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STATE OF THE ART

Not that niche: making room for the study of LGBTIQ people in political science

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Despite both unparalleled progress on and persistent backlash to LGBTI rights in world politics, LGBTIQ people are rarely centred in our work as political scientists. This article charts the status of LGBTIQ scholarship in political science, advocating the creation of new spaces for such scholarship in the field, including in the pages of journals like the *European Journal of Politics and Gender*. Drawing on recent studies of the profession and on the reflections of leading LGBTIQ thinkers on navigating their presence in the subfield, I argue that LGBTIQ scholars and their scholarship still face individual-level and structural discrimination in political science. This encompasses active and passive homophobia and transphobia in teaching, getting hired and promoted, gaining access to research funding, and the publication process.

Key words: LGBTIQ politics • political science • profession • inclusion • representation

Key messages

- The article charts a brief history of the status of LGBTIQ scholarship in political science.
- The article advocates for new spaces for such scholarship in the field, including in the pages of journals like the *European Journal of Politics and Gender*.
- The article draws on recent studies of the profession and on the reflections of leading LGBTIQ thinkers on navigating their presence in the subfield.
- The article argues that LGBTIQ scholars and their scholarship still face discrimination in political science, and that this neglect is not without consequences for knowledge production in the field.

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Introduction

Perhaps the absence of research on LGBT topics, however, signals the largely unquestioned presence of heteronormativity – defined by Cathy Cohen (1997) as ‘localized practices and centralized institutions that legitimize and privilege heterosexuality ... as fundamental and “natural” within society’ ... [S]cholarship investigating how heterosexuality is reinforced, produced, and promoted through institutions (including disciplinary apparatuses of knowledge production) could, and should, be integral to political science. (Currah, 2011: 14)

This article reflects on the limited space for LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer)¹ research in political science, both in the field generally and in its journals. In many ways, the observations in this domain dovetail with the encompassing work that has documented the active exclusion of gender in the study of politics (Engeli and Mügge, 2020) – exclusions that are often applicable to research on LGBTIQ politics in the field. Such exclusions lead to glaring oversights in our purview as scholars. In the most ringing example of this moment, the field may well have been better prepared to address the politics of the COVID-19 pandemic had more political scientists paid attention to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The announcement of a ‘gay-related immune deficiency’ has its 40th anniversary this year. However, here, a persistent theme emerges: given that the communities HIV/AIDS was perceived to affect were at the margins – their lives were ‘niche’, so to say – they thus also remained marginal to our attention in political science.² The relevance of that crisis to our interconnected lives is plainly apparent now, but we largely left it to other fields to study, despite the fact that political institutions played a central role in actively ignoring and/or exacerbating that political tragedy for a decade (Densham, 2006).

Drawing on the premise set by Paisley Currah (2011) in the epigraph, I use this as an opportunity to survey a literature on LGBTIQ marginalisation in a field of inquiry that remains structured by hetero- and cis-normativity. Naturally, such an endeavour is also shaped by personal reflection, based on what I perceive as my own unusually fortunate experiences within these academic spaces in North America and Europe since the early 2000s.³ I argue that while we have seen substantial gains over the last two decades, many LGBTIQ scholars and their scholarship still face individual-level and structural discrimination in political science, encompassing active and passive homophobia and transphobia in teaching, getting hired and promoted, gaining access to research funding, and publications. For a field interested in power and politics, we must be more reflexive in seeking to understand how real-world LGBTIQ exclusions are still also reproduced in our scholarly community. This makes it all the more important for journals, like the *European Journal of Politics and Gender (EJPG)*, to make a concerted effort to elevate and incorporate LGBTIQ politics into our purview as valuable for the study of power and who has it.

Why we need LGBTIQ representation in political science

Despite both unparalleled progress on and persistent backlash to LGBTI rights in world politics, LGBTIQ people are rarely centred in our work as political scientists. This is a reality that many LGBTIQ scholars (including or akin to those working on gender, race or ability) in the profession commonly feel: that ‘work in GLBT

studies and queer theory is often seen as special interest political science at best and not political science at worst' (Brettschneider, 2011: 25). The categorisation of 'niche' also comes with a stigma surrounding the quality and rigour of their work, which is brushed off as 'me research' (Ayoub and Rose, 2016) or as amounting to little more than the study and practice of identity politics (Mucciaroni, 2011). Tony Smith (2011: 35) makes this case bluntly in his reflection of a decade ago:

Political science as a discipline often operates under an assumption of heterosexuality that frames any consideration of LGBT issues as either aberrant or trivial. Thus, the LGBT community is marginalized individually and collectively. Individually, all members of the LGBT community are categorized as 'not straight', while scholarly work on LGBT issues often has been, until very recently, categorized as 'not-serious'.

