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CHAPTER

## The Intellectual Benefits of Diversity: How Political Science Suffers from Its Lack of Diversity, and How It Can Do Better

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### Abstract

This chapter highlights the longstanding call for increased diversity, particularly in terms of gender, race, and socioeconomic backgrounds within the field of political science. It specifically focuses on the intellectual advantages of racial diversity in the discipline, contending that it enhances the quality of research. Racial diversity not only brings a variety of research themes but also a range of methodological approaches. Despite significant underrepresentation of Black scholars in political science, they have pioneered innovative research on new subjects and introduced novel methodological techniques. These contributions span various subfields, including international relations, political theory, and race and ethnic politics. The chapter highlights the striking lack of diversity in tenure-track faculty positions at leading PhD-granting institutions and the scarcity of PhDs awarded to Black scholars across various disciplines. The chapter also provides several examples of the theoretical richness and innovations stemming from Black scholars' work and underscores how these insights may not have arisen from White scholars. It emphasizes the role of identity in shaping research questions, theoretical approaches, and the capability to investigate various topics. In conclusion, the chapter stresses that addressing the demographic imbalances within the profession will enrich political science by enhancing the diversity of theoretical questions, approaches, and the capacity to address crucial research inquiries. It also points out that political science lags behind many related disciplines in terms of demographic diversity, and similar intellectual benefits can be expected if these issues are addressed in other fields like economics, history, psychology, and sociology.

## Introduction

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Political science has a diversity problem. For years, political scientists and others have penned papers chronicling this fact (see, e.g., Prestage 1977; Woodard and Preston 1985; Walton, Miller, and McCormick 1995; Wilson and Frasure 2008; Alexander-Floyd 2017; Jones 2017; Belk, Smith, and Wallace 2020).<sup>1</sup> All of these papers are important because they reflect upon the discipline, a useful exercise if change is ever to occur. In the spirit of these studies, we consider the diversity problem in political science, paying particular attention to race and what is true of Black people. We depart from most extant works, however, in that our focus is on the intellectual benefits of having Black political scientists. In particular, and most relevant for this *Handbook*, diversity enhances methodological and substantive pluralism.

Our focus is on the discoveries and insights made by Black political scientists, in American politics and beyond. Without Black political scientists we would know considerably less about conflict, election administration, public opinion, representation, and voting. We start with a review of the state of faculty diversity, comparing political science to cognate disciplines. Here, we show that while political science is better off than philosophy or economics, it still lags behind other fields. Moreover, we uncover that Black faculty, as well as graduating Black PhDs, are concentrated in departments of African American studies, a reality that speaks volumes about the nature of racial diversity in institutions of higher education. All the major disciplines we explore have a diversity problem, a fact that should surprise no one, but should concern all. We end by making the case that others have made before about the need to address the pipeline and to increase the number of Black faculty in political science departments. Although our suggestions won't be new, they are rooted in an argument for the way that diversity improves our discipline intellectually, as opposed to claims about the importance of diversity for normative reasons. Although each of us values diversity for many reasons, we recognize that not everyone shares our views. No matter our views on the inherent value of diversity—,and some may place little value on this—we concentrate here on something else: diversity makes us better as a discipline. A more diverse political science profession will produce better work. If an intellectually vibrant and relevant discipline is what everyone wants, then a much more diverse profession is the way to achieve it. Absent significant changes to institutions of higher education at all levels, political science risks becoming stagnant and irrelevant to future generations of students. When one keeps in mind that the United States is projected to be a majority-minority country in the next two decades, it suggests that a failure to become more diverse may lead to the discipline being viewed as anachronistic by future students, something that would be detrimental and unfortunate. With increased diversity, however, we increase the range of theoretical and methodological approaches, and the richness of our intellectual conversations.

## The State of Faculty Diversity in the Major PhD-Granting Institutions, 2020

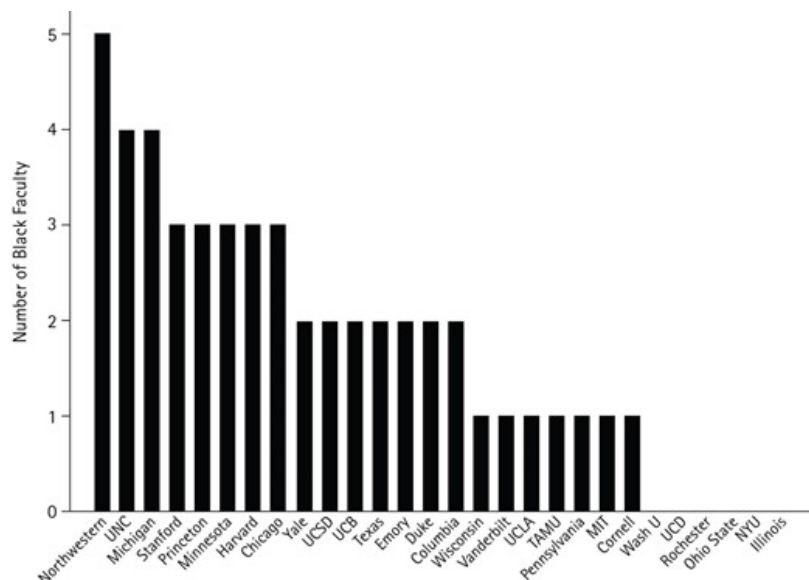
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In Summer 2020, we collected data on the total number of tenure-track faculty and the number of those we could identify as African-American. We limited our search to the top twenty-five-ranked political science graduate programs (from the most recent *US News* rankings),<sup>2</sup> using university website directory listings. (Because of ties, twenty-eight departments are included in our analysis.) For each Black faculty member, we also recorded their year of PhD. We then extended the analysis to cognate departments from the same universities: African-American studies, economics, English, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Finally, we gathered information on the percent of Black undergraduates at the relevant universities (using university websites) and the Black percent of the state population (using the most recent figures from the US Census).

