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THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GENDER GAP

by

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## ABSTRACT

### THE IR GENDER GAP: HOW DOES GENDER SHAPE THE TOPICS OF STUDY?

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Like many other fields, there is a gender gap within the discipline of International Relations (IR). In this gap, female scholars are not as recognized as male scholars for their work and are pushed to pursue specific areas of study compared to male scholars. This thesis argues that the marginalization of women in the IR discipline has consequences for the types of research questions that dominate the field. To demonstrate this, this study analyzes journal articles in seven of the most prominent disciplinary journals (*International Studies Quarterly*, *International Organization*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *International Security*, and *Millennium*) for 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020. For each article, the data collected includes topic of study, academic levels of authors, the number and gender of authors, the theoretical approach, and methodology. The findings show a prominent gender gap across these areas. I conclude with some suggestions to help close the gap.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Are women pushed into specific research areas in International Relations (IR)? This question sparked my interest in evaluating whether there is a gender gap within the IR discipline, and what it looks like. Women are marginalized in academia because “there is a masculinist bias in the field” (Williams 2022, 1). This marginalization discourages women from joining the discipline, leading to a lack of female representation within the faculty of the IR discipline, where “only 26% of professors in political science are women” (Tauscher 2021).

The IR discipline has been dominated by male scholars for a long time; it was not until the 1980s when feminist IR theory emerged, introducing gender as an explanatory variable into the discipline. A key moment occurred in 1988, when the journal *Millennium—Journal of International* published a special issue focused on women and IR. This special issue is considered a landmark for making clear that despite women being present in the discipline, very few were published in the disciplinary journals at the time (William 2022, 1). This marginalization of women in the discipline has consequences for the types of research questions that dominate the field.

The underrepresentation of female scholars in the discipline is harmful to the discipline itself. First, it deprives the discipline of the perspectives of women, which would open the field up to new theories and research questions, beyond those of Western men. Second, these new perspectives, issues, and topics can make the discipline richer by



analyzing the lives of individuals on the margins whose problems have never been the subject matter of the IR discipline (Tickner 2005, 2178). Third, scholars can propose solutions to issues such as war, violence, poverty, and so on by considering the effects on female and minority communities. Fourth, adding the perspective of female scholars can also highlight issues within gender relations in regions that have different cultures, values, and sets of beliefs than the scholars from the West have.

Therefore, it is important to evaluate whether there is a gender disparity within IR because it will highlight any issue areas or theoretical approaches female scholars are concentrated in. This research entails an examination of journal articles in seven of the most prominent disciplinary journals from 1990 to 2020: *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Organization*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *International Security*, and *Millennium*. Journals will be studied by decade starting with 1990; the study of *Foreign Policy Analysis* begins in 2005, the year it began publication. Each article will be coded for topic of study, academic levels of authors<sup>1</sup>, the number and gender of authors, the theoretical approach, and methodology.

By comparing these major disciplinary journals, I will determine whether men or women are published more often, the issue areas they write about, and the differences between them. This, in turn, will reveal disparities within the IR discipline.

This thesis begins with a review of the literature of feminist IR, and the concerns it raises. Then it discusses the methodology used in and the results of the study, with an analysis of whether there is a gender gap within the discipline of IR and what it looks like

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<sup>1</sup> This study focused only on male and female because there was no survey or interview conducted. The study uses male or female for the gender of the author unless the author(s) indicated otherwise.

and will conclude with explanations of the gender disparity within the field and suggests proposals to address it.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Gender Roles and Gender Gap

Gender is defined as socially constructed roles, identity, and attributes society considers appropriate for men and women (Narain 2018, 1). More specifically, gender is “the relational construction of individual masculine and feminine identities, where masculine identities are preferred over feminine ones” (True 2010, 8). These identities shape not just the expectations of women and men, but also the specific work and activities they engage in. For example, men are considered to be strong, while women are emotional (Blackstone 2003, 337). Masculine identity is seen as the dominant identity, whereas feminine identity is considered to be subordinate. This difference in perception leads directly to gender inequality.

This division created by societal expectations spills over into the workforce. First, women are expected to perform household tasks while men are expected to be the providers for the house, working outside the home. Second, society believes that men are better at certain jobs, resulting in women being paid less and discriminated against within that field (Blackstone 2003, 337). This is evident in many male-dominated fields such as engineering, architecture, legal, business, and education (International Labour Organization 2020).

For example, women are more likely to pursue jobs such as schoolteacher, dental assistant, receptionist, childcare worker, school lunch monitor, nursing or cosmetologist.

Compare these careers to men, who are encouraged to pursue engineering, architecture, construction, doctor, stock trading or firefighting. One reason women pursue more associate or lower position jobs is that those jobs are more flexible, so they do not face the motherhood penalty they would face at a high position job. The motherhood penalty “makes up 80% of the gender pay gap,” that disadvantages women within the workforce because employers are likely to replace the female worker than wait for her to return from parental leave (Whiting 2022). According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), “the U.S. is the only country that does not have a national paid leave mandate” and “the United States has the least liberal government policies regarding paid parental leave” which is a disadvantage for women trying to build their career (Livingston 2013). This is particularly relevant when thinking about IR, since the core of the discipline is American IR.

This imbalance is equally noticeable in the IR discipline, where women only make up 40 percent of IR faculty in the United States, and women “tend to be more junior and less likely to hold tenure than their male colleagues” (Bindi and Giamanco 2019). The cause of this imbalance is societal expectations and norms because they “exert pressure on women to bear a disproportionate share of domestic work—particularly caring for children and elderly parents” (Schieder and Gould 2016, 6). Given that upon entering the academy, scholars are always working under a high-pressure tenure clock, how society views women make it difficult for them to pursue higher positions within their career.

