Toward Trans-gendering International Relations?*

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This article engages with trans-theorizing to show how International Relations (IR) is currently blind to gender diversity, and the conceptual contributions trans-theorizing could make. To do so, it asks what insights trans-theorizing might provide for the study of global politics generally, and for feminist theorizing about gender in global politics specifically. After briefly introducing the terminology of trans-theorizing, the article addresses the potential for (and potential hazards of) an alliance between trans-theorizing and feminist theorizing in IR. The article then discusses several potential contributions of trans-theorizing—including hyper- and in-visibility, liminality, crossing, and disidentification—which provide explanatory leverage for IR. The article concludes with some suggestions for further collaboration between trans-theorizing and (feminist) IR to deepen and widen IR's work on gender specifically, and global politics generally.

Although Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) have noted that the difference in global politics could, and should, be a key part of the scholarly agenda of International Relations (IR), research that pays substantive attention to diversity is often met with "awkward silences and miscommunications" (Tickner 1997:617) or accepted only when it is oversimplified (Sjoberg 2009; Soreanu 2010). As a result, "instead of recognizing the possibility of the overlap of self and other, boundaries are rigidly drawn, carefully policed, and mapped onto the difference between good and evil" (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004:11). Arguing that "identity always owes a debt to alterity," Inayatullah and Blaney (2004:219) suggest rewriting IR as a dialogue of, about, and for difference, rather than obscuring its own diversity.

One axis of diversity that IR has rarely engaged is the question of sex and/or gender diversity. Feminist theorizing in IR suggests that gender is a key causal and constitutive factor (see Soreanu 2010; Zalewski 2010), but the discipline has been disengaged from gender theorizing (Steans 2003). Feminist IR engagements with queer theorizing (and its potential lessons about global politics) have thus far been somewhat limited (see, for example, Peterson 1999). The fact that IR theorizing often ignores sexual diversity and the concerns of queer theorizing may not seem problematic to all, but this article suggests that queer theorizing uniquely contributes to thinking about global politics. Following Peterson (1999:56), this article contends that the normalization of exclusively heterosexual desire serves to maintain the biological and social reproduction of nations,

differentiate group identity, and shape political ideologies, such that "in the context of systemic violence (within and between groups), heterosexism may be the historically constituted 'difference' we most need to see and to deconstruct."

This article addresses that claim in more detail by engaging with trans-gender theorizing, "the academic field that claims as its purview transsexuality and cross-dressing, some aspects of intersexuality and homosexuality, cross-cultural and historical investigations of human gender diversity," and many other similar issues (Stryker 2006:3). Much like feminist work in IR, trans-theorizing is not a single approach, but rather a diverse, vibrant, and contested collection of theories which share an interest in the existence, meaning, and signification of the trans- in political and social life. This work, according to Stryker (2006:2), "has helped foster a sea-change in the academic study of gender, sex, sexuality, identity, desire, and embodiment." This article looks to translate those gains to the discourses of IR.

In order to do so, it asks what insights trans-theorizing might provide for the study of global politics generally, and for feminist theorizing about gender in global politics specifically. After a brief introduction to the terminology of trans-theorizing, this article addresses the potential for (and potential hazards of) an alliance between trans-theorizing and feminist theorizing in IR. The article then discusses several potential contributions of trans-theorizing, including hyper- and in-visibility, liminality, crossing, and disidentification, which provide explanatory leverage for IR. The article concludes with some suggestions for further collaboration between trans-theorizing and (feminist) IR to deepen and widen IR's work on gender, specifically, and global politics generally.

Vocabularies of Trans-Theorizing

Generally, "sex" is perceived biological "maleness" or "femaleness" based on the (perceived) distribution of sex organs and sexed bodies. While there are more than two "sexes" (including varieties of intersex and trans-bodies), sex is often discussed dichotomously either out of convenience or because neither the policy world nor mainstream IR have the tools to analyze multiple sexes. While some theorists have argued that "sex" is itself a social construction (Fausto-Sterling 2005) or a performance (Butler 1993), many continue to refer to sex as a biological fact.

If "sex" is usually characterized as biological and dichotomous, "gender" is usually characterized as social and a continuum (Hooper 2001). Gender is a set of socially and culturally constructed characteristics that are associated with persons based on their perceived sex. People seen as "men" are expected to be "masculine" and associated with masculinity, while people seen as "women" are expected to be "feminine" and associated with femininity (Tickner 1992; Sylvester 1994). These traits are organized hierarchically, where "masculine" characteristics are often symbolically and actually valued over "feminine" characteristics (see Peterson 2010). In these terms, sexism is the assumed or explicit preference for men over women; gender hierarchy is the assumed or explicit preference for masculinities over femininities; and sex/gender discrimination occurs when these preferences are manifested (see Enloe 2007).

A number of related concepts identify sexual preferences. The term "heterosexual" identifies persons of one "sex" attracted to "the other." People of one "sex" who sexually prefer people of the same "sex" are termed "gay" or "homosexual." "Bisexual" refers to persons interested in "both sexes" regardless of their own "sex." Gender words are often assigned to people perceived to be, or self-identifying as, homosexual or bisexual, either from inside or outside of those communities, including words like "metro," "butch," "femme," or "stromo" (Munt and Smith 1998). Homophobia is fear of, or discrimination against, peo-

ple seen as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Heteronormativity is the assumption of the normalcy of heterosexuality. Heterosexism is preferring heteronormative social structures, combined with discrimination against those people and lifestyles classified as homosexual or bisexual.

