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Pluralism and political studies in the UK: A pilot study into who gets what in the discipline

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Abstract: How pluralist is political studies? How are resources distributed across the discipline? In this article, we turn one of the fundamental questions of politics – who gets what, when, and how – back on to the study of politics itself. Our focus is on two areas that are central concerns to pluralism: gender and sub-discipline. We pose two specific questions: What is the gender and sub-disciplinary composition of political studies? And how are various resources – ranging from jobs to prizes – distributed along gender and sub-disciplinary lines? In addressing these questions, we draw on a pilot and partial audit of departments, journals, and other key indicators from 1998-2018. The paper contributes to long-standing debates about the character of political studies and the extent to which the field is pluralistic or not.

Keywords: political studies, pluralism, diversity, gender, the UK

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Introduction

If you open up any textbook on politics and its study, you are likely to come across Harold Laswell's (1936) famous definition of politics as "who gets what, when, and how". This article turns this fundamental question of politics – the control, allocation, and use of resources – inwards, and back on to the study of politics itself: how are resources distributed across the discipline? If the aim is to study politics and therefore understand and explain it in all of its manifestations, then the field might have an obligation to ensure that different perspectives and voices are able to substantively contribute to our collective knowledge. If so, then this kind of "pluralism" is a prerequisite for rigour on a collective scale. Who gets stable employment, who gets published, and who gets their research funded are therefore key concerns. To start answering these questions we require an audit of the field: a basic, descriptive account of who gets what in political studies.

Within this context, this article reports on and discusses a pilot study into the composition – or audit – of political studies, with a focus on two important axes of pluralism in the field: gender and sub-discipline. The two research questions are: What is the gender and sub-disciplinary composition of political studies? And how are various resources – ranging from jobs to prizes – distributed along gender and sub-disciplinary lines? In tackling these questions, the paper draws on an original pilot dataset – a partial audit – of departments, journals, and other key measures across 1998-2018. The dataset includes the composition of academics, publications in a leading British political studies journal, journal editors, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grants, committee memberships, and Political Studies Association (PSA) prizes. Although a partial audit, this pilot dataset provides a basis to start analysing the shifting composition of British political studies, with implications for how pluralist the field is.

The audit presents a mixed picture. With regards to gender, we confirm existing studies that highlight the incremental increase in the relative composition and absolute increase of women in the field (see Bates et al. 2012; Pflaeger-Young et al. 2019). This shift is mirrored in the gender composition of articles published in *Political Studies*, as well as the composition of various boards, committees, and panels (although PSA awards and prizes perhaps buck this trend). With regards to sub-disciplines (e.g. political theory, political economy, etc.), the overall trend we find is evolution rather than transformation. Out of the sub-disciplines we coded, none have grown dominant, none have disappeared, and nearly all are growing in absolute terms. We do note, however, some uneven distribution of resources, especially in terms of research funding. We discuss and interpret these findings in the discussion section of the article, before concluding with some suggestions for future research.

Political studies in the UK

To make sense of pluralism in political studies – including with respect to gender and sub-discipline – we need to appreciate and acknowledge the historical development of the discipline in the UK (on which see Johnson, 1989; Hayward, 1991; Hayward et al., 1999; Kenny, 2004). Key milestones in the development of the field include the establishment of the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1895 and the creation of a Chair in Political Theory and Institutions at the University of Oxford in 1912; followed in the same institution a decade later, with the launch of a degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (Grant, 2010: 6). Political studies was not however properly institutionalised until the establishment of the Political Studies Association (PSA) in 1950, the commencement of an annual conference in 1951, and the launch of *Political Studies* a year later (Grant, 2010: 35-7). It is helpful to place the gender and sub-disciplinary composition of the field in this context. We will review each in turn.

With respect to gender, it is notable that the twelve signatories to a letter proposing the creation of the PSA were men (Grant, 2010: 18). It was not until 1974 that a woman, Susan Saunders, joined the PSA's Executive Board. The PSA's Women Group was established in 1977 and shortly after Jodi Lovenduski (1980) wrote a path-breaking report on the state of the discipline. She disclosed unambiguous evidence of a pattern of disadvantage for women involving 'higher teaching loads, lower publication success, lower publication rates, lower earnings, lower levels of self-confidence [and] lower chances of promotion'. Starting the mid-1980s, the PSA began to champion greater gender equality within the discipline. Over the same period, the study of gender and politics emerged as a 'coherent sub-field' (Mackay, 2004: 113). However, while research on gender and politics was routinely appearing in mainstream politics journals, the status of this literature within the overall discipline remained uncertain. Vicky Randall (1991) observed that it is not always clear that the rest of the discipline is listening to the scholars producing work on gender and politics.