## Political Science

Across the twenty-eight departments, we found 1,057 tenure-track faculty members, of whom forty-nine were Black. Figure 1 shows just how low these numbers are across the various departments included in our study. The findings are as unsurprising as they are unsettling, for they bear out the astute observation made by Alex-Assensoh et al. (2005, 283): “Rarely will one find more than one or two (if any) African Americans in political science departments on white campuses.”

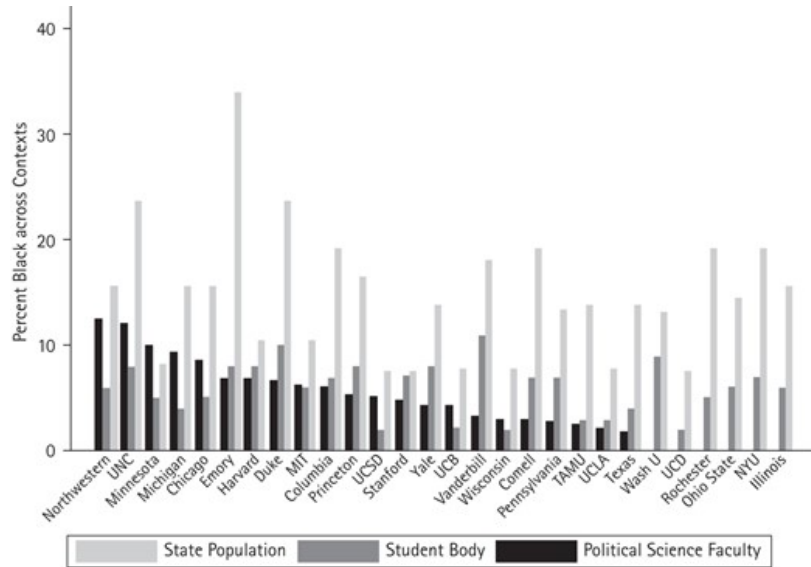
**Figure 1**



Number of Black Faculty in Top-Ranked Political Science Departments

Just three departments have more than three Black faculty members, whereas thirteen of the twenty-eight departments have one or fewer. Rather than celebrate the accomplishments of Northwestern, Michigan, and the University of North Carolina (UNC), we should ask why these numbers are so low on average. Moreover, we should ponder why so many departments have a single Black faculty member, or none. Figure 2 shows the percentage of Black faculty and compares this to the undergraduate student body and to the state population. Departments are listed left to right in declining order of the percentage of Black faculty.

Figure 2



Percentage Black of Political Science Faculty, Undergraduate Students, and State Population

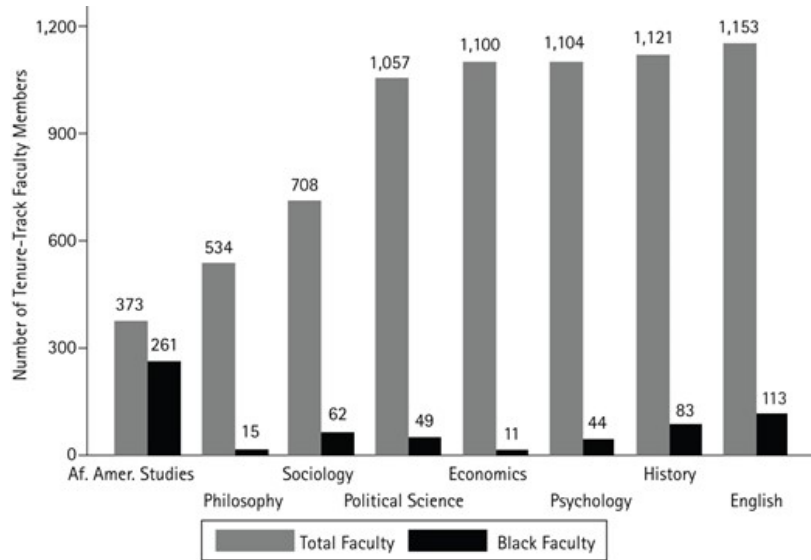
A small number of departments have political science departments showing more representation of Black faculty than their undergraduate Black student bodies; nine departments meet this standard and three more are within one percent. But the figure shows this is a weak point of comparison as the top ranked political science departments are typically housed in universities that vastly underrepresent both Black students and Black faculty as compared to the populations of the states where they are located. Even this is a lower standard than one might imagine since only Emory, Duke, and UNC are in states where Black residents comprise more than 20 percent of the population. The University of Minnesota is the only department listed with a higher share of African Americans on the faculty than in the state population, but Black folks comprise only 7 percent of the population in the North Star State.

Before we beat ourselves up collectively about the woeful state of Black faculty in the profession, we should recognize that the universities that employ most of us do no better with regards to the student body. Higher education in general vastly overrepresents the privileged (Morley 2021), so much so that Tali Mendelberg and colleagues have used the college experience as a window to understanding how the affluent are socialized into their political and economic points of view, and what happens to the political attitudes of the poor when they enter these affluent spaces (see Mendelberg et al. 2017, 2021, Willeck and Mendelberg 2022). Because we are collectively embedded in a system of affluence and privilege, we must recognize the context. In the sections that follow, we will review just how much we suffer from these characteristics and tendencies. We will never know how much over-emphasis on certain topics and how much ignorance of others stems from the fact that our discipline, and higher education in general, has such race- and class-based bias. We look next at our cognate disciplines.

## Other Disciplines

Political science is by no means an outlier in the matter of under-representing Black faculty either compared to the undergraduate student body or with respect to the state population. Figure 3 shows how the various disciplines compare.

