Women Also Know Stuff: Meta-Level Mentoring to Battle Gender Bias in Political Science

Emily Beaulieu, *University of Kentucky*
Amber E. Boydstun, *University of California, Davis*
Nadia E. Brown, *Purdue University*
Kim Yi Dionne, *Smith College*
Andra Gillespie, *Emory University*
Samara Klar, *University of Arizona*
Yanna Krupnikov, *Stony Brook University*
Melissa R. Michelson, *Menlo College*
Kathleen Searles, *Louisiana University*
Christina Wolbrecht, *University of Notre Dame*

ABSTRACT Women know stuff. Yet, all too often, they are underrepresented in political science meetings, syllabi, and editorial boards. To counter the implicit bias that leads to women's underrepresentation, to ensure that women's expertise is included and shared, and to improve the visibility of women in political science, in February 2016 we launched the "Women Also Know Stuff" initiative, which features a crowd-sourced website and an active Twitter feed. In this article, we share the origins of our project, the effect we are already having on media utilization of women experts, and plans for how to expand that success within the discipline of political science. We also share our personal reflections on the project.

Emily Beaulieu *is associate professor of comparative politics at the University of Kentucky. She can be reached at eabeau2@uky.edu.*
Amber E. Boydstun *is associate professor of political science at the University of California, Davis. She can be reached at aboydstun@ucdavis.edu.*
Nadia E. Brown *is associate professor of political science and African American studies at Purdue University. She can be reached at brown957@purdue.edu.*
Kim Yi Dionne *is assistant professor of government at Smith College. She can be reached at kdionne@smith.edu.*
Andra Gillespie *is associate professor of political science at Emory University. She can be reached at angille@emory.edu.*
Samara Klar *is assistant professor of political science at the University of Arizona. She can be reached at klar@email.arizona.edu.*
Yanna Krupnikov *is associate professor of political science at Stony Brook University. She can be reached at yanna.krupnikov@stonybrook.edu.*
Melissa R. Michelson *is professor of political science at Menlo College. She can be reached at melissa.michelson@menlo.edu.*
Kathleen Searles *is assistant professor of political communication at Louisiana State University. She can be reached at ksearles@lsu.edu.*
Christina Wolbrecht *is associate professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame. She can be reached at wolbrecht.1@nd.edu.*

We are political scientists. We are women. We know stuff. And we are deeply concerned about the implicit bias in our profession that minimizes and marginalizes the voices of women.

More than a decade ago, the American Political Science Association (APSA) noted the problem of underrepresentation of women in the professoriate, created by (1) a leaking pipeline, (2) a chronological crunch, (3) a hostile institutional climate, and (4) insufficient opportunity and support in the culture of research (American Political Science Association 2004). That report highlighted the various factors contributing to the lack of gender parity in the profession, with the result that men outnumber women in political science, especially at higher rungs of the academic ladder. This problem is particularly true for women of color, who are even less well represented than women overall. Yet, even taking into account the imbalance in the number of men and

doi:10.1017/S1049096517000580

women political scientists, men have *disproportionately* outpaced women in reaching prominence in the field (Masuoka, Grofman, and Feld 2007). Furthermore, women political scientists are *disproportionately* less likely to have their research cited (Maliniak, Powers, and Walter 2013; Mitchell, Lange, and Brus 2013); to be included in teams of coauthors (Teele and Thelen 2017); to appear on professional panels at conferences (Gruber 2009); to be invited to contribute to edited volumes (Mathews and Andersen 2001); and (anecdotally, at least) to be invited to speak at university colloquia.

Is the problem one of simple math? Men certainly outnumber women in faculty positions: women hold only 29% of full-time faculty positions in political science (American Political Science Association 2011). This proportion is much smaller than the proportion of women who earn doctoral degrees: 42% of PhDs awarded in political science in 2013 went to women, which is—of course—still short of parity (National Science Foundation 2013). Nevertheless, men do not outnumber women enough to explain well-documented gender gaps in political science (Mitchell, Lange, and Brus 2013; Teele and Thelen 2017). As Mershon and Walsh (2016, 463) noted, "research produced by women is read and cited less often than is research by men, which means that this research is 'systematically undervalued.'"

