

State, Academy, Discipline: Regendering Political Science

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In 2013, I participated in an APSA roundtable on “Learning In and Having It All? Redefining Equality and Transforming Political Science in the New Millennium.” Sponsored by the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, the roundtable asked how, in the US, women can pursue careers, take leadership, specifically, national political, academic, and corporate leadership, and have healthy, happy, fulfilling lives. What can we expect our political system to do for women and what is our vision of a just world?

In this essay, I focus on women, in women’s intersecting class, race, ethnic, religious, generational, and sexual diversities in the US. This essay also focuses on gender, that is, the processes and means by which relationships of dominance and subordination are enacted through understandings of masculinities and femininities, which are also racialized and classed in specific ways (Beckwith 2005; Crenshaw 1991; Alexander-Floyd 2012; Hancock 2007). Finally, this essay is specific to US political science and politics in higher education. Higher education in the US federal political system is not constrained (or advantaged) by centralized government funding and assessment of our research,¹ even within our discipline, the practice of political science and disciplinary professional experience vary across states in public and private universities and colleges, and across types of institutions. Therefore, I paint with a broad brush, but attend to details where appropriate and possible.

THREE PREREQUISITES FOR FEMINIST CHANGE

Comparative research on women, gender, and politics demonstrates that women benefit most in bringing about positive change for women, from the presence of three factors: 1) conducive political structures, 2) sympathetic political elites, and 3) activist feminists and their allies.

By *conducive political structures*, I mean the sets of rules, laws, and institutions that shape women’s access to political power and facilitate women-friendly policy impact. Political structures most conducive to women’s presence and influence are formal, visible, and specifically undergird substantive equality. Substantive equality “recognizes that formal equality can produce unequal results [such that] further disadvantage for the [already] disadvantaged may be the outcome ... [and] encompasses positive programs to ameliorate disadvantage” (Irving 2008, 2–3; cf. Young 2000, 158). Conducive political structures include constitutions with express mentions of women and men as citizens, explicit guarantees of women’s voting rights and access to office, gender-specific language that

protects against the unequal results of judicial interpretation of apparently neutral language carrying markers of masculine advantage (Irving 2008, 44), and electoral arrangements that provide the structure within which organized women can insist upon nominations of women as well as men.

Three major caveats concerning conducive political structures cannot be over-emphasized. First, there are no structural guarantees for policy outcomes. Even the apparently most supportive structural tools can also be used for negative and/or unintended purposes or, without active mobilization, remain inert. Second, the research on gendered political structures primarily concerns women in the aggregate and hence may underestimate or seriously misrepresent structural impacts on ethnic and/or racial minority women. Identifying conducive structures requires sensitivity and specificity; in particular, structures that rely on majorities or large numbers are unlikely to be helpful to groups that are numerical minorities, or to groups at the intersections. Finally, existing but unidentified structural tools may be available that have not been exploited by organized women. The recognition, creation, and use of conducive structures are critical, if insufficient, for increasing diversity within political science and politics.

Sympathetic political elites within structures of power are important as both allies and gatekeepers. In both roles, sympathetic political elites offer positive opportunities for advancing women and women’s interests. Women and members of minority groups in positions of power have generally (although not always) been sympathetic to and have acted to advance minority groups’ and women’s interests (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014); women are more likely than are men to share gendered experiences of women’s lives and to appreciate claims by activist women.²

Active feminists and allies are the foundation for the collective action necessary to effect change (García Bedolla 2014, 449–50). Research on women’s movements suggests that collective endeavor by activist women has been the source of most political change challenging sex discrimination and women’s exclusion from political institutions and citizenship and initiating women-friendly public policy (Krook 2009, 21; Weldon 2011; cf. Daniels 2014 on internal departmental changes). This third factor is key: when feminist activists mobilize allies and sympathetic elites to employ and to exploit conducive structural arrangements, social justice and gender equity become possible. What changes in the state are necessary to enable diversity and social justice in politics, academia, and our discipline?