## 2.2 Gender Defined in IR

The analysis of gender in IR was introduced by feminist theory through criticism of mainstream IR theories that were infused with masculine bias and often excluded gender from most analyses. Theories such as realism and liberalism, and the study of militarism and war, were linked to masculine bias because IR scholars would omit gender in their analysis and focus on the perspective of Western men (Tickner 2005, 2184; Williams 2022, 1). Most IR scholars would write on these theories based on experiences and knowledge “derived from an exclusive male-dominated public sphere” (True 2010, 5). This is similar to the way racism became embedded in IR, where the “impact and role of racism are manifest through the major paradigms operative today... mainly through their continued reliance on a racist conception of anarchy” (Henderson 2013, 88,89). Racism and Feminism in IR face preconstructed and traditional theories of the discipline that are based on the perceptions of a white male, which does not account for the issues and ideologies of minorities or marginalized communities, making the theories more harmful than helpful.

Feminist IR utilized gender analysis to examine “women and men, masculinities and femininities, gender hierarchies/order, intersectionality (race, ethnicity, gender, class, etc.), positionality, and power relations” (Williams 2022, 1). It was through this work that gender became a category of analysis within the IR discipline. Gender analysis was used to deconstruct the traditional framework created in IR, critique gendered identities and predominant security discourses, and develop “new, non-traditional research questions and interpretations” (True 2010, 4,5,8,9).

Feminist IR defines gender as “socially constructed assumptions that are assigned to either male or female bodies – that is, behavior that is assumed to be appropriate ‘masculine’ (male) or ‘feminine’ (female) behavior” (Smith 2018, 2). The keyword in this definition is ‘assumption,’ which is an indication that the roles assigned to men and women are constraints created by the society that affect the way men and women are seen and the duties they are assigned. For example, “men are presumed to be more ambitious and task-oriented in their work, while women are presumed to be more interested in and concerned about their relationships with others at work” (Blackstone 2003, 337). This assumption affects the distribution of power between men and women, with men gaining more power in terms of being seen as authoritative, and thus more suitable for manager and executive positions, while women are seen as emotional, sympathetic, and thus suitable for secretary or receptionist positions. In 2020, the International Labour Organization collected employment and sex data from 161 countries and found that women occupied 60% of the clerical support and 76% of health associate positions; men held 65% of the administrative and commercial manager positions (International Labour Organization, 2020). This imbalance of power creates inequality within the workforce, affecting the job opportunities, research topics, and academic job positions women may receive or hold.

### 2.3 Gender Gap in IR

There are fewer women occupying positions such as associate or full-time professor compared to men in the field, and it is a result of the gender gap within the discipline. In the 2006 Teaching, Research, and International Politics (TRIP) survey, women made up “only 17% of political science professors” (Maliniak, Oakes, Peterson,

and Tierney 2008, 125). According to the American Political Science Association (APSA), these numbers increased in 2010, with women occupying 29% of the professor positions in political science (Stegmaier, Palmer, Assendelft 2011, 799).

The reasons for this gap in positions are the same for workplace imbalance in other areas: women and men have different sets of responsibilities. In IR, women are more likely to interrupt their career or quit to raise children and take care of their family than men (Maliniak, Oakes, Peterson, and Tierney 2008, 125), which sets their tenure clocks back so that they do not advance as much or as quickly as men. A second reason is that the topics women study and the theories they use have been less likely to be published in the main IR journals. Though the number of journals in the discipline has expanded since the 1980s, and they have all been more accepting of feminist scholarship as well as what were previously marginalized topics, there are simply fewer women in the discipline to publish in them.

These imbalances and restrictions have further gendered effects on the discipline, including the differences between men and women over the issue-areas they study, the theoretical approaches they use, and the methodologies they prefer. Analyzing what the gender gap in IR looks like in journal publications helps us better understand the gap and develop solutions to close it.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This thesis analyzes the disciplinary problem by conducting a study that compares the issue-areas, theoretical approaches, and methodologies men and women study and use.

To investigate the gender gap in IR, this study focuses on publications on the top disciplinary journals for the years 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 (2005, 2010, and 2020 for *Foreign Policy Analysis*). Articles from each issue in these years was coded for topic of study, academic profession level of authors, the number and gender of authors, the theoretical approach, and methodology. There is a total of 764 articles.

I begin with 1990 because feminism had already been generally accepted into the IR discipline by then, if not widely used. Thus, the study begins when IR scholars already had time to understand what gender is and the effects it has on women.



## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Gender of Authors

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of author gender. Men authored 518 articles, women wrote 137 articles, and 109 articles were co-authored by men and women. Female authors do not make up even 25% of the authors published by the major disciplinary journals. The results are not surprising. One scholar referred to the discipline as “a man’s world,” and argued that very few women are visible within the discipline because it is not a welcoming field as it marginalizes female scholars and legitimizes masculine theories within the field, which discourages women from joining IR (Tickner 2005, 2184).

