

**Knocking Down Walls in Political Science:  
In Defense of an Expansionist Feminist Agenda  
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**Feminism in Context:**

In contemporary society we are bombarded with mixed messages about the state of feminism. These messages include the notion(s) that feminism is “over” or in “crisis”; that feminism is “scary” and/or “irrelevant”; and, that feminism has more “battles” to fight (Murphy, 2013). The limited research on contemporary feminist identity also reveals tensions about the current state of feminism. Findings indicate that while many young women approve of and support what can broadly be defined as “feminist” values and goals many of these same women reject the label “feminist” as part of their individual and/or collective identity (Aronson, 2003; O’Neill, Gidengil and Young, 2008). Tensions about the meaning, place, and implications of feminism are reflected in the discipline of political science as well. On the one hand, feminist political science has contributed significant knowledge to the discipline. As Hawkesworth (2005) aptly observes, feminist political science has revealed many “omissions” and “distortions” that permeate dominant political science. Feminist political scientists have demonstrated the fundamental importance of gender as an analytical tool for understanding social and political relations amongst citizens and amongst citizens and various aspects of the state. Yet, in many ways, feminism remains marginal within the discipline as a whole as it remains largely relegated to “feminist” journals and non-requisite courses on “women” or “gender” (Hawkesworth, 2005; Waylen et al, 2013; Vickers, 2007; 2016). The marginal position of feminist political science is even more troubling when assessed comparatively alongside the fields of sociology, literature, history, and anthropology—fields that have been much more “revolutionized” as disciplines by the impact of feminist work (Silverberg, 1990; Vickers, 2016).

The confusion about the state of feminism in our society in general and the marginal place of feminist work in our discipline are not unrelated phenomena. In my experience as a graduate student and faculty member in departments of political science over the last fifteen years, many political scientists seem genuinely confused about what feminism is and how it may or may not relate to the field as a whole. This confusion can facilitate overly simplistic understandings of feminism that further marginalize the varied and complex approaches that fall under the feminist rubric.<sup>1</sup> While this marginalization may be indicative of outright and purposeful resistance by some members of the discipline it is, at least, in part, facilitated by the fact that feminist political science has to date been done by feminist political scientists and taught in feminist courses, and, at least, in part, by the fact that the term “feminism” has many different meanings and interpretations. The variety of

existing feminisms and the dominant perception that feminism is somehow in “crisis” begs the question, “What is the future of feminist political science?” This article offers one possible answer to this question by outlining and defending an expansionist agenda centered on interrogating the male-female binary as it has been upheld and replicated in the discipline to date. Such an approach requires that the field of political science investigate the varied and complex masculinities (both hegemonic and counter or non-hegemonic masculinities) that pervade our society and our discipline respectively and draws heavily on the insights of intersectional analyses, new materialist theories, transgender, queer and gender fluid articulations of identity.

The discipline of political science will benefit from analytical engagements on the complexities and opportunities revealed by the varied masculinities that diverge from the dominant norm (a norm that has heretofore been presumed and even reinforced within the discipline). Political science must also engage with the complexities revealed by transgender experiences, identities and politics. While transgender activists and social movements are increasingly informing the public debate on gender politics political science has been notably silent on these issues putting the discipline out of date and out of touch with many important questions of social and political justice. Overall, this paper will argue that an expansionist feminist agenda that takes seriously these areas of inquiry is key to responding to the interrelated challenges presented by the perceived “crisis” of feminism and the ongoing “masculinity” of the discipline of political science.

### **Outlining an Expansionist Feminist Agenda:**

The previous section outlines two distinct yet interrelated trends regarding the state of contemporary feminism. The first being the vague but influential social perception of an “identity” crisis of feminism and the second being that the influence of feminism in the discipline of political science is siloed and, as a result, the influence of feminism in the discipline has somewhat stagnated. While these two trends have been cause for some alarm both within and outside of academic circles I suggest they also offer a context in which to explore new possibilities and opportunities to expand the feminist agenda in the discipline. Such an expansion is, I will argue, contingent on letting go of the hard won but arguably outdated notion that gender and politics is code for women and politics.

