

# A Discussion of Jessica Blatt's *Race and the Making of American Political Science*

**Race and the Making of American Political Science.** By Jessica Blatt. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 216p. \$55.00 cloth.

In *Race and the Making of American Political Science*, Jessica Blatt argues that the professionalization of the discipline was deeply entwined with ideas about racial difference, and the concomitant attempt by leading scholars to define and defend a system of racial hierarchy in the United States and beyond. Although it focuses on the period from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s, the book also raises fundamental questions about the historical legacy of racist arguments for professional political science, the extent of their continuing resonance, and contemporary implications for both academic and broader civic discourse. We have asked a range of leading political scientists to consider and respond to Professor Blatt's important call for scholarly self-reflexivity.

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Although Jessica Blatt's valuable analysis focuses on the first 50 years of American political science as a professional discipline, it begins by noting the "resurgence of biological determinism in the United States in the twenty-first century" (p. 2). Harvard geneticist David Reich has recently insisted that genome research may yet reveal genetically based differences in the average traits of human subpopulations, even though virtually all such groups will prove to have highly mixed ancestry. He maintains that if scholars simply deny the existence of these differences, instead of urging equal rights regardless of differences, they will cede credibility to those who once again claim to find biological bases for social, economic, and political systems of inequality and exclusion. Blatt reminds us that at its birth, American political science was a major contributor of such claims. Her book can help us consider whether and why modern political science might do so again—or whether and how it might play a very different role.

Blatt initially contends her "central argument" is that "race thinking shaped U.S. political science at its origins far more profoundly than has previously been recognized" (p. 4). But although important, this claim—which might be better stated as "more profoundly than has *generally* been recognized," given the number of kindred scholars she cites—is less fundamental for the present and future of political science than where she ends. Blatt calls for

political scientists to "attend more closely to the ways in which political life has shaped the identities we have," so that we might mobilize politics "to transform them and to build new solidarities" (p. 147). Her book also provides useful material for exploring a question that her study touches on but does not pursue thematically: *Why* have political scientists so often sought premises for their work that promise to explain differences and developments in terms of "other, more basic realms" seen as "pre-political," including, but by no means confined to, alleged biological racial differences (p. 137)?

There appear to be at least three distinguishable, though often linked, motivations at work. One is to naturalize, and thereby to justify in at least some eyes, structures of unequal power and privilege—and sometimes, though much more rarely, to use nature to call for reform of such structures. Columbia's John W. Burgess, the profession's seminal but quickly superseded figure, sought to replace "a priori, philosophically grounded speculation about natural rights and social contracts" with "sound, scientific principles" (p. 16). Those principles, shaped by Germanic thought and focused on historical institutions and practices, supposedly revealed, lying behind and above governing agencies, an organic, Anglo-Saxon "state" that was the true embodiment of popular sovereignty, and which had to be kept free from racial degeneracy by confining the franchise to whites, and immigration to northern Europeans. Soon, figures like Woodrow Wilson and Frank Goodnow began to replace Hegelian-flavored notions of "the state" with calls for pragmatic executive leadership and public administration on behalf of "the people," still imagined as rightfully white (pp. 38–39, 45). Yet as

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Robert Vitalis has elaborated, some of the contributors to the *Journal of Racial Development*, the forerunner of *Foreign Affairs*, believed that understanding the differences in the “blood” of racial peoples could help discern paths to a “far-reaching, even world-historical program of racial uplift” (75).

