LGBTIQ+ Scholars within Political Science:
An Exploratory Review of PSAs' Good Practices and (Un)Available Data

Massimo Prearo
Federico Trastulli
UNIVERSITY OF VERONA

Abstract

The aim of this article is to provide the Italian Political Science Association (SISP) with an exploratory review of practices implemented within other national and international political science associations to assess and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, through an in-depth focus on LGBTIQ+ scholars. To do so, the article reviews publicly available documentation, such as codes of conduct, equality plans, and monitoring reports produced by selected major political science associations (including APSA, PSA, and ECPR). Our review highlights the widespread lack of systematic data on LGBTIQ+ scholars in international political science and the importance of complementing data collection within broader organizational mechanisms, such as institutional policies, political engagement, and active strategies of visibility. On this basis, we thus offer practice-informed observations tailored to the Italian context and aimed at supporting the development of a sustainable monitoring and inclusion agenda within political science associations.

1. Introduction

In a historical moment in which diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are explicitly under attack and increasingly contested, higher education institutions face renewed pressures that directly affect minority scholars and research agendas. Recent evidence shows how anti-DEI legislation and political backlash are reshaping academic environments, constraining the teaching and research of LGBTQ+ issues, and fostering environments of precarity and self-censorship among faculty (Goldberg, 2024). Against this backdrop, this article seeks to address the following question: how do political science communities and organizations engage with DEI programs and initiatives, particularly with respect to gender and sexual minorities, within their institutional frameworks and professional practices? It does so with the goal of generating evidence-based observations in order to inform the development of an inclusive agenda within the profession. Indeed, despite increasing attention to diversity, minority communities in political science often still struggle with structural and cultural barriers, such as implicit biases (Reinhardt et al, 2023). By providing an exploratory review of existing practices, our goal is to contribute towards the identification of feasible and effective strategies, both already pursued or yet to be followed, for fostering a more equitable and supportive academic environment – specifically within Italian political science, as addressed by this special issue.

The literature on DEI within academia, particularly in political science, has generally focused on gender equality (Stapleton & Michelson, 2021). To encompass a more comprehensive array of identities, the inclusion of categories such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and other forms of marginalization seems to be necessary (Briscoe-Palmer & Mattock, 2020). This is not only because these issues concern the practical lived experiences of scholars within academia, but also because attention to such issues has itself become a matter of public debate and political contention. Hence, our review of existing DEI strategies in international political science will specifically focus on the case of gender and sexual minorities, traditionally stigmatized both in the job and in terms of research interests.

Thinking about DEI programs and initiatives in academia entails a broader reflection on the institutional and scientific dynamics of participation, representation, and legitimization of marginalized and discriminated groups. More specifically, promoting a diverse and inclusive institutional and scientific environment involves active engagement to ensure equitable access to opportunities, resources, decision-making processes, and publications.

Political science as a discipline and as a profession has been predominantly occupied by white, male, and upper-class individuals from the Global North, shaping the discipline's research agendas, methodologies, and institutional priorities (Lustick, 1996; Erdmann, 2004; Gunaratne, 2009; Gorodzeisky & Leykin, 2022). This bias has led to significant gaps in scholarship, particularly concerning issues related to marginalized communities, despite recent developments indicating significant changes in the field (Donà, Pandardi & Prearo, 2025; Boncourt, Engeli & Garzia, 2020). In fact, the underrepresentation of minorities (e.g., women, racialized groups, LGBTIQ+ scholars) is not merely a numerical problem: it involves the kinds of research questions investigated, the resources that are mobilized, and the interpretations accepted as valid within the epistemological paradigms that define the discipline.

Specifically with regard to gender and sexual minorities, research on LGBTIQ+ issues in higher education has increased over the past two decades, with a concentration in fields such as education, psychology, and sociology, as most studies focus on students or curricular inclusion (Renn, 2010). In contrast, systematic research on LGBTIQ+ scholars – their professional trajectories, experiences of inclusion or exclusion, and institutional positioning – remains limited. This gap is particularly evident in political science, where empirical studies focusing on LGBTIQ+ scholars' experiences are dramatically scarce. This raises an empirical challenge: in the absence of systematic data, how can we identify and conceptualize the dynamics (and more particularly the obstacles) that shape the careers of LGBTIQ+ academics, beyond professional merit alone, and in relation to their identity and research focus, which are often closely intertwined?

Rather than providing a conclusive and normative answer to this question, this paper aims to contribute to the debate by foregrounding the role of professional associations. It does so by reviewing actions, measures and initiatives proposed and adopted by political science associations (PSAs) to tackle these challenges, offering a map of existing practices. Our goal is not to provide causal explanations – such as historical trajectories, national political cultures, or organizational resources –, but to identify the range and scope of inclusion-oriented measures across major political science

associations, in order to helpfully inform the relevant debate currently ongoing within Italian political science and SISP. Thus, this article takes the form of a review essay.

