

Who Is “Taken Seriously”?

Let me start with a confession: I spent a long time—too long—*not* taking women seriously. That means I did not think I would gain anything analytically by paying close attention to women. I did not think that any explanation I could offer would be strengthened by my listening to women, observing women, or taking into explicit account the ideas and experiences of women. Furthermore, back then I did not think I would significantly deepen my understanding of men’s ideas, men’s decisions, and men’s actions by taking women seriously.

Simply being a woman is no guarantee that you will take women seriously. In fact, as a woman, one might even imagine that one should avoid showing analytical interest in women so as not to be painted by others with a damning “feminine” brush.

For my doctorate, I chose to study the interplay of ethnicity and education politics in postcolonial, postwar Malaysia. This was during the 1960s. Malaysia was a country that only recently had gained independence from Britain and had come out of a prolonged civil war. Before leaving Berkeley, and then as I was settling into Kuala Lumpur, I read everything I could about Malaysian history and culture, about life on rubber plantations, about the British colonial strategy of co-opting traditional Malay sultans, about the Japanese wartime occupation, about

both the insurgents and the Malaysian and British counterinsurgents during the years of civil war from the 1950s to the 1960s. I read novels, memoirs, ethnographies, political science studies, government reports, histories, and old newspapers. Most were authored by men. I scarcely noticed. Virtually all the featured actors portrayed in the books and articles were male. There were a handful of women characters in the novels, but many of them turned out to be the Malay mistresses of British colonial men. A notable exception were the more prominent women characters in Han Suyin's novel *And the Rain My Drink*.¹ Back then, I hardly paused to reflect on the oddity of these all-male casts of characters.

There was so much to absorb, I thought, such complex dynamics to grapple with. There were class differences—among the British expatriates, among the multiethnic Malaysians, and within each of Malaysia's three most prominent ethnic communities, the Malays, the Chinese, and the Tamils. Then there were the sources of interethnic mistrust to comprehend (mistrust fueled by the fact that each of the ethnic communities had its own daily newspaper, not only written in a distinct language but also published in a distinct script). On top of this were the complex and shifting political party alliances and electoral strategies, federal-state tensions, and multiple school systems, as well as the ups and downs of the rubber, palm oil, and tin industries. All together, the story seemed complicated enough. There was no room on my intellectual plate to add questions about gender. And, I imagined, to be taken seriously in my new academic career, I did not need to add such questions.

Back then, that is, investigating women's lives and the workings of masculinities and femininities seemed unlikely to tell me anything I really needed to know about British colonial rule, the Japanese wartime occupation, political economies, ethnic Chinese Malaysians' support for the guerrilla insurgency, the assumptions underpinning the authorities' counterinsurgency strategies, how wartime experiences were shaping postwar 1960s societal relationships, or even about how education policies were fueling the rising communal tensions. I was admitted

to Kuala Lumpur's exclusive Selangor Club because I fit into the club's desirable expatriate category of "a woman without a husband in the country"—a membership I sought so that I could take male civil servants to lunch in the capital and sign for the bill without embarrassing them. I joined the all-women's (mostly Chinese and Indian) local field hockey team. I had Malaysian women colleagues at the University of Malaya. I became aware that many male officials talked to me precisely because they did not take seriously a twenty-six-year-old "girl" in sandals and a sleeveless cotton dress. Despite all this, the only people I chose to interview were men—male teachers, male civil servants, male politicians.

And because I did not take women seriously, I did not see these men *as men*; thus I did not try to investigate their diverse masculinities or the political consequences of their diverse masculinities. It was not as if I had made a conscious choice to interview only men. It just seemed normal.

