

Rethinking Globalised Resistance: Feminist Activism and Critical Theorising in International Relations

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Abstract

This article argues that a feminist approach to the ‘politics of resistance’ offers a number of important empirical insights which, in turn, open up lines of theoretical inquiry which critical theorists in IR would do well to explore. Concretely, we draw on our ongoing research into feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism to rethink the nature of the subject of the politics of resistance, the conditions under which resistance emerges and how resistance is enacted and expressed. We begin by discussing the relationship of feminism to critical IR theory as a way of situating and explaining the focus and approach of our research project. We then summarise our key empirical arguments regarding the emergence, structure, beliefs, identities and practices of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism before exploring the implications of these for a renewed critical theoretical agenda in IR.

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Introduction

In this article, we reflect on the nature, scope and remit of critical theorising in International Relations (IR) through the lens of feminist theory and activism. The seeds of this undertaking lie in our recent edited book, *Critical Theories, International Relations and 'the Anti-Globalisation Movement'* (Eschle and Maiguashca 2005a), in which we sought to apply diverse critical perspectives to contemporary activism, bring them into dialogue with each other, and pull out the implications of such a substantive focus for critical theorising in IR. We concluded by arguing (2005b, 216), amongst other things, that such theorising was built upon 'a largely implicit and undertheorised' notion of 'the politics of resistance', of which social movements are one key vehicle. Our research continues to be driven by the issues raised in that edited volume. Indeed, while completing it we began a joint research project tentatively entitled 'Making Feminist Sense of "the Anti-Globalisation Movement"'. This current project is rooted in an empirical study of what we are labelling feminist 'anti-globalisation' activism and seeks to draw out the empirical and theoretical implications of this for thinking about the wider movement conjuncture and the 'politics of resistance' more generally. Below, we reflect on our research, asking: in what ways can our feminist study of 'anti-globalisation' activism help us rethink the critical IR theory project and its pivotal concept of 'the politics of resistance'?

Although much used in the discipline, the meaning of the term 'critical theory' is ambiguous at best. In its original framing, Critical Theory designated a broad tradition of social thought—mainly associated with the Frankfurt School, but sometimes understood to include others such as Gramsci—which had as its central aims the revitalisation of Marx's thought along less economic, scientific lines and the exploration of the role of consciousness in the activation of emancipatory political practice. Recently, however, the term 'critical theory' (lower case) has been deployed more expansively. Political theorist Leonard (1990), for example, defines it as those approaches that share the overriding goal of the realisation of self-liberating practice. In IR, Brown (1994) includes all those critical of positivism as the dominant epistemological approach in the field. In this view, then, the critical theory project is pursued by Marxists, Gramscians, Habermasians, poststructuralists, postcolonial scholars—and feminists.

Adapting Leonard (1990, 4-8), we understand 'critical theory' in this broad sense to be characterised by the following three imperatives. At the level of epistemology, critical theorists must seek to expose taken-for-granted truths as historically contingent and socially constructed and to unravel the relationship between knowledge and power. Furthermore, we should reflect critically on the origins of our own theoretical enterprise and the impact it has on the very reality we want to understand. As Guess reminds us (1981, 55), 'a critical theory is itself always part of its object domain'. At the ontological

and political level, we agree with Fraser when she states, ‘no-one has yet improved on Marx’s 1843 definition of critical theory as “the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age”’ (1995, 21) To this end, critical theorists must illuminate relations of domination and oppression and the concrete social struggles that seek to overturn them. In other words, critical theory is a theory about the ‘the politics of resistance’. Finally, at the normative level, critical theory refuses to take a distance from its subject matter, acquiring its bite by speaking from and to a particular marginalised constituency that is, or could be, engaged in the politics of resistance. As Leonard asserts, ‘without the recognition of a class of persons who suffer oppression, conditions from which they must be freed, critical theory is nothing more than an empty intellectual enterprise’ (1990, 14). Critical theory is, in this sense, a form of ‘politicised’ or ‘critical’ scholarship (Eschle and Manguashca 2007, forthcoming).

While we acknowledge the growing critical-theoretical literature in IR dealing explicitly with the politics of resistance and related issues of social movements, civil society, and the like, it is our view that this literature remains curiously underdeveloped both theoretically and empirically. To the extent that efforts have been made in this direction, critical IR theorists have focused, in the main, on mapping the broad tectonic plates of global power—whether conceptualised in discursive or material terms—and the consequent conditions of possibility for the emergence of resistance, rather than on the detail of resistance itself. Given this lack of attention to political agency, it is not that surprising that relatively little sustained work has been undertaken thus far by critical IR theorists on the recent conglomeration of social struggles known variously as the ‘anti-globalisation’ or ‘global justice’ movement—or ‘the movement of movements’.¹ There has been some commentary in the wake of the Seattle protests (Gill 2000; Halliday 2000; Scholte 2000a); a handful of important but disparate case studies of phenomena frequently associated with the movement in marxist-influenced IPE (Gills 2000; Morton 2000; Morton 2002; Rupert 2000); and some useful consideration by theorists of associated phenomena under the rubric of ‘global civil society’, ‘activist campaigns’ or ‘global resistance’ (e.g. Glasius and Kaldor 2002; Drainville 2004, ch.3; Amoore 2005). Arguably, however, there has yet been neither significant engagement with the proliferating literature on the ‘anti-globalisation’ or ‘global justice’ movement from beyond the discipline, nor sustained theorisation of its nature and significance as an instance of the politics of resistance.