When, however, Charles Merriam and his colleagues and students began in the 1920s to call for “a scientific turn in the discipline” once again, this time following pluralists like Harold Laski in putting “internal differentiation rather than (racialized) organic unity” at the center of politics and political science, they did so primarily out of a second, distinguishable concern (p. 95). They were attracted to what they saw as measurable “psycho-biological” traits as explanations for the identities and behaviors of variegated groups (p. 126). They sought a political science that could be a “science of constructive, intelligent social control,” in service of “an educated, organized, democratic public” that, at least for Merriam and some of his allies, such as Harold Gosnell, did not have to be white (pp. 97, 133–135). For all too many, to be sure (including Merriam’s older brother John, president of Washington’s Carnegie Institution), psychometric studies of “intelligence” and “criminality” served to rationalize eugenics policies. For growing numbers of others, however, political science, understood as the empirical mapping of differences that were “deeply individual” yet “patterned within groups, and originating somewhere deeper than and precedent to political life,” was to be an instrument of “liberal, meritocratic” causes (p. 136).

Beyond reinforcing or contesting hierarchies and developing tools for social control, however, there may be a third reason for the quest to base political science on pre-political premises. Gaining prestige through its perceived national security contributions, behavioralism rose to predominance in the post-World War II era. It has since undergone development and withstood various assaults, without losing its central role in defining modern, “mainstream” political science. In part, I suggest, it has done so because it responds well to a defining desire of political scientists: to be real scientists.

Blatt repeatedly notes the role of “internal demands for empiricism” and “rigor” in fostering “quantitative, naturalistic research” of the sort that behavioralists have preached and practiced (pp. 140, 143). Why do these demands arise, and why are they so potent? It is possible that, among other things, they express felt intellectual as well as psychological needs to find relatively fixed foundations that can ground testable, falsifiable explanations and predictions. Finding such premises can seem necessary to make a *science* of politics possible, at least according to many conceptions of science (not simply Popper-style positivism). If we cannot trace political conduct and its consequences back to measurable, relatively enduring

pre-political sources, then political developments may appear to be radically contingent, undercutting possibilities not only for their constructive control but even for any real scientific understanding. What Burgess and Goodnow and Merriam, and many proclaimers of a new, true political science before and since, all have in common is their desire to ground political science, and thereby to comprehend and guide politics, on some thing or things that seem more fundamental and enduring than political interactions conceived as somehow a free-standing realm (or realm of freedom). Though different schools of political science have done so with different degrees of enthusiasm for history, they have all sought to overcome the fear that history and politics are really captured only by narratives of ineradicable contingency and unpredictability.

In this regard, Jessica Blatt is, and probably should be, a good political scientist herself. Though she calls for an end to conceiving of identities as fully pre-political, she also does not present them as purely political creations. She calls instead for attention to the “co-production of identity and politics,” presumably through intertwined social, economic, and yes, biological as well as political processes that we can hope to comprehend in large measure (p. 147). And she does so, again, as part of a kind of social control project—one aimed at transforming many features of the identities we have and building new social solidarities.

In these regards, as indeed in most regards, I am very much on the side of Blatt and her book. Even so, her work must still stand as a caution for us all. In our quest for a political science that can illuminate political conduct, that can provide grounds for deciding what forms of difference and inequality are and are not inevitable, and that can provide guides for improving our condition, we must not fall prey to the political and intellectual temptations that made race so central to the making of American political science. For in succumbing to them before, we helped make race and racial inequalities central to American political life.

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How do you talk about the disciplinary foundations of political science in the United States without talking about race and scientific racism? You do not, according to Jessica Blatt's *Race and the Making of American Political Science*. In this tightly written account of the foundations of political science as an academic discipline, Blatt ties together political science's desire for legitimacy among policy makers with an instrumental use of the methods and often the tenets of scientific racism. In so doing, she offers new levels of detail about the precepts of the discipline.

This focus is similar to previous works like Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*. The two books differ, however, in their approach. Eze allows the audience to read celebrated theorists of scientific racism like Immanuel Kant in their own words, inviting readers to more critically engage the entirety of a thinker's ideas. Blatt's book brings together the intentions of such thinkers with a consideration of their tangible impact on political science as a fledgling discipline.