This state of the field, just ten years ago, is troubling. It reminds us that a 'niche' discourse justifies as legitimate the instinct not to read or incorporate such work into our understanding of politics.

Looking out of the window and onto the world around us, the importance of LGBTIQ research should be plainly obvious and the choice to remain blind to it plainly wrong. Yet, it still needs consistent repeating that the study of LGBTIQ people and their experiences *is* centrally about power and politics. While many LGBTIQ scholars rightly shirk the repeated request to justify the merits of their work, I will briefly make this case for the purposes of this piece. Indeed, the study of LGBTIQ politics connects to the vital spokes in all our major theories of political science. LGBTIQ people are – for better or for worse – centrally present, be it about value conflict and change in norms (Kollman, 2007; Wilkinson and Langlois, 2014; Paternotte, 2015; Ayoub, 2016), the stickiness of national identity (Chetaille, 2011; Ayoub, 2014; Kamenou, 2019; Swimelar, 2019), the promotion of human rights (Browne and Nash, 2014; Chase, 2014; Langlois, 2015; Wilkinson, 2015), the political power of media (Szulc and Dhoest, 2013; Persson, 2015; Garretson, 2018), contests within intergovernmental organisations (Swiebel, 2009; Mos, 2014; Sloommaeckers et al, 2017; Voss, 2018; Ayoub and Paternotte, 2019), backlash to liberalism (Flores and Barclay, 2016; Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017; O'Dwyer, 2018; Verloo, 2018), social movement outcomes on institutions and culture (Egan and Sherrill, 2005; Ayoub et al, 2021), the politics of health (Altman, 2003; Stockdill, 2003; Bosia, 2006; Broqua, 2015), or religion and the state (Ramet, 2006; Burack, 2008; Wilson, 2013; Dreier, 2018). Studies about LGBTIQ politics also tell us much about policy diffusion (Kollman, 2009; Ayoub, 2016; Velasco, 2018), representation and elections (Reynolds, 2013; Haider-Markel et al, 2017; Magni and Reynolds, 2018; Hunklinger and Ferch, 2020; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020; Schotel and Mügge, 2021), foreign policy (Burack, 2018; Thiel, 2020; Carlson-Rainer, 2021), public opinion (Lewis and Gossett, 2008; Takács and Szalma, 2011; Bishin et al, 2016; Broockman and Kalla, 2016; Abou-Chadi and Finnigan, 2019), migration (Mayo-Adam, 2017; Ayoub and Bauman, 2019; Hamila, 2019; Mole, 2021), political economy (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Badgett, 2020), political psychology (Harrison and Michelson, 2017; Page, 2018), political parties (Siegel and Wang, 2018; Bishin et al, 2020) and the courts (Burgess, 2009; Engel, 2011; Helfer and Voeten, 2014; van der Vleuten, 2014). In fact, few movements have reached comparably rapid levels of socio-legal

change cross-nationally over the last three decades, as well as simultaneous backlash to that change (Fetner, 2008; Bob, 2012; Weiss and Bosia, 2013; Velasco, 2020).

Importantly, the study of LGBTIQ politics is about intersectionality, identity and the personal being political, and thus centrally about ability, class, gender and race (Cohen, 1997; Smith, 2007; Strolovitch, 2007; Murib and Soss, 2015; Moreau et al, 2019). The growing global campaign to reboot mobilisations against marriage equality into mobilisations against ‘gender ideology’ is a case in point (Kováts and Pöim, 2015; Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017; Korolczuk and Graff, 2018; Corrêa, 2019). Those campaigns are woven together with nationalist, anti-feminist and anti-immigrant discourses that are disseminating globally along with the rise of the Far Right. For political theory, queer thought is centrally about power, justice, liberation, equality and democracy (Cohen, 1997; Brettschneider, 2011; Smith and Lee, 2015; Weber, 2015; Ammaturo, 2016, Rao, 2020). This list of references is exceedingly partial, as the literature is far too rich – even if it is often made invisible – to do it justice within the limits of two paragraphs and word-count restrictions (for holistic literature reviews, see Kollman 2010; Paternotte, 2018).