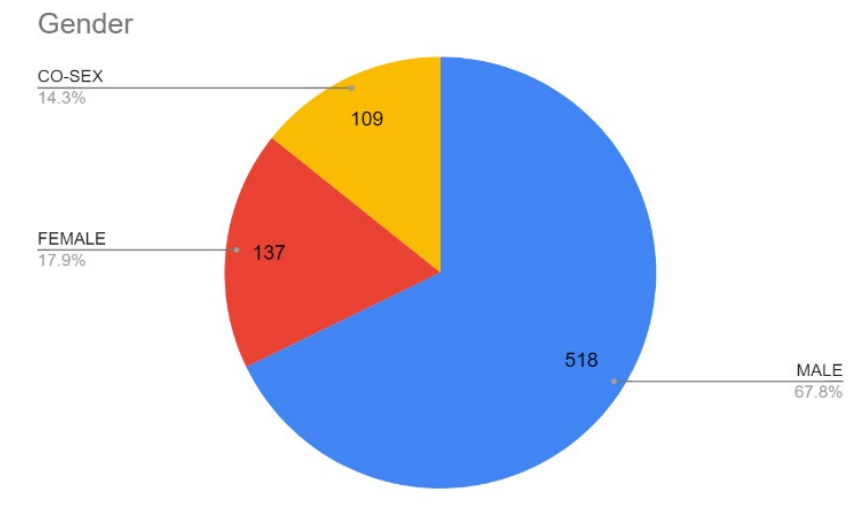


Figure 4.1: Author Gender

## 4.2 Gender and Rank of Authors

Gender and rank of authors is presented in Figure 2. Of the main ranks, women and men are closest in number among Associate and Assistant Professors, though there are still fewer women in both categories. However, there are far more male than female professors at the rank of Full Professor: 441 compared to only 61. This, too, fits with what we know of the gender gap in IR and in Political science more broadly.

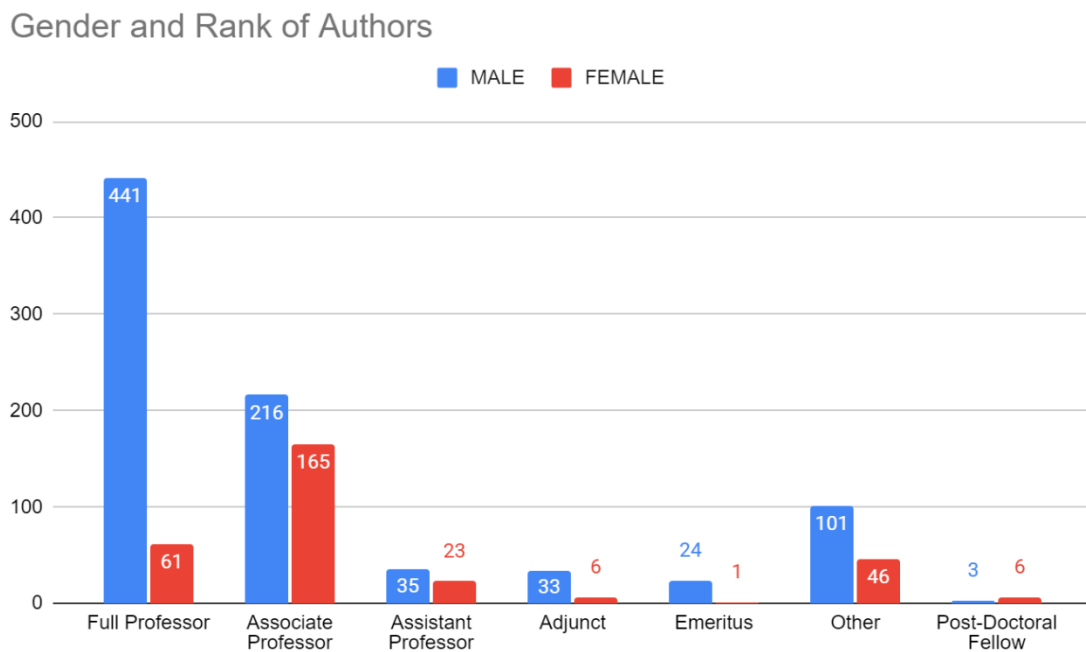


Figure 4.2: Gender and Rank of Authors

Figures 1 and 2 present a major problem in the discipline. The problem is that (1) there are not a lot of women in the IR discipline or Political Science, and (2) very few of those women hold high faculty positions. As noted, IR is a male dominated field where the work and positions were presumed to be adequate for men but not women. One reason for this is that women are seen to fill the roles of a caretaker; therefore, they are

assumed to not be as capable of holding a high position or be published for the topics they chose.

Another reason for this is that female scholars do not get the same opportunities to hold high positions as male scholars do. Women take maternity leaves or take a break from their career to take care of their children and family. On the other hand, very few men take time off to raise children or look over the house, even when parental leave is available, which means that they can spend more time working towards their career leading to more opportunities for them to participate in research projects, write and publish articles, and be promoted (Whiting 2022).

#### 4.3 Gender and Issue Areas

The data also showed the types of topics men, women, and co-authors chose to write on. Figure 3 reveals that there are certain topics that women do not write on, and the few that do tend to co-author with a male colleague.