Trans-theorists have argued that these classifications are fundamentally limited, because "neither feminism nor queer studies, at whose intersection transgender studies first emerged in the academy, were quite up to the task of making sense of the lived complexity of contemporary gender" (Stryker 2006:7). In Cressida Heyes' words,

> To the extent that "sex," "gender," and "sexuality" have come to be thought of as core ontological facts about individuals, organized through a binary schema, discourses about transsexuality have an obvious foothold. One simply *is*, essentially, either male or female, and concomitantly heterosexual or homosexual, depending on the relation of sexual object choice to biological sex.   (Heyes 2003:1102)

Introducing trans-bodies complicates the ways sexes, genders, and sexualities are conceptualized; even the trans-theorizing community debates the precise direction and goals of these complications (Stryker 2006:8; Heyes 2007).[1]

The term "'transgender' refers to people who do not appear to conform to traditional gender norms by presenting and living genders that were not assigned to them at birth or … in ways that may not be readily intelligible in terms of more traditional conceptions" (Bettcher 2007:46). The abbreviations "FTM" (female-to-male) and "MTF" (male-to-female) signify a directional transition between "sexes."[2] If misogyny is the hatred of women and homophobia is the hatred of people seen as homosexual, trans-phobia is negativity toward trans-people because of gender enactments (Bettcher 2007:46). Notorious occurrences of transphobic violence include the brutal murders of Brandon Teena[3] and Gwen Araujo,[4] but research on trans-people's experiences suggests that most are the victims of at least one serious transphobic attack (see Halberstam 2003; Currah, Juang, and Minter 2006).

Some trans-theorists ask what the opposite of "trans-" is, given dichotomies such as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. In these terms, everyday discourses of trans-gender and trans-sexuality stand out. "Trans-" is framed as the aberration, where people are assumed just to have "gender" and "trans-gender" persons are the only persons we need prefixes to describe. As a corrective, "cisgender" indicates comfort and identification with the sex and/or gender one has been assigned. "Cissexism," then, is the belief that trans-identifications are inferior to, or less authentic than, those of cis-persons (Serano 2007). Cissexisms include characterizing trans-persons as impersonators, refusing to acknowledge their identified sexes or genders, reducing bodies to their parts or the medical procedures they have been through, or questioning their knowledge of self (Serano 2007). The terms "cisgender," "cissexual," and "cissexism" are used to critically interrogate the trans-/normal dichotomy.[5]

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[1]I use the term "trans-" throughout most of this article to denote not having chosen between the terms "transgender" and "trans-sexual" and their (potentially) different connotations, where "trans-sexual" is often associated with having had surgery to "correct" the person's sex/gender and trans-gender is a broader term.

[2]These terms, however, are controversial, because many people argue that they did not "transform" from one sex to another, but were always a particular sex and needed their body to conform to that self-identification.

[3]An "FTM" trans-teenager who was raped and murdered in transphobic violence, and became the subject of the movie *Boys Don't Cry*.

[4]An "MTF" trans-teenager who was raped and murdered in transphobic violence after being "outed" at a party.

[5]As Shotwell and Sangray explain, "this neologism helps us recognize normative gender privilege—or, at least, …it is a useful, short term for the experience of feeling at home in one's assigned gender" (2009:67). Still, some argue that these terms are either trivial or themselves problematic, either because they obscure sexisms or because they erase in-category differences.

There remains some controversy around these issues, because a number of trans-theorists have expressed concern about seeing trans-ness as a sex or a gender. In Susan Stryker's words:

> Homonormativity lies in misconstruing trans as either a gender or a sexual orientation. Misconstrued as a distinct gender, trans people are simply considered another type of human than either men or women, which leads to … homornative attempts at 'transgender inclusion' … through a liberal politics of minority assimilation.   (Stryker 2008:148)

The goal of this discussion about vocabulary is not to discipline a particular understanding of the trans-, but rather to map the terrain of concepts often used in trans-theorizing. Along those lines, the goal of engaging trans-theories in this article is not a liberal politics of minority assimilation but a feminist politics of theoretical critique and reformulation. Working from David Halperin's (2004:340) understanding of the deployment of queer theory, this article looks to make IR theory trans- (that is, to question its cissexist assumptions) and to trans-theory (to call attention to the transgressive in the project of theorizing global politics).

Trans-Theorizing and Feminism (in IR)

The incorporation of queer theorizing in IR, when it has happened, has usually been in explicitly feminist work (for example, Peterson 1999; Wilcox 2009; Weber Forthcoming). Still, a number of trans-theorists have explicitly criticized both feminism and queer theory for their reactions to the trans- (Stryker 2006:2). While feminist IR has not engaged in these problematic modes of theorizing, many feminist theorists outside of IR have eschewed trans-advocacy, arguing that there is tension between trans-claims to rights and women's claims about gender hierarchy.[6] According to Shotwell and Sangray, this creates a double bind for trans-persons in (especially liberal) feminisms, where, "while trans women are framed as men stealthily infiltrating the last bastions of women's space, ….trans men … [are framed as] lesbians with a particularly bad case of patriarchy-induced false consciousness" (2009:70). Trans-theorists have also argued that feminisms sometimes hold an understanding of gender that is injurious to trans-people's interests, especially to the extent that feminisms refuse to recognize some trans-people's claim to a primordial biological sex.[7]

While some scholars and activists see feminism and trans-theorizing as fundamentally at odds, others see these tensions as potentially transformative for feminist theorizing, such that trans-theory insights might improve feminist theory. As Heyes notes, "it is now clear that feminist politics need to speak of (and be spoken by) many more subjects than women and men, heterosexual women and lesbians," and therefore "engage bisexuality, intersexuality, transsexuality, transgender, and other emergent identities" to rethink notions of sex and gender (Heyes 2003:1093). Accordingly, "one can speak from both a trans- and a feminist perspective at once" (Scott-Dixon 2006:45), "transphobia is fundamentally a part of (hetero)sexual systems of violence and rape mythology" (Bettcher 2007:57). In these terms, as Heyes argues, "feminists of all stripes share the polit-

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[6]For example, Sheila Jeffreys (2002) once characterized trans-sexualism as an effort to eschew gender hierarchy individually without dealing with it collectively, where trans-men are looking to climb the ladder of gender hierarchy and trans-women are "really men" violating women's space.

