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What, and Where, is Feminist Security Studies?

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Abstract: This piece looks to backwards and forwards to what feminist work in security was, is, and could be, pairing a historical sociology with a forward-looking view of the future(s) of the field. It begins with thinking about feminist studies of security before FSS as a foundation for the discussion, then traces different claims to core identities of FSS. It then looks at divergent strands of FSS, as well as omissions and critiques. Rather than looking to reconcile those different accounts, it asks what can be taken from them to engage potential futures for FSS, and its contribution to feminisms and/or studies of security.

Key words: gender, feminism, security, Feminist Security Studies

Introduction

[Feminist Security Studies looks to] challenge the assumed irrelevance of gender, ... [to] argue that gender is not a subsection of Security Studies to be compartmentalized or briefly considered as a side issue. Rather, feminists argue that gender is conceptually, empirically, and normatively essential to studying international security. As such, accurate, rigorous, and ethical scholarship cannot be produced without taking account of women's presence in or the gendering of international politics.¹

When I first started thinking and writing about international security from a feminist perspective, the term “feminist security studies” was not, to my knowledge, used as a term of art. That is not to say that feminist scholars did not study international security – they did, perhaps in a more comprehensive way than many of us do now. But it is to say that feminist work on security predates (and will hopefully remain past) the use of the term Feminist Security Studies (from here on FSS for short). This piece looks to backwards and forwards to what feminist work in security was, is, and could be, pairing a historical sociology with a forward-looking view of the future(s) of the field. It begins with thinking about feminist studies of security *before* FSS as a foundation for the discussion, then traces different claims to core identities of FSS. It then looks at divergent strands of FSS, as well as omissions and critiques. Rather than looking to reconcile those different accounts,

1 Sjoberg 2009, 186.

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it asks what can be taken from them to engage potential futures for FSS, and its contribution to feminisms and/or studies of security.

Feminist Studies of Security Before FSS

Feminist work came relatively late to International Relations (IR) and political science, compared to many of the other social sciences and humanities, as well as to the ‘real world’ of global politics. It is not, then, just that feminist work on security in IR predates FSS in IR – it is that feminist work on security predates feminist work in IR.

In fact, I think it is a fair argument to make that feminist scholarship, and feminist advocacy, is something that is fundamentally about security. Standard dictionary definitions of security suggest that it is about the degree of resistance to, or protection from, harm. Early feminisms in the 19th and early 20th centuries that looked to change women’s legal inequalities, particularly their (in)ability to vote in electoral democracies and their (lack of) access to particular property, educational, and employment rights were fundamentally about resisting the distribution of harm (denial of opportunity) on the basis of sex. What is commonly called ‘second wave’ feminism in the United States and Western Europe – a movement that maintained a commitment to legal equality but broadened feminisms to question the traditional roles of women in social and political life, and critique inherited gender roles – did so with an interest in redressing harms that were happening to women as a result of, and in relation to, gender norms that operated to structure their lives. What is commonly called ‘third wave’ feminism includes those interests, and increases attention to intersectional harms – gender subordination interlinked with class, race, sexuality, and nationality-based discrimination – again, interested in protection from, and putting an end to, harm.

There are both strategic and intellectual reasons not to treat feminism as itself a theory and practice of security – not least the well-documented potentially harmful effects of *securitization*.² *Securitization* – naming something as security – can have the effect of *militarization* – changing the traditional categories of security without changing the traditional tools (militaries) used to address what is understood as security. Associating *feminisms* as movements interested in both providing and analyzing the potential to provide security has the impact of, correctly or not, associating those feminisms with militarisms, given the standing associations between security and militarisms.

Still, it is important to pay attention to the role that protection from harm for women and bodily security regardless of gender have in the constitution of many feminisms. This is all the more true of the entry of feminist theorizing into disciplinary IR inquiry. Ann Tickner’s book, widely understood to be the first singly-authored explicitly feminist IR book, was called *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global*

2 Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998.

