
1 Troubled Encounters: Feminism Meets IR

Since its inception, at the beginning of the century, the discipline of international relations has gone through a series of debates over both its subject matter and the methodologies appropriate for its investigations.¹ None of these debates have been as fundamental as those of the last two decades. The end of the Cold War and the plurality of new issues on the global agenda, to which I referred in my introductory chapter, have been accompanied by increasing calls for rethinking the foundations of a discipline that appears to some to be out of touch with the revolutionary changes in world politics, as well as deficient in how to explain them. Justin Rosenberg has suggested that it is strange that momentous events, such as the collapse of Soviet Communism, the strains of European integration, and the economic growth of China (which presently contains one-fifth of the world's population), events that are part of a gigantic world revolution of modernization, industrialization, nationalism, and globalization in which the West has been caught up for the last two hundred years, tend to be excluded from most IR theory.² Instead of what he claims are arid debates about hegemonic stability or order versus justice, which abstract from real-world issues, Rosenberg calls for theory grounded in historical and social analyses. He suggests that global issues can be better explained through narrative forms of explanation rather than social-scientific methodologies of conventional IR.

Such calls for rethinking the way in which we explain or understand world politics began in the 1980s, with the so-called third debate in IR;³ the 1980s marked the appearance of a substantial body of scholarship, associated

with critical theory and postmodernism, that challenged both the epistemological and ontological foundations of the field. Asserting that we had moved from a world of states to a global community, R. B. J. Walker claimed that the third debate represented a fundamental divide that went well beyond methodological issues because it arose more from what scholars thought they were studying than from disagreements as to how to study it.⁴ While these concerns are obviously interrelated, scholars on the critical side of the third debate challenged the foundations of the field as well as the appropriate methods by which it should be studied.

It is no coincidence that feminist theory came to IR, in the late 1980s, at about the same time as this fundamental questioning of the foundations of the discipline. Although there had been earlier literatures on women in the military and on women and development, IR feminists pointed to the gendered foundations of the field and began to develop feminist critiques of the major assumptions of the discipline.⁵ Although their definition of real-world issues might be different from IR theorists' abstractions, they, too, were concerned with concrete issues embedded in what they claimed were gendered social relations. Raising issues that had rarely been seen as belonging in the discipline as conventionally defined, they also preferred theory grounded in historical and social analysis.

Like the third debate in IR, feminist theory has also been engaged in a critical discussion and reevaluation of epistemological issues. These debates began earlier, however, in the 1960s, when radical feminists challenged the empiricist foundations of liberal feminism; in many ways, they were more genuine debates than those in IR, with scholars from a variety of epistemological and disciplinary perspectives, ranging from the natural and social sciences to the humanities and philosophy, engaging openly with one another. Questioning liberal assumptions that women's subordination can be diminished by incorporating women into existing institutional structures on an equal basis with men, postliberal feminists pointed to hierarchical structures that would have to be radically challenged to address these issues. They also claimed that knowledge about both the social and natural world is not objective but based on the experiences of men.

Feminist IR scholars were drawn to this earlier interdisciplinary discussion. As had other feminists in sociology, literature, and the natural sciences, they perceived IR as a field, largely within political science, committed to universalist, positivist methodologies that, they claimed, did not recognize its gendered foundations; nor did it speak to the concerns that feminist schol-

ars brought to their investigations. Identifying with the postpositivist side of the third debate, but critical of its silence on gender issues, feminist scholars went outside the discipline to feminist theory to seek answers to their questions.

In this chapter, I first outline some of the approaches to feminist theory and some of the debates between them—the debates dating back to the 1960s. This survey is intended to demonstrate how far the ontological and epistemological concerns of feminist theory are from those of conventional international relations and also why IR feminists have been drawn to them. I then briefly review some of the earlier debates in IR, thereby demonstrating their difference from feminist concerns. Finally, I introduce some feminist IR perspectives, integrating them into the third debate. Although much feminist IR scholarship demonstrates affinities with critical or postpositivist IR, its roots in feminist theory, and its commitment to the importance of gender as a category of analysis, make this body of literature distinctive and different. In this chapter, I focus on the epistemological and methodological issues raised by these feminist and IR debates, rather than on substantive issues in world politics. These issues will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Feminist Theories

Feminist theories are multidisciplinary; they draw from both the social and natural sciences as well as the humanities and philosophy. They include a wide variety of epistemological and methodological approaches. Although I shall outline some feminist theoretical approaches by presenting them sequentially, it should be emphasized that many of these approaches still coexist: the debates to which I refer are far from resolved. The key concern for feminist theory is to explain women's subordination, or the unjustified asymmetry between women's and men's social and economic positions, and to seek prescriptions for ending it.⁶ Susan Okin defines feminists as those who believe that women should not be disadvantaged by their sex; women should be recognized as having human dignity equal with men and the opportunity to live as freely chosen lives as men.⁷ However, feminists disagree on what they believe constitutes women's subordination, as well as how to explain and overcome it. Feminist theories have been variously described as liberal, radical, socialist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, and post-modern.⁸ Besides seeking better understanding of women's subordination,

most of these approaches see themselves as politically engaged in the practical tasks of improving women's lives. While liberal feminists have generally relied on empiricist methodologies, other approaches have questioned these positivist methodologies. Arguing from standpoint or postmodern epistemological positions,⁹ they claim that "scientific" theories, which claim the possibility of neutrality of facts and a universalist objectivity, hide an epistemological tradition that is gendered. Below, I outline some of the major features of these approaches as well as their epistemological orientations, emphasizing issues that have been important for feminist IR. Acknowledging that much of contemporary feminism has moved beyond these labels, they are, nevertheless, helpful in understanding feminist thought in its historical context.¹⁰ It is important to emphasize that not all feminists think alike; the diversity in feminist scholarship is often not recognized by IR scholars.

Liberal Feminism

Contemporary feminist theories have emerged out of a long historical tradition of feminism that goes back to the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries and is associated with names such as Christine de Pizan, Mary Astell, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Harriet Taylor.¹¹ Each of these theorists argued that women should have the same chance to develop their rational capacities as men. Liberal feminism is a continuing intellectual tradition; in the United States, it is also associated with women activists and organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW). While many contemporary academic feminists have moved beyond liberal feminism, it should not be underestimated; most reforms in Western liberal democracies that have benefitted women can be attributed to liberal feminism.