[7]Vivian Namaste, for example, contends that Judith Butler's characterization of gender as performative (derived from the existence of the "trans-" which Butler understands as performed) is beneficial to feminists interested in helping women defy gender expectations, but does not resonate with many trans-people who see their "sex" as primordial (see Stryker 2006:10, 1). Namaste argues therefore that the feminist project does not serve trans-women well (2009:12).

ical goal of weakening the grip of oppressive sex and gender dimorphisms …
with their concomitant devaluing of the lesser terms *female* and *feminine*"
(2003:1094). Trans-theorizing brings to an alliance with feminist theorizing work
that "disrupts, denaturalizes … and makes visible the normative linkages we
generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differ-
entiated body [and] the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body
is expected to occupy" (Stryker 2006:3). This section explores what an alliance
of trans-theory and feminist theory might contribute to the study of global poli-
tics and particularly to feminist IR.

Potential Contributions of a Trans-Feminist IR

In considering the ways in which thinking through trans-theorizing could con-
tribute to feminist IR analysis, at least three potential directions are clear. First, a
relationship between trans-theory and feminist IR would encourage feminist IR
to consider the difference a truly plural (rather than dichotomous) understand-
ing of "sex" would make for thinking about the function of gender hierarchy in
global politics. For example, while many feminists have a more complicated
understanding of "gender" than biological sex, sometimes feminist politics is
reducible to the representation of people and interests identified with "women."
Often, feminist theorists have trouble understanding what (if any) "other" to the
masculine/feminine dichotomy exists. Trans-theorists tend to talk about gender
not in terms of masculinities and femininities but in terms of "gender diversity,"
which might enhance feminism's (and IR's) understandings of diversity in global
politics (Moreno 2008; Lane 2009).

Thinking of sexes and genders as multiple provides several insights. Such an
approach urges scholars to critically interrogate the comfort we have with social-
constructionist approaches to gender as our only alternative to biological essen-
tialism. As Lane warns, "social-constructionist methodology tends to invite *ontolog-
ical* belief that gender is produced by socialization" (2009:144). Lane's concern
is that feminist IR's constructivist and poststructuralist epistemological choices
reflect (and produce) an understanding of gender *as social construct* or *as
performed* that does not resonate with trans-people's experiences. Instead, taking
trans-theory seriously might encourage rethinking the role of the biological in a
way that acknowledges the strong role that it plays in some gender narratives
(particularly those of many trans-people) without falling into the traps of essen-
tialism. Perhaps work like that of Anne Fausto-Sterling (2005), Lauren Wilcox
(2009), and Iver Neumann (2008)—which takes seriously questions of embodi-
ment alongside questions of performance and social construction—provides a
way forward that could lay the foundation for a more inclusive understanding of
gender.

Thinking of sexes and genders as multiple creates space to think in terms of
gender diversity instead of sex dichotomy. While power dynamics between things
understood as masculine and things understood as feminine matter in global
politics, trans-theory suggests the importance of power dynamics between things
understood as queer and things understood as straight, and between things
understood as trans- and things naturalized as cis- as well. Seeing many sexes as
opposed to two also encourages seeing those sexes as diverse instead of linear.
Sex and gender "diversity" can be used in the negative (global political leader-
ship is not sex or gender "diverse" enough), but it can also be read in the posi-
tive (sex or gender diversity in global leadership would add perspectives and
potential policy solutions previously omitted from dominant discourses). This
diversity is both representational (including not "both" but "all" sexes and
genders) and substantive (thinking about how to take account of peoples'
differences in political decision making and analysis).

This suggests a different way of looking at sex(es) and gender(s) as not only constraint but capacity. In other words, we often think of sex as fixed: People *are* "male" or "female," but ambiguity and the potential to change sexes means that bodies are not fixed (sexually or otherwise). Following from that, with sex assignments, gender expectations are not only limiting, but also things that can be manipulated, used instrumentally, taken advantage of, and navigated among. Seeing sex *and* gender as capacities does not erase sex and gender subordination, but could make space for a creative, transgressive politics of the body. People *change* their bodies, not only through "sex reassignment," but through cosmetic surgeries, diet, exercise, body-building, etc. To the extent that embodiment can be understood as flexible and malleable, it can be included in a more sophisticated understanding of sexings and genderings in politics.

Taking trans-theory seriously might further influence feminist interpretations of "what" gender "is," not only substantively (as discussed above) but also conceptually. Feminist work assumes gender's ontological existence is only as social construction—it is as we know it. Trans-theorizing suggests that there is a component to gender that cannot be reduced to social construction, but also cannot be reduced to essentialist notions of sexually dichotomized bodies. In other words, how do we read sex and gender dichotomies when we take account of trans-people? Does the very existence of trans-people reveal the false nature of sex and gender dichotomies? Can feminist IR understand (some part of) gender as ontologically prior to social construction and still maintain its commitment to deconstructing gender dichotomies in global politics? Or does the suggestion that there might be substance to not just sex but gender pose a fundamental threat to feminist theorizing?