Additionally, scholars working on LGBTIQ politics approach it from various methodological and theoretical perspectives, joining conversations in all of political science’s methodological diversity. As Tony Smith (2011: 37) points out, their work is post-Perestroikan, in the sense that the specific scientific approaches and methods campaigned for by mainstream behaviouralists in the field are also ‘met in abundance by LGBT research’, alongside rich qualitative and interpretivist work that tells us much about the plurality of ways in which the political world functions. Yet, according to Ken Sherrill, that pluralism and rigour may not overcome the “sad truth that people won’t read beyond the title if it begins with LGBTIQ. Knowing that, editors think that they are wasting scarce resources by including our work. It’s a vicious cycle. Things are not as bad as they used to be but they remain bad.”

Structural exclusions

While the importance of the study of LGBTIQ politics is readily understood and accepted by the large majority of today’s political science students, faculty and administrators have been slower to embrace its relevance and urgency. Students are interested in the topics that LGBTIQ politics scholars take on – a demand that most institutions, particularly in our field, are still not supplying fully. Several studies of the profession itself point towards the systematic exclusion of scholars(hip) on gender identity and sexuality (APSA, 1993; Duyvendak and Krouwel, 2000; Kollman, 2010; Currah, 2011; Brettschneider, 2011; Mucciaroni, 2011; Paternotte and Perreau, 2012; Brettschneider et al, 2017; Reid and Curry, 2019; Zamani-Gallaher et al, 2019; Beagan et al, 2021; Majic and Strolovitch, 2020).⁴ Novkov and Barclay (2010), for example, uncovered sizeable scepticism towards LGBTIQ research in their survey of the political science field, which surprised them given that people (presumably especially social scientists) are cautious about displaying overt discriminatory tendencies in a survey.⁵ Despite that, they documented experiences of discrimination – 25 per cent of LGBTIQ respondents said that they had experienced it – alongside various structural impediments facing queer political scientists.

Indeed, a substantial number of respondents felt that being LGBTIQ hurt faculty teaching evaluations and their college relations. In the subfield of international

relations (IR), the survey also found particularly little appreciation for the potential of LGBTIQ research, with about 24 per cent of the surveyed practitioners saying that the issue was not appropriate and another 20 per cent saying that they were not familiar with the issue (see [Novkov and Barclay, 2010](#): 101, Figure 2). The three other primary subfields were more enthusiastic, with American politics and political theory being the most open, followed by comparative politics. It is worth keeping in mind that these survey findings (from IR) were procured at a point in time when the legal opening to same-sex unions was rapidly and unexpectedly spreading to multiple states in the international system ([Kollman, 2007](#)). Thus, while LGBTIQ faculty may face overt discrimination at some institutions (for example, Brigham Young University [see [Anderson, 2020](#)]) they face more insidious structural homophobia and transphobia almost everywhere else. This structural discrimination often becomes apparent during interviews, for example, when LGBTIQ, and especially trans and non-binary, candidates have to consider 'gender-appropriate' attire and what they can say for fear of negative repercussions.⁶ The lack of institutional acceptance is compounded by job precarity for many LGBTIQ scholars. Those fortunate enough to attain permanent positions often face a geographic obstacle that I will call the 'queer body problem': the reality that LGBTIQ faculty must often then relocate to geographical areas that have low levels of LGBTIQ diversity and acceptance (such areas make up large parts of all countries) (see [Garvey and Rankin, 2018](#)).

The lack of institutional acceptance and space for LGBTIQ faculty may have various repercussions for mentorship and student success. While the number of students identifying as LGBTIQ is growing ([Jones, 2021](#)):

many political science departments have few or no 'out' LGBTQ people on the faculties. As a consequence, LGBTQ-identified graduate students often reach out to scholars from institutions other than their own for advice about issues such as how to be 'out' in graduate school or as a junior faculty member and how to navigate self-presentation on the job market. ([Majic and Strolovitch, 2020](#): 764)⁷

Many LGBTIQ faculty will attest to the invisible labour done to mentor undergraduates at their own institutions and both graduate and undergraduate students beyond it. This also applies to supporting colleagues working on LGBTIQ politics. Take the availability of tenure/award nomination/job application/promotion letter writers with LGBTIQ expertise at Research 1 (R1) universities, for example; only a handful of people carry the brunt of this labour. Multiply marginalised minorities within the LGBTIQ community, in particular, often face the risk of tokenism and being overburdened with service in diversity positions. It is true that LGBTIQ faculty, who are under-represented in the field's top departments, have come together to mentor the next generation of LGBTIQ scholars, including serving as external members on graduate dissertation committees and providing feedback in the few (often-underfunded) spaces that LGBTIQ scholars have created for themselves.⁸ Despite the labour it requires, LGBTIQ faculty have responded to this problem in innovative ways. For example, the LGBTQA Caucus at the International Studies Association (ISA) recently formed a queer mentoring programme that pairs queer-identified/friendly mentors with graduate students.