Resting on a conception of human nature that is radically individualistic, whereby human beings are conceived as isolated individuals with no necessary connection with each other, the liberal tradition sees humans as separate rational agents.¹² Liberal feminists claim that discrimination deprives women of equal rights to pursue their rational self-interest; whereas men have been judged on their merits as individuals, women have tended to be judged as female or as a group. Liberal feminists believe that these impediments to women's exercise of their full rational capacities can be eliminated by the removal of legal and other obstacles that have denied them the same rights and opportunities as men. When these legal barriers are removed,

they claim, women can begin to move toward full equality. Unlike the classical liberal tradition, which argues for a minimal state, most liberal feminists believe that the state is the proper authority for enforcing women's rights; although it may engage in discrimination in practice, the state is capable of becoming the neutral arbiter necessary to ensure women's equality.

Liberal feminism has generally relied on positivist epistemologies typical of the analytic and empiricist traditions of knowledge that began in seventeenth-century Europe. These knowledge traditions are based on claims that there is an objective reality independent of our understanding of it, and that it is scientifically knowable by detached observers whose values can remain outside their theoretical investigations. Liberal feminists claim, however, that existing knowledge, since it has generally not included knowledge about women, has been biased and not objective; nevertheless, they believe that this problem can be corrected by adding women to existing knowledge frameworks. Therefore, liberal empiricists claim, the problem of developing better knowledge lies not with the scientific method itself but with the biases in the ways in which our theories have been focused and developed.

Challenges to Liberal Feminism

In the 1960s and 1970s, feminists began to question this liberal belief in the possibility of women's equality; they also began to question feminist empiricist methodologies for studying these inequalities and the liberal feminists' prescriptions for ending them. Critics of liberal feminism claimed that the removal of legal barriers did not end the discrimination against women in either public or private life. Moreover, critics suggested that the liberal emphasis on individualism and rationality promoted masculine values, which privileged mind over body and individualism over relationships.

Radical feminism, which emerged out of the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, claimed that what it referred to as women's "oppression" was too deep to be eliminated by the removal of legal barriers; radicals believed that women's oppression is the first, the deepest, and most widespread form of human oppression.¹³ Radicals claimed that women were oppressed because of patriarchy or a pervasive system of male dominance, rooted in the biological inequality between the sexes and in women's reproductive roles, that assigns them to the household to take care of men and children. Unlike liberals, radical feminists did not endorse the idea that

women should aspire to being equal to men; rather, they should celebrate women's unique virtues that, in patriarchal societies, have been devalued. Valuing characteristics typically associated with females, such as caring and the fostering of relationships, radicals believed that these female virtues could be the basis for better societies.

Rejecting liberal empiricism, radical feminism questioned the possibility of objective knowledge and the separation of the knower from the known; claiming that dominant groups (certain men) will impose their own distorted view of reality, they argued for "women's ways of knowing" that are arrived at through consciousness raising, a technique begun in the 1960s, that allowed women to understand the hitherto invisible depths of their own oppression.¹⁴ Whereas patriarchal thought is characterized by divisions and oppositions, women's ways of knowing have tried to construct a worldview based on relationships and connections.

Psychoanalytic theories also claimed difference between women and men and suggested "women's ways of knowing." Object-relations theory suggested that gender differences are formed in early childhood socialization, when boys are encouraged to separate from their mothers while girls remain identified with them, a relationship that fosters attachment. Sara Ruddick's work on maternal care claims that skills that are necessary for mothering, which girls learn through socialization, are different from those employed in public life. She suggests that maternal practice or responsibility for child care requires nonviolence, trust, and tolerance of ambiguity, skills that are consistent with peacemaking. While she is careful not to make the claim that women and mothers are always peaceful, she does suggest that ways of knowing that arise out of maternal practice could serve us well in areas such as conflict resolution.¹⁵

Challenging the work of Piagetian psychologist Laurence Kohlberg, who outlined six stages of moral development, Carole Gilligan has suggested that women and men have different conceptions of morality and a different way of moral reasoning from men. On Kohlberg's scale, women rarely reach the sixth or highest stage's association with universal abstract principles of justice, but, rather, exemplify the third stage—morality conceived in interpersonal terms of pleasing others. Contrary to Kohlberg, Gilligan claimed that women do not have a less-developed sense of justice than men; rather, because women have different views of self from men, they do not engage in formal reasoning, suited to universalistic conceptions of justice, but instead in relational, consequentialist reasoning. Moral choices

are not made from universal ethical orientations but from choices situated in particular contexts.¹⁶

Both radical and psychoanalytic feminism have generated criticism particularly for their essentialism, or seeing “woman” as an undifferentiated category across time, class, race, and culture. Critics have also claimed that valorizing and celebrating female characteristics can perpetuate rather than overcome women’s marginalization. Radical feminism’s attribution of all women’s oppression to an undifferentiated concept of patriarchy, and psychoanalytic feminism’s explanations for women’s subordination as being fixed in early childhood, appear overly determined. Nevertheless, these approaches began to offer versions of women’s standpoint, which have since been refined and incorporated into other approaches. The use of gender as a conceptual category of analysis is also rooted in early radical feminism. Before moving to other postliberal approaches and to some of the contemporary debates generated by these approaches, I will first offer a definition of gender, on which a variety of postliberal feminist approaches have depended for their theoretical investigations.

As Sandra Harding has suggested, gendered social life is produced through three distinct processes: assigning dualistic gender metaphors to various perceived dichotomies; appealing to these gender dualisms to organize social activity; and dividing necessary social activities between different groups of humans. She refers to these three aspects of gender as gender symbolism, gender structure, and individual gender.¹⁷ Feminists define gender as a set of variable but socially and culturally constructed characteristics: those such as power, autonomy, rationality, activity, and public are stereotypically associated with masculinity; their opposites—weakness, dependence/connection, emotionality, passivity, and private—are associated with femininity. There is evidence to suggest that both women and men assign a more positive value to these masculine characteristics that denote a kind of “hegemonic masculinity”—an ideal type of masculinity, embedded in the characteristics defined as masculine but to which few men actually conform.¹⁸ They do, however, define what men ought to be. Characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity vary across time and culture and are subject to change according to the requirements of power. They serve to support male power and female subordination and they also reinforce the power of dominant groups, since minorities have frequently been characterized as lacking in these characteristics. Indeed, there is a hierarchy of masculinities in which gender interacts with class and race. Importantly,

definitions of masculinity and femininity are relational and depend on each other for their meaning; masculinities do not exist except in contrast with femininities. It is also important to note that there can be no such thing as hegemonic femininity, because masculinity defines the norm.¹⁹

As Joan Scott claims, while the definition of masculinity and femininity and the forms gender relations take across different cultures may vary, they are almost always unequal; therefore, gender in the structural sense is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. Although gender is frequently seen as belonging in the household, Scott argues that it is constructed in the economy and the polity through various institutional structures that have the effect of “naturalizing,” and even legalizing, women’s inferior status.²⁰ Recent feminist writings that deal with issues of race and class problematize these power relationships still further.