Along these lines, I suggest utility in seeing sex/gender as sociobiological (for example, Fausto-Sterling 2005), a combination of people's knowledge, their experiences, and how people read and construct their bodies and others'. Such a conception could radically change feminist thinking on gender and thereby broaden the scope of feminist IR analysis. For example, in *Mothers, Monsters, Whores* (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007), Caron Gentry and I note that some see women's violence as an alienation from womanhood (for example, Strickland and Duvvury 2003), but others see it as a performance of femininity (Landesman 2002). We argue (with other feminists) that biological femaleness and femininity do not map one-to-one. Using a sociobiological notion of gender (diversity) from trans-theorizing could complicate this analysis even further to show femaleness and femininity in violent women as a feedback loop.

Third, and finally, trans-theory explores whether gender expression is what we call in political science a zero-sum game. Heyes (2003:1095) argues that gender diversity and plurality cannot be the end of the story for a trans-aware feminism, because the implication that feminist politics should tolerate any gender expression forgets one of the first lessons of feminist theorizing: That gender is relational. It is normatively important to see gender as relational because, often, more powerful gender expressions silence or oppress weaker, more marginal, or less mainstream gender expressions. As feminists have observed when looking at male–female relations, "expression of one gender may limit the possible meanings or opportunities available to others" (Heyes 2003:1095). Therefore, while it is important to be inclusive of sex and gender diversity, it is equally important not to lose sight of the power relations between and among sexes and genders.

Trans-theorizing about gender has the potential to be a transformative force for feminist IR because it could open up new research directions examining the complexity of gender, the ways that configurations of gender diversity impact and are impacted by other political configurations, and the ways that multiplicities (of gender and otherwise) shape political interactions in global politics.

Translating Trans-Theorists' Concepts to IR

It is, however, not only trans-theorizing about gender impacting feminist theorizing that makes it worth paying attention to IR. Instead, as this section will discuss, some of the central concepts in trans-theorizing contribute to IR's understandings of global politics. In particular, this section looks at four concepts from trans-theorizing that have implications for IR: hyper- and in-visibility, transition and liminality, crossing, and disidentification.

Hyper- and In-Visibility in Global Politics

Questions of visibility and voice have come up in, and been circumvented by, mainstream IR theorizing for decades. Sometimes, IR references the "levels of analysis" (Waltz 1959; Singer 1961) or the "agent-structure" debate (Wight 2006), but the basic problem is recognizing who "International Relations" is and how to study that *who*. Feminist work in IR has paid attention to "voices," particularly those of women, at the political margins (for example, Tickner 1988). Gayatri Spivak, however, has made the controversial argument that the subaltern in global politics cannot speak or be heard in the halls of power (1988). A similar conversation took place between Copenhagen school securitization theorists who argue that the utterance of security produces it (for example, Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998) and Lene Hansen (2001), who expresses concern that this approach to security excludes those in the international arena whose silence is not voluntary.

Feminist theorists in IR have looked to make the invisible visible, asking, after Cynthia Enloe (2007), "where are the women?" in global politics, a question that implies revealing the unseen to change our ideas of global politics. Peterson and Runyan (1999) have conceptualized visibility in IR as a case of "lenses," where all scholarship makes choices about focal points that shape research processes and products. Critical theorists have argued that mainstream IR sometimes "sees" with "blinders" (George 1994). While some references to visibility are meant as metaphors, they raise important issues for framing IR analyses.

Much trans-literature expresses concern about the politics of visibility, particularly dealing with the dimensions of "outness" particular to trans-people. Being "out" in terms of gay/queer communities often signifies a process of personally accepting homosexuality and disclosing it to family, co-workers, and friends. Visibility is all the more complicated in trans-communities, where some argue that there is no such thing as being "out" as trans- (that is, "outness" implies that trans-ness is hiding some truth, where some people see transitioning as a solution to untruth) and others see "outness" as an important part of transitioning. Still others see trans-bodies as invisible, where "outness" is meaningless because one would have to be acknowledged to be "out," but "it is common … for non-trans-people to neither know nor care about the existence of trans-people" (Shotwell and Sangray 2009:59). Trans-theorists are also interested in the times when trans-bodies become *hyper*visible—that is, the object of gaze and fascination. I contend that visibility, invisibility, and hypervisibility in trans-theoretic terms are useful tools in understanding global politics.

Outness and (In)visibility

The first question that "outness" might raise for IR is the question of who is "out" or visible in global politics. Judith Butler (in reference to queer performances of outness) once framed visibility as a question of privilege, asking "for whom is outness a historically available and affordable option? Is there an unmarked class character to the term, and who is excluded?" (1993:227). Out-

ness presumes visibility and the ability to be heard when speaking, which are both privileges of limited availability in global politics (for example, Spivak 1988; Hansen 2000). "Outness" in any sense is a site of privilege, and there is often a barrier of (in)visibility to even being discussed by IR theorists as having "agency" in global politics. This is because some agents have the option of visibility of their "true" self through the use of their voices and public presences. There are others who do not have the privilege of visibility. For them, "outness" is empty, because being "out" is the same as being "in," invisible and voiceless. Outness thus has both class and power dimensions that have implications for trans-people as well as for global politics.