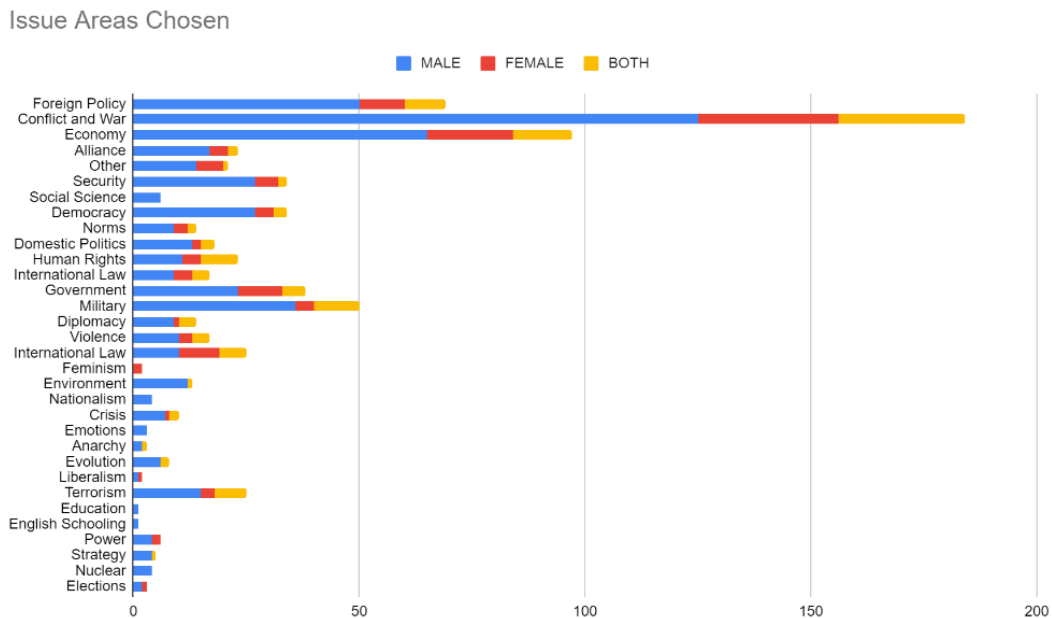


Figure 4.3: Gender in Issue Areas

Figure 3 exhibits all the issue areas that were written on by the authors from the articles that were published in the seven prominent IR journals. Female authors are seen writing more on topics such as Conflict and War, Foreign Policy, Economy, International Law, Government, Military, Feminism, and Security. But they rarely write on topics such as Social Science, Environment, Education, Nationalism, Evolution, or Nuclear. One reason may be that there are female scholars who write on these topics, but they do not get published by the journals, which can discourage other female others from writing on these topics. In 2005, Breuning, Bredehoft, and Walton found that three IR journals focused on specific topics, most of which are ones that male scholar's study. Data was collected from the years 1995-2004, for *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Organization*, and *World Politics*. This study is similar to the one I conducted as it examined journals from the IR discipline in an attempt to find out if the research in IR was narrow and who were the authors of it (Breuning, Bredehoft, and Walton 2005, 447).

This study found that the articles published in the journals accentuated on four research categories: "International Political Economy (IPE), Conflict Processes, International Organization, and Foreign Policy Analysis" (Breuning, Bredehoft, and Walton 2005, 453).

Table 1: Primary Subjects of Articles, Breuning, Bredehoft, and Walton 2005

	<i>All Journals</i>	<i>IO</i>	<i>ISQ</i>	<i>WP</i>
International political economy	30.4	32.7	24.0	38.5
Conflict/conflict processes	14.2	11.4	22.5	3.4
International organization	13.9	26.1	9.0	2.7
Foreign policy analysis	11.5	9.4	17.1	4.7
IR theory	6.7	9.0	6.9	2.7
Democratization	4.9	0.4	2.5	16.9
Security/intelligence	4.8	4.9	5.5	3.4
Ethnic politics	3.7	1.2	2.9	9.5
Representation/electoral systems	2.5	0.0	1.1	9.5
Human rights	1.8	0.8	2.5	2.0
Development	1.5	0.8	1.1	3.4
Feminist IR/gender studies	1.2	0.4	1.8	1.4
Environmental studies	1.0	0.4	1.5	1.4
IR data/data set	0.9	1.2	0.7	0.7
Peace studies	0.7	1.2	0.7	0.0
<i>N</i>	668	245	275	148

*IO, International Organization; ISQ, International Studies Quarterly; WP, World Politics.*

Comparing this to the results from my study, we can see that three out of four of the categories emphasized in the 2005 study are the top three categories in my study, and my study shows that majority of the authors write in these three categories. One explanation may be that female authors write more over these three categories because they are most popular and therefore the most likely to be published in top IR journals, discouraging them from writing on other topics.

Another reason female scholars write on specific topics is that the ideas or perspectives they produce are not widely accepted yet by the IR discipline. Feminist IR proved in the 1980s that some female scholars resisted the traditional approaches and ideologies of the IR discipline in their work, which may be why female scholars generate resistance from the mainstream (Tickner 2005, 2173). Scholars such as Cynthia Enloe wrote *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, aiming to deconstruct the gendered dynamics of politics, military, and tourism by

highlighting the experiences of women on military bases. She believed that the exclusion of women in IR leaves the discipline incomplete (Williams 2022, 7; Buskie 2013, 2).

J. Ann Tickner proposed that “inequalities in power between mainstream and feminist IR allow for greater ignorance of feminist approaches on the part of the mainstream” (Tickner 1997, 629). This means that the marginalization of female scholars stems from the belief of other IR scholars that feminist ideologies do not fit into the conventional and mainstream approaches the IR discipline has established, which leads to female scholars and feminist IR receiving less attention and engagement in serious conversation.

#### 4.4 Gender and Theoretical Approach

A similar pattern can be seen in the theoretical approach section of the data, where female scholars use certain theories in their articles over others.