Individual gender relations enter into and are constituent elements in every aspect of human experience. Jane Flax reminds us that, while feminism is about recovering women’s activities, it must also be aware of how these activities are constituted through the social relations in which they are situated.²¹ Therefore, gender is not just about women: it is also about men and masculinity.²² Gender is a notion that offers a set of frameworks within which feminist theory has explained the social construction and representation of differences between the sexes.²³ Consequently, working for gender equality is deemed impossible by many feminists because, definitionally, gender signifies relationships of inequality.²⁴ Rather, feminists should work toward making gender visible in order to move beyond its oppressive dynamics.²⁵

Reacting against the essentialism of radical feminism and its notion of an undifferentiated patriarchy, socialist feminism, coming out of Marxist roots, has looked to differences in men’s and women’s material existence as a reason for women’s oppression. Socialist feminists have claimed that patriarchy has a material base that is expressed in men’s control over women’s labor power. In the modern West, women’s role as reproducers and household workers have reduced them to a state of economic dependence; even when women work in the labor force, they receive on average less pay than men and are still responsible for a disproportionate share of household duties. Whereas Marx claimed that capitalist modes of production were responsible for workers’ oppression, these feminists have looked at modes of reproduction as primary sources of women’s oppression. Claiming that classical Marxism dismissed women’s oppression as less important than that of

workers in capitalist systems, socialist feminists have pointed out that often women do not fare better under socialism. Women's oppression, therefore, is linked to these various modes of production and reproduction, as well as to class and economic position.

Although all of these postliberal/postempiricist approaches have introduced the idea of women's ways of knowing, feminist standpoint as an epistemology was most highly developed in socialist feminism. Based on its Marxist roots, socialist feminists define standpoint as a position in society from which certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured.²⁶ Standpoint feminism presupposes that all knowledge reflects the interests and values of specific social groups; its construction is affected by social, political, ideological, and historical settings. Women's subordinate status means that women, unlike men (or unlike some men), do not have an interest in mystifying reality in order to reinforce the status quo; therefore, they are likely to develop a clearer, less biased understanding of the world. Nancy Hartsock, one of the founders of standpoint feminism, has argued that material life structures set limits on an understanding of social relations so that reality will be perceived differently as material situations differ. Since women's lives differ systematically and structurally from men's, women can develop a particular vantage point on male supremacy. However, this understanding can be achieved only through struggle, since the oppressed are not always aware of their own oppression; when achieved, it carries a potential for liberation. Hartsock argued that women's liberation lies in a search for the common threads that connect diverse experiences of women as well as the structural determinants of these experiences.²⁷

Similarly, Sandra Harding has argued that while women's experiences alone are not a reliable guide for deciding which knowledge claims are preferable because women tend to speak in socially acceptable ways, women's lives are the place from which feminist research should begin.²⁸ Harding explores the question as to whether objectivity and socially situated knowledge is an impossible combination. She concludes that adopting a feminist standpoint actually strengthens standards of objectivity. While it requires acknowledging that all human beliefs are socially situated, it also requires critical evaluation to determine which social situations tend to generate the most objective claims.²⁹ Susan Heckman avers that feminist standpoint is rooted in a concrete "reality" that is the opposite of the abstract, conceptual world inhabited by men, particularly elite men, and that in this reality lies the truth of the human condition.³⁰

In important ways, all of these approaches challenge the assumptions and worldviews of liberal feminism as well as its positivist/empiricist epistemological foundations. Today, however, feminist theory is engaged in a fundamental reassessment of these approaches and their epistemologies. While, in the 1970s, it was assumed that the various structural causes of women's oppression could be specified and broken down, this consensus has now eroded. For example, Nira Yuval-Davis has argued that the notion of patriarchy, so important to radical and socialist feminisms, is highly problematic. While it may be appropriate for specific historical periods and geographical regions, Yuval-Davis claims that it is much too crude an analytical instrument. In most societies, certain women have power over some men as well as over other women.³¹

This debate, which began in the late 1980s, has been strongly influenced by postcolonial, Third World, and postmodern feminisms. This is due both to the impact of black feminist critiques, which have introduced considerations of race and class, and to the influence of postmodernism that has called into question the possibility of systematic knowledge cumulation.³² These and other critics have argued that standpoint theories failed to recognize differences amongst women based on race, class, sexual preference, and geographical location. Standpoint has been faulted for basing its generalized knowledge claims on the experiences of white Western women. As Patricia Hill Collins tells us, African American women experience the world differently from those who are not black and female.³³ Questioning liberal feminism's focus on equality, black feminists remind us that black women would be unlikely to subscribe to the goal of equality with black men, who are themselves victims of oppression.

Third World women have begun to question the term *feminist* because of its association with Western cultural imperialism. Stressing the importance of producing their own knowledge and recovering their own identities, these women, speaking out of the historical experiences of colonial oppression, offer further evidence of a multiplicity of oppressions. Chandra Mohanty, while she acknowledges the impossibility of representing all their diverse histories, suggests the need to explore, analytically, the links among the struggles of Third World women against racism, sexism, colonialism, and capitalism. She and other postcolonial feminists use the term *Third World* to include North American women of color; their writings have insisted on the need to analyze the interrelationships between feminist, anti-racist, and nationalist struggles. Postcolonial feminists interpret Western im-

perialism as the historical imposition of an imperial order, based on white, masculine values, on subjugated and feminized colonial peoples.³⁴ Avtar Brah claims that, in today's world, feminist questions about women's locations in the global economic system cannot be answered without reference to class, ethnicity, and geographical location.³⁵

Dissatisfaction with the essentialism of early standpoint theory has moved feminist theory toward the consideration of multiple standpoints and multiple subjectivities.³⁶ Whereas, in the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis was on a political agenda designed to work toward the equality of women, this new concern with the identity of the subject has shifted theoretical considerations toward philosophical and epistemological issues and has brought feminist theory closer to postmodern perspectives. According to Michele Barrett, the social sciences are losing their purchase; the new turn to culture has moved feminism toward the humanities and philosophy.³⁷