It is structured as follows. The first section assesses the specific dynamics of exclusion of LGBTIQ+ scholars and studies within political science as a discipline. In the second section, we review the broader academic debate on DEI, with a particular focus on the representation of gender and sexual minorities in political science. The third section reviews existing practices and mechanisms adopted by political science associations to identify and address gender and diversity-related issues. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings and discusses their implications for the discipline, with the goal of proposing initial recommendations for enhanced DEI in the specific case of Italian political science.

2. Logics and mechanisms of exclusion: the case of LGBTIQ+ political scientists

How widespread is the exclusion of minority scholars in political science? Because of enduring structural barriers, women, racialized minorities, and specifically LGBTIQ+ political scientists keep facing enduring systemic exclusion within the discipline. These structural barriers, which limit access to funding, publishing opportunities, and professional recognition, do not just hurt the discipline as a whole by restricting the array of diverse viewpoints that constitute it, but also and perhaps most importantly by considerably hindering the career prospects of these scholars.

Evidence shows that structural barriers disproportionately affect women, especially in subfields traditionally dominated by men such as international relations and security studies. Drawing on a survey of 1,273 female PhD students and faculty members in political science departments across the United States, Hinze (2023) documents that 43% of respondents perceive their gender as a disadvantage to their professional standing. Notably, this figure rises to 49% for women in PhD-granting institutions, reflecting a more pronounced exclusionary dynamic at the higher strata of academia. The barriers experienced by women often manifest in the form of gendered isolation, which significantly hampers their access to critical career-enhancing resources such as mentorship, professional networks, and insider know-how. This isolation is particularly concerning given its implications for long-term career trajectories (Bosco & Feo, 2024), as mentorship and professional networks are integral to securing funding, publishing in high-impact venues, and gaining recognition within the field (Hinze, 2023). Despite incremental progress in women's representation in political science, the culture within academic departments often remains resistant to change. Male-dominated norms continue to dictate practices in hiring, promotion, and collaboration, perpetuating an environment in which women's contributions are undervalued or marginalized (Stapleton & Michelson, 2021).

The systemic underrepresentation and marginalization of racial and ethnic minorities in political science also persist as critical issues. According to the American Political Science Association's (APSA) Project on Women and Minorities (P-WAM), data from the 2018–2019 academic year reveal that 75% of political science faculty at the top 100-ranked institutions are white. In sharp contrast, only 7.7% of faculty identify as Asian, 4% as Latin American/Hispanic, and 3.9% as Black/African American (APSA, 2019).

Furthermore, the disadvantages of racialized faculty members are not just limited to their numerical underrepresentation. Scholars of color are less likely than their white counterparts to secure research funding (Hoppe et al., 2019), publish in prestigious academic journals (Roberts et al., 2020), or achieve high citation rates for their work (Chakravartty et al., 2018).

Moreover, a 2019 survey conducted among members of the International Security Studies Section (ISSS) of the International Studies Association (ISA) shows that only 59% of scholars of color reported feeling welcome within the security studies community most or all of the time, compared to 73.9% of white scholars. Additionally, scholars of color were nearly six times more likely to report never feeling welcome. These findings underscore a persistent sense of exclusion that is exacerbated by perceptions of the ISSS as an insular and exclusionary "old boys' network" (Mershon & Walsh, 2016). The survey further reveals that 45.2% of scholars of color described the section as "clubby" and 46.2% as an "old boys' club", compared to only 28.6% and 23.2% of white scholars respectively (Zvobgo et al., 2023).

Additionally, and more dramatically, 32.5% of scholars of color report experiences of harassment and exclusion at ISA events, which nearly double the 16.5% reported by white scholars. Among those who experienced these incidents, 85% attributed them to their race. Regarding networking dynamics, findings from the 2019 ISSS survey reveal that scholars of color are 1.5 times more likely than white scholars to seek additional mentoring opportunities and institutional support. Nevertheless, despite this heightened interest, racialized scholars report fewer opportunities to participate in professional development initiatives, indicating a disparity in access to resources and mentorship (Zvobgo et al., 2023). Of course, scholars are not affected by single axes of discrimination: gender, race, and sexuality intersect in shaping differentiated experiences of marginalization and access within the discipline. Acknowledging these intersectional positionalities is essential to fully grasp the structural dynamics at play and to design inclusive policies that respond to the complexity of scholars' lived experiences.

