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Bringing Women In: Gender Mainstreaming in Introduction to Political Science

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INTRODUCTION

All political science students benefit from exposure to the gendered ways in which political systems operate. In this paper, I discuss the ways in which I bring these issues into Introduction to Political Science, a general education course typically taken by non-political science majors. The challenge is that introductory texts tend not to incorporate gender as an analytic construct.[1] I overcome this obstacle by including gender-related supplementary readings and classroom activities. In this paper, I focus on providing concrete examples of ways in which I have introduced intersectionality, the gender gap, and women in post-war rebuilding.

THE CASE FOR MAINSTREAMING IN INTRODUCTORY POLITICAL SCIENCE CLASSES

Since the Wahlke Report recommendation on the inclusion of gender in political science (Ackerly and Mügge 2016), gender and politics scholars have made strong cases for gender mainstreaming (Atchison 2013; Frueh 2007). In a general education class, the rationale is about exposing students to the gendered ways in which political systems work and the gender-based assumptions individuals make. It is about asking students to question why we simply accept all of this as the status quo (Lyle-Gonga 2013). We find gender imbalances in almost every facet of political life, and it is important that students see how these imbalances lead to gendered outcomes.

A major impediment to teaching about these imbalances is that instructors are often highly reliant on the textbook (Cassese and Bos 2013), and recent research indicates that political science textbooks tend not to mainstream gender content (Cassese et al. 2015; Cassese et al. 2014). The scarcity of women's voices in textbooks is problematic in that it segregates women and politics rather than treating gender as an integral part of the political world. In Introduction to Political Science, I mainstream gender through supplementary readings and classroom activities. As Kramer and Martin (1988, p. 133) note, "Teaching gender in a mainstreamed context is more difficult than teaching a course on gender because the most hostile, or uninterested students tend to select themselves away from a specialized course." Given the potential for hostility to gender mainstreaming in an introductory course, I use in-class activities and simulations to increase students' enthusiasm for the material.[2]

I supplement each chapter of the course text, *A Novel Approach to Politics* (Van Belle 2015), with additional readings and classroom activities. In this article I concentrate on just three segments of the course:

- *Gender and intersectionality*: This topic introduces the importance of gender and race in modern politics. The topic and exercise help to frame the rest of the gender and race related issues that I introduce via supplemental readings and exercises throughout the semester.
- *Voter behavior and the gender gap*: I include this topic as it helps to highlight both that women and men have different policy priorities and that the dearth of women in office results in lack of attention to the policy issues that are more salient to women.
- *Women and societal rebuilding after armed conflict:* International institutions have adopted the feminist idea that women must be included in post-conflict rebuilding. However, mainstream international relations (IR) authors have traditionally been less welcoming of feminism. I include this topic because it allows students to see that feminist IR has influenced international policy and helps students to think about the role of women in domestic politics and the effects of different institutional structures on both women and minorities.

Adding just these three segments to an introductory political science class exposes students to gender and democracy/political institutions/IR.

Gender and Intersectionality
Reading

Paxton, Pamela M., and Melanie M. Hughes. 2014. "Ch. 9: Women from Marginalized Groups." *Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Classroom activity

The Privilege Walk.

Materials needed

Copies of the Privilege Walk personas, ample space for students to move about.[3]

Political scientists have long studied cross-cutting cleavages such as race, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. In general, the discipline treats each of these as separate groups in which group members have relatively uniform preferences and outcomes. Looking at groups in this compartmentalized fashion would then imply that women, African Americans, and the middle class are separate and monolithic groups. The problem with this approach is obvious when you consider that a middle class African American woman belongs in all three groups. Is her position in society based on being a woman, being African American, or being middle class? An *intersectional* approach would argue that her position in society is a combination of all three, plus others such as religion, age, and sexual orientation. Her position is not determined by simple addition (race+class+gender), but by the *compounding* effects of race, class, and gender. As Hancock (2007, 64, emphasis added) notes, "intersectionality considers

wage gap between women and men cannot be explained by life choices around education, experience, union membership, industry, and occupation. Thus, even in this simple example we see that gender *and* race interact to result in larger wage gaps for women of color, and life choices cannot fully explain the gap.