Feminist postmodernism has criticized feminist standpoint for being overly committed to an essentialized view of women.³⁸ Rather than grounding feminism in women's experiences, postmodern feminism examines gender as a source of power and hierarchy in order to better understand how these hierarchies are socially constructed and maintained. Disputing liberals' claim that there is a world out there waiting to be discovered, postmodernists reject the foundationalism of Enlightenment knowledge. For them reality is multiple and historically contingent; what has counted as knowledge has done so through its association with prevailing power structures. Under the influence of postmodernism, universalistic theoretical discourses have been subject to a profound critique.³⁹ Postmodernism has produced the tendency to shift central theoretical concepts from structure to discourse, or from "things" to "words."⁴⁰ Feminist postmodernism deconstructs and critiques rather than prescribes; it attempts to problematize entities such as women, truth, and knowledge.⁴¹

Attempts to incorporate race and class into theoretical analysis have moved feminism closer to postmodernism. Indeed, one of postmodernism's strongest appeals to many feminists has been its focus on difference; its rejection of male-centric thought has allowed space within which to legitimize voices of the marginalized, whose experiences have not been part of conventional knowledge construction.⁴² But, in spite of the positive value of these moves, feminism has an uneasy and complex relationship with postmodernism. A developing post-postmodern critique warns of the perils of tolerating cultural relativism; it also warns of the dangers of skepticism about

all knowledge claims, for such skepticism could lead to an abandonment of the political project of reducing women's subordination that has motivated feminism since its early beginnings. For example, Maria Nzomo claims that removing the possibility of appealing to universal ideals, such as human rights, would serve to diminish the strategies available to women.⁴³ If feminism loses sight of its political goals, certain feminists fear that power will remain where it is. Moving attention from women's subordination to gender constructions, or from agents to structures, makes it more difficult to determine ways of emancipating women.⁴⁴

In a critique of trends in women's studies in the 1990s, Renate Klein claims that the new focus on gender studies threatens to make women invisible again; a lack of connection to the real lives of women endangers the political project of women's emancipation. Klein suggests that while we need to listen to women from other cultures, we must focus not only on difference, but on commonalities.⁴⁵ Agreeing with early critics of liberal feminism that the removal of legal barriers will not end women's subordination, many contemporary feminists are urging a sensitivity to difference and a respect for contextual knowledge that does not lose sight of the emancipatory goals to which various feminist approaches have been committed.

This overview suggests a multiplicity of feminist approaches. Rosi Braidotti describes feminism not as a canonized body of theories but a widely divergent, sometimes contradictory, amalgam of positions.⁴⁶ For IR, a discipline that has been concerned with cumulation and working toward a unified body of theory defined in terms of propositions that can be tested, this array of positions appears unsettling. Indeed, the concerns and debates in feminist theory that I have outlined seem far from the agenda of conventional IR. These positions have, however, been central to providing important insights and guidance for IR feminists as these scholars have constructed feminist critiques of the discipline and begun to develop feminist research programs.

Feminist Theories and IR

Although IR feminists, seeking to develop feminist critiques of the core of the discipline, have drawn on the work of liberal feminists (for example, those writing about women in foreign policy and the military),⁴⁷ many of them have rejected a liberal-empiricist orientation. Noting the dispropor-

tionately low numbers of women in elite foreign-policymaking positions in most societies, as well as their historical absence from the academic discourse of IR, feminists in IR would be unlikely to subscribe to liberal feminism's claim that these absences are the result of legal barriers alone. Moreover, incorporation into liberal analysis arouses fears of co-optation into the mainstream discipline.⁴⁸ Feminist IR theorists generally agree with post-liberal claims that gender hierarchies are socially constructed and maintained through power structures that work against women's participation in foreign- and national-security policymaking. Rather than seeing the state as a neutral arbiter, feminist IR scholars have pointed to "gendered states" that promote and support policy practices primarily in the interests of men. They have examined concepts such as security and sovereignty for gender biases, and they have suggested that boundaries between inside and outside, order and anarchy, evoke gendered constructions of self and other that privilege hegemonic constructions of masculinity. International relations and international politics are arenas dominated by men; therefore, any analysis of gendered concepts and practices in IR demand that attention be paid to the construction and reproduction of masculine identities and the effects that these have on the theory and practice of IR.⁴⁹

Calls for studying men and masculinities have been accompanied by a suspicion, voiced by some feminists, of radical feminism's celebration of female characteristics. Besides the obviously problematic slide into distinctions such as good women/bad men, the association of women with maternal qualities and peacemaking has the effect of disempowering both women and peace and further delegitimizing women's voices in matters of international politics. However, socialist feminists' claims about the material bases of women's subordination have been important for explanations of the feminization of poverty, a trend that appears to be accompanying forces of economic globalization. Given that feminist IR is attempting to better understand a variety of subordinations confronted by women worldwide, the introduction of race and class as well as postcolonial perspectives, which attend to issues of culture and identity, has been another welcome development. Conventional IR has been very Western, great-power oriented; listening to and respecting women's voices worldwide and recovering the activities of those on the margins—people not usually considered significant actors in world politics—is an important contribution to the discipline.

These investigations into the gendered practices of IR owe a great deal to feminist epistemologies, which are sensitive to differences in women's

position and experience while remaining committed to producing the kind of knowledge that can contribute to the lessening of women's subordination. Understanding subordination and uncovering the gendered foundations of the theories and practices of international politics that have contributed to them have been central to feminist IR. I return to these epistemological contributions later in this chapter, and in subsequent chapters I will elaborate on the contributions of feminist theories to understanding these issues and global issues more generally. But first, to provide background for these contemporary epistemological debates and feminist perspectives on them, I will briefly survey earlier IR debates out of which they arise.