Building on the above considerations concerning women and racialized scholars, LGBTIQ+ colleagues – which are of key interest to this review – also remain underrepresented across all ranks of academia and often occupy precarious or temporary positions. APSA's 2007 survey on the status of LGBTIQ+ individuals in the profession, which gathered responses from 2,215 political scientists, illustrates this disparity in detail. The study found that 16.4% of LGBTIQ+ scholars were in visiting, adjunct, or instructor roles, compared to only 11% at the full professor level. These patterns suggest the persistence of a gendered "glass ceiling" and a "leaky pipeline" that, as in the case of women's careers, limit LGBTIQ+ scholars' advancement to senior academic positions (Novkov & Barclay, 2010; Naldini & Poggio, 2023). Regarding the way LGBTIQ+ political scientists navigate academic spaces, while 56% of LGBTIQ+ respondents in the APSA survey believed they had not experienced discrimination, 25% reported facing discrimination, and 20% were uncertain. These percentages suggest that while overt acts of discrimination may be rare, subtler forms of exclusion, such as microaggressions, seem to remain pervasive (Novkov & Barclay, 2010).

Finally, this stigmatization also extends to the marginalization of LGBTIQ+ research, further reflecting broader patterns of exclusion. A pioneer of the LGBTIQ+ politics strand of literature, Haider-Markel (2009) emphasizes the traditional marginalization of LGBTIQ+ research within political science, which is historically more focused on dominant or traditional research interests. Ayoub (2022) highlights how LGBTIQ+ scholars face frequent accusations of conducting "politically charged" or "activist-oriented" research, with their work often dismissed as "me-search".[1] Yet, this critique fails to recognize the epistemic value of positionality and embodied knowledge. LGBTIQ+ scholars navigate a structural paradox: their proximity to the subject is seen as a liability, while their lived experience constitutes a crucial epistemic asset. Thus, the stigma they face is not merely directed at their research interests or career choices, but rather operates at the level of embodiment and identity (Prearo, 2024), reinforcing mechanisms of exclusion that are embodied as much as epistemological.

To sum up, the professional and research exclusion, marginalization, and stigmatization of minorities is historically widespread and far-reaching in political science, often reflecting traditional substantive imbalances in the discipline's interests (e.g., Paternotte, 2018) as well as an inadequacy in assumptions, methodologies, and priorities (e.g., Durand, 2021). This highlights the need to scrutinize the institutional responses developed within political science to address these persistent inequalities, at both national and international levels.

3. Addressing DEI in higher education and political science

The evidence discussed above aligns with a broader set of debates on DEI in higher education. Over the past two decades, universities have increasingly institutionalized DEI frameworks, introducing equality plans, recruitment targets, mentoring schemes, and codes of conduct. Yet, scholars underline that the presence of such measures is not sufficient to dismantle entrenched cultures of exclusion. When structural prejudice remains unaddressed, "diversity hires" often encounter the same obstacles as historically marginalized minorities in academia, leading to high turnover and stalled career trajectories (Gaiaschi & Musumeci, 2020; Duarte, Losleben & Fjørtoft, 2023). This disjuncture between formal policies and informal practices illustrates a key feature of DEI in academia: the persistence of cultural and epistemic norms that reproduce inequities despite institutional commitments.

Within this literature, LGBTIQ+ scholars occupy a specific position. While much of the DEI agenda has centered on gender and race, research shows that LGBTIQ+ students and faculty continue to experience exclusion and obstacles in ways that exceed general diversity concerns. Trans and non-binary students are disproportionately subjected to harassment and exclusion, often leading to withdrawal from higher education (Goldberg, 2018; Freeman & Stephenson, 2023). LGBTIQ+ students from racialized or migrant backgrounds encounter compounded disadvantages at the intersection of sexuality, ethnicity, and class (Raja et al., 2024). Faculty inclusion also remains uneven, with gaps in institutional preparedness, curricular integration, and mentoring opportunities

---

[1] The term "me-search" is used to undermine the academic legitimacy of research either grounded in personal or identity-related experiences (Harrison & Michelson, 2022), or on marginalized gender and sexual minorities, or both. See also Ayoub and Rose (2016).

(Murray et al., 2025). These dynamics highlight the epistemic invisibility of LGBTIQ+ issues within academic knowledge production and the institutional vulnerability of scholars working in these fields.

At the same time, the current political climate underscores that DEI in academia is never insulated from broader societal conflicts. In the United States, for example, the spread of anti-DEI legislation has created hostile environments for faculty engaged with issues of race, gender, and sexuality. Recent surveys show that these measures not only constrain teaching and research but also contribute to self-censorship, declining wellbeing, and increased attrition among LGBTQ+ faculty (Goldberg, 2024). The fact that DEI has itself become a political target demonstrates both its symbolic significance and its vulnerability to backlash.