In the US, many discussions about inequality—particularly regarding women and the poor—revolve around the "choice" argument. In these discussions, people insist that women make educational and familial choices that prevent them from getting to the top, while poor people make choices that prevent them from climbing out of poverty (Stephens and Levine 2011; Weiner et al. 2011). The choice rhetoric masks many of the structural impediments that permeate American society; it also allows people to believe that inequality is not a systemic issue. The choice rhetoric also allows some students to deny that privilege accrues to them as a result of race and/or

The persona approach means that students often receive a persona that is nothing like them; this makes the exercise a very effective way to help students see gender, race, class, and privilege from a new perspective.

the *interaction* of such categories [race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.] as organizing structures of society, recognizing that *these key components influence political access, equality, and the potential for any form of justice.*"

To illustrate how intersectionality works, I offer a relatively simple example: the gap between male and female wages. The wage gap is most often calculated as the ratio of women's to men's gross hourly wage (Plantenga and Remery 2006). In the US, the gender wage gap is currently reported at 78%, meaning that a woman earns about 78 cents for every dollar a man makes (AAUW 2015, NP). The 78% statistic actually refers to the wage gap between white men and women; this is important because the wage gap is an issue of both race *and* gender. Consider these race/gender-inclusive comparisons:

- White men versus men of color: African Americans earn 72% and Latinos 66% of what white men make (Ashton 2014).
- Men of color versus women of color: African American women earn 90% of what African American men earn and Latinas earn about 89% of what Latinos earn (AAUW 2015).
- White men versus women of color: the wage gap widens to 63% for African American women and 54% for Latinas (AAUW 2015).

One could counter-argue that the wage gap is not driven by sexism or racism, but by choices regarding educational attainment, career path, and/or family status. However, Ashton (2014, NP) reports that there are wage gaps between white men and men of color *and* between men and women of all races at nearly every level of educational attainment. Indeed, Blau and Kahn (2007, 12) find that more than 40% of the

gender. On the first substantive day of class, I challenge the choice dialog by having students complete a modified version of the Privilege Walk. Doing this at the outset sends a clear message about the importance of gender, race, and class in the political arena and tells students that these topics will be central to the course.

In the Privilege Walk, participants line up in a straight line outdoors or at the middle of the room and take steps forward or backward based on their responses to the Privilege Walk prompts; the prompts are largely related to race, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. These can be sensitive topics, so in a typical Privilege Walk participants do not have to respond to prompts that make them uncomfortable. To circumvent this, I created Privilege Walk personas. Each student is given one of these personas and completes the exercise based on the instructions for that persona rather than their own experience. This class is capped at 30, so I use two of each persona.

The persona approach means that students often receive a persona that is nothing like them; this makes the exercise a very effective way to help students see gender, race, class, and privilege from a new perspective. Also, despite having the same persona two students may end up in slightly different places (due to height/length of step). I use this to incorporate the idea that an individual's capabilities can affect the person's relative position in society. After completing the exercise, we discuss the exercise and its outcomes.

Although I typically assign supplementary readings in advance of classroom activities, I find that assigning the Paxton and Hughes reading after the Privilege Walk is more effective. Going through the exercise exposes students to the idea of intersectionality and the reality that a person's "gender,

class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and sexuality combine to form intersecting social hierarchies" (Paxton and Hughes 2014, 224). Students no longer have to try to imagine it; they have seen that the black middle-class lesbian and the white middle-class straight man have very different societal positions despite having similar levels of human capital.

Voter Behavior and the Gender Gap

Readings

Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2014. "Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition." *American Political Science Review* 108 (3): 499–519.

Inglehart, Roland, and Pippa Norris. 2000. "The Developmental Theory of the Gender Gap: Women's and Men's Voting Behavior in Global Perspective." *International Political Science Review* 21 (4): 441–63.

Classroom activity

Mind the (Gender) Gap.

Materials needed

Gender gap questions, clickers or polling software

Women and Societal Rebuilding in the Wake of Armed Conflict

Readings

True, Jacqui. 2013. "Women, Peace and Security in Post-Conflict and Peacebuilding Contexts." *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, Policy Brief*.