Reid and Curry (2019) specifically studied diversity (as measured by representation) in political science subfields (per American Political Science Association [APSA] membership). They find that ‘sexuality and politics’ is one of the few subfields with gender balance among its members, though it is less racially diverse than several others (Reid and Curry, 2019). Yet, even in their own study, they can do little to address the under-representation of LGBTIQ scholars in the field, explaining that there is ‘so little representation ... that to discuss them would be to “out” individual scholars’ (Reid and Curry, 2019: 281). In sum, the presence of LGBTIQ scholars is rarely measured as part of diversity. Reid and Curry (2019: 281) rightly go on to point out that ‘the very lack of representation should indicate the utter lack of progress in these dimensions. This is a massive problem.’ As Majic and Strolovitch (2020) explain, measurement issues pervade many indicators commonly discussed under the umbrella of marginalisation, including teaching evaluations, invisible labour and hiring practices. Since, at least in the US, ‘gender identity and sexual orientation are not protected categories under federal civil rights laws’, the data sources we often rely on to identify LGBTIQ people and the ‘pervasive discrimination’ against them are lacking (Majic and Strolovitch, 2020: 764). Yet, ‘there nonetheless is “ample evidence” that they face “an array of challenges, ranging from personal attacks, both verbal and physical, to actions (intentional or otherwise) that isolate and alienate LGBT individuals, to institutional policies that prevent individuals from freely expressing their sexual identity and/or gender identity”’ (Majic and Strolovitch, 2020: 764, citing American Federation of Teachers, Higher Education, 2013). In other fields, in which more systematic evidence on LGBTIQ faculty has been collected and analysed, discrimination and marginalisation are shown to be extensive (Cech and Waidzunas, 2021).

Making space in the profession

While political scientists have made substantial progress in these areas, there is still a long way to go to create spaces truly inclusive of insights from LGBTIQ scholarship. The field lacks a journal devoted to the study of LGBTIQ politics, hiring committees still fail to single out LGBTIQ work and professors working primarily in these areas are largely absent from the faculty of the field’s leading graduate programmes. While there are both benefits and empowerment in being ‘niche’ – including an interdisciplinary support network and an open community where innovative ideas can take root and develop – the exclusions charted earlier are nonetheless deeply felt by scholars working in this domain. In my own experience, an intellectually rich and helpful group of queer colleagues helped me to navigate the profession, despite having limited access to resources in LGBTIQ politics in my own otherwise very supportive department’s graduate training. Additionally, it was primarily feminist colleagues from the gender and politics subfield who cracked open the door to mainstream political science. Allies from this community often recognised the value of LGBTIQ work and saved a seat on their panels and in their publications for voices from LGBTIQ folks.⁹ It is thus no coincidence that many LGBTIQ faculty find affinity in women’s, gender and sexuality studies programmes or departments. It is our prerogative at the *EJPG*, a journal focused on gender holistically, to maintain and grow such intersectional spaces, which require nourishing and development.

In professional associations

The availability of such spaces in the profession is undeniably important to a field that has not yet fully noticed the importance of the work on LGBTIQ politics, yet they remain underdeveloped. When I was preparing to speak on a panel on diversity at the European Union Studies Association meeting in 2017, it became apparent that no papers on LGBTIQ politics (and only two on gender) had appeared in the prior conference programme (at a conference devoted to exploring the politics of an intergovernmental organisation that leads globally on LGBTIQ rights promotion). When they do exist, LGBTIQ-focused papers are often siloed to the thematically diverse 'LGBTIQ panel', no matter how directly and theoretically relevant the insights of individual papers are to other panels at conferences. There are two problems I develop here: the first is that there is a relative lack of effort by conferences to highlight LGBTIQ work; and the second is that when this work does show up, it is inevitably relegated to specific panels and epistemically severed from the discipline.