Taken together, this body of research demonstrates that LGBTIQ+ inclusion in academia cannot be reduced to a generic extension of diversity frameworks. Instead, it requires proactive and intersectional measures that address cisheteronormative structures and acknowledge the epistemic value of positionality and embodied knowledge (Golubeva, 2025). Such recognition also raises the question of which institutional actors are best positioned to initiate meaningful change. Universities and funding bodies play a role, but professional associations occupy a particularly strategic position within the discipline. As organizations that regulate professional standards, provide networking and mentoring opportunities, and shape disciplinary priorities, they act as both epistemic and political actors. Their infrastructures and representational practices can either reproduce systemic inequalities or foster inclusive transformations (Zvobgo et al., 2023).

Focusing on political science associations, rather than solely on universities or public policies, makes it possible to examine how disciplinary self-regulation operates and how collective professional identities are constructed and contested. For political science, where systematic data on LGBTIQ+ scholars remain scarce, associations are a crucial but underexplored site for institutional innovation. By documenting existing practices across PSAs, this article seeks not to offer definitive explanations but to contribute to an ongoing debate on how disciplinary organizations can advance equity and inclusion in ways that respond to the specific challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ political scientists.

4. PSA measures addressing discrimination, violence, harassment, and exclusion

What have political science associations done to address the exclusion or to promote the inclusion of political scientists belonging to minorities and minoritized groups? Over the last few decades, professional and political science organizations have progressed to tackle pressing concerns in their respective fields. Here, we provide an exploratory review of this subject. We have taken into consideration the major political science associations (APSA, ECPR, EPSA, IPSA), as well as – given this paper's interest in Italian political science – the Italian Political Science Association (SISP) and the British Political Science Association (PSA), the latter by means of comparison and as a model for early intervention, at the national level in Europe, on such issues. Although the documents analyzed were not always the same across every association – insofar as they were not

available –, we included as many DEI a) codes of conduct, b) dedicated programs, and c) public reports as possible. Whilst we fully acknowledge the methodological limitations of our exploratory review, we still believe our initial and comprehensive attempt provides a considerable amount of useful information for our ultimate goal: providing helpful observations for SISP's future policy elaboration on this matter. For a summative overview of many of the actions and practices discussed below, see Table 1.

Table 1. Political science associations' practices towards DEI

Association	Code of Conduct	Program	Report
APSA	New code of conduct; Ombudspersons at Annual Meetings	Project on Women and Minorities (P-WAM)	Dashboard (Online: no LGBTIQ+ lens published)
ECPR	Adopted Code of Conduct (revised 2021) with explicit policies on gender and sexual grounds	--	Gender study (2024, yearly report since 2016)
EPSA	One-page Code of Conduct; Ombudsperson for reporting	Mentoring LGBT Program	--
IPSA	Comprehensive Code of Conduct (2018) including sexual harassment and sexual violence	--	Gender Inequalities in Political Science (2025) Gender and Diversity Monitoring Report (2022, 2019, 2017, 2011)
British PSA	Code of Practice – Diversity & Equality	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, including 10-year strategy and EDI Working Group	Report on Career Trajectories and EDI in Politics and IR (2021, Online: no LGBTIQ lens)
Italian SISP	Ethical Chart promoting diversity, gender equality, and non-discrimination	--	Articles published in Italian Political Science (IPS) Special issue IPS (2025)

Source: own elaboration.

One of the most critical forms of actions taken within political science is internal investigations into harassment. In 2017, APSA conducted an internal investigation into harassment acts reported at its Annual Meetings between 2013 and 2016. This effort, led by the Professional Ethics, Rights, and Freedoms Committee, aimed to identify the prevalence and nature of harassment within the discipline. The survey used the "Sexual Experiences Questionnaire" model, a widely recognized tool frequently employed in studies, especially in military settings. Distributed to APSA's 13,367 members, the survey achieved an 18.1% response rate, with 2,424 completed questionnaires. Respondents

were asked about their experiences with three distinct categories of harassment: condescending behavior or "put-downs", inappropriate language or looks, and inappropriate sexual advances or touching. The results revealed troubling disparities, particularly along gender lines. Experiencing condescending behavior or "put-downs" was reported by 42% of women, compared to 22% of men; 30% of women were exposed to inappropriate language or looks, sexist remarks, leering, or sexist materials, compared to 10% of men, and inappropriate sexual advances or touching were reported by 17% of women versus 6% of men. The data also highlighted that 63% of all members reported no experiences of negative behavior, though only 51% of women fell into this category. Further analysis revealed that women, younger professionals, and those without tenure were disproportionately affected. Additionally, graduate students and postdocs did not report significantly higher harassment rates compared to tenured faculty, suggesting that socio-professional vulnerability, rather than career stage alone, played a critical role. Regular conference attendance and recent PhD completion were also identified as important predictors of harassment, particularly severe forms such as inappropriate sexual advances and touching. However, race and ethnicity did not significantly affect the rates of harassment (Sapiro & Campbell, 2018). In responses to open-ended questions, some participants shared that they had encountered such behaviors before the study's four-year timeframe. Notably, older women often noted that while they were no longer subjected to such behaviors, they had faced them earlier in their careers.

