GENDER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

NICOLE DETRAZ

Gender and the Environment

For my students

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Acknowledgments

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Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRED	Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESS	environmental security studies
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAD	gender and development
GDP	gross domestic product
GED	gender, environment, and development
GEP	global environmental politics
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGO	intergovernmental organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IR	international relations
MEA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PCB	polychlorinated biphenyl

R2P	responsibility to protect
UCC	United Church of Christ
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSD	United Nations Division for Sustainable Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WAD	women and development
WED	women, environment, and development
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization
WGC	Women and Gender Constituency
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	Women in Development
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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Introduction: How Are Gender and the Environment Connected?

Environmental challenges are widely recognized as important issues for the international community to address. Climate change, loss of biodiversity in forests and oceans, natural disasters, dependence on polluting energy sources: all of these are environmental issues that have captured the attention of people and policymakers around the world. Environmental issues are typically understood to be complex and transboundary, but they are not always recognized as being gendered. This book provides an introduction to the links between gender and the environment by analyzing some of the key issues and topics within global environmental politics (GEP) through gender lenses. In particular, it identifies sustainability and justice as two central goals within GEP in general. Actors seek sustainable solutions to environmental challenges, and many also strive to ensure that these solutions are fair and just. Including gender in discussions and evaluations of these aims is both necessary and helpful.

There are both instrumental and ethical reasons for reflecting on the connections between gender and environmental politics. The instrumental reason relates to the overall goal of sustainability: halting environmental change requires consulting multiple perspectives and understanding a diverse range of experiences. Humans have a strong incentive to identify and pursue effective paths toward sustainability. The chapters of this book make the case that we are unlikely to

get there unless we incorporate gender into our understanding of sustainability. The ethical reason for including gender is that current distributions of environmental ills and environmental benefits are uneven across the international system. People who are most likely to suffer from environmental change are also those who experience discrimination and marginalization at multiple levels and based on multiple categories (gender, race, class, ethnicity, etc.). Gender lenses allow us to examine specific gendered manifestations of injustice that have been underexplored in GEP.

By examining debates about population, consumption, security, and governance, the book considers how looking at the environment through gender lenses pushes us to ask different questions and broaden our sphere of analysis. It specifically claims that the concepts of sustainability and justice can shape how we see gender in these debates. These topics are appropriate to include because of the fact that they (1) are central concepts within GEP debates, and (2) have important gender components that are often ignored in both scholarship and policymaking. The central argument running through the text is that considering the environment through gender lenses challenges the primacy of some traditional environmental concepts and shifts the focus of sustainability and justice goals to be more inclusive.

Exploring the objectives of sustainability and justice through gender lenses is particularly important because society's understanding and enforcement of gender norms influence how we interact with the environment in numerous ways. Men and women are typically differently placed in terms of both their vulnerabilities to environmental change and their agency in addressing environmental issues. Without exposing the relevance and presence of gender in these kinds of discussions, important debates may continue without the inclusion of a key element. This book highlights gendered understandings of key environmental issues and topics and reveals the complexities of these discussions. It argues that a feminist perspective will help advance the GEP field by highlighting the gendered assumptions that go into scholarship and policymaking, and thus should help us come to a more complete understanding of and response to global environmental problems. These contributions directly relate to goals

of sustainability and justice. Environmental processes and experiences are gendered – meaning that gender currently (and historically) intersects with power relations, which influence, among others, political processes of environmental decision-making; economic processes, which can help or hinder environmental sustainability; and social processes, which determine which tasks members of society will be expected to perform. The objective of the current volume is to reveal this gendering in order to facilitate dialogue across academic disciplines but also to better inform policymaking.

This undertaking is particularly important now because environmental issues are the subject of high-stakes policymaking in states across the globe. Issues like climate change, energy independence, green jobs, etc. have had a central place on the agenda of policymakers in recent years. These environmental debates have included several of the topics that are explored in the chapters of this book, including population, consumption, and environmental security. It is essential that students and the general public understand the role of gender in these topics so that they can better comprehend the ongoing discussions about environmental change and environmental policymaking.