There are still others for whom the question of what "true" self to reveal is an easy question. This is because "outness" presumes some essential content of self that is "truer" than appearances. "Outness" presumes some opposite—"in-ness"— that is secretive, dishonest, or misrepresenting. We do not usually talk about actors in global politics in terms of their "in-ness" or "outness," even when visibility is a theoretical question. But the discourse of visibility in trans-theory is not just about seeing people, it is about seeing people (controversially) for what they "really" are. In global politics, then, "outness" might have two important elements: visibility at all (as an "entry fee") and then some analysis of the "true self" of an actor.

Visibility Tradeoffs: People and Groups

Questions of visibility/invisibility are further complicated by individual and group representation. In global politics, there are some groups who are visible when their individual members are not. Trans-theorizing has struggled with the paradox that sometimes *trans-people* generally are visible, where the voices of *trans-persons* individually can be silenced. Dominant images of the trans- can become hypervisible, and persons who do not meet such images correspondingly invisible. As Moreno explains,

> It is useful to highlight the different dimensions of (in)visibility as an analytical category. First, it is possible to distinguish an individual dimension from a collective dimension… Second (in)visibility can be addressed according to the lived experience of people involved or through cultural representations … which universalize the opinions of some while excluding those of others.   (Moreno 2008:140–141)

In other words, group "outness" might actually present a condition of impossibility for individual "outness" or individual counternarratives to the dominant group narrative. Feminist analyses of the margins of global politics, then, need to pay attention to both individual and group visibility. Moreno is also concerned that the general, collective invisibility of trans-people and their individual invisibility reinforce each other—that is, that the lack of recognition of trans-experience causes individual trans-people to remain "in," while individual trans-people's "in-ness" contributes to a failure to recognize trans-experiences and transphobic/cissexist behavior (2008:141). Two questions that are important for the study of global are thus presented: What are the power relations between individual voices and group voices? When and how is marginality self-reinforcing?

Hypervisibility

There are those who argue that "in-ness" and "outness" do not make sense for trans-people, since "trans-" is not something one *is* (and therefore not something one must out oneself as). Instead, "trans-" is the *process* of becoming what one is. Trans-theorizing has problematized the association between outness and visibility, arguing that the trans- and genderqueer bodies demonstrate the problems with

assuming a clear "self" to be "out." If being trans- is a process rather than a result, then it makes little sense to be "out" as trans-. Yet, trans-persons who do not immediately self-identify as trans- (which may or may not actually resonate with them) may be considered dishonest when their "passing" is discovered. The trans-theory problem with seeing people as "really a man" or "really a woman" (and therefore "out" as a "man" or "woman") is that these discourses "reinscribe the position that genitalia are the essential determinants of sex" (Bettcher 2007:50). This runs directly contrary to the lived experiences of many trans-people, who see their genitalia as either not representative of or only partly representative of their "actual" sex (Bettcher 2007:50). Trans-theorists express concern that the continued emphasis on the difference between how trans-people look and what they "are" is "fundamental to transphobic representations" (Bettcher 2007:50).

Trans-people are often characterized as dishonest if they are not "out" as "trans" because they are seen as presenting as a sex they are "really not," whereas trans-people who are not "out" are seen as lying for not admitting the unreality of the sex they present as. Trans-people's options, then, comprise being dishonest one way or another, "disclose 'who one is' and come out as a pretender or masquerader, or refuse to disclose (be a deceiver) and run the risk of forced disclosure, the effect of which is exposure as a liar" (Bettcher 2007:50). Visibility, then, is pretending, while invisibility is lying.

This creates a politics of hypervisibility of trans-identities. In these terms, "visibility yields a position in which what one is doing is represented as make-believe, pretending, or playing dress up," while "to opt for invisibility is to remove one's life from the domain of masquerade into actual reality... [which] generates the effect of revelation, exposure, or hidden truth" (Bettcher 2007:50). Each begets violence, but the violence is often unrecognized as such.[8] Judith Butler sees it as important to think about:

> Why violence against transgender subjects is not recognized as violence, and why this violence is not recognized as violence, and why this violence is sometimes inflicted by the very states that should be offering such subjects protection from violence.   (Butler 2004:207)

Trans-theorists have explained this in terms of the violent enforcement of a settled gender, where transphobic violence is actually punishment for non-conformity with settled ideas of maleness and femaleness, phrased and understood in terms of dishonesty in order to hide that it is not honesty, but reality, being policed through hypervisibility (Lamble 2009).

Trans-theorizing about visibility could inspire important research directions for IR. For example, it might be useful to ask what norms we *do not see* being enforced violently, what realities are policed, and whose identities are labeled less valid or genuine by definition. It might be fruitful to theorize the ways in which public gazes silence or distort certain voices, and to look at the ways that attention traps certain people as public/publicized representational forces. How does being trapped *in* the public gaze affect certain people at the margins of global politics? How does that relate to being trapped *outside* of the public gaze? Do some people and/or groups experience both simultaneously?