In response to the findings from this investigation, several political science associations have undertaken the additional effort of developing and implementing comprehensive Codes of Conduct, designed to foster a respectful and inclusive professional environment. The APSA Guide to Professional Ethics includes a robust section on "Sexual Misconduct, Harassment, and Discrimination Guidelines", offering a detailed framework to define and address such behaviors. The guide categorizes offenses into sexual harassment, sexual violence, and sexual discrimination. Sexual violence is explicitly defined as "*a particularly grievous form of sexual misconduct, including but not limited to sexual assault and rape*", emphasizing that coercive sexual conduct is a criminal offense. EPSA, on the other hand, designated an Ombudsperson to handle complaints, ensuring accessibility and confidentiality for victims. Both the IPSA and APSA Codes feature detailed procedures for filing and resolving grievances. APSA's approach includes provisions for confidentiality, protection against retaliation, and the involvement of its ethics committee in adjudicating complaints. These measures emphasize transparency and victim-centered solutions while ensuring accountability within the discipline. Similarly, the SISP Ethical Chart (2024) emphasizes nondiscrimination and gender equality within Italian political science. It outlines principles for equitable academic evaluations and teaching practices, explicitly denouncing comments or behaviors that undermine dignity based on personal characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. In preparation for its 2024 Annual Conference, SISP also circulated a warning to ensure gender-balanced panels and intergenerational dialogue, reflecting its commitment to fostering inclusivity.

Furthermore, structural reforms within political science associations have emerged as a critical effort to advance diversity, equity and inclusivity. The British PSA exemplifies such efforts through its Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, which spans

a decade (2017-2027). This strategy integrates inclusivity into all facets of the organization's operations and governance. Notable initiatives include: fostering research spaces; supporting research by and about social minorities through targeted journals, conferences, and awards; revising governance structures; enhancing oversight and accountability regarding diversity goals, and creating the EDI Working Group. Awards for scholarly contributions in gender studies were also promoted by APSA and ECPR.

Finally, building on the points illustrated above, sound data collection and reporting seem to be essential to understanding and addressing systemic inequalities within academia. The British PSA's 2021 report (Hanretty, 2021) on diversity in British political science offers a compelling case. It revealed that men represented 61% of political science staff (78% of whom were white), while women held only 29% of senior positions, and ethnic minorities accounted for 13%. It is noteworthy that gender and sexual minorities were not included in this data collection.

Complementing this national-level initiative, the ECPR's Gender Study reports for 2023 and 2024, respectively the eighth and ninth in a longitudinal series launched in 2016, offer a comparative view across a pan-European professional association. These reports track gender representation across participation, leadership, and editorial roles, enabling the identification of both areas of improvement and persistent gaps. In 2023, ECPR achieved or exceeded gender parity in 18 of 26 key categories (69%), including 78% of women among Teaching Assistants and 64% among prize recipients. In 2024, these figures remained strong in 17 categories (65%). Particularly notable are both the upward trend among Section Chairs at the General Conference (from 55% to 56%) and the maintenance of parity within the Executive Committee. At the same time, setbacks emerged. The proportion of published women authors declined from 35% in 2023 to 26% in 2024, and female prize recipients dropped sharply from 57% to 22%, although the 2024 data are currently provisional.

At the international level, IPSA has proactively monitored gender diversity through a Gender and Diversity Monitoring Report (Korkut & St-Laurent, 2022). According to the report, in terms of membership and representation, women now constitute a substantial portion of the membership in most of the large political science associations, averaging 38.6% across the most significant associations surveyed (more than 400 members). However, there is considerable variation between countries, reflecting broader societal, cultural, and institutional dynamics that influence gender inclusivity in academia and beyond. For instance, the UK and Spanish political science associations have achieved gender parity or even exceeded it, with women making up 50% and 54.6% of their respective memberships. In contrast, political science associations in Japan and Korea report much lower female representation, with women comprising only 15.9% and 17.3% of their memberships respectively. These disparities are rooted in long-standing gender norms and institutional structures within these countries. They not only restrict women's participation in academia but also impede their representation in professional organizations like PSAs (e.g., Steele, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2021).

The report also points to a considerable improvement in the representation of women in leadership roles within political science associations. As of 2022, women held 50% of the presidencies, which corresponds to a significant increase from previous years. Furthermore, women constitute 39% of vice presidents, 40% of executive committee

members, and 58% of advisory board members. As for women's participation in political science associations' conferences, women represented 44% of panel chairs, 40% of participants, and 54% of paper presenters at the most recent conferences.

More recently the "Gender Inequalities in Political Science" survey conducted among IPSA's individual members (IPSA, 2025) highlights that the barriers facing LGBTQ+ academics are not marginal or anecdotal, but systematic. Testimonies from the survey underscore how identity and research focus intersect to produce specific forms of vulnerability, often compounded by nationality, ethnicity, or other axes of inequality. While these initiatives and research signal progress in gender inclusivity, one persistent critical issue emerging from our exploratory review is the lack of data on diversity beyond gender.