It was only later, when I became a feminist, that I began to question this seductively powerful adjective, *normal*, the twin brother of *natural*. It was only later that I tallied up all that I had missed owing to my narrow vision, my shrunken curiosity. It was only later, too, after I had begun to ask feminist questions, that I realized my own gender-ignorant understanding of Malaysia's war and postwar eras was not simply incomplete; it was unreliable. Today, despite the wealth of feminist research and writing that has come out of Malaysia in recent years, there is yet to be written a thorough feminist analysis of the international politics of rubber (think Dunlop) or of the Malaysian armed guerrilla conflict of 1948–1960—and of its lingering postwar gendered consequences.² So because of our failing to take women seriously, we still do not know exactly what we have missed in our understanding of the emergent international political economy and of the Malaysian civil war and its long aftermath.

Not taking women seriously, not paying close attention to the subtle workings of gender, is not, however, simply a characteristic of the "bad

old days." It characterizes most contemporary studies of economy, culture, society, and politics. We all are acutely aware that most social commentators, contractors, and policy makers still do not think deeply about women unless they are pushed to do it. And because most of these commentators do not take women seriously, they do not feel compelled to dig deeply into the often fraught dynamics of masculinities: that is, as a result of not taking women seriously, they do not see men *as men*.

It may not be mere coincidence, then, that on all three of the major American cable news channels—CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC—men (mostly white men) make up 65 percent or more of the “expert” guests chosen to appear on their prime-time news shows to discuss political issues. And in Britain too, feminist researchers monitoring nine of Britain’s national newspapers found a similar gendered pattern: of the “experts” directly quoted in these influential papers’ front-page stories, 76 percent were men; only 24 percent were women. Furthermore, as the British researchers from Women in Journalism found, women were most likely to be directly quoted in a newspaper account when they could be positioned by the journalists as victims. That is, these American and British media producers and editors see men as the ones best equipped to provide serious analysis of political questions facing their countries.³

We need to think collectively about what rewards are handed out for *not* taking women seriously—in research projects, in policy debates, in media discussions of the pressing issues of the day. This question has brought me to think a lot about the adverb *seriously*. To be taken seriously is a major reward that can be bestowed on a person. Sometimes the laurel bestowed is called gravitas. Few women are said by the architects of cultural pyramids to possess gravitas. Hannah Arendt and Susan Sontag were admired for possessing gravitas. But, then, often those generous bestowers treated both women as honorary men.

Conversely, as caveat or as punishment, seriousness can be withheld. During the 2012 phase of the uprising in Syria, a journalist briefly mentioned the only woman within the elite inner circle around Syria’s besieged authoritarian ruler Bashar al-Assad. This was vice president



Figure 1. An all-male team of UN observers meets with an all-male group of Syrian rebels, Qusayr, Syria, May 2012. Agence France-Presse—Getty Images.

Najah al-Attar. Would she be a possible compromise candidate, various external observers were wondering, to replace President Assad? No, though she was in the regime’s inner circle, she was deemed by these diplomatic calculators to lack gravitas.⁴ To be taken seriously does not mean to be liked or to be admired. Rather, to be taken seriously means to be listened to, to be carefully responded to, to have one’s ideas and actions thoughtfully weighed. It means that what one does or thinks *matters*—that is, significant consequences flow from it.

Propping up the phrase *taken seriously* is the presumption that one becomes worthy of being taken seriously if one is judged to be adult, rational, and able to wield meaningful influence. Those whose ideas are labeled “trivial” or “innocent” or “juvenile” or “shallow” or “silly” or “lightweight” or “pedestrian” will not be taken seriously. Those whose influence is “passing” or “parochial” will not be taken seriously. They will be dismissed. Their ideas will not need to be taken into account

“when the chips are down”—that is, when the likely consequences are important, when “it matters.” At best, if not taken seriously, these people will be listened to only later—that is, after the crisis has passed, after the crucial decisions have been made, when it no longer matters: after the new constitution is written, after the waters have receded, after the banks have been recapitalized, after the candidate lists have been finalized, after the electoral campaign funds have been raised.