Although she starts and ends with contemporary research in genetic approaches to politics, Blatt centers her analysis on the turn of twentieth century, with significant attention to "how racial ideas figured" (p. 5) in the context of a new academic field and the work of academic entrepreneurs seeking to cement political science's status as a putatively scientific scholarly enterprise. Examining the record of John Burgess, William Dunning, Charles Merriam, and other academic entrepreneurs, the author turns away from a "silence in the face of great accomplishment" approach to reveal the ways in which supposed racial differences were simultaneously embraced as a central part of political science's ontological origins and hypocritically dismissed as ephemera that could be conceptually separated from the methods that supposedly confirmed them.

As political science evolved over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was both a product and harbinger of a post-Reconstruction United States that grappled with Jim Crow. Indeed, one of Burgess's most powerful claims for civil service exams was its ability to provide a convincing and objective "theory of human difference" that would preserve the racial status quo of white domination. The "scientific turn" in eugenics and race difference studies proved irresistible to political scientists seeking to win friends and influence people in a way that would grant them access to the halls of power. Blatt quite convincingly reveals the way in which the quest for innovation and "progress" in how to study politics was

bound up with the quest for political influence on topics as broad as bureaucratic efficiency, colonial administration, and domestic politics.

This focus on preservation of the status quo was indeed the most intriguing and also the disturbing revelation of the book. The preservationist intent of political science to maintain the colonial racial hierarchy internationally in light of new circumstances, which is to say in light of mobilization to end colonial domination in places like India and to rationalize continued imperialist aspirations in the Philippines, rings clear throughout each chapter.

The tension between the desire for preservation of the current political order and the discipline's valorization of "progress" is an important question left mostly unaddressed throughout the book. The shared racist underpinnings of what today would be characterized as the more liberal and the more conservative elements of the discipline are deeply caught up in a definition of "progress" that is grounded in an "evolutionary understanding of racial difference." The author is mostly content to mention that the founders of political science departments on both coasts laid the intellectual groundwork for ethnic cleansing and genocide while debating the merits of colonial administration versus colonial autonomy in rival journals. The epilogue splits the difference without delving into the tension itself. Blatt herself describes the situation this way: "Certainly people in this milieu often endorsed the idea that racial differences were inherent and that African Americans and other racialized groups were probably or certainly inferior to Anglo-Saxons in at least some ways. At the same time, I have noted that many of them seem not to have been especially committed to white supremacist ideology as a political stance" (p. 139).

To be crystal clear, I am not suggesting that the author sympathizes with the racism and racialism discussed in this book. Rather, she seems to equate intent with effect in a way that limits the ability to critically consider the impact of such a racist origin story on the evolution of the discipline and on many contemporary questions of equity and access today. Such tension is exactly what this discipline needs to explore at this time in our nation's history.

The articulation of the relationship between the scientific turn of the 1920s, race difference, racism, and its material impact is frequently framed as if it is largely beside the point. But I cannot help but wonder about how political science's engagement and subsequent dismissal of Boas's anthropological work—as an example of a compelling alternative methodology—were intentional choices of Burgess, Merriam, and other figures. Early political scientists' refusal to engage with rigorous empirical scholarship proving exactly the opposite point about the racial status quo, specifically the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, is likewise a reflection of intent with tremendous impact. Within the very same literature of race difference and during the exact time period covered

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by Blatt's book, Du Bois conducted the Atlanta University Studies and wrote *The Philadelphia Negro*. He wrote about these studies in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* in 1903. Our discipline's decision to embrace select methods within the racial difference literature that happened to preserve the status quo is surely more than an innocent mistake or oversight.

Blatt contends that "race science appealed not so much as proof positive of white superiority but as a possible means to satisfy long-standing, internal demands for empiricism, rigor, and real-world applicability within political science. Moreover, it was also suited to—and indeed was implicated in the construction of—a new institutional landscape" (p. 140). This tension between preservation of the racial status quo and a professed interest in scientific progress illuminates another important question worthy of consideration: Can one separate a methodology from the original subject of such a methodology? Here I question the ontological assumption that there can be a conceptual distinction between the subject matter of racial hierarchies / difference and the methodologies that were designed to confirm such hierarchies.

