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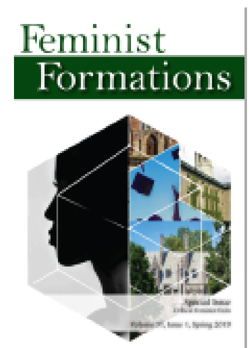

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Mapping Movements and Motivations: An Autoethnographic Analysis of Racial, Gendered, and Epistemic Violence in Academia

Natasha Behl

Why are women of color severely underrepresented in political science, despite significant efforts to diversify the profession? Why do women of color continue to experience political science as a hostile environment, despite the discipline's decades-long commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion? I draw on an autoethnographic tradition of feminist truth telling and extend it into political science to open up new ways of seeing, being, and writing, which, in turn, can challenge dominant understandings of the discipline as apolitical. I share my family's experience of racial violence in a post–September 11 environment to map my movements within and across academic institutions. I further explain my motivation to write and conduct ethnographic research, and explore the embodied lived experience of producing knowledge as a middle-class South Asian woman, as a child of authorized immigrants, and as a woman of color in political science. In mapping my movements and motivations, I reveal multiple forms of violence—racial, gendered, and epistemic—within political science, which provides some insight into the difficulty of diversifying the discipline.

Keywords: autoethnography / diversity / epistemic violence / gender / gendered violence / political science / race / racial violence

> "Write with your eyes like painters, with your ears like musicians, with your feet like dancers. You are the truthsayer with quill and torch. Write with your tongues of fire. Don't let the pen banish you from yourself. Don't let the ink coagulate in

your pens. Don't let the censors snuff out the spark,
nor the gags muffle your voice. Put your shit on the paper."

—Gloria Anzaldúa (1981, 173)

Introduction

I am trained as a political scientist, yet I function on the margins of this discipline. In my research, I use interpretive and feminist methods to understand the lived experience of minority Sikh women in India and to make these experiences central to the process of theorization. I use the thick description and detailed evidence of political ethnography to reveal the unknown and unpredicted, to upend unexamined assumptions, and to imagine alternative histories and futures. My epistemological and methodological choices often challenge dominant paradigms and normative expectations in political science. My choice to stray away from the conventions and doctrines of political science is a type of critical feminist exit, which can perhaps function as a rerouting of political science itself. My embodied positionality as a woman of color, as a third world woman also challenges prevailing gendered and racialized norms in political science about who is a legitimate knowledge producer, who is a competent teacher, and who is authorized to speak and write. Given my epistemological and methodological choices and my embodied positionality, I write from the margins of political science.

This essay responds to Zenzele Isoke, a fellow ethnographer also at the margins of political science, who asks, "Isn't it the role of the ethnographer to discern meaning through the shock of the Event, through her own brokenness? Isn't it her role 'to lean into her own brokenness . . . as a break away from traditional epistemes' to make visible 'the profundity of our paradoxical existences'" (2018, 158)? This essay is an autoethnographic leaning into my own brokenness to perhaps open up new ways of seeing, being, and writing in political science. In doing so, I reveal multiple forms of violence—racial, gendered, and epistemic—within political science, which provides some insight on the difficulty of diversifying the discipline.

I ask: why are women of color severely underrepresented in political science, despite the discipline's decades-long commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion (Alexander-Floyd 2015; Mershon and Walsh 2015; Sinclair-Chapman 2015)?[1] Why do women of color continue to experience political science as a hostile environment (Sampaio 2006; Brown 2007; Isoke 2015, 2018; Behl 2017)?

I draw on scholarship by women of color and third world feminists to develop an intersectional autoethnography that maps my movements in academia as a woman of color who is violently excluded, yet chooses to stay and to speak of this exclusion (hooks 1981; Anzaldúa and Moraga 1981; Anzaldúa

1981, 1987; Latina Feminist Group 2001; Browdy de Hernandez 2003; Sangtin Writers and Nagar 2006; Téllez 2013). Such an approach centers embodied, lived experiences at the intersections of race, class, sexuality, gender, and religion, and challenges an understanding of these categories as universal with shared interests and solidarities.[2] I draw on my experience from 2002 to 2018 as an undergraduate and graduate student, doctoral and postdoctoral fellow, and visiting and assistant professor at large research-intensive public universities and small teaching-intensive private liberal arts colleges, where my substantive scholarship questioned/s dominant epistemological and methodological standards and my embodied presence routinely challenged/s prevailing gendered and racialized norms.