It is the argument of this article that a specifically feminist approach to the politics of resistance offers a number of important empirical insights which, in turn, open up lines of theoretical inquiry which critical theorising in IR would do well to explore. More concretely, we suggest that our research into feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism provides a lucrative starting point for thinking about the nature of the subject of the politics of resistance, the conditions under which resistance emerges and how resistance is enacted and expressed. We develop this argument in three parts. In the first, we discuss the relationship of feminism to critical IR theory as a way of situating and explaining the focus and approach of our research project. In the second, we introduce our key empirical arguments regarding the emergence, structure, beliefs, identities and practices of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism and, in the third, we explore the implications of these for a

renewed critical theoretical agenda in IR, one that is oriented to and developed from a specific instance of the ‘politics of resistance’.

I. Feminist Research as Critical IR Theory

Since the inception of feminist IR as a self-defining trend in the discipline, scholars have pointed to its close, but uneasy relationship with critical theory, broadly defined. In an early intervention, Whitworth (1989, 269-70) argued that critical theory ‘holds out the greatest promise for incorporating gendered analyses into international relations’, with its basic parameters echoing those of the feminist scholarly enterprise, but added that ‘the fact that no critical international relations theorists have yet discussed gender in any sustained fashion is the most damning criticism that can be made of it’. In the years since, other feminist IR scholars have echoed this insistence on both the potential affinity of critical theory and feminism and the limitations of critical theory in practice (Johnson and Maignushca 1997; Ackerly and True 2006). Some have gone even further to argue, as do Ackerly and True, that ‘feminist IR offers a more *critical*, critical IR theory and practice’ (2006, 244, emphasis added). We agree, and propose that feminism fulfils the promise of critical theory for five main reasons.

First, feminist scholarship foregrounds gender relations as a salient form of oppression in a way that other forms of critical theory have yet to do. Indeed, as Marshall claims ‘it is *gender* as a focus ...that defines the feminist critical project’ (2000, 12, emphasis in original). This does not mean, however, that we are presented with one approach to gender. Rather, as Squires argues, ‘[t]he term gender, as used within feminist theory, is a complex and contested concept that can be best understood as a category that was developed to explore what counts as “woman” and as “man”’ (2000, 54). We suggest that, for most feminist scholars, there remains an assumption that gender categories are in some way relational, gaining their meaning from an implied opposition to each other, and that they are hierarchically arranged, with man/masculine tending to be privileged over female/feminine. Increasingly, feminists emphasise the productive as well as constraining dimensions of gender. They also pay attention to the vastly differing, context-specific ways in which gender hierarchies play themselves out and to the intersections of gender with other forms of power and oppression.

Second, the best feminist work seeks not to reduce women and men to mere effects of power, but instead, as Ackerly and True state, to ‘reveal the *agency* of the seemingly excluded’ (2006, 249, emphasis in original). To this extent, feminists are centrally concerned with exploring and understanding the collective organisation of women and their efforts to resist gendered hierarchies. In other words, feminist scholarship foregrounds the politics of resistance, with women’s and feminist social movements seen as a central object of inquiry as well as key subjects of knowledge in their own right, that is, as producers of what Sturgeon calls ‘direct theory’ (1997, 5). Third, and closely related, feminist scholarship, like other forms of critical theory, represents a ‘politicised’ or ‘critical’ scholarship to the extent that it is normatively committed to the empowerment of its subject. Unlike a number of current renditions of critical theory in IR, however, feminist theory does have a specific addressee, i.e., women and

women's/feminist movements. Thus, it primarily speaks to and from the experiences and struggles of women.

Fourth, feminist scholarship is characterised by a particularly strong impulse to reflexivity. This is because feminist scholars (like other critical theorists) understand knowledge as an expression of power and as socially and historically produced. In addition, as argued above, they have a unique identification with women's struggles and the feminist movement, which means they are, in effect, part of what it is they are studying. These twin commitments impel feminist scholars to interrogate their own locations, theoretical commitments and political impacts and to make these explicit in the exposition of their research. This brings us to our final point here: whereas some critical theories have a tendency to generate universalist arguments about social totality, ethical systems or political struggles from a supposedly Archimedean, external point, feminist scholars see all knowledge claims—whether made by academics or activists—as embodied, located and partial (e.g. Haraway 1991, 181-93). This, in turn, encourages them into dialogue with others across locational and theoretical differences in an effort to create 'a *collective conception* of a field of knowledge' (Ackerly and True 2006, 258, emphasis in original; see also Manguerra 2005b).

