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Gender and Bias in the IR Curriculum: Insights from Reading Lists

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Abstract

Following growing academic interest and activism targeting gender bias in university curricula, we present the first analysis of female exclusion in a complete IR curriculum, across degree levels and disciplinary subfields. Previous empirical research on gender bias in the teaching materials of IR has been limited in scope, i.e. restricted to PhD curricula, non-random sampling, small sample sizes, or predominately US-focused. By contrast, this study uses an original dataset of 43 recent syllabi comprising the entire IR curriculum at the London School of Economics to investigate the gender gap in the discipline's teaching materials. We find evidence of bias that reproduces patterns of female exclusion: 79.2% of texts on reading lists are authored exclusively by men, reflecting neither the representation of women in the professional discipline nor in the published discipline. We find that level of study, subfield, and course convener gender and seniority matter. First, female author inclusion improves as the level of study progresses from undergraduate to PhD. This suggests the rigid persistence of a "traditional IR canon" at the earliest disciplinary stage. Second, the International Organisations/Law subfield is more gender-inclusive than Security or Regional Studies, while contributions from Gender/Feminist Studies are dominated by female authorship. These patterns are suggestive of gender-stereotyping within subfields. Third, female-authored readings are assigned less frequently by male and/or more senior course conveners. Tackling gender bias in the taught discipline must therefore involve a careful consideration of the linkages between knowledge production and dissemination, institutional hiring and promotion, and pedagogical practices.

Keywords

International Relations; Gender; Syllabi; Pedagogy; Methods

Introduction

To what extent are gender imbalances embedded within university reading lists in the discipline of International Relations (IR)?¹ And what can patterns of male and female-author inclusion (and exclusion) in reading lists across a spectrum of undergraduate (UG), graduate (MA), and post-graduate (PhD) course syllabi tell us about the state of the discipline?

Inclusion and diversity in teaching are crucial concerns which the discipline has only more recently begun to think about in earnest. Student campaigns (such as ‘Decolonising the academy’ or ‘Why is my curriculum white?’) and institutional debates challenging the male-centric structures that dominate the disciplinary development of fields such as Politics, IR, and Western Philosophy are gaining momentum. Initiatives such as #WomenAlsoKnowStuff, Genderize.io, GenderizeR (Kamil Wais), and the Gender Balance Assessment Tool (Jane Sumner) have built awareness around the underrepresentation of female scholars. While much research has (rightfully) focused on publication, citation, and hiring patterns, the materials of teaching themselves play a role in perpetuating gender imbalance. Indeed, something as “standard” as a course syllabus can reveal the state of discipline. This holds not only at the post-graduate and early-career levels, but also during earliest stages of disciplinary training when students are introduced to central concepts, theories, and texts.

On the heels of growing scholarly interest in gender and diversity issues with regards to those who practice and represent IR (Owens, 2017), instances of publication and citation bias (Breuning, Bredehoft, and Walton, 2005; Evans and Moulder, 2011; Maliniak et al., 2008; Maliniak et al., 2013; Teele and Thelen, 2017; Young, 1995), and gender biases in course syllabi (Colgan, 2015a, 2017; Hardt and Smith, 2018), this study examines patterns of gender bias at one of the UK’s leading institutions for the study of IR: the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics (LSE).

Existing studies focusing on the taught discipline have been limited, in addition to small sample sizes, by concentrating only on post-graduate teaching, “core” disciplinary courses, or journal publications. By contrast, our study investigates the taught discipline holistically, combining

¹ Throughout this article, we use the term *gender* rather than *sex* to denote categorisations of male/female authors. Though imperfect, *gender* as a sociological term allows us to build associations with gender roles and norms within academia. We recognise that adherence to disaggregating by male/female may be viewed as problematic because it denies the inclusion of transgender, genderqueer, and other non-binary categories. This is not to dismiss these categories, but rather shows the limits of our methodological approach to assigning gender identities.

core and elective courses and including book, chapter, and journal publications regardless of publisher rank or type. To do so, we use an original dataset of 43 IR syllabi across sub-disciplines and degree-levels. This comprises the entire IR curriculum as taught at the LSE's IR department in 2015/16 with a total of 12,399 non-unique textual sources (11,199 unique sources). While our dataset contains publication dates reaching as far back as 1651, we focus on IR texts published from 1960 onwards to minimize the skew.

We code for gender of author and co-author combinations, integrating this with publication details (dates of publication, publication type, and publisher) and course convener gender. Based on literature surrounding issues of gender, gender bias, and processes of inclusion and exclusion as they pertain to the taught discipline, we develop and test hypotheses relating to the inclusion of female scholars in university reading lists. This allows us to assess some of the patterns of gender bias that students of IR are exposed to. It also sheds light on how these patterns intersect with degree-level, subfield, publication type, authorship decision-making, and course convener information.

We find that LSE reading lists suffer from gender bias: far from equity, they neither reflect the representation of female scholars in the professional discipline, nor the representation of female authors in the published discipline. This is thus the first study to uncover systematic gender bias in a full disciplinary curriculum at a leading institution for the study of IR. Only 20.8% of all assigned readings include at least one female author (and conversely, 79.2% are written exclusively by men), while female-only contributions make up 14.2%.

These results vary based on level of study as well as disciplinary subfield. First, inclusion of female scholars increases from undergraduate to graduate and PhD level. We argue that this is suggestive of specialisation and exploration as education advances, but also of the persistence of a male-dominated "traditional canon" at the undergraduate level. Second, the Security and Regional Studies subfields perform particularly poorly in terms of the male-female balance, while texts associated with Gender, Feminist, and Queer Studies are overwhelmingly produced by female scholars. We interrogate how this might relate to gender stereotyping of disciplinary subfields. Third, texts by women are assigned less frequently by male and/or more senior conveners. This suggests that gender bias must be addressed within and alongside debates about hiring practices, syllabus production, and what constitutes appropriate measures for gender inclusivity. Finally, we provide indirect insights into patterns of co-authorship: the female inclusion rate is much

higher in co-authored pieces (33.3%) than on average. However, on our reading lists women are less likely to have co-authored with each other and less likely to hold first author position in mixed teams than their male counterparts.