More In-Visibility

It might also be useful to ask for whom neither "in-ness" nor "outness" are an option; who, in Christine Sylvester's (2002) terms, is "homeless" in IR, and how

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[8]For example, Gwen Araujo, a trans-teenager, was killed by men she had been sexually intimate with, after they discovered that she was "really male." At their trial, her killer used a "trans-panic" defense, "using allegations of 'sexual deception' as a main tactic in his defense [for murder]" (Bettcher 2007:44).

that plays out in global politics. As Heyes explains, these conundrums with visibility apply both inside and outside of trans-experiences:

> It is both necessary and troubling to seek out a home as a gendered or sexual being: necessary because community, recognition, and stability are essential to human flourishing and political resistance, and troubling because those very practices too often congeal into political identities and group formations that are exclusive or hegemonic.   (Heyes 2003:1097)

This realization is important because often, theorists who have talked about homelessness in IR have talked about the opposite (being "homed" or having a "home") as a positive development, where belonging produces a sense of community. Trans-people often experience a dark side of belonging, however, which is being among the people still excluded. Some trans-people find themselves belonging to neither "men" nor "women," and victimized by the tribal violence of one or the other (or both) because they remain "homeless." In other words, the very existence of sexed "homes" is what makes "homelessness" dangerous for trans-people. While (feminist) IR is well versed in the difficulties of being homeless while others are "homed," it is less well equipped to deal with the dangers of being assigned a "home" that one does not feel like one belongs in, or of the burdens of being "homed." Trans-theorizing could be used to illuminate these difficulties, and to engage in serious dialogue on the question of visibility and placement in global politics as dimensions of traditional "levels of analysis" and "agent-structure" debates.

Transition and Liminality

Even assuming a clear ability to both recognize and treat fairly potential actors in global politics as objects of study, scholars of IR still struggle with how (if at all) to account for change in those actors, their identities, and their relationships. In particular, critical theorists have suggested that realist and liberal accounts (particularly at the systemic level) are ill-equipped to account for change (for example, Checkel 1998). On the other hand, Kenneth Waltz (2000) suggests that scholars are witnessing changes in the system and that those factors which do change continue to be less important than those properties of the system that remain constant.

Still, some theorists have argued that IR needs to account for change—how does the international arena change over time? What cycles does it go through (Goldstein 1988)? What are the unique causes of individual wars and conflicts (or lack thereof) (Suganami 2002)? Is the system *still* an anarchy (Waltz 2000)? If it is, how has that anarchy changed? If it is not, what is it now? If IR as a discipline has been uncertain about how best to account for change in global politics, it has also been uncomfortable dealing with questions of liminality and unrest. Liminal states are transitional, uncertain, and unidentifiable, structurally as well as functionally. While some scholars have addressed questions of liminality (for example, Higgott and Nossal 1997; Rumelili 2003), IR has, for the most part, understood change as moving from one state to another, rather than examining the uncertainty in between. When IR has thought about process (such as democratization), it has often been in terms of approximating the end result, rather than focusing on the period of in-betweenness.

This is an area where trans-theorizing could provide a helpful intervention. Much of trans-theorizing is about change, and much of the gaze focused on trans-people is related to the process of "transition" from one sex to another. As Krista Scott-Dixon explains, "non-trans-observers and clinical practitioners fixate on 'the transition' demanding with oblivious gender privilege to *look*, to *know*, and to *judge* the most intimate details and private representations of trans-people's physical selves" (2006:43–44). In other words, not only is the "change" seen

as the relevant part of theorizing the trans-experience, the change *is* the trans-experience, and therefore needs to be understood, deconstructed, and examined in intimate detail. As Bettcher laments, "why do only some people have to describe themselves in detail, while others do not?" (2007:53). The answer to Bettcher's question can be found in the combination of the uncertainty of the observer (what *is* that person?), the assumption that clarity can come from understanding what parts a person has (oh, that person has a penis, therefore, that person is a *man*), and an intolerance for confusion and liminality in our understandings of trans-bodies.

Therefore, trans-theorizing has prioritized thinking about the significations of liminality, work which can enhance IR's views of change. Christine Sylvester sees that "liminality suggests borderlands that defy fixed homeplaces in feminist epistemology, places of mobility around policed boundaries, places where one's bag disappears and reappears before moving on" (2002:255). We can, then, think of human interactions in terms of "different subjectivities, different travelling experiences, which we can think of as mobile, rather than fixed, criss-crossing borderlands rather than staying at home" (Sylvester 2002:255).

What trans-theorists add to this conception of liminality is a reminder that "home" might be as dangerous as the "liminal," and that there might (as Bell Hooks (1990) suggests about marginality) be empowerment in embracing liminality. The murky waters of "passing," "crossing," and "disidentifying" (all liminal states) might be safer for some persons and groups in global politics than the certainty of membership, identity, and home that so many IR theorists are interested in locating for global politics' marginal/liminal participants.

Crossing through IR

Critics of IR theory have also expressed concern with the discipline's flat or static concept of identity. Much IR theorizing often conveys a sense that, among states, "self" remains "self" and "other" remains "other." Often, this is discussed in terms of primordial culture (Huntington 1996) or intransigent conflicts (Jackson 2007). Seeing trans-genders, however, brings this apparently simple relationship between self and other into question and interrogates the naturalness of stagnant identification.

"Crossing" in trans-theorizing is generally used to refer to the process of changing one's appearance and gender representations. Deidre McCloskey (2000) describes "crossing" as changing tribes—she was once an accepted member of the tribe "men" and behaved in the manner expected of members of that tribe. She then joined the tribe "women" and behaved in the manner expected of members of that tribe. In other places, McCloskey describes crossing in cultural terms ("crossing cultures from male to female is big; it highlights some of the differences between men and women, and some of the similarities too" (2000:xii)) and in psychological terms (as "change, migration, growing up, self-discovery" (2000:xiii)). Roen (2002) describes the act of crossing as a political one, moving from one defined and exclusive group to another.

