How Political Science Can Be More Diverse

Introduction

Carol Mershon, *University of Virginia, guest editor*
Denise Walsh, *University of Virginia, guest editor*

This symposium in *PS: Political Science and Politics* addresses a timely question of discipline-wide importance: how to diversify leadership and end discrimination in the profession. In the recent *Perspectives* special theme issue on gender, Isaac (2014, 1) argues that "the gendering of political science" is a "topic of pressing concern." In a widely cited article, Maliniak, Powers, and Walter (2013) document gender citation bias in international relations journals. And in a recent special report to *PS*, Monroe et al. (2014, 424) find that "both statistical and qualitative interview data confirm the ongoing existence of gender inequality within American academia."

The question of bias in political science is both urgent and longstanding. Women and racial minorities are underrepresented among political science faculty in the United States and internationally.[1] A database compiled by the American Political Science Association (APSA) discloses that, in 1980, female faculty comprised an estimated 10.3% of political science faculty nationwide. By 2010, that share had increased to 28.6% (APSA Task Force 2011, 41–43). Female faculty of color, who face multiple dimensions of disadvantage, are still severely underrepresented. In 2010, 86.6% of female political science faculty were Caucasian, 6.1% were African American, 4.4% Asian Pacific Islander, and 3.0% Latina. Hence in 2010 African American females constituted 1.7% of political science faculty nationwide, a mere 161 women.

Underrepresentation both manifests and perpetuates discrimination in multiple ways, including through implicit bias and self-replicating exclusionary social networks.[2] For example, Monroe et al. (2008) report that women's underrepresentation in the professoriate is sustained by masculinist stereotyping by both women and men. Because society maps feminine characteristics such as passivity onto heterosexual middle-class white women, and this characteristic is devalued in the paid labor sector, these women are found lacking regardless of how they act or how well they perform in leadership roles. Yet, when these women deviate from feminine stereotypes, colleagues are likely to view them negatively as too abrasive (e.g., Duguid et al. 2012; Williams 2014). Women who are perceived as incapable of acting according to feminine stereotypes, such as working-class black women, are also in a double bind, as colleagues are unlikely to think that these women can adequately perform according to dominant feminine *or* masculine norms (Malcom and Malcom 2011; Malcom et al. 1976). Monroe and co-authors find that gender stereotypes such as these obscure institutional discrimination by depicting all women as lacking in qualifications and experience, and that they deflect women's legal action against bias because women frequently internalize these stereotypes. Even when a handful of women access leadership positions, women and men colleagues tend to classify their achievements as tokenism and devalue these positions, characterizing the achievements as service-oriented rather than leadership. These biases justify discrepancies in salaries, resource distribution, service responsibilities, and institutional responsiveness to outside offers (Monroe et al. 2008; Monroe et al. 2013).

Not surprisingly, white women, women of color, and members of other marginalized groups who enter into the political science academic pipeline as graduate students and who become junior faculty often encounter a hostile environment in the workplace and obstacles to career advancement (e.g., Anonymous and Anonymous 1999; Monforti and Michelson 2008; Van Assendelft 2003; Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden 2008; but see Ginther 2004). Survey-based research documents attrition rates among women graduate students that exceed those of men, which stem from relatively poor mentoring for women and from their knowledge or experience of inappropriate behavior (Hesli, Fink, and Duffy 2003a; 2003b). Survey data also indicate that women assistant and associate professors perceive their surroundings in relatively negative terms (Hesli and Burrell 1995; Hesli 2013). Racial minorities have significantly lower levels of satisfaction than those of whites, underscoring the importance of intersectionality (Hesli and Lee 2013).[3]

Reflecting on these problems in the discipline, Maliniak, Powers, and Walter (2013, 32) recommend "real changes in how universities mentor, support, and promote women." Monroe and colleagues (2014) point out that research confirms the kinds of policies that, if implemented, would serve to

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diversify the profession: for example, appoint equity advisors, provide childcare, hire partners, and offer parental leave. Even so, the commitment to enacting such policies has been lacking to date. Changing this record is of paramount importance, and can be advanced by change agents, including powerful allies in the discipline who have the requisite leadership skills.