Several aspects of my identity were/are salient for understanding my embodied experience of knowledge making. I am a young Punjabi-Sikh woman born in the United States to upper-caste, authorized immigrant parents from Punjab, India.[3] I speak English and Punjabi. I practice the Sikh faith, but have not been baptized and do not keep unshorn hair.[4] I am an attractive woman, who is short in stature, petite in build, and has dark black hair and a wheat-colored complexion—a complexion that is understood as fair and desirable in India and nonwhite and undesirable in the United States.

Students, colleagues, and administrators in academia often see me as a young woman of color of South Asian or Indian origin. At other times, students and colleagues see me as Indian, Indian American, and/or Asian American. As a perceived woman of color, gendered and raced stereotypes impact how I negotiate life within and beyond academia.[5] My identity is more complicated and fluid than what I describe here. These characteristics, however, are often most important to those with whom I interact.

In what follows, I share my family's experience of racial violence in a post–September 11 environment to map my movements within and across academic institutions, to explain my motivation to write and conduct ethnographic research, and to explore the embodied lived experience of producing knowledge as a middle-class South Asian woman, as a child of authorized immigrants, and as a woman of color in academia. In mapping my movements and motivations, I also provide insight into the difficulty of diversifying political science, highlight some of the factors that cause women of color to (in)voluntarily exit the profession, and underscore some of the dynamics that produce higher rates of attrition for women of color compared to their counterparts from the political science pipeline. In the following sections, I adopt an autoethnographic approach to examine the primary tools of othering that I experienced: hate crime, sexual harassment, and sexual and gender-based violence. I then discuss how these situations illustrate the need to challenge the content, style, and form of academic writing, to make visible practices and processes of racialization and gendering within academia, and to engage in critical reflection on the embodied experience of knowledge making.

Through an autoethnographic analysis, I also explore my motivations to write. In doing so, I draw on the insights of Gloria Anzaldúa (1981) who responds to the question "Why am I compelled to write?"[6] in the following manner:

> Because the writing saves me from this complacency I fear. Because I have no choice. Because I must keep the spirit of my revolt and myself alive. Because the world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me. By writing I put order in the world, give it a handle so I can grasp it. I write because life does not appease my appetites and hungers. I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you. To become more intimate with myself and you. To discover myself, to preserve myself, to make myself, to achieve autonomy. To dispel the myths that I am a mad prophet or a poor suffering soul. To convince myself that I am worthy and that what I have to say is not a pile of shit. To show that I *can* and I *will* write, never mind their admonitions to the contrary. And I will write about the unmentionables, never mind the outraged gasp of the censor and the audience. Finally, I write because I'm scared of writing but I'm more scared of not writing. (168–69)

I write because difference, for me, is not an abstract concept; it is a lived, embodied experience that has given rise to racism, sexism, and violence. In a post–September 11 environment, my father, Dr. Ashok Behl, was shot and nearly killed. The perpetrator of this violent act was found guilty of attempted murder, perpetrating a hate crime, shooting into a residence, and causing great bodily injury. I pursued graduate training to understand and make sense of my immigrant family's experience of racial violence in the United States, and perhaps to eradicate racial violence. But, in the very place that I thought I would find intellectual freedom, political possibility, and equality, I experienced yet more violence. I did not expect to be the victim of gendered violence in academia, which I envisioned as a liberatory meritocracy. Ultimately, I write because writing is a political act, a way of reclaiming power, and giving voice to a double trauma—first of racialized and gendered violence, and second of loss of voice.

I find that academic writing often adopts a cold and detached writing style, which obscures the pain, trauma, and injustice that animates researchers and the research process. I also find, as does Elizabeth Dauphinee, that "ways of writing are choices, and this means we can choose differently" (2010, 818). By choosing to write differently, I open up questions about the politics of knowledge production that are often overlooked in conventional research approaches and writing styles. By choosing to write differently, I also make visible the gendered and racialized processes and practices that limit, disadvantage, and exclude women of color in political science by reminding them that they do not belong as scholars and are at risk of violence and trauma.