The holistic, in-depth study of an entire curriculum, spanning all levels of study and sub-fields, allows us to unpack patterns of gender bias that might otherwise go unnoticed. It thus illustrates the potential ways in which institutional, disciplinary and (possibly) individual biases, syllabi production processes, and stereotypes around gender and knowledge interact to create an intricate web of systemic exclusion of female scholars in the taught discipline.

Gender Inclusion and Exclusion in the Teaching of IR

The study of gender inclusion and exclusion in disciplinary teaching is rooted in broader theoretical debates relating to the origins and trajectories of, as well as the power relations inherent to, the (re)production and dissemination of disciplinary knowledge. The dominance of male scholarship has unequivocally shaped the intellectual contours of the taught discipline over time. Despite efforts to diversify teaching practices with a mind to gender, race, positionality, and lived experience, biases inherent in the taught discipline remain ubiquitous. In recent years, growing levels of awareness and activism from within and outside of academia have helped to retrieve historically suppressed voices and return them to the fore. This momentum is propelled by the conviction that IR should adequately reflect the international that it claims to study and the multiplicity of voices who study it. Yao and Delatolla (2017) argue that “we cannot be a truly international (or global) discipline if our scholarship sidelines and silences the diverse nature of the object of our study”.

Left unaddressed, parochial research questions and modes of knowledge production and teaching will continue to override other perspectives, leading to the solidification of what is perceived to be the disciplinary mainstream (Levine and Barder, 2014: 866). The institutionalised face of the discipline—curricula, publications, departmental practices, etc.—is therefore something worth interrogating, deconstructing, and revisiting. Effecting positive change requires understanding the extent to which disciplinary knowledge (re)production and teaching are (measurably) imbalanced and non-diverse, and whether progress can or is being made. This study shines a light on gender imbalances; specifically, the extent to and ways in which female scholars are (and are not) included on IR reading lists.

Gendered exclusion can be both overt and implicit, and recent empirical studies have uprooted and made visible the patterns of bias embedded within the discipline. Existing empirical literature on gender and IR knowledge production and dissemination can be divided by a primary research focus relating to 1) the socio-historical development of gender imbalances, 2) the professional discipline, 3) the published discipline, or 4) the taught discipline. While our study contributes to the latter, it both informs and is informed by broader research agendas, some of which we highlight below as they pertain to this study.

Firstly, research on the absence of women from the intellectual and disciplinary history of IR has sought to challenge the established canon that is taken as given and as fundamental to the study of IR (see for instance Allen and Savigny, 2016; Hagmann and Biersteker, 2014; Maliniak et al., 2008; Owens, 2017; Tickner, 2013). Rather than simply adding women back into existing disciplinary debates, the goal is to question the assumptions built into modes of knowledge (re)production. To take women seriously as producers of IR knowledge also means to recognise that exclusion is not (always) a conscious act as much as an implicit, customary, and learned practice (Owens, 2017: 7). These disciplinary concerns trickle down to the level of pedagogy, where there is even less diversity than the content of IR suggests, and “more conformity to certain ways of doing, practicing, or promoting IR” (Turton, 2016: 148). If pedagogy and knowledge production are inherently political, they must be returned to the study of IR.

Secondly, the development of the Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) Project has fostered a subset of research focusing on the academic profession and the stark gender imbalances among university faculties. The UK’s most recent data (TRIP Faculty Survey UK, 2014) shows that 35% of scholars identify as female, reproducing other estimations that roughly a third of IR scholars globally are women (Sharman and Weaver, 2013: 1095). This divide deteriorates the more senior the position—at the LSE, 10 out of 11 full professors were male in the year of observation, corroborating other findings that women are scarcer in the higher ranks of academia (Beaulieu et al., 2017: 780; Kantola, 2008: 203; Maliniak et al., 2008: 122).

And yet female entrants into universities have outpaced men for some time: across the UK, women are now 35% more likely to enter university than men (UCAS, 2016). Half of all social science-related PhDs have been awarded to women in the past five consecutive years (HESA, 2018). Yet, the subsequent academic career ladder through to full professor fails them (Hancock et al., 2013). Explanations for this so-called “leaky pipeline” (Alper and Gibbons, 1993; Østby et

al., 2013: 493) range from historical determinism to structural and social factors; for instance, stereotyping, discrimination, gendered divisions of labour, and inadequate supervisory, departmental, or familial support (Beaulieu et al., 2017: 779; Kantola, 2008). Correspondingly, the top ten most influential IR scholars according to UK academics surveyed by TRIP include only two female scholars (Cynthia Enloe and Susan Strange).² Importantly, TRIP surveys have found cross-national variations in how scholars define and associate with “IR” on either side of the Atlantic (see Jordan et al., 2009), which begs for a more nuanced approach to deconstructing the issues at hand (for limitations of the TRIP dataset, see Sharman and Weaver, 2013).

Thirdly, in the published discipline, men have generally outpaced women in rates of publications (and submissions), leading to the notion that female scholars lag behind in productivity, impact, and recognition (Maliniak et al., 2008: 122; Mathews and Anderson, 2001: 143; also: Hesli and Lee, 2011). Yet the rate of “lag” is not necessarily reflective of the makeup of the scholarly community. Publications do not emerge in real-time, nor do they reflect the drop-off in female scholars from junior to senior career levels. Research in this area has tended to focus on journals as the “most direct measure of the discipline itself” (Wæver, 1998: 697). In today’s market for academic publishing, journal articles serve as an institutional platform for the development of both IR generally and the career trajectories of emerging scholars (Mitchell et al., 2013, 490). In studies of top-ranked journals in IR and political science, female-author inclusion rates are consistently found to be under 30% (Breuning and Sanders, 2007; Evans and Moulder, 2011; Teele and Thelen, 2017; Young, 1995). Reasons for this may relate to societal or institutional gender-based inequalities (Mathews and Anderson, 2001: 144). Processes of scholarly collaboration, methodological bias, or “self-selection bias” may also lead to women submitting research at lower rates (Teele and Thelen, 2017: 443).