Also, this undertaking is important because environmental issues have profound implications for human well-being. Rather than the repercussions of environmental change simply being a theoretical issue, these concerns are also often survival issues for those living in many parts of the world. Much feminist work has focused on the particular gendered implications of environmental change for marginalized populations in society, focusing especially on the unique hardships that women face because of environmental degradation. This includes women having to travel farther from home to collect water or fuelwood, women's unique experiences as environmental refugees, or women suffering food insecurity in greater numbers than men. These examples are important to understand because they offer insight into the gendered complexities of environmental issues.

This book is situated in the field of GEP. As an intellectual tradition with many connections to international relations (IR), GEP assess the politics of identifying, coping with, and

addressing environmental protection and change. For many years, feminist scholars have claimed that IR has been slow to incorporate gender into its analysis (Tickner 2001). Since many GEP scholars have been trained within IR, it is not very surprising that gender does not factor into the work of most GEP scholars in a consistent and sustained fashion. This is not to say that there is necessarily a hostility to looking at environmental issues through gender lenses, but rather that there is a silence about gender. For example, most foundational texts within GEP contain very little attention to gender. Again, this is not to suggest that the authors and editors of these texts have specifically excluded gender on purpose. Rather, it is indicative of larger silences about gender within the field as a whole.

Understanding environmental politics

What is the environment? This is a question that I pose to my students, and which receives a wide array of responses. Many claim that "the environment" encompasses humans and the places and spaces in which they live. Others argue that the environment is a forest or field that is largely untouched by human hands. Since the Enlightenment in particular, there has been a tendency in many societies to think of nature as an entity that is external to humanity, and in many cases, something for humans to dominate (Hartmann et al. 2005; Plumwood 2002). Those who are critical of this tendency claim that terms like "nature," "environment," and "wilderness" must be understood as being historically contingent. The chapters of this book adopt a wide perspective on what "counts" as the environment. They draw on critical scholarship that sees discourses used in environmental debates as fluid entities that shape our understandings of global environmental political issues and the solutions we propose to address them.

Discourses are powerful forces within both academic and policy debates. The use of one discourse over another has very real implications for how we understand and seek to address international concerns (Ackerly and True 2010).[1] For

example, there are multiple discourses around the concept of "genetically modified food." One discourse may include narratives of genetic modification as a solution to food shortages, while a second discourse may include narratives of genetic modification as a dangerous source of food insecurity. Policies made about the genetic modification of food will be supportive of the practice if the first discourse is used, and are likely to prohibit the practice if the second is used. Discourses shape our understanding of the terms of a debate, and are therefore important to how policies about environmental issues will be made (Detraz 2014).

There is a very long history of humans being concerned about perceived negative changes in their "environment." The late 1800s and early 1900s saw individuals and groups call attention to the radical changes that accompanied processes of industrialization. During this timeframe, well-known authors in the global North[2] like Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others reflected on the impacts of industrialization on pastoral landscapes, wilderness, and simple ways of life. John Muir challenged the society of the time to consider the meaning and necessity of preservation of wild spaces. Gifford Pinchot raised questions of conservation in the face of industrialization's hasty use of resources (Wapner 2012). In fact, the timeframe associated with the rapid spread of industrialization is frequently cited as a turning point in humanity's relationship with "nature," as well as our understanding of that relationship. In the face of these debates, some governments began to manage natural resources "scientifically" through policies such as sustained yield management for timber and other resources.

Despite the attention of some, the environment was not considered a central political issue for much of the history of the modern state system.[3] It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that public demand for safer and cleaner spaces, coupled with the rise of environmentally focused nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), resulted in states paying increased attention to the environment as a political issue. Environmental NGOs have had a strong presence in the environmental issue area. The first environmental NGOs emerged in the late nineteenth century, including the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations in 1891 and

the International Friends of Nature in 1895 (Betsill 2014). In later years, Greenpeace, Earth Island Institute, Rainforest Action Network, World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International, along with others, emerged as examples of transnational environmental activist groups working to protect environmental quality across the globe (Wapner 2012).

By the late 1970s and 1980s many governments had created environmental departments or ministries to specifically tackle environmental policymaking (Chasek et al. 2006). Early examples include the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which was created in 1970, and the Canadian Department of the Environment and the French Environment Ministry, both established the following year. Singapore's Ministry of the Environment followed in 1972. The 1970s also saw the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment held in June 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden. This conference was heralded as reflecting a growing recognition of the seriousness of environmental issues, as well as their transboundary nature. One important outcome of the conference was the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), located in Nairobi, which adopted a mission to "provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations" (UNEP 2015).