Security.³ In other words, security was the predication of Tickner's application of feminist theory to international relations. Tickner's book brought together a combination of her training in development studies, her readings in feminist philosophy of science,⁴ feminist peace theorizing,⁵ and IR theorizing on war and peace,⁶ political economy,⁷ and environmental politics.⁸ Spike Peterson's *Gendered States* was, in significant part, a survey of the ways in which the influence of gender in global politics constitutes the ways that states provide, or claim to provide, security to their citizens.⁹ Many early works of feminist IR contained a significant amount of analysis of the subject matter that would be traditionally understood in disciplinary IR as 'security,' without the label "Feminist Security Studies."¹⁰

Two features of this work are of interest to me for the purposes of this piece. The first feature of the work is the extent to which it blended security concerns with political economy, human rights, and environmental concerns. For example, Tickner identified conflict, economics, and the environment as together three essential aspects of "achieving global security."¹¹ Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* spends significant effort discussing what we might now term the political economy of security (the ways that militarization shapes economic relations) and the securitization of political economy (the ways in which economic patterns are understood to be a part of national and/or personal security).¹² Nira Yuval-Davis talked about the ways that state security relied on women as biological and cultural reproducers of state/national identity¹³, a discourse which developed in following research into discussions of feminized productive and reproductive labor.¹⁴ The feminist discussion of the personal being political, in Enloe's words, "the personal is international and the international is personal,"¹⁵ produced with it theorizing intersections that may have previously been invisible or understudied in IR theorizing – links between the center of global politics and the margins,¹⁶ links between political economy, personal security, and international security,¹⁷ and links between gender, race, and class in security.¹⁸ All of

3 Tickner 1992.

4 See: Keller 1985; Harding 1986.

5 See: Reardon 1985; Elshtain 1985.

6 See: Morgenthau 1948; Waltz 1959.

7 See: Keohane 1984.

8 See: Haas 1990.

9 Peterson 1992.

10 See: Whitworth 1997; Sylvester 1994; Pettman 1996.

11 Tickner 1992.

12 Enloe 1989.

13 Yuval-Davis 1997.

14 See: Peterson 2010.

15 Enloe 2004.

16 Moon 1997.

17 Enloe 2010.

18 Yuval-Davis 1997.

these contributions were made to feminist security studies (and to feminisms and to security studies) before the nomenclature ‘Feminist Security Studies’ was widely used.

The second feature of this work is that, when it was recognized in broader disciplinary IR, it was rarely recognized *as* a contribution to the study of security. Exceptions exist, certainly – for example, Steve Smith’s typology of the parts of Critical Security Studies mentions Feminist Security Studies as a type.¹⁹ Still, the journal *Security Studies*, for example, did not publish the words women or gender until well into the 21st century, and *International Security* did so irregularly, and usually without reference to the feminist IR work that paid attention to security. Work in Security Studies generally functioned as if feminist work in the field did not exist, and the recognition of feminist work in IR, when it happened, usually treated it as a paradigmatic theoretical approach to theorizing global politics – realism, liberalism, constructivism, feminism, etc. As a result, feminist contributions to thinking about security in global politics were often speaking to, intentionally or unintentionally, each other – especially about the meaning and dynamics of security.

The Advent of (the term) Feminist Security Studies

It was this second feature – the lack of acknowledgment of feminist work on security *as* work on security – that encouraged me to start using the term ‘Feminist Security Studies’ as a term of art. After trying and failing at a consulting assignment of outlining feminist contributions to the field of Security Studies (so named by my then-employer, not me), I started wondering why there had been so little dialogue among these research programs – particularly, why ‘Security Studies’ included so little feminism. I realized that although feminists had been doing important research about gender, war, and conflict for decades, they had been adopted into Security Studies. As I have explained before, then, “I used the term ‘Feminist Security Studies’ with the explicit intent of convincing people in Security Studies that feminist work matters to their research”²⁰. My use of the term was outward-looking: there existed a field of Security Studies, and I thought that gender-based work should be an important part of it. Accordingly, in 2006, I proposed a special issue of the journal *Security Studies*²¹ and a related workshop at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association.

My thinking at the time was looking for a way to make visible the ways that feminist work not only critiqued but reconstructed, reconstituted, and transformed the subject matter of Security Studies and the methods that the field could avail itself of to do the work of studying security in global politics. Following Ann Tickner’s critique that the arena of “power and conflict” in global politics is “a man’s world” where gender analysis is often

19 Smith 2005.

20 Sjoberg 2015.

21 *Ibid.*

met with “awkward silences and miscommunications,”²² I looked (with Spike Peterson) to address “androcentric accounts that render women and gender relations invisible”²³ head-on. My use of the term was “with the goal of improving the quality and quantity of conversations between feminist Security Studies, and Security Studies more generally, in order to demonstrate the importance of gender analysis to the study of international security, and to expand the feminist research program in Security Studies.”²⁴

