, 45:1 (2014), pp. 23–42; Matthias Leese and Anja Koenigseder, 'Humor at the airport? Visualization, exposure, and laughter in the "War on Terror"', *International Political Sociology*, 9:1 (2015), pp. 37–52.

[82] Genderqueer is a term that refers to people who feel that their gender identity is non-binary, that is, not conforming to either masculine or feminine regardless of their sexed embodiment or sexual orientation. Joan Nestle, Clare Howell, and Riki Anne Wilchins (eds), *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary* (Los Angeles: Alyson Publications, 2002).

[83] There are of course examples of 'failure' across all realms of social activity. The focus on feminist/queer theory is to show how any theory of practice necessarily involves a theory of the relationship between the subject and the body, but is also incomplete if it only focuses on behaviours considered to be successful.

according to certain standards of 'competence' in order for its practitioners to remain on the 'safe' side. If gender is a kind of bodily practice that creates the illusion of the naturalness of bodily practice, as Butler argues, we are only really made aware of the functioning of gender at the margins, or when gender fails: that is, fails to be convincing. As opposed to failure in many other human endeavours, failure to 'do' gender competently does not just make one 'incompetent' in some sense, but other or less than human. The violence that trans- and genderqueer people regularly suffer (as well as others who may be perceived to trans-, genderqueer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or otherwise not conforming to the dictates of the 'heterosexual matrix') is a consequence of failing to 'do' gender competently. A US Department of Homeland Security memo connected gender presentations that did not 'match' one's bodily morphology based on heteronormative assumptions: "Terrorists will employ novel methods to artfully conceal suicide devices. Male bombers may dress as females in order to discourage scrutiny.'[84] Airport security assemblages are a site at which a 'competent' gender performance renders one as 'safe' and an illegible or 'incompetent' gender performance can lead to the perception of one as a threat and thus subject to harassment, humiliation, and detention.

To understand how success and competence are calibrated requires an understanding of what a 'successful' gender practice entails vis-à-vis airport security practices, in particular the identification requirements. These state practices of requiring different forms of identification can be said to be a kind of sovereign statecraft, particularly as a way of practising security through securing the documentary gender, gender presentation, and sexed embodiment of the traveller to fit the dictates of the 'heterosexual matrix'.[85] Yet, as Doty reminded us, practices are not sovereign at securing meanings; they are structurally indeterminate, and contain excesses or surpluses.[86] Practices of state sovereignty that attempt to secure air travel from terrorism by securing the gender of passengers are not, despite state's efforts, wholly successful at producing subjects whose practices of gender align with these norms, due largely to the multiple different practices of determining 'gender' that are not always aligned in real-world practices of gender. For one example, trans- and gender non-conforming people often do not identify or are not necessarily perceived to be the same gender as the gender markers on their official identification documents. Yet, travelling, particularly across international borders, requires identity documentation that almost always involves a gender marker. Procedures for changing the gender marker on one's identity documents vary around the world and are non-existent in some places. The US passed the REAL ID law in 2005 that enabled comparing identification data across agencies and jurisdictions in an effort to weed out invalid IDs or those obtained under false pretenses, which has led to considerable problems for trans- people whose official identification documents are likely to be in more than one gender, say on a passport, birth certificate, or driver's license.[87] Security agents also use gender markers to check the identity of the passenger being inspected. The inclusion of 'M' and 'F' as information about a passenger assumes that this is a permanent feature of the body, as well as that there is an uncomplicated relationship between the sex one is assigned at birth, one's gender identity, how one's gender is perceived by others, and the gender classification on identity documents.[88] All these elements combine to establish what a

[84] US Department of Homeland Security, 'DHS Advisory to Security Personnel; No Change in Threat Level' (2003), available at: {www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/press_release_0238.shtm}.
[85] See also Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence*, pp. 104–30.
[86] Doty, 'Aporia'.
[87] Dean Spade, 'Documenting gender', *Hastings Law Journal*, 59 (2008), pp. 731–84.
[88] Paisley Currah and Tara Mulqueen, 'Securitizing gender: Identity, biometrics, and transgender bodies at the airport', *Social Research*, 78:2 (2011), pp. 557–82.