The twenty-five women who in 1985 founded an American organization to raise money for those women candidates who would run on the Democratic ticket and who would support women’s reproductive rights decided to name their new group “EMILY’s List.” *Emily* was not the name of a wealthy woman donor. EMILY, the founders explained, stands for: “Early Money Is Like Yeast.” That is, these feminist strategists calculated, candidates who can raise money early in the prolonged, expensive American campaign season are the ones political insiders will take seriously.⁵ Thus to be taken seriously in America’s money-driven electoral politics, women would have to create a mechanism with which to raise that early money. Otherwise, their candidacies would be dismissed by power brokers as inconsequential.

At worst, people and their ideas that are *not* taken seriously will not be listened to at all, not now, not later. Instead, they will be exposed to ridicule. Their ideas will be called soft or naive or irrelevant or childish. It is not happenstance that conventionally minded people imagine most of these dismissive adjectives to be closely associated with the patriarchal notion of femininity. A gender-smart observer knows that in any masculinity-privileging society a person or an idea that can be feminized is a person or an idea that can be easily trivialized, dismissed. This provides an incentive for some men to try to feminize their male rivals. Feminization is a potent weapon in the masculinized contest between men over who will be taken seriously. If one is not attentive to the cultural politics of femininity, in other words, it is hard to make sense of the politics of diverse masculinities and the gendered rivalries between men.⁶

Who is taken seriously and by whom? These are not minor questions. The answers carry consequences, not only for the person who is dismissed but also for the hierarchies of influence, for the quality of the entire public conversation, and ultimately for the decisions that flow out of that conversation. If what is taken seriously is defined too narrowly—for instance, if feminist questions and feminist findings are dismissed as not serious—then the results can be inadequate explanations, poor decisions, flawed policies, failed efforts, and perpetuated injustices.

Most of us hope that we will be taken seriously. Yet, like beauty, seriousness is in the eye of the beholder. It is a status bestowed by someone else. Therefore, talking about being taken seriously in the passive tense is dangerous: it risks leaving the bestower invisible, unaccountable. You can try your best to be taken seriously, but it will be others who decide whether they will take you and your ideas seriously. This is why being taken seriously is held out as an inducement and reward—and is withheld as punishment. Rewards, inducements, and punishments, of course, shape behavior.

This is one of the reasons that one may feel “brave” when one insists on making women the focus of a doctoral dissertation, even though none of one’s faculty advisors take questions of masculinity or femininity seriously in their own research or teaching. Those same well-meaning advisors may try to persuade the student that it would be “better for your career”—that is, one will be taken more seriously by future employers and colleagues—if instead one’s research focused on, say, class relations in the copper industry or on the history of Twitter (each of which is, of course, presumably ungendered). Similarly, an ambitious journalist may steer away from proposing to her or his editor an in-depth investigation of factory women’s lives or the workings of rival masculinities inside big banks. Better, the ambitious reporter calculates, to ask that editor—by whom one hopes to be seen as a serious journalist—if one can cover a territorial dispute or an oil drilling enterprise (again, each allegedly ungendered). Likewise, many elected women legislators resist being assigned to legislative committees that

work on "women's issues." It is hard enough, they determine, to be taken seriously as lawmakers when, as women, they are trying to gain influence in a male-dominated institution, without also being assigned to a committee that specializes in issues that most of the male legislators do not consider serious.

The same inducement, reward, and punishment regime operates in today's international organizations. Sheri Lynn Gibbings tells a revealing story.⁷ In 2003, she was working with and studying the New York-based women's advocacy groups that were the engines behind the United Nations Security Council's 2000 adoption of the groundbreaking UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution requires all UN agencies and all UN member states to include women in peace negotiations and in all efforts to rebuild postconflict societies. The myriad impacts of armed violence on women living in war zones from East Timor to Congo and Afghanistan were thenceforth to be taken seriously by international and local actors. Moreover, according to 1325, women were not to be treated merely as victims in need of protection for which they should be silently grateful.⁸ Local women in war zones were instead to be treated by national and international authorities as thinkers, strategists, and decision makers.