The crisis of representation in the published discipline is also mirrored in citation patterns (see Østby et al., 2013). Research of female scholars is underrepresented in volumes edited by men (Mathews and Anderson, 2001, 146). Female authors are cited less often by male authors and by mixed-gender teams than by other female authors, which may point at subconscious bias (Mitchell et al., 2013, 486-487). Maliniak, Powers, and Walter (2013) also find that women are systemati-

² In the 2014 survey, the top ten scholars were (in order): Alexander Wendt, Robert Keohane, Kenneth Waltz, Robert Cox, John Mearsheimer, Joseph Nye Jr., Barry Buzan, Cynthia Enloe, Susan Strange, and James Fearon.

cally less cited and cite themselves less often than men. Top journals represent a selective, homogeneous slice of global IR scholarship. Analyses of top publications will therefore find this bias embedded within their results. Journals may be vital indicators insofar as they relate to key dialogues and issues at stake within and among academic communities, but to understand the (state of the) discipline means to consider more than top publication practices.

Fourthly, the discipline of IR (re)produces itself through the dissemination of scholarly research in curricula, teaching materials, conferences, and other institutionalised practices. These material “modes of disciplinarity” impress upon subsequent academic generations’ understandings and definitions of the discipline and their role within it, and yet they also tend to be less visible and trickier to investigate (Turton, 2016: 148). As a mode of disciplinarity, syllabi are like the DNA of the curriculum, containing the information and instructions needed to produce a functioning system.

The extent to which syllabi are (not) gender-inclusive is therefore an important piece of a multifaceted puzzle that, if tackled, would help build a more balanced curriculum. Indeed, syllabus design is “one of the most important, but most often overlooked, aspects of conducting a course” (Ishiyama and Rodriguez, 2015: 279). Syllabi provide the groundwork upon which students are made to read, study, and organise their learning. They serve as a “lasting statement to which students can refer again and again” (Ishiyama and Rodriguez, 2015: 279), and are thus a format in which discriminatory patterns can settle and affix themselves. They are subjectively crafted, used and reused, amended and discarded, but rarely subjected to external critique. Furthermore, syllabi are notoriously slow to change and course conveners are likely to teach much of what they themselves were taught using similar or overlapping modes and materials. They therefore serve as a dynamic lens through which the state and development of the discipline can be readily observed. If understood, at the very least, as defining the discipline (within the context of a course and its content), syllabi also allow us to observe linkages between the professional, published, and taught realms of the discipline.

Recently, IR syllabi and the readings they contain have been scrutinised in studies focused on gender bias (Colgan 2015a, 2016, 2017). Jeff Colgan’s analysis of American post-graduate (mostly “core course”) IR reading lists finds a rough 80/20 benchmark for authorship; that is, 82% of assigned readings are authored by men, while 18% account for female or mixed authorship (2017). The same benchmark emerges in TRIP data, with 18% of readings assigned in UK “Intro

to IR"-styled courses authored or co-authored by female scholars (Jordan et al., 2009). Some sub-fields, like International Law or Conflict Resolution fare slightly better than others like Security Studies. While partially a result of biases in publication patterns, these differences also stem from the gendered nature of subject areas, educational background, academic seniority, and importantly the gender of the course convener who compiles the reading list. The latter is also directly tied to how women and men are respectively socialised into their roles as teachers and educators (Allen and Savigny, 2016: 998). While Colgan's work illuminates part of the picture, it also leaves us to speculate on cases outside the American post-graduate sphere, opening avenues for research that this study seeks to explore.

Dataset

We analyse the state of the discipline as it exists in reading lists by capturing a snapshot of the entire curriculum at one of the UK's leading institutions for the study of IR: the LSE's Department of International Relations. Our dataset includes the full spectrum of courses on offer at undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels in the 2015/16 academic year.

The LSE's IR Department offers a wide range of courses across the discipline's subfields. It is one of the oldest of its kind and has historically been, continues to be, and views itself as at the forefront of disciplinary development. Its contributions, specifically with regards to the "English School" approach, constructivist and critical theory, and regional expertise, complement external perceptions of its IR programme as world-leading. In the most recent TRIP survey, UK respondents identified the LSE as the best university to study IR at the undergraduate, graduate, and PhD level (TRIP Faculty Survey UK, 2014). As a vanguard institution for research and education in IR, we expect that the Department's curriculum is maintained and crafted to be one exemplar of what the discipline should encapsulate. Located firmly within European traditions of historical, sociological, and theoretical inquiry, IR at the LSE is likely closer in kind to IR curricula in UK and European institutions than American or other global institutions with which it competes for disciplinary leadership.

Due primarily to data accessibility issues, many existing studies of Political Science and IR syllabi have built datasets using online searches for publicly available and/or voluntarily shared syllabi (Colgan 2016, 2017; Hardt and Smith, 2018). In these cases, it is difficult to assess to what extent the data is representative of higher education curricula. To overcome this, we analyse a

curriculum holistically. Our dataset is based on an export of Moodle data, and provides, at the time of writing, one of the largest samples for this type of study. Open-source pedagogical software such as Moodle and Blackboard are widely used in UK and US-based higher education, and can serve as rich data sources. The choice of institution and data selection are purposeful but entail limitations. On this note, we highlight what we believe to be LSE's idiosyncrasies in our data and results.

Our dataset provides a snapshot of the full IR curriculum rather than its development over time. As opposed to a longitudinal approach, a "current state" exercise can uncover what students today are contending with. Independent of trends in changing syllabi and debates over what constitutes "improvement", our goal is to uncover the trappings of overt and implicit bias which stifle the current taught discipline. Data is pulled from the 2015/16 academic year. The lifecycle of a standard course syllabus may extend for several years before being fully revised and replaced. Most syllabi in our dataset are drawn from core and elective courses that have been on offer to students for many years. We assume our dataset resembles the curriculum offered for two to five years on either side of the academic year of observation, and is thus largely representative of the current state of the discipline as taught at the LSE.

Our dataset comprises a total of 43 courses (18 undergraduate or 41.9%, 23 graduate or 53.5%, and 2 post-graduate or 4.7%), which together render 12,399 non-unique assigned readings assigned as essential or background reading material. Of these readings, 36.5% (4,524) are assigned in undergraduate courses, 59.3% (7,353) in graduate courses, and 4.2% (522) in post-graduate courses. Following Colgan (2016), the unit of analysis is a single assigned reading list item. We count readings assigned more than once in a course (i.e. different book chapters from the same author) as separate reading list items. This reflects the reader's experience when sitting a course, as items assigned multiple times in a course imply the added importance given to that respective item.