Other uses of the term around that same time and even before were less engaged with the disciplinary juggernaut of Security Studies and more interested in what feminisms thought about and/or added to thinking about security in the global political arena. For example, Jasmina Husanovic and Patricia Owens suggest that a feminist/security studies would be an interesting exploration and/or intervention: “at this stage what a ‘feminist security studies’ ...might actually look like is unclearperhaps the first thing is to provide a limiting, negative check on erroneous deeds.”²⁵ This framed a ‘feminist security studies’ less a term of art and more as an ethical orientation towards (gendered) wrongs in the world. Lene Hansen also describes “feminist security studies” as an orientation interested in security from the “bottom up.”²⁶ My view is that either an inwardly or outwardly focused use of the term and/or grouping Feminist Security Studies can take account of these orientations – and has.

For example, my initial description of FSS described it as recognizing a relationship between the knower and the known, and sharing four common understandings of what international security is and how it works within feminist research on security.²⁷ Those four common understandings were that security should be understood broadly, that gendered values are constitutive of norms in the security arena, that gender plays a broad and diverse role in constituting security theory and practice, and that omitting gender analysis or gender-aware practice is *gendered* rather than *gender neutral*.²⁸ My interest was to gather the insights of feminist work on security that was neglected by Security Studies at the time, and push them into conversations with Security Studies by naming the field in which feminists worked on security as within Security Studies.

Others who used the term early in its popularization as a term of art had different orientations of what they looked to accomplish with its use. Like my use, other scholars were looking to create spaces and engineer conversations across scholarship that was constituted as a field by the use of the term. That said, many of them aimed at different conver-

22 Tickner 1988; 1997.

23 Peterson 1992, 197.

24 Sjoberg 2009, 188.

25 Husanovic and Owens 2000, 425, 434.

26 Hansen 2000, 703; citing Tickner 1997, 628.

27 Sjoberg 2009, 195.

28 *Ibid.*, 200–202.

sations. Annick Wibben, for example, aimed her discussion of FSS towards “a narrative approach,” where gendered narratives of security are “a primary way of making sense of the world around us.”²⁹ Wibben’s FSS is oriented more towards feminist scholars and critical work in Security Studies; her use of the term is more inward-looking than mine is. Laura Shepherd positions FSS as outside of, but engaged with, IR/Security Studies, as she argues that it “offers an important corrective to the foundational assumptions of IR, which themselves can perpetuate the very instances of violence that they seek to redress.”³⁰ This orientation and deployment has a different purpose and direction than my use of the term, but still has a significant amount of commonality with what I think FSS is, contains, and strives to do in research terms. Shepherd goes on to describe what she sees as “the core insights of feminist security studies” – “the centrality of the human subject, the importance of particular configurations of masculinity and femininity, and the gendered conceptual framework that underpins the discipline of IR.”³¹ The point of FSS, Shepherd argues, is “to envisage a rather different politics of the global.”³²

Whatever these different orientations of the beginning of the use of the term, and the self-understanding of the field, Feminist Security Studies, both the general research-orientation and the specific use of the term have caught on. In terms of traditional disciplinary IR/Security Studies, in 2009, I found that “less than forty out of more than five thousand articles in the top five security journals over the last twenty years explicitly address gender as a major substantive theme,”³³ including in my analysis *International Security*, *Security Studies*, *Issues in International Security*, *International Security Review*, and *Security Dialogue* from 1986–2006. More than half of those articles had been in *Security Dialogue* in the 21st century, and at the time *Security Studies* had never, in my detection, published the word ‘woman,’ even incidentally. Since then, many journals that Security Studies scholars see as their logical publication outlets, including the five journals above, but also the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *International Interactions*, and a wide variety of generalist journals, have published work explicitly engaging gender and security, some of which self-identifies with the FSS label.

The use of the FSS label has also proliferated. In addition to a subfield and/or intellectual orientation, FSS has become a Facebook group with hundreds of members, and a prominent stream of panels at annual meetings of the International Studies Association each year since 2008. Before 1990, I find no uses of the term “feminist security studies” in print. Between 1990 and 2006, I find less than twenty scholarly works that use that phrase. Between 2007 and 2015, I find 380 published uses of that phrase. Similar increases can be found on syllabi and on conference programs. A FSS – perhaps both as a subfield of feminist IR and as a subfield of Security Studies – has come into existence over the last

29 Wibben 2010.

30 Shepherd 2009, 209.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

33 Sjoberg 2009, 187.

decade, and grown quickly. Still, what that field is and will be is far from decided, and what it *should* be is up for significant debate as well.