As the savvy women advocates behind the historic resolution knew, the proof of the international pudding was going to be in the eating—in the instance of 1325, the proof was going to be in the elite-level and ground-level implementation of all the provisions of the resolution. These UN-focused women activists had done so much to provide the evidence for, to draft the content of, and to mobilize Security Council delegations' support for 1325. To bring the international decision making to this point, these feminist-informed activists inside and outside the UN (from Oxfam, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, as well as from within UNIFEM, which is now incorporated into the new major agency UN Women) had created the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. In the wake of the historic passage of 1325, members

of the NGO Working Group made their group's chief activity the monitoring of all agencies of the UN that should be implementing 1325's provisions to see if, in their daily actions, they indeed were taking the requirements of 1325 seriously. One of their monitoring devices was a monthly report on the UN's 1325-related actions, *Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council*.⁹ The objective was to provide evidence of agencies taking the provisions seriously or, to the contrary, of their trivializing or ignoring those provisions; in this way they would hold the feet of the Security Council's state delegates and of the UN Secretariat to the bureaucratic fire. It takes a lot of strategic thinking and labor-intensive action to ensure that people inside any complex organization actually do take their commitments seriously.

According to Gibbings, in order to keep up the pressure, to ensure that the easily distracted UN delegates and officials remained attentive to the promises they had made in 1325, activists in the NGO Working Group tried to bring women from war zones to New York to meet with influential UN actors. They wanted to keep showing to the latter the women's realities on the ground. They also wanted to demonstrate that women active in women's groups organizing under duress in the midst of armed conflicts were sharp analysts of what was causing the violence, and that these women had ideas about what needed to be done to end it and to reweave their countries' shredded social fabrics.

In that spirit, in 2003, in the early months of the Iraq War, they invited several touring Iraqi women to come to New York to meet with key UN officials and government representatives. But the meetings did not go well. The Iraqi women were indeed sharp analysts. But they did not try to cover up their anger at what was happening to their fellow Iraqis in the wake of the U.S.-led military invasion. Furthermore, they framed their analysis in terms of "imperialism." Both their tone and their framing seemed to alienate a number of the UN insiders. The women activists who had set up the meetings were dismayed.

As Gibbings relates, members of the NGO Working Group later tried to figure out what went wrong. They were not going to stop bringing

women from war zones face to face with UN people making decisions that were affecting those women's lives. But they concluded that, as they themselves had had to learn by years of trial and error, UN insiders would take seriously only those outsiders who would adopt UN-insider cultural practices. And those practices included the suppression of public anger and the usage of certain sorts of speech. Call them "speech norms." Moreover, when it came to talking about *women's* lives, and *women's* war-time proposals, the framing that the UN insiders found most "hear-able" was the sort that positioned women as the sources of hope. Being forthrightly feminist, a woman risked not being heard, not being taken seriously.¹⁰

The experiences of the NGO Working Group activists underscore a dilemma faced every day by feminists: how far does one go in trimming one's speech and one's concepts in order to be heard? How can one be taken seriously by people for whom talk of feminism, systematic rape, sex trafficking, misogyny, prostitution, sexual harassment, sexist humor, and patriarchy is deemed impolite or hysterical or extreme?

Feminists speaking to nonfeminists, often to antifeminists, about gendered violence or gendered impoverishment face a challenge: how do they speak realistically about the conditions of women, about the relationships between women and men, and about the relationships between states and women in a way that is taken seriously by their listeners *without* so diluting their message—in the name of adopting the insiders' bland speech norms—that the gendered realities of which they speak fade out of sight?

The unquestioned presumptions about what and who deserves to be rewarded with the accolade of "serious" is one of the pillars of modern patriarchy. That is, being taken seriously is a status that every day, in routine relationships, offers the chance for masculinity to be privileged and for anything associated with femininity to be ranked as lesser, as inconsequential, as dependent, or as beyond the pale.

Patriarchy cannot survive amid the current destabilizing changes—the end of colonial rule, the surge of foreign investment, the emergence

of new industries, the spread of the Internet, the expansion of education, the influx of tourists, the toppling of oppressive regimes—unless ways are found by patriarchy's beneficiaries and supporters to nourish reward systems that (1) sustain the privileging of certain forms of masculinity, (2) treat most women as if they naturally lack autonomy, and (3) weigh all things deemed to be feminine as of lesser value than those deemed masculine when the discussion turns to topics that matter.