IMPLICIT BIAS

Women's underrepresentation is not a "men-versus-women" problem; many men champion their women colleagues. Moreover, although women generally are better about citing other women, women academics can be as guilty of underrepresenting other women in scholarly citations and conference/colloquia invitations. Rather, men and women alike hold implicit biases about gender that shape their attitudes and behavior, including the tendency to think of—and reference—men rather than women as experts (Jones and Box-Steffensmeier 2014; Leslie et al. 2015).

Implicit bias is an established phenomenon whereby subconscious attitudes and stereotypes influence a person's perceptions of others and can manifest in nondeliberate discriminatory behavior (Greenwald and Krieger 2006). Unlike explicit biases, which operate under conscious control, implicit biases can affect a person's behavior without that person even being aware.

Both men and women in academia and in the media often express their genuine concern regarding issues of equality. However, these people also are busy and, when a deadline looms, the most efficient strategy is to call or reference the experts that most quickly come to mind—who often tend to be men. Implicit biases have an especially strong tether in academia, where a person's perceived intellect is paramount. Indeed, across STEM fields, women's underrepresentation correlates with the degree to which researchers in each field view academic success as hinging on raw intellectual talent, or "innate genius" (Leslie et al. 2015).

When women political scientists are missing from academic discussions about politics, the profession loses out on the expertise and perspective they have to offer—some of it directly related to women's different experiences in life and some of it simply because roughly one third of the available expertise is missing. The absence of women also reinforces stereotypes about who is an expert. If we could increase the volume of voices of women in our discipline, we could diversify and strengthen our science.

THE LAUNCH OF "WOMEN ALSO KNOW STUFF"

Our witnessing of and experience with this implicit bias against women political scientists reached a tipping point in 2016. We launched a crowd-sourced website, WomenAlsoKnowStuff.com, to highlight the diversity of expertise among women in the profession and to make it easier for scholars who are writing papers; developing syllabi; and convening workshops, colloquia, and conference panels to find women experts. We also wanted our website to be a resource for journalists who aim to achieve greater gender balance in asking experts to comment on current political events.

Our editorial board consists of members with a wide range of scholarly expertise, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and institutional affiliations and ranks. We embody the fact that women have a range of skills and identities that further the production of knowledge in the discipline and the larger public discourse.

The women in our database encompass and expand on this diversity in experience and expertise. After only a few weeks, nearly 1,000 women political scientists with expertise in more than 80 topical areas added their names and profiles to our website, which—to date—has been viewed more than 80,000 times by more than 15,000 unique visitors. Our Twitter account has nearly 8,000 followers and has made nearly 57 million impressions.[1]

Much of the initial response to the "Women Also Know Stuff" initiative has come from media outlets, including the immediate use of our website by journalists who want to reach out to individual women political scientists for their expert commentary on events ranging from the 2016 US presidential campaign to the recent corruption scandal and subsequent presidential impeachment in Brazil. We are delighted that members of the media see the value of diversifying their rolodexes.

Both men and women in academia and in the media often express their genuine concern regarding issues of equality. However, these people also are busy and, when a deadline looms, the most efficient strategy is to call or reference the experts that most quickly come to mind—who often tend to be men.

IMPACT ON THE PROFESSION

We are excited about the initial engagement among women political scientists and the warm response from the media. However, our primary goal for the "Women Also Know Stuff" initiative is to have an impact on our profession. In short, we want the site and future related activities to counter implicit bias among political scientists, as evidenced through greater gender equity on syllabi, in book and journal-article bibliographies, on conference panels, and in invited talks. Drawing on the many anecdotes already relayed to us, we see important opportunities for impact.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096517000580 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As one example, after our website launched, we received the following e-mail from APSA then President-Elect David A. Lake:

> Thank you for putting together the website "Women Also Know Stuff." I just happily spent the afternoon going through your expert lists. On the penultimate draft of a paper where I needed to make sure I cited all the relevant materials, I just worked my way down your list of experts on civil conflict. Slapping my forehead numerous times, I kept repeating "of course I need to cite that." By the end, my reference list changed from 2/3 male to 50-50 male/female. I may have slighted my male colleagues in this process, but I take this to be fair retribution for years of past negligence. Fantastic resource, for which we are all in your debt.