This question is worthy of significant consideration after reading *Race and the Making of American Political Science*. To be sure, experimental methodologies were not discarded completely by psychology after the Milgram or the Stanford prison experiments. The Nuremberg Code, however, was introduced in 1947 following some of the most egregious transgressions in the basic implementation of that methodology. In the United States, additional regulations were added in 1974 with the National Research Act in the United States, which established Institutional Review Boards.

But what can we say has been the redress for the race difference underpinnings of political science? Where have we corrected as a discipline for the persistent inequalities and discriminatory impact of these foundations in our research? Going beyond the idea of a set of regulations as redress, it seems to me that the insights of critical race theory, feminist theory, and intersectionality help us in setting the standard that it is no longer sufficient to simply suggest that the focus of a methodology is an accident of history with no bearing on that methodology. *Race and the Making of American Political Science* can bring us to an important reflection about current evolutionary and neurobiological approaches within political science through both its strong American political development analysis and its conceptual gaps. Like most institutional developments, the evolution of political science in the earliest part of its disciplinary formation was as much about consolidation of power and influence as it was about any notion of progress. Foregrounding that conversation for political scientists in the years to come is therefore this book's greatest contribution.

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There are times when straightforward analysis clarifies what has seemed unclear and contentious for many years. When this happens in political science, it is often grounded in a deep knowledge of history in ways that, unfortunately, too many contemporary scholars seem to have little interest in pursuing. Professor Jessica Blatt's book *Race and the Making of American Political Science* uses the historical and individual origins of the early development of the discipline of political science. Moreover, if political science is the study of power and its consequences, none of us should be surprised to find that the identification, justification, and exacerbation of racial hierarchy and white supremacy, so central to the 13 colonies being able to agree on the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of 1787, through slavery and its contorted integration within these founding documents, were at the heart of the development of political science as well. Among the most fundamental dimensions of the character and soul of American government is its acceptance of racialized white supremacy, in its ever-evolving forms. Professor Blatt's book, magnificently researched and elegantly written, convincingly reveals this historical legacy for our discipline. In doing so, she has given the profession yet another opportunity to learn from the past and, if we have the self-confidence, to look in the mirror, feel uncomfortable if not sincerely sad, and work to overcome this racialized legacy in all the active research and teaching we do today.

The analysis Blatt provides of the critical role played by John W. Burgess and the Columbia School of Political Science is extraordinary. Not only was Burgess a direct contributor, if not the actual founder, of political science, the first PhD program in political science, and the American Political Science Association (APSA), he was also, as Blatt states, "an especially committed and vehement racist, even by the standards of late nineteenth-century America" (p. 13). Blatt argues that his valuing of white supremacy, often phrased as "Teutonic domination" (p. 15), is likely related to his coming from a slaveholding, pro-Union family, as well as his experiences as a Union soldier during the Civil War: these resulted in a severe critique of social justice, formal equality, and the active participation of freed African Americans during Reconstruction and "the (to his mind) catastrophic experiment in racial equality" (p. 19) that resulted. We are led on an exquisite intellectual history of how this view of white

supremacy was justified in the most clear "objective science" that would, as Blatt states, "free. . . political and historical theory from abstraction" (p. 15) such as the possibility of political equality across racial and subsequently immigrant-ethnic lines. With the development of racialized understandings of white supremacy, recommendations regarding civil service examinations and limiting the franchise were fully justified. Blatt also helps us understand that these views of a dominant racial hierarchy were justified as scientific and were used to train many younger scholars in how they should pursue their own research.