While our courses, textbooks and conference panels on the topic of women and/or feminism are increasingly titled as courses, textbooks and panels on the topic of gender few political scientists have discussed the significance of this discursive shift for the discipline.<sup>ii</sup> This omission is perhaps best explained by the fact that, in many instances, the shift appears to be largely in title rather than in substance—that is, while the notion of studying gender includes many possible gender articulations, identities and experiences, few political scientists have taken up the full conceptual range in their work instead focusing more particularly on the gendered experiences of women. The emphasis on women has, of course, existed for many important

reasons. Given the masculinity of the discipline, creating opportunities to discuss women and politics is itself a significant accomplishment in feminism that must not be overlooked or undervalued. The discursive and physical spaces provided by political science courses, texts, journals, conferences, and other professional gatherings on the topic(s) of women and politics have been, and continue to be, important subalterean spaces for feminists in the discipline. Just as feminists in our larger society developed alternative publics in which to invent and circulate counterdiscourses (Fraser, 1997: 81) so too have feminist political scientists developed alternative spaces in which to invent and circulate interpretations and perspectives oppositional to mainstream political science. As Joni Lovenduski (1998) observes, feminist political science has worked to reveal and correct the biases of the discipline:

Early critiques of the masculine biases [...] were accompanied by excavations of lacunae, neglect, and sexism in Western political theory [...] These were succeeded by analyses of the reasons for the discipline's failure to deal with women as political beings and by systematic expositions of the ways in which political science and political theory were implicated in the exclusion of women from the public sphere [...] The criticisms of empirical political science showed a special concern with the neglect of women by traditional behavioural approaches, which, it was claimed, described a stereotype of women's political roles. Feminists outlined a research agenda that would challenge that stereotype by contesting both the way politics was practiced and the manner in which it was understood. (333-334)

These discursive spaces have been key to developing the subfield of women and politics as well as to developing important internal questions and critiques regarding the obligations, ethics, and issues of voice and appropriation implicit in academic feminism.

Arguably the most influential of these internal critiques are encapsulated in the approach of intersectionality—an approach first developed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s to reveal the ways in which structures of power and privilege impact women asymmetrically, particularly along the lines of race. Crenshaw's work reveals and problematizes the implications of overlooking these intersections when conceptualizing and articulating injustice. From this perspective, identity politics is flawed not by its failure to “transcend difference” but rather the opposite, that is, its failure to fully engage with the realities of intragroup differences. On the issue of violence against women Crenshaw argues:

[T]he violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. Moreover, ignoring difference within groups contributes to tension among groups, another problem of identity politics that bears on efforts to politicize violence against

women. Feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains. Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling. (1991: 1242)

Crenshaw's work has profoundly influenced feminist political philosophy and strategy (see Dhamoon, 2009). Within feminist political science the theory of intersectionality has become central in feminist texts and course syllabi (see Newman and White, 2012; Waylen et. al, 2013). Yet, while feminist political science has been impacted by intersectional analyses regarding the complex and varied relations amongst women, some of the most important insights of intersectionality have been overlooked in the discipline. Most notably, feminist political science has failed to critically engage with the categorizations that have been foundational to its existence and how these categorizations are themselves exclusionary to others. As the discourse of feminism has shifted to a discourse of gender feminism has become answerable to a wide range of identities and experiences that challenge the anchoring role women have traditionally played. This is perhaps best exemplified by our failure to deeply engage with the growing and varied articulations of gender in our larger societies that include the practice of various masculinities, transgender, and gender-fluid articulations and how these practices impact the goals of feminism. The call to interrogate and challenge the existing binary need not translate into a world without gender. Rather it is a call to further complicate and politicize gender by revealing the multiplicities, diversities, and contradictions that have heretofore been hidden or buried in dominant dichotomous understandings. Revealing the multiple counter or non-hegemonic practices of gender, I argue, works to reveal possible sites of feminist resistance and change.