Struggling with Feminist Security Studies

As FSS has become more popular and more widely adhered to within (feminist) IR, there have arisen a number of debates and concerns around what FSS is, what it will be, and what it should be – debates about what it means or should mean to do feminist analysis in/of security. This section will briefly outline three major debates. I do so not to suggest that there are only three major debates, or that the voices cited herein are representative either of the field or of these disagreements within it. Instead, I mean to highlight some areas of disagreement that I think are field-constitutive, and outline my reading of each of these disagreements to say something, ultimately, on my opinion of how the field could or should move forward. First, I discuss concerns over whether FSS is and/or should be oriented towards disciplinary IR. Second, I discuss concerns over how representative FSS is, either in terms of the scholars who participate in the endeavor or the research that those scholars produce. Third, I go over what is gained and what is lost by what evolved as a bifurcation of FSS and Feminist Political Economy (FPE).

Feminist Security Studies and Security Studies/IR

As I mentioned above, my initial interest in FSS was to reach out from feminist IR work concerned with security to disciplinary Security Studies/IR. This move itself, even if it had not had unanticipated effects, is not without its political contestation in the field, both before the genesis of a subfield of FSS and after. In fact, even some early work in feminist IR suggested that there was a “danger” in feminists’ “uncritical acceptance” of the methods, boundaries, ideas, and subject matters of IR as traditionally understood.³⁴ Sarah Brown made the argument that attempts at engagement from feminist IR to a masculinist disciplinary IR might risk losing feminist IR’s critical edge, especially when it came to a political concern for people at the margins of global politics.³⁵ While I do not think it would be fair to think of either my or others’ mainstream-facing work as “uncritical acceptance,” Brown’s arguments about the intellectual and political risks of engagement are worth considering, and have been repeated more recently in nuanced ways.

For example, Annick Wibben argued that FSS should not be mainstream-facing, putting forth what she characterized as “a plea to recognize the dangers involved in establishing FSS [feminist security studies] as a subfield of security studies when feminist aims and the scope of their concerns continue to explode its confines at every turn.”³⁶ In other words, Wibben was arguing that FSS cannot be contained by, or in, disciplinary IR be-

34 Brown 1988.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Wibben 2010.

cause, at its best, FSS breaks the rules and boundaries of its positivist, statist, and masculinist modes of inquiry. As such, Wibben argues that feminists should “move far beyond a broadening and deepening of security studies toward an opening” which would involve “continual, radical, and deliberate critique” “true to feminist methodological and political commitments.”³⁷ The most fundamental part of this need to remain distinct, in Wibben’s view, is the question of pushing the parameters of inquiry. As such, Wibben urges, “feminist security scholars cannot let traditionalists have the uncontested say about what security refers to, especially because security is so powerful when evoked.”³⁸

I have never thought that even the most mainstream-facing FSS work should, or needs to, let the traditionalists define what security is. Even in my *Security Studies* article, I suggest that one of the key tenets of FSS, however facing, is broadening and deepening of the presumed subject and object of security.³⁹ Still, Wibben’s suggestion is that there is a fundamental disconnect between that and more radical work. I think Carol Cohn’s discussion of this, as a problem of orientation, is a useful framework to think through this contestation.⁴⁰ When thinking about Feminist Security Studies as a term of art, Cohn makes the argument that “there is – potentially at least – an inherent ambiguity in the label itself, related to which two of the three words one sees as most closely linked.”⁴¹ In other words, Cohn is interested in whether FSS is ‘feminist security’ studies or feminist ‘security studies.’ The first etymological juxtaposition is one that implies that FSS is the study of a feminist notion of security, while the second implies that FSS is feminist perspectives on a predefined notion of ‘security studies.’