None of these reports includes data on LGBTIQ+ identities, since they continue to conceptualize inclusivity primarily through a binary gender lens. In fact, only a few associations, such as those in Ecuador, the UK, and the USA, systematically collect data on aspects such as race, ethnicity, LGBTIQ+ identities, and disability. This limitation highlights a broader challenge: while PSAs have begun institutionalizing commitments to inclusion through policies, reforms, and targeted initiatives such efforts remain constrained by a structural blind spot. Addressing these gaps requires investment in data infrastructures that capture sexual and gender diversity more comprehensively.

It is noteworthy that in 2023, the ECPG Steering Committee launched an internal survey among its members that collected both demographic information – explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity – and experiential data related to discrimination and harassment. Although the results of the survey were not made public, they served as the empirical foundation for the elaboration and formal adoption of the Guiding Principles and Ethical Framework at the 2024 ECPG Conference. The Guiding Principles are intended, as stated, to promote inclusion, respect, and transparency across all forms of participation, with a particular focus on supporting early-career scholars and mitigating structural inequalities.

5. Conclusion

Our article had the goal of providing SISP, and more broadly political science communities, with an exploratory review of existing initiatives to promote DEI in PSAs. Despite the methodological limitations of our preliminary overview, we believe that one of the main results that emerges is the beneficial role of data collection and availability on minority scholars for the development of effective and comprehensive policies. Associations that collect comprehensive and fine-grained data – on scholars' identities and experiences – seem better equipped to formulate policies that address the specific challenges individuals face, especially (but not exclusively) those from minoritized groups.

Of course, the aforementioned challenges related to collecting extremely sensitive data on stigmatized and marginalized minorities persist, and this should be made abundantly clear for anybody seeking to attain data-driven approaches and solutions within political science associations. This challenge is common in LGBTIQ+ studies relying on survey data (e.g., Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020; Jones, 2021; Grahn, 2024; Prearo & Trastulli, 2025), which are difficult to collect because of well-known issues such as the under-

representation of sexual and gender minorities in self-reported data through concealment derived from social desirability bias, problematic question wordings and related response bias or dropout rates, and small sample sizes for LGBTIQ+ communities (e.g., Waite & Denier, 2019). It is easy to imagine that all of these problems of data sensitivity are exacerbated in even smaller circles, such as national academic and political science communities, where the personal and professional consequences derived from coming out are likely to be perceived as more tangible. Indeed, the risk of outing LGBTIQ+ scholars might be perceived as even higher than usual, given the tight-knit nature of academic circles, compounding the methodological and data-collection issues at hand. Concerns about privacy, potential backlash, or the perceived sensitivity of these issues might explain the reluctance to collect data on LGBTIQ+ identities (Guyan, 2022).

However, formulating questions on gender and sexual minorities following the best practices from academic and institutional specialists (e.g., FRA, 2024; 2020; 2013), involving LGBTIQ+ associations and communities in the formulation of such questions (e.g., NYU Langone Health, 2022), and focusing the communication of political science associations on the benefits of data-driven practices for LGBTIQ+ scholars, can go a long way towards gathering greater and better information on sexual and gender minorities in the profession.

Yet, collecting data is just one part of the equation to promote DEI in academia. As Lombardo and Meier (2022) argue, equality and, by extension, diversity policies are inherently political processes, embedded in power relations and subject to contestation and resistance. The success of such policies depends not only on the availability of empirical evidence, but also on several complementary factors: a clear political will on the part of institutional actors; the presence of critical actors committed to advancing equality; the allocation of adequate resources and supportive legal and organizational structures; the capacity to overcome explicit and implicit resistance, including institutional inertia and anti-gender mobilizations; and a continuous critical reflexivity in the power relations underpinning knowledge production and academic practices. Without sustained engagement on these fronts, even the most data-driven policies risk producing only superficial or symbolic change. It would thus be beneficial for PSAs not only to document inequality but also to reflect on their own role in sustaining or challenging the hierarchical structures embedded in academic institutions, committing to structural and cultural transformations.

As shown in our exploratory review, PSAs can act as key institutional actors with the capacity to shape and transform academic environments, exposing and addressing inequalities. Their significance should go beyond issuing formal statements against discrimination, as it ultimately lies within their ability to leverage a range of mechanisms: from systematic data collection and efforts to increase representation in leadership roles and academic events, to the establishment of diversity awards, mentorship schemes, and financial support programs. To this end, we hope our exploratory contribution can be a useful starting point to foster a constructive conversation for PSAs' DEI policy elaboration, including within SISP.