I ask, "Where are *we* as writers" (Doty 2004, 378)? Where is a reflexive awareness of the self in our writing? Why do we so often adopt an objective,

neutral, and cold academic voice? What if we spoke and wrote differently? To address these questions, I reflect on my and my family's embodied and situated experiences because these experiences are *themselves* political. I draw on interpretive approaches, particularly autoethnography, because this kind of analysis demonstrates that knowledge production is itself political. I share my personal experience to demonstrate the gap that exists between the goals of decades of intersectional feminist scholarship and activism and lived reality. This autoethnographic analysis also raises significant questions about the politics of knowledge production. Who is "empowered to speak and write" (Dauphinee 2010, 807)? Who is "presumed incompetent" (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012)? Why do we have to "conceal our deepest intellectual impetus behind other people's words and other people's ideas" (Isoke 2018, 163)? Why does the "'I' [remain] hidden behind the citation—the 'self' . . . shrouded in secrecy" (Isoke 2018, 163)?

Autoethnography is a practice of critical reflection on the embodied experience of knowledge making (Doty 2004; Shehata 2006; Dauphinee 2010; Brigg and Bleiker 2010; Löwenheim 2010). Autoethnography provides social scientists with a means to account for their positionality in the research process. The goal of autoethnography is to challenge the subject-object separation by placing the researcher's experience at the center of the phenomenon under investigation. By doing so, autoethnography can map power relations within the knowledge production process. In particular, autoethnography makes visible two kinds of violence—one perpetrated on the researched in all writing and representation (Dauphinee 2010, 806), and the other perpetrated on the researcher through forced adoption of a particular voice, which follows the dictates of the profession (Doty 2004, 380). By revealing these two forms of violence, autoethnography acknowledges, explores, and perhaps minimizes these forms of violence.

Autoethnography can be traced to multiple sources, including scholarship by women of color and third world feminists (Combahee River Collective [1977] 1997; hooks 1981; Anzaldúa and Moraga 1981; Feminist Review 1984; Collins 1990; Anzaldúa 1987; Behar 1993, 2003; Zavella 1993; Narayan 1997; Latina Feminist Group 2001; Mohanty 2003; Sangtin Writers and Nagar 2006; Brown 2007; Téllez 2013). These scholars often use autoethnography, oral traditions, narratives, storytelling, biography, and testimony to give voice to marginalized experiences, to analyze power relations, and to challenge conventional views on epistemology. The Latina Feminist Group (2001, 2) utilizes *testimonio* to inscribe "those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure." Similarly, the Sangtin Writers and Richa Nagar (2006, xlvi) use autobiography to "reclaim the meanings of empowerment and to intervene in the global politics of knowledge production." I continue an autoethnographic tradition of feminist truth telling and extend it into political science to open up new ways of seeing, being, and writing, which, in turn, can challenge dominant understandings of the discipline as an apolitical political science.

Giving Voice to Racial, Gendered, and Epistemic Violence

In this section, I examine the primary tools of othering that I experienced—hate crime, sexual harassment, and sexual and gender-based violence. The narrative I offer below reveals the pain I experienced as I navigated racial, gendered, and epistemic violence, and it invites readers to experience this pain as a way to think critically about some of the factors that result in women of color (in) voluntarily exiting political science. I share these experiences because writing my individual experience is to write a larger political experience where particular gendered and raced bodies are marginalized in political science, despite commitments to diversity and inclusion. To ensure students' and colleagues' anonymity, I use pseudonyms throughout the paper.

Hate Crime

During my sophomore year at Smith College, my father, Dr. Ashok Behl, was almost taken from us. On February 18, 2002, I returned to my dorm room after my 9 a.m. Latin American Political Systems class. I put my books down and listened to my messages. As I listened, I was struck by the message from my childhood friend who was in Texas. She was barely able to speak; it sounded as if she was crying. I picked up the phone and immediately called. I asked her if she was okay, if her family was okay. She was silent and then she muttered, "Tash, you don't know . . . your father has been shot." I could not say a word. She kept talking. All I heard were intermittent phrases as she spoke, "He is in the hospital . . . he is alive."

I sat on the floor in silence until I realized that I needed to contact someone—my mother, my brother, my sister, anyone. I picked up the phone, and sat with the phone to my ear listening to the dial tone, hoping that somehow, I would hear my father's voice.