'competent' practice of gender entails.[89] One's ability to travel, particularly across borders, requires 'match' between one's gender presentation and the sex on one's official documents, which is by no means an easy or uncomplicated process. The bureaucratic procedures to change one's gender marker can be quite complex, expensive, and even impossible, as different jurisdictions and state agencies often have different procedures or requirements. Trans- people are usually required to have surgical interventions or medical treatment of some kind and to be certified by a doctor in order to change their gender marker on official documents.[90]

In addition to the identification document requirements for travel, the ability to move across borders increasingly requires being subject to biometric technologies are that are not only aimed at 'securing' borders but also are also political technologies that draw distinctions between friend/enemy[91] or draw boundaries between the recognisable from the unrecognisable.[92] The use of biometric screening practices is another practice that effectively 'screens' for one's competent practice of gender according to a norm of alignment between gender presentation and bodily morphology. One must present one's body at the border, at which points parts of the body or visualisation or data from the body are made to stand in for whole of an identity, whether from photographs on a passport, to fingerprints and iris scanners.[93] Such technologies often screen trans- and gender non-conforming people as 'anomalous' or 'suspicious', reinforcing the unintelligibility of gender practices outside of a 'heterosexual matrix'. Biometrics technologies rely upon human programming of attributes: what counts as 'normal' embodiment is inscribed in devices, algorithms, and the practices that surround their use.[94] Of particular interest is the use of 'full-body' scanners, used throughout airports in the US as well as in the UK, Australia, Thailand, Canada, Europe and Japan, among other places. While the algorithms used in biometric technologies such as facial recognition are proprietary, the underlying science uses human perceptions of the racial/gender identities of persons to teach computers about differences, including the use of such traits as hairstyle and clothing to indicate gender.[95] The full-body scanners used to produce images of the human body, akin to a hospital x-ray, that was screened by trained personnel in a separate room from the space where travellers were screened. Following controversy over the explicit nature of the images produced and privacy concerns, software known as 'ProVision ATD' (for 'automatic threat detection') was

[89] There are a few exceptions to this: recently, Australia, New Zealand, and India have allowed people to have a gender marker 'X' on their passports indicating 'third gender', indeterminate or trans- gender status. This does not solve the problem of requiring 'competent' gender practices according to the 'heterosexual matrix' as trans and intersex and 'third gender' people are still frequently harassed and humiliated at airports based on their bodies being considered 'anomalous'. See, for example, Lane Sainty, 'Transgender passenger was forced to remove prosthetic by airport security'. *Buzzfeed Australia*, available at: {http://www.buzzfeed.com/lanesainty/trans-passenger-forced-to-remove-prosthetic#.bkaOpXkvw8} accessed 7 January 2016.

[90] Currah and Mulqueen, 'Securitizing gender'; Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 2011).

[91] Muller, '(Dis)qualified bodies'.

[92] Louise Amoore, *The Politics of Possibility: Risk and Security beyond Probability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 101.

[93] Mark Salter, 'Passports, mobility and security: How smart can the border be?', *International Studies Perspectives*, 5 (2004), pp. 71–9; Peter Adey, 'Facing airport security', p. 277.

[94] Shoshona Amielle Magnet, *When Biometrics Fail: Gender, Race and the Technology of Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Govert Valkenburg and Irma van der Ploeg, 'Materialities between security and privacy: a constructivist account of airport security scanners', *Security Dialogue*, 46:4 (2015), pp. 326–44; Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence*, pp. 104–30.

[95] Joseph Pugliese, *Biometrics: Bodies, Technologies, Biopolitics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010); Magnet, *When Biometrics Fail*, p. 42.

developed to 'read' the images for signs of anomaly, presenting to the human security agents an image of the outline of an un-sexed human form. However, the practice of screening individuals relies upon a security agent pressing a pink or a blue button, signifying whether they believe the person about to be screened presents as a woman or a man. This indicates that the software is set to define bodily anomalies differently for men and women based on pre-programmed parameters for bodily morphology that assumes a coherence between the gender a person is perceived as and how the software algorithm will interpret an image of their body as belonging to either a man or a woman.

The combination of state-agency-regulated gender markers on identification documents and 'body scanners' present well-documented difficulties for trans- and gender non-conforming people, showing the stakes of practising gender 'incompetently'.[96] Cary Gabriel Costello, for example, has written about his repeated detentions, invasive searches, and missed flights despite assurances of the US Transport Security Administration that their procedures are trans- friendly. He has been singled out on the basis of 'anomalies' that appear on scanners due to his wearing a chest binder.[97] Writer Shadi Petosky, a trans-woman, live-tweeted her harassment and detention when she was flagged for an 'anomaly' in the body scanners, even after she explained she was transgender. 'I'm in trouble if they push a button that doesn't fit.'[98] Furthermore, competently practising gender in airports also has a racialised component: black women are subjected to higher level security screenings at nine times the rate of white women, despite being half as likely to be caught with contraband, while women with 'natural' or 'Afro' style hair are frequently subjected to having their hair 'patted down' despite not having set off any alarms or displaying any other signs of 'suspiciousness' in US airport security screening procedures.[99] The competent practice of gender in airport security practices therefore also means conforming to ideals of whiteness, class privilege, and heterosexuality.[100]