We also count the same item if it appears in different courses (again following Colgan, 2016). The number of unique readings is 11,199 (distinct author, title, and course). Given the methodological similarities to Colgan's work, a remark is in order on key differences: Colgan (2016) collected 42 syllabi (as well as an additional 73 in Colgan, 2017), which rendered 3,343 (and an additional 4,148) readings. Our reading lists comprise more assigned readings per course; the average number of readings per course is 251 for undergraduate, 320 for graduate, and 261 for

post-graduate levels. UK syllabi often have extensive background readings sections that contextualise debates or provide case examples. Newly added readings tend to push older readings into the background readings section. This hints at different modes of syllabi creation.

Each item in the dataset was manually coded for gender (sex) of author(s) using the format M and F to signify male and female authors, editors, and their combinations. We include journal articles, books and book chapters, documents, journals, and some webpages.³ An added benefit of Moodle-exported syllabi is the availability of variables such as the essential/background categorisation, dates of publication, and publisher information. We are therefore able to indirectly uncover insights into the *published* discipline. We also code multiple author incidences and preserve naming order. Finally, for every reading list, we code for gender of course convener(s) and the institutional position (rank) held.⁴ To test hypotheses, we primarily use two statistical techniques: logistic regression to estimate coefficients and report odds ratios, and Welch's two-tailed t-testing for unequal variance and to compare means.

Hypotheses

Our null hypothesis predicts that the ratio of female to male authors as they appear on reading lists is proportionate to the ratio of female to male-authored publications in the discipline. Thus, the expectation here is that curricula will mirror the published discipline. Though sources such as TRIP find that women comprise up to 35% of the profession, studies (though so far focused on political science rather than IR) have found that women are generally published below the rates of their professional presence (Bird, 2011: 929; Teele and Thelen, 2017: 432). Rather than assuming equity (50% male/50% female) or the approximate 65% male/35% female split of the professional discipline, we thus test against a more robust average female-to-male publication ratio of 26.5% (as per Teele and Thelen, 2017: 441).

H₀: Female and male authors are included in IR reading lists at rates proportional to the average female-to-male publication ratio in the discipline.

³ Some non-book, non-article items (e.g. blogs, films) feature in our syllabi. Such “non-traditional” forms of knowledge production and dissemination can render the “invisible visible” (Harman, 2017). However, they were excluded from our analysis to prevent skews from their relative scarcity.

⁴ A small number of cases exist where a convener taught in place of a convener on leave. Course convener data is thus imperfect, but sufficiently reliable to include in this analysis.

We hypothesise the presence of biases (whether overt or implicit, direct or indirect) favouring the inclusion of male authors on IR reading lists. First, we suspect that female authors are less likely to be included on IR reading lists than their average publication rates in the discipline. Second, we expect this bias to hold for readings marked “essential”, allowing us to test whether women are relegated to supplementary reading or excluded regardless of this designation. Third, we expect that female inclusion on syllabi will improve as study levels progress from undergraduate to post-graduate, where instruction becomes more specialised and less focused on “seminal” texts. Fourth, using publication dates as a proxy for temporal trends, we hypothesise that the number of contributions from female(s) and mixed author teams has grown at a faster rate than male-only contributions. This is based on historic trends towards gender inclusivity in the professional arena.

H_{1a}: Female authors are less likely to be included in IR reading lists than the average F/M publication ratio in the discipline.

H_{1b}: Female authors are less likely to be designated as essential readings in IR reading lists than the average F/M publication ratio in the discipline.

H_{1c}: Female inclusion rates in reading lists improve as we move from undergraduate to graduate to PhD levels.

H_{1d}: Over time, the number of female contributions is growing at a faster rate than male-only contributions.

Colgan (2017: 458) finds different patterns of inclusion across subfields: for example, Security-related courses do less well than the average (with 80.5% all-male authors), whereas IPE and IO/Law courses are not as starkly biased (76% and 64.8% respectively). Following these results, it may be expected that courses linked to security, war, and statecraft are dominated by male authorship. In contrast, other subfields, especially those stereotypically linked with female authorship and disciplinarily linked to questions of inclusion and equality (e.g. Gender Studies, Feminism or Queer Theory) may be expected to exhibit higher levels of female authorship than average (Goldstein, 2007, 322).⁵

⁵ Extensive literature exists on gendered constructions of core IR concepts, e.g. on: militarised masculinities, Eichler (2014); masculinity and power, Hooper (2001); gender, war and peacekeeping, Kronsell and Svedberg (2011); and the gendering of security discourses, Blanchard (2014).

H_{2a}: The subfields of Security/Statecraft will be dominated by male authors to a larger extent than the subfields of IPE and IO/International Law.

H_{2b}: Readings relating to Gender/Feminism/Queer Theory will more likely be authored by women.

Previous studies have shown that female course conveners tend to assign more readings by female authors than male conveners, but assign their own work less (Colgan 2016, 2017; Hagemann and Biersteker, 2014; Maliniak et al., 2008; Maliniak et al., 2013; Østby et al., 2013; Teele and Thelen, 2017). We therefore expect that male conveners assign fewer readings by female authors than their female colleagues. Additionally, we expect that junior academics assign more readings by female authors due (in part) to increased sensitivity and exposure to, or engagement with, questions of gender and diversity.⁶

H_{3a}: Male course conveners are less likely to assign female authors in their reading lists than female course conveners.

H_{3b}: Junior course conveners are more likely to assign female authors in their reading lists than senior conveners.

Based on evidence suggesting that female academics are more inclined to collaborate and co-author (Bird, 2013), we expect single-authorship in IR reading lists to be a male-dominated phenomenon. Further, name sequencing in co-authored publications follows two general patterns: the alphabetisation of last names, or non-alphabetisation which places importance on the first author. Following Young's (1995: 528) findings on bias in co-authorship name sequencing, we posit that women are less likely to be listed first in mixed-author teams. Finally, when women do co-author, we expect they will do so more with men than with other women. Networking events and professional associations created by and for women, often facilitated within institutions and conferences, have become more prevalent. Yet the extent to which they are shaping co-authorship patterns is unclear. Recent literature suggests a persistent link between male dominance in the discipline and mixed co-authorship predominance among female scholars (Bird, 2011: 932; Evans and Moulder, 2011; Teele and Thelen, 2017: 438).

⁶ Conversely, Colgan (2017: 458) finds that while female conveners do assign more readings by female authors, age/seniority has no significant effect.

