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CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER AND POLITICS

Feminism and Quantitative Methods in International Relations

Feminist Methods in International Relations

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All empiricists struggle with aspects of methodology at one point or another in their research. Moments of indecision with critical import for a research agenda occur at all stages of the research process, but particularly during the formulation of the research question, conceptualization of the project and its key variables, determination of the research design, selection of data collection methods, deployment of data analysis methods, and the publication of findings. Because feminist scholarship is rooted in a historical relationship between social movements and academe, because feminist empiricists work in concepts (gender, gender equality, state feminism, etc.) that are theoretically and essentially contested, and because data on women and gender norms and gender disaggregated data have not been generally part of public data collection efforts, feminist empiricists have often been methodological pioneers. From 2003 through 2005, Maria Stern, Jacqui True, and I arranged a series of conference panels in which feminist methodologists in international relations analyzed the methodological import of the challenges they faced throughout the research process. This Critical Perspectives section continues such feminist methodological reflections with three quantitative feminist IR scholars reflecting on their methodology. Laura Parisi, Clair Apodaca, and Mary Caprioli have done feminist IR work that uses quantitative analytical tools. Each is differently informed by feminism. In these scholars we see different theoretical feminisms at work, yet the similarities in their struggles, particularly around data and concerns about the reception of their work in the field, are interesting as well. A final essay reflects on the import of feminist empirical work, even work that utilizes a feminist theory that is not the theorist's, in the development of feminist theory and on the role of theory in strengthening empirical work. Together, these essays address the role

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of feminist theory in informing conventional positivist-oriented research and the role of positivist-oriented research on feminist questions in informing feminist theory, even feminist theory that challenges the epistemological commitments of positivism.

The Numbers Do(n't) Always Add Up: Dilemmas in Using Quantitative Research Methods in Feminist IR Scholarship

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How might one reconcile feminist international relations theorizing with quantitative methods, if they can be reconciled at all? This question has occupied a central place in the field of feminist international relations theory[1] since its inception, and while it is not my intention to rehash it in its entirety here,[2] my story sheds light on the difficulties that feminist IR scholars may face in choosing the quantitative route. My essay highlights these conundrums from different stages of the research process: formulation of the research question, selection of a research method, usage of quantitative methods, and the dissemination of the findings. I conclude with questions for further consideration.

My discussion is informed by a number of different vantage points. My Ph.D. is in political science and I have been trained in international relations — both mainstream and feminist or conventional feminist, as Mary Caprioli (2004) refers to it — as well as in quantitative methods. Nevertheless, my institutional home for much of my career has been in Women's Studies departments, where I regularly work with colleagues and students from many different disciplines, such as english, biology, sociology, history, and film making. I am rarely recognized in Women's Studies as a "feminist IR scholar" since this identification really has theoretical and perhaps methodological meaning only in the field of international relations. Working in this context has allowed me to reflect

1. This has also been a key concern of feminist economists (Barker 2006; Jackson 2002).
2. See, for example, Tickner (2006); Caprioli (2004).

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