I am grateful to Roxanne Doty and Ido Oren for their thoughtful comments on my work. Most of their critiques come from a post-positivist perspective, so I will use this response as a means to clarify some of my own struggles with positivism and post-positivism.

Like Roxanne Doty, I am interested in “how” questions, but rather than asking how discourse makes certain practices possible, I am interested in how governance works. I am particularly interested in how power and ideas implicate each other in political structures and competitions. Thus, the principle goal of my research is to understand better some realities “out there” rather than to investigate how such understanding is possible, though I am aware that the ways in which I observe such realities are themselves products of particular configurations of social forces and processes. I do want my work to render the relation between discourse and power more transparent, but I aspire to do so not primarily by critiquing the dominant discourse, but rather by examining how groups and individuals with fewer resources at their disposal respond to dominant discourses through varying degrees of internalization, accommodation, appropriation and resistance. This is the chief goal of my manuscript, “Becoming Visible.” My article on the politics of national identity, as Ido notes, is not nearly so critical or self-reflective, though in many respects it foreshadows the approach in my more recent work.
ROXANNE’S CRITIQUE OF “BECOMING VISIBLE”

Roxanne notes quite rightly that it could be more focused and more consistent in its approach. Here I plead in part that the manuscript is a work in progress. It certainly is scattered. My goal was to create a framework to understand the very diverse area of transnational activism that I could later apply to a number of more specific cases. Unlike other treatments of transnational activism within IR theory, I wanted to create a framework that would not treat the identities of activists and the international norms they espoused as self-evident. Rather, I sought to demonstrate how these networks were themselves implicated within larger structures of global governance such as the sovereign state system and global capitalism, and how in many respects these networks reflected and reinforced such structures even as they provided more space for outside voices to enter the discussion. Examining the effect of transnational alliances on the goals, strategies and identities of local activists seemed the best way to illustrate the workings of power even in the production and maintenance of seemingly progressive, seemingly “intersubjective” international norms. Still, as Roxanne suggests, I crammed too many things into the manuscript, and it could stand substantial pruning.

Roxanne also correctly notes some inconsistencies in my approach. I had only recently come to appreciate the value of Foucault’s notion of governmentality in relation to my questions, so some of the inconsistency stems no doubt to a lack of understanding. To me, Foucault’s concept of governmentality provides an excellent lens through which to analyze and critique the prevailing discourses and practices of any system of governance. Perhaps even more usefully, however, Foucault’s emphasis upon the “microphysics” of power demonstrates how discourse and practice works in daily life to
identify, elicit, authorize and discipline certain qualities and identities while rendering others alien or invisible. This not only helps me understand how discourses are translated into practice, but also suggests the enormous amount of material resources invested in and produced by daily practice to maintain the macrostructures of governance.

I remain essentially a materialist. For discourses to gain authority, they must reasonably reflect practical experience, and such practices in return require and produce material resources. Russian nationalists who proclaim their country to be a great power lose authority if they cannot translate their notions into practice. Of course, the notion of great power is also discursive, but as Iver Neumann remarks in his submission to this conference, relation between discourse and material practice can be seen as an endlessly repeating feedback loop, where discourse makes practice possible, which is then reinterpreted as discourse. One can enter this feedback loop where it makes most sense for the questions one wants to explore.

This argument does not address an important question: if power is dispersed throughout the minute practices of everyday life, how then can material resources be concentrated to the extent where agency and innovation is possible? In fact, change is very difficult. Some of the more interesting work in the history of the early 20th century in Russia now emphasizes the continuities extending across the revolutionary period in addition to the changes. Still, I do see room for agency acting in at least two different ways. First, Gramsci posits the role of the organic intellectual who synthesizes, selects and reconceptualizes the inchoate fragments of institutionalized patterns in daily life to create a new, more coherent account that makes more sense of everyday experiences (this seems to resemble the kind of agency Foucault identifies in the paragraph cited in
Neumann’s response). Second, the accumulation of practice over space and time creates a certain amount of what Bourdieu would call “capital” (whether social, cultural, economic or political capital) that individuals or officeholders can deploy for their own ends. For example, the office of the Presidency in the United States has accumulated significant amounts of political capital over the years, such that people expect the holder of that office to translate certain pronouncements into practice, and adjust their own behavior accordingly, thereby translating expectations into “reality” (though probably not a reality that was expected). So I do treat certain organizations and institutions as having a presupposed identity, as Roxanne suggests, but I do so not because I am unaware of the accumulation of discourse and practices over time and space that has made these identities possible, but because it seems a more practical shorthand for discussing the issues that interest me.

