CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER AND POLITICS

Advocating for Change in the Discipline: "Political Science, Heal Thyself"

Introduction

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Scholars of marginalized groups are experts on attitudes, behaviors, practices, and institutions that resist inclusion and reproduce bias. Many scholars who study marginalization also work from first-hand experience of it. Although academic experiences of marginalization usually occur in sites of middle-class privilege, the effects can be profound. Women in the U.S. political science profession continue to be underrepresented, and women of color severely so. This sends the message to all students that women lack the capacity to be scientists. Women in academe often internalize that message and too rarely seek leadership positions. When they do, their achievements are characterized as tokenism and devalued, revealing a hostile gender climate that enables bias to flourish. That bias is reflected in salary discrepancies, resource distribution, and service responsibilities (e.g., APSA 2011; Monroe et al. 2008).

What does this marginalization in numbers and in climate, as experienced by women political scientists, disclose about the discipline? How can our experience and our research provide us with strategies for redressing this marginalization? How can we draw on these strategies to diversify the discipline and improve our professional lives? This symposium invites scholars to think expansively about the application of our research agendas by suggesting that our knowledge of political institutions, beliefs, and behavior can be fruitfully extended to our own discipline and to the educational institutions in which we work. This application of our research to our lived experiences may even generate new research agendas, thus creating a virtuous circle of links between our research and our experience of marginalization.

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A central principle of feminist methodology is that lived experiences should inform the questions that we ask and should be — and in practice are — crucial for understanding the world (e.g., Collins 2000; Harding 1993). The idea behind this principle is that the marginalized, through their struggle for a collective political consciousness, acquire a double vision that the dominant lack. Lived experience thus inspires transformative visions of the world and inspires as well activism to achieve transformation, all of which political scientists study. Political scientists, however, rarely apply the principle of lived experience to their departments or the discipline. Until recently, in fact, we have resisted this principle for fear that it threatened impartiality and thus objectivity. Now that it is a philosophical commonplace to recognize that the terms of objective inquiry are themselves conditioned by social contingencies, political science is newly alert to contributions from feminist-informed epistemology. Moreover, now is the time for new strategies, given that increasing the number of women in the discipline and hostile work environments have remained stubborn challenges. One way to find those new strategies is to listen to those who attempt to be explicit about the role of lived experience in structuring their analyses of political and social institutions.

Conventional efforts to diversify the profession and to improve departmental climate focus on assisting "underrepresented groups" by advancing them up the ranks through leadership training and mentoring, with the expectation that those who are successful will open the door to others and make the workplace more friendly for all (e.g., Blau et al. 2010; Hesli, Fink, and Duffy 2003a; 2003b). This approach has not been particularly successful. White women in 2010 comprised only 28.6% of political science faculty nationwide (concentrated at the lower ranks); and African American females comprised a mere 1.7% of political science faculty nationwide (APSA 2011).

Mentoring also has limitations. To be sure, informal mentoring of women political scientists does improve job satisfaction (Hesli and Lee 2013), and in economics, researchers have found that mentoring by senior women helps junior women obtain grants, publish articles, and place articles in top-tier journals (Blau et al. 2010). Yet a strategy that spotlights mentoring presumes the existence of a number of supportive women social scientists at senior ranks and in authoritative positions. Such women are few in number. What is more, research shows that

white women as members of a marginalized group (and, by implication, members of other marginalized groups) may conform to the behavior of white men as a dominant group, which means that white women may exhibit (implicit) bias against other white women and members of marginalized groups, and thus fail to support these colleagues (e.g., Duguid, Loyd, and Tolbert 2012; cf. Kanthak and Krause 2012). Not surprisingly then, masculine stereotyping continues to pervade hiring, retention, and promotion practices at universities and in political science departments (e.g., Anonymous and Anonymous 1999; Hesli, Fink, and Duffy 2003b; Williams, Alon, and Bornstein 2006).