Figure 3

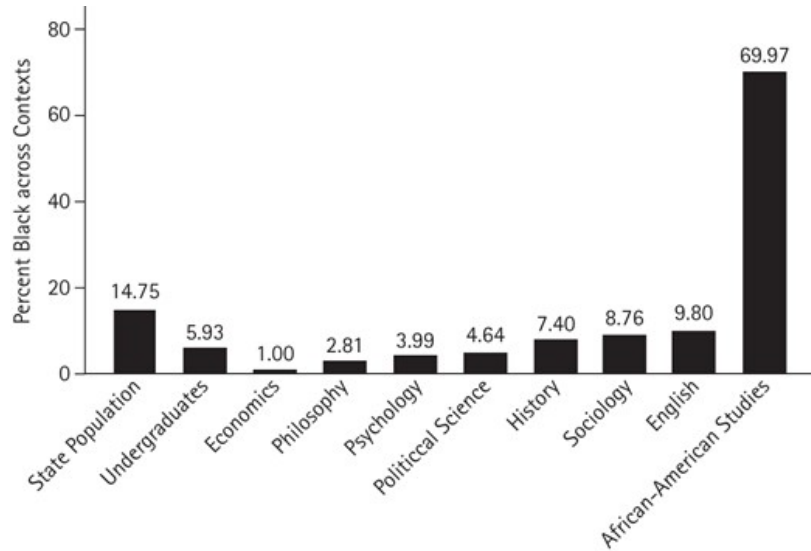


Total Faculty and Black Faculty Numbers across Academic Departments

Five of the disciplines we examined have more than 1,000 tenure-track faculty members across the twenty-eight universities we considered; these are large departments, on average, often with forty or more faculty. Sociology is smaller, and has a larger, but still low, share of African American faculty members. African-American studies departments are, not surprisingly, majority Black in their compositions, but these are small departments, as the figure shows. Universities cannot generate diversity by concentrating their hiring in these departments; they are too small. Students should see a diverse range of faces in front of the classroom across all disciplines. Economics and philosophy show particularly egregious outcomes, especially when one steps back and asks: do Black Americans have distinctive views on the economy, or on philosophical issues? If so, why are these not represented in the academy, and are those disciplines intellectually richer by their near exclusion of Black scholars? It is also worth noting that the political science departments with no Black faculty members in 2020 include New York University (NYU), Rochester, and Washington University in St. Louis. This may well be related to the strength of the economic perspective of politics in those departments, though of course we cannot say for sure. If the only thing that matters is a certain intellectual style, then efforts to diversify will never work. Diversity of background and diversity of approach go hand in hand. Where one is low, so too may be the other.

Figure 4 presents data allowing the comparison of state population, student bodies, and different department faculty groups. It shows the percent of the faculty in the indicated disciplines who are Black, drawing from the same data presented in Figure 3, as well as the percent of the state population and the undergraduate student body in the same universities listed in Figure 2.

**Figure 4**



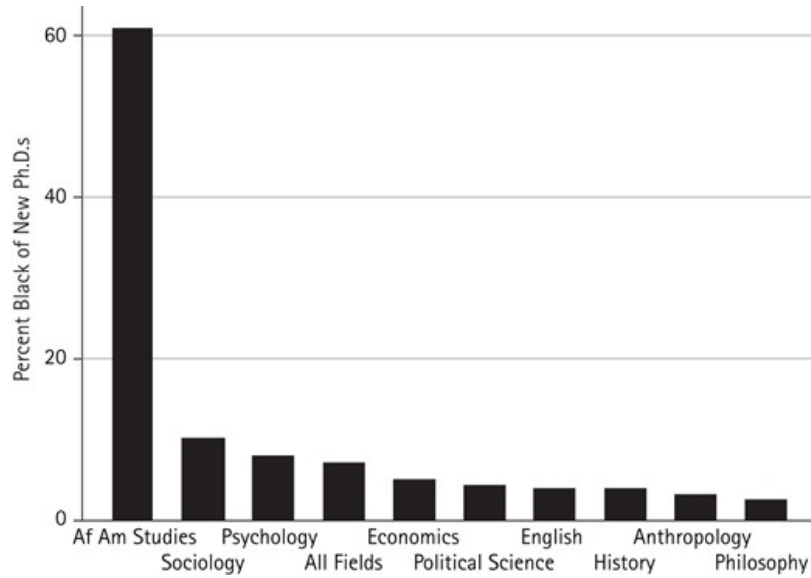
Percent Black among State Populations, Undergraduate Students, and Faculty

With the exception of African-American studies, which Figure 3 shows to be a relatively small academic discipline, no discipline comes close to representing the Black share of the state population, though English, sociology, and history do significantly better than political science and psychology, which in turn score higher than philosophy and economics. We already noted how poorly these twenty-eight universities do with respect to Black representation among undergraduates; whereas the relevant state populations are almost 15 percent Black, only 6 percent of the undergraduates are. And whereas history, sociology, and English show higher shares of Black faculty than students, none of the disciplines comes close to matching the demographic profile of the state population.

It is possible that the political science profession is changing. Among the forty-nine Black faculty members we identified, fifteen have PhDs dating from the 2010s, and seventeen more from the 2000s. This may be a sign that we are moving in the right direction with regards to expanding the pool of eligible candidates for faculty positions. But there is no way to look at the data reviewed in the previous section and conclude anything other than that political science, like many of its sister disciplines, is in crisis when it comes to the presence of Black faculty at leading institutions.

As we have shown in Figure 2, the underrepresentation of Black people is not confined to the faculty population in political science. We also find that the number of doctorates being awarded to recently graduating Black students to be of high concern. We use the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics Survey of Earned Doctorates to find the percentage of recent students being awarded a doctorate by field of study, and these data are presented in Figure 5.