Once I managed to contact a family member, I was informed that someone had come to our home, knocked on our front door, and shot my father point blank through the glass paneling of our door. My father survived. All the same, we were left wondering what would motivate someone to commit such a horrendous crime. The police asked if it could be a patient of my father's or someone he knows, or perhaps a thief. But it was not. The perpetrator was motivated by hatred, racism, and ignorance.[7] He thought that my father, an Indian-born physician, was an Arab, a terrorist, and a threat to the United States.

I spent a month not speaking to anyone about the incident because I was unable to make sense of it myself. During this time, I lost the ability to continue living my normal life—I stopped running, I could not write, I no longer kept in touch with friends. I went to class, but was not mentally alert. Things began falling apart—my grades dropped, my smiles faded, and my motivation disappeared. After several months of intense sadness, I decided that the time had

come to make sense of this racial violence. Continuing to mourn the near-death experience of my father was no longer an option for me.

I began to talk to professors, human rights activists, and civil rights proponents. I questioned the definition of citizenship: how is membership and belonging in the United States determined? How is citizenship determined? In what ways do race, religion, and national origin influence one's status as a citizen? Who is included and who is excluded? Who is determined to be an alien, a perpetual foreigner, and a threat to the nation? Can the notion of membership and belonging be changed to be more inclusive? While at Smith College, I explored these questions as a student and activist. Many of these pursuits helped me find some solace and comfort in both intellectual inquiry and community activism by transforming my own role from the object of racial violence to an agent of change.

However, I also felt a real discomfort with my research and activism. As an undergraduate student, I was unable to name, explore, or understand this discomfort. What I realize now after years of training and scholarship is that my research felt cold and disconnected from the initial pain and violence that animated the project. Roxanne Doty's words resonate with my experience: "Where is the soul in our academic writing? Where is the humanity in our prose?" (2004, 378). Even when academic writing has something significant to say about the larger political world, the contributions are often lost in objective, neutral, and sterile writing.

I also realize that part of my discomfort arose from this vague sense that perhaps I was helping to perpetuate the very racial violence I was trying to understand. As an undergraduate, I could not name and explain this discomfort or its epistemological underpinnings. This discomfort followed me to graduate school. As a graduate student conducting ethnographic research on gendered and racialized citizenship in India, I was often told: "what you are doing isn't political science; you won't finish the PhD; you won't get an academic job."[8] I was often asked about the relationship between my independent and dependent variables, about the measurement and operationalization of my variables, to identify my testable hypotheses, and so forth. I struggled to provide coherent answers because I did not understand then what I understand now: I was being judged by an evaluative criterion that did not match my epistemological and methodological approaches, an evaluative criterion that was seemingly being imposed on the entire field of political science. I was being forced to pick generalizability over contextuality, predictive explanation over contextual understanding, reliability and replicability over transparency and reflexivity (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012).

But now I am in a position of privilege as assistant professor and have access to the scale of knowledge and resources required for academic self-reflection.[9] As an assistant professor in an interdisciplinary school of social and behavioral

sciences, I now grapple with questions that were once not even thinkable as an undergraduate and graduate student. In an interdisciplinary department, I can remain in political science while also straying from its normative conventions. As a result, my scholarship asks why some of us are seen as appropriate targets for violence and murder in democratic societies.

Why is it important to examine my experience of racial violence as one of my motivations to write? Why do I ask *these* questions? Why do I choose to write about *these* issues? I write out of love. Love for my father who was almost taken from me. Love for all of the brown men and women who were assumed to be terrorists and targets of hate crime in a post–September 11 world. I write because of the pain and hurt I felt and continue to feel. I write to make sense of my father's racialization as Arab, as Muslim, and therefore an "appropriate" target for attempted murder. I write to connect my family's experience of racial violence to larger processes of racialization in the United States. I write to make the causes and consequences of racialization central to our pursuit of knowledge in political science. I write against a discipline that assumes neutrality and objectivity in its pursuit of an apolitical political science. I write against a discipline that fails to be attentive to racialized and gendered dimensions of politics. I write to make sense of my position as never completely belonging, as never fully included, as always at risk of violence. I follow Anzaldúa and write "to preserve myself, to make myself, and to achieve autonomy" (1981, 169).