Any of us take something seriously when we begin to see that it *matters*. Something matters when we start to uncover its *consequences*. Thus, women are not taken seriously in large part because so many people (officials, sociologists, historians, economists, news commentators, bloggers) believe that whatever happens to women really does not have major consequences. This is a deeply held belief that has proved very hard to budge. It is a belief rooted in the patriarchal (that is, masculinity-privileging) presumption that women are fundamentally *dependent* beings.

As the following chapters reveal, in the narratives of economies and especially of finance, women typically are dismissed as not-serious actors or thinkers when their labor is (mistakenly) deemed inconsequential because it is so often part-time, low paid, or unpaid. Furthermore, as these same case studies show, women's political economies can be trivialized in public debates when the money they earn is (erroneously) trivialized as "pin money," as not the principal economic lifeblood of households, or when they are talked about solely as consumers (of groceries and clothes, not of construction equipment, bonds or real estate).

And as other chapters to follow demonstrate, in narratives of wartime and revolution, women are presumed to be confined to "the home front." They are (merely) "the protected." They are the (silent) "grieving." They are the (voiceless, idea-less) "victims." They are the symbols of "the nation," not its makers.

As these case studies reveal, women are mobilized, of course, for the revolution or for war-waging, but only by others (influential men and occasionally by a handful of women who have been deputized by men). Yet, when they are mobilized, it is only "for the duration," destined to

be demobilized (by those same men)—sent back to their “natural” domesticated, unpaid, low-paid, dependent roles—as quickly as possible once the crisis has passed. In fact, women’s return to domesticated dependency is often taken as proof—as in the United States of the late 1940s, and currently in Egypt—that a reassuring normalcy is being restored after the violence, after the turmoil.

If women are imagined to be basically dependents, these case studies show, then the people you should take seriously, by contrast, are the *independent* actors. They are the ones who strategize, who protect, who “don’t have time to grieve,” who take actions that shape history, who take risks that generate profits, who craft the lasting postcrisis lessons. It is the independent actors who confront the riot police, play hard, stay late at the office, eschew the domestic sphere. They are the “manly” ones. These manly independent actors, therefore, are the ones who can see “the big picture.” The ideas, emotions, calculations, and actions that matter are those of the independent, autonomous actors—the bankers, the generals, the rebel commanders, the political party strategists, the diplomats, the editors. For good or for ill, it is their ideas, emotions, calculations, and actions, so the conventional thinking goes, that will have significant consequences, consequences that, supposedly, we all need to care about.

In patriarchal societies (including those that claim to be modern or even postmodern), to be feminized is to be made dependent; to be independent is to be masculinized. Thus it is no wonder that so many people—men and women—who believed that patriarchy was the natural and the best way to order societies fought so hard against women’s suffrage. The battles waged intensely against women’s right to vote—in Britain, in India, in Mexico, in China, in the United States, in Switzerland, in Kuwait—are as important to study as those campaigns that ultimately won women their suffrage rights, because those antisuffrage activists spelled out in often desperate clarity what they thought would be *lost* if women could cast their own ballots in public elections: the feminization of dependency.¹¹



Figure 2. Indian suffragettes in the Women's Coronation Procession, London, June 17, 1911. © Museum of London.

The studies here of the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession, as well as the exploration of the still-evolving Egyptian revolution, demonstrate that it is no wonder those who value patriarchal social relations are made nervous when women in wartime and in other times of societal upheaval—after earthquakes, during financial crashes, in the midst of political revolutions—are revealed to have minds of their own. It makes those who cherish patriarchy anxious when women reveal their capacities for organization, strategizing, enterprise, and analysis. The eras commonly called “post”—postwar, postrecession, postdisaster, postrevolution—are usually eras marked by concerted efforts to put the independent woman back in her dependency bottle. That bottle is sometimes referred to as “the kitchen.”