The experiences of trans- and gender-nonconforming people in airport security practices show the perils of theorising practices in terms of 'competence'. If we only recognised 'competent' practices, we are only recognising those who are already intelligible, already considered competent actors. We are looking only at the general version of 'trusted travellers'[101] in International Relations or at

[96] See also Shepherd and Sjoberg, 'Trans- bodies in/of war(s)'; Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 85–90; Alissa Bohling, 'Exclusive: Transgender travelers singled out in TSA screenings, docs show', *Al Jazeera America* (26 May 2014), available at: {http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/5/26/groin-anomalies-andpatdowns traveling whiletrans.html} accessed 10 January 2016; Cary Gabriel Costello, 'TSA body screening and the trans body', *Transfusion* (25 March 2012), available at: {http://trans-fusion.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/tsa-body-scanning-and-trans-body.html} accessed 10 January 2016; Cary Gabriel Costello, 'Traveling while trans: the false promise of better treatment', *Transfusion* (3 January 2016), available at: {http://trans-fusion.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/traveling-while-trans-false-promise-of.html} accessed 10 January 2016; and Nicholas L Clarkson, 'Biometrics', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1–2 (2014), pp. 35–8.

[97] Costello, 'TSA bodys screening'; Costello, 'Travelling while trans'.

[98] Katie Rogers, 'TSA defends treatment of transgender air traveller', *New York Times* (22 September 2015), available at: {http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/us/shadi-petosky-tsa-transgender.html?mtrref=query.nytimes.com} accessed 15 Jan 2016.

[99] Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 132.

[100] See also Toby Beauchamp, 'Artful concealment and strategic visibility: Transgender bodies and U.S. state surveillance after 9/11', *Surveillance and Society*, 6:4 (2009), pp. 356–66.

[101] The United States offers expedited service at the border for 'pre-approved, low-risk' travellers as part of their 'trusted traveller' network, including 'Global Entry' or 'Nexus'. Such travellers avoid long lines by using kiosks to scan their fingerprints and passports. 'Trusted Travellers' in the US can also apply to TSA Pre Check,

least those who are deemed 'competent' actors at the expense of reifying existing relations of exclusion and marginality of which normative gender embodiment is only one. The 'mismatch' between embodiment and gender presentation presents a form of failure in airport security practices, one that demonstrates possible consequences of incompetent practices: being branded as a threat, harassment, humiliation and detention. If, in terms of IR theory, we only consider practices to be *constitutively* competent, we erase and in fact make unintelligible a multitude of practices defined as incompetent, practices that may turn out to be quite subversive.

As a final point about the stakes of competence in terms of gender practices, even the subject of 'trans-' can be complicated as matter of success or failure in light of queer theory and queer gender practices. 'Trans-' can itself become a category with its own standard of success and failure. As Meghana Nayak notes in relation to US asylum law, there is an expectation that trans- people are either anatomically male with a stereotypical female identity and gender expression in terms of behaviour, appearance, and dress, or they are anatomically female with stereotypically male identity and gender expression.[102] Similar arguments have also been made about Turkish and British asylum law.[103] A gender performance of a self-identified trans- person that is 'competent' according to the gender regulations of the state and the heterosexual matrix (a person whose gender marker has been legally changed, who has had medical and surgical interventions, and whose bodily performances are regularly 'read' as those of a particular sex/gender) would in all likelihood be considered normatively gendered rather than ambiguous or trans-, regardless of how he or she identifies, and therefore such a person may be considered a 'trusted traveller'. Such trans- people include those considered to 'pass' as members of the gender they identify with. The US-based National Transgender Advocacy Coalition advocates a strategy Toby Beauchamp has labelled 'strategic visibility', which includes carrying paperwork, documenting one's surgeries, and disclosing to security agents one's status as trans-.[104] The category of trans- in this situation serves as a regulatory category, a status that one must conform to in order to access certain rights and services. Failure to be a 'good trans-' subject, as most trans- and genderqueer people 'fail' to be (most people who identify as trans- do not pursue surgical modifications) results in becoming aligned with terrorists and other suspicious or monstrous bodies. Not all people who identify as trans- or genderqueer may be as much of a 'failure' according to these gender norms as others. As Beauchamp notes, 'The dangerously mobile body may well be not that which abides by medicolegal regulations [of trans- subjects] but that which exceeds or eludes them.'[105] Some 'trans-' bodies may thus be more 'successful' at practising gender according to state and societal dictates of competence than others.