Perhaps, in this schema, neither Wibben’s approach nor mine fit perfectly into one category or the other, but Wibben’s might correspond most closely to the ‘feminist security’ studies approach and mine might correspond most closely to the feminist ‘security studies’ approach. Cohn sees potential benefits to both approaches. Addressing the FSS where ‘feminist’ modifies ‘security studies,’ Cohn muses:

Is the term *Feminist Security Studies* meant to imply that the central causal dynamics underlying the main preoccupations within (conventional) security studies need to be rethought? And would a fruitful transformation occur by bringing feminist analysis to the field? Again in this case, the boundaries of the conventional self-definition of the field would be accepted, but the suggestion is that (at least some of) the central assumptions and analytics have been wrong. If that is the case, then does “Feminist” modifying “Security Studies” aspire not to be a subfield but a *school*? Or even a paradigm shift?⁴²

37 *Ibid.*

38 Wibben 2010.

39 Sjoberg 2009.

40 Cohn 2011.

41 *Ibid.*, 582

42 *Ibid.*

Cohn also explores the utility of thinking about “feminist security” as the subject of FSS. She suggests that, in this construction, “Feminist Security’ becomes the subject about which studies are created.”⁴³ While, in Cohn’s view, ‘feminist security’ “is a term without obvious meaning,”⁴⁴ it holds some critical potential as a concept to be deployed. Among other suggestions, Cohn argues that “the term feminist security [might] reference the feminist realization that security cannot come from some fantasized, isolated, completely autonomous and self-sufficient, armed independence, but rather is always, inevitably, relational, based in interdependence.”⁴⁵ In other words, this sort of FSS might reorient security studies to think about the very constitution of the concept of security (and therefore of the field that studies security) differently.

At the end of the day, Cohn eschews picking between these two readings of the word-pairings in FSS. Instead, she suggests that “the question is not so much ‘What is Feminist Security Studies as a field?’ but ‘What are the intellectual and political commitments that motivate our research, and how do they shape not only our scholarship but what we choose to name it?’”⁴⁶ In these terms, Cohn, like Wibben, worries that “I cannot make progress on the problems that I am most interested in ameliorating within the confines of security studies”⁴⁷ and therefore resigns not to spend much energy on engagement personally. Still, Cohn, contra Wibben, chooses not to make that judgment for others, she does not “think others should necessarily make the same decision,”⁴⁸ and expresses respect for those who try to engage the powerful field of Security Studies. Rather than discourage such inquiry, Cohn urges reflexivity in it: “my own experience of trying to have an impact on a mainstream field has made me painfully aware that trying to make a feminist contribution to a (nonfeminist) field can distort”⁴⁹ both research questions and the management of research effort.

At the core of this debate is whether, and how, FSS should relate to the subfield of IR generally understood as “Security Studies” (which is largely though not exclusively defined by the American mainstream) and IR more generally. To me, both my original position, which was discipline-facing in a way meant to be instrumental and temporary, but did not make those qualifications, and the position that FSS should *not* engage with the discipline more broadly are *both* over-limiting. While I agree with Wibben that FSS should not “accept the existing ontological, epistemological, and methodological boundaries of the field” and should see gender as “transformational of traditional war studies,” I also think that ignoring the narrowness and power of existing disciplinary structures does not make

43 Cohn 2011, 582.

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*, 583.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*

them go away.⁵⁰ At the end of the day, then, *my* FSS will be engaged with the discipline, though always carefully staking the ground of feminist politics and feminist methodology and explicitly dealing the tradeoffs that engagement can bring about. I think such an FSS is crucial to opening up political space for feminist inquiry in IR/Security Studies, as well as professional space for it to be taken seriously as research work.

I also do not think, though, that *my* FSS has to be everyone's FSS – in fact, I think FSS would be significantly poorer intellectually if it restricted itself to the attempt to come up with one narrative of security, one direction of scholarship, and/or one understanding of its place in the discipline(s) in which it is situated. Instead, I think there should be FSS work that is IR-facing, FSS work that is gender-studies-facing, FSS work that is policy-world-facing, FSS work that faces the margins of global politics, and FSS work that is internally referential. What this variety of work would/could/does share is an explicitly feminist orientation – an interest in calling out and redressing gender subordination in global politics. Its variety provides, where uniformity could not, intellectual and political translatability to a number of different audiences for a number of different purposes. If FSS is either to create disciplinary space (on one side of this debate) or achieve intellectually transformative aims (on the other side), it does so more effectively flanked by a wide variety of approaches which show its flexibility, its broad applicability, and its durability.