Debates in IR

Epistemological debates of the magnitude of those in feminist theory did not begin in IR until the late 1980s. Even then, the challenge to conventional social-scientific methodologies to which IR, particularly in the United States, had been committed since the 1950s has not had the same significant impact on the discipline. While IR has had debates between a variety of paradigms or worldviews, in the United States (where it has largely been a subdiscipline of political science) it has remained for the most part committed to social-scientific methodologies and a search for more rigorous explanatory theories.⁵⁰ IR began as a discipline seeking a better understanding of war, conflict, and the problems of anarchy; it was hoped that such an understanding could diminish the frequency and severity of future conflicts. The first debate in IR took place in the 1930s and 1940s, when realists criticized so-called idealists for their optimistic assessment of the possibility of cooperation in international politics through legal agreements and the building of international institutions.⁵¹ As Brian Schmidt has suggested, debate was a misnomer; it was more an evolution, from scholars in the tradition of international law and institutions to those who focused on international politics. Schmidt argues that intellectual histories of the field have served justificatory and legitimizing purposes—in this case, the legitimation of realism.⁵²

Most of the founding fathers of U.S. realism in the post–World War II era were European intellectuals fleeing from Nazi persecution. Flagrant violations of international law and abuses of human rights in the name of German nationalism motivated realist scholars to dissociate the realm of

morality from the *realpolitik* of international politics. Painting a gloomy picture of “political man” and the dangers of an anarchic international system, realist Hans Morgenthau claimed that war was always a possibility. However, he believed that the search for deeper explanations of the laws that govern human action could contribute to lessening the chances that such disasters would reoccur in the future.⁵³ Morgenthau believed that only by a more “scientific” understanding of its causes could the likelihood of war be diminished.

Yet many subsequent international theorists did not consider Morgenthau and other mid-century realists scientific enough. The second debate, which took place during the 1950s and 1960s, was between these early realists and more scientifically oriented scholars. While initially it was largely a methodological debate conducted between and among scholars who shared realist assumptions, this scientific turn in U.S. postwar realism was also adopted by behavioralists, liberal institutionalists, and some peace researchers, all of whom drew on models from the natural sciences and from economics to build their theories. Seeking scientific respectability, international theorists turned to the natural sciences for their methodologies; many of them were also defending the autonomy of rational inquiry against totalitarian ideologies, this time of postwar Communism. Theories were defined as sets of logically related, ideally causal propositions, to be empirically tested or falsified in the Popperian sense. Scientific research programs were developed from realist assumptions about the international system serving as the “hard core.”⁵⁴ Although international theorists in this scientific tradition never sought the precision of Newton’s grand schemes of deterministic laws and inescapable forces, they did claim that the international system is more than the constant and regular behavior of its parts.⁵⁵ Structural theories, which are still popular today in the discipline, account for behavior by searching for causes. Structural theorists believe that events are governed by structures external to the actors themselves.⁵⁶ In all these endeavors, theorists in the scientific tradition have generally assumed the possibility, as well as the desirability, of conducting systematic and cumulative scientific research.

Borrowing from economics, game theory and rational-choice theory became popular for explaining the choices and optimizing behavior of self-interested states in an anarchical international system, as well as the means for interpreting the actions of foreign-policy decision makers. Given the dangers and unpredictability of such a system, theory building was motivated by the desire to control and predict.⁵⁷ The search for systematic inquiry

could, it was hoped, contribute to the effort of diminishing the likelihood of future conflict. Broadly defined as positivist, this turn to science represents a view of the creation of knowledge based on four assumptions: (1) a belief in the unity of science—that is, the same methodologies can apply in the natural and social worlds; (2) that there is a distinction between facts and values, with facts being neutral between theories; (3) that the social world has regularities like the natural world's; and (4) that the way to determine the truth of statements is by appeal to neutral facts or an empiricist epistemology.⁵⁸

During the 1970s the realist predominance in IR began to be challenged by scholars committed to different worldviews rather than to different epistemologies. Known as the interparadigm debate, these competing worldviews continue to define the major approaches to IR, at least for those who reject the newer critical orientations. In the 1970s the realist view of the world began to be challenged by two competing paradigms; first that of liberals, who questioned realism's state-centrism and focus on power and conflict. Liberal scholars pointed to the growth of transnational forces, economic interdependence, regional integration, and cooperation in areas where war appeared unlikely—trends and issues not amenable to realist analysis.⁵⁹ The second challenge came from scholars concerned with the global capitalist economy and its tendencies toward uneven growth and development. Many of these scholars employed Marxist or other sociological theories to try to understand the growing disparities between North and South.⁶⁰

While scholars in these three competing traditions—realism, liberalism, and Marxism—have continued to work within a social-scientific framework, they see a different reality, make different assumptions, and tell different stories about the world. Although each of these approaches is still evident in IR today, Marxism has suffered considerable decline, particularly since the end of the Cold War. Each paradigm has its own supporters, and there is little debate between them; the little that has taken place tends to be between realists and liberals.⁶¹

With the decline of Marxist approaches, which began in the 1980s and is attributable, in part, to the triumph of liberal capitalism and the demise of the socialist alternative, debate within these scientific traditions, particularly in the United States, became focused on that between its two most visible proponents, neorealism and neoliberalism, approaches that evolved from earlier realist and liberal paradigms, with the intention of making them

more “scientific.” Distinguishing neorealism from the classical realism of Morgenthau and others, Ole Waever claims that what divides them is neorealism’s concept of science expressed in the form of theory. In contrast to classical realism, which generalized about the nature of human life and philosophies of history, neorealism, in becoming more scientific, can say (to quote Waltz) only a small number of big and important things.⁶²

Likewise, neoliberalism underwent the same type of methodological transformation from its earlier form associated with liberal theories of integration and interdependence. Describing this as a “neo-neo synthesis” that has brought realists and liberals closer together in terms of their worldviews as well as their methodologies, Waever claims that both are searching for more limited and precise assertions that can be reduced to simple analytical statements amenable to tests and theory building.⁶³ Robert Keohane, a major proponent of neoliberalism, describes neoliberal research on international institutions as being rooted in exchange theory, which assumes scarcity and competition as well as rationality on the part of actors. Operating under similar assumptions about international anarchy as realists, neoliberals see greater possibilities for cooperation with institutions mitigating the conflictual effects of anarchy.⁶⁴

According to Charles Kegley, theoretical debate in IR since its advent as a discipline has ranged primarily within the boundaries of the competing worldviews of realism and liberalism. He goes on to argue that the most important topic (although, as he admits, not the only one) in international-relations theory in the 1990s was the challenge to the dominant realist paradigm that was mounted from diverse perspectives grounded in liberal or “idealist” theoretical orientations. Kegley’s “key cleavage” is reminiscent of the conventional reading of the first debate. While to many scholars, particularly U.S. scholars, this assessment of the field may seem accurate, for others, including feminists, this description appears excessively narrow.⁶⁵

In a review article that includes the Kegley volume, Richard Mansbach claims that if the debate between realists and liberals accurately reflected the state of the field in the 1990s, we should be wondering “whether our theories are relevant to an era of failed states, warring tribal and ethnic identities, hot money, environmental catastrophe, massive popular mobilization and participation, and the immobilism of governments everywhere.”⁶⁶ Similarly, Fred Halliday refers to what he terms the North American branch of IR as a search for scientific analysis that cannot provide a general or comprehensive methodology for any area of human behavior,

that of international relations included. He goes on to suggest that this search, which grew out of the behaviorist revolution, has been an unmitigated disaster for the discipline of international relations, as well as for its ability to influence and attract interested attention from outside the field.⁶⁷ These critics raise a fundamental challenge to conventional IR. By questioning the ontological and epistemological foundations of the field, they raise issues that are at the heart of the third debate.