There are now sections and caucuses at several major professional associations that have advocated for such inclusions and have helped develop an energetic community, thanks to pioneering leadership by colleagues. The APSA's LGB (later, LGBT and now LGBTQ) Caucus was started by members in 1987 as an affiliate of APSA in order to create space for LGBTIQ political scientists, regardless of what they studied (Ackelsberg, 2017). It was followed by the organisation of a Status Committee (in 1992) and eventually a Sexuality & Politics Section (in 2007) – organised by Susan Burgess and Angie Wilson – to create space for research on sexuality and politics.¹⁰ Earlier, Ken Sherrill and Phil Ryan formed a Gay Caucus in 1974, but it withered away after a few years. According to Sherrill, "Amazingly, no one showed up wearing a paper bag over their head."¹¹ The later founding of the LGBTQA Caucus at the ISA in New Orleans in 2010 relied heavily on the allyship and embrace of the established Feminist Theory and Gender Studies (FTGS) Section. Colleagues noted that strong allies were necessary since "the ISA had previously not been a welcoming space", and that year was politicised because of a Louisiana ordinance that stripped the legal rights of LGBTIQ people (including visitors) approximating any rights of marriage (like adoptive parental rights or spousal coverage of healthcare). Under the leadership of scholars like Sandy McEvoy (chair), Cai Wilkinson (subsequent chair) and Mike Bosia, among others, the new caucus formed despite scepticism.¹² According to McEvoy: "The [ISA] governing council asked if the caucus was 'really needed' as a 'special interest' that could be represented by the FTGS Section. It was a TOUGH sell."

In Europe, the Council for European Studies (CES) has housed a Gender and Sexuality Network since 2011 (Cooper and Sloodmaeckers, 2020). At the European Political Science Association, a group on diversity formed in 2019, including LGBTIQ scholars who organised a formal meeting and an informal get-together for queer scholars that year. Most importantly, before that, the vigorous leadership at the European Conference on Politics and Gender (ECPG) (a gender politics section offshoot of the European Consortium on Political Research), especially under Isabelle Engeli, with input from Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte, among others, led to a community and space for such work at the flagship conference of the *EJPG* journal. Thanks to the same pioneering work – one that also helped found the original LGBTIQ-inclusive mission of the *EJPG* – the ECPG's biannual conference created a vibrant space for LGBTIQ scholarship from 2009 onwards. The year Kelly Kollman

and I chaired the LGBTQI Rights, Sexuality and Politics Section (in 2017), we had 13 panels; subsequent meetings expanded this representation under the leadership of Koen Slootmaeckers and Michael Strambolis-Rohstorfer (the section received 17 panels in 2019). The presence of LGBTQI scholarly interventions, and their applicability to the broader field of gender and politics and beyond, were readily apparent there, drawing colleagues from multiple continents to a comparatively smaller conference thanks to its inclusive platform. Its success calls on us to maintain and cultivate this space – as the history outlined earlier indicates, it cannot be taken for granted – and also to reflect it in the *EJPG*. Further changes may be on their way with the election LGBTQI-identifying scholars as the heads of the ISA, CES, the Canadian Political Science Association and the Political Studies Association at various points in recent years (Paternotte, 2018).

In the pages of journals

In their study of diversity in political science subfields, Reid and Curry (2019: 280) point out that in one of the field's main venues for discussing diversity, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 'from 1993 to 2017, more than 50 articles pertained to gender inequalities in the profession, whereas only a few articles addressed ... other forms of diversity, including one [2011] symposium on LGBTQ issues'. Indeed, since 'women, scholars of colour, and LGBTQ scholars are more likely than their straight, white, and male colleagues to study marginalization and its relationship to politics, the lack of equity and diversity also contributes to the underrepresentation of research about issues such as race, gender, and sexuality' (Majic and Strolovitch, 2020: 764).