Feminist Security Studies and Representation

Early work in feminist IR emphasized a political commitment to paying attention to the margins of global politics, both in terms of the location of women and at any site where disempowerment is to be found.⁵¹ Much of feminist IR work, then, has been what those in gender studies might call intersectional: focusing on the intersection of gender, race, nationality, and class in global politics.⁵² This intersectional work has a strong component of postcolonial feminism⁵³, looking at the ways that dynamics in global politics have been and remain gendered, raced, and colonialist. Much of this postcolonial analysis, like much of the feminist analysis of IR before the term FSS, explicitly and implicitly deals both with security as traditionally defined and with an argument that notions of security can and should be broadened. Still, postcolonial concerns sometimes are not fully integrated into FSS scholarship, and some postcolonial feminist scholars have expressed concern that the language and structures evolving in FSS feel exclusive of the sort of concerns in their scholarship and/or experiences in their lives.⁵⁴

50 Sjoberg 2013, 282–283.

51 See: Brown 1988; Tickner 1992; Peterson and Runyan 1992.

52 See: Yuval-Davis 1997; Moon 1997; Chin 1998.

53 See: Chowdhury and Nair 2002; Agathangelou and Ling 2004.

54 See: Teaiwa and Slatter 2013; D'Costa and Lee-Koo 2013.

Teaiwa and Slatter suggest that the very margins/center construction often used by scholars in feminist IR/FSS is a source of the problem rather than a way to draw attention to it.⁵⁵ As they explain: “Recent articulations of feminist security studies (FSS) suggest that the Pacific Islands are geo-politically marginal to the field? How can feminists still be reproducing such hierarchies of knowledge and authority in the twenty-first century? But maybe hierarchies are endemic to Security Studies?”⁵⁶ Looking at FSS, Teaiwa asks, “should we lament the lack of a coherent body of Pacific Island FSS or count ourselves fortunate to have avoided such a biased view of what is worth knowing?”⁵⁷ While Teaiwa and Slatter focus on the problems that this produces of understandings of knowledge, D’Costa and Lee-Koo explicitly explore the potential implications of a Western-centric notion of FSS for the goals of feminist research on global politics.⁵⁸ They argue:

It has been pointed out that, like security studies more broadly, feminist security studies is theorized in English, and is located primarily in the Global North. This forum gives us space to self-reflect and ask ourselves whether we have really succeeded in representing the voices and/or including the voices of women who were previously invisible through the lens of security. Are we talking to ourselves or are we truly making a difference? What are some of the ethical choices we make as critical feminist scholars to be inclusive? If we are indeed dedicated to the language of inclusivity what role do we play in the politics of voice and in particular in the politics of citation?⁵⁹

Some context for this argument might be useful. Jennifer Lobasz and I edited a Critical Perspectives section of the journal of the Women and Politics section of the American Political Science Association (APSA), *Politics & Gender* about the state of FSS.⁶⁰ For me, the purpose of the forum was dual: to remedy the underrepresentation of both feminist and IR work in the Women and Politics section of APSA, and to serve as a corrective to the assumption common in mainstream IR/Security Studies in the United States that positivist, quantitative work on the ways that women (may) behave differently than men or that state gender equality influences other characteristics of state policy (e.g., Hudson *et al.*, 2009) is not representative of, and may not even be properly included in, FSS. While a collection of short, loosely-cited thought pieces like a Critical Perspectives section could not hope to do justice to all of the nuances of the differences between sex and gender and the complexity of gender dynamics, I was not looking to do that. Instead, I was looking to suggest that such nuances exist, and could/should be taken into account. In so doing, I was interested in talking about the risks and negative implications for taking gender-essentialist work as feminist, and failing to recognize some of the gender-subordinating impacts of some claims to scientific veracity.

55 Teaiwa and Slatter 2013.

56 *Ibid.*, 447.

57 *Ibid.*

58 D’Costa and Lee-Koo 2013, 451.

59 D’Costa and Lee-Koo 2013, 451–452.

60 Lobasz and Sjoberg 2011.

In other words, the Critical Perspectives section was not meant to define FSS – nor were its ‘citation patterns’ anything other than a few scattered citations that were directly cited across the pieces. That said, an unintended consequence of the constitution of the forum for its narrow political purpose was that it was frequently read, by proponents and opponents alike, as a definitional and disciplinary action. These readings constituted it as such, even if it were not otherwise. As a definitional and disciplinary action, the Critical Perspectives section was/is highly problematic. Laura Shepherd’s reaction brings up questions: “I would ask, however, that we remain attentive to the question of who gets to be part of the conversation, and ask whose contestations are seen as legitimate challenges to dominant ways of knowing both within and outside of FSS.”⁶¹ Shepherd’s critique suggests that “the question of *who* is this Feminist Security Studies”⁶² is problematic in the Critical Perspectives section, as the origins of all of the authors in the United States creates the effect of “diversities and differences airbrushed out of the picture as this particular practice of power prevails to construct FSS in the image of White Western femininity.”⁶³