A VISION OF WHAT THE STATE CAN DO

At the level of the US state, the challenges are formidable, but we can start with a vision of feminist social justice that emphasizes citizen equity and substantive equality, undergirded by public policy enablement and empowerment, with a gendered appreciation of well-being, self-development, and the common good. Because there are “limits to what citizens can accomplish through institutions of civil society alone,” positive state action is necessary (Young 2000, 180). Moreover, the state, political and economic institutions, and gendered political cultural understandings establish the context within which social justice becomes possible (or not) and within which political science as a discipline can justly function. Social justice that provides substantive equality, policy responsiveness, and political inclusion to women in all our intersecting diversities and to persons of ethnic/racial minority status requires a shift in conventional demarcations between the political/public and the private (Irving 2008, 3). At the APSA Roundtable, I proposed ten policies for constructing a socially just feminist vision of the state; I emphasize only two here: women’s inclusion in political leadership and state provision of childcare and parental leave. These combine to support each other to redraw boundaries between public and private.

First, women should be present, in all our diversity, in every venue of national government. Comparative political research indicates that the presence of women in positions of power has positive impacts on women’s political engagement, interest, involvement, and knowledge (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001); on setting policy agendas (e.g. Swers 2002); and on women-friendly public policy (e.g. McDonagh 2009). Normalizing female political inclusion and leadership is likely to help normalize women’s presence in academia and in political science, and in positions of leadership in both.

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Second, to ensure self-development for mothers and for parents, child care and public education should be a public responsibility, supported and funded by the state; as Alissa Quart wrote in the *New York Times*, “we need high-quality, universal, [free] day care.” Publicly funded and supported childcare, Quart writes, is considered “a private responsibility” in the US, even as work-life balance for women (and increasingly for our male colleagues) depends upon childcare by working parents and paid childcare providers (Lewis 2009). It is a particularism of US politics that childcare is market-driven and employment-dependent.³ State-supported childcare, as well as paid maternity leave and paid parental leave, are conventionally state responsibilities of European Union member states and other democracies (Clawson and Gerstel 2002). “The United States has the least generous parental leave policies among ... 21 high-income countries....” and is now the only “high-income country without some form of paid parental leave” (Ray et al. 2009, 21). We need to extend

the boundaries of what is suitably “public” to encompass childcare as a state responsibility.

The issues of women’s political presence and leadership, and state support for childcare, are related. Policymakers who want to open opportunities for diverse women to enter the workforce must provide for childcare, parental leave, and flexible work schedules. Such policies “help lay the groundwork for women’s leadership indirectly by enabling women to stay in the workforce after becoming mothers” (Ben-Galim and Silim 2014, 1; cf. Thompson and Ben-Galim 2014). The benefits of public childcare likely to accrue to women with children, including political scientists, are to keep women within political science, to advance female political scientists throughout our profession’s ranks, and to undergird women’s leadership opportunities, including political office-holders. The benefits of increasing women’s presence in the US political elite are potential policy benefits that support social justice.

WHAT ACADEMIA CAN DO

Increasing social justice and diversity within political science requires not just support from and changes within the state; political science will prosper if situated in a more socially just academic context. Citing Maliniak et al. (2013), Mershon and Walsh (this issue) “recommend ‘real changes in how universities mentor, support, and promote women.’” Absent changes in academia generally, political science as a discipline will face greater difficulty in increasing diversity and ending discrimination. In envisioning academia as supportive of these goals for political science, academic demarcations between public and private, and between the political and the academic, must shift—and, in some cases, already have.

For example, several colleges and universities provide on-site childcare centers for faculty, staff, and students. These employment-related benefits serve positive purposes for

academic institutions in terms of attracting and retaining excellent faculty, and increasing faculty and staff productivity. Best practices in academia that will benefit political scientists—fathers and mothers alike—include provision of free childcare, from infant through kindergarten, as well as aftercare for children within wide age and grade ranges (Monroe et al. 2008).

Several colleges and universities provide parental leave beyond the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act (Monroe et al. 2008). These include maternity and parental leave at full pay, most commonly for a semester. Best practices would provide these benefits in consultation with individual faculty members, such that some might arrange to take full-year, half-pay, part-time teaching as maternity or parental leave, even as others might prefer the protection of a full semester at full pay with no teaching or work responsibilities. Note that these provisions by academic institutions are far exceeded by childcare and leave provisions for everyone in

most countries, the US excepted. Ray, Gornick, and Schmitt (2009) identify five best practices for parental leave policies:

- (1) generous paid leave;
- (2) non-transferable quotas of leave for each parent;
- (3) universal coverage combined with modest eligibility restrictions;
- (4) financing structures that pool risk among many employers; and
- (5) scheduling flexibility.