What does this mean for those of us working today to craft methods of gender analysis—especially feminist-informed methods of gender analysis, gender analysis infused with a curiosity about power? It means

that we need to think carefully about how the rewards of being labeled as serious operate in all spheres of society. We need to be candid about how alluring those rewards can be for each of us. Patriarchy is stubbornly perpetuated because it is not simply oppressive; it is rewarding, it is alluring. It is reassuring to be protected. It is satisfying to be called respectable. It is pleasing to be labeled a good wife or a good mother. It can be a source of pride when the men in the room occasionally describe one's comments as rational.

To craft strategies and practices of feminist-informed gender research—and to get our findings taken seriously by diverse audiences—we need to directly challenge and dismantle the dismissive categories of “trivial,” “innocent,” “naive,” “sentimental,” “soft,” and “parochial.”

The case studies that follow here are only contributions to a much broader, current transnational campaign by feminist analysts—of wars, of economic failures, of natural disasters. These studies provide examples of what feminist analytical seriousness looks like: they show what the workings of masculinities and femininities do to the economic, political, and cultural processes shaping our lives—and why they matter.

When we are investigating women's multidimensional and diverse relationships to conflict and economic turmoil, however, we must challenge those dismissive patriarchal categories in ways that do not turn women's liberation or women's rights merely into instruments in the hands of the powerful. Anything that is used instrumentally can be put back on the shelf once its users no longer find that instrument useful for their own ends.

An example: domestic violence against women often escalates in war zones and after wars in those households with returning male veterans (veterans of the government militaries or veterans of insurgent militias). If we argue that our research on war-related domestic violence should be taken seriously (by officials, by humanitarian-aid-group donors, and by social commentators) because the military's effectiveness is jeopardized if that violence by soldiers and ex-soldiers is ignored, then we imply that women's experiences of domestic violence by their male partners matters

only insofar as it weakens that military—that it does not matter for its own sake, that women’s physical integrity has little or no importance of its own. Using this instrumental argument, one may indeed catch the ear of officialdom, might persuade officials, donors, or militia leaders to pay more serious attention, but it will be at a steep price. It will mean that military priorities remain in the driver’s seat. When any military strategist deems domestic violence a nonissue or “absorbable,” findings about women’s experiences of domestic violence will fall off the table.¹²

Likewise, today gender analysts have become increasingly interested in the poverty and accompanying homelessness experienced by many countries’ women military and militia veterans after they leave their military organization. Frequently that poverty is accompanied by (or partly caused by) significant mental and physical disabilities that can be traced back to their specific wartime service.¹³ In trying to get editors and officials to take seriously the impoverishment of women veterans, one might be tempted to argue that confronting those findings and taking steps to address them matters because neglecting or denying them tarnishes a patriotic or nationalist legacy. While, of course, this may be true, if that is the chief argument employed to gain serious attention, then, once again, the impoverishment and health problems of women veterans will, by implication, be seen to be important only insofar as they tarnish patriotism or the nation. They will not matter because women’s well-being matters for its own sake.¹⁴

The trap—the dangerous temptation—here is to adopt other people’s patriarchal criteria for what is worthy of serious attention as our own criteria. That is, it is tempting to believe that women matter only because they are somebody’s wife, somebody’s daughter, somebody’s free or cheapened labor, somebody’s unpaid caretaker, somebody’s reproducer, somebody’s emotional attachment, somebody’s source of honor or shame, somebody’s patriotic symbol.

At the very core of feminism is the conviction that women matter *for their own sakes*. As we will see, revolutionary feminist women have

asserted that no woman's freedom of expression, or freedom from harassment, depends for its worth on its value to any man. This is a radical assertion. By *radical*, I mean it is an assertion that goes to the root of popular and official understandings.