Bekoe, Dorina, and Christina Parajon. 2007. Women's Role in Liberia's Reconstruction. Retrieved from http://www.usip.org/publications/women-s-role-in-liberia-s-reconstruction.

Classroom activity

Rebuilding Myappia.

Materials needed

Rebuilding worksheets; Myappia backstory

Women are disproportionately affected by armed conflict both during and after hostilities. Although academics in security studies have been resistant to gendering the field, practitioners have pursued women-centric strategies for rebuilding states that have been torn apart by armed conflict (Sjoberg 2009). For example, UN Security Council Resolution

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At every stage of political life—from voter to elected official—women and men think and/or behave differently. Of particular interest to college students, Fox and Lawless (2014, 501) find that young women are 45% more likely than young men to state that they would never run for public office. I use the Fox and Lawless reading as a lead-in to the topic of underrepresentation of women in political office. I then use the Inglehart and Norris reading to introduce the gender gap in voting and public policy preferences. Tying those together, it is easy to make the point that because men and women have different policy concerns, the global dearth of female representation is problematic.

To illustrate the gender gap I present the students with a set of questions related to issues on which men and women tend to split, like the death penalty or social welfare. Research indicates that individuals tend to believe others share similar beliefs to their own; this "false consensus effect" tends to be strongest around morality issues (Park 2012). Thus, students are likely to feel that most of the class agrees with them and are likely to be surprised by the results. I first use clickers to poll all of the students. I then re-poll the questions by gender. At the end, we compare both the in-class results and the results reported in the initial studies. To debrief, I ask what students found most surprising in the results; it is rare that I have to ask a follow-up question, as their surprise typically acts as a catalyst for strong discussion regarding why the genders might have different views.

(UNSCR) 1325 mandates women's inclusion in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery.[4] Per the UNSCR, women are to be equal participants in peace negotiations, peacekeeping, and humanitarian aid.

Because these are new concepts to students, I have developed an exercise in which students must participate in rebuilding a fictional state (Myappia) that has just come out of a genocidal three-way civil war.[5] Over the course of three to four weeks, I conduct a series of lectures on relations between different levels of government, democratic executives, legislative systems, and electoral systems; as appropriate, I highlight the ways in which institutional design can affect gendered outcomes (i.e. proportional representation tends to be better for women and unitary systems ensure that the same rights are given to all citizens, regardless of location).

After each lecture, I give the students a worksheet and they work in small groups to determine what institutions they will implement as they rebuild Myappia, keeping the gender aspect of post-conflict rebuilding in mind. Both readings are helpful here; the True reading gives them a basic framework and the Bekoe and Parajon reading gives them concrete examples of how women have participated in Liberia's post-conflict rebuilding. After each group session, I ask the groups to explain which institution(s) they chose and why they felt theirs was the best choice for rebuilding Myappia. This often generates lively debate between groups that have made different choices.

CONCLUSION

When students are blind to gender-bias in everyday life, they are likely to see inequality as an individual problem rather than a socio-political problem. Students are then unlikely to see themselves as agents of change who can help bring gender into the mainstream (Ackerly and Mügge 2016). My goal is to help students see gender imbalances in life so that they are able to recognize and act on gendered outcomes in politics and public policy. I have attempted to demonstrate a few ways this can be done in an introductory political science class. It is my hope that exercises like these will help faculty address gender in a meaningful way in their classes and help students to apply what they have learned to real-world situations.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit http://dx.doi.org/S1049096516000950. ■

NOTES

1. Although DiStefano (1997) warns against conflating 'gender' and 'women,' it is women's voices and perspectives that are missing from introductory political science texts.
2. Research on active learning indicates that students enjoy simulations/activities and think simulations help them learn (Glazier 2011).
3. Please see the supplemental materials (online) for copies of all of the materials needed for each activity (personas, worksheets, .ppt files),
4. 10/31/2000. See http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml for more details and other UN resolutions related to women, peace, and security.
5. A fictional state works better than a real one for this exercise; with a real state, students focus on the realities in that state. With the fictional state, they concentrate on the assignment.

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