### **Othering the Centre: Theorizing Masculinities in Political Science:**

Thus far I have suggested that the increasing societal challenges to the traditional gender binary offer an important opportunity for political science: an opportunity to reconsider how we think, talk, write and teach about gender and an opportunity to challenge hegemonic notions of gender. A central component in challenging the way the gender binary has been upheld in the discipline is an investigation into masculinities. This call to bring focus to masculinities as part of an expansionist feminist agenda will likely be met with some skepticism and for a number of good reasons. As Connell (2005) notes:

Men's Liberation has often been seen by feminists as a way for men to extract benefits from feminism without giving up their basic privileges, a modernization of patriarchy, not an attack on it. There is widespread

feminist skepticism about the ‘new father’, the ‘new sensitive man’, and other images of a kinder, gentler masculinity. (41)

Concerns that a focus on masculinities could reinforce rather than challenge the existing binary by creating space for opportunistic men must be taken seriously and these concerns are the basis for my call for a robust *feminist* inquiry into the topic. As the existing literature in the field of sociology has revealed, masculinity is a powerful and complex concept but it is also fluid, precarious, rife with contradictions, and, perhaps mostly importantly, diverse and contested (Faludi 1999, Connell 2005, Hebert 2007, Kimmel 2012, Fernández Álvarez 2014). Revealing and analyzing this under-explored diversity is key to challenging dominant conceptions of the gender binary that leave masculinity as the uninterrogated gender norm or centre against which all *other* gender identities are situated. In his efforts to explore “non-hegemonic masculinity”, Fernández Álvarez argues:

Masculinity is a set of constantly changing meanings, which are constructed through relationships with ourselves, with others, and with our world [...] rather than seeking an essential definition of masculinity, one of the most important tasks in gender studies would be to analyze the differences between men and their varying relationships with masculinity and femininity. (2014: 49)

These under-explored, relational aspects of gender provide valuable insight into the false but powerful fiction(s) underpinning dominant dichotomous understandings the socio-political structures they support. As Connell argues, “Masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in relation” (44). The project of investigating masculinity is not an end in itself but rather a key component of investigating and ultimately challenging unjust gender relations.

Until recently, political science has been virtually silent about the diverse gendered identities and experiences of men and the intragroup differences of those identified as such. The consequences of this silence should not be underestimated. As Elisabeth Gidengil noted in her 2007 Presidential address to the *Canadian Political Science Association*:

All too often [...] gender is being treated as being synonymous with women, but gender is a part of the identity of women and men alike. Indeed it may well be time to start moving beyond a simple dichotomous conception of gender [...] If we always enquire why women differ in their political behavior and political orientations from men—rather than the other way around—we risk subtly perpetuating the assumption that male behavior is the norm. When we ask why women differ in their political behavior and political orientations from men, *men are implicitly serving as the yardstick*. (Emphasis added. 819-820)

While the argument Gidengal makes in her address is focused on the need to challenge a monolithic understanding of women in the “gender gap” literature specifically, her comments about our continued, if often unintentional, reinforcement of a monolithic notion of men as a neutral standard in feminist political science is revealing for the entire discipline. As political science has maintained this male standard of measurement in research so too has it maintained the masculinity of the discipline in general. Unpacking the gendered identities and experiences of men and how they relate to other gendered identities and experiences is key to revolutionizing the discipline as a whole.

Discussing men as gendered in any complex way is, to date, very rare in the discipline. One exception is Rainbow Murray’s recent work on men and political representation (2015). Murray observes that while there is an extensive literature that examines and measures the interests of women and a further emerging literature that highlights the complications of such an approach (most obviously the risks of essentialism), the topic of “men’s interests” fails to appear at all. She states:

It is assumed that men do not suffer from gender oppression, and have their interests well met given their over-representation within positions of power. However, these assumptions neglect the fact that men are also heterogeneous and subject to great diversity of identities and interests. (2015)

Murray’s main objective is to reveal how gender analyses of men reveal new insights about our theories of political representation by highlighting the fact that the diversity of men is “seldom reflected within male elites” and that a number of policy areas have a “distinctive gendered impact on men” including “health, education, war, crime, paternity and employment” (2015).