As one crosses, in trans-theorizing, many trans-people express concern about "passing."[9] A trans-person is said to have "passed" when the people around them in a given social or professional situation believe that they are of the biological

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[9]Passing is an idea that is not without controversy in trans-communities or outside of them. In the trans-communities, some people see passing as how life should be—they *are* a (insert sex here), they look like one, and people believe they are one—life is normal, and as it should be. In other trans-discourses, "passing is portrayed as complicit with normative gendering and therefore as contrary to the gender-transgressive ethic of transgender politics" (Roen 2002:501).

sex which they see themselves as/understand themselves to be/have changed their physical appearance to resemble.[10] A trans-person may "pass" to some and not to others, likewise someone may be able to "pass" in a distant or sterile work environment, but not in an intimate setting.[11]

The idea of changing defined groups is not new in IR; people change religions and state citizenships frequently, even as we think that identities fundamentally matter in defining international conflicts. People "cross" sides of wars and conflicts (such as those people seeking peace in Israel/Palestine despite their governments' behaviors, or, more explicitly, Prussia's changing sides in the Napoleonic Wars). Though IR speaks of it less, people also cross ethnic groups and castes (Dirks 2001). For example, some of the leading "Hutu" perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide had been born to Tutsi parents, but become accepted into the "tribe" of Hutus, even when acceptance or rejection was a question of life or death (for example, Landesman 2002). At the same time, IR often cannot account for the process, logic, or consequences of these crossings between seemingly un-crossable divides.

While we assume that ethnic group or national group membership is an ontological fact that one simply *is*, rather than something flexible, the world out there does not reflect such a simple construction. Understanding that people "cross" even the deepest and most clearly understood boundaries in social and political life (and often "pass" as crossers) makes it important to rethink what those boundaries mean, both to "crossers" and more generally. While boundaries, borders, and expected social mores are clearly salient, and often key to the world's most brutal conflicts, they are also porous, and understanding the lives and actions of those who cross them might help us understand those pores.

A simple example is women crossing the gender divide in conflicts. Stories of women "passing" as men are common throughout history for those women interested in being a part of military forces or state leadership. Historic and mythic figures (such as Joan of Arc) posed as men to get around prohibitions against women fighters and women leaders, along with many other women who remain nameless and faceless in history, including in the United States Civil War (Blanton and Cook 2002), the Napoleonic Wars (Wilson 2007), the Crusades (Vining and Hacker 2001), the Trojan War (Spear 1993), and other conflicts. Very often this "passing" is historically described as heroic, but was met with substantial disapproval at the time.

Thinking about "crossing" might help us understand how states and other actors in the global political arena experience ontological change from one thing to another, and what can be gained and lost in the process. Thinking about "passing" while crossing or once crossed might help us understand how to identify and deal with the unseen in global politics. For example, spies rely on "crossing" national and/or ethnic groups and then "passing" as a member of the group that they are charged with getting to know. Many military maneuvers are built on "crossing" into enemy social and political life and "passing" either as local or as part of the surrounding landscape. These and other instances of "passing" suggest that there is utility in considering what passing means for how we understand global politics. In particular, useful questions to ask include what trans-people "passing" means for the meaning of sex and gender, what the ability to "pass" means for the stability of the categories we take for granted in our analysis of global politics, and if (and if so where) more subtle "passing" takes place in the relationships between states, nations, and ethnic groups.

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[10]As Bettcher notes, "passability as non-trans may not always be an all or nothing affair" (Bettcher 2007:52).

[11]Sometimes, passing is talked about as a lifestyle (no one would know that person is trans-), and sometimes it is talked about as an event (that person passed at a party last night).

Disidentification and IR

As mentioned above, in addition to wrestling with concepts of identity, IR has struggled with what Inayatullah and Blaney call "the problem of difference" (2004). The question of the role difference plays in global political interactions has garnered significant attention in the discipline in recent decades. For example, Peter Katzenstein and his contributors (1996) collected the ideas of a number of scholars who argued that culture plays a definitive role in national security identity and strategizing. Mark Salter (2002) has argued that perceived civilization and perceived barbarity impact the likelihood of conflicts and the nature of them. In much more rudimentary forms which garnered more attention, Samuel Huntington (1996) and Francis Fukuyama (1992) argued that culture and identity were major fault lines in international interactions. Postcolonial scholars (Bhabha 1994; Muppidi 2006) have argued that the continued power of colonial dynamics in global politics is not only defining but ultimately destabilizing. Scholars interested in religion and politics (for example, Fox 2001) have argued that religious difference is a crucial determinant of conflictual relations in global politics. Scholars have also pointed out differences in regime type (Russett 1994), governance values (Russett and Maoz 1993), economic system (Mousseau 2010), and values related to women's rights (Caprioli 2000). Even postcolonial feminists have argued that the differences among feminists can translate into conflict and oppression (for example, Mohanty 1988, 2003; Chowdhry and Nair 2002).

IR scholars who theorize about difference deal with it in different ways, including trying to understand it (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004), emphasize it (Huntington 1996), downplay it (Booth 2005), or overcome it (Ruane and Todd 2005). Some scholars have noted that the difference can be leveraged counterproductively in global politics. As Inayatullah and Blaney have noted, "knowledge of the other, inflected by the equation of difference and inferiority, becomes a means for the physical destruction, enslavement, or cruel exploitation of the other" (2004:2, 11). While difference in global politics may be incendiary, and IR may theorize it poorly, trans-theorizing about disidentification might offer another path.