This view—white supremacy justified on the basis of the immutability of racial difference—was predominant during the founding of the APSA and was explicitly stated by some of its early presidents, including Columbia's Frank Goodnow and Lord James Bryce. It also structured much of the research and writing of Woodrow Wilson, who explained the lynching of African Americans and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan as resulting from the misguided attempt during Reconstruction to bring Blacks and Whites together in society as political equals. Blatt contends that arguments for "efficiency" and "administration," for which Wilson was an intellectual champion, were foundationally informed by understandings of racial hierarchy driven by white supremacy (p. 41). This view also pervaded many of the pages of both the *Political Science Quarterly*, the journal of the Columbia School of Political Science, and the new journal of the APSA, the *American Political Science Review*.

Blatt also discusses how these views were especially present in grounding understandings of how the United States could best meet its internationalist responsibilities, if not its ambitions for empire, by its success in expanding its global influence through the Spanish-American War and its aftermath. Wilson, known for his work in international affairs that led to the establishment of the League of Nations, was driven by an understanding of white supremacy in international affairs as well. This permeated many of the discussions of the early meetings of the APSA as international affairs became a more central part of political science in the United States. Even the establishment of the *Journal of Race Development*, which would change its name to the *Journal of International Relations* and would later be published under the current title of *Foreign Affairs*, was driven by a racial project even as it discussed the possibility of racial uplift. Constant references to "'backward' [and] 'dependent' races" (p. 76) are examples of how white supremacy and racial hierarchy were ever present.

The Chicago School of Political Science as organized by Charles E. Merriam and his star student Harold D. Lasswell, best known for bringing innovative methods of statistics and related scientific rigor to political science, was developed in service to racialized understandings of the essential units of political analysis and the necessary

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resulting political arrangements that flowed from such an understanding. Although, as Blatt argues, these political scientists did not try to justify the essentiality of racial differences, they nevertheless used the focus on the individual and group “averages” (p. 93) to characterize this newer method of conducting political science as putatively more objective and scientific. Interestingly, although there were intellectual critiques of this view, they did not come from political scientists as much as they came from anthropologists such as Franz Boas. Political scientists struggled with being self-reflective regarding the continuing significance of white supremacy and racial hierarchy for their work, under the cover of supposedly objective science and its rigorous methods.

This veil of objectivity as it related to white supremacy was only further reinforced by the development of political behavior as an area of study, again driven by Merriam and others from the Chicago School. Blatt helps us understand how the development of major funders of political science research such as the National Research Council and the Social Science Research Council was facilitated by influential political scientists’ embrace of psychological testing that began during World War II and later led to the development of IQ tests. Here Blatt seems to be more sympathetic to how a more systematic study of aspects of political behavior allowed for a focus on the individual, driven by a deep understanding of how individual behavior could be explained by fundamental psychological predispositions. However, it was still limited by understandings of white supremacy and racial hierarchy.

Although in the epilogue Blatt makes reference to how the origins of political science have placed limits on its capacity to engage directly with the ways that politics itself can structure racial hierarchy, I would have appreciated Blatt providing the profession with a stronger self-critique concerning the ongoing struggle to understand the consequences of our founding conceptual frameworks. Is not the purpose of political science to study not only groups but also power and the consequences of specific distributions of power for the attainment of equality and justice? Our origins as a discipline demonstrate clearly that we are driven as much by the questions we do not ask as by the questions that are the focus of our attention. What we learn from Blatt is that our profession has its origins in justifying white supremacy and the resulting racial hierarchy both in the United States and abroad. Whether justified in terms of the needs of stability, the inevitability of ethnoracial difference, the slow pace of the development of civil institutions in other countries, or the veil of scientism, ours is a profession that justifies not asking hard questions about the continuing presence of white supremacy and related racial hierarchy. This remains true even as our scientific methods become ever more

technical and sophisticated. What Blatt allows us to consider are the ways that current dominant theories of political science and related methods still seem to avoid grappling with our complicity in the maintenance of the racialized origins of our republic. Sometimes the truth of who we are as a profession hurts. Nonetheless, it is through work such as Blatt’s that we gain a greater understanding of why we are as we are as a scholarly discipline. Let us hope that at some point we have the intellectual maturity, self-confidence, and humility to work harder than ever to overcome those origins and to help our nation and the world work to transform themselves to be more inclusive, responsive, and democratic than we have thus far been.