These five features of feminism have been fundamental to our current research project, 'Making Feminist Sense of "the Anti-Globalisation Movement"', which we started out of concern about the near-total evacuation of women's groups and feminism from the dominant images and theorisations of the 'anti-globalisation' or 'global justice' movement (Eschle 2005a). Believing this to be both empirically wrong and politically worrisome, we have sought to map the history, structure, ideologies, identities and practices of what we are calling feminist 'anti-globalisation' activism.² We chose the World Social Forum³ process as the entry point for this mapping because of its high-profile and relatively inclusive, international character, which, in turn, has allowed us to glimpse the wider terrain of movement activism, along with some of the relations of power that shape it. To this end, we participated in two European Social Forums (in Paris, November 2003, and London, October 2004) and two World Social Forums (in Mumbai, January 2004, and Porto Alegre, January 2005). At each site we used participant observation techniques, gathered activist documentation and conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women and some men we identified as feminist. We also conducted supplementary interviews in each country, and drew pragmatically on social movement theory and methodology as well as on feminist debates to help frame our questions and shape our analysis. Our overriding aim in so doing is to illuminate for both an activist and academic audience the feminist contribution to the 'anti-globalisation' or 'global justice' movement. We also hope to contribute to a more inclusive, nuanced, and critical understanding of this movement more generally.

In sum, our project is critical-theoretical, and more specifically feminist, because it is rooted in a concern with gendered relations of power and their intersections, specifically within a movement context. It seeks to foreground and critically engage with a form of feminist activism that has been marginalised and treats participants in that activism not only as objects of inquiry, but also as sources of knowledge, particularly by privileging

interview accounts. Further, it integrates explicit reflection on our relationship to our interviewees and our role in framing and interpreting their self-representations and, finally, its mapping of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism is presented as situated, tentative and incomplete, written from a specific vantage point and freighted with our particular histories, advantages and prejudices. It is in this spirit that we hope our arguments can contribute to a broader conversation among feminists and anti-globalisation activists, as well as among critical theorists in IR about the nature of their endeavour. In the next part of the article, then, we outline our situated mapping as a necessary precursor to considering its implications for critical IR theorising.

II. Mapping Feminist Anti-Globalisation Activism

As stated above, our ongoing empirical study of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism involves an examination of emergence or origins, structure, beliefs and aspirations, identity claims, and practices.

Starting with the emergence of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism, we are undertaking a multilayered analysis of global and national dynamics, including the role of changing economic and political structures, established traditions of protest, and contingent factors. At the global level, the worldwide neo-liberal restructuring of the relation between the state and economy has produced gendered, racialised impacts that have been particularly severe for women, especially those already marginalised and poor. Simultaneously, dramatically changing political opportunities offered by international institutions over the last few decades have provided space and resources for the consolidation of feminist organising on a transnational scale, with a recent reorientation of such organising away from the UN to other global arenas, including the World Social Forum. Turning to the national level, it is clear that feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ organising in the four countries in which we conducted our fieldwork (France, India, Brazil and the UK) has developed in very specific ways in response to the interplay of global structures and movements with local trajectories and events. We note, for example, that in both Brazil and India, activists have confronted far greater problems of poverty and deprivation, exacerbated by neoliberal policies, than their counterparts in the UK and France. They have also had to grapple with, in the case of India, colonial subjugation and, in both, a militarised state, which has encouraged the mobilisation of women in the context of struggles against dominant regimes and a more sustained affinity of feminist organising with organised Marxist parties. In all four contexts, however, we find that feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activists are responding not only to political-economic forces but to gendered inequalities which condition their social relations and life chances, leading to a repeated impulse across time and space to organise autonomously from the male-dominated Left.

In addition to this study of structural dynamics, collective agency and contingent factors, we are interested in learning from our interviewees’ own explanations of the origins of their activism. What we are finding are patterns that cut across the different contexts. For example, personal experiences of gender oppression play an important mobilising role, particularly within the family and early relationships, as well as in the context of existing ‘anti-globalisation’ groups. Thus for Kaarina Kailo, from Finland, feminist consciousness

came once she was ‘hit by the reality I faced as an independent woman’ and particularly by the recognition that, in her cohabiting relationship, ‘I was supposed to be an underling ... That’s where I started becoming a feminist’ (interview, Paris, 15/11/03). However, we would also stress that it is not necessarily direct personal experience of oppression that mobilises activists, but often knowledge about and empathy for others who are oppressed. As one interviewee eloquently put it, her activism involves ‘a feeling of being on the side of the oppressed’ (Nadia de Mond, interview, Paris, 14/11/03). Empathy is often combined with a sense of responsibility, as illustrated in the testimony of an interviewee mobilised by ‘the death of a young woman ... in fighting between fascists and anti-fascists ... [T]hat made me come to the point that it’s really necessary not just to stand somewhere and listen or watch, but to get involved ... to prevent other things like that from happening’ (Ann-Kristin Kowarsh, interview, London, 16/10/04). Finally, we would point to the importance of intimate, emotional ties with families and friends in enabling and sustaining activism. For Kailo, for example, it was the radical Christian values of her parents and the consequent ‘strong ethical background in my home ... from that premise I was always questioning anything that I found to be unjust’ (interview, Paris, 15/11/03). For Sonia Correa of DAWN, in contrast, it is friendship that is key. As she puts it, ‘to sustain political initiatives and political action throughout time ... the politics of friendship is just vital, you cannot do without it’ (interview, Rio de Janeiro, 10/1/05).