H_{4a}: Where female authors are included on IR reading lists, they are more likely to appear as co-authors together with men rather than single authors.

H_{4b}: Where female authors are included on IR reading lists, they are less likely than male authors to be listed first in a co-authored piece.

H_{4c}: Where female authors are included on IR reading lists, they are more likely to co-author with male than female authors.

Results

H₁: Patterns of gender bias

Across all IR courses in our curriculum dataset, 79.2% of assigned texts, whether journal articles, books, or chapters, are written exclusively by male authors (including single male authors and male-only author teams). Conversely, the remaining 20.8% of readings have at least one female author. Thus, the 80/20 benchmark for the taught discipline holds. *Female-only* texts make up 14.2%. This means that, excluding mixed teams, the female to male inclusion ratio is 1:5.64—for every 1 female, 5.64 males are included. Amongst all authors, the share of female authors is 21%. By these measures, we confirm that female authors are significantly less likely to be included in IR syllabi than men. Additionally, women are significantly less likely to be included as compared to the share of women working in the discipline, as well as the average rate of female publication in the discipline (H_{1a}).

In analysing the effect of designated importance (essential/background), we find that graduate and PhD syllabi have fewer essential readings on average compared to undergraduate syllabi, though this may be an LSE idiosyncrasy. Publications including at least one female author are 5.5% less likely to be assigned as essential readings than the average female publication rate (H_{1b}), while a similar pattern holds for non-essential readings. There is no additional penalty introduced by this distinction. As expected, female inclusion ratios in reading lists significantly improve with level of study (H_{1c}). Undergraduate syllabi have, on average, the worst ratio of female author inclusion (18%), followed by graduate (22%), then post-graduate (25%).

[FIGURE 1 HERE]

Fig.1: Development of inclusion rates by date of publication

Using year of publication, we compare the absolute increase in reading materials with the relative increase in female author inclusion. Every year of publication since 1960 increases the chances of female author inclusion by 1.75% after controlling for the increase in number of publications. The inclusion of more recent work (in terms of publication date) also significantly increases over time. Female-authored texts enter syllabi at an increasing rate from the 1990s onwards (Fig. 1). In absolute terms, the difference is striking: 2010 as a publication year features only slightly fewer publications ($n=210$) than the sum of all female-authored works up to 1994.

Fig. 1 also demonstrates that when accounting for male-authored publications, the trend is not necessarily a herald of progress. Recent works naturally appear more frequently than older ones as syllabi are updated (H_{1d}), and even the apex of female author inclusion (2010) is dwarfed by male author inclusion. Fig. 2 below shows author-gender ratio based on year of publication.

[FIGURE 2 HERE]

Fig. 2: Gender ratio across dates of publication; dashed line represents a 26.5% average female publication rate (based on Teele and Thelen 2017)

On average, roughly ten more books than articles are included for any given publication year. Until publication year 1975, books and articles were included at roughly the same rate. After this, books peak in the early 2000s, outnumbering articles by more than 100. In more recent publication years, we see a reversal: in the publishing year 2014, articles have a margin of more than 150 over books. Thus, books are about 3.5 years “older” (less recent) than articles on average. At the same time, we note a marked rise in the number of distinct publishers per publication year in our dataset (from less than 10 until 1970 to more than 100 by the mid-2000s). This may be evidence of syllabi production patterns, changes in academic publishing, or shifting student preferences in reading consumption. Changes in the inclusion of books and articles as well as the increase of distinct publishers in the dataset may also relate to the parallel increase in female authors since 1960, though this merits further investigation.

H₂: Subfield analysis

We analyse author-gender bias from a content perspective using a manually coded subset of 3,333 publications from seven core undergraduate and graduate courses. Based on title, abstract, and keywords, we identified whether the reading concerned (any of) the thematic areas: Feminism,

Gender Studies, Queer Theory, or sexual relations. This analysis was double-blind coded for inter-rater reliability (95.2% percentage agreement, Cohen's κ of 0.551). From this subset, only 65 items (2%) deal with gender issues directly. Of these, 41 items (63%) feature at least one female author. Given the low female author ratio in the main dataset, this implies that female authors are about three times more likely to be included in an IR reading list if they write about gender issues than male authors (H_{2a}). Despite the strong effect of the small positive case size on the coefficient estimate, this provides evidence of gender stereotyping in IR.

We note similar patterns for IR subfields (Fig. 3): Security, Regional Studies, International Political Economy, IR Theory, and IO/International Law⁷. Each subfield is comprised of a minimum of seven undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate (PhD) courses. With regards to author gender, courses in Security/Statecraft fail even the 80/20 benchmark, with 87% of assigned readings authored by at least one male (H_{2b}). IR Theory and IPE courses just cross the threshold, with 21% and 22.5% F/M ratio respectively. This is contrasted with courses in IO/International Law, which display the highest levels of female author involvement (29%).

[FIGURE 3 HERE]

Fig. 3: Subfield breakdown across a full curriculum showing female-to-male author ratio and number of readings with at least one female author included, ordered by UG-MA-PhD courses

H₃: Course convener insights

Out of 12,399 non-unique readings, 85% are assigned by male conveners ($n=10,539$), 11% by female conveners ($n=1,364$), and 4% by mixed-gender (i.e. multiple) conveners ($n=496$). Male conveners are 35% less likely to include female authors in their reading lists, in accordance with H_{3a} . On average, male conveners assign 19.3% female authors, while their female colleagues assign 30.7%.

In terms of rank breakdown, 10% of all items were assigned by fellows and adjuncts ($n=1,240$), 2% by assistant professors ($n=248$), 40% by associate professors ($n=4,960$), and 48% by full professors ($n=5,951$). We collapse convener rank into a binary junior/senior indicator by dividing the career ladder in the middle. Senior conveners contribute a 22% penalty for female

⁷ The IO/Law subfield also includes EU Studies. This is mainly due to the focus on international organisations in the LSE's EU Studies courses.

authors, consistent with H_{3b}. Notably, among senior conveners, professors assign only 18.5% female authors. Given that 80% of senior conveners in the dataset are also men, this results in a 57% lower likelihood for female author-inclusion on our reading lists *ceteris paribus*. Convener gender also correlates with the subfield breakdown in Fig. 4. IO/Law has the highest share of female conveners (about 30%). In 2015/16, the Security category did not have any female conveners, which may explain its low female-author inclusion rate.