We certainly know the consequences of not having that maturity, self-confidence, and humility: we will remain a profession in which many of our most celebrated findings coexist with, if not perpetuate, a status quo of white supremacy and racial hierarchy to the disadvantage of segments of our own population, citizenry, and peoples around the world. Blatt helps us understand that our intellectual forefathers were more interested in justifying the privileged position of the powerful than in understanding the consequences of the exercise of that power on the attainment of justice and equality by many segments of our nation’s peoples. Perhaps Blatt’s work requires that we understand our profession as better characterized as *privilege science* than as political science. This book helps us understand ever more deeply the consequences of political scientists not having higher aspirations and expectations of what scientific truths our work can reveal to better our societies. It certainly is sad if at the turn of our most recent century, we are more similar than not to what we were at the turn of the last century. What is assured is that our profession is in control of what it chooses to contribute to overcoming the contemporary consequences of our nation’s and our profession’s origins. I am less sure that we are willing to accept the responsibilities of both exercising—or failing to exercise—that control.

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In contemporary political science research on American politics, the concept of race is typically framed as a factor that leads to deviations from the established pattern. For example, behavioralists are taught to “control” for race in multivariate models to understand how racial minorities vary from whites. In the profession, the study of race and ethnicity has been created as a separate section from other areas in U.S. politics. Although today’s scholars may be tempted to explain political science’s treatment of race as a function of the post-civil rights era and recent demographic change, we learn from Jessica Blatt’s *Race and the Making of American Political Science* that the discipline has long cultivated an orientation to seeing race as separate from politics. The practices and patterns we find in political science today find their roots in the early formation of the discipline.

This book largely focuses on the discipline’s creation and early years in the first half of the twentieth century. What Blatt points out is that the discipline originated as a professional enterprise during the same period that scholars were redefining how they understood race. Early thinking saw race as a concept interdependent with nation, culture, and peoplehood and used race as a justification for colonial rule. But with the rise of positivism and the scientific method, race became a useful site to develop typologies and to empirically test theories on intra- and intergroup variation. Blatt contextualizes for readers how race represented one of the trending scholarly topics at the turn of the century and shows that political scientists were eager to integrate these “innovations” into their own field. In this way, political science’s readiness to be viewed as a rigorous science made it continually vulnerable to the racism of the times. This has not changed since the discipline’s founding. Blatt opens and closes the book by discussing the popularity of genetic data. By juxtaposing today’s in vogue genetic data with eugenic typologies of the past, we glean lessons from Blatt’s historical analysis and can only hope that more political scientists will take greater caution from the discipline’s past before joining in on the latest academic trend.

But history tells us that we do not often learn lessons from our past. Unfortunately, many of the more harmful human tendencies—in this case, racist ideologies—reemerge in new eras. What was most striking about the book is the correspondence between the explanations offered by political scientists in defense of their work at the turn of the century and those heard today in contemporary debates about race. In contrast to today’s claims that racial polarization is becoming more virulent, Blatt shows us

that there has actually been greater consistency in American political thought over time with respect to race, rather than growing extremism. Interestingly, Blatt documents the fixation on Reconstruction that characterizes a dominant share of early work published in the newly founded *American Political Science Review*. It makes sense that Reconstruction was a concern of political scientists given that the incorporation of newly enfranchised black voters was, in fact, an uncharted challenge for the federal government. Yet, much of the scholarly discussion focused on justifying why Reconstruction was destined to fail. As expected, arguments employing old-fashioned racism—for example, that blacks are incapable of participating in democratic governance—were cited for Reconstruction’s assumed failure.

