

resources shifts as the people do. So, for instance, a department with more than one woman (some would say a critical mass is necessary) might devote more resources to recruiting female graduate students. Similarly, a department with one or more tenured Black or Latino faculty members might make different hiring decisions or institute new policies to diversify the curriculum, such as offering more REP courses or auditing course syllabi to ensure the inclusion of work from scholars of color. It also could be the case—and has been in my own experience—that in a more-diverse department, white faculty take up more diversity work.

The same process that underlies the exchange of ideas, interests, and skillsets in a department could translate to much larger institutions, such as Congress. It may well be the case that white, male members of Congress hear about or engage in conversations about gender or racial and ethnic issues and then use their own experience in the legislature to move issues along that otherwise might have stalled. The DREAM Act is one key example. It began as bills going nowhere, introduced by junior members of Congress and then was taken up by Senators Orrin Hatch and Dick Durbin, renamed, and moved forward. The DREAM Act failed by five votes in the Senate in 2010, after years of advocacy and having already passed the House of Representatives. Diversity—and inclusion—may lead to both innovative opportunities and innovative solutions.

In my own scholarship, I am working with a fabulous interdisciplinary team of scholars on the effects of diversity in social movements. I also am still very interested in symbolic politics and bill sponsorship. I take every chance I get to remind researchers that the simplest way that people understand politics is through symbols; therefore, understanding the ownership, definition, and manipulation of symbols is crucial to understanding the political enterprise. Dismissing symbols or symbolic gestures because they are difficult to measure consistently is a mistake. Our current politics is replete with symbols and not only the obviously symbolic ones, such as naming schools (or military bases), but also less obvious examples, such as introducing bills in one chamber that have zero chance of

THE CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDYING THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

Artemesia Stanberry, *North Carolina Central University, USA*

DOI:10.1017/S1049096522000099

What Were Your Initial Motivations to Study African American Lawmakers?

My motivation for studying Black lawmakers was actually the suggestion of my dissertation advisor, Dr. Lorenzo Morris. I initially wanted to focus my dissertation on the state of school desegregation on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. I thought my research would be very relevant. Dr. Morris told me that because I was working as a congressional staffer, I should consider doing something on the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). It had not occurred to me to write about the CBC. I ultimately focused my dissertation on the response of the CBC to the War on Drugs, specifically mandatory minimum laws for crack and powder cocaine. My career in Congress spanned from 1996 to 2004; I took leave in 2003 to complete my dissertation but returned in 2004 before taking my first tenure-track position at Prairie View A&M University later that year. Focusing on the CBC was a good decision because it allowed me to explore more deeply the complexities of Blacks in Congress. It had been relatively recently (i.e., at the time of my doctoral studies) that the CBC increased its numbers as a result of the creation of majority-minority districts following the 1990 US Census. After the 1992 congressional elections, the 103rd Congress (1993–1994) had the most new Black members in history (Committee on House Administration 2008, 8). The number of African Americans in Congress reached 50 by the 115th Congress and 57 in the 116th, the highest number in history (Brudnick and Manning 2020).

The CBC was founded in 1971. By the 103rd Congress, it was composed of experienced members (e.g., Charles Rangel, D-NY, and John Conyers, D-MI) as well as those from states that had not sent a Black member to Congress since Reconstruction. Thus, studying,

Given the motto of the CBC (i.e., “Black people have no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, just permanent interests”) and given that its members have their own constituencies who also must be considered while they are engaged in their duties as a group, the CBC posits itself as the “Conscience of the Congress.”

passing the other chamber and voting 20 times to repeal bills such as the Affordable Care Act.

Minority representation is an area that is ripe for innovation and new inquiry as the Congressional Black Caucus and the Hispanic Caucus mature and their members age. We are now at an interesting juncture in which retirements and credible primary challenges will arise. It reminds me of the 1990s, when Black legislators began vying for the seats of white Democrats. What is on the horizon now? How will representation change generationally, racially, and ethnically to reflect new issues and demographic shifts in districts? So many questions remain. It is really a rewarding time to study legislatures, legislators, and legislative institutions and behavior. ■

researching, and writing about these dynamics and racial politics in general were important contributions to the literature. Given the motto of the CBC (i.e., “Black people have no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, just permanent interests”) and given that its members have their own constituencies who also must be considered while they are engaged in their duties as a group, the CBC posits itself as the “Conscience of the Congress.”

Has the Field Changed Since You Started as an Assistant Professor? If So, How?