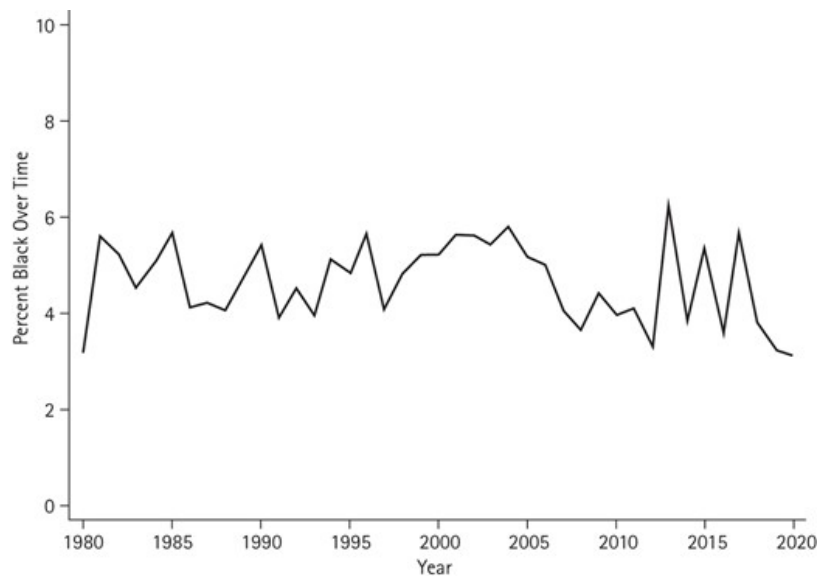
**Figure 5**



Percent Black among 2020 Earned Doctorates by Field

We might like to believe that over time this story is changing, that we are doing at least better than we were thirty years ago. This assumption would be wrong. Figure 6 shows the Black percent of doctorates awarded each year within political science and government.

**Figure 6**



Percent of Doctorates Awarded to Black People by Year

Although there are a handful of years where the graduation rate improves slightly, trends are not moving in the direction of improvement. We are not close to attaining a proportional number of Black PhDs compared to the population, and we have never been.

What path do Black PhDs take after graduation? According to a recent American Political Science Association (APSA) Placement Survey, at the conclusion of the 2017–18 academic year, 616 political science PhDs were on the job market, and only 3 percent of those individuals were Black (McGrath and Davis 2019). Black PhDs



are likely to either leave academia entirely, enter academic administration, or enter directly into tenure-track positions (McGrath and Davis 2019). While securing a tenure-track position is certainly an accomplishment, other groups are opting for different paths. Notably, men and White new PhDs are more likely to obtain a post-doctoral position (McGrath and Davis 2019), granting them the time to expand their dossier, such as publishing research and applying for grants, before committing to the additional responsibilities that come with a faculty position.

Taking a step back to one of the earliest stages in a political science career path shows only a slight improvement. A 2021 APSA report of graduate students in the profession shows that the incoming 2019–20 cohort of PhD students were the most diverse group in our discipline; 54 percent White, 16 percent East Asian, and 8 percent Black (McGrath and Davis 2021). While this is a slight improvement upon later career points, we are still failing at achieving equitable Black representation at every stage. We cannot wait until the current generation of training PhDs make it to the finish line to diversify our faculty for a host of reasons. Without adequate representation of Black faculty, we run the risk of overburdening Black graduate students with service work early in their careers (Anonymous 2018 Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group 2017), will continue to fail at providing Black graduate students with sufficient support and mentorship (Johnson-Bailey et al. 2008; Alex-Assensoh et al. 2005; Majic and Strolovich 2020), and will expect Black graduate students to navigate learning in an unwelcoming and potentially hostile workplace.

## The Intellectual Benefits of Diversity

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We make the case for the intellectual benefits of diversity by celebrating examples of innovative work by Black scholars who, because of their unique perspectives and experiences, add greatly to the discipline by addressing a range of topics. Black scholars often by use new theories to address old questions, create novel methodological approaches, and disseminate their results in hitherto underutilized ways.

## The Need for a Change

Recent innovations in the discipline offer compelling evidence of the theoretical, intellectual, and methodological benefits that political science gains from an increase in professional diversity. In terms of both substantive richness and analytical rigor, diverse perspectives propel the discipline forward, broaden its boundaries, improve its pedagogy, maintain its public relevance, and equip its members to respond to our evolving world (McClerking 2021). Moreover, the research clearly shows the importance of advocacy-based and culturally sensitive mentorship when it comes to training graduate students in general (Thomas et al. 2007; Brunnsma, Embrick, and Shin 2017) and future political science PhDs in particular (Monforti and Michelson 2008; Behl 2020; Smith, Gillooly, and Hardt 2022). To demonstrate the research value that such diversity adds, the following sections provides a non-exhaustive list of work that simply would not exist if Black scholars themselves did not write it, or if non-Black scholars doing race-adjacent work did not care passionately about certain projects. We first review a sample of research topics that may not have been addressed if it were not for Black scholars doing so, and later we turn to the issue of “caring.”



## Intersectionality

Intersectionality is arguably one of the most influential ideas in the social sciences. As an activist orientation with intellectual roots in Black (and multiracial) feminist thought and critical race theory (Gines 2011), intersectionality rejects the idea that demographic categories exist independently of one another and challenges us to consider how different forms of marginalization can overlap and produce unique experiences of oppression (Collins 2015). Political scientists (particularly those who study the politics of gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, etc.) embrace its complexity and its liberatory tenets.