In addition, it would help political scientists, as well as others within academia, if universities and colleges would develop clear, public, enforceable policies that recognize (and correct and/or accommodate) disjunctions between academic demands and life demands for men and women, such as stopping the tenure clock, and institute them. Finally, if universities and colleges worked to advance women into presidencies, provost positions, and deanships, women as academic elites would be likely to provide the “strong, committed leadership” necessary for actively advancing diversity (Monroe et al. 2008, 418).

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WHAT POLITICAL SCIENCE CAN DO

I focus on APSA because, as our national disciplinary association, APSA is in a position to develop conventions and set standards and disciplinary norms for departments of political science. Moreover, APSA already offers key components for advancing feminist change in our discipline. First, we have sympathetic elites in positions of power; that is, our association is not hostile to our issues. As women have been included in APSA leadership, as presidents, as members of the Executive Council, and as committee members and chairs, we have also *become* those sympathetic elites. This has positioned us to employ an inside-outside strategy for influencing APSA policy. One of the reasons we have sympathetic elites inside APSA is that APSA offers some conducive structural supports in terms of rules and policies. We have some tools we can use, thanks to the efforts of APSA members and leaders.

We have an existing rule recognizing gender inclusion in the APSA presidency. In 2001, the Executive Council passed a resolution encouraging Nominating Committees to avoid selecting a nominee for president of the same gender for more than two consecutive years. Akin to voluntary party quotas, this guideline quickly advanced women into the APSA presidency, has been recognized in practice by APSA Executive Councils as a disciplinary convention, and has shaped nominations in anticipation of women’s inclusion. Gender quotas for women’s parliamentary representation have been recognized as the mechanism best able to accelerate women’s nomination and election to office (Dahlerup 2013; Krook 2009);

APSA’s “voluntary quota” has similarly helped advance women’s inclusion in APSA leadership. Since 2002, women have led APSA as presidents, on average, every 2.4 years, with Jennifer Hochschild currently APSA President-Elect. This directive has succeeded in putting women’s APSA leadership on a faster track, cutting by more than half the number of years between women’s APSA presidencies.

Two other tools are a directive that emphasizes inclusion in all APSA elective positions, and an amendment to the APSA Constitution. The by-laws (chapter III, 2 [3]) call for the Nominating Committee to “give due regard to diversity, geographical distribution, fields of professional interest, type of institution, and academic/nonacademic employment status” in selecting nominees for elective office. Likewise, the APSA Constitution (5, 2) specifies “geographical distribution, fields of professional interest, types of institution, race, gender, ethnicity, methodological orientation, gender identity, sexuality, and other important forms of diversity” as considerations in the nominating process (<http://www.apsanet.org/files/APASConstitution2011.pdf>). APSA presidents have reinforced these directives.

Women have also been included in relatively large numbers on APSA journal editorial boards. Two of the four *APSR* editors are women, for perfect gender parity. The *APSR* Editorial Board includes 30 women among its 73 members (41.1%). *Perspectives on Politics*, with sole editor Jeffrey Isaac, has 10 women on an editorial board of 25 (40%). *PS*, under Rob Hauck’s editorship, had nine women on an editorial board of 15, or 60% women. The new *PS* editorial board, with interim editors Paul Gronke and Phillip Ardoin, also has nine women among its 15 members. The Southern PSA’s *Journal of Politics*, under out-going editors Jan Leighley and Bill Mishler, had 43 women on its 87-member editorial board (49.4%); incoming editor Jeff Jenkins leads a team of six editors, two of whom are women (33.3%), and an 86-member editorial board that includes 31 women (36.0%). The Midwest Political Science Association’s journal, the *American Journal of Political Science*, edited by William Jacoby, has a 60-member editorial board, of whom 19 are women (31.7%).⁴ The inclusion of women in the work of our professional journals has become a disciplinary convention.