We hope other political scientists will follow Dr. Lake's lead. We still need to explore the systematic ways that our profession and our institutions discount the achievements of women scholars. Yet, there are ways that "Women Also Know Stuff" can help scholars be individually proactive. We recommend the following first steps:

1. Check your syllabus for gender bias. We may be inadvertently giving our students—especially our graduate students—the impression that women are not making significant contributions to the field by omitting them from assigned readings. This form of representation is especially important because today's reading lists become the reference lists of tomorrow's scholars. (See the appendix for a web-based tool to help achieve this.)
2. Check the lists of references in your current research projects. Are you omitting relevant work from women? When we neglect to cite important work by women scholars, it has implications for their career trajectories and also negatively impacts the discipline in that we come to equate the canon with work written by men (see step #1). Moreover, these scholars bring important insights to bear that can enhance our work.
3. Think about your list of invited presenters for events or panels that you are organizing for an upcoming conference or department speaker series. Featuring only or mostly men in colloquia gives the impression that women are not doing important work. By disproportionately inviting men to give talks, we unnecessarily diminish the profiles of our women colleagues.
4. Recommend that your women colleagues join the website. There are almost 1,300 women currently listed, but we know that many more are out there. Do not keep the good news to yourself; recommend to all of your colleagues that they use the website when putting together their syllabi, bibliographies, conferences, and speaking events.

REFLECTING ON OUR EXPERIENCES

Working on this project is both rewarding and frustrating. It is encouraging to see enthusiastic responses from those like Dr. Lake, who recognize the problem and are making our profession more inclusive. We also have our share of trolls. The amount of time and energy we invest is the stereotypical type of service that is unlikely either to be recognized by our institutions or to assist our individual ambitions for advancement and/or tenure. It also is the type of service that women are more likely to perform. We remain convinced that the work is both necessary and worthwhile.

The amount of time and energy we invest is the stereotypical type of service that is unlikely either to be recognized by our institutions or to assist our individual ambitions for advancement and/or tenure. It also is the type of service that women are more likely to perform.

Our founding board member, Samara Klar, launched the first version of the website when one day she simply had had enough, after seeing both a conference program with a nearly all-male lineup and a news article asking six (white male) political scientists for their views on the election. She created a bare-bones WordPress blog site and e-mailed her women political science friends to invite them to add their own information—and then to forward the e-mail to other potentially interested women. The initial response was overwhelming; within a week, it was clear that the website would need more hands-on management. Eventually, nine other women agreed to become members of a founding editorial board. Initial goals included improvement of the website, increased visibility, and development of a grant proposal to provide support for ongoing efforts.

There were growing pains. Shifting to a centralized system of adding women to the site—rather than globally sharing the password—ensured that only women political scientists were added and that women were adding only themselves (rather than others without their consent). However, doing so also meant that we suddenly needed a way to process and post the massive influx of applications. After a few forays into possible solutions—such as simply investing hours of our own (or our research assistants') time adding names—we moved to a new website that includes a mechanism for women to add and edit their own listings.

Another challenge was facing our own implicit biases. However inadvertently, our initial board had limited racial and ethnic diversity. As soon as we noticed this oversight, existing board members enthusiastically and unanimously agreed to extend invitations to two women of color to join the board. Both accepted, and our work is much improved as a result. However, we remain cognizant of the need to be attentive to our own biases going forward.