It will be tempting to argue that we should have our gender analyses taken seriously because we are providing a useful instrument for those currently in power. We need to ask four questions as we weigh this temptation:

- What price are we paying when we use that instrumental argument?
- Is the price too high?
- Are there alternatives?
- Are there strategies by which we can get those alternatives taken seriously by the people we need to persuade?

One alternative to an instrumentalist argument is an explanatory argument: to argue that if we (and our hoped-for audiences) dismiss—shrug off—thoughtful, rigorous, carefully pointed feminist-informed gender analysis, we will fail to understand. That is, if anyone treats gender analytical findings as irrelevant or “soft,” they will base their subsequent decisions on flawed explanations. This is my own argument in offering here feminist gender analyses of the 2008 banking crash, of the subsequent recession, of peacekeeping operations and peace movements, and of Egyptian women's experiences of the Arab Spring.

In other words, the case studies that follow here (all of which rely on other feminists' careful, often daring research) throw into sharp relief the amount of thinking—both individually and collectively—that diverse women do during crises and crashes, the thinking and acting that shape the contours and trajectories of current and future society. The result: those who ignore careful feminist-informed gender research will, first of all, naively imagine that women are merely dependent bystanders, victims without agency, inherently peaceful, domestically

confined. They will erroneously imagine that women are passive, that they can be easily manipulated.

Second, those who ignore gender analytical findings that take women seriously will significantly underestimate the power wielded by governments, by state officials, by insurgents, by militias, by banking executives, by foreign forces both during and after crises, wieldings of power intended to influence women's behavior—women's relationships to men, their relationships to the economy, their relationships to the war's adversaries, their relationships to their own state. The result: they will imagine that wars are easier to wage, revolutions are easier to shrink or to roll back, and economies easier to repair than in fact they are. Likewise, those who dismiss feminist-informed gender analyses will naively imagine that it is easier to reestablish a patriarchal "normalcy" in the "post" era than in fact it is.

Third, if the findings of feminist-informed gender analyses of crashes and crises are treated as trivial, then the workings of, and impacts of, diverse masculinities will remain invisible. Taking women seriously always has the effect of enabling us to see men as men. That is, when only men are treated as if they matter, those men appear to be generals, authorities, activists, police, farmers, soldiers, managers, investors, economists, writers, and insurgents. That serves to hide their masculinities. It makes us incurious about how male revolutionaries, male budget directors, male soldiers, male bankers imagine their own manliness, worry about expressing their manliness, and make choices based on their efforts to prove their manliness to their male rivals and male superiors.

By contrast, as I hope the following case studies show, when we take women seriously we have to wonder about the pressures on them to be feminine—or sometimes to pass as manly. This curiosity motivates us to pay attention to how women craft their relationships to diverse men in their lives: their bosses, their clients, their allies, their husbands. That attentiveness, in turn, pushes us to pay closer attention to men as men. The result of not using gender analysis to carefully explore the

workings of masculinities in economic crises, in revolutions, in war-time, and in the years following turmoil is this: one will mistakenly presume that all men are attracted to soldiering or banking, and that leaders do not have to use power to persuade many men to fight, or they do not have to press male bankers to adopt new risk-taking, masculinized identities. In turn, one will naively ignore the reality that many men's traumatic wartime experiences, or their exhilarations in a banking boom or in a revolution, are converted into postwar, postboom, postrevolution worries about their status as manly. One will underestimate the number of the decisions made leading up to, during, and after crises that are made by men in order to prove their manliness in the eyes of other men. One will underestimate women's resistance to being turned into postwar, postcrash, postrevolution fodder in the contest between masculinities.

The conventional politics of seriousness is a series of personal and public dynamics that, if unchallenged, serve to reinforce patriarchal structures. The politics of seriousness can allow patriarchy to be sustained even when dramatic social changes, such as those marking today's world, are occurring. The case studies that follow are feminist investigations of particular crises—economic, militarized and political—but, simultaneously, they are feminist investigations of workings of seriousness. These investigations flow from a conviction that we need to monitor gendered seriousness on large stages and small, in the public arenas and in private spheres.

The gendered politics of seriousness is serious.