APSA has another convention: providing childcare at APSA meetings. Provision of childcare has been our disciplinary convention for decades, developed specifically to facilitate conference participation by political scientists who were mothers. APSA identifies 1984 as the first year that onsite childcare was provided at its annual meeting; the MPSA was providing onsite childcare by 1991.⁵

These two APSA conventions—inclusion of women in disciplinary leadership and governance, and recognition of childcare

as a disciplinary requirement—position ASPA to assert these conventions as disciplinary standards, and to insist upon their extension to the university and college level as professional requirements within academia.

Female political scientists and their male allies developed these conventions. We should value and continue those efforts by actively engaging collectively within our discipline and within APSA. With activists and allies inside APSA, we can mobilize to encourage APSA to establish sets of disciplinary best practices and to emphasize those instances where public policies are actually professional requirements, shifting the boundaries of public and private to jettison apparently gender- and race-neutral policies that have disparate, inequitable, unjust impacts, and to replace them with equitable policies that increase diversity and decrease disadvantage for women and members of ethnic and racial minority groups. These include the following:

- 1) Work with departments and universities to support paid parental leave as a disciplinary and professional requirement.
- 2) Work with departments and universities to support government-funded, widely available, high quality childcare as a professional, disciplinary requirement, and to encourage universities to establish, or to keep and to strengthen, campus childcare facilities.
- 3) Make female chairs of departments an aspirational norm, regendering the meaning of [default] male leadership.
- 4) Regender the meaning of single-sex, single-race departments. Develop a norm that valorizes diversity among faculty in all ranks (and that makes all-male and/or all white political science departments a signal of failure and low quality).
- 5) Reinforce and celebrate inclusionary norms for disciplinary journal editorships and editorial board membership.
- 6) Develop a disciplinary policy statement concerning mentoring and establish disciplinary guidelines for mentoring as a political science departmental standard;⁶ disseminate these guidelines throughout our professional associations; and establish a standard of mentoring as a disciplinary norm.
- 7) Set as a disciplinary standard the convention of flexible course scheduling across several years to accommodate childcare, elder care, illness, acceptance of outside consulting and governmental positions, with continuing full (or proportional) salary, salary increases, access to tenure and promotion, and contract continuity.

These proposals are feasible and sustainable across time. Indeed, several institutions have moved to provide some of these benefits. We should identify these best practices, circulate and discuss them, and recommend that APSA identify them as disciplinary (*not* political) concerns that departments, colleges, and universities—and the US government—be encouraged to adopt.

WHAT WE CAN DO AS INDIVIDUALS

Political science scholarship recognizes that individual efforts by members of marginalized and disempowered groups are

likely to be unsuccessful (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012), and that even organized groups often privilege those already most advantaged among those they purport to represent (Strolovitch 2008). Social movements scholarship confirms that organized, collective mobilization with appropriate strategies aimed at correctly identified targets, in recognized moments of opportunity, is more likely to be effective than individual action. What our discipline teaches us is that, as individuals, we should work collectively and that we should recruit allies. Nonetheless, the importance of key individuals in positions of power also suggests that we should work to diversify departmental, disciplinary, and academic (and political) leadership, so that individual actors, with experience and sympathy, recognizing critical moments of opportunity, are positioned to speak, intervene, and have influence (Childs and Krook 2009). As Sandberg asserts in *Lean In* (2013), individual actors should try to make a difference when they can. ■

NOTES

1. For example, the US does not have the equivalent of Britain's Research Excellence Framework (REF); <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/ref-2014-results-by-subject/2017594.article>.
2. I do not claim that increasing numbers of women will necessarily (certainly not automatically) increase women's opportunities or create equity and justice within our discipline.
3. Childcare, paid maternity and parental leave, and other benefits depend on employers offering these as employment-related benefits. My institution, CWRU, offers one-semester, full-pay parental leave, as well as emergency nanny service in the event of a child's sudden illness. CWRU provides some financial support for child travel and/or childcare for faculty attending conferences. The CWRU policy varies internally according to employment status.
4. Thanks to Lanny Martin for information on the new *JoP* editorial board, and to Paul Gronke and Barbara Walthall for information on the new *PS* Editorial Board.
5. Thanks to Steven Smith, Will Morgan, and Tamara Speelman for providing data.
6. Mentoring guidelines must be tailored specifically for women and for under-represented ethnic and racial minority faculty, as well as for those at the intersections.

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