Disidentification (derived from, but separate to, the psychological use of the term in the 1960s and 1970s) in trans-theorizing plays two roles: discussion of irritation with feminist disidentification with trans-bodies (why does feminism eschew trans-persons when an affinity seems natural?), and discussion of trans-people's disidentification with their assigned biological sex (what does it mean for identity that people can reject "their" sex?). IR might learn a lesson of tolerance from thinking about trans-/feminist disidentification. As Heyes explains:

> Much that has been written about trans people by non-trans feminists has not only been hostile but has also taken an explicit *dis*identification with transsexuals' experiences as its critical standpoint. This move runs counter to familiar feminist political commitments to respecting what the marginalized say about themselves and seems to ignore the risks of orientalism.   (Heyes 2003:1096)

The second sort of disidentification discussed in trans-theory, that of trans-disidentification with assigned biological sex and corresponding social genders, might be more interesting for the study of global politics. First, it suggests that, contrary to the debate about culture and identity in IR, the question of whether identity is primordial and fixed (Woodward 1997) is not a yes/no question, and can be answered with hybridity (for example, Bhabha 1994). Many trans-people see their gender identity as primordial/fixed, while their sex identity needs to be changed to reach accord with their gender identity. Others see their sex identity as primordial/fixed but not represented in their physical being. Still others

see their sex identity and their gender identity as both fluid and flexible. Asking when people *disidentify* with their assigned or primordial states, nations, ethnic groups, and genders may be a more productive way to get at the question of conflict and difference in global politics generally, and the question of intransigent conflict specifically. Also, asking when people *are disidentified* from their primordial groups, either by explicit rejection or by "the experience of misrecognition, this uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong" (Munoz 1999:12; citing Butler 1993) might help us to understand both cultural conflict and individual violence in global politics.

Perhaps disidentification as an action is interesting, but so is disidentification as a strategy. As Munoz explains, "to disidentify is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to 'connect' with the disidentifying subject" (1999:12). In other words, the process of disidentifying necessitates divorcing one's perception of self from both in-group and out-group narratives of belonging and identification in sociocultural contexts, asking "what would I be were I not situated in a particular context?" While feminist theorizing has shown the risk of decontextualizing scholarly work and political perspective, especially for the purpose of purporting objectivity, the trans-scholarship suggests a different purpose for disidentification both as a thought experiment and an event and/or series of events. Munoz notes that "disidentificatory performances …circulate in subcultural circuits and strive to envision and activate new social relations …[which] would be the blueprint for minoritarian counterpublic spheres" (1999:5). Two important elements of this idea stand out: First, that the public/private dichotomy is unrepresentative of the lived experiences of trans-people, who often experience a "counterpublic" sphere where political and social interaction takes place, but does not mirror the hegemonic public sphere. Second, disidentification changes social relations. In these terms, it is not ignoring context in the ways that we have come to think about it in IR (as ignorance of contingency, power, and interaction), but instead denying context the power to dictate how we interact, such that "disidentification is … the survival strategies that minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform" (Munoz 1999:4).

It is possible, then, to think of disidentification as a potential (theoretical and empirical) tool to diffuse conflicts and synthesize among differences. In theoretical terms, feminists have argued that knowledge is always perspectival and always political, and cannot be divorced from the knower's subjectivities (for example, Tickner 1988). They have noted that recognizing the perspectival and political nature of knowledge means that feminists should engage in dialogue and empathetic cooperation with "the other" to try to see and/or feel the perspective of others (for example, Sylvester 2002; Sjoberg 2006; Confortini 2010). Intentional disidentification with one's own perspective and looking for the alterity in self can broaden our theoretical viewpoints as students of global politics. Beyond theoretical synthesis, however, it is possible that strategic disidentification might be useful as a tool of conflict resolution in the policy world, useful as one of many potential tools to reconcile interests that appear to be diametrically opposed.

Conclusion: Looking Crossways

Catherine MacKinnon once argued that "inequality comes first; differences come after. Inequality is substantive and identifies a disparity; difference is abstract and falsely symmetrical" (1987:8). In other words, MacKinnon was arguing that difference only becomes recognizable/significant to the extent that inequality is distributed along it. There are many places where we do not yet fully understand

how difference works in global politics, and even more where we do not yet fully grasp how it maps onto inequality. Yet, some argue these dimensions are the essence of understanding global politics and should be the priorities of scholars in the field of IR.

This article has worked to establish the initial plausibility of a new approach to studying difference by arguing that (feminist) IR should come to value trans-gender theorizing, not only toward the end of "making the world safe and just for people of all genders and sexualities" (Serano 2007:358), but also that of better explaining and understanding global politics generally. This article does not mean to argue that trans-gender studies provide *the way* to think about global politics, or even *the direction* feminist work in IR needs to take. Instead, through looking at global politics from a trans-feminist perspective, it suggests the fruitfulness of applying the concepts of trans-theorizing to help us understand IR, and the ways that trans-theorizing might improve our understandings of global politics.

Trans-theorizing is likely to be especially useful to theorizing global politics to the extent that it shows "that basic conceptualizations—ways of opposing home and the economy, the political and personal, or system and lifeworld—presuppose and reinforce" (Warner 1993:xxiii) masculine, heterosexual, cissexual norms. Though IR is coming to recognize privileges associated with gender, race, class, and nationality, trans-theorizing suggests it is necessary to look further. Not only is "cisgender" privilege an important axis of privilege to recognize (even as the "other" to it, trans-people, are often invisible), it also begs the question of what other privileges in the theory and practice of global politics are assumed to be so normal that they are invisible. It behooves IR theorists to ask what other social, political, or cultural attributes or characteristics are *so* normalized that we do not even see when the alternative to them is being oppressed or silenced, *as well as where cisprivilege manifests in global politics*—a productive research agenda as IR looks to build research programs taking difference seriously.

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