While I continue to think that such a reading relies on the *decontextualization* of the Critical Perspectives section, I bring it up not to rehash an old debate or to pick on the particulars of an argument that has been had several too many times already.⁶⁴ Instead, I bring up the exchange to bring up important issues about both substantive and representational diversity in FSS. To the extent that the discussion above about discipline-facing *does* have some constitutive effect of causing/helping/encouraging a discipline-facing FSS to mirror the exclusions of the discipline it faces, it is important to recognize, and act to correct, those issues. To the extent that resource disparities and the structure of both academic and scholarly associational institutions cater to the overrepresentation of some perspectives and the underrepresentation of others (corresponding to the relative empowerment of some perspectives and the relative disempowerment of others), it is important to pay attention to the ways that disciplinary power has *disciplining* effects. To the extent that relatively empowered perspectives within FSS have a conscious or unconscious tendency to privilege certain ways of knowing (often those that mirror Western social science disciplinary models of research), it is important to interrogate, critique, and broaden those assumptions. In other words, there is no excuse for an FSS that replicates the subordination that it sees on the basis of gender in global politics along other axes, including but not limited to race, nationality, religion, class, and/or sexuality – either in the practice of FSS research or in engagement with questions of what FSS is and how the scholarly community is constituted.

So what would a representative FSS look like? With Teiawa and Slatter, I do not think it has to be something unidirectional, unified, or even unifiable.⁶⁵ Instead, I think that

61 Shepherd 2013, 437.

62 Shepherd 2013, 438.

63 *Ibid.*

64 See: Sjoberg 2014.

65 Teiawa and Slatter 2013.

there can be many different approaches to and perspectives on FSS, from many different places in the world and many different situations in those different places. Still, it would be inappropriate to ignore the power dynamics that make a pluralist position politically problematic. Instead, FSS work done from positions of privilege of all sorts would need to recognize and be reflexive about that privilege at every possible turn. Emphasis on inclusiveness would need to strive to be both substantively and representationally inclusive. If one of the key tenets of FSS is to look for both a broader definition of security and deeper understanding of the multiples ways in which gender and security are co-constitutive, then seeing the multiple different ways that the two interact in different contexts around the world must be a crucial part of that inquiry.

Feminist Security Studies and Feminist Political Economy

One of the important ways that gender/security interact is as mediated through political economy. As the terminology and research foci of FSS became more popular in the field, a field of FPE also developed, perhaps looking to stake out territory for continued and developing economic analysis. For the first several years of the popular use of the term FSS, my sense was that FSS work was overrepresented in the conference presentations and publications of work in feminist IR. FPE as a subfield (perhaps of International and/or Global Political Economy and of feminist IR) made the argument that political economy research into gender and global politics is an essential part of understanding not only gender in global politics specifically, but also both political economy and global politics more generally. While, like the term FSS, FPE as a research cluster inspired a significant amount of intricate analysis, careful fieldwork, theoretical development, and empirical data collection, it also shared with FSS a sense of specialization that had not characterized feminist IR before the explicit use of the label FSS.

Particularly, as I mentioned above, early feminist work that addressed issues of security in global politics recognized and emphasized interlinkages between political economy and security, especially inasmuch as it understood political economy to play a significant role in in/security at the margins of global politics, and security threats to be frequently manifested in political-economic distributional effects. The overlap that early feminists in IR saw between political economy and security has often (though not always) been lost in both FSS and FPE research.