With 10 women on board, the massive amount of work associated with the project's goals was more easily shared (although still representing a sizeable workload for each of us). Women with expertise in website programming took on that role; those with expertise in social media focused on developing a Twitter presence. Other women branched off to work on a proposal to the National Science Foundation; others refined the group's logo and branding (see figure 1). Individual board members conducted interviews with various media outlets and wrote blog posts for The Conversation, the *Washington Post*'s Monkey Cage, and the *Huffington Post*, to name only a few. After months of operating through mostly informal subcommittees and ad hoc conference calls, we now have a codified set of by-laws.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096517000580 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As the project began to bear fruit in the form of increased visibility and website hits, board members also received feedback from those hoping we would expand our scope, such as to nonpolitical scientists and to nonacademics, and to include other underrepresented groups in political science, such as people of color and members of the LGBT community. Although we wholeheartedly concur that implicit bias also negatively impacts members of these groups, we decided to retain our narrow focus on women in political science. At the same time, we hope eventually to produce a how-to manual for others that describes our project and allows them to launch similar initiatives to raise the visibility and inclusion of other underrepresented voices. We are thrilled to see that others have launched an effort to amplify the voices of people of color in the discipline: @POCalsoknow.

We also had to make difficult decisions. For example, although we were thrilled by the volume of women academics who expressed interest in participating in our initiative, we ultimately had to commit to restricting our database to only women in political science. Similarly, we are pleased that women in graduate school have enthusiastically embraced the site, although we decided to distinguish those experts who hold a PhD from those who do not. Regarding the website, we are constantly struggling to maximize its effectiveness and utility, all with limited technical expertise and no source of funding on which we can rely. Together, we developed a mission statement for our initiative that will allow this project to persist well into the future; we deliberated about the tone and purpose of our social media voice; and we even gave careful consideration to the design of our logo. Initial consensus on a stack of binders (thanks, Mitt Romney) soon gave way to a more nonpartisan visual incorporating a light bulb.

Figure 1
The "Women Also Know Stuff" Logo

The development of our initiative has been fueled by—and has fueled—our internal discussions and ponderings about gender in academia. Our first (video) conference call was held the only time that we were all available—late at night, with nearly half of the editorial board sporting pajamas. This call was only one instance of the mix of dedication and honesty that buoys our efforts. Since that first call, we have had long discussions about how to move forward, such as how much effort we should put into responding to individual journalists' queries and which features should be included in the search function on the website. We also share stories about our experiences as women in this profession: the need to find a private space in which to pump breastmilk while traveling, the pressure to have a drink during an on-campus interview to demonstrate to prospective employers that we are not pregnant, and the degree of support (or lack thereof) from our respective institutions.

Coming together as a group of strong, knowledgeable women to share our experiences of implicit bias, outright sexism, and bean-counting bureaucrats has relieved some of the stress of those challenges.

These latter discussions, which often incorporate considerable humor and flurries of hashtags, are part of what has made the project so fulfilling. Coming together as a group of strong, knowledgeable women to share our experiences of implicit bias, outright sexism, and bean-counting bureaucrats has relieved some of the stress of those challenges. This is yet another aim of the "Women Also Know Stuff" initiative: to bring women in the profession together in solidarity and strength.

Given the time commitments that this work has required, why are we doing it? Why, after so many months, have none of the 10 board members "cried uncle" and asked to cycle off? Why, as members of the "harmed" group (i.e., women in the discipline), are we the ones doing the work to fix that harm? Simply stated, we find this work to be one of the most rewarding projects that we have been part of as academics.

We are changing the profession into one in which we want to and feel like we belong: one that is inclusive and committed to diversity. This work reminds us that the state of our discipline is not static; with collective effort, it is changing for the better. It allows us to give back to those who paved the way and made our own careers possible (both men and women) and to pay it forward to the next generation of women political scientists. We are proud to be part of a group that is confronting head on those professional and popular biases, in a classically feminine fashion: by being helpful.

The work also has brought us personal rewards. The work nurtures our souls, providing us with support and inspiration to do our other professional work. We have formed bonds with one another as well as with other women in the discipline that we have met because of this project. We are building our networks and feeling more connected—building a community that makes us personally happier and more fulfilled.