Sexual Harassment

I entered a top political science doctoral program to make sense of my family's experience of racial violence in a post–September 11 environment. But, in the very place that I thought I would find intellectual freedom, political possibilities, and equality, I experienced yet more violence.

In 2005, during my first year of graduate school, I asked a male professor of color if he would serve as my mentor. We were both very excited to work with one another. I shared the good news with members of my first-year cohort. It soon came to my attention that a male member of the group, an immigrant and racial/ethnic minority, was telling other graduate students that, "The only reason that Professor X is working with Natasha is because he wants to sleep with her." He also said, "Natasha isn't a political scientist . . . she will never finish the PhD program." I felt betrayed, belittled, and hurt. After this incident, I retreated from the graduate student cohort. I realized that the students could not be trusted, and I would soon realize that the faculty could not be trusted as well.

In 2007, during my third year of graduate school, a faculty member betrayed me. It was late at night and I was already in bed asleep. My cell phone rang; the call was from a Professor Miller. When I picked up, I heard Mike, a male graduate student of color on the phone. Mike told me that he was hanging out with Professor Miller and Cynthia, a prospective graduate student, and "they

were ranking the hottest women in the department." Mike said, "I ranked you the hottest, but Cynthia thinks she is the hottest woman." At this point, Professor Miller intervened; he informed me that Mike was drunk dialing me. I was shocked. My only response was to ask Professor Miller about my qualifying field paper. I asked if he had read it and if I had passed.

At first, I did not tell anyone about the incident. But I could not get over the idea of Professor Miller talking to graduate students (Cynthia joined the program in the Fall) about me as a sexual object, ranking me and other women on a scale of hotness, discussing tits, asses, legs, lips. I was also embarrassed by my response. Why did I ask about my field paper? Why didn't I tell them to fuck off? Why didn't I respond in a more appropriate way? What would a more appropriate response be?

It took about a month, but I finally told my mentor, a senior male scholar of color. The words came pouring out. My mentor named the incident for what it was: *sexual harassment*. Prior to that, I was not able to categorize or name what had happened, leading me to doubt myself, asking what kind of social scientist am I?[10] My mentor said that I had grounds to file a formal complaint with the university and that he would support me. I decided that there was no need for a formal complaint—part of me convinced myself it wasn't that *bad*, the other part of me justified it because I needed Professor Miller's support—to pass my qualifying papers, pass the dissertation, complete my PhD, and secure an academic job. I felt this need because, in a department, discipline, and profession that is so often hostile to women and people of color, I saw Professor Miller as an ally—a fellow person of color, in a highly competitive and hostile academic environment who valued my research; he supported my decision to study minority Sikh women in India using interpretive methodologies deemed unscientific and invalid by others in the department. He understood what it meant to not belong, to be rendered illegitimate, and to be defined as suspect as a researcher and a human being. Yet the late night phone call and other similar incidents made it clear that this support and validation would come along with sexist comments, sexist humor, and sexual harassment.

My experience thus raises a larger question: How do we foster diversity and advancement in academia when some are being harassed, objectified, and marginalized by the very people who are supposed to support and empower them? How do female students create solidarity and trust with one another and with mentors across racial, gender, and epistemological differences? How does one calculate the tradeoffs between epistemological and methodological freedom and sexual harassment? How does one effect a compromise between racial solidarity and gendered violence? My experience demonstrates that race and gender, epistemology and methodology intersect in complicated and painful ways making it difficult to achieve diversity. My experience also demonstrates that I never completely belong as scholar, I am never fully included as citizen, and I am always at risk of violence.

When I begin to question if I have the right to share stories of racial, gendered, and epistemic violence, I recall the words of Anzaldúa and remind myself that "I am worthy and what I have to say is not a pile of shit" (1981, 169). I remind myself that "I *can* and I *will* write . . . about the unmentionables" because "I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten." I write because writing is the process by which I make sense of the world, "give it a handle so I can grasp it" (169).

Sexual Assault and Rape

I receive emails, texts, and phone calls from my friends and family when they read anything or see anything about sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in any part of the world. Given that my research focuses on the dangers of gender-based violence, from its most extreme expression to the more commonplace, my family and friends send me articles about horrific violence against women, brutal gang rape of young girls with messages that read, "thinking of you" or "thought of you." Sometimes I wonder what have I done to deserve *this* . . . why do my loved ones think of *me* when they hear and read about horrific violence against women and girls in India, Brazil, Pakistan, the United States. . . . More importantly, why have I linked myself to these acts of violence?