Murray’s work highlights an important omission in the field of political science but also within feminism more broadly. An omission that was also raised in Emma Watson’s 2014 *HeforShe* speech at the United Nations<sup>iii</sup>. Watson’s speech touched on an important difficulty confronting contemporary feminism—that is the role, or lack thereof, for men. While the campaign slogan and website promoted by *UN Women* suggests the role of feminist men is in advocating for, or on behalf of, women, Watson’s speech went beyond that notion to explore the relational aspect of gender. When Watson stated, “if men don’t have to be aggressive in order to be accepted women won’t feel compelled to be submissive. If men don’t have to control, women won’t have to be controlled” (Watson, 2014) she shifted the focus from women and men as oppositional categories to women and men as gender articulations and experiences constituted by one another. From this perspective, feminist men must interrogate *their own* articulations and practices of gender and consider how these articulation and practices reinforce gender injustice. This relational lens is key to interrogating and challenging the existing gender binary.

The relational aspect is also highlighted by Susan Faludi's work. Her desire to better understand the gendered experiences of American men led her to observe meetings for a domestic violence support group. In reflecting upon her experience she asks:

What did I expect to divine about the broader male condition by monitoring a weekly counseling session for batterers? That men are by nature brutes? Or, more optimistically, that the efforts of such a group might point to methods of managing or even 'curing' such beastliness? Either way, I can see now that I was operating from an assumption both underexamined and dubious: that the male crisis in America was caused by something men were *doing* unrelated to something being done to them, and that its cure was surely to be found in figuring out how to get men to *stop* whatever it was. (1999: 7)

Faludi's work reminds us of the importance of including men in our gender analyses not simply as agents of behavior but also as subjects to the disciplinary power of what it is to be a "man." Holmgren and Hearn (2009) make a similar call to adjust the focus of our gender(ed) lens:

[M]uch of what men do is not seen as 'about gender', related to gender equality or about making gender relations and gender divisions more or less equal or unequal – in fact it is not seen as political activity at all. Much of men's practices, in public and in private, are commonly not seen as gendered. They are often done, perceived and felt as (if they were) 'normal'. They are not usually gender-conscious activity: they 'just happen'!" (404)

The *HeforShe* campaign by *UN Women* demonstrates a missed opportunity to initiate a change in the conversation in popular culture. While the campaign is promoted as a "solidarity movement for gender equality" the role offered to men in this pursuit is not one in which their gendered practices are interrogated but rather one of "support" that can be demonstrated by clicking on an "I agree" icon on the *HeforShe* website which states: "*HeforShe* is a solidarity movement for gender equality that brings together *one half of humanity in support of the other half of humanity* for the benefit of all" (emphasis added. UN Women). This approach does not interrogate the relational aspects of gender nor does it speak to the many gender articulations and experiences that fall outside the traditional male-female constructions of gender. While this campaign is disappointing for those of us interested in expanding the feminist agenda it can also serve as an important call to action—a call articulated powerfully by bell hooks in her appeal that feminists take up new audiences and new priorities, both academic and non-academic. hooks argues (2014):

Patriarchal masculinity teaches men that their sense of self-identity, their reason for being, resides in their capacity to dominate others. To change this males must critique and challenge male domination of the planet, of less powerful men, of women and children. But they must also have a clear vision of what feminist masculinity looks like. How can you become what you

cannot imagine? And that vision has yet to be made fully clear by feminist thinkers male or female [...] No significant body of feminist literature has appeared that addresses boys, that lets them know how they can construct an identity that is not rooted in sexism. (70)

As feminist political scientists, educating ourselves and others in the discipline in comprehensive non-hegemonic understandings of gender and the politics that accompany these understandings, is an exciting opportunity to transform the discipline. Moving away from the traditional understandings of the gender binary also provides new insight into the gendered nature of the discipline as well as new tools and critiques with which we can challenge this reality.