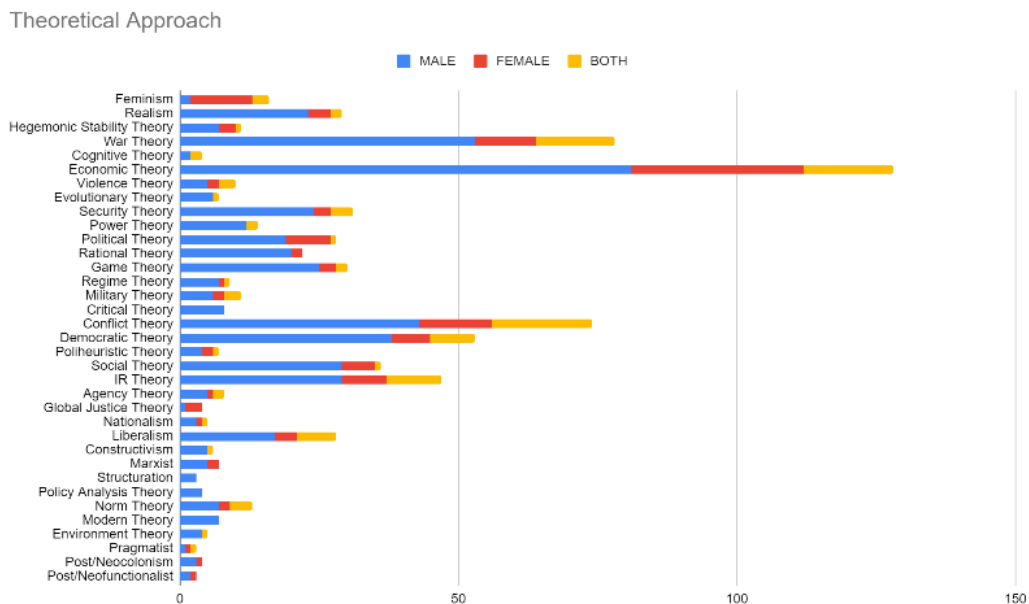


Figure 4.4: Gender in Theoretical Approach

A majority of female scholars utilize theoretical approaches such as Feminism, Economic, Conflict, War or Political, but not theories such as Policy Analysis, Modern, Critical, or Structuration. Very few female scholars use theories like Realism, Rationalism, or Constructivism. One interesting, but not surprising, finding is that female scholars are the dominant users of the Feminism theory, just like their dominance in the topic of Feminism in the Issue Areas chart, while very few men use feminist IR in their work.

It is impressive that despite being outnumbered by male scholars within the discipline, female scholars are prominent in certain topics and theoretical approaches. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of issue areas or theoretical approaches in which this is the case. Male IR theorists remain hegemonic in the discipline.

#### 4.5 Gender and Methodology

The data in Figure 5 shows that male scholars are equally dominate in methodology.

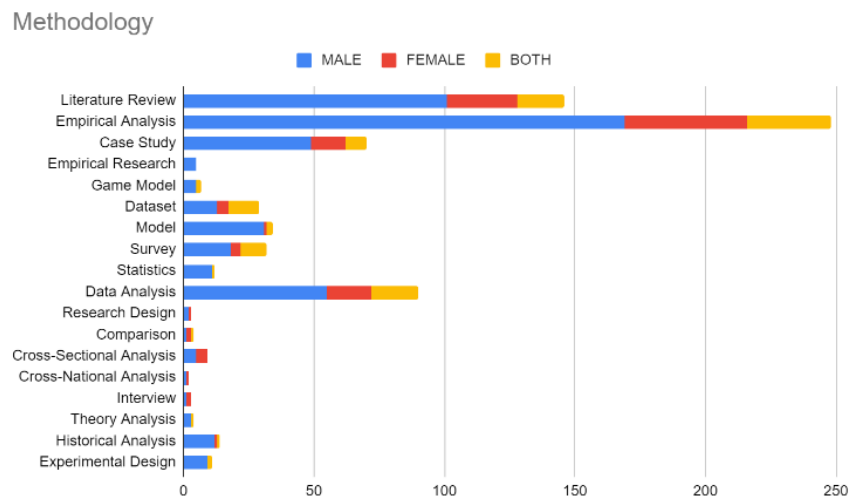


Figure 4.5: Gender in Methodology

Female scholars barely utilize methods such as Interview, Experimental Design, Game Model, or Statistics. Rather, they lean more toward qualitative methods over quantitative, for example, Literature Review, Empirical Analysis, Data Analysis, or Case Study. Interestingly, in the 2014 TRIP survey, when asked what type of methodology IR faculty primarily employs, 26% of the female faculty employed quantitative analysis while male faculty employed 22%, while 56% of the female faculty utilized qualitative analysis, compared to 64% of the male faculty (Maliniak, Peterson, Powers, and Tierney 2014). Although there were more female faculty using quantitative analysis, a majority of the faculty still opted for qualitative analysis.

One reason for this difference is that women may not receive as much funding or support from their departments compared to male scholars. Qualitative work is typically time and resource intensive. It may also be that women are more likely to use qualitative methods such as comparative case studies, discourse analysis, ethnography or process tracing because they tend to write more on topics that are outside the dominant disciplinary issue-areas (Maliniak, Oakes, Peterson, and Tierney 2008, 135; Jordan, Maliniak, Oakes, Peterson, and Tierney 2009, 40).



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Clearly, women are underrepresented in the IR discipline, whether it is the academic level or the topics, theories, or methods they write on. This gender gap needs to be addressed. Here I present some ideas to do so.

First, the discipline should acknowledge that women are underrepresented in the field, and that the imbalance must be fixed, including by equal funding. Departments should acknowledge that women do more service work and should evaluate scholars for promotion and review based on a variety of factors, not just the quantity of work they produce. Doing this will not only encourage female scholars to pursue topics they would rarely write on, but also allow them to progress in their career since they will be judged on other things than the number of articles they have published. The discipline could achieve this by creating additional categories to judge scholars on such as the amount of service work they do, the quality of the papers they submit for publication. Departments can also more actively encourage and support female scholars to apply for grant proposals for outside funding.

Second, the discipline should promote the benefits of coauthoring, including that collaboration may help increase the visibility of the scholarly work women publish (Maliniak, Powers, and Walter 2013, 920). While some departments rank co-authored publications as equal to sole-authored ones, not all do. This may help female scholars

increase their chance of getting published, and potentially help them receive the recognition they deserve.