The term *third debate* was articulated by Yosef Lapid, who in 1989 proclaimed a “post-positivist era” in international relations. Postpositivism, to use Lapid’s term, includes a variety of approaches—critical theory, historical sociology, and postmodernism, as well as most feminist approaches; all of them lie outside the approaches defined by the interparadigm debate, although critical theory’s intellectual roots lie in Marxism. All of them challenge the social-scientific methodologies of conventional IR. But their critiques of the discipline go well beyond methodological issues to debates over ontology and epistemology. While, as Lapid noted, many scholars have celebrated this multiplicity of approaches; others have disagreed, seeing “a discipline in disarray.”⁶⁸

Steve Smith claims that these newer approaches are more united by what they oppose than by what they agree on.⁶⁹ Their agreement centers on a skepticism about the value of social-scientific theories for understanding world politics. The third debate is, therefore, a dispute over the relative validity of what have been variously termed explanatory and constitutive theories or rationalist and reflectivist epistemologies.⁷⁰ According to Robert Keohane, who used the terms *rationalist* and *reflectivist* in his 1988 presidential address to the International Studies Association, rationalists postulate a “natural world,” outside theory, whose regularities can be observed by the theorist; rationalists accept a substantive conception of rationality—behavior that can be adjudged objectively to be optimally adapted to a situation. Keohane claims that rationalist theories have been used in fruitful ways in international relations to explain behavior, including the behavior of institutions.⁷¹

Reflectivists, on the other hand, see theory as constitutive of reality. They are concerned with understanding how we think about the world, and how ideas, including those of the theorist, help shape the world. Coming out of sociological rather than natural scientific approaches, they stress the role of social forces as well as the impact of cultural practices, norms and values that are not derived from calculations of interests as in rationalistic theories.

The word *debate* is probably a misnomer for the divide between these two positions. Because they disagree sharply about how to build knowledge, there is very little contact between explanatory and constitutive theorists.⁷² Not only do proponents of each position rarely talk to each other, the disparity of power between them makes the potential for genuine dialogue very difficult, particularly in the United States, where postpositivist approaches, including feminism, are rarely given much attention, and where there is little critical self-reflection by the mainstream on these epistemological issues.⁷³ Scholars in the scientific tradition tend to judge critical theorists according to positivist criteria for good scientific research, which makes other approaches, when judged in these terms, look less than adequate.

Feminist Intersections with IR

Feminist IR scholars, many of whom are skeptical of IR's scientific turn for the same reasons that postliberal feminists are skeptical of empiricism (discussed earlier), have tended to identify with the reflectivist side of the third debate. Even though scholars in the third debate have been slow to introduce gender into their analysis, this debate has opened up space for feminist perspectives in a way that previous debates did not. Most IR feminists firmly reject identification with either side of the first debate; even though IR scholars have frequently associated feminists with the idealist position, feminists see this association, like that between women and peace, as disempowering and likely to further reduce their being taken seriously.⁷⁴ Just as Schmidt noted that defining the realist/idealist divide as a debate that delegitimized the idealist position, current attempts to associate feminists with idealism has a similar effect on delegitimizing feminist perspectives. Moreover, as feminists have pointed out, the construction of the realist/idealist dichotomy is in itself implicitly gendered.⁷⁵

In her assessment of the potential for finding a space in IR for feminist theory in the realist and liberal approaches of the interparadigm debate, Sandra Whitworth has suggested that, to incorporate gender, theories must satisfy three criteria: (1) they must allow for the possibility of talking about the social construction of meaning; (2) they must discuss historical variability; and (3) they must permit theorizing about power in ways that uncover hidden power relations. Whitworth claims that, in terms of these three cri-

teria, there is little in realism that seems conducive to theorizing about gender.⁷⁶ The liberal paradigm that has sought to enlarge concerns beyond the state-centric, national-security focus of realism might seem more promising; however, according to Whitworth, it is ahistorical and denies the material bases of conflict, inequality, and power. Introducing women and gender to the liberal paradigm would also encounter the same problems noted by critics of liberal feminism. Attempts to “bring women into IR” feed into the mistaken assumption that they are not there in the first place. As Cynthia Enloe tells us, women (as well as marginalized people more generally) are highly involved in world politics, but existing power structures, institutionalized in the split between the public and private spheres and what counts as “important,” keep them from being heard.⁷⁷

Whitworth concludes by suggesting that critical theory is the most promising approach for feminist IR. Writing in 1989, Whitworth noted that the critical approach was, at that time, still quite underdeveloped; she also suggested that creating a space within critical theory would not launch gender analysis into the mainstream of IR, since critical theory is as much on the periphery as feminist analysis. While critical theory has become more developed and recognized in IR since 1989, in the United States at least, it remains on the margins.

Although not all IR feminists would identify themselves as critical theorists, most would define themselves as postpositivists in terms of the characterization of positivism outlined above. With a preference for hermeneutic, historically based, humanistic, and philosophical traditions of knowledge cumulation, rather than those based on the natural sciences, IR feminists are often skeptical of empiricist methodologies, for reasons mentioned above. While they are generally committed to the emancipatory potential of theory, which can help to understand structures of domination, particularly gender structures of inequality, they are suspicious of Enlightenment knowledge, which they claim has been based on knowledge about, and produced by, men—a claim that seems particularly true of the discipline of international relations.

In an introductory text, Steve Smith identifies five types of what he calls reflectivist or postpositivist theories: normative theory, feminist theory, historical sociology, critical theory, and postmodernism. He stresses that they are too different from each other to be added together and presented as one theory to rival the neo-neo synthesis.⁷⁸ However, all of them place IR in a broader interdisciplinary context; drawing on different intellectual traditions

such as philosophy, history, sociology, and political theory, many of these scholars come from outside international relations; many of them are also situated outside the United States.