Somehow even these horrific acts become sterile and clinical when you read about gang rape after gang rape . . . sexual assault after sexual assault. . . . The sad truth is that these kinds of horrific acts are routine. In the face of these routine, yet brutal occurrences, I often feel hopeless. Students, colleagues, and others often ask me, "How do we stop gang rape?" "How do we end violence against women and girls in India?" "How do we end campus sexual assaults in the United States?"

What I often think, but don't say out loud is that I don't know what to do. I don't know how to stop gendered violence. I don't know how to grieve for those who have been traumatized, harmed, and killed. In the words of Roxane Gay (2016), "I don't know how to believe change is possible when there is so much evidence to the contrary. I don't know how to feel that my life matters when there is so much evidence to the contrary." I feel powerless to make my life matter. I feel powerless to make black lives matter, to make brown lives matter. I feel powerless to make the lives of women of color and third world women matter. And I feel powerless to make others believe that these lives should matter and should be free from violence.

I hold on to three things in these moments of doubt: first, my capacity to still be "horrified and brought to tears" (Gay 2016) when I encounter racialized and gendered violence. Second, my commitment and belief in the fact that women's lives do matter, that black lives do matter, that brown lives do matter, that immigrant lives do matter, that minority lives do matter. And that these lives should be free of fear of violence—state-sponsored violence, intimate

partner violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, structural violence, domestic violence—all forms of violence. Third, I turn to the very tools that I have cultivated as a critical, feminist ethnographer. I follow Zenzele Isoke, who describes the Black ethnographer as one who "dives into the moldy crevices of erasure and finds breath. Inhaling, exhaling, listening, talking, sharing, creating. She resists suffocation. She is an artist" (2018, 155).

When the perpetrator, Brock Turner, from the Stanford rape case received a light six-month jail sentence for three felony counts of sexual assault—sexual assault of an unconscious person, sexual assault of an intoxicated person, and sexual assault with intent to commit rape—I received numerous emails and texts. I had read the news coverage of the attack. I was aware of the fact that in January 2015 Brock Turner sexually assaulted a 23-year-old woman while she lay unconscious and unresponsive on the ground behind a dumpster. The perpetrator had repeatedly penetrated the woman with a foreign object. He stopped because two men saw the attack and intervened.

In June 2016, I came across the sexual assault victim's court statement. When I read the words of the Stanford sexual assault survivor, I was reminded of why I write about sexual assault and rape. I was reminded of my continued capacity to be "horrified and brought to tears" (Gay 2016). In the words of the Stanford sexual assault survivor, "I had no power, I had no voice, I was defenseless." I write so as not to be helpless, defenseless, voiceless, and powerless. I write because so many women and women of color, in particular, never had the opportunity to write. So many were forced to endure the double trauma—first of gendered and racialized violence, and second of loss of voice. As the Stanford sexual assault survivor says, "You took away my worth, my privacy, my energy, my time, my safety, my intimacy, my confidence, my own voice, until today."

And then, at other moments, I wonder why *I* should keep writing . . . why *I* should keep writing about *gender* and *race*. I, like the Stanford sexual assault survivor, feel outrage at the continued need to *explain*:

> I have done enough explaining. You do not get to shrug your shoulders and be confused anymore. You do not get to pretend that there were no red flags. You do not get to not know why you ran. You have been convicted of violating me with malicious intent, and all you can admit to is consuming alcohol. Do not talk about the sad way your life was upturned because alcohol made you do bad things. Figure out how to take responsibility for your own conduct.

Sometimes I, like Donna Kate Rushin, am done *explaining*, done *translating*:

> I've had enough
> I'm sick of seeing and touching
> Both sides of things
> Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody . . .
> I've got to explain myself

> To everybody
> I do more translating
> Than the Gawdamn U.N. . . .
> I'm sick of filling in your gaps . . . (1981, xxi)

But then I remember all the women who came before me who never had the opportunity to write, to be heard, to have a voice. . . .