The research on intersectionality in our discipline is richest in its analyses of the politics of Black women. For example, Mae C. King (1977), Jewel Prestage (1991), and Gloria J. Braxton (1994) helped to establish and legitimize the study of Black women in politics. More recent scholarship that builds on this foundational work includes Nikol Alexander-Floyd (2012); Michele Tracy Berger (2004); Khalilah Brown-Dean (2019); Nadia Brown (2012, 2014a, 2014b; Minta and Brown 2014); Cathy Cohen (2001, 2009, 2019); Andra Gillespie (Gillespie and Brown 2019); Ange-Marie Hancock (Hancock 2004, 2007, 2013, 2016); Dutchess Harris (2001); Julia Jordan-Zachery (2007a, 2007b); Jennifer C. Nash (2008, 2018, 2020); Pearl Dowe (2016, 2022); Evelyn Simien (2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2007); and Wendy Smooth (2006, 2013, 2016). These are but a handful of examples, of course. For interested readers, Mügge et al. (2018) offer an impressive systematic review of this growing literature.

Suffice it to say that the appeal of intersectionality, both as a concept of radical activism and a topic of intellectual analysis that prompts recent—and contested—efforts to apply its insights across different demographic groups and geographic contexts (Weldon 2006; Choo and Ferree 2010; Dhamoon 2011; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Davis and Zarkov 2017; Phillips 2021; Block, Golder, and Golder 2023), is evident.

## Race-Informed Global and Comparative Politics

As an alumnus of Howard University, one of the coauthors is encouraged to see ideas from the “Howard School of International Relations” regaining momentum through the ever-growing number of scholars—particularly scholars of color—who are (re)applying the perspectives and conceptual frameworks from the study of racism and White supremacy to the subject of global politics. The work of Errol Henderson (2007, 2013, 2015, 2017); Robert Knox (2013); Randolph Persaud (Persaud 2002, Persaud and Walker 2001); Kathy Powers (2022); and Debra Thompson (2016) come immediately to mind, as does research by Horace Bartilow (2019) and Kelebogile Zvobgo (Zvobgo and Loken 2020), to name only a few examples. An outstanding review of the Howard School’s still-underappreciated influence on the discipline and its (re)emergence as an area of scholarship appears in Freeman, Kim, and Lake (2022), and Anievas, Manchands, and Shilliam (2014) have an edited volume on the topic. These scholars remind us of what W. E. B. Du Bois rightly observed more than a century ago: “the Negro problem in America is but a local phase of a world problem” (Du Bois 2005 (1906), 33). Nobel Peace Prize winning public servant and former Chair of Howard University’s Political Science Department, the late Ralph Bunche, would be proud! He would also be saddened to know that the global White supremacy he wrote passionately about and worked tirelessly against remains so strong today.

There are similar trends in the subfield of comparative politics. Work that comes immediately to mind is Kathie Stromile Golden’s research on the politics of communist and post-communist societies (Golden 2018), William “Nick” Nelson’s case studies of Black political participation and urban race relations in Boston, MA and Liverpool, UK (Nelson 2000), research by Mark Sawyer (Sawyer 2005a, 2005b; Telles, Sawyer, and Rivera-Salgado 2011) and Danielle Clealand (Clealand 2013, 2017, 2021) on racial consciousness, discrimination, and movement politics among Black Caribbean and Afro-Latino/a/x immigrants in the USA.

## “Groupness” as a Key Political Concept

At its core, “groupness” implies that people who share common demographic characteristics also share common political goals (Lee 2008). The study of groupness and its many variants dominates the subfield of American politics that focuses on race. As a measure of groupness, Michael C. Dawson’s (1994) notion of “linked fate” (the degree to which a person believes that what happens to her personally is connected to what happens to members of her demographic group), was one of the most visible and influential ideas in this field. The study of linked fate inspired libraries of research, and, for some of this chapter’s coauthors, it was the reason they decided to specialize in racial and ethnic politics. In recognition of Dawson’s field-defining work, the summer 2019 volume of *Politics, Groups, and Identities* included a dialogue section in which contributing authors discussed, among other things, the influence Dawson’s ideas have had on the discipline and their applicability to other ethnic, gender, religious, and sexuality groups (Frasure-Yokely, Masuoka, and Barreto 2019).

But there are other measures of groupness. For example, Patricia Gurin, William Gamson, and their colleagues are known for their “mistrustful-eficacious hypothesis” (see Matthews and Prothro 1966; Gamson 1968; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1978, Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980; Miller, Gurin, Gurin, and Malanchuk 1981). To explain the widely replicated pattern that Black voters match—if not outpace—their White colleagues of comparable socioeconomic status, the authors posit that the combination of low trust in government and a high sense of one’s ability to make a difference in politics produces a group consciousness that Black Americans can draw upon as a participatory resource (Shingles 1981 provides a particularly good discussion of these ideas). Related dimensions like group membership (one’s awareness that they “belong” to a demographic category) and group identification (how “close” one feels toward people in that shared category) are also prevalent in this literature (see McClain et al. 2009; McClerking 2009; Gay, Hochschild, and White 2016; and Spry 2018, 2021 for extensive reviews). And we cannot forget the work of Ismail White, Chryl Laird, Julian Wamble, and their colleagues’ on racial norms and Black partisanship (see, e.g., White and Laird 2020; Wamble et al. 2022). We could go on, but the point we are making here is simply that the discipline owes much of what it knows about race and politics to this line of research.

## Protest as Collective Action

As evidenced by the groundswell of research on Black Lives Matter, the Movement for Black Lives, and related racial justice movements and organizations, African American Political Scientists and their coauthors are challenging and reimagining the study of mass-level political involvement. Examples are too numerous to do justice to them here. But any list should include scholars like Megan Ming Francis (Francis 2019, 2020, 2022) Candis Smith (Bunyasi and Smith 2018; 2019a, 2019b); Al Tillery (Tillery 2019; Bonilla and Tillery 2020); and Deva Woodly (2021).<sup>3</sup> It is encouraging to see protest, a non-conventional and not fully understood mode of activism, getting its due. As Glenn E. Bracey (2016, 18) rightly notes, there is a tendency in the social movement literature to de-value protest—particularly those that use violence, and especially if those protests are Black-led. Bracey attributes this pattern to disciplinary blind-spots: while Black people are central to the study of social movements, Black theorists (and Black-centered theorizing) are conspicuously less present in this field of study. The idea that all forms of protest are aspects of social movements is important, and, apparently, White scholars had difficulty acknowledging that. Recent work seeks to fill in these conceptual gaps, offering an innovative study of the politics of protest, one that merges game theory with government records, statistical analyses, and the qualitative explorations of grounded surveys and elite interviews (see Gause 2022a, 2022b, 2022c). Gause, like many who write about Black protest (see Gillion 2020; Peay and Camarillo 2021) discusses it as an important form of collective action whose long history of use (and success) can be explained by its ability to give “voice” to the marginalized. (For additional examples of research on protests as strategic political communication, see Meyer 2004; DeNardo 2014).