Even more revealingly, however, political scientists sought to further clarify the imperative of institutions to uphold the rightful racial order. One analysis of the time highlighted by Blatt makes this clear: “lynching and vigilantism appeared in that historiography as yet another unfortunate consequence of the Reconstruction policies themselves. When the law was on the side of ‘unnatural’—that is, equal—relations between people of different races, it lost its hold on otherwise law-abiding whites” (p. 50). Thus, by focusing on white violence against blacks in response to Reconstruction, rather than the long-standing institutionalization of racial inequality itself, political scientists chose to characterize race as what Blatt calls a “pre-political” characteristic that had little relationship to the origin of America’s deeply oppressive and exclusionary political and social institutions.

But, even more importantly, we can see that Blatt’s analysis of Reconstruction could be substituted nearly verbatim for many analyses found in American politics in 2019. The choice to explain racial group conflict as separate from institutions continues to be the preferred mode of analysis. Thus, earlier quotes in this review could also be seen as modern explanations for recent political phenomena. For example, when considering the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, one often encounters explanations that view Trump’s rise as a product of the populism and xenophobia found within certain segments of the United States, rather than as the result of an entrenched racial order endemic in most American public policy and the nation’s history.

So although Blatt’s book ends with little to offer in the way of optimism that the profession will embrace race as a seminal and constitutive political feature of American politics, it at the same time offers insights into how political science came to view race and the role of race itself. By reading this book, new students entering the profession who want to focus on the study of race and ethnicity can become aware of the entrenched challenges they face in the profession while, at the same time, developing an orientation that will enable them to situate their work in contrast to much of the scholarly literature on this topic in American politics.

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By most any measure, *Race and the Making of American Political Science* by Jessica Blatt is a significant accomplishment in and for a discipline that should learn more about its history. Fast-paced and relatively short, it is still the most “extended” and “systematic” treatment to date of “racial ideas” (p. 10) in the discipline’s past, particularly the 1890s through the 1930s. Although there are many familiar names (Burgess, Wilson, Goodnow, and Merriam) and many familiar institutions (Columbia, Hopkins, Chicago, and the APSA) and many familiar concepts (state, nation, difference, and development), Blatt presents them all in the more or less *unfamiliar* light of the enduring grip of their racial ideas. There were many changes in the discipline over time, but almost every political scientist was “explicitly committed to one vision or another of a definite racial order” (p. 139).

It is one thing to make a sweeping claim like this and another to document it in sufficient and convincing detail. And the book does this, at least for the political scientists and time period covered. Readers have before them details about the flat-out racism of Burgess’s Teutonic “germ” theory, the race-fueled colonialism of the early APSA, the racial uplift promised in the *Journal of Race Development*, the scarcely subtle white superiority in eugenics, and “the glaring and irreconcilable contradictions” over race “determinism” in “Merriam’s milieu” (p. 107).

There are also details about lesser-known counter-moments, such as Hamilton Franklin Hankin’s critique in the 1920s (at last!) of both past Teutonic racism and an emergent “race mysticism” of Boasian evolutionism. Hankin was patently no “racist” in the vulgar, vernacular sense—and neither were many later political scientists, it seems, who were nonetheless in the grip of their own (implicit?) racial commitments. Yet, like most others, Hankin in the end found no way out, ceding contradictorily to “an ounce of eugenics” as if it hedged “race determinism” (p. 114).

Blatt also calls attention to Hankin’s “social-constructionist-sounding argument” that perceptions of racial unity were not the cause but a consequence of “political integration” (p. 114). One senses that Blatt, too, embraces a social-constructionist account of race in framing the project. It would be interesting for this to come out more clearly and theoretically, because not only historical but also contemporary political science may harbor essentialist notions about race (say, the “genes and politics” research with which the book begins and ends). Readers might also

be asking why there were “changing notions of racial difference” (p. 4) in the particular ways the book chronicles. Is there anything like a model or theory of conceptual change at work, if only implicitly, that *explains* the exhaustion of one “racial order” and its replacement by another?