I think of Virginia Woolf's ([1929] 2011) *A Room of One's Own*.[11] I recall Woolf's question, why are there are so few women writers on her bookshelf? I remember Woolf's explanation through a fictional examination of Shakespeare's imaginary sister, Janet, whose creativity would have led to her early death:

> This may be true or it may be false—who can say?—but what is true in it so it seemed to me, reviewing the story of Shakespeare's sister as I had made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked . . . a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty. (53)

Woolf reminds us that perhaps when we read of "a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs . . . then . . . we are on track of a lost novelist and a suppressed poet" (52).[12] We are reading of women's genius that never made it to the paper. A genius that couldn't be expressed and often lead to insanity, loss of health, and suicide. Woolf saw in these witches and possessed women herself and all other women who ended their own lives because they were unable to fully express their great gift.

I also think of Patricia Hill Collins's (1990) opening words from *Black Feminist Thought*. Collins begins the text with a discussion of Maria Stewart to demonstrate that the "ideas of this extraordinary woman come to us only in scattered fragments that not only suggest her brilliance but speak tellingly of the fate of countless Black women intellectuals. Many Maria Stewarts exist, African-American women whose minds and talents have been suppressed by the pots and kettles symbolic of Black women's subordination" (4). Collins asks, "Why are African-American women and our ideas not known and not believed in?" (5).

The fact that we do not know about African-American women's intellectual traditions, or the intellectual traditions of Latinas, indigenous women, women of color, third world women, is not accidental. These voices have been purposefully and systematically suppressed—suppressed by men who were supposed to be racial/ethnic/religious allies and suppressed by women who were supposed to be part of the sisterhood. Collins (1990, 13) gives a way forward by calling on us to use our "outsider-within social location" as a distinctive vision on the intellectual and political world.

Similarly, Anzaldúa (1987) calls on us to live in the borderlands—a physical, psychological, sexual, and spiritual site. She suggests that living on borders and in margins opens us up to the potential, creativity, and pain of a "mestiza consciousness," a consciousness that is tolerant of ambiguity and tolerant of transgression. Mestiza consciousness raises new questions and suggests new ways of thinking about the intellectual, political, and spiritual world.

Woolf ([1929] 2011), Collins (1990), Anzaldúa (1987), and others challenge the very categories of knowledge and knowledge producer. They challenge us to reconsider the content of academic writing and its style, form, structure, and language. They challenge us to rethink who is a legitimate writer and knowledge producer. They challenge us to reconsider key analytic categories. They remind us that writing is difficult, painful, and dangerous. It is dangerous because of what it reveals. Yet writing is also a political act, an act of survival, a way of reclaiming power. This is why Anzaldúa both fears and embraces writing: "I write because I'm scared of writing but I'm more scared of not writing" (1981, 169).

When I hear of horrific violence against women—such as the gang rape of a 16-year-old girl in a Brazilian favela by over thirty men—I often think of my 10-month-old son. I often think about the young man he will become . . . and I am reminded that I also write out of love for him. . . .

Feminist scholars have provided a possible way forward, yet political science has largely ignored decades of feminist and critical research. Is political science as a discipline willing to listen to new forms of knowledge produced by the "Black(female) ethnographer" (Isoke 2018), or by the "diasporic researcher" (Behl 2017), especially when this knowledge is characterized as unscientific and invalid by most of the discipline? According to Mary Hawkesworth, political science fails to engage feminist scholarship: "Few doctoral programs allow students to develop areas of concentration in feminist approaches to political studies. Few routinely include feminist scholarship in proseminars. . . . None requires familiarity with leading feminist scholarship as a criterion of professional competence" (2005, 141–42). Hawkesworth argues that by "refusing to read and engage feminist scholarship . . . political scientists violate the very norms of objectivity and systematicity that support the characterization of their own research as 'scientific'" (152). Similarly, J. Ann Tickner argues that international relations is unwilling "to listen to new forms of critical thinking . . . [even though] our very survival may depend on being open to new ways of thinking" (2015, 549–50). Likewise, Zenzele Isoke finds that "Too many brilliant minds have migrated away from this institutionalized area [of political science] because they refuse, or simply are unable, to be compliant subjects to the doctrines of the field . . . [they] work in exile in interdisciplinary departments like women's and gender studies, African and African American studies, and cultural studies" (2015, 163). I fear that if we are not open to feminist exits and strayings from the dominant paradigms of political

science, then it will be even more difficult for some of us to survive and thrive in academia. I also fear that if we are not open to interpretive, critical, and feminist approaches that center the lives of marginalized populations, then political science will fail to ask important research questions, will fail to find new sources of empirical data that can lead to theoretical innovation, and will fail to remain politically and intellectually relevant in an increasingly diverse context.