The structure of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism is our second axis of inquiry. The groups that make up social movements, and their interrelationships, have long been a focus of social movement theory for, as one of our interviewees recognised, ‘it’s very hard to be an activist alone ... it’s much easier to do it in a structured environment’ (interview with Helen Lynn, London, 29/10/05). In terms of internal group structure, while we note an expectedly high proportion of formal, professionalised, staff-based NGOs in our sample, there are also a surprisingly large number of informal, non-institutionalised groups, particularly among those more recently established. Moving on to the structure of relations *between* groups, the picture that emerges is one of extensive, but highly uneven and geopolitically and economically segmented networked relations, with a core of transnational networks linked together in a relatively powerful central position. All the groups in the sample have linkages to groups beyond it, particularly those associated with economic and social justice, indicative of a strong trend to combine autonomous women’s organising with integration into the broader ‘anti-globalisation movement’. Interestingly, it seems that ideology is not as significant in shaping these alliances as domestic and regional movement trajectories and resource capacities and constraints. For example, a significant number of groups participate in both of two of the most central networks in our sample, Articulación Feminista Marcosur and the World March of Women, notwithstanding the fact that these often adopt ideologically divergent positions at the World Social Forum.

This takes us to our third mapping exercise, focusing on the ideological contours of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism. In terms of what our activists say they are fighting *against*, without exception all see gender-based oppression, variously articulated, as connected to and perpetuated by political-economic structures and policies. It is this, in our view, that makes them part of a shared political struggle. The precise analysis of this

relationship may differ, as does the relative emphasis placed on the privileged position and resources of multinational corporations, financial institutions and Western states; the neo-liberal trade policies they benefit from; and the economic exploitation and environmental destruction they are seen to generate. A handful of our interviewees emphasise the accompanying problem of cultural homogenisation and a significant minority insist that the fundamental problem is capitalism itself. In terms of the specific goals that our activists are fighting *for*, we are finding significantly greater variation with examples ranging from the demand that states construct ‘a non-monolithic world political organisation with ... egalitarian and democratic representation of all countries on earth’ (World March of Women, 2001) to a dream of ‘a world where it does not matter about class, or skin colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender or the body’ (Glauca Matos, interview, São Paulo, 18/1/05, translation). Regardless of these differences in specific objectives, however, our interviewees generally express the urgent need to transform prevailing social relations as well as a faith in the possibility of bringing about such a change. We would also highlight a widespread reluctance amongst our interviewees to use ideological labels for the beliefs and aspirations they elaborate. This critique of the ‘politics of labelling’ can be explained, in part, because of a ‘post-ideological’ orientation among some and, in part, because even the most ideologically committed are aware of the exclusions that such identifications can generate. As one interviewee put it: ‘when I feel that a label is coming up, I start to wince’ (Helena Kotkowska, interview, London 12/10/04).

This takes us to our fourth empirical focus, on collective identity formation. Here, we suggest that more pertinent than ideology as a source of identity and difference are those social stratifications centring on gender, class, race and sexuality. Such identities are, however, usually treated not as fixed markers but as ‘imagined communities’ that must be negotiated and traversed. For example, basic educational and professional data reveal a relative class privilege amongst key feminist organisers cutting across North and South. Many of these organisers have responded by striving, with varying degrees of success, to both facilitate the organisation of ‘grassroots women’ and build bridges across class difference. Another example concerns the phenomenon of women from ethnic and sexual minorities organising in distinct groups. As Lucia Xavier claims of her group *Criola*, ‘the organisation was made by Black women for Black women, to be a comfortable space’ (interview, Rio de Janeiro 12/1/05, translation). Yet such autonomous organising does not mean a retreat into separatism. *Criola* is a member of, amongst others, the Network of Black Brazilian Women’s NGOs (AMNB), ‘an important political actor in rethinking feminism in Brazil’ (interview, 12/1/05, translation). Thus, longstanding feminist arguments about the need to combine autonomy with integration and diversity with solidarity clearly remain highly resonant here. Indeed, for those activists associated with the *Articulación Feminista Marcosur* and the associated ‘Campaign Against Fundamentalism’, recognition of and support for diversity of identity is seen as the basis of solidarity: ‘the construction of an “us” that is inclusive, plural, shifting and not entirely without conflict ... is the fundamental challenge facing an alternative political project’ (Oliveira n.d.).

