CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE INTRODUCTION

Intersectional Identity and Representative Politics

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Representation scholarship has drawn from intersectionality theory 0to examine how systemic structures of oppression and privilege have created social groups with distinct political needs. Derived from Black feminist theory that recognizes that identities are mutually constitutive and interconnected, intersectionality research is rooted in the lived experiences of marginalized groups who call attention to social (in)justice. Empirical scholarship building on the insights of Black feminist theorists such as Collins and Bilge (2016), Hill Collins (1990), Crenshaw (1989; 1991), and King (1988) has constituted nothing less than a paradigm shift in the study of gender and politics. Nevertheless, there remain an array of opportunities to expand upon the potential for intersectional frameworks and methods, as well as pressing new questions concerning the operationalization of intersectionality itself. This Critical Perspectives section offers a moment to take stock of these developments and debates, as well as to highlight new pathways for scholarship committed to centering the margins and considering the nexus of multiple power structures that frame our political lives.

Despite pioneering studies of Black women's representation (Darcy and Hadley 1988; Darcy et al. 1993; Gay and Tate 1998; Herrick and Welch 1992; Prestage 1977), Latina and Chicana representation (Marquez 1997; Takash 1993), and Asian American women's representation (Chu 1989), gender and politics research has historically been limited in its attention to the intersections of gender, race, and other power structures. The authors in this Critical Perspectives are animated by ongoing calls for political science research on representation to take these intersections seriously and to center the experiences of representatives and constituents/electorates who are women of color (Smooth 2011; 2006; Alexander-Floyd 2017; 2014; Brown, Clark, and Mahoney 2023;

Hancock 2007). This scholarly exploration offers a deeper understanding of how oppressive strucures animate the political lives of under-theorized groups. It is with that in mind that we center the voices, experiences, and political behavior of women of color.

Existing scholarship employing intersectional approaches has advanced knowledge of the experiences and contributions of women of color in legislatures (Brown 2014; Casellas 2011; García and Márquez 2001; Cargile 2023; Montoya et al 2000; Montoya 2023); the intersection of gender and race in campaigns (Ward 2016; Gershon 2013); intersectional understandings of descriptive (Montoya et al. 2022; Lien 2015), substantive (Siow 2023a; Siow 2023b; Mügge et al. 2019), and symbolic representation (Brown and Gershon 2017); as well as raced and gendered institutions (Hawkesworth 2003) and a reimagining of democratic representation inspired by Black feminism (Jackson 2016). These contributions highlight why it essential to understand how positionalities shape political institutions and representative politics.

However, in employing intersectional frameworks, the authors in this Critical Perspectives argue that scholars must remain reflexive regarding how representatives and those represented are grouped, as well as attentive to the inherent assumptions and power relations that underpin these groupings (Junn and Brown 2008). This approach includes interrogating how researchers operationalize gender (Murib, this collection), considering the effects of race beyond the US (Lu, this collection), theorizing the actions of minority representatives in hegemonically white and patriarchal contexts (Begum et al, this collection), and applying intersectional approaches in global South contexts (Johnson, this collection). Scholars must also confront new challenges presented by categorizations of democratic representation itself (Celis and Childs, this collection).

In doing so, the contributions in this Critical Perspectives are keen to advance a methodologically pluralist approach to employing an intersectional lens within political science, building on a growing body of work on this topic (Brown 2014; Brown 2014; Mügge, van der Pas, and van de Wardt 2019; Evans 2016; Murray 2016; Mügge 2016; Celis et al. 2014; Hardy-Fanta et al. 2007; Hardy-Fanta et al. 2006; Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, and Garcia 2000; Hawkesworth 2003; Hughes and Dubrow 2018; Hughes 2013; Hughes 2011; Brown and Gershon 2016; Montoya et al. 2022). The authors acknowledge the potential for innovation in methodology while cautioning that the theoretical underpinning of inquiry should determine the approach, resisting simplifications that may miss the richness of experiences of women of color and what researchers might learn from it. Additionally, the authors encourage continuous investigation *within* marginalized groups about how race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and other political salient identities intersect to shape not only political participation and its potential but identity (re)formulation itself.