For FSS, though my work is as susceptible to this critique as any other work if not more so, I increasingly find this bifurcation unfortunate. Political economy is always relevant to issues of concern to Security Studies/FSS –political-economic constellations are important in accounting for how individual people’s experiences of war and conflict; to conflict-related displacement; to how militaries are fielded, armed, and fed; to who perpetrates violence against whom; to the social dynamics of joining and fighting in militaries; and to who feels threatened by what and when in the global political arena. In fact, as I recently argued, “some of the most interesting and underexplored intersections between war prac-

tice and feminist theorizing are the places where questions of political economy would dominate the analysis – like analyzing the gendered nature of military logistics practices, understanding the long-term effects of conflicts on populations in conflict zones, and understanding the gendered health impacts of war, to name a few examples.”⁶⁶ An approach that focused on security exclusively might not pay adequate attention to many of these dimensions – which I think would be to the detriment of FSS research. This risk is heightened when FSS’s focus is drawn not only exclusively to the ‘security’ realm, but to a security realm that privileges the ways in which security is traditionally defined by the self-identified field of ‘Security Studies,’ as discussed above.

In this sense, then, I think FSS would benefit substantially from a return to its roots before the term FSS and the establishment of its imagined community of scholars. While I like, and would like to keep, a number of the developments of FSS scholarship in the meantime (including but not limited to careful field work, and complex and nuanced interpretations of gender), I think that reviving the sense of interdependence between political economy and security that existed in early feminist IR scholarship would be a boon to the theoretical and explanatory capacity of work in FSS. Juanita Elias edited a Critical Perspectives Section of *Politics and Gender* to “look to the growing divide between FSS and FPE with all of the contributors seeking to analyzing how these two traditions of feminist scholarship might be reintegrated and why this reintegration is so important.”⁶⁷ The contributions to that section show the ways that FSS analysis needs, and benefits from, acknowledgment of political economy dynamics in security issues as diverse as military prostitution⁶⁸, sexual and gender based violence⁶⁹, and everyday insecurity⁷⁰.

The sense that FSS has both drifted away from and at times dominated political economy analysis is an important one, and one that I think a future of FSS should carry with it, both substantively for good scholarship and when thinking about the politics of substantive representation. It is, in my view, important that certain sorts of work (e.g., work on ‘hard’ security, or within the American subfield of Security Studies, or the like) get done, but it is equally important that they are not overrepresented, and that they do not function to silence the representation of other, equally important (or perhaps more important) strains of research. Here, the research that might be silenced or underrepresented is the sort of research that pays attention to the intersection of political economy and security, security at the margins of global politics, radical interpretations of the need for individual women’s security to be empowered in security discourse, and critiques of the securitization of what might be called personal security. An FSS that *balances* between these perspectives, I think, is both more likely to provide more useful information to a wider variety of people *and* more likely to produce more interesting scholarship.

66 Sjoberg 2015, 410.

67 Elias 2015, 406.

68 Sjoberg 2015.

69 True 2015.

70 Elias and Rai 2015.

Looking Forward for FSS

There are some who might suggest either that the term ‘Feminist Security Studies’ has too much baggage to continue to use as a descriptor for either a subfield of feminist IR focused on the study of security or a subfield of Security Studies where research is done. I am not among them. While I think it is important to critique and walk back some of the unintended side effects and narrownesses in the growing field of FSS, I think its self-identification as a field has created more space than it has closed. The proliferation of work in FSS, and the very existence of these contestations, shows both growth and vibrancy.

As FSS changes, so does my thinking about it. Like I did a decade ago, I think of gender as importantly constitutive, causal, and predictive in security studies, and an essential piece of “solutions” projects. But I think of ontological, epistemological, and methodological contention and contestation *within* and surrounding Feminist Security Studies not as something to be tolerated with pluralism or solved through argumentation, but as *the substance* of the work, which can and should challenge Security Studies, but can also and should also challenge IR, feminist IR, international political economy, gender studies, queer theorizing, and other areas of inquiry relevant to thinking about (and securitizing) gendered bodies, representations, politics, and power relations as they map onto violence in global and local politics. While the duality of these (conservative and radical?) interpretations of the “state of the field” poses some problems if coherence is a primary driving goal, I find myself deeply committed to both visions, both in my interpretation of the field and my place in it.

In thinking about futures for FSS, then, I hope that it is both discipline-facing and radical, substantively and representationally diverse, and broad enough to account for the interdependence of political economy and security. In addition to learning from these debates, I hope FSS grows to pay serious attention to queer theory, sexuality, and LGBTQI people in global politics; to continue engagements with both critical theory and policy analysis, and to reach out to an even wider variety of research communities than it already does. At the core of what FSS has grown into and will grow into, though, is, as it always has been, a feminist understanding of what security is, and how gender is constitutive of and constituted by it.

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