### **Transgender Disruptions of the Dominant Gender Binary:**

While political science lags behind in examining the full range of questions on gender, politics, and citizenship, our larger societies—communal, provincial, national, and international—are increasingly discussing the complexities of gender articulations and experiences that challenge the traditional dichotomy of masculine and feminine. This shift is perhaps most notable in the increased space occupied by articulations of non-binary gender identities in popular media. As Isaac West observes:

Whatever the actual number may be, trans people are increasingly visible and vocal— so much so that one *New York Times* columnist predicted that 2010 would ‘be remembered as the year of the transsexual’ [...] More than just the subjects of exploitative documentaries and talk shows, trans people are more respectfully and affirmatively represented in popular culture. Whether these representations enable trans people to live their lives more openly or whether greater numbers of visible trans people generates increased media interest, trans people are less and less an invisible gender minority in public cultures. (2013: 14)

The history of feminism and trans people, particularly trans women, has often been “troubled” and “antagonistic” both at the academic and activist level (Connell, 2012: 857). As Raewyn Connell observes, “At first the women’s liberation movement paid no attention to transsexual women, though some were in the ranks” (859-860). This disregard soon gave way to profoundly negative representations of trans women in some high profile and influential feminist works.<sup>iv</sup> In the decades since these hostile engagements, however, a number of societal shifts have occurred so that “by the 1990s the terms “transgender” and “trans” have been increasingly used to refer to a “growing range of nonnormative identities, from ‘androgynous’ to ‘genderqueer transboi’ ” (862). Similarly, Viviane Namaste defines “transgender” as:

[A]n umbrella term used to refer to all individuals who live outside the normative sex/ gender relations—that is, individuals whose gendered self-presentation (evidenced through dress, mannerisms, and even



physiology) does not correspond to the behaviors habitually associated with the members of their biological sex. A variety of different identities are included within the 'transgender' label—cross dressers, or individuals who wear the clothes associated with the 'opposite' sex, often for erotic gratification; drag queens, or men who usually live and identify as gay men, but who perform as female impersonators in gay male bars and leisure spaces; and transsexuals, or individuals who take hormones and who may undergo surgery to align their biological sexes with their gender. (2000: 1)

One of the most significant challenges to the antagonism between feminism and trans articulations of gender came from Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble (GT)* first published in 1990. In *GT* she directly challenges the notion that feminism can, or should, be based on any notion of shared identity, strategic or otherwise and highlights the implicit and unstable exclusions constituted by the category of woman (1990: 4). Instead, Butler argues for a feminism that is freed from the notion that its politics must be based on a common identity. Gender, Butler tells us, is not a stable signifier but is rather an identity constituted and/or subverted through performance. As, Connell notes, Butler's theory of gender performativity is based on transvestite drag performances as the "key example" behind her argument that subversive performativity could be the basis of a radical gender politics (861). While Butler's work continues to change the conversation as feminists continue to respond to her call to "trouble" gender, both Connell (2012) and Namaste (2000), have expressed concern about the limits of Butler's work for trans politics due to its "appropriation of transsexual and transvestite experience" and its failure to engage with the "economic realities of drag and prostitution, the gender-specific character of violence, and the devastation of transsexual women's lives by HIV (Connell, 2012: 862). For Namaste queer theory "as it is currently practiced" must be rejected, both theoretically and practically for these reasons (2000, 9).

The materialist critique of Butler specifically and queer theory more generally reminds us that while these accomplishments in popular culture and academic discourse must not be underestimated, much work remains to be done in the world of gender politics writ large. For Connell, feminist social science is a "vital resource" for gaining insight into the complexity and "work" of transsexual politics:

The multidimensional structuring of gender relations certainly includes gender symbolism, but it also involves authority relations, the economy, and emotional attachment and separation [...] Therefore as transsexual women make their way through gendered social landscapes, their practices are necessarily much more than identity projects. (865)