With regard to our fifth and final axis of inquiry, we find ourselves confronting an unanticipated range of feminist practices. Thus, in Brazil, one feminist NGO assesses the gender impacts of the government budgetary process and proposes ways to make public policy more inclusive and accountable (Guacira Oliveira, interview, Porto Alegre, 26/1/05, translation), while another runs self-esteem workshops in which women create collages from magazines and model their bodies with clay as a way of encouraging reflection on body image, commodification and self-worth (Nalu Faria, interview São Paulo, 17/1/05, translation). In India, the Deccan Development Society runs a series of ‘daughter-in-law’ workshops to build the confidence of younger women and encourage them to become rural leaders (Rukmini Rao, interview, Hyderabad 6/1/04), while Women Speak Out in the UK has held events aimed at encouraging reflection and support in a safe space for activist women battling within mixed-sex groups (Gail Chester, interview, London, 8/11/05). Clearly, this wide range of feminist practices is shaped by specificities of context as well as existing traditions or ‘repertoires’ of protest. Nonetheless, we have found a number of common threads that cut across our fieldwork sites. Most of our groups, for example, engage in several types of practice simultaneously, that is, they multi-task. Relatedly, feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism has a marked tendency to address the economic and material needs of women as well as their social and psychological wounds. In this regard, material deprivation and social stigmatisation are seen to be seen as working in tandem and equally important to combat. Furthermore, we are finding a pervasive emphasis on educational outreach and collective knowledge generation (see Eschle and Maignushca 2007, forthcoming); a recurrent focus on violence against women and the need to provide them with shelter and legal redress; and an interest in the body as a source of knowledge, form of political expression and political tool. Finally, ideological affiliation often seems less crucial in determining the type of practice prioritised than other factors, including a pragmatic consideration of specific goals and the conditions and alliances within which they are pursued. For example, Marxist mass women’s groups and feminist NGOs in India may be ideologically divided but they frequently engage in strikingly similar activities—offering legal advice, facilitating self-governing cooperatives—in their quest to help women become self-sufficient and resist violence.

III. Theorising the Politics of Resistance from Feminist Practice

We turn in the third part of the article to the implications of these empirical arguments for the conceptualisation of the politics of resistance in critical IR theory.⁴ More specifically, we explore what our research has to offer to critical IR theory in response to the following three questions: who or what is the subject of resistance? why does resistance emerge when it does? what acts constitute resistance?⁵

A. Who/what resists?

It is perhaps those working within the Gramscian tradition of thought who have been the most explicit about whom they take to be the subject of the politics of resistance. Deploying the concept of ‘social movements’ or ‘forces’ and situating them in the realm of ‘civil society’, they characterise these actors as ‘counter-hegemonic’ to the extent that

they reflect a collective will and seek to overturn class forms of oppression (e.g., Cox 1999; Chin and Mittelman 2000; Morton 2002; Rupert 2003; Birchfield and Freyberg-Inan 2005). We suggest that, for Gramscians, such movements embody alliances of diverse forces which transcend different ways of being and understanding, unite distinct realms of subjectivity around the interests of subordinated classes, and reflect shared truths and goals. In a similar vein, although dropping the class-based ontology that informs the Gramscian perspective, others in IR have suggested that movements can be understood as new forms of political agency united around marginalised identities (Scholte 1996, 39; 2000 86, 107; Linklater 1996, 96). Suspicious of the erasures entailed in narratives of identity and unity, those of a more poststructuralist bent have emphasised the transitory and contingent nature of activist politics (e.g., Connolly 1991; Walker 1994). They may eschew the term ‘social movement’ in favour of concepts seen as less homogenising, such as ‘activist campaigns’, ‘resistances’, ‘dissent’, or a ‘politics of alterity’ (Shaw 2003; Bleiker 2000; Campbell 1998). From such a perspective, there is no unified subject performing acts of resistance: rather, resistance acts are constitutive of an always incomplete subject, and marked by strategic rationality, irony and contradiction.

Now, while each of these conceptualisations capture important aspects of resistance politics, they also reproduce an unhelpful dichotomy which positions movements as either unified entities marching to the same tune or as fragmented, internally combustible expressions of difference. In response, our co-edited book defended the constructivist argument that a social movement has to be understood as an ongoing social process in which solidarity is continually subject to dissent and renegotiation. Further, we drew attention to the fact that difference *within* movements is not simply a question of varying identities, but also reflective of the inequalities generated by power relations from which movements are not immune (Eschle 2005b). We suggested that in the context of movement politics the pursuit of identity is not an end in itself, but rather a means to a wider end, involving the articulation of a political critique of the status quo and of an alternative vision of the future (Maignashca 2005a, 135-6). According to this view, solidarity does not hinge on the articulation of a pre-existing common identity, i.e., a collective sense of ‘who we are’, but involves, in part, the *construction* of identity and contestation of power inequalities, as well as shared feelings of moral outrage at injustice, shared intuitions about human potential, love and loyalty to others, and, finally, a faith in the possibility of ending injustice and bringing about social change. This more expansive understanding of solidarity, which cannot be reduced to shared identity—or to shared ideological commitment, for that matter—allows the necessary space for the idea and practice of diversity.