Such patterns of publishing exclusions have been carefully charted by scholars on gender (Teele and Thelen, 2017; Key and Sumner, 2019), and these patterns resonate with many LGBTQI scholars, despite LGBTQI research lacking equivalent studies. I vividly remember searching the *American Political Science Review's* (*APSR's*) database for work on sexuality and politics as a new PhD student in 2007. Needless to say, not much was to be found in the 115-year history of our field's flagship journal.¹³ This sent a strong signal to me (and presumably other young scholars) wanting to embark on this research. Indeed, Susan Burgess noted to me that the "*APSR* still had an informal practice as late as the mid-1990s that desk rejected LGBTQI work. [Members of the APSA LGBTQ] Caucus [coordinated] to flood the journal with such work, and they were indeed desk rejected." Today, about a handful of *APSR* articles and letters deal with dimensions of LGBTQ politics, and the imperative to consider LGBTQI research became most apparent within the journal's mission in the months after a women-led editorial team took charge in 2020. The presence of vocal editors signals that work by and on marginalised populations is welcome and encouraged. In writing this piece, several LGBTQI colleagues told me that they actively notice and turn to publishers who have become more inclusive of 'our' scholarship for submission.

Furthermore, being inclusive of work that resonates with the lived experiences of people in contemporary politics has direct benefits for journal editors. This has to do with the timely nature of the politics that this critical work engages – one that meshes well with the questions that students are asking themselves in these political times. According to Shareen Hertel, editor of the *Journal of Human Rights* (*JHR*), their editorial choice to encourage the submission of and publish a widely read special

issue on LGBTIQ politics in 2014 has been transformative: “I think that *JHR* as a journal has been repositioned because of the role scholars on LGBTIQ issues have had in mainstreaming that conversation through our pages.” *Politics, Groups & Identities*, which has quickly developed an international reputation for innovative politics research, was founded as a journal that would openly solicit work in the discipline on identities and groups/mobilisation, including work on LGBTIQ politics. A new series on *LGBTQ Politics*, edited by Susan Burgess and Heath Fogg Davis at NYU Press, was founded in 2019 and offers a much-needed and pioneering space for such work among book publishers.

A journal’s leadership plays an important role in this regard, as selecting a set of reviewers covering method, theory and area focus should also be complemented by at least some topical understanding of and expertise in LGBTIQ politics. Many authors working in this area say that the latter is often not a prerequisite, commonly facing gatekeepers who are not the least bit shy about vetoing ‘less appropriate’ topics. This sometimes has more to do with benign neglect than outright malice, but the outcome can be an all-too-familiar set of reviewer refrains: ‘great paper *but* not sure if this “unique case” will be of interest to a generalist audience’; or ‘well executed study *but* it is a shame it *only* focuses on LGBTI [and/or] Q issues’; or ‘very interesting implications *but* would be better suited for a specialist journal audience on LGBTIQ issues [all of which are fittingly outside of political science¹⁴].’ A second dynamic includes scholars ‘discovering’ LGBTIQ politics as a *hot topic* case but then failing to engage the existing work in this domain; the assumption being that such work does not exist. Selecting reviewers with expertise will better both problems of exclusion.

In hiring and graduate training

These patterns (both in publishing and in representation in the field) affect a multitude of interconnected outcomes that ricochet to the various corners of the profession. There remains a lack of mentors in graduate departments, a lack of specific courses that address LGBTIQ issues and a lack of work by and on LGBTIQ people on political science syllabi. During my years of coursework during graduate school – which I must emphasise was fortunate and uncharacteristically supportive compared to many peers – I was not assigned a single article that specifically addressed LGBTIQ politics in any political science course outside of a political theory course taught by Anna Marie Smith. I eventually wrote my own syllabus for an independent study, generously supervised by Matthew Evangelista, another feminist scholar who saw the need for and value of reading this rich literature together. With the encouragement of my endlessly helpful graduate committee, I also relied on the further generosity of colleagues at other institutions who volunteered to comment on my work.

Problems in representation exist because, throughout the world, political science departments rarely list LGBTIQ politics as a desired area for hire. According to Susan Burgess: “I would say almost never, because never is a high bar. But I personally have never seen an ad for LGBT politics in political science, with such listings typically appearing in women’s, gender, and sexuality studies programmes or departments.” This bears out in the data. In hiring criteria, only 9 per cent of the Novkov and Barclay sample (including the non-LGBT respondents) saw LGBT status playing a positive role for a candidate, despite the fact that the same survey found that LGBT scholars

are more likely to incorporate LGBT themes into their teaching and research. A total of 50 per cent (39 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively) felt that it was irrelevant or harmful to a job candidate's prospects (another 40 per cent did not know) (Novkov and Barclay, 2010: 97). It also requires only a short glance at APSA eJobs – which lacks a category for indexing/searching LGBTIQ politics – to see that the field does not write job descriptions specifically for scholars studying sexuality and gender identity politics.