H₄: Authorship and co-authorship patterns

Single-authored works are the norm until 1960. Since then, we see a linear decline favouring co-authorship, with the last year in the dataset (2016) reaching parity. Statistically, every publication date after 1960 decreases the chance of a single-authored publication by about 3%. This corresponds to earlier findings of a trend towards multi-author teams in the published discipline (Teele and Thelen, 2017: 437). About one quarter (n=3,075) of all readings feature at least two authors. Of this subset, 66% are written by male-only teams, 28% by mixed-gender teams, and only 6% exclusively by female authors. This subset includes 1,024 readings co-authored by at least one female (33.3%), which means that female author representation in co-authored pieces is significantly higher than the average female publication rate in the field.

In turn, out of all 9,324 single-authored pieces, only 1,550 are written by women (16.6%). 7,774 texts come from single-author males, which also constitutes a majority of the entire dataset (62.7% of 12,399 items). All in all, women on our reading lists are 89% less likely to be single authors than their male counterparts. Male authors and editors are more likely to be included multiple times: as per Table 1, the list of top-ten contributors features one female academic in shared third spot (three women in the top-20 and seven in the top-50). While some names may be explained by idiosyncrasies (e.g., former LSE faculty or the frequent citation of IPE authors), the general pattern confirms findings from the TRIP survey.

	Author	N	Gender
1	Keohane, Robert O.	92	Male
2	Eichengreen, Barry J.	78	Male
3	Simmons, Beth A.	52	Female
4	Barnett, Michael N.	52	Male
5	Cohen, Benjamin	50	Male
6	Risse, Thomas	50	Male
7	Hill, Christopher*	48	Male
8	Buzan, Barry*	45	Male
9	Rittberger, Volker	43	Male
10	Wendt, Alexander	43	Male
11	Frieden, Jeffry	42	Male
12	Finnemore, Martha	37	Female
13	Halliday, Fred*	37	Male
14	Helleiner, Eric	37	Male
15	Moravcsik, Andrew	37	Male
16	Acharya, Amitav	35	Male
17	Mearsheimer, John	35	Male
18	Woods, Ngaire	34	Female
19	Bull, Hedley*	33	Male
20	Krasner, Stephen	33	Male

Table 1: Top featured authors in LSE IR syllabi

* Denotes authors formerly employed at LSE. This list excludes authors employed at LSE during the time of observation. N may include multiple mentions for the same publication within or across courses, as well as author and editorship of all publication types.

Testing H_{4a} , we find that female single-authored publications are more likely to be included in reading lists as compared to a co-authored piece with male colleagues. The dominance of single-authorship prevails over the dominance of male authors.

Next, we test author-name sequencing in multi-author teams to determine whether women are disadvantaged in claiming the first author position (H_{4b}). We cannot account for cases in which multiple authors may claim equal authorship (e.g. in the acknowledgments section) due to coding constraints. We filter mixed-gender teams involving two or three authors ($n=795$) and binary-code this subset to identify which are listed alphabetically. In mixed-gender teams with non-alphabetical ordering ($n=224$), we indeed find that males are more likely to be first author (in 55.8% of cases). However, in alphabetical ordering ($n=571$) men are also more likely first author (57.2%). The difference between the two ordering types is not statistically significant. Thus, while male authors are more likely to be first author, our findings indicate that this is because more men are included in our lists, and that no increased disparity is found from non-alphabetical ordering.

Among all publications with more than two authors, only 203 instances (6.6%) exist of female-female collaboration (including in author teams with one additional male author). This indicates that the comparatively high percentage of women in co-authored pieces (33.3%) is almost entirely due to the collaboration of a single female author with either one or multiple male authors (H_{4c}).

Discussion

In this article, we analyse gender bias as it exists within a complete IR curriculum. Our primary effort is to unveil patterns of bias in the taught discipline, rather than qualitatively investigate the root causes of these patterns. As a case study, the IR curriculum at the LSE provides us with a context-dependent alternative means for testing broader hypotheses relating to gender bias in the taught discipline. This helps to build theory around issues that concern students of IR in departments across the world. Our results open avenues of inquiry pertaining to three questions of critical importance for the discipline:

Is there a benchmark for gender bias in IR reading lists?

As a first step, we tested the strength of the 80/20 male-female author divide found in the literature (Colgan 2015a, 2016, 2017). Using a case study to corroborate the 80/20 benchmark helps to generalise theories relating to pedagogical bias. Benchmarks are not by themselves normative. Their goal is not to say definitively whether a syllabus is “good” or “bad” (there is an ongoing debate around creating the “best” curriculum, see Colgan, 2015b; Schwartz-Shea, 2003), but rather to provide a reference point or contextual guide for comparative measurement. If our aspiration for the professional, published, and taught discipline is equity of representation, much remains to be done.

In addition to not being gender-equal, the reading lists neither mirror the presence of female scholars in the professional discipline, nor in the published discipline. Gender bias in curricula adds to, rather than simply reflects, bias elsewhere in the discipline. The existing divide is jarring: most IR student bodies are comprised of 50% or more female students, and UK PhD completions in the social sciences approach parity (HESA, 2018). Female scholars make up around a third of UK-surveyed IR scholars, and female authors (co-)produce around a quarter of surveyed published

research. Based on our analysis of one of the most prominent IR departments globally, teaching materials fail women to an even greater extent.

In response, substantially more interest must be directed toward creating university-level practices that not only reflect the diversity of classrooms and of the world IR purports to study, but tackle the history and development of systemic exclusion in teaching materials. The underrepresentation of women's contributions is bad for any science, suggestive of methodological flaws, and specifically problematic in IR (Achen, 2014). And in turn, including diverse perspectives enhances the curriculum (Nguyen, 2018). IR syllabi form students' perceptions of what (the study of) "International Relations" is; this includes concerns for inequality, exploitation, and violence as well as conceptualisations of power and power relations. When these same power dynamics are built into modes of disciplinarity, we can expect a constrained and discriminatory conceptualisation of the discipline to emerge.