Namaste (2000), Connell (2012), and Irving and Raj (2014) underline the significance of material politics for transgender people, a politics that ranges from social institutions, to economy, to health and constructions of the family. These realities lead Connell to argue that despite the antagonisms and complexities implicit in the relationship, transsexual women have an interest in supporting

feminist causes to create a just gender order. For Connell, “collective struggle” is important in reaching the necessary gains, particularly when it comes to questions of material justice such as housing, health, safety, income and education. She argues:

Transsexual women are a small group, and most are not in a strong social position; the traumas of contradictory embodiment and transition, and the effects of discrimination and contempt cannot be waved aside. Support from other feminists is the most strategic resource to empowering transsexual women. (874)

The increased visibility of transgender politics is an opportunity to expand the feminist political science agenda and re-energize other feminist politics that have been pushed to the margins such as those engaged on issues of class (hooks 2014). The varied recognition and material issues included in trans politics bring questions of gender justice to the fore in new and imperative ways. For example, transgender citizens have worked to reveal the everyday disciplinary and discriminatory nature of spaces such as public restrooms structured along the traditional binary of men and women. These politics have been the result of strenuous advocacy—often at the level of individual trans children and their families.<sup>v</sup> Their work has revitalized discussions about the gendered nature of public space and public policy.

In highlighting the opportunity for alliance(s) between trans and feminist politics I do not want to suggest that feminism, in political science, or other disciplines or communities, simply add “other” gender issues to the existing agenda. As Kimberley Manning recently argued:

A feminist university does not call for the inclusion of marginalized others (such as women, racialized minorities, and sexual minorities) into a pre-existing hierarchy, but rather disrupts and reshapes the forces of knowledge production, the relationship between teaching and learning, and the means by which creative output is measured and valued. (2016)

Feminism itself must change if its advocates want to be accountable to the many gender constituencies that exist. As Namaste argues, “transsexuals are continually and perpetually erased” both in the cultural and institutional world and in much of the research world (2000: 2). If feminist political scientists want to continue their role as experts and/ or advocates on the topic of gender the agenda must expand to reflect the shifting political and social context. An expansive response need not be co-opting or reductive, nor should it appropriate the voices of those working to create space to tell their own stories, but it can speak to the complex yet fundamental role gender plays in a society and can work to reveal new alliances and area of study in which feminist political science can play a vital role within the discipline as a whole. As Irving and Raj (2014) argue, “the construction of knowledge concerning trans identities and the material lives of trans people is political engagement” (Emphasis added. 5). We can, and must, continue to discuss “women” in a variety of ways and through a variety of means, but we must also

make room to discuss the contested and relational nature of gender. As Joni Lovenduski reminds us, gender is not just reflective of categories or identities, it is also fundamentally relational and “is expressed in relations that are embodied in the sexual division of labour, compulsory heterosexuality, discourses and ideologies of citizenship, motherhood, masculinity, and femininity” (1998: 335). An expansionist feminist agenda prioritizes relationality as a central lens in thinking, talking, writing, and doing gender.

### **Moving Forward as “Nomadic Subjects”**

Can feminist political science take on the project of interrogating the gender binary without reinforcing hegemonic articulations of it? What might be lost or buried in such a pursuit? Braidotti’s theory of nomadic subjects offers a timely and significant theoretical lens through which to pursue this kind of work in a way that is accountable to the multiple subjectivities at stake. Her argument centers on the need for politically invested cartographies of “embedded and embodied social positions” through figurations of becoming (2011: 4).

For Braidotti, theories informed by narrative and counter-memory techniques can work to redefine power relations while remaining accountable to the subjects at stake and their constitutive multiplicities. This approach provides a possible way out of the theoretical impasse that arises from the conflict between approaches that assert unified identities (thus reinforcing the hegemonic gender binary) and those that problematically equalize various asymmetrical identities through deconstruction (thus failing to account for the power differentials that continue to be reinforced by dominant understandings of the gender binary).