Two additional global environmental conferences are regarded as significantly shaping the trajectory of environmental politics: the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (popularly known as the Earth Summit), and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. These global conferences witnessed heated debates about which environmental issues should be on the global agenda, who is responsible for protecting the environment, and how best to halt or reverse environmental change. In the years from 1972 to the present, the governance of global environmental issues has involved both state and non-state actors working on a diverse range of problems related to environmental processes (Betsill 2014; Stevis 2014).

GEP scholarship The environment came to be recognized as a central topic of scholarship within political science during a similar timeframe. Scholars of the late 1960s and early 1970s began to reflect on issues like the role of states and global institutions as well as the global economy with regard to the environment. GEP emerged as a specific topic of study under the umbrella of IR. As a subfield of political science, IR focuses on political relations that reach across political boundaries. GEP scholars within IR examine the nature of these associations as they relate to the global environment. The focus of GEP scholarship has included work on environmental actors and regimes, studies of the ecological impact of the global political economy, and work on the ethics of environmental politics, among many other topics (Dauvergne and Clapp 2016). Many GEP scholars are political scientists who draw from existing work in their field, as well as reach across disciplinary boundaries in order to build theories about why environmental change occurs and how best to approach it. While not all GEP scholars are explicitly associated with political science, this book largely focuses its attention on debates within this particular academic community.

Over the years, the types of issues on the radar of scholars and policymakers have changed. Early concerns included the extraction and use of resources and species and the implications of population growth for them (Stevis 2014). "Worries about energy supply, animal rights, species extinction, global climate change, depletion of the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere, toxic wastes, the protection of whole ecosystems, environmental justice, food safety, and genetically modified organisms" have been added to these early concerns (Dryzek 2005: 3). As this extensive list suggests, there is a wide variety of environmental issues that have gotten global attention. Each of these issues has been the subject of intense debate at multiple levels in society, including the global, national, and local levels. GEP as a distinct field of study came of age in the early 1990s. This was partly motivated by the enthusiasm and attention given to environmental concerns after the 1992 Rio Conference (Betsill 2014). Rio helped to place environmental issues on the agenda of policymakers and academics alike. In the past twenty-plus years, GEP has become broader and deeper in terms of the geographical and

disciplinary origins of its researchers, as well as its research agendas, substantive concerns, and theoretical approaches (Betsill et al. 2014).

Gender–Environment connections

This book is premised on the idea that environmental, social, economic, and political processes are all related, and are all gendered. In the context of this project, gender refers to socially constructed understandings of what people identified as men and women ought to be. Elsewhere I have argued that there are two important components of this definition: the idea of social construction, and a difference between sex and gender (Detraz 2012). Understanding gender to be a product of social construction means that assumptions of "masculine" and "feminine" behavior are not to be taken for granted. There is not a normal or natural way to be, but rather we are all exposed to expectations about what a man or woman is supposed to be, or how a man or woman is supposed to act. These expectations are fluid – they shift over time and across societies – and there are multiple forms of masculinity and femininity that exist within a given society at a given time. The difference between sex and gender is that sex typically refers to biological differences, while gender refers to the behaviors that are understood to be appropriate or acceptable for people who are identified as male and those identified as female. Both sex and gender are complex concepts that are frequently essentialized in both everyday conversations and much academic work.

Gender is of fundamental importance for understanding global politics because gender is intimately connected to power relations within society through patriarchal systems. Patriarchy is "the structural and ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of masculinity" (Enloe 2004: 4). Patriarchal systems exist because they become viewed as the only option by many men and women alike. Cynthia Enloe (2007: 80–1) explains that patriarchy relies on social constructions of gender to exist.

> Any patriarchy survives and thrives only if its leaders and members can perpetuate a widely accepted standard of "proper" femininity. A dominant notion of "proper" femininity is especially potent when it becomes the basis by which women (and girls) judge, or "police," each other… Second, if the promoters of a patriarchal system are skillful, they will manage to make "femininity" appear natural – not the product of human decisions. This feat makes their own uses of power harder to see.

Patriarchy likewise requires the policing of masculinity in similar ways. Gender becomes seen as something fixed when its socially constructed nature is veiled. When this occurs, those individuals who are viewed as violating gender norms become seen as unnatural, and even potentially dangerous in some cases.

Gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, caste, and ethnicity in the ways that society understands difference, acceptance, and value. The term "intersectionality" was coined by critical race and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1994) in the 1980s to highlight the various ways that forms of marginalization interact. Since this time, intersectional analysis has become widely adopted and adapted across multiple disciplines. Various feminist scholars have argued that intersectionality is an essential component for analyzing how multiple kinds of power differentials work together within society (Lykke 2009). In addition to paying attention to gender as a multifaceted concept, the present volume also considers ways that gendered marginalization and agency intersect with race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, national origin, and other forms of "difference." Intersectional research focuses on the simultaneous and interactive effects of these categories of difference. It explores multiple, co-constituted differences.

Gender is a central concept within feminist perspectives. Anne Sisson Runyan and V. Spike Peterson (2013) have popularized the idea of examining issues in world politics through gender lenses. Gender lenses are plural due to the fact that there are multiple and fluid versions of masculinity and femininity. Gender lenses allow us to examine issues in ways that go beyond what is typically visible and present in IR

scholarship. To use gender lenses is to focus on gender as a specific kind of power relation, and to trace out the multiple ways that gender is central to understanding practices and processes within world politics. Gender lenses allow us to focus on the gendered nature of international institutions, and, at the same time, allow us to focus on the everyday experiences of men and women.

Much important insight into the connections between gender and the environment has come from feminist scholars, who approach the issue from a variety of perspectives. That is to say, there is not only one form of feminism, and this book draws on multiple forms. Feminist scholars highlight the specific associations between the relative position of people in society and the ways that they experience and/or contribute to environmental change. This necessitates reflecting on lived experiences through an understanding of the power relations and social norms that shape those experiences. Feminist authors often claim that the systems of domination that contribute to the marginalization of women are frequently the same systems of domination that contribute to treating the non-human world as inferior. According to Val Plumwood (2006: 54), "[a]n ecological form of feminism must be willing to mount a more thorough challenge to the dominant models of culture and humanity which define them against or in opposition to the non-human world, treating the truly human as excluding characteristics associated with the feminine, the animal and nature." This calls attention to the importance of unraveling multiple forms of power relations in order to understand how they influence drivers and experiences of environmental change and policymaking to address these in particular contexts.

Feminist environmental scholars specifically seek to understand the unique experience of women *and* men in the face of environmental damage. Rather than assume that environmental change impacts everyone similarly, or even that it impacts the marginalized in the same ways, feminist environmental scholars conclude that our relationships to nature are gendered – and that this often serves to make women more vulnerable than men to environmental change. Much environmental scholarship and policymaking treats environmental damage as a gender-neutral phenomenon, which masks

the complexity of human–nature connections as well as opportunities for effective and just environmental policies.

There is a danger, however, in a simplistic analysis that automatically views women as victims in the face of environmental change. This volume calls for a more nuanced understanding of the ways that women and men both contribute to and address environmental damage. This caution is echoed by many feminists who argue against simplistic notions of nurturing or life-giving women and destructive men (Harcourt and Nelson 2015; Sandilands 1999). The automatic connection of women with environmental protection paints a simplistic, and inaccurate, picture of environmental issues. The story of environmental change and environmental protection is a very complex one that is deeply and intimately connected to socially constructed ideas of "nature" – much the same way that the story of gender is tied to socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity. Focusing on gender–environment connections also does not mean thinking only about marginalization and vulnerability. It is important to think of agency when discussing these connections. We must engage in careful analysis of where agency exists, and what the obstacles to agency might be.

For this reason, this book explores gendered understandings of environmental issues rather than simply the roles and responses of women in discussions of environmental issues. Examining GEP through gender lenses involves asking how the social constructions of masculinity and femininity impact the way we relate to nature, and the perceived "appropriate" roles for men and women in addressing environmental damage. This goes beyond simply bringing women into an analysis, which can isolate women from the broader sociocultural context in which behavioral norms are embedded. Therefore, this book will not only explore the particular position of women and men within the context of the environment, but also investigate the objects of study and the specific language used in present environmental discussions for examples of gendered implications.

Gender identities are constructed in part through environmental struggles and practices. Farhana Sultana (2009: 428) claims that "gendered subjectivities are socially and discursively constructed but also materially constituted;