As has been highlighted throughout, hiring LGBTIQ scholars allows departments to address key political successes and crises of these times. The ongoing precariousness experienced by trans people, particularly those of colour, who are disproportionately affected by the most recent wave of anti-trans legislation (Murib, 2020), is a case in point, as are the ways so-called 'gender ideology' is deployed by the Far Right to gain ground in Europe and internationally. On the latter, IR scholar Dan Nexon recently tweeted: 'I don't think the IR community really groks the degree that LGBTQ+ rights are implicated in contestation over "liberal international order"' (5 July 2021). LGBTIQ IR scholars have long been aware, but the discipline has overlooked such political developments given its failure to promote the scholarship of, and hire specialists who can speak on, these issues. Additionally, surveying instructors who teach courses on LGBTIQ politics would reveal that courses on these topics inevitably enrol,¹⁵ suggesting that students and perhaps the broader public are eager to hear what political scientists have to say on these issues.

While some politics graduate programmes now have minors and certificates in race and ethnic politics or gender politics, astonishingly few have competences and frameworks for LGBTIQ politics. Since programming is often absent, speakers invited to give talks on such topics are more likely to do so voluntarily or with less funding than for their talks in other topical areas. The Global LGBTIQ Speaker Series that I founded at my two institutions were among the best attended by students, but funding efforts were tedious and required my own resources. Indeed, sceptics may argue that it will 'get better', with such programming just around the corner, but even that cannot be fully taken for granted. Attacks on gender research are increasing in the academy in many countries. Hungary infamously announced its attempt to wholly ban gender studies programmes in 2018 (Paternotte and Verloo, 2020).

The lack of LGBTIQ-focused readings assigned on graduate syllabi could potentially be very easily addressed, followed by improving course offerings on LGBTIQ politics. Giving more centrality to LGBTIQ politics in graduate programmes is essential if we wish to signal that there is a space for this research and these scholars in the profession, as graduate school is where future scholars are initially acquainted with research and the profession. In other words, it sets important parameters, sending cues on what is embraced and encouraged, and what is tolerated but discouraged, in the profession. To accomplish these changes, the importance of allies in departments, universities and the profession who make space for LGBTIQ scholars is essential.

Conclusion

Too few political scientists explore LGBTIQ themes in their work. In fact, many mainstream journals made it through the 20th century without going 'there' at all, despite: the vibrant political movement around homosexuality in Germany in the

late 1800s and early 1900s; the horrific persecution of queer people during the Second World War; the post-war homophile movement that innovatively tried to access (though were left out of) the United Nations human rights framework; the Gay Liberation Movement of the 1970s that reverberated with new understanding of self around the globe; the political shortfall towards and group suffering of the HIV/AIDS crisis beginning in the 1980s; the global proliferation of LGBTIQ rights policies at the turn of the century; and the organised backlash to it across all these times and in all the (local, national and global) political spheres we study. This neglect is not without consequences for knowledge production in the field.

The goal of this article has been to address such oversights in a twofold manner: (1) to chart a very brief and very partial history of the status of LGBTIQ scholarship in political science; while (2) advocating for new spaces for such scholarship in the field, including in the pages of journals like the *EJPG*. I have drawn from the reflections and research of some of the leading thinkers in the subfield, as well as partly on my own experiences, as they relate to navigating and creating spaces for LGBTIQ presence in political science. Journals like the *EJPG* have a double challenge (but also a unique opportunity) to elevate LGBTIQ politics in an already-heavily marginalised area of research on gender and politics.

As [Majic and Strolovitch \(2020: 764\)](#) emphasise, political scientists must be aware of the fact that political science (despite variation across subfields) 'is a discipline that remains overwhelmingly straight, white, and male, and it has been slower than many others in the humanities and social sciences to incorporate and make central the study of race, gender, and sexuality'. The invisibility and marginalisation of LGBTIQ experiences and their political importance is magnified the more the subject matter intersects with other marginalised identities around ability, gender and race. This is true of both scholarship on and movements for LGBTIQ people ([Murib, 2017](#); [Ayoub, 2019](#)). The vast variation in representation among identity groups within the LGBTIQ umbrella is a case in point, including how exclusionary practices are reproduced within our own communities: scholars and scholarship analysing how institutions affect the lived experiences of trans, intersex, bi and lesbian communities are less visible than those working on upper-middle-class, cis, white, gay men ([Monro, 2015](#)). These are dynamics we must all remain attuned to as we think through whose lives are niche or peripheral to politics.