Acknowledgements

References

APSA. (2019). APSA P-WAM Dashboard. American Political Science Association (APSA). https://apsanet.org/resources/data-on-the-profession/dashboards/p-wam/

Ayoub, P. M. (2022). Not that niche: Making room for the study of LGBTIQ people in political science. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 5(2), 154–172. https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16345581767345

Ayoub, Phillip M. and Deondra E. Rose. In defense of 'Me' Studies. *Inside Higher Ed*, April 14, 2016.

Chakravartty, P., Kuo, R., Grubbs, V., & McIlwain, C. (2018). #CommunicationSoWhite. *Journal of Communication*, 68(2), 254–266. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy003

Boncourt, T., Engeli, I., & Garzia, D. (2020)(Eds.). *Political science in Europe: Achievements, challenges, prospects*. London: ECPR Press.

Bosco, A. & Feo, F. (2024), Che genere di Scienza politica? Tempi e ostacoli nelle carriere accademiche delle donne. In Verzichelli, L. (Ed.), *La scienza politica italiana. 50 anni dopo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 81-96.

Briscoe-Palmer, S., & Mattocks, K. (2020). Race, intersectionality, and diversity in European political science. In Boncourt, T., Engeli, I., & Garzia, D. (Eds.). *Political science in Europe: Achievements, challenges, prospects*. London, ECPR Press, 199-218.

Donà, A., Pansardi, P., & Prearo, M. (2025). *Prospettive di genere. Potere, politica, istituzioni*. Bologna, il Mulino.

Duarte, M., Losleben, K., & Fjørtoft, K. (2023). *Gender Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academia: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Transformation* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003363590

Durand, M. (2021). Out of the French closet: The political participation of gays and lesbians in France into perspective. *French Politics*, 19(2–3), 306–328. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-021-00151-z

ECPG. (2024). *SGGP Guiding Principles and Ethical Framework*. https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/Content?ID=1434&EventID=253

ECPR. (2025). *Gender study 2024*.

ECPR. (2024). *Gender study 2023*.

ECPR. (2021). *Code of Conduct*. https://ecpr.eu/ContentPage.aspx?ID=626

Erdmann, G. (2004). Party research: Western European bias and the 'African labyrinth.' *Democratization*, 11(3), 63–87.

FRA - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2024). *LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads: progress and challenges*.

FRA - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2020). *A long way to go for LGBTI equality*.

FRA - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2013). *EU LGBT survey - European Union lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender survey*.

Freeman, J., & Stephenson, R. (2023). *Trans and non-binary student experiences in UK higher education* (HEPI Report 174). Higher Education Policy Institute.

Gaiaschi, C., & Musumeci, R. (2020). Just a Matter of Time? Women's Career Advancement in Neo-Liberal Academia. An Analysis of Recruitment Trends in Italian Universities. *Social Sciences*, 9(9), 163. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9090163

Giorgi, A., Pizzolati, M., & Vacchelli, E. (2021). *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale. Contesto, pratiche e strumenti*. Il Mulino. https://www.mulino.it/isbn/9788815290229?forcedLocale=it&fbrefresh=CAN_BE_ANYTHING

Goldberg, A. E. (2018). *Transgender students in higher education*. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.

Goldberg, A. E. (2024). *The impact of anti-DEI legislation on LGBTQ+ faculty in higher education*. University of California eScholarship.

Golubeva, I. (2025). *Diversity, equity, inclusion and intercultural citizenship in higher education*. Cambridge University Press.

Gorodzeisky, A., & Leykin, I. (2022). On the West–East methodological bias in measuring international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(13), 3160–3183. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1873116

Grahn, M. (2024). Still proud at the polls? LGBT+ rights don't dilute the sexuality turnout gap. *European Journal of Political Research*, 63(3), 973–996. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12624

Gunaratne, S. A. (2009). Globalization: A Non-Western Perspective: The Bias of Social Science/Communication Oligopoly. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 2(1), 60–82.

Guyan, K. (2022). *Queer Data: Using Gender, Sex and Sexuality Data for Action*. Bloomsbury. https://www.amazon.it/Queer-Data-Gender-Sexuality-Action/dp/1350230731

Haider-Markel, D. P. (2009). Bentley Was Right: The Significance of LGBT Politics for Political Science. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1469851

Hanretty, C. (2021). *Career trajectories in UK departments of politics and international relations*. https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/PSA_BISA%20Report_0.pdf

Harrison, B. F., & Michelson, M. R. (2022). LGBTQ Scholarship: Researcher Identity and Ingroup Positionality. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 55(4), 759–763. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096522000038

Hoppe, T. A., Litovitz, A., Willis, K. A., Meseroll, R. A., Perkins, M. J., Hutchins, B. I., Davis, A. F., Lauer, M. S., Valantine, H. A., Anderson, J. M., & Santangelo, G. M. (2019). Topic choice contributes to the lower rate of NIH awards to African-American/black scientists. *Science Advances*, 5(10), eaaw7238. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aaw7238

IPSA (2025). *Gender Inequalities in Political Science*.