Third, the discipline should foster mentor relationships between all levels of faculty to create a support system for women within the discipline. This will help address the gender gap as it will require both men and women to work together, which can help clear any bias that IR scholars have about feminist theories attacking mainstream IR. It can also allow other IR scholars to understand what female scholars are addressing within the IR discipline, and possibly even open up serious discussion over the topics they are writing about. Furthermore, this mentor relationship can encourage more female scholars to write on topics they would rarely write on because they have someone in the department supporting, guiding, and encouraging them.

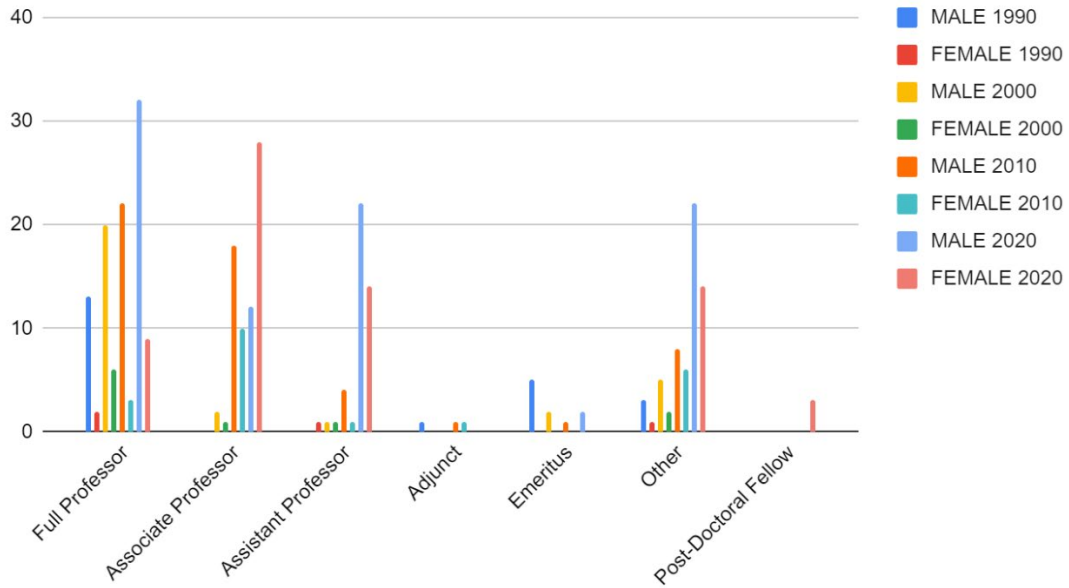
The gender gap needs to be addressed within the IR discipline because it is depriving IR of valuable perspectives of women and other minorities whose problems are different from what Western men encounter. The discipline can be enhanced by these new ideas because they can account for the problems people from different race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic positions, or geographical positions face. Mainstream IR is not doing as much as it should otherwise.