Our current research, described above, builds on this view. The reluctance of many of our interviewees to use ideological labels to differentiate self and other, their awareness of the exclusionary nature of labelling, their frequent collaboration over strategic goals notwithstanding ideological difference, and the intertwining of black women’s organisations with broader social struggles—all point to the self-conscious way in which activists simultaneously construct solidarity and foster diversity. In addition, we think it is crucial to recognise the importance of organisational structure for nurturing and giving expression to both solidarity and diversity. The feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ groups we

studied are characterised by a wide variety of complex internal structures, which set the parameters within which activists converge, act as an important resource, and allow for temporal and spatial continuity, thus tying activists into the group and the group into the movement. Currently, the critical IR literature neglects this organisational aspect of the politics of resistance and would do well to explore and learn from social movement theory, which has much to offer on the subject.

A final insight here concerns the importance of emotional attachments to the construction of solidarity—and, by extension, to the making of collective subjects of resistance. As detailed in Part Two, it is clear that shared experiences and feelings of empathy are vital to the politicisation process as well as to the development and maintenance of movement infrastructure. In fact, a number of the groups we studied were established by close friends who have sustained their organisations, in part, because of their close affinity with each other. Thus, critical IR theorists need to temper the more rationalist modes of understanding organisations prevalent in social movement theory with recognition that the nodal points of a movement infrastructure can also be knots of intimacy and love. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that empathy can transcend close friendships, with many of our activists motivated to act out of empathy with, and feelings of responsibility for, the pain and suffering of those beyond their immediate social network. To this extent, feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism exemplifies ‘a politics for and on behalf of others’, or, as Goodwin et al. (2001) describe it, ‘a passionate politics’, which draws its strength and resilience from affective relations.

This emphasis on the role of emotional attachment in the construction of collective subjects of resistance reminds of the need to pay attention to the individual agent within a social movement context, and particularly to the nature of political subjectivity. Our research suggests that feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activists are motivated by empathy, fear and anger as well as a sense of hope and faith. They are thus responding to a range of emotional, cognitive, and spiritual impulses that are largely neglected in critical IR theory. Indeed, most such theory tends to avoid the question of political consciousness altogether. On the notable occasions when it is addressed, those influenced by Marxist perspectives have assumed a rational, self-knowing actor, driven primarily by material ‘needs’ and/or ‘interests’ (e.g., Gruffydd Jones 2005: 57), while those influenced by post-structuralism tend to translate questions of political subjectivity into those of identity and discourse. What is largely missed is any serious exploration of the range of forces (emotional, psychological, spiritual, bodily, cognitive) animating the political consciousness of activists, and we suggest that this is a line of inquiry that critical IR theorists would do well to pursue. (see, e.g., Campbell 1998; Sullivan 2005a).

B. Why resist?

Turning now to the conditions under which resistance emerges, it is again the Marxists and Gramscians who have most explicitly set out the parameters in which ‘counter-hegemony’ can develop. Whether framed in terms of ‘global crises’ brought on by neo-liberal restructuring, ‘uneven development’, or ‘structural contradictions’ that create disjunctures between material life realities and cognitive beliefs, the root causes of

discontent and, thereby, resistance are situated within an expanding and transformative capitalist system (e.g., Cox 1986, 1999; Hoogvelt 2001; Rupert 2003; Gruffydd Jones 2005). It is economic globalisation and changing relations of production that provide the terrain for social struggle. In response, we argued in our previous work for the need to go beyond mapping economic conditions to consider other relations of power, such as gender, as well as the sustaining role of ideational and discursive factors (Eschle and Maignashca 2005b, 215). Further, we insisted that any effort to explain the origins of resistance politics has to be more reflexive about the assumptions it makes regarding the relationship *between* relations of power and resistance politics. Thus, Rupert's lack of surprise at resistance to US policies given that 'global capitalism cannot be normalised' (2005, 57), and the assumption of Colas that 'capitalist relations—like most power relations—are politically contested' (2003, 99), need to be questioned and explored. In other words, tracing the origins of resistance compels us to go beyond mapping power relations to the ways in which activists conceptualise *oppression* (Eschle and Maignashca 2005b, 215).