Even if the numbers and mentoring were improved, it is possible that departments and the discipline might remain "chilly." Scholars have argued that gender is not reducible to women or to the number of women in an institution, but instead is a category and a process (e.g., Beckwith 2005; Young 2002). Politics and gender scholars have therefore studied how gender gets produced and reproduced, finding, for example, that political institutions are masculinist, meaning, among other things, that women politicians face obstacles in legislatures that men do not (Acker 1992; Kenny 1996). We know also that increasing the number of women legislators and providing them with mentors does not transform norms or assure success in the passage of legislation advancing women's interests. On the contrary, even legislatures with high proportions of women rarely succeed in altering masculinist practices (Paxton and Hughes 2007); scholars have found that just a handful of feminist actors in the legislature can pass women's rights legislation (e.g., Childs and Krook 2009) with the support of strong, autonomous feminist movements that have diverse, inclusionary networks extending throughout civil society and into the halls of power (e.g., Baldez 2002; Walsh 2011; Weldon 2011). This suggests that diversifying political science may not reduce hostile climates and that diversification and redressing bias are distinct goals, although they may be pursued simultaneously.

The premise of this symposium is that when political science scholars from marginalized groups adopt the feminist principle of lived experience to produce both fuller and unanticipated research findings like these, they can also generate new strategies for change in political science departments and in the discipline more broadly. By developing our own standpoints, women in political science not only reject the dissonance we experience while working in a white, male, middle-class, heteronormative profession, but we can also provide a

richer account of how power relations operate in our departments and disciplines and how the costs and consequences of those unequal relations unfold. We can then apply our research to these locations and transform them.

In highlighting how this process works, the author contributions in this section draw on four themes in the politics and gender literature — gender as a category and as a process, intersectionality, diverse networks, and skilled feminist leadership — to offer new strategies for transforming our departments and discipline. The first contribution, by Anonymous, explains why women in political science need a feminist standpoint. Anonymous then argues that because university departments and the discipline systemically favor masculinity, and inclusionary strategies displace this issue by focusing on numbers, inclusionary strategies are counterproductive to systemic change. Anonymity is preserved here to prevent two forms of professional backlash. It prevents backlash that can occur given the chilly climate in so many departments and in the discipline; and it forestalls, too, the backlash arising among diversity advocates and liberals more broadly who cherish inclusion.

The next contribution, by Lisa García Bedolla, turns to relationships among diversity advocates. She argues that if activists in university settings treat marginalized groups as intersectional, they can identify new opportunities for alliance building, issue framing, and assessment, thereby shifting the discourse about diversity and pressuring universities to become more just. Futher drawing on her lived experience, García Bedolla warns that we must be prepared for resistance within our own marginalized groups, as each has already defined its own constituency and has institutional interests to protect. This warning underscores our reasons for preserving the anonymity of the first contributor: resistance often comes from allies who share our goals but are deeply invested in alternative strategies.

Like García Bedolla, Brooke Ackerly draws on the themes of intersectionality and networks. Ackerly, however, grounds her discussion of them in her experience of field research in Bangladesh. Ackerly argues that privileged members exercise leadership when they join networks and help empower the marginalized to speak and to act for themselves. She thus outlines an important role for the dominant in our profession and explains how we might work with those who do not share our goals of institutional transformation.

In the final essay, Cynthia Daniels demonstrates that changing faculty demographics and promoting structural transformation are possible with skilled feminist leadership. In recounting the story of how her political science department successfully diversified and altered its institutional norms, Daniels offers a general road map for change that reaches far beyond conventional efforts.

These four contributions and the symposium as a whole invite political scientists to reflect on their lived experience and put that experience into dialogue with their research. We believe that doing so can generate new strategies for change that, when applied, might enrich our scholarship by guiding and transforming the questions we ask and enhancing our understanding of the marginalized groups that we study. The contributions and the symposium as a whole thus indicate how political scientists who research marginalized groups might engage as advocates, carrying and implementing the message that we as a discipline must heal ourselves.

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No Shortcuts to Gender Equality: The Structures of Women's Exclusion in Political Science
Anonymous

J. R. R. Tolkien once suggested that "short cuts make long delays." While Tolkien was not talking about improving the situation of women in political science, this essay argues that those of us interested in making political science less alienating for women would do well to heed his advice.

There is significant evidence that women's position in the discipline is improving. Many scholars in political science (of all sexes) are deeply