I read part of the Winter 2019 *The Legislative Scholar* that featured an interview with Dr. Nadia Brown (Harbridge-Yong and Sin 2019). The interviewer mentioned that of the 101 authors who

published in *Legislative Studies Quarterly* in two issues, there were zero Black scholars—a disappointing number. However, there is a body of literature about Black lawmakers that includes how they have addressed specific issues (Rivers 2012) and about the types of campaign strategies that African Americans have used in their effort to get to Congress (Gillespie 2010). How these legislators come to Congress and the types of campaigns that they run can determine their issue focus. For example, a legislator who ran a deracialized campaign, deemphasizing race so as to appeal to a more diverse constituency, may not want to focus on reparations or issues that target systemic poverty and structural racism. Doing so would make it difficult for the CBC to remain the Conscience of the Congress. The literature on symbolic and substantive representation continues to be important (e.g., Tate 2003). Given the important nature of this research, it is surprising that of the 101 articles, none were from Black scholars. If it is the case that there were insufficient submissions, then perhaps there should be more presence at conferences, such as the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS).¹

I think it is imperative for the *Legislative Studies Quarterly* to consider more articles on racial politics. There likely will be a new generation of scholars addressing the themes of “the New Black Politics” and “the End of Black politics,” as well as racial gerrymandering and the ongoing impact of the *Shelby v. Holder* ruling. Research that explores an electoral strategy versus a protest strategy and whether Black lawmakers can be effective in achieving the goals of a broad African American constituency will be more important than ever. What does it mean to be a successful Black lawmaker balancing institutional challenges that bring about incremental change with the need of activists to see immediate action and results? How will Black lawmakers address the demands of Black Lives Matter protesters? I have no doubt that many Black scholars are thinking about this, but it will be discouraging if publications do not deem their work to be important. So, the question of how has the field changed can be answered in that datapoint (i.e., 101 articles) with acknowledgment of work that has been instrumental in understanding racial and legislative politics, including the scholarship mentioned previously. Given this current political era, the growth of the CBC, and more scholars studying these issues, the question should be: What must be done to reflect more positive numbers in terms of Black contributors *and/or* a focus on Black politics? When I was working on my dissertation, I relied on a diverse group of scholars including Tate (2003), Lublin (1997), Canon (1999), and Swain (1993) for insight into the CBC and the creation of majority-minority districts in the early 2000s. Similarly, graduate students will yearn for the type of research that results from this moment, coupled with race and redistricting issues.

How Was Your Experience Trying to Become Part of a Field Dominated by White Male Scholars?

I did my doctorate work at Howard University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). I was surrounded by Black professors for the first time in my entire education and I was exposed to conferences such as the NCOBPS, where I met scholars doing incredible work. I encountered people who wrote some of the books I was reading or had read before graduate school and my peers presenting work with interesting and profound research questions. Given this background, I thought, “Who would not want read about the work these scholars are

doing?” Given the level of scholarship I saw, read, and was taught by outstanding faculty members, it did not occur to me that there would be a limit to being published. I also had the benefit of understanding the CBC because I had worked for two CBC members as a congressional staff member, and I had interviewed several in 2003 as part of my dissertation research, including the late Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH). At the beginning of the interview, she informed me that Richard Fenno had spent time interviewing her for his book (Fenno 2003). I had read Fenno’s 1978 book, which discussed two Black House members and I was an admirer of his work—he is another giant in our field who will be missed. Therefore, my mindset was that if Fenno sees the importance of studying the roles and representational styles of Black members of Congress, then others would as well. (Writing this brings back fond memories of my interview with Stephanie Tubbs Jones.)

My publication experiences have not been as broad as other scholars. My teaching positions were at HBCUs, and it has always been important for me to include specific literature on Black members of Congress in my syllabi. This includes a wide range of research concerning the final vote on a bill, committee voting, symbolic and substantive representation, and historical backgrounds of those who made it to Congress, including Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Shirley Chisholm, and Barack Obama—the only sitting member of the CBC to become President of the United States. I taught at universities that required a heavier teaching and service load, so I did not continue to publish in the field as much as I would have liked; however, I continue to include in my teaching and research the scholarship with a specific focus on the CBC as well as Congress as a whole. I have presented at conferences on some variation of Black lawmakers and found a supportive environment at this level. Nevertheless, I have heard from colleagues across the political science field about the difficulties of having their research valued and getting published. Scholarship on race does not seem to be taken as seriously, based on many off-the-record conversations about the experiences of getting published and attaining tenure. I hope that as Black Lives Matter is being adopted across corporations and institutions that this will include the need for more research on Black lawmakers in the context of how democratic institutions can be used to address systemic inequality facing Black and marginalized communities.