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This symposium on diversifying political science offers an innovative approach to transforming our discipline by offering new strategies that include how to prompt a commitment to change among leaders in the discipline. The contributions comprising this symposium apply political science insights about how to diversify institutions to the discipline itself—to national associations such as the American Political Science Association (APSA), colleges and universities, and political science departments. The symposium thus provides novel answers to the following questions: What new mechanisms might political science research offer for advancing diversity and equity in our discipline? Which organizations and actors can take the lead in promoting these changes? And what steps should they take to maximize the probability of change?[4]

The authors in the symposium use research on political institutions to answer these questions. The answers in each contribution are distinct, for each article evaluates the problem at a different level of analysis. Karen Beckwith begins with a macropolitical assessment that targets national governmental policy, academe, and disciplinary associations. Applying insights from the gendered institutions literature, Beckwith specifies a blueprint for policy reform that identifies conducive structures, sympathetic elites, and women advocating for change as critical for securing reform at the macro level. Miki Caul Kittilson, engaging with the literature on women in political parties and legislatures, delivers a detailed action plan for diversity that involves lobbying and women's organizing at multiple levels to facilitate the macropolitical action that Beckwith recommends.

Valeria Sinclair-Chapman concentrates on the meso level of universities and colleges. Pointing to the resources that these institutions dedicate to diversity and their need for astute leadership, Sinclair-Chapman advises that political scientists in disciplinary caucuses serving underrepresented groups emulate minority members in the US Congress by viewing the "diversity business" as an opportunity to bridge their differences, position themselves as campus diversity leaders, and forge new networks among universities, colleges, and professional associations.

Carol Mershon and Denise Walsh shift the level of analysis again, from the university to the micropolitics of the department. Mershon and Walsh agree with Kittilson and Beckwith that women's organizing is the key for changing departmental—and by extension, disciplinary—practices and policies. Their case study highlights that women's organizing in one political science department has successfully challenged gender bias. Whereas Mershon and Walsh discuss *how* to open the doors to change in departments, Nikol Alexander-Floyd outlines *what* those changes might be. Applying the literature on democratic theory and embodiment, Alexander-Floyd explains how and why institutional practices sustain bias, and then offers new guidelines for reframing standard modes of evaluating teaching, research, and service, guidelines that in turn disrupt the institutional reproduction of bias. Once again, the symposium makes clear how to create momentum for change by analyzing how institutions entrench the status quo and by devising strategies that can alter it.

The symposium concludes with a contribution by the current president of the APSA, Rodney Hero, who provides a grounded perspective on how the strategies proposed here can be both deepened and extended. His breadth of vision and administrative and leadership experience expand the conversation still further. We trust that this final contribution will inspire others to join the collective effort motivating this symposium and aiming to diversify the discipline.

Political science focuses on legislatures, political parties, social movements, and the bureaucracy, not on academe. The institutions that political science targets and the questions it raises—about political representation, institutional change, and policymaking—are not directly transferable to the workplace. It nonetheless offers a wealth of insights about how leadership can be diversified, how institutions work, and how policies and practices can be altered. These insights offer important lessons for how we might generate the commitment needed to diversify the profession. This symposium thus applies the tools of the discipline to the discipline itself. Together, the contributions, with Rodney Hero's reflections, launch an original approach in answer to the longstanding and pressing question: how can political science become more diverse? ■

NOTES

1. For data beyond the US, see Bates, Jenkins, and Pflaeger (2012) and Curtin (2013).
2. See for example Kadera (2013); Hancock, Baum, and Breuning (2013); Mansbridge (2013); Mitchell, Lange, and Brus (2013); Monroe (2013); Østby, Strand, Nordås, and Gleditsch (2013); Voeten (2013).
3. We concentrate on women and on race because these are the dominant categories used to assess diversity in the discipline. That is, the data available to date tell us little about the role of intersectionality (e.g., women of color) and other social locations such as sexuality and disability.
4. The symposium authors participated in a series of conference events addressing diversity and discrimination in the discipline, including a conference-within-a conference at the 2013 Southern Political Science Association meeting, a roundtable at the 2013 Midwest Political Science Association meeting, a short course and panel at the 2013 American Political Science Association meeting, and a roundtable at the 2014 American Political Science Association meeting.

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