Related to this research on social movements is the research on political organizing, another field of study that was born in activism circles that found a home in the academy. We distinguish this term from *mobilizing* (providing people with the impetus to gather and complete tasks) and from *activism* (expressions/reactions to decision-makers and their outcomes). Rather, *organizing* is the cyclical process through which constituencies learn to be self-governing (Han, Baggetta, and Oser, forthcoming). Organizers help people make strategic choices about how best to channel their voices through collective action. And while organizing can lead to mobilization and activism, it is a distinct concept. Again, this is hardly an comprehensive list, but the spirit of this line of research is exemplified in Jake Grumbach’s exploration of the “nationalization” of (anti-progressive) state politics (Grumbach and Michener 2022; Grumbach 2022), Hahrie Han’s case studies on how activist groups build and sustain community organization (Han 2014; Han, McKenna, and Oyakawa 2021), Jenn Jackson’s work on Black youth’s perceptions of police and policing (Jackson 2019), Deva Woodly’s path-breaking book on Black Lives Matter (Woodly 2021), and Jamila Michener’s incisive research on poverty, racial inequality, and public policy (Michener, SoRelle, and Thurston 2018, Michener 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022).

## Other Notable Innovations

Nadia Brown and Danielle Casarez Lemi's recent book on the physical appearance of Black women in politics is important to note here (Brown and Lemi 2021), as is Ernest McGowan's work on Black residents in the suburbs (McGowan 2017), Patricia Posey's book on payday loans and financial capitalism (Posey, forthcoming), Jonathan Collins' work on the structure of, and deliberative activities within, school board meetings (Collins 2018, 2020, 2021), Christine Slaughter's research on how Black people develop psychosocial resilience against racial trauma (Ojeda and Slaughter 2019; Slaughter, 2022), research on the political relevance of jazz, blues, rap, and other forms of Black music (e.g., Spence 2011; Bonnette 2015; Bonnette-Bailey, Block, and McClerking 2018; Baptist, forthcoming), and Hakeem Jefferson's inquiries into race and "respectability politics" (Jefferson, 2023). Moreover, Davin Phoenix's and Antoine Banks' inquiries into the link between emotions and politics (Phoenix 2019, Phoenix and Arora 2020; Banks 2014), Walter Mebane's "election forensics" research on the ability to detect voting irregularities (Wand et al. 2001; Mebane 2008, 2011), and Darren Davis' contributions to our understanding of race-of-interviewer effects (Davis 1997a, 1997b; Davis and Silver 2003; Cody, Davis, and Wilson 2010)—along with his recommendations regarding the need to revisit the empirical properties of the "racial resentment scale" (Wilson and Davis 2011; Davis and Wilson 2021)—are also worth mentioning here.

Again, our goal is not to name everyone but simply to emphasize that the rich perspectives of these authors, and the unique discoveries they made in their scholarship, would never have emerged if the discipline relied solely on the research tendencies of cis-gender White men.

## Why Caring Matters

Many political scientists have come into the profession out of a concern for a substantive question central to our profession: income inequality, racial disparities, war and peace, terrorism, religious strife, or some other personal concern. Others have not; they have wanted to understand how institutions operate or voters behave without a fundamental concern for injustice or inequality. Each of these approaches to the discipline of course brings different strengths and challenges. For many members of the profession who have come into it in the past generation, there have been some jarring lacunae at the center of the discipline. Any American knows that race is central to American politics, but it has not been central to American political science. Similarly, gender was not centered in the profession before the discipline attracted substantial numbers of female scholars, a development that is not so far back in history.

Consistent with the overarching theme of this edited volume, "caring" about the problems one studies is important because it encourages scholars to be more "applied" in their orientation: researching things not just because they are interesting but because society in general (and the members of their particular demographic groups) will improve if the problem in question is solved. Examples of scholars calling for more applied work in political science include Perry (2012), and Davies, Jackson, and Streeter (2021).

An issue with "caring" is that it motivates one to solve methodological problems that others consider not worth the bother. The US population is approximately 11 percent African-American. That means that in a nationally representative survey sample of 1,000 respondents, only 110 will be Black, with about half that number of each gender. For many years, this was the main reason why Black political behavior was generally only given the most cursory attention; it was a single variable among others. Deeper analysis, in the face of questions of whether a "dummy variable for Black" was sufficient (see Sen and Wasow 2016), was precluded by the sample size. Some would move on from that, seeing it as an insurmountable problem. Others were unsatisfied and they created new methodologies for creating large-sample and nationally representative surveys, including the National Black Election Study—first organized with National Science Foundation support by Katherine Tate in 1996, building upon the work of James S. Jackson and colleagues in

1984 (see Tate 2004; Jackson et al. 1994). These pioneering works have of course now been expanded substantially by the larger and more diverse Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS)—a poll that not only includes some of the largest oversamples of racial and ethnic minorities to date, but also provides a model of content flexibility and resource sharing that is simply not possible in more mainstream surveys like the American National Election Study or the General Social Survey (see Barreto et al. 2018; Frasure-Yokley et al. 2020; Frasure-Yokley et al. 2022).<sup>4</sup>

The point here is not only have Black political scientists and others motivated by the importance of the substance of their chosen areas of study developed new tools and ideas, such as Dawson's linked fate, but they have also developed new methods, research tools, and techniques for analyzing problems that others left behind because they were "too hard." If necessity is the mother of invention, then caring can and does lead to methodological as well as theoretical innovation. Without caring, one can choose the topics that have the greatest methodological ease or the potential to use a particular method in which one has specialized. Where caring comes first, then one is forced to develop the methods needed to study a given topic, no matter the difficulties. Of course, some of these efforts will be more successful than others, but the profession is richer for the fact that many individuals care.