The disciplinary history on offer in the book begins with the “modern, university-based discipline” (p. 154n2) at Columbia, Hopkins, and the APSA. In these institutions, then, “the precept of formative late nineteenth century political science”—the *ur* “racial idea” that “politics are born into us” (p. 3)—took flight from Burgess’s ideas about “the state.” In the spirit of constructive dialogue and imagining further inquiries to follow, I propose thinking of disciplinary history as a subgenre of the history of ideas *per se*. This proves relevant, among other things, when dating beginnings and first figures. In this context, Blatt admits that “some [unnamed disciplinary historians] extend this history [of political science] to the Civil War-era writer and publicist Francis Lieber” (p. 154n2). On Blatt’s own terms, this would not be an arbitrary extension, but would actually bolster the history on offer by chasing “racial ideas” back further in time, closer to their disciplinary origins.

Lieber’s academic career spans the Civil War and was caught up in the nation’s contradictions and horrors about it. He taught and wrote the era’s defining political science texts at South Carolina College (in the heyday of antebellum hysteria). In 1857, he moved north to Columbia University, where he was the first-ever professor of political science in America. Thus, the discipline’s institutionalization began before the Civil War and continued in its immediate aftermath (with Lieber’s participation) via the American Social Science Association, from which emerged the APSA.

Of “racial ideas,” Lieber was overflowing. Not only in *Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (1853) but even earlier in the *Manual of Political Ethics* (1838)—long before Burgess and Adams—he theorized “the state” and thought the “true germs” of self-government lay with “the Teutonic races,” notably the “Anglican” or “Cis-Caucasian” race whose historical “task” was to spread its “seeds of constitutional liberty.”<sup>1</sup> Popularized, this notion morphed into “manifest destiny,” preached and popularized by the Teutonist John Fiske. (Fiske was thus related to the “discipline” as an informative “outsider,” as the Progressive Herbert Croly later would be [p. 40], which is suggestive of the power of intellectual and political forces *outside* the discipline, helping explain developments and conceptual changes *within* it).

Lieber was yet further in the grips of his own “racial order,” but his ideas were profoundly inconsistent. Indeed, he was “painfully aware of the contradictions he lived.”<sup>2</sup> Coining the term “negroism,” he distinguished the “negro race” from the “white race” via physiognomy and skin

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color. (Other “races” were more about national character). But he questioned, “Superiority of the white race! Since when?” “Negroism” explained perceptions of racial difference but did not justify political inequality, much less slavery. Yet, Lieber himself owned slaves in South Carolina, engendering a bad conscience that eventuated in condemnation. As he wrote (in an unsent letter) to none other than John C. Calhoun, “Slavery is eminently a state of degradation,” “a contradiction in terms.”<sup>3</sup> African descendants even deserved citizenship as human beings. In a further contradiction, Lieber thought that “the word race” was an often “abused” term. Moreover, “the noblest things” like science and liberty “are not restricted to races.”<sup>4</sup>

Looking back late in his career, Burgess placed himself in Lieber’s lineage and hailed him as one of “the two names which stand highest in our American literature of political science” (the other being Lieber’s “ardent admirer,” Theodore Dwight Woolsey).<sup>5</sup> No one would render this judgment today. But we now have even better reason—thanks to the agenda set out in *Race and the Making of American Political Science*—to recover Lieber’s (and others’) “racial ideas” and confront the contradictions within them. Political science inherited and passed on both racial ideas and contradiction. They and their

progeny, many of whom are still unexplored, require further scrutiny. For are they not the discipline’s stain to be acknowledged and addressed at last?

### Notes

- 1 Quotes in Farr 2007, pp. 81–82.
- 2 Keil 2008, p. 21.
- 3 Quotes in Keil 2008, pp. 24–25.
- 4 Quotes in Farr 2007, p. 82; cf. Adcock 2014, ch. 3.
- 5 Burgess 1933, p. 74.

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