Accounting for the multiple historically othered articulations and experiences is central in this nomadic approach but so also is a critical investigation of the historical center. This approach, Braidotti argues, is:

Equally resistant to the identification of the center as inertia and self-perpetuation and to the aporetic repetition of Sameness. The challenge is to destabilize dogmatic, hegemonic, exclusionary power at the very heart of the structures of the dominant subject through nomadic interventions.” (9)

Thus, destabilizing the gender binary does not equate with the disappearance of difference but rather requires articulations of difference, “different differences”, that challenge the pejorative implications of the term and that reveal the multiplicities inherent in all subject positions. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide any robust account of the many “different differences” we might seek to learn from I suggest making space for multiple trans, bisexual and gender fluid articulations and experiences that have yet to be included in the cartography of political science as figurations that offer a number of possible insights into non-hegemonic gender practices.

In conclusion, I would like to offer a few words of caution. Any effort to expand the feminist political science agenda must be accompanied by an ongoing critical examination of the larger discursive and political context(s) in which such work is embedded and engaged. More specifically, the risks of appropriation, co-optation, and de-politicization must be central in any meaningfully accountable feminist approach. The socio-political landscape is constantly shifting therefore mapping and rethinking the landscape is of fundamental importance. Braidotti's concerns about "men in feminism" offers an insightful warning that must be heeded seriously in any efforts to expand the feminist agenda:

In an advanced queer era it may [...] seem inadequate to still speak of men and women, let alone their respective relationships to feminism. Yet in the competitive context of the contemporary social and academic labour market, torn between 'theory wars' and multiple 'races for theory' these seemingly old-fashioned categories have acquired a new salience. The statistics of male-to-female career practices speak for themselves and the term *backlash* does not even begin to sketch the extent of the political obstacles put in the way of the fulfillment of feminist ideals and practices. The 'brothers' may have learned to appreciate complexity and multiplicity in theory, but they are far from practising generous encounters with positive differences in practice. (281)

The possibilities of co-optation and the de-politicization of gender through so-called gender neutral articulations and policies, particularly in neoliberal contexts, have been well documented in feminist political science (Bashevkin, 1998; Brodie and Bakker 2007; Collier, 2009; Jenson, 2009) and is precisely why feminism remains a central lens through which to consider contemporary gender politics. How to take on the double-edged work of challenging gender while utilizing gender as a powerful tool to reveal new possibilities and strategies is a complex question that any expansionist must pursue head-on.

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<sup>i</sup> For instance, citing Knopff and Morton 1992, and Cairns 1991 as specific examples, Cossman, Bell, Gotell, and Ross (1997) argue that mainstream discussions of "feminism" and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms reduce Canadian feminism to a discussion of one political actor and, by doing so, one political position. More specifically, they argue: "the dominant argument in mainstream texts is that Canadian feminists (i.e. LEAF) have been the most successful Charter actors—an argument that would be seen as exceedingly naive by most feminist analysts" (Cossman et. al, 1997: 105).

<sup>ii</sup> One notable exception is Joni Lovenduski. In "Gendering Research in Political Science", Lovenduski (1998) observes that feminist political science "has undergone a significant, if incomplete, shift in method from the use of a dichotomous category of sex to a more complex and sometimes slippery category of gender." A shift that is,

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“incomplete” in part, “because many feminists are reluctant to give up on biologically determined categories of man and woman” (350-351). Overall, Lovenduski argues, feminist political science needs to engage the concept of gender, “but must also retain the use of the dichotomous variable of sex” (336).

iii While Watson received significant criticism in social media for speaking from a place of white socio-economic privilege this criticism reflects the difficulty feminists confront when doing feminist work. See <http://www.papermag.com/emma-watson-bell-hooks-conversation-1609893784.html> for a shared interview with Watson and bell hooks on these challenges.

iv Connell (2012) discusses some of the most antagonistic “feminist” accounts of trans women most notably Mary Daly’s discussion of transsexuality as a “necrophilic invasion” of “women bodies and spirits” and Janice Raymond’s depiction of transsexual women as “parodies of femininity and male invaders of space” (860).

v For example, in 2014, as a result of trans advocacy, the Vancouver school board passed a policy amendment that included directives to address children by the name that corresponds with their self-identified gender, to avoid sex-segregated activities and to allow children to use the bathroom of their choice.