In a recent review of over 20,000 articles published in the most prominent political science journals, Wilson and Knutsen document that the cumulated published work on which our discipline is based is heavily weighted to democracies, countries with high levels of economic advantage, larger countries by population, and countries where the prominent languages are English, French, or Spanish (see Wilson and Knutsen 2022, 1036). It is hard to see how our knowledge of politics generally can be enhanced by this partial view. However, most political scientists, especially in the US, might be completely unconcerned by our collective ignorance about politics in countries that may be poor, where the language is Arabic or Chinese, or where the political system is autocratic. This lack of concern by some does not mean that important theoretical insights, and new methods of studying politics, would not be developed by those who do care about such things. Caring matters.<sup>5</sup>

## Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

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In this chapter, we have argued that more Black faculty in the discipline matters not merely for normative reasons, but because of the way Black scholars have contributed to our understanding of politics. Black scholars have helped us understand everything from how skin tone and hairstyle matters politically to how groups influence the way people engage in politics to the way protest movements matter politically. Further, they have pushed methodological boundaries, finding new ways to study important topics when others gave up or were not interested. Our chapter was not meant to be comprehensive; instead, our goal was to highlight just a few ways that Black political scientists have contributed to the body of knowledge.

In writing this chapter, we have struggled with the question of whether another treatment of a time-worn topic will move the needle when it comes to the creation, hiring, and retention of Black political scientists. After all, there have been many reviews of the poor state of affairs in the political science discipline with regards to diversity. We hope that by taking a different approach, emphasizing the intellectual value of diversity to the entire profession, that we may draw the attention of some within the discipline who do not share our normative concerns about the lack of diversity. After all, those concerns have been long and repeatedly noted but little has happened. Of course, only time can tell if our optimism is unfounded.

The five authors of this paper are alike in that we are appalled at the paucity of Black faculty at top PhD-granting institutions, and we are tired of conversations about diversity without much practical effort to change the situation. We also all have ties to at least one of the twenty-eight programs that are the subject of our study. However, we differ from one another in important ways. Four of us are tenured professors,

while one of us is a postdoctoral research associate. We have some gender diversity, albeit limited. We have racial diversity in this coauthorship, but racial minorities far outnumber White authors. Although we all study American politics, we do not study it exclusively, and within the subfield we focus on different matters. Public policy is a focal point for some of us; political behavior is what concerns one of us the most; one of us is primarily concerned with the political representation of marginalized groups, and another one of us has published multiple books on Black representatives in Congress.

One of us is a chaired professor with a different experience than the others. When Baumgartner entered graduate school (in 1980), women were about 10 percent of the graduate program, a similar or smaller share of the faculty, and racial and ethnic minorities were exceedingly rare. As a White cis-gender male, he experienced a range of privileges, mostly informal ones: being invited to socialize with faculty members with the professional mentoring that followed from that, opportunities for research collaborations that put his career on a positive trajectory, and so on. And while none of the numerous wonderful mentors was perhaps conscious of what was happening, it was nonetheless true that his female and minority colleagues were not experiencing the same opportunities. Given that one of the key elements in his graduate school training was an empirical orientation, including counting things, it was not hard to see what was happening, even though others were not seeing it. Throughout a long career, it has been clear that this initial positive experience in graduate school, being adopted almost like a family member by a baker's dozen of Michigan's most prominent faculty members, set the trajectory for a positive experience in the profession. It has also become increasingly clear over the years how rare that experience is, and how differentially it is allocated based on the identity of the student.

Another of us recently completed a graduate program that she started in 2016. Johnson's experience has been quite different from Baumgartner's. When Johnson began her graduate program, she was the only Black cis-gender woman in her cohort. Gaining support for her research agenda sometimes felt like an uphill battle, with faculty members making borderline racist remarks and questioning whether, as a Black woman, her work questioning the fairness of punishment and their foundation in anti-Black racism might come across as pushing a personal agenda. She dedicated a significant amount of her time in her graduate program to departmental service and pushing for increased support of minority students, both of which resulted in little meaningful change. Unlike Baumgartner, she found it hard, though not impossible, to find faculty members to offer the formal and informal support offered to her White peers. Although her graduate school experience has been harrowing, Johnson attributes her success so far to the handful of faculty and fellow graduate students, all of whom are already overburdened with department service and mentoring women and non-White folk, who took seriously the need to diversify the profession, not just to improve its image, but also the need to make the profession more welcoming on a personal and intellectual level.

A key element of what we are arguing in this essay is that these opportunities need to be allocated without regard to identity characteristics, and yet they are not and never have been. The mentoring aspects of a more diverse profession are clearly fundamental, and we have a long way to go. In the end, we hope that the various demographics we represent, not to mention the varied lived experiences we have, can help to convince others that the topic we are talking about is something that is important for everyone. All of us benefit when more Black scholars work as faculty at leading institutions.