Conclusion

I follow Anzaldúa's call to "*Put your shit on the paper*" (1981, 173), and in doing so, I force a rethinking of an objective, neutral, and cold academic voice so often adopted by political scientists. In choosing to write differently, I give voice to the pain and injustice that underlie my research and allow readers to see my intentions, to make clear why I write, for whom I write, and for what purpose I write. I give voice to a double trauma—first of racialized and gendered violence, and second of loss of voice. I write about my experience of othering and write about the "emotional knowledge" (Chong 2008) associated with this experience because writing in this fashion is itself a political act, an act of survival in a hostile environment, in which I never completely belong as scholar, I am never fully included as citizen, and I am always at risk of violence and trauma. In writing, I open up new ways of seeing and being in political science, which, in turn, can perhaps function as a strategy to reduce exit and exile of those scholars whose substantive research and embodied positionality places them outside the dominant norms of political science. In writing, I make visible my own critical feminist exits, which can perhaps constitute a rerouting of political science itself. In writing, I hold out hope that political science can perhaps be more inclusive and more diverse.

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Notes

1. In 2010, 86.6 percent of female political science faculty were white, 6.1 percent were African-American, 4.4 percent Asian Pacific Islander, and 3.0 percent Latina (APSA 2011). Despite programs like the American Political Science Association (APSA) Mentoring Program (APSA 2018b) and APSA Diversity and Inclusion Programs (APSA 2018a), women of color continue to be underrepresented.
2. I am mindful to deploy intersectionality as analytic tool, which is normatively grounded in a "liberatory" framework (Jordan-Zachery 2007), thus avoiding a tendency to "whiten" intersectionality (Bilge 2013a, 2013b).
3. In Sikhism, no scriptural sanction exists for caste distinction, but nonetheless a caste hierarchy exists.
4. Sikhs can be characterized by religiosity: The most traditionally religious is *amritdhari*, those who keep unshorn hair and have undergone the baptismal ceremony. The second is *kesdhari*, those who keep hair but have not been baptized. The least traditionally religious is *sahijdhari,* those who do not keep unshorn hair and have not undergone the baptismal ceremony.
5. Many scholars find that academic institutions create an inhospitable climate for women faculty of color (Narayan 1997; Agathangelou and Ling 2002; Alcoff 2003; Sampaio 2006; Brown 2007; Gutierrez y Muhs et al. 2012).
6. Elizabeth Dauphinee explains her motivation to write in the following manner: "I write out of love. I also sometimes write out of guilt. In all cases, I write because I become aware that something is not the way I thought it was. Something has hurt me. Something has made me angry or sleepless or aggrieved in some way" (2010, 808). I too write out of love. And sometimes I too write out of guilt, pain, and anger.
7. The man who shot my father was sentenced to life in prison with parole for attempted murder, perpetrating a hate crime, shooting into a residence, and causing great bodily injury.
8. For a detailed discussion, see Schwartz-Shea and Majic 2017.
9. For a detailed discussion of academic self-reflection and humility, see Ackerly 2013.
10. Rebecca Gill states "if impostor syndrome is the unrealistically low assessment of one's own talents, adding sexual harassment to the mix provides specific, tangible confirmatory evidence that the low assessment isn't unrealistic after all—that the stereotypes are true. That you don't belong" (Flaherty 2018).
11. Anzaldúa urges us to "Forget the room of one's own—write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, on the job or

during meals, between sleeping or waking. I write while sitting on the john. No long stretches at the typewriter unless you're wealthy or have a patron—you may not even own a typewriter. While you wash the floor or clothes listen to the words chanting in your body. When you're depressed, angry, hurt, when compassion and love possess you. When you cannot help but write" (1981, 170).

12. Similarly, Anzaldúa works to recover lost novelists and suppressed poets by dispelling the myth that she and other women of color are mad prophets or poor suffering souls (1981, 168–69).

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