Notes

- ¹ The studies I draw on use various acronyms, depending on the scope of their research, which explains my fluctuation between the umbrella terms of 'LGBTIQ', 'LGBT' (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender), 'GLBT' (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) or 'gay and lesbian'.
- ² By contrast, in just months, the field has produced multiple special issues to address a pandemic that we recognise as also affecting (though still under-proportionately) majority populations.
- ³ I try to bridge conversations that often happen separately in North American and European contexts – the contexts where many early LGBTI spaces in the field have formed. (Since starting as an undergraduate in 2001, I have been affiliated with five institutions in the US and eight spanning four European countries.) In taking a broad-brush approach, I find myself at a level of abstraction that diminishes important variation across domestic academic cultures, including structural inequalities in the production of

knowledge. Indeed, the obstacles of exclusion facing some LGBTIQ political scientists are far more extensive in particular domestic contexts where LGBTIQ issues face heightened repression or invisibility.

- ⁴ Many of these studies have centred the experience of colleagues in the North American context, though I attempt to make linkages to the experiences of colleagues elsewhere, particularly in Europe.
- ⁵ They conducted their survey in 2007, garnering 2,215 responses from political scientists: ‘1,883 (85%) identified themselves as heterosexual, and 324 (15%) identified themselves as LGBT [0.3 per cent identified as trans, 4.4 per cent as bisexual, 3.2 per cent as lesbians, and 6.4 per cent as gay men]’ (Novkov and Barclay, 2010: 96).
- ⁶ The modal political scientist is a cis het, white man whose gender presentation defines standards of professionalism in the field.
- ⁷ HIV/AIDS also cleared the field of a generation of forceful mentors, overtaxed those who remained and shifted our collective attention away from our careers to self-preservation. I thank Mike Bosia for this reflection.
- ⁸ David Paternotte’s Atelier Genre(s) et Sexualité(s) at the Université libre de Bruxelles is one example of such a space. Andy Reynolds’ Queer Politics Webinar at Princeton University is another. Such spaces (formal and informal, like the American Political Science Association’s [APSA’s] LGBTQ Caucus happy hour) have also brought together LGBTIQ scholars. Increasingly, virtual connections have helped overcome physical isolation for queer scholars, who are also less likely to have familial support networks.
- ⁹ Cooper and Sloopmaeckers (2020) point out that while ‘gender politics’ has traditionally been the central ally, tensions and exclusions within the gender politics scholarly communities are perpetuated. Experiences of exclusion were expressed by LGBTIQ colleagues in preparing this piece, and persistent battles around the inclusion of LGBTIQ people remain. For some, this awareness has produced additional drive to overcome those internal barriers and emphasise the belonging of sexuality and gender identity research within the gender politics community.
- ¹⁰ In addition to providing a collective for scholars who share LGBTIQ identities, the section and caucus promote research by issuing awards for the best papers (for example, the Bailey Award and the Weber Award) and dissertations (the Sherrill Award).
- ¹¹ While this problem was surely more pervasive in 1974, some colleagues still cannot access the community that was designed to professionally (and personally) support them. For example, Sandy McEvoy shared that colleagues who cannot be out at work have issues accessing the few LGBTIQ spaces in the profession since host associations often keep lists of members of the subgroups.
- ¹² Two of the founding goals were to:
 - [(a)] promote fair and equal treatment of members of the LGBTQ community in the ISA ... in areas including but not limited to graduate school admission, financial assistance in schools, employment, tenure, and promotion; [and (b)] To combat discrimination against and provide support for LGBTQ faculty, student, and professional members. <https://www.isanet.org/Portals/0/Documents/LGBTQA/LGBTQA%20Charter%202018.pdf>
- ¹³ Per the APSR’s managing editor:
 - ‘From 2017–2021, I listed the articles/letters dealing with identity in 3 groups: gender (x8), racial/ethnic/religious (14, and if we include articles dealing with broader themes of group discrimination, diversity, or immigration, then the number is higher), and sexual orientation (2)... there is much less when it comes to sexual orientation.’

¹⁴ There were two attempts to create a journal focused on LGBTIQ issues. One was a short-lived journal edited by Steve Haeberle in 2003 called *The Journal of Gay and Lesbian Politics*.

¹⁵ See ongoing research by Edward Kammerer Jr, R.G. Cravens and Erin Mayo-Adam.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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