NEXT STEPS

"Women Also Know Stuff" board members are active in attending disciplinary conferences. We continue to reach out to women

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096517000580 Published online by Cambridge University Press

political scientists who may want to add their names to our website as well as to all political scientists, with the aim of mitigating the ongoing issue of implicit gender bias. Within the next year, we plan to hold a series of focus groups with women political scientists to better understand their challenges in the profession and how the "Women Also Know Stuff" initiative can help.

We also plan to keep an eye on the profession, systematically measuring the presence of gender bias at conferences, in lists of references, and in syllabi. We urge all political scientists to make use of the expertise listed on our website and of women in political science more broadly.

In every instance in which you can make a difference, take personal responsibility to be inclusive and fight back against implicit gender bias. Remember, women also know stuff. You should ask them about it. Be like Dr. Lake: include women. ■

NOTE

1. An *impression* refers to the appearance of a tweet on an individual user's Twitter feed.

REFERENCES

American Political Science Association. 2004. "Women's Advancement in Political Science: A Report of the APSA Workshop on the Advancement of Women in Academic Political Science in the United States." Available at http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495970.pdf. Accessed February 14, 2016.

———. 2011. "Political Science in the 21st Century: Report of the Task Force on Political Science in the 21st Century." Available at www.apsanet.org/portals/54/Files/Task%20Force%20Reports/TF_21st%20Century_AllPgs_webres90.pdf. Accessed February 14, 2016.

Greenwald, Anthony G. and Linda Hamilton Krieger. 2006. "Implicit Bias: Scientific Foundations." *California Law Review* 94 (4): 945–67.

Jones, Hazel Morrow and Jan Box-Steffensmeier. 2014. "Implicit Bias and Why It Matters to the Field of Political Methodology." *The Political Methodologist*. Available at http://thepoliticalmethodologist.com/2014/03/31/implicit-bias-and-why-it-matters-to-the-field-of-political-methodology.

Leslie, Sarah-Jane, Andrei Cimpian, Meredith Meyer, and Edward Freeland. 2015. "Expectations of Brilliance Underlie Gender Distributions across Academic Disciplines." *Science* 347 (6219): 262–5.

Maliniak, Daniel, Ryan M. Powers, and Barbara F. Walter. 2013. "The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations." *International Organization* 67 (4): 889–922.

Masuoka, Natalie, Bernard Grofman, and Scott L. Feld. 2007. "The Political Science 400: A 20-Year Update." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40 (1): 133–45.

Mathews, A. Lanethea and Kristi Andersen. 2001. "A Gender Gap in Publishing? Women's Representation in Edited Political Science Books." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 34 (1): 143–7.

Mershon, Carol and Denise Walsh. 2016. "Diversity in Political Science: Why It Matters and How to Get It." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 4 (3): 462–6.

Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin, Samantha Lange, and Holly Brus. 2013. "Gendered Citation Patterns in International Relations Journals." *International Studies Perspectives* 14 (4): 485–92.

National Science Foundation. 2013. "Survey of Earned Doctorates." Available at www.nsf.gov/statistics/sed/2013/data/tab16.pdf. Accessed February 14, 2016.

Teele, Dawn and Kathleen Thelen. 2017. "Gender in the Journals: Methodology, Coauthorship, and Publication Patterns in Political Science's Flagship Journals." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50 (2): 433–47.

APPENDIX

Following are additional resources for increasing women's visibility in the discipline:

- VIMbot automatically sends out tweets to announce when Visions in Methodology participants publish a new article. See @PSci_VIMbot or http://shawnakmetzger.com/wp/vimbot for more information.
- Check the gender (and race) balance in your syllabus with this online tool, available at https://jlsumner.shinyapps.io/syllabustool.
- Get involved in the Women's Caucus for Political Science (WCPS); see the group's website for more information: https://womenscaucusforpoliticalscience.org. WCPS meets during the APSA Annual Meeting, publishes a quarterly newsletter, and hosts a listserv.
- Visit the website hosted by the APSA Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, available at http://web.apsanet.org/cswp. The website includes data, advice columns, graphs that make you gasp, and other valuable resources.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096517000580 Published online by Cambridge University Press