Strategies and Advice

I recommend that scholars interested in studying Black lawmakers attend conferences such as the NCOBPS, which provide opportunities to learn from the experiences of others as well as to see the types of research being presented. Conferences provide an excellent opportunity to network and to find potential coauthors. For example, NCOBPS has a publication, the *National Review of Black Politics*, and the American Political Science Association (APSA) recently announced a diverse group of editors for the *American Political Science Review* (Political Science Now 2019). This is a positive direction in the field and provides the modeling needed for other publications to follow. It also is a positive direction for young scholars who may have experienced resistance to their work on racial politics. Networking is important, which includes maintaining contact with graduate-school cohorts. I advise scholars to seek opportunities for coauthorship

and edited books while also working on peer-reviewed journal articles to focus on at least publishing something as the years pass. The service remains, the teaching remains, but it is publications—even at universities with a four-four teaching load—that ultimately will result in tenure.


Civil Rights giants John R. Lewis and C. T. Vivian died during the month of July 2020. For a significant portion of this country's history and because of barriers to voting, Black political activity has been by means other than voting. The Honorable John R. Lewis began serving in the United States Congress in 1986. His service as a member of Congress should continue to be explored more deeply in both books and journal articles. In this era of awakening, it is hoped that studying racial politics will yield significant and real opportunities for Black scholars to make a substantial contribution to the field.


Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this subject. ■


NOTE

1. It was encouraging to read former APSA President Rogers M. Smith's contribution to a recent publication of the *National Review of Black Politics* entitled "NCOBPS and APSA: Building Partnerships in the 21st Century." <https://online.ucpress.edu/nrbp/article-abstract/1/1/136/91532/NCOBPS-and-APSABuilding-the-Partnership-in-the?redirectedFrom=PDF>


SPOTLIGHT CONTRIBUTORS


Tiffany D. Barnes  is professor of political science at the University of Kentucky. She can be reached at tiffanydbarnes@uky.edu.

Nadia E. Brown  is professor of government, chair of the Women's and Gender Studies Program, and affiliate in the African American Studies program at Georgetown University. She can be reached at nb865@georgetown.edu.

Niambi M. Carter  is associate professor of political science at Howard University. She can be reached at niambi.carter@howard.edu.


Christopher J. Clark is associate professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He can be reached at chrclar@email.unc.edu.


Anna Mitchell Mahoney  is administrative associate professor of women's political leadership at Newcomb Institute at Tulane University. She can be reached at amahoney4@tulane.edu.

Renita Miller  is associate dean in the graduate school and lecturer of politics at Princeton University. She can be reached at renitam@princeton.edu.

Valeria Sinclair-Chapman is professor of political science at Purdue University. She is author or coauthor of numerous articles and an award-winning book, *Countervailing Forces in African American Civic Activism, 1973–1994* (Cambridge University Press 2006). Her research examines the effects of diversity on institutions and political behavior including legislatures,

organizations, and social movements. She can be reached at vsc@purdue.edu.

Kristen Smole  is assistant director of economic development in her hometown of Elkhart, Indiana. She graduated with an MA in political science from Purdue University, where she served as editorial assistant for *Politics, Groups, & Identity* and later for *American Political Science Review*. A dedicated public servant, Kristen has served as a campaign staffer on local, state, and national campaigns. She is a founding partner of *Caldera Strategies*, a political consulting firm based in Indiana.

Artemesia Stanberry  is associate professor of political science at North Carolina Central University. She specializes in American politics. She can be reached at astanberry@ncceu.edu.

REFERENCES

- Brudnick, Ida A., and Jennifer E. Manning. 2020. "African American Members of the U.S. Congress: 1870–2020." Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL30378.pdf>.
- Canon, David T. 1999. *Race, Redistricting and Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Committee on House Administration. 2008. *Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007*. Washington, DC: US House of Representatives.
- Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Fenno, Richard. 2003. *Going Home: Black Representatives and Their Constituents*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gillespie, Andra. 2010. *Whose Black Politics: Cases in Post-Racial Black Leadership*. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge.
- Harbridge-Yong, Laurel, and Gisela Sin (eds.). 2019. *The Legislative Scholar* 3 (2): 1–30. https://mkoapsaconnectby6p6.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2019/02/Legislative_Scholar_Winter2019.pdf.
- Lublin, David. 1997. *The Paradox of Representation: Racial Gerrymandering and Minority Interests in Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Political Science Now. 2019. "APSA Announces the New Editorial Team for the American Political Science Review." <https://politicalsciencenow.com/apsa-announces-the-new-editorial-team-for-the-american-political-science-review>.
- Rivers, Christina R. 2012. *The Congressional Black Caucus, Minority Rights, and the U.S. Supreme Court*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Swain, Carol. 1993. *Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tate, Katherine. 2003. *Black Faces in the Mirror: African Americans and Their Representatives in the U.S. Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.