While many authors in these various traditions remain silent on gender issues, these postpositivist, historical, and normative orientations are compatible with many of the orientations of postliberal feminists. Yet as Marysia Zalewski emphasizes, it is not easy to apply one disparate and large body of theory to another. It entails taking into account a whole area conventionally defined as invisible or as part of the private realm and, therefore, out of the scope of conventional political analysis. A key task of feminist analysis is to extend the scope of the agenda rather than to answer questions about what is already on the agenda.⁷⁹ Feminists also emphasize that, rather than introducing gender into IR, they are revealing how gender is already embedded in the theory and practice of international relations. I shall now suggest ways in which feminist perspectives have found space within these various post-positivist traditions to expand the agenda and bring to light existing gender hierarchies. Here I emphasize epistemological concerns; in later chapters I will discuss how this knowledge is used to expand the agenda of world politics and deepen our understanding of global issues.

Normative Theory Normative theory began to gain attention in the 1980s. Although it had been an important influence on the early discipline, it was subsequently submerged under realism's portrayal of amoral states and positivism's quest for the separation of facts and values. Addressing itself to the morality, or immorality, of war, as well as some of the issues that emerged on the international relations agenda in the 1970s, such as economic development, inequality, and distributive justice, normative theory evaluates the moral dimensions of world politics. Many of its leading theorists come out of traditions of political philosophy and international law rather than international relations.⁸⁰ World-order theorists postulate a better world and then investigate how progress toward its realization might be achieved.⁸¹ A major debate in normative theory is whether we can postulate the existence of a world society and talk about justice and democracy in a universal sense, or whether society is contained within states that then form boundaries of moral obligation.⁸² Communitarians argue that state boundaries define the political community within which discussions about justice and obligation can take place, whereas cosmopolitans argue for the need to think about justice in universal terms.⁸³

Since women own a very small share of the world's wealth and are frequently discriminated against in the articulation of human rights and through cultural practices, theories of justice are an important issue in feminist theory, although one usually addressed by feminist political philosophers, rather than IR feminists. Western theories of universal justice, built on an abstract concept of rationalism, have generally been constructed out of a definition of human nature that excludes or diminishes women. Feminists assert that the universalism they defend is defined by identifying the experience of a special group (elite men) as paradigmatic of human beings as a whole.⁸⁴

Feminist attempts to articulate a theory of justice that steers between the pitfalls of a false universalism (which in reality is based on a masculine concept of justice and the experiences of certain men) and cultural relativism (which denies any possibility of articulating generalizable standards for moral behavior) has been difficult. The debate over difference in recent feminist theory has made this an especially crucial issue. That women have been excluded from definitions of human rights is undeniable. Yet basing appeals for justice for women on false universals is also problematic. A sensitivity to difference, but an awareness of the need for a "community of conversation across cultures," in which conversational partners are given equal rights of participation, is one constructive approach to a feminist conception of justice.⁸⁵ I return to this issue when I discuss human rights in chapter 4.

Historical Sociology Historical sociology examines the ways in which societies develop through history. Rather than taking the state as given and unproblematic, as neorealists and neoliberals do, this tradition tries to understand how certain states have developed, looking at both internal and external factors.⁸⁶ IR feminists would agree that state formation and the development of states must be examined for evidence of patriarchal structures and the effects that they may have had on foreign-policy and security-seeking behaviors.⁸⁷ Like historical sociologists, IR feminists challenge liberals' assertions that the state is a neutral arbiter; Spike Peterson and Anne Runyan, for example, claim that while historical sociologists have articulated the coercive dynamics of states, their continued omission of women produces inaccurate and inadequate accounts. Peterson and Runyan argue that it is not possible to understand power relations without understanding the absence of women from elite decision-making positions in states, as well as the gen-

dered constructions of public and private that support these exclusions.⁸⁸ These patriarchal customs were enshrined in early state formations and have been reproduced through history through a reconfiguration of legitimating ideologies.⁸⁹ These issues, too, will be pursued further in chapter 4.

Critical Theory Critical theory played a central role in motivating the third debate. Critical theory comes out of Marxism as well as Hegelian and Kantian Enlightenment traditions.⁹⁰ Like historical sociologists, critical theorists examine the historical development of society with the intent of understanding various forms of domination in order to overcome them. Critical theory views the prevailing order of social and political relations as a historical production that must be explained. In order to explain injustice, it is necessary to understand the world as it is. In this sense, critical theory accepts the realist description of world politics, but it seeks to change it. Critical theorist Robert Cox uses a hermeneutic approach that conceives of social structures as having an intersubjective existence; however, making the claim that structures are socially constructed does not deny that they have real concrete effects: humans *act* as if the structures are real.⁹¹

This is quite a different concept of theory from positivism, and it is one that many IR feminists find compatible with their orientations. Feminists claim that gender structures are socially constructed, historically variable, and upheld through power relations that legitimize them. Like critical theorists, most feminists would claim an emancipatory interest in seeking to overcome these structures of domination. Most feminists would also agree with critical theorists that knowledge reflects certain interests of the society from which it is produced; in IR, knowledge has generally been produced by and for men, particularly elite men. Feminists are particularly concerned to examine and explain why certain kinds of knowledge have been left out of the discipline. Like many critical theorists, they, too, question the subject matter of conventional IR. Often focused on the lives of people at the margins of global politics, they raise issues not normally considered part of the discipline and ask questions about them in new ways. As Sandra Harding tells us, an important task of feminist theory is to make strange what has previously appeared familiar, or to challenge us to question what has hitherto appeared as “natural.”⁹² A reexamination of the meaning of security in chapter 2 is an example of how feminists are expanding the subject matter of IR.

Many IR feminists would also agree with Robert Cox’s famous definition of critical theory, which he contrasts with what he calls problem-solving

theory, a type of theory that takes the world as it finds it and implicitly accepts the prevailing order as its framework. The purpose of problem solving is to make prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized work smoothly, by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble.⁹³ Since feminist theorists believe that the world is characterized by socially constructed gender hierarchies that are detrimental to women, and since they are committed to finding ways to eliminate these hierarchies, they are unlikely to take such an epistemological stance.

