

African Americans in those political activities on which researchers focused and the absence of African Americans and women in the political science profession. In the late 1960s, the profession was estimated to be 97% non-Black and 90% male.

The task of creating a body of political science literature on “both race and gender” has been assumed in large measure by women and African Americans. Increased voting and officeholding by women and African Americans served as a basis for descriptive, empirical studies, which were followed by more theoretically oriented work. Expanding the focus of political science research to include these new areas was costly in terms of negative tenure and promotion decisions and rejection of requests for research funding. In spite of the problems encountered, it is imperative that basic, exploratory research continue as the database on women’s political activity is still exceedingly limited. The situation is even more critical in regard to African American women. Quality teaching is inextricably tied to quality research output.

My own research on African American women state legislators was initiated in the early 1970s with no special funding and while employed full time. Travel was underwritten by a research project in higher education for which I was a volunteer interviewer for a special group of academic administrators, some of whom were located in geo-

graphic areas with African American women state legislators. Later, the collaborative effort with Marianne Githens for *A Portrait of Marginality* (1977) was undertaken with similarly sparse resources. These experiences with limited financial support were more typical than atypical for those doing research on women and African Americans in politics.

A final word of caution is offered regarding the necessity for scholars to confront the authentic tensions that exist around questions of “race” within the study of women’s political behavior in the United States. If race makes a difference in the larger society, then race makes a difference among women in terms of life chances and access to power, including political power. This reality must be reflected in what is taught in political science courses which address gender issues, even if the reality is unpleasant.

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Teaching Against the Double Couplet of Problem/Victim

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In *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*, Gilroy argues that one of the definitive characteristics of contemporary racism is its use of the double couplet: the assignment of the status of both problem and victim. Gilroy asserts that Blacks must be brought back into history outside the categories of problem and victim. In my view, his analy-

sis applies to gender as well, even though racism and sexism differ in a number of important aspects. The notion of a cultural legacy that crosscuts such factors as age, income, or circumstances of psychological aberration dominates the discussion of both racism and sexism. As a consequence, stereotypes, inaccuracies, and subordina-

tion are perpetuated. A critical question for those of us involved in teaching then is: how can we avoid reinforcing the double couplet and its ahistoricism?

Teaching any introductory politics course poses a series of problems. Not fully aware of the distinction between politics and the study of politics, students want to

understand what is going on in the world of politics, but thinking about politics in a disciplined, systematic way is often not precisely what they expected. To make matters worse, most beginning students have only a minimal control over the vocabulary of our discipline. To take up the issues which interest students, to subject those issues to the rigorous analysis of political science, and to carry on a discourse in a language which the students have not yet internalized entails a great deal of negotiation and compromise.

Efforts to mainstream material on race, gender, and sexual orientation complicate the situation further. Students steeped in, and often fully committed to, the dominant culture fail to understand the complexities of minority status. Furthermore, although the purpose of mainstreaming is to move away from stereotypic thinking and to broaden the student's terms of reference, responding to the lacunae in some students' understanding of minority status runs the risk of reducing the minority students present in the classroom to the role of eavesdropper.

There are, as we all learned the hard way, a broad range of problems endemic to the very concept of mainstreaming. One obvious response is to strike an optimistic tone. Emphasizing an idealized and highly abstract future, free of conflict, provides students with a vi-

sion, which they may come to accept as their personal goal.

In my opinion, however, political science is too earthbound to soar into the clouds. When it has transcended its boundaries, it has become dogmatic. Some of our students quickly see our efforts to inspire for what they are—wishful thinking—and quickly dismiss them as an unrealistic treatment of diversity. Others who are inspired may develop false expectations and illusions that often leave them especially vulnerable. In either case, the inspirational approach serves no useful purpose.

A second approach, and one that is far more popular, is to deal with the issues of diversity within the framework of domination/subordination. Such an approach certainly depicts the role of power in the study of politics, what it means to have power and the consequences of not possessing power. The scenario of domination/subordination in the areas of race and gender furnishes concrete examples of what happens when the powerless confront the powerful.

Despite these advantages, however, the domination/subordination approach has a fatal flaw: it represents the very embodiment of the double couplet. The subordinate group is, by definition, the victim and the problem. Even efforts to locate the subordinate group in a historical moment usually focus on a confrontation with the powerful, and if the group remains subordi-

nate, in all probability it retains its status as problem/victim.

Thus, discussions of the first and second wave women's movements or the civil rights movement chronicle the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed; in their very attempt to illustrate oppression they perpetuate it. As long as racism and sexism are treated as normal, they are reinforced.

What is the alternative? A celebration of African American women and their political accomplishments, such as Jewel Prestage has spoken to, is one possibility. It suggests an escape from the double couplet because it understands and accepts the implications of racial and sexual meanings and identities for action in specific historical settings. The changing historical character of racism and sexism must be moved to center stage, for as long as racism and sexism are treated as though they are normal, or eternal, or natural, the paradigm of a double couplet will remain in place.

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Mainstreaming Gender, Race, and Sexual Orientation in Teaching: A Student's Point of View

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In the early 1970s when I was at York University, Toronto, Canada, I was always race conscious, as I still am. As a student for many years in the field of political science, I always brought my race into whatever I learned, asking at all times, "What does this mean for

me?" I studied in order to understand the implication of the superstructure as it pertained to my race/myself. I defined being Black in the same way as Malcolm X, not by the definitions used elsewhere. No matter what I read, what I studied, what I did, I reflected on it with

the perspective that the White superstructure would always strive to make me a reject. And somehow I had to find ways to tell myself that I was not a reject but instead, as Malcolm suggested, the first, the best, the cream of the crop. With this philosophy, I came prepared to