Roxanne’s comments about my use of variables and hypotheses—noting that they are themselves discourses—are more difficult to deal with. Clearly, the use of these methods is not consistent with my approach, and seems to emphasize the “why” over the “how.” I will probably accept her critique and ditch the hypotheses, but I am not altogether comfortable doing so. Generalizations are inevitable in the study of politics, and it seems useful to articulate such generalizations clearly and to subject them to rigorous tests. In the case of my manuscript, I use the variables within the context of a discursive framework to understand particular questions that may be more amenable to positivist analysis, namely why and under what conditions some interpretive accounts prevail over others. Still, I am genuinely ambivalent on this issue, and would like to discuss it.
IDO’s CRITIQUE ON THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN RUSSIA

As noted above, I wrote this article before I began to grapple with many of these questions, and would approach the question differently now. I agree wholeheartedly with Ido that the form of constructivism I used in this article embraces many of the assumptions of conventional liberalism, particularly with regard to its tendency to neglect the role of power in constructing norms and identities. It is also true that I assumed my audience would be mostly US academics and possibly some policy makers, and tried to ensure my argument would be intelligible to that audience. On the other hand, the article foreshadows some of the concerns about power, ideas and practice mentioned above, and is perhaps more critical than Ido suggests. First, as Ido suggests, I explicitly state that I am looking at a narrow stratum of Russian politicians and draw a distinction between the representations of Russian national identity they deploy and the way most Russians themselves might construct that identity. This qualification accurately reflects the type of evidence I was using, but it also implies the widespread existence of identities not represented in public debates because of a lack of resources. This recognition of potential subaltern identities is not easily compatible with liberal notions of representation.

Second, even though Ido is largely correct when he argues that my account rehearses persistent themes in the representation of Russia within the discourses of more powerful “Western” countries, still I do not think the article simply imposes these identities on a passive Russian “other,” as Ido seems to imply. The liberals quite self-consciously identified themselves as “Westernizers” and were identified as such by other Russians participating in this debate. Similarly, the term “statists” was not entirely my
own invention, but was an effort to render into English the Russian term that was often associated with this group, “derzhavniki” (which is more literally translated as “great-power-niks”). The notion of “statism” reflects also the Russian term often used to describe Putin’s governing ideology, “gosudarstvenost” (which can be translated—though inadequately—as sovereign-ness). I do mentions that I compare these statists with the traditional form of realism usually associated in the United States with Hans Morgenthau, and he seems to suggest by this example that I am looking at Russia through US eyes. In fact, I chose this example precisely because, unlike US neorealism, traditional (or continental) realism “invests the state with “moral worth” (I would now prefer “moral agency”). Moreover, two paragraphs later, I qualify the analogy by pointing out that the statists differ from traditional realism insofar as their “differentiation from the West relied on the traditional distinctions between East and West found in Russian history.” (81) If I could rewrite the article, I would now probably use Russian scholarship in “geopolitics” rather than realism to illustrate this point.

I also don’t think the article presumes the superiority of Western practices and discourses for Russia. I never equate the “liberals” with “democracy.” In fact, I am quite explicit in identifying them as a narrow elite who sought to differentiate themselves from the rest of Russian society by condemning what they considered to be traditional “Russian” practices as “backward.” Moreover, I note that they were quite willing to use undemocratic, even coercive measures to disempower such “backward” ways and consolidate their rule. A liberal victory, I argue at the end, could only occur with massive support from the Western powers, and even so the elites would remain largely disarticulated from the rest of society. This vision of a potential future owes much more
to dependency theory than to the liberal variant of constructivism. In the end, I contend that a “statist” government would best suit the needs of the Russians and the long-term interests of the United States. At this point I do adopt a US perspective, but I do so explicitly as part of the task of the article, and I do so in a way that recognizes and encourages pluralism over orthodoxy.

Finally, I did not mean to invest the term “anachronistic” with any normative value, though obviously it can be read that way. I simply meant to argue that I did not think that the derzhavniki,—whose vision of great power reflected the mission, the structures and practices of huge Soviet-style industrial enterprises—could mobilize the resources they needed to enact that vision in a world dominated by the global organization of production.

If my account rehearses old discourses about Russia and the West, and it does, what I find most interesting is how these discourses have reasserted themselves in both “Russian” and “Western” practice despite the massive disruption in the discourse that occurred between 1988 and 1992, when many powerful Russians sought to redefine themselves as an integral part of a larger “Western” identity and many powerful people in the “West” were quite willing to acknowledge and embrace this new Russian identity. Thus, if I were to rewrite this article now, it would be precisely to examine in a self-conscious manner how the interaction between the United States and Russia shaped the evolving accounts of the “other” in each of these countries in such a way as to rearticulate (in the Gramscian sense) old patterns of discourse and practice.