In recent years, a series of reports (ESRC 2007; Grant, 2010: 157-8) and academic articles (e.g. Allen and Savigny, 2016; Akhtar et al., 2005; Bates et al., 2012; Briggs and Harrison, 2015; Childs and Krook, 2006; Dunlop, 2018; Foster et al., 2013; Mackay, 2004; Pflaeger-Young et al., 2019; Randall, 1991; Savigny, 2019; Williams et al., 2015) have pointed to the continued under-representation of women within the discipline and leading journals; how this under-representation is linked to the prominence and value of gender research and teaching; and the gendered character of the impact agenda. This literature also outlines several factors constraining women's participation in the profession, including a top-down balance of gendered power, a lack of female role models, and the gendered pressure of family commitments and time constraints. These factors intersect with other axes of difference that include sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and disability (Smith and Lee 2015; Mattocks and Briscoe-Palmer, 2016; Begum and Saini, 2019). Our paper builds on and expands this

literature. While the gender composition within Politics departments and academic journals has been studied before, we analyse it alongside other forms that include the award of grants and prizes and the composition of journal editorial teams. We also explore how the composition of gender intersects with different sub-disciplines.

The historical emergence and evolving status of political studies sub-disciplines cannot be divorced from the perennial question of whether politics can be studied as a science or not. When the establishment of the PSA was being discussed, an agree-to-disagree consensus soon emerged that 'no agreement exists, or is likely to be reached in the near future, about the precise scope of a systematic study of politics' (quoted in Grant, 2010: 18). Although bound within a relatively narrow conception of the political, political studies was conceived from the beginning as an inherently pluralistic discipline composed of the different research and teaching bases of political theory, government, parties and groups, public opinion, and international relations. *Political Studies'* first editor, Wilfrid Harrison, who had counselled against the study of politics as a science, was notably determined to publish articles from across the discipline as he perceived it (Grant, 2010: 39). As the decades passed, the discipline changed. Following talk of a 'coup' against the PSA's old guard in 1971, Brian Barry, one of the insurrectionaries, was instrumental in launching the *British Journal of Political Science* (BJPS). The journal almost immediately became associated with the publication of articles on the study of elections and public opinion using quantitative methods. The British International Studies Association was established in 1975 and *Review of International Studies* was launched soon after. Politics and international relations have to some extent since then led separate professional academic lives despite usually cohabiting within the same departments.

New approaches emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Rational choice theory rapidly gained ground in the US and seemed set to 'dominate political science in a generation or less' (Mueller, 1993). With a UK base in the Department of Government at the LSE, it seemed that

rational choice theory might have a similar impact in the UK, which it did not quite. Rather, there has been a steady rise in the quantity and diversity of recognised sub-disciplines. In 1979, at a time when the PSA already had 19 specialist groups, a Social Science Research Council report (cited in Grant, 2010; 49) commented upon the 'generally accepted fact that Political Science embraces an unusually wide range of sub-disciplines, some of which might under other administrative arrangements have separate committees of their own'. Nearly three decades on, an ESRC (2007: 11) review noted that 'more than anywhere else, perhaps, the primary attachments of scholars of politics and IR in the UK are to sub-disciplines rather than to some larger, overarching discipline'. There is little indication that this has changed.

However, diversity and peaceful existence is one thing, and genuine dialogue and relationships between those sub-disciplines in another. Gabriel Almond (1990) and Brian Barry (1999) bemoaned the wilful ignorance and indifference of different parts of the discipline to each other. Almond likened political studies to a restaurant in which the diners sit at separate tables and mostly talk only to those they are sat with. Through the development of 'border-crossing' (Thelen, 1999) or 'analytical eclectic' (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010) approaches, some researchers have highlighted the virtues of employing different theoretical and methodological approaches within the same research projects or trajectories. A second response – associated most clearly with Robert Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann's (1996) *New Handbook of Political Science* – maintained that beneath the apparent fragmentation of the discipline lies a common research agenda, shared methodological tools, and even a common theoretical approach (centred upon the new institutionalism). In the UK context, Marsh and Savigny (2004) rejected and criticised these claims as invalid and as a stalking horse for American-style positivism. These concerns over methodological pluralism partially translate, albeit in an uneven and messy fashion, into the sub-disciplines we outline and code below – upon which there is little existing research.

This is the shifting context in which we pose our overarching inquiry about the extent to which political studies a pluralist field, in which resources and recognition are equally distributed. In the next section we outline our pilot study to start addressing the specific research questions of this article: What is the gender and sub-disciplinary composition of political studies? And how are various resources – ranging from jobs to prizes – distributed along gender and sub-disciplinary lines?