Jones, P. E. (2021). Political Distinctiveness and Diversity Among LGBT Americans. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 85(2), 594–622. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfab030

Kim, Y, & Kim, S. (2021). Being an academic: how junior female academics in Korea survive in the neoliberal context of a patriarchal society. *Higher Education*, 81, 1311-1328.

Korkut, U., & St-Laurent, M. (2022). *IPSA Gender and Diversity Monitoring Report 2022*.

Lombardo, E. and Meier, P. (2022). Challenging boundaries to expand frontiers in gender and policy studies, *Policy & Politics*, 50(1), 99–115.

Lustick, I. S. (1996). History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias. *American Political Science Review*, 90(3), 605–618.

McClain, P. D., Ayee, G. Y. A., Means, T. N., Reyes-Barriéntez, A. M., & Sediqe, N. A. (2016). Race, power, and knowledge: Tracing the roots of exclusion in the development of political science in the United States. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4(3), 467–482. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1170704

Mershon, C., & Walsh, D. (2016). Diversity in political science: Why it matters and how to get it. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4(3), 462–466. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1170703

Murray, S. B., Kanter, C., O'Brien, A., & Clark, K. D. (2025). Faculty inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer populations in health curriculum. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing*, 20(5), e395–e401.

Naldini, M., & Poggio, B. (Eds.). (2023). *Genere e accademia: Carriere, culture e politiche*. Il Mulino. https://www.mulino.it/isbn/9788815386823

Novkov, J., & Barclay, S. (2010). Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and the Transgendered in Political Science: Report on a Discipline-Wide Survey. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 43(01), 95–106. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509990643

NYU Langone Health (2022). Engaging Special Populations Best Practice Brief - LGBTQIA+ Population.

Paternotte, D. (2018). Coming out of the political science closet: The study of LGBT politics in Europe. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.1332/251510818X15272520831175

Prearo, M. (2024). Resisting the epistemic straight gaze in the anti-gender era: Italian LGBTIQ+ studies and scholars, 2013–2023. *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, 52(1), 171-187.

Prearo, M., & Trastulli, F. (2024). Beyond electoral performance: Reviewing and advancing the literature on LGBTIQ+ political careers. *Italian Political Science Review / Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica*. https://doi.org/10.1017/ipo.2024.3

Prearo, M., & Trastulli, F. (2025). Rainbow ballots: introducing the Italian LGBTIQ+ electoral survey 2024. *Italian Journal of Electoral Studies*. https://doi.org/10.36253/qoe-17696

Raja, A., Lambert, K., Patlamazoglou, L., & Pringle, R. (2024). Diversity and inclusion strategies for LGBTQ+ students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in higher education: A scoping review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(14), 3585–3605. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2217814

Reinhardt, G. Y., Windsor, L. C., & King, B. A. (2023). Introduction: Diversity and Inclusion in Political Science as a Profession. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 56(1), 107–113. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096522000981

Renn, K. A. (2010). LGBT and queer research in higher education: The state and status of the field. *Educational Researcher*, 39(2), 132–141. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X10362579

Roberts, S. O., Bareket-Shavit, C., Dollins, F. A., Goldie, P. D., & Mortenson, E. (2020). Racial Inequality in Psychological Research: Trends of the Past and Recommendations for the Future. *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science*, 15(6), 1295–1309. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620927709

Sapiro, V., & Campbell, D. (2018). Report on the 2017 APSA Survey on Sexual Harassment at Annual Meetings. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(01), 197–206. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096517002104

SISP. (2024). *Carta Etica della SISP*. https://www.sisp.it/chi-siamo/carta-etica-2

Stapleton, Patricia A., and Melissa R. Michelson. 2021. "Disbanding the Old Boys' Club: Strategies for Departmental Gender Equity." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 54(3): 520–23. doi: 10.1017/S1049096521000032

Steele, J. F. (2016). Japanese political science at a crossroads? Normative and empirical preconditions for the integration of women and diversity into political science. *European Political Science*, 15, 536–555.

Turnbull-Dugarte, S. J. (2020). The European lavender vote: Sexuality, ideology and vote choice in Western Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59(3), 517–537. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12366

Waite, S., & Denier, N. (2019). A Research Note on Canada's LGBT Data Landscape: Where We Are and What the Future Holds. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie*, 56(1), 93–117. https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12232

Zvobgo, K., Sotomayor, A. C., Rublee, M. R., Loken, M., Karavas, G., & Duncombe, C. (2023). Race and Racial Exclusion in Security Studies: A Survey of Scholars. *Security Studies*, 32(4–5), 593–621. https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2023.2230880