The exclusion of female scholars in syllabi is a multi-faceted problem, located at the intersection of historically embedded practices of exclusion in scholarship, institutional policies, and curriculum production. Notably, the syllabus itself as a product of scholarly work can reveal complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion (Afros and Schryer, 2009: 231). Its different elements (i.e. course description, expectations, and readings), built-in hierarchies (i.e. grading schemes and essential/background categories), and life-cycles may capture the state of the discipline, but are just as prone to being "captured" by institutional and personal bias as the larger body of knowledge they represent.

Therefore, policies of change should aim beyond curriculum facelifts. The appropriate response cannot be limited to simply adding more females and "diverse" authors and perspectives. Rather, there is a need to identify new strategies to free the taught discipline from its inherent myopia.⁸ Using more than just competitively published texts as the standard form of instruction, and/or seeking out innovative forms of knowledge production and dissemination that challenge hidden power structures (Harman, 2017: 3) may constitute worthwhile starting points.

What are the conditions that lead to female inclusion on reading lists?

⁸ One project underway at the LSE's IR Department creates and tests new versions of a given syllabus: one that "writes back in" women and diverse voices, and another that attempts to rewrite the course without starting from the "conventional" texts and concepts.

While our data does not allow us to explore *why* certain authors are omitted from their fields of expertise in IR reading lists, we can investigate factors favouring (and obstacles hindering) inclusion. For example, the division of readings into “essential” and “background” categories might reveal yet another way in which female scholarship is suppressed. While women are less likely to be included in both essential and non-essential designations, women are not more likely to be relegated to background reading—in results short on good news, this may be one.

Male single-author contributions dominate reading lists, although there is a trend towards multi-authorship in more recent years (corresponding with findings from Teele and Thelen, 2017: 437-439). Women are still twice as likely to be included on a reading list as a single author as opposed to co-authoring with male colleagues. This counters the idea that co-authorship is a precondition for female inclusion on readings lists, which is a promising insight. Co-authored pieces do include a higher-than-average percentage of female authors (33.3%), and yet women seem to co-author more with men as opposed to other women (Young, 1995: 527). Female-only co-authorship as well as female-female collaboration in mixed teams are rare in our reading lists, while male-only (co-)authorship is ubiquitous.

Should the trend towards multi-authorship continue, it may thus be, perhaps perplexingly, both a driver of and a hurdle for female inclusion in reading lists. In mixed co-authorship teams, men dominate the lead author position, largely by virtue of their greater representation on reading lists generally. The first-named position can carry prestige or reflect the relative intellectual contribution, and it is common practice to refer to a source using only the first author, e.g. “Maliniak et al., 2008”. Male first-author predominance in a landscape already dominated by men makes the overshadowing of female contributions appear even more stark.

Findings relating to subfields within IR also have implications for female exclusion. Security and Regional Studies see the lowest levels of inclusion, while IO/International Law is more gender-diverse (with a greater number of female conveners than other subfields as well). IPE and IR Theory fail the benchmark at the undergraduate level but become progressively more inclusive the higher the level of study. Our low results for Regional Studies courses correspond with similar evidence elsewhere in the literature (Pepinsky, 2013; Dionne, 2013). A comprehensive explanation would require further interrogating the ways in which regional expertise is acquired and how practices of global IR knowledge production differ (Dionne, 2013). It might also be the case that the

literature encompassing each region of study (Middle East, Southeast Asia, etc.) inherits its own set of internal, geographically-specific biases, though further research on this is required.

Subfield bias likely interacts with course convener gender and seniority, and much remains to be understood here. However, some disciplinary stereotypes (i.e. of more “masculine” or “feminine” subfields) are perpetuated in taught instruction. Based on a textual analysis, readings relating to women, gender, or sex are authored predominately by female scholars. This subset also accounts for a considerable share of female contributions out of the overall dataset. The (token) inclusion of Gender Studies, Feminism, or Queer Theory in IR courses (usually relegated to a section in a later week of the term), coinciding with the (token) inclusion of female scholarship in that same week, problematises the use of departmental benchmarks for syllabi. Specifically, *when* female scholarship is included and for *which* topics matters. Writing women back in might reproduce previous patterns of inclusion as a gesture to otherness rather than merit (Fallon, 2017; Kunz and Maisenberger, 2017: 129). In future research, combining textual/content analysis across institutional cases will more firmly establish the relationship between disciplinary subfields and inclusion patterns.

Gender and seniority of the course convener are key determinants of the inclusion of female authors on IR syllabi—indeed, male conveners in our sample are 35% less likely to assign female-authored readings than female conveners. While our convener data is limited, our findings echo similar studies (Colgan, 2015b, 2017) and link syllabi inclusion patterns with hiring practices. The expectation is that a more gender-balanced faculty diversifies teaching provision. This should incentivise IR departments to reflect on the ways in which their faculty composition shapes teaching over time. It remains to be thoroughly investigated precisely why male faculty assign fewer female-authored texts. Reasons may include implicit bias, bias in the published discipline, subject specialisation or regional expertise, range of familiarity with readings, prior education, or age or origin of the syllabus itself. Previous research has suggested that male conveners are more likely to add their own writings to their reading lists than their female colleagues (analogous to citation patterns in the discipline; Colgan, 2017: 457; Maliniak et al., 2013). Relatedly, female conveners may assign more readings by female authors because of explicit positive discrimination, the existence of informal networks, or a variety of other effects (McDowell et al., 2006).

Finally, we find that the seniority level of course conveners has negative effects. This may have to do with greater awareness and exposure among younger faculty, or with modernisation

processes where younger faculty might include more recent readings (which in turn increases the likelihood female authorship). It might also relate to labour practices and the courses that scholars are likely to teach, with junior faculty teaching more specialised courses and senior faculty teaching more introductory or general courses, or vice versa. But overall, there is reason for hope, as the increased willingness among junior faculty to assign more female authors might gradually address the problem, especially if this awareness retained as young scholars progress through their careers.

Does the situation improve over time?

Although we do not produce longitudinal data showing the transformation of IR syllabi over time, we notice patterns of improvement in our snapshot. The increase in female authorship relative to educational tier (18% at undergraduate, 22% at graduate, and 25% at PhD level) might be explained by the advanced specialisation of knowledge as instruction progresses. Additionally, the acceleration of female publication rates over time (as per publication date) might also play a role. Undergraduate courses tend to be filled with widely-cited “cornerstone” disciplinary texts, relying heavily on a “traditional” IR canon. Authors like Machiavelli and Hobbes, more recently Keohane, Waltz, and Wendt, are disciplinary heavyweights who for reasons present at the time of their writing (and possibly less so today) all happen to be men. Their status in the field has been used, implicitly or explicitly, to maintain particular knowledge structures that side-line other voices. Indeed, Table 1 highlights the persistence of “the classics of the discipline”.