Research design

To address these questions, we aim to develop a partial audit of who gets what in political studies in the UK by constructing a pilot dataset of the composition of the field by gender and sub-discipline. The rationale for our study is the distribution of resources in the discipline. In concrete terms, this means working out who is employed in political studies; who publishes in which journals; who has more resources to conduct research; who gets recognised for their scholarship (e.g. awards); and who has formal decision-making authority over the discipline (e.g. journal editors). For this reason, we selected seven measures for this pilot study: (1) the composition of academics; (2) publications in a leading British political studies journal; (3) journal editorship in that journal; (4) Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grants; (5) PSA executive committee membership; (6) PSA prizes; and (7) Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and Research Excellence Framework (REF) panel membership. Given that this is a pilot study, we collected data from around three snapshots: 1998, 2008, and 2018.[1] Each data was coded by sub-discipline and gender. The dataset is a pilot and partial audit, and is not intended to be exhaustive. The details of the measures are in Table 1 below, and we will

[1] We start our dataset in the late-1990s because much of the archive material for the research was accessed via the Internet Archive (http://archive.org/web/).

use the remainder of this section to justify and explain this approach, starting with the seven measures.

The first measure is the composition of academics. The most important resource for an academic is employment. An academic appointment provides paid employment with the space (and also often the obligation) to conduct scholarly research and contribute to the field. Academic appointments are uneven, both in terms of security and seniority, and in terms of research intensity (in contrast to prioritising teaching, for example). Without the means to code the entirety of the field over the time period, we opted to sample a selection of research intensive institutions as the focus of our study. We selected these departments based on our questions over the distribution of resources in political studies. Since the rationale of our study is about who gets to contribute to the discipline through peer-reviewed knowledge (and control processes, such as journals and conferences, that underpin that core activity), we chose to focus on research intensive institutions because our questions about pluralism implicitly address the research rather than teaching side of scholarship.

We selected departments to analyse on the basis of the strongest performance in research evaluation exercises. RAE/REF are research audits produce one of the most important rankings (and thereby status) in British higher education. Those rankings are then used to make decisions about research funding (and therefore the allocation of resources). There is therefore an incentive for research-driven academics to seek employment in these departments, thereby making employment in these research-intensive departments itself a scarce resource that can also denote status within the field. We also assume that those departments – having shown consistently strong performance in RAE/REF – strategically select new colleagues or encourage their existing faculty to produce scholarship that will score highly in the REF terms of rigour, originality, and significance. If some sub-disciplines were, for example, seen in REF terms as significantly more "rigorous" than others, then we might expect to see a relative

increase in those sub-disciplines across the twenty-year period. If so, then we assume that these sub-disciplines are receiving greater resources than others, and therefore a possible decline in pluralism. This is also relevant to the distribution of male and female academics. Existing research has queried whether there is a gender divide in terms of research and teaching, with female academics more likely to focus "teaching, module and programme management, and student pastoral care" (Briggs and Harrison, 2015: 108).

To select departments, we collected Politics and International Studies RAE/REF rankings from 1996, 2001, 2008, and 2014, and calculated an average ranking for each institution (which mostly corresponds to departments). We then selected the seven departments with an average ranking of 10 or less across the four assessments, as this indicates a long-term research intensity and, within the contested but established rules of the authoritative REF process, "excellence". The seven institutions are, in alphabetical order: Aberystwyth, Essex, Exeter, London School of Economics (LSE), King's College London (KCL), Oxford and Sheffield.[2] We coded academic staff at these seven institutions across three snapshots: 1998, 2008, and 2018 (n = 1,026).

The second measure is publications in a leading British political studies journal. The most established and common way to contribute to knowledge is through publishing in peer-reviewed journals. Who publishes where, on what topic, and using which methods, is a key component of pluralism. To gauge how British political studies is represented in academic journals is, however, a challenge. As the field has grown and become increasingly internationalised, the number of journals available to scholars in British political studies has increased. To gauge some sense of the political studies field, then, we therefore selected *Political Studies.* As the PSA flagship journal, *Political Studies* is implicitly expected to represent the field as a whole, which is reflected in its long-standing and self-consciously

[2] LSE includes both the Department of Government and Department of International Relations. KCL includes the Department of War Studies.

generalist mandate. It is also the PSA's longest-established journal with a strong ranking and reputation. So although the journal is now international insofar as it actively solicits and accepts submissions from beyond the UK, we can nevertheless analyse it as a core component of political studies in the UK. We collected data in three sets of three-volume year blocs between 1996 and 1998, 2006 and 2008, and 2016 and 2018 to ensure we had a sufficient level of data (n = 395).