This collection of essays on intersectionality and representation specifically addresses the diversity within marginalized groups in cross-national contexts with the intention of breaking down homogenized perceptions of any one group. In doing so, the authors invite readers to consider the challenges and

opportunities this diversity presents for practical politics. What new coalitions might be possible? What divisions may be underlying our lack of progress toward equality? Together, these short pieces raise innovative questions and invite new research agendas regarding the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation, the politics of race in cross-national context, the operationalization of intersectionality within political science, and methods for addressing the complexity of intersectional identity and representative politics.

Scholar Activism and Reimagining Democracy

Karen Celis and Sarah Childs begin by offering an anthology of what they call "intersectional representational problematics", laying bare the challenges that intersectional power dynamics pose to good representation within and beyond parliaments. They call for Feminist Democratic Design (FDD) to reimagine and redesign and rebuild democratic practices and architectures through an intersectional feminist lens. This includes collaboration across academics, practitioners, and civil society, as counterstrategies to respond to frequent violence and backlash against democratic gains for marginalized groups. In short, they argue, scholars need some "big thinking" about democracy, feminism, and intersectionality.

Challenging Dominant Methodological Approaches

Zein Murib offers a challenge to the discipline, namely, to recognize the limitations of employing solely a biological understanding of gender. One shortcoming of failing to decouple biology and gender is that the discipline has trouble making sense of political movements hostile to trans rights. From a measurement perspective, using a binary measure of gender can lead to measurement error. Murib exposes the very material political consequences of misidentifying subjects of political science inquiry and argues that a qualitative approach represents a path forward.

Race and Paradoxical Representation

Neema Begum, Michael Bankole, Shardia Briscoe-Palmer, Dan Godshaw, and Rima Saini employ an intersectional approach to re-appraise the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation, theorizing instances in which certain ethnic minority politicians not only refrain from substantively representing the constituencies that they substantively represent, but actively act *against* those constituents. The authors introduce the concept of "paradoxical representation" to capture this phenomenon, which they argue occurs in a context of "hegemonically white and patriarchal structures on ethnically diverse conservative politics." In so doing, Begum et al demonstrate the value of

investigating the range of ideological perspectives among people of color and how the racing and gendering within institutions shapes representation.

Disability and Global South Perspectives

Adetokunbo Johnson contributes an application of intersectionality in two ways which have thus far remained understudied: intersections between gender and disability and intersectionality in a global south context. Her analysis of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol, highlights the ways in which Article 14(2)(C) simultaneously promotes "recognition and support of African women's reproductive autonomy," while also risking "perpetuation of prevalent stigma and discrimination against women with disabilities" without "deliberate and intentional intersectional interpretation." This analysis exposes the limits of single axis approaches and the ambivalences experienced by multi-marginalized groups in many other contexts.

Gender and Ethnicity in a Cross-National Context

Fan Lu examines Asian women candidates for office in the US and Canada. In this innovative work, Lu shows that Asian Canadians face more barriers to achieving descriptive representation than do Asian American women, due in part to the deference of recruitment to male-dominated religious organizations within particular communities. By moving beyond an assumption that shared racial identity would lead to identical experiences for Asian women candidates, this study reinforces the importance of keeping in mind the role of context when conducting studies on women of color and their entrance into electoral politics.

Advancing Intersectional Research on Representation

By presenting this collection, the authors and editors hope to generate further research into the diversity within various political categories that thus far have only been presented as homogenized groups. In doing so, political science will come closer to understanding real political lives and move away from tokenism both of its subjects and of political diversity itself. We hope to engage senior scholars whose initial research has created the foundations upon which to build as well as the cutting-edge contributions of those most recently inaugurated into the discipline into this conversation. We recognize that this may be an uncomfortable undertaking that may question the findings of long-standing works and invite self-interrogations of methodological choices throughout the canon. Our own work may be found in the crosshairs, and we welcome the opportunity to question our own assumptions and learn new ways of inquiry. We see this reflection as an opportunity for all scholars to expand our understanding and work collaboratively to better illustrate the political world in which we all strive for representation.

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