a service to expedite security screenings (not have to remove shoes, belts, jackets, or laptops). US and Dutch citizens are eligible for similar programmes, 'FLUX' or 'Privium' in Canada. Other examples of states giving special treatment at the borders to 'trusted travellers' include 'Registered Travellers' in the UK, Mexico's 'Viajero Confiable', 'Automatic Gate' in Japan, 'Smart Gate' in Australia and New Zealand, 'e-gate' in Hong Kong, and the Republic of Korea's 'Smart Entry Service'. Such programmes promise faster crossings for pre-approved travellers from certain countries, often linked to providing biometric readings in advance.

[102] Meghana Nayak, *Who is Worthy of Protection? Gender-Based Asylum and US Immigration Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 152

[103] Sima Shakhsari, 'Shuttling between bodies and borders: Iranian transsexual refugees and the politics of rightful killing', in Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (eds), *The Transgender Reader, Volume II* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 565–80; Rachel Lewis, '"Gay? Prove it": the politics of queer anti-deportation activism', *Sexualities*, 17:8 (2014), pp. 958–75.

[104] Beauchamp, 'Artful concealment'.

[105] Toby Beauchamp, 'The substance of borders: Transgender politics, mobility, and the US regulation of testosterone', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 19:1 (2012), pp. 57–78.

The development of trans- as potentially a regulatory category of which one can measure success or failure at is not only a matter of controversy within trans- communities,[106] but speaks to broader questions of queer theory's place in International Relations. Eve Kosofky Sedgwick influentially suggested that the designation 'queer' could apply to '[t]he … excesses of meaning when the constituent element of anyone's gender, or anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically.'[107] Moving from a singular 'either/or' to a multiple 'and/or' frame can help us understand the pluralities of sex, gender and sexuality that can be described as 'queer'. Rather than being either a man or a woman, or, I might add, a success or a failure, in a binary way, one can be read as man *and* a woman in terms of different categorisations of documents, the ways one is read by others, one's self-identity, how one's body is interpreted by technological algorithms, and more, as well as being either/or a man or a woman at the same time. For Weber, the plural 'and/or' framework 'can require us to appreciate how a person or a thing is constituted by and simultaneously embodies multiple, seemingly contradictory meanings that may confuse and confound a simple either/or dichotomy'.[108]

Furthermore, while Weber's more recent work[109] focuses on Barthes's 'and/or' theorisation of indeterminacy and multiplicity of sex and gender, Weber's earlier work also relies on Barthes's 'neither/nor' figuration of the neuter, which is symbolically neither male nor female, in which any perceived gender or sexuality is a mask for plurality and undecidability.[110] The figure of the neuter is unclassifiable under binary schemes and is therefore excluded from schemes of intelligibility in the way that trans- and gender non-conforming people are often excluded from being 'trusted travellers' and from the terms of 'intelligible life' more broadly. However, to be in this space of 'neither/nor' is to reveal that it is not only trans- and gender non-conforming people who are, at some level, 'failing' at gender. Rather, it demonstrates that practices of gender always, at some level, 'fail' in that they fail to be fully determinative of gendered subjects.

Depending on the combination of one's gender identity, sexual orientation, gender presentation, gender markers on various documents, and bodily morphology, in the airport security practices, trans- and gender non-conforming people may be read as men or women, or as both men *and* women. They might also be read as neither men nor women; as the embodiment of the refusal or the impossibility to 'signify monolithically' in terms of gender. Certain trans- practices of embodiment could be considered, on one hand, either a success or a failure: their gender could be seen as an 'incompetent' practice of gender that marked them as a security threat, even if they are 'competently' practising 'trans-' embodiment in terms of making themselves 'strategically visible', that is, identifying themselves as trans- to security personnel, and carrying doctor's notes about surgical

[106] Katrina Roen discusses a tension in trans- politics as 'both/neither' versus 'either/or' in which some trans- people take a position of refusal to fit within categories of man and woman while 'either/or' refers to the imperative by some trans- people to pass convincingly as either a man or a woman. Katrina Roen, '"Either/or" and "both/neither": Discursive tensions in transgender politics', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 27:2 (2002), pp. 501–22. Weber's articulation of 'and/or' logic may be said to encompass both of these positions ('Queer intellectual curiosity').

[107] Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, p. 8.

[108] Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity', p. 9.

[109] Ibid.; Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 40–3.