APPENDIX A

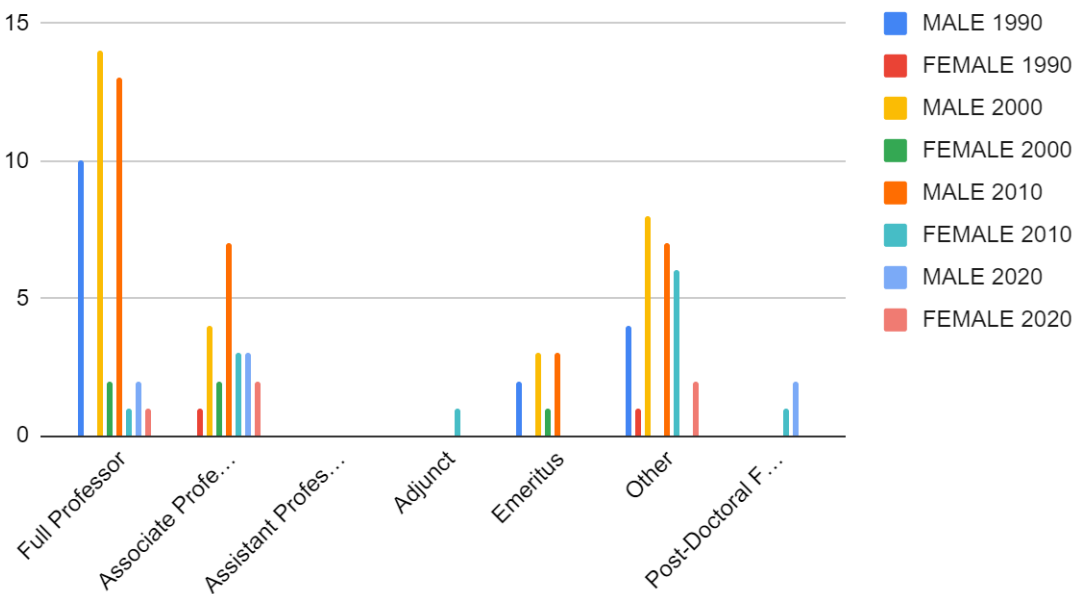
LEVEL OF ACADEMIC PROFESSION PER DECADE

## Academic Profession Level

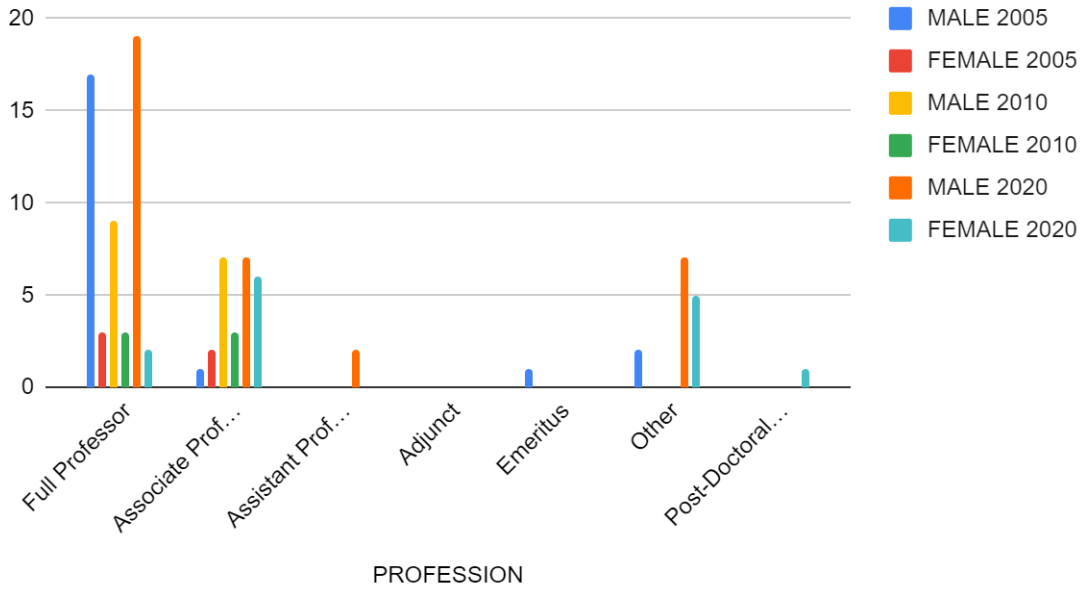
### International Studies Quarterly



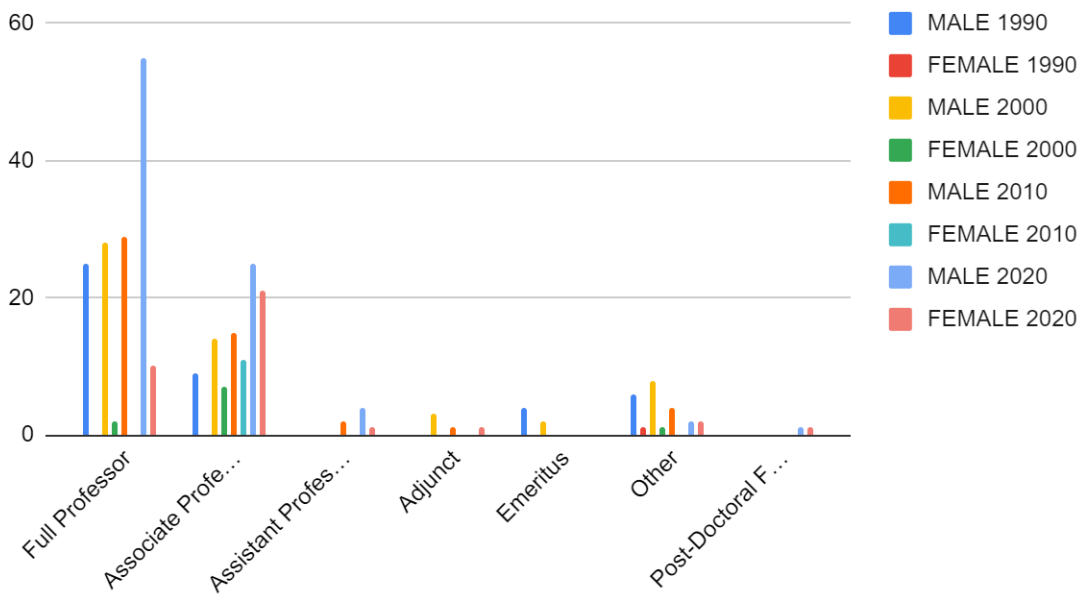
### Millenium



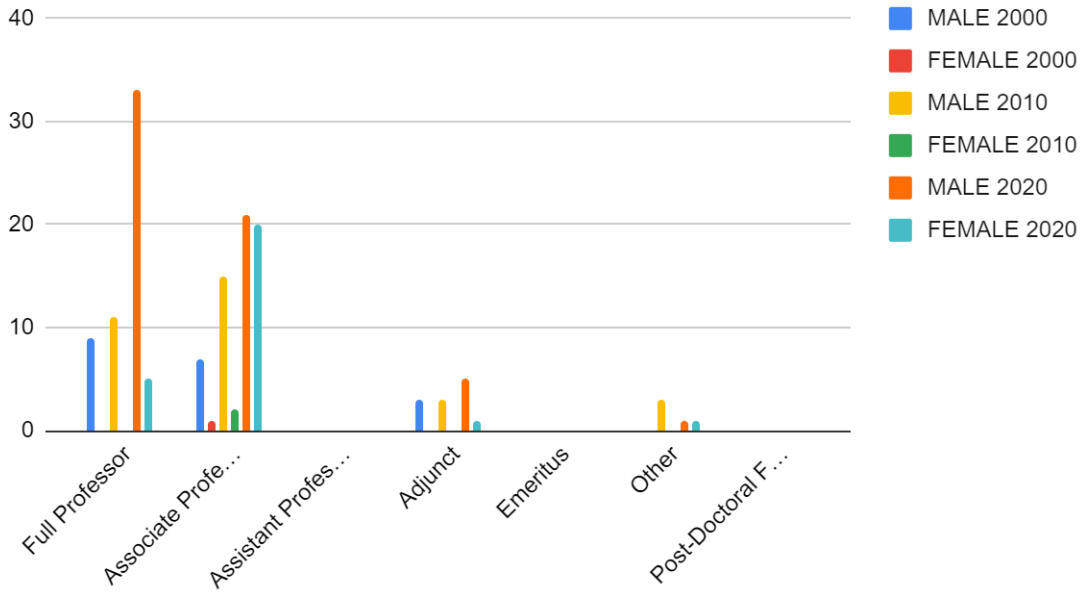
## Foreign Policy



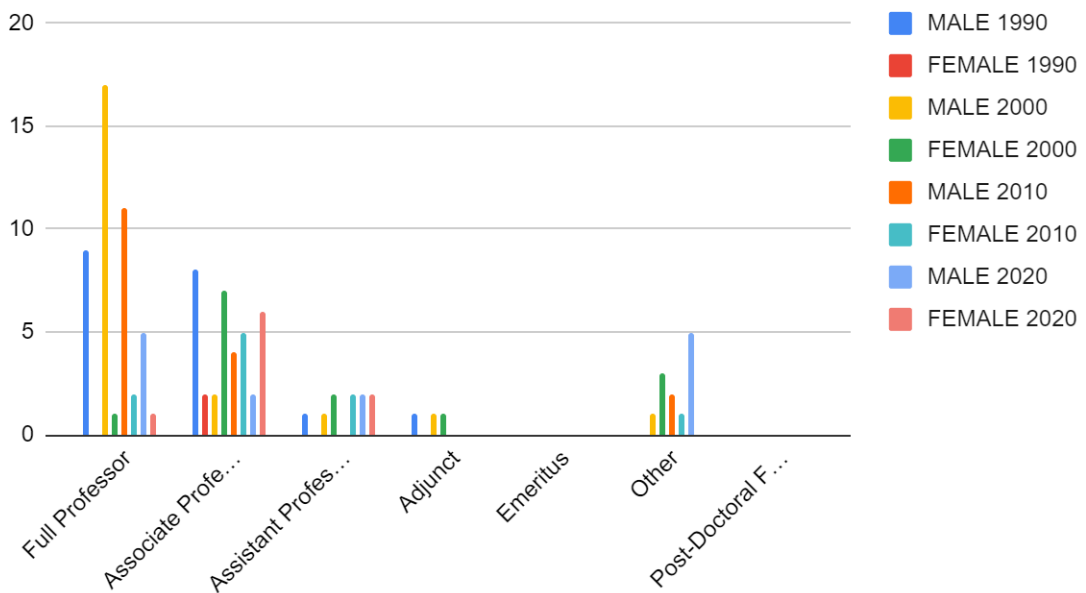
## Journal of Conflict Resolution



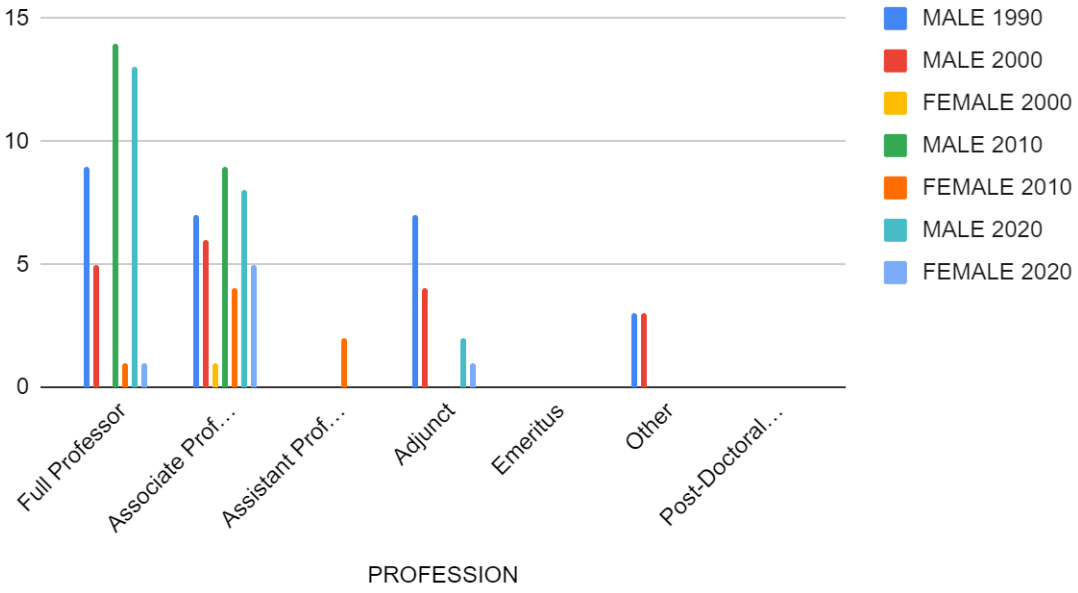
## European Journal of IR



## International Organization



# International Security



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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Meghna Sharda is an undergraduate at The University of Texas at Arlington majoring in Political Science, minoring in Law & Legal Studies, English, and Spanish for Global Competence. She is also pursuing a Certificate for Spanish for the Professions. Meghna is the President of the Pre-Law Society, a position that has helped her become better at public speaking, and a good leader. She has had the honor of interning at the Second District Court of Appeals last semester, where she was able to network with Justice Womack. This was possible through the Courting for Success program that Meghna participated in during Summer 2022, where she shadowed judges in Tarrant County for Family, Criminal, Civil, Probate, and Juvenile law. Through this internship Meghna was able to network with many judges, lawyers, and court reporters. She was able to experience how each law has different rules and expectations for trial.

Meghna enjoyed her time at UT Arlington and is planning to apply to law school very soon, hoping to get into a law school out-of-state.