This chapter lends itself to many extensions. One could consider the representation of Black faculty from an intersectional perspective. One might even analyze why some schools outperform others; one conjecture is that the presence of hiring initiatives (e.g., Target of Opportunity programs) go a long way towards explaining why some schools have more Black faculty than others. Although our chapter focuses on Black scholars, we have highlighted the work of scholars from other underrepresented groups. That said, we recognize the importance of future work focusing on the intellectual contributions of other marginalized groups such as Latinx individuals and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and more (LGBTQ+) individuals. We welcome any and all extensions. Yet, we also warn readers against the temptation

to dismiss or minimize our study because we choose to center Black scholars. While all groups are shaped by politics, one is hard-pressed to find a group of people impacted more than Black people have been. Politics shapes whether people can vote, where people can live, where they can eat, whether they can get a loan (and if so how much interest is charged), and matters considerably for the offenses that cause one to lose one's freedom. The lived experiences of Black people inform how such topics are studied, which in turn sheds light on our collective understanding of these topics. By no means should we try to solve the problem of few Black faculty at the expense of increasing the number of women, Latinxs, and others. That said, let us not be too quick to inquire about the presence of these other groups without first wrestling with the hard reality that Black Americans, people who were once considered partial persons out of political expediency, all of these centuries later continue to be grossly underrepresented in the very roles that are positioned to shape not only the hearts and minds of students, but those of other faculty.

Let us also be careful not to fall into the trap of zero-sum thinking. One response to what we have shown would be to say that the diversity problem in political science is a function of competition among universities for a pool of talent, and an especially small pool when considering so few Black students earn PhDs. As Lee Ann Fujii rightly noted in the keynote address she gave at International Studies Association Northeast (ISA-NE) in November 2016, such rhetoric only serves to point to a conclusion that it is fruitless to address the issue, as the solution is just a collective action problem and what is good for University A comes at the cost of University B (Busby 2017). This is why the pool is a greater concern than who is relatively more or less successful. The data we present shows that none of us should be tooting our horns, though some might be particularly embarrassed. Moreover, marginal changes will not alter the trends we have discussed. Take this hypothetical example: if we doubled the number of Black faculty in the twenty-eight departments studied here, then Black scholars would still comprise only 9.3 percent of all tenure-track faculty, which still falls well short of parity with regards to the US population. To realize racial parity in political science, it would take roughly 138 Black tenure-track faculty, which is nearly triple the number of Black faculty that were employed at the time we collected data. Achieving this goal would not only require universities to be willing to hire a greater number of Black faculty, but it would also require a greater number of Black PhDs.

Given the lack of progress in growing the numbers of Black PhDs across the disciplines (see Figure 6 above) and the general poor performance of most disciplines regarding faculty diversity, it is certainly worth questioning whether there is much desire to move the needle. Talking the talk is not the same as making sacrifices and hard decisions to make increased diversity a reality. In this chapter, we have tried to raise a point that we hope might attract the attention and support even of those who have no personal interest in diversity. The country club demographics of US academics have not served us well. They have held us back. They have made us willing to study topics because of their methodological tractability rather than because of their substantive importance. They have made us unable to address key issues in international relations, comparative politics, political theory, American politics, and public policy. They have detached us from the very processes we seek to understand. Increased diversity will make us a better and more influential profession. It will sustain itself if we are able to dramatically change our own professional demographics, as we'll do better work and better be able to attract a growing share of students from diverse backgrounds. Political scientists study racial representation in institutions; we could cite dozens of studies to corroborate this point. In other words, we as a profession know that it is possible to alter the racial makeup of spaces, and this includes institutions of higher education. Thus, it is not a matter of knowing what to do to improve the presence of Black faculty at leading colleges and universities, but rather a question of whether there is the will to do so.



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## Notes

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- 1 Paula McClain's 2021 presidential address to the American Political Science Association (APSA) makes this point forcefully, as do the members of the recent task force she led on Systemic Inequality in the Discipline. But these are just recent examples; there is a rich (and unfortunate) tradition of scholars lamenting how far the discipline needs to go to resolve its issues of entrenched racism.
- 2 We focus on top-ranked universities because, as research shows, these institutions train the overwhelming majority of PhDs (Wapman et al. 2022; Morgan et al. 2022; Nowogrodzki 2022).
- 3 Brown, Block, and Stout (2020) curated a collection of articles on these and similar topics that were published in *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.
- 4 Specifically, the CMPS offers a more equitable way for scholars to 1) pose questions on a large and nationally representative public opinion poll, 2) gain access to the polling data once it has been collected, and 3) work with teams of scholars to write up results based on that data. The whole system is designed to make it easier for scholars in less resource-rich universities to use the data, and the access structure for acquiring the data fosters collaboration between senior and junior scholars (thus helping in a meaningful way with the "research pipeline" problem by creating writing communities that would most likely lead to co authorships and ultimately publications).
- 5 It isn't lost on us that NOT caring about the tendencies in one's discipline is a privilege in itself. When we teach courses about diversity in political science, the authors of this chapter commonly start with a bird's-eye-view of the discipline: acknowledging the innovations and arguments that expand intellectual frontiers while simultaneously lamenting the lack of minority group representation. Such conversations happen naturally in certain subfields (for example, racial, ethnic, or gender politics). But they seem less common—and perhaps less welcomed—in mainstream discussions of political institutions and behaviors, when considering the decisions of actors in comparative context or within complex global systems of governance, when training students to conduct empirical analyses, or when acknowledging the contributions of long-deceased social philosophers or contemporary thinkers. This shouldn't surprise anyone. Because of the particular traumas they face, women, racial and ethnic minorities, and people who define their sexuality in non-binary and gender-fluid ways are acutely aware of their marginalized positions within the Ivory Tower (Sinclair-Chapman 2015, 2019; Lewis-Maddox, forthcoming). In fact, it is a luxury to not be preoccupied with one's status vis-a-vis the academy, which is why, as we show in our discussion of contributions to the discipline, some of the strongest research on the state of the discipline comes from scholars who are female, non-White and non-cis-gender.