Our current research into feminist 'anti-globalisation' activism confirms a number of these old insights as well as opening up new lines of inquiry. Certainly, it has re-emphasised the need to take the gendered constitution and impact of globally produced socio-economic relations seriously and to consider the way in which gender has both material and cultural/ideational dimensions. It has also confirmed that power relations are multiple and that gender intersects with other hierarchies of power in context-specific ways. Thus, for example, we argue that feminist 'anti-globalisation' activism has not only emerged as a response to gendered hierarchies within 'anti-globalisation' groups but also that it has taken different forms in different contexts because of racialised and geopolitical hierarchies operating in a variety of ways. Moreover, we have been reminded of the significance of past movement mobilisation in shaping and inspiring new waves of activism, as evident in the ways in which the legacy of the anti-colonial movement is mobilised in India. In this way, we can see that the politics of resistance should be conceptualised as a response to both structural and agential forces.

Finally, our empirical work brings to the fore the importance of the personal histories and affective attachments of individual activists in the making of a social movement. Indeed, our interviews highlight that, in addition to sustaining movement solidarity, friendships, family relations, contingent personal experiences and a range of emotional responses are equally salient to an explanation of why activists become politically engaged in the first place. The family, in this context, should be conceived as a site not only of gendered power relations, but also of inspiration and politicisation. In this way our research goes beyond confirming that the personal is political and opens up a number of new lines of inquiry about the politicisation process and how and where activists come to construct knowledge claims about 'oppression'.

C. What does the politics of resistance look like?

The specific 'repertoires of action' or practices of movements have received much attention in social movement theory but are comparatively understudied in the critical IR

literature (for recent exceptions, see Morton 2002; De Goede 2005; Gruffydd Jones 2005; Sullivan 2005a). From Marxist and Gramscian perspectives, social movements and resistance politics more generally are seen as operating within civil society, as instrumental in character (oriented strategically toward material goals) and aimed at an external enemy (the transnational capitalist elite and its mediator, the state) (see, e.g., Colas 2002; Halliday 2000). Those more influenced by poststructuralism tend rather to be more interested in how movements, variously conceived, re-inscribe political practices and re-instantiate an alternative political ethic (e.g., Walker 1994; Bleiker 2005). As Walker states, 'it is less interesting to ask how powerful or influential social movements are, or how they fulfil established expectations of what they must be and must become, than how they contribute to the reconfiguration of the political under contemporary conditions' (1994: 674). Because of their wariness about the erasure of difference, poststructuralists tend to argue in support of practices that pluralise identities and defend alterity and difference (e.g., Campbell 1998; Connolly 1991, 218).

In this context, we note that, on the rare occasions when women's or feminist activism does feature in critical IR theory, it is generally described as 'identity-oriented' and primarily concerned with changes in the cultural sphere (Shaw 1994, 660; Scholte 2000b). As such, feminists are depicted as pursuing 'expressive' (rather than instrumental) strategies that operate in symbolic terms and engage with the 'politics of everyday life'. In part, it is the assumption that feminists privilege identity over material concerns that explains why Marxist and Gramscian scholars do not usually consider feminism central to their analyses (for an exception, see Rupert 2003, 5-8). Conversely, we suspect that it is the assumption that feminists pursue a unified, exclusionary identity that encourages poststructuralist scholars to similarly sidestep the political potentials of feminist theory and practice.

The limitations of these perspectives are highlighted by our case study. First, the conceptualisation of power in the form of an external opponent is problematic because it fails to consider power relations internal to movement politics such as gender. Moreover, the emphasis that many of our interviewees placed on 'popular education' and consciousness-raising reveals an understanding of gender as the product of both intended and unintended collective actions by both men and women, rather than as the imposition of one opponent.

Second, as we have argued, it is inaccurate to represent women's and feminist activism *per se* as operating solely on the terrain of identity. As we have seen, feminist 'anti-globalisation' activists are often critical of static, reified identities and, indeed strive to make links across identities around shared political goals. Furthermore, their tendency to combine their opposition to dominant cultural representations with a challenge to material inequalities suggests that they are engaging simultaneously in what Fraser has characterised as a 'politics of recognition' *and* a 'politics of redistribution' (1997, 6). In this way, they confirm Fraser's view that any analysis of oppression necessitates an analysis of the way culture and political economy are mutually constitutive.

Third, while Marxist and Gramscian IR scholars narrow the politics of resistance to acts of open contestation in civil society, our investigation into feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism suggests that resistance can be expressed in multifaceted ways and in diverse locations. As we have seen, many of the practices of our interviewees seek to develop self-esteem, raise consciousness and enhance emotional tranquillity. Such practices may address women’s role in the private sphere, are often expressive in character and tend to focus on the mind and body of individual women. While these practices are seen by feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activists as an integral part of a wider political struggle against a globalised capitalist system, they do not address the state or the transnational capitalist elite directly. Having said this, many of our activists do directly engage with political and institutional structures, often in an ‘instrumental’ fashion. In other words, feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ practices must be understood as *hybrid*: following a continuum from instrumental to expressive, engaging a range of audiences in both public and private domains and deploying multiple methods.