In contrast, Cox claims that critical theory does not take institutions and social/power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing. In other words, critical theory stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about; it can, therefore, be a guide to strategic action for bringing about an alternative order.⁹⁴ Agreeing with Cox's assertion that theory is always for someone and for some purpose, the goal of feminist approaches is similar to that of critical theory as defined by Cox. Like critical theorists, feminists are concerned with context and historical process and with "how we construct, rather than dis-cover, our world(s)."⁹⁵

Postmodernism According to Chris Brown, *critical theory* and *postmodernism* are ambiguous terms. He suggests that postmodern theorists are also critical theorists, in the broad sense of the term, since they, too, challenge the existing order.⁹⁶ Like critical theorists, they, too, see a crisis in Western thought, and they share a suspicion of rationality and science. Postmodernists, however, are more willing to abandon the Enlightenment project; therefore, they criticize the foundationalism of critical theory.

It is particularly hard to categorize postmodern theory; indeed, postmodernists reject any notion of a unified approach, and attempts to define it are contentious issues even among its adherents. Although feminist theory has had an uneasy relationship with postmodernism (discussed earlier), IR feminists and postmodern IR share many assumptions. Indeed, many IR feminists can be placed at the intersection of critical and postmodern approaches; their unwillingness to give up the emancipatory project of critical theory—an unwillingness shared by certain IR theorists who might define themselves as postmodern—places them at this intersection. Christine Sylvester's text *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* takes much from postmodernism, but notes the dangers of sacrificing women as the

primary concern; for this reason, she advocates a “postmodern feminism.” According to Sylvester, “postmodern feminism is emerging as a position of negotiation between standpoint feminism, with its conviction that real women exist and lean toward practical-moral imperatives, and feminist postmodernist skepticisms.”⁹⁷ Sylvester advocates a position that recognizes many local standpoints and identities and suggests an empathetic conversational politics.

Like critical theory, postmodernism claims that knowledge is produced in certain people’s interests. Postmodernism believes that the positivist separation between knowledge and values, knowledge and reality, and knowledge and power must be questioned.⁹⁸ In international relations, this requires an investigation of the way some issues are framed as “serious” or “real,” such as national security, while others are seen as unimportant or subjects for another discipline—an issue of great importance for IR feminists, as discussed above. Postmodernists, like critical theorists and feminists, aver that knowledge is shaped by and constructed in the service of existing power relations. Thus they are skeptical of positivist claims about the neutrality of facts and objectivity.

Many feminists would agree. In her critique of the natural sciences, Evelyn Fox Keller asserts that modern Enlightenment science has incorporated a belief system that equates objectivity with masculinity and a set of cultural values that simultaneously elevates what is defined as scientific and what is defined as masculine.⁹⁹ Throughout most of the history of the modern West, men have been seen as the knowers; what has counted as legitimate knowledge, in both the natural and social sciences, has generally been knowledge based on the lives of men in the public sphere. The separation of the public and private spheres, reinforced by the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, has resulted in the legitimization of what are perceived as the “rational” activities in the former, while devaluing the “natural” activities of the latter.¹⁰⁰

To uncover this relationship between knowledge and power, postmodernism has drawn on the notion of genealogy—a style of historical thought that exposes and registers the significance of these power/knowledge relations. The goal of genealogy is to write counterhistories that can bring to light processes of exclusion. Claiming that there can be no one true story or historical narrative, genealogy situates knowledge in a particular time and place and demonstrates how it is constructed from particular perspectives. In international relations, postmodernists have demonstrated how particular

representations of international relations take hold and produce political effect. For example, R. B. J. Walker claims that standard interpretations of Machiavelli, as the initiator of the realist tradition, legitimize certain political practices that gain a sense of permanency, practices that Machiavelli's own insistence on impermanence and contingency would have denied. Walker and certain IR feminists have also noted Machiavelli's gendered construction of *fortuna* and *virtu* that place the feminine *fortuna* as a representation of wild and untamed spaces of anarchy against which masculine *virtu* must prevail.¹⁰¹ As Runyan and Peterson suggest, the association of "woman" with unruly nature has a long history in Western political theory.¹⁰² In this sense, "woman," like Machiavelli's *fortuna*, is representative of the problem of anarchy in realist international relations.

Walker and other postmodernists have also questioned realism's reading of Hobbes's state of nature, asking why, when Hobbes himself refused to make such distinctions, the phrase has become associated with distinctions between community on the inside and anarchy on the outside. IR feminists have questioned realism's reliance on state-of-nature myths on the grounds that it introduces gender bias that extends into IR theory.¹⁰³

Importantly, postmodernism engages in the deconstruction of conceptual oppositions. It questions binary hierarchical oppositions in which one of two terms is privileged over the other. This kind of deconstruction has been used to question prevailing interpretations of international relations. For example, Richard Ashley questions the conventional reading of the anarchy problematic, which depends on an opposition between sovereignty and anarchy, where sovereignty is seen as stable and a legitimizer of state practices and anarchy is viewed as dangerous and problematic.¹⁰⁴ IR feminists also problematize the defining dichotomies of the field that are reinforced through an association with the masculine/feminine gender dichotomy.¹⁰⁵ They question how they serve to naturalize other forms of superordination in world politics. For example, boundaries between self and other, realism and idealism, order and anarchy, all of which evoke gendered connotations, serve as legitimators of national-security practices.

I have shown, through this chapter's discussion of debates in both the disciplines of IR and feminism, that there are many kinds of feminist IR that have affinities with a variety of critical IR approaches. I have suggested why they tend to be situated on the critical side of the third debate. Importantly, however, they are rooted in a long tradition of feminist theory—for as Re-

becca Grant has claimed, while the newest theories in IR are radical, they come with no guarantee of being feminist.¹⁰⁶ I have also suggested that, just as postliberal feminists have developed standpoint and postmodern epistemologies, which they see as better able to understand women's subordination than liberal empiricism, IR feminists have similarly identified with postpositivist epistemologies in IR, which they feel can provide better ways to understand the gendered structures and practices of world politics. Yet, as Spike Peterson suggests, a rejection of positivist empiricism does not mean repudiating empirical study.¹⁰⁷ Rather than rejecting systematic inquiry or empirical research, a postpositivist critique involves examining boundaries, frameworks, and research questions; it involves asking how and why these forms came to be and how they reproduce the status quo. Moving beyond these critiques, IR feminists are beginning to develop their own research programs—extending the boundaries of the discipline, asking different questions in new ways, and listening to unfamiliar voices from the margins. While these new frameworks and questions appear strange to the conventional discipline of IR, they are ones that feminists are using as they begin to build their own research programs—programs that they hope will lead to new understandings of world politics. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, these investigations are shedding new light on traditional topics as well as taking IR feminists on journeys that are far from the conventional discipline.