As students progress toward higher levels of study, knowledge of the canonical texts may simply be assumed, and studies become more specialised and explorative, exposing students to more diversified literature. This cannot be an exoneration, however. There is no inherent reason why the (perceived) necessity to hold on to some male disciplinary heavyweights should produce a ratio as heavily tilted in favour of men as what we find. This is especially true given the breadth of invaluable contributions written by women across subfields.

Undergraduate courses offer generations of new IR students an initial glimpse at the discipline (Yao and Delatolla, 2017). It is particularly worrisome, then, that the materials presented to undergraduate students (the widest and most diverse student audience) are exposed to the least diverse curricula. Herein lies an insight with potentially major implications, which other studies focusing on post-graduate syllabi alone have not uncovered. The undergraduate syllabus is the first

and earliest point of contact for university students. These years are formative for a student's intellectual trajectories within and beyond of academia. If students fail to see themselves reflected in early-stage disciplinary teaching, their perceptions of and interest in IR and academia more broadly are likely compromised. Should such a relationship between non-diverse reading lists and student disciplinary perceptions hold, it would likely disproportionately affect those already underrepresented in the profession. This can create a self-perpetuating cycle of disciplinary exclusion.

In addition to the above, we also gain some indirect insights into the published discipline. Articles on our reading lists have more recent publication dates than books, and publication outlets have become more diversified over time. Trends such as these interact with syllabus production when, for instance, highly valued older publications (i.e. the "traditional canon") come from a small selection of top publishers (or are reprinted by academic presses) and are retained as syllabi are updated, while less valued older contributions are replaced with recent works. Similarly, there may be a signalling effect to syllabi producers when some presses or journals serve as proxies for academic quality. For example, publications from top journals might be retained on syllabi over time, while publications from non-top journals are not considered to the same degree. At the same time, a diversification of publishing outlets may also create new pathways to publication for female authors, and thus contribute to the increase in female authorship of books and articles measured per publication year.

Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 demonstrate this improvement in gender-delineated publication ratios in absolute as well as in relative terms. This is cause for optimism. The effect could be explained by both increased venues of participation and publication for female scholars, as well as increased awareness of the many excellent contributions made by women today and historically. However, progress is slow at an absolute rate of 1.75% per publishing year, which may relate to the continued dominance of male scholars in faculties, slow faculty turnover, or hiring practices. When combined with the tendency of women to cite themselves less, or the risk of course conveners assigning material disproportionately based on their own gender, this presents a complex case of overlapping mechanisms that explain the extent of gender bias in syllabi.

Conclusion

Reading lists are situated at the centre of the taught discipline: they help to delineate the boundaries of the discipline and its subfields, and shape how knowledge is reproduced. In many ways, they are manifestations of (what is perceived to be) the state of the discipline at a given moment in time. If the academic profession and its institutionalised practices by their nature exclude women, the taught discipline is likely to reflect this. As activism aimed at problematising, diversifying or decolonising white, Western, and male-dominated curricula has already highlighted, the role of teaching materials in (re)producing gendered power asymmetries cannot be glossed over. The aim of our study is to contribute to that growing pulse of student and scholarly activism and work to uncover the trappings of exclusion which stifle the taught discipline.

Syllabi and the reading lists they contain provide a link between students and practitioners of IR. To study them is to say something about the generational progress of the discipline and its pedagogical legacy. The message in our findings is that intricate forms of gender bias permeate the IR entire curriculum. Our results reveal an 80/20 divide in the LSE's IR curriculum between male-authored texts and those (co-)authored by female scholars. Women are routinely eclipsed in IR reading lists at all levels of study and throughout all disciplinary subfields (except for gender-related studies), to varying degrees. Simply hoping that the presence of women in the professional or published disciplines will reduce gender imbalances over time is exceedingly optimistic: while female contributions have increased steadily (measured by publication date), relative inclusion compared to male scholarship remains consistently low.

Some departments manage this asymmetry by imposing quotas for female inclusion on course syllabi. And yet, while quotas instil expectations, signal institutional effort, and stimulate change faster than it might naturally occur, they do not tackle implicit bias. Adding readings to syllabi based on quotas and not merit may take away from good scholarship. "Writing women back in" may simply reinforce notions of otherness and tokenism in the service of an otherwise unchanged, continuously male-centric discipline. More imaginative tools are needed to institutionally identify and tackle bias. We encourage departments to find and share their most innovative methods, including a fundamental rethinking of structured syllabi production. As supported by our findings, gender bias in the taught discipline must be addressed within and alongside debates about hiring, promotion, citation and publication practices, and what constitutes the "canon" of the discipline.

The extent to which gender bias in reading lists affects the academic training, development, and “soft skills” of university students remains unresolved. Empirical studies such as ours raise other important questions: to what extent are students’ frames of reference and perceptions of the political world shaped by their curricula? Are female and male learners treated equally in disciplinary teaching? Are gender-stereotyped roles reinforced in the class setting? And what might a gender-equal or gender-perceptive curriculum look like? A careful conceptualisation of the pedagogy of female representation, be it in specialised courses or in general disciplinary teaching, can be combined with studies about the artefacts of the taught discipline to offer avenues for change.

Our results show a temporal snapshot of a single (albeit important) institution for the study of IR. There are subject-matter, administrative, and institutional idiosyncrasies unique to the LSE. We therefore encourage other departments to replicate this research and build a more robust repository of knowledge on the state of the taught discipline. At the same time, this study is the first, as far as we know, to capture bias in an entire university IR curriculum and to shed light on UK syllabi. It offers unique insights into the state of disciplinary instruction, as well as a glimpse at the interconnected ways in which hiring practices, publication patterns, and syllabi production mirror and perpetuate gender bias. It formulates theoretical propositions and derives causal connections that can be tested elsewhere. It therefore contributes to empirical research and activism aimed at building a better discipline, one that is reflective of student diversity, inclusive and representative of women’s contributions, and speaks of and to the manifold environments we research and inhabit.

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