Finally, we suggest that our research highlights the importance of what could be called *principled pragmatism*. By ‘pragmatic’ (as opposed to strategic, implying a narrow means-end rationality), we are claiming that many of our interviewees respond primarily to the specific conditions under which their movement emerges and develops, rather than to the demands of ideology, and that they are experimental and flexible. By ‘principled’ we are referring to their faith in and hope for an alternative future, their commitment to making that future a reality and their insistence on their accountability to a wider constituency. Thus, in contrast to Brassett’s and Higgott’s idea of ‘pragmatic praxis’, which calls for the recognition of the contingency and fallibility of our decisions (2003, 46-7), our understanding of ‘principled pragmatism’ embraces a utopian vision of social transformation. It is arguable that the distinctive ethos of principled pragmatism represents, along with the above-mentioned hybrid character of movement practices, a key contribution of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activists to the re-instantiation of the political. As such, it deserves further attention from more poststructuralist-influenced critical IR theorists.

Conclusion

In this article we have argued that a feminist approach to the politics of resistance, in general, and feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activism, in particular, yields interesting insights and raises a number of important questions that need to be taken into account by those engaged in critical theorising in IR. In terms of the subject of resistance, our case study suggests that solidarity and collective identity should be understood as a creative process, rather than an end point, sustained through organisational structures and emotional attachments, and involving the continual contestation of inequality and negotiation of difference. It also draws attention to the constitution and role of individual political consciousness and its relation to collective agency and movement politics. With respect to the conditions of possibility for resistance, the case study confirms the need to factor in considerations of gender to macro-structural analysis and highlights the importance of the ways in which activists respond to and draw upon prior movement activism, as well as the role of the private, personal and intimate in shaping activist

experience and their understanding of oppression. Finally, the case study pushes beyond reductive understandings of what resistance looks like: the practices of feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activists traverse the boundaries between public and private, economic and cultural/psychological; take multivalent, ‘hybrid’ forms; and are frequently characterised by a ‘principled pragmatism’. With all three sets of claims, we are reminded of the ways in which well-established dichotomies—such as solidarity/difference, structure/agency, material/ideational, instrumental/expressive, abstract/concrete —compartmentalise and limit thinking about the politics of resistance, and of the feminist transgression of such dichotomies in theory and practice (Peterson 1992). Clearly, while the feminist contribution to critical IR theory and to rethinking the politics of resistance may start with a curiosity about gender, it goes far beyond that.

For us, the insights and lines of inquiry described above, developed as they are from one specific instance of the politics of resistance, represent only the first tentative steps towards the reformulation of a critical research agenda in IR in dialogue with others. Of course, to what extent our theoretical arguments are generalisable to other forms of resistance politics remains an open question and needs to be worked out through comparative, empirical and theoretical research. But we hope to have demonstrated that a feminist approach, as a particularly powerful exemplar of critical IR theory, offers a revealing view of the who, why and what of resistance. Not only does it place these questions at the heart of its political and academic agenda, but it also offers us the theoretical tools and vital moments of activist engagement with which to start to answer them.

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Notes

1. While there is widespread agreement amongst activists and commentators that such a movement exists, the appropriate label for it remains highly disputed. Indeed, many find 'anti-globalisation' objectionable, in part because it implies a purely oppositional and perhaps parochial stance and in part because of a recognition that the movement itself has a globalised form. However, several of our interviewees still use the term as a convenient shorthand, generally on the understanding that it is a stand-in term for opposition to globalised neoliberal policies and associated phenomena. While 'global justice' is rising in popularity it has not been universally adopted. Marxist activists prefer 'anti-capitalist' while Indian interviewees frequently used 'anti-imperialist'. Francophone interviewees talked instead of 'the alter-globalisation movement' and German-speaking Austrians of 'the critical globalisation movement'. In this article, we use the labels 'anti-globalisation' and 'global justice' movement interchangeably, retaining the problematising quotation marks.

2. Given the contested nature of social movement labels already mentioned, we would emphasise here that feminist 'anti-globalisation' activism is *our* strategic label for activism contesting both gender hierarchy and globalised neoliberalism. We also want to acknowledge there are other empirical entry points through which one could 'make sense' of the 'anti-globalisation' movement from a critical, feminist perspective—by, for example, examining the ways in which gendered hierarchies constitute particular aspects of it in specific contexts (e.g., Sullivan 2005b) or by asking 'where are the women'? (e.g., Egan and Robidoux 2001).

3. Intended as a one-off gathering of activists from all over the world who shared an insistence that ‘another world is possible’, the first World Social Forum was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001. It spawned a rolling series of national and regional fora, feeding into an annual global event (see, e.g., Leite 2005; Sen et al. 2004).

4. We wish to acknowledge that many of our arguments in this part resonate strongly with other feminist studies of social movement practices, the nature of political subjectivity and the ethics of care, although our focus in this article remains on our own empirical work and the limits and contributions of critical IR theory in terms of conceptualising the politics of resistance.

5. These emerged from our own conversations but closely echo Amoore’s (2005) introduction to her recent survey of writings on ‘global resistance’.