[110] Cynthia Weber, *Faking It: US Hegemony in a Post-Phallic Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). See also Cynthia Weber, '"What is told is always in the telling": Reflections on *Faking It* in 21st century IR/global politics', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 45:1 (forthcoming 2017).

procedures or hormone treatments. According to the practices of airport security, being a trans-, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming person can mean embodying gender/sexuality in a way that is successful (as in one conforming to normative standards around embodying 'trans-') or a failure (one's embodiment confounds the gender norms of security personnel and 'body scanners', leading one to be treated as a terrorist threat) but could also be read as both a success and a failure: a failure to practise racialised, heteronormative gender norms, but possibly contributing to the successful exposure and undermining of those very norms that govern the intelligibility of bodies. The existence of 'trans-' as a category, embodied by trans- people demanding their own intelligibility as subjects, thus brings with it the possibilities for disturbing assumptions about what it means to practise gender apart from the heteronormative norms of sex, gender, and desire contained within strictly 'competent' practices of gender. Sandy Stone articulates this sense of trans- embodiment as disruptive or subversive of dominant norms of what it means to practise gender, in an essay considered to be a foundational work of transgender studies. Stone draws upon Butler's work to articulate the *genre* of the transsexual (not necessarily any individual person) as possessing 'a potential for the *productive* disruption of structures of sexuality and spectra of desire [that] has yet to be explored'.[111] Feminist/queer approaches to practising gender thus highlight the inherent potentiality of change and subversion within embodied practices. Queer approaches in particular highlight the interderminacy of gender as a practice; here, the coherence of the distinction between success and failure could itself be undermined in practices that fail to be either wholly 'successes' or 'failures' according to the normative standards for gendered embodiment.

Conclusion

The explicit focus on theorising 'practices' in recent years can open windows into some of the foundational assumptions of IR theory. Dominant ways of thinking about practices in International Relations do more than inadvertently erase the experiences of marginalised populations such as trans-, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people; they are limited in thinking about the significance of different kinds of practices for making and unmaking subjects. Taking seriously contributions from feminist/queer theorists to theorising gender as a practice are necessary in order to redress the neglect of certain bodies and certain lives in IR theory, such as those whose gendered practices and identities are not considered 'competent' or rather, have a indeterminate relationship to heteronormative standards of practising gender. Butler's concept of performativity is not only inherently related to the indeterminacy of gender practices, but contains within it a reading of the stakes of success and failure that has been neglected by practice turn theorists. Reading the experiences of trans- and gender non-conforming people in navigating airport security practices reveals the violence inherent in normative conceptions of sex and gender and embodiment for the kinds of subjects that can be recognised as such, as well as the kinds of theory that can be recognised as intelligible in IR.

Despite the occasional citation of Butler as an influence in 'the practice turn' in IR, the use of feminist/queer theory in this regard amounts to what Cynthia Weber described as 'gentrification' in IR theory in terms of assimilating the distinctiveness of this approach to practices of embodiment to a homogenised, catch-all category with its critical impetus stripped out.[112] Theorising gender as a

[111] Sandy Stone, 'The "Empire" strikes back: a posttransexual manifesto', in K. Conboy, N. Medina, and S. Stanbury (eds), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997 [orig. pub. 1991]), p. 352, emphasis in original.

[112] Weber, 'Why is there no queer International Relations theory?'.

practice from the perspective of queer theories and/or queer practices that enact gender in multiple and diverse ways is about much more than seeing actors or variables that were not otherwise visible to International Relations theory; it is about a fundamental rethinking of the practices of theory in IR that neglect feminist and/or queer theories, or at best, 'gentrify' them by flattening out key theoretical and political differences to be one of many under a diverse (heteronormative) 'family' of practice theorists.[113] Attempts to establish a broad school of 'practice theory' in IR that strives to replace heterogeneity with assimilation has the effect of driving out people and theories marked by difference, assimilating and replacing them with watered-down versions that reproduce existing hierarchies of disciplinary 'competence'. Including Butler, however briefly, as a theorist that can be assimilated into a pre-existing work on 'practices' without taking seriously the challenges that feminist/queer theory poses at underlying assumptions around gender, sexuality, and embodiment and the stakes and possibilities of failure and incompetence risks repositioning feminist/queer work as 'failures' in IR that can only be resuscitated through their association with more respectable, 'competent' work. Neglect of the ways in which feminist/queer scholars have interrogated gender as a practice radically distorts what taking practices seriously in IR might mean, as well as reproducing (hetero)normative standards of being a competent 'trusted traveller' in practices of IR theory.

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[113] Bueger and Gadinger, 'The play of international practice', p. 2.