The third measure is journal editorship. Journal editors have power to shape the field through their formal decision making over what to publish. Journal editorship – as well as a place on the editorial board – also denotes status. We collected data on *Political Studies* editors, associate editors, and editorial boards in 1998, 2008, and 2018 (n = 103).

The fourth measure is research grants. To fund research (and increasingly to achieve promotion) academics apply for external funding. The ESRC is the major and most prestigious funding body for political studies in the UK. Although the ESRC has some programmes dedicated to the promotion of quantitative work (e.g. Secondary Data Analysis schemes), its remit is to fund all social science research. Having said this, we expect that resource-intensive research (e.g. large scale survey work) to be better funded than other areas. For this reason, we have excluded British Election Study and European Social Survey funding from the dataset. The ESRC grant data (2006-2018) was sourced from the UKRI gateway to publicly funded research. We used a combination of research classification, the department of the PI, and researcher judgement to create a dataset of grants awarded to political studies scholars (n = 195).[3]

[3] The Gateway to Research website (https://gtr.ukri.org/) provides data for every grant awarded by UK Research Councils since 2004, including the ESRC. The dataset was compiled in two stages. First, we used the GTR website to compile dataset that included all ESRC Research Grants that were classified as 'politics' or 'political science' (total of 575). Second, we narrowed down the database by including grants that were held in politics departments and/or in which the PI had a substantive role in political studies networks (as evidenced through grant title or through conference participation and journal choice) and that had been completed. This left us with an n of 195. The limitations of this approach include the exclusion of international relations that was not classified as 'politics' or 'political science', and only being able to code the PI.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh measures are status positions within the field: PSA executive committee membership (n = 345), the recipients of PSA prizes (n=95),[4] and the membership of RAE/REF panels (n = 66) (see Table 1).

[Table 1 here]

For each data-point we recorded the gender and sub-discipline(s) of the academic concerned: whether as staff member, author, grant-holder, prize recipient or committee member. For the composition of departments and the academics employed in them, we also recorded the seniority of academics in reference to their job title.[5] We coded for sub-discipline using two methods. In the case of institutional composition, prizes, or membership, we coded on the basis of the research interests and publications of an academic as described on their departmental research profile during the corresponding time period. In the case of journal articles and grants, we coded on the basis of the article or grant title. For the sub-discipline codes, we employed eleven categories: area/regional studies; British politics; comparative politics; elections, parties, and public opinion (EPOP); environmental politics; European Union studies; gender; international politics; political economy; political theory; and public policy and administration.[6] It is important to note that in all cases we assigned up to a maximum of

[4] The Harrison Prize (32 recipients) is for the best article published during the previous year in Political Studies (data available from 1994); the Mackenzie Prize (34) for the best book published in political science (from 1987); the Richard Rose Prize (14) for a young scholar who has made a distinctive contribution to British Politics (from 2005); and the Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize (15) for lifetime achievement (2000-2014).

[5] We used six categories: teaching fellow, research fellow, lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor. If alternative job titles were used, then we translated them into our categories, e.g. teaching associate became teaching fellow, and associate professor became senior lecturer. When positions were ambiguous, we coded as undefined position. This amounted to 24% of our surveyed institutions in 1998, but less than 1% in 2018.

[6] There is no single agreed list of sub-disciplinary areas within politics. Recent REF panel guidance describes politics and international studies as a 'broad spectrum' before listing nearly twenty-five areas of research (REF 2018, 24). The most recent QAA Benchmark statement for Politics confirms that politics is a broad church before listing fifty areas of work (QAA 2015, 8-9). These lists are too long to be of practical value. Our eleven categories were developed through a grounded theory strategy involving preliminary and exploratory coding. Once the categories were established, all three authors separately coded a sample of the dataset to ensure intercoder reliability. We discussed the few differences, developed the coding procedure further, and flagged up any data points that required a check from the research team.

two sub-disciplinary codes. Individual academics rarely work in just a single sub-discipline, and many journal articles and grants can span categories. A paper on voting in the 2015 British general election can, for example, be coded as being both EPOP and British politics. A paper on the influence of lobby groups on European Commission decisions can reasonably be coded as both European Union studies and public policy and administration.[7]

Before moving onto results, a note about the status of the international politics sub-discipline is required. Given that International Relations has its own institutions, we expect to see the proportion of international politics articles published in political studies journals, as editors for those journals, and in the PSA to be smaller when compared to Department composition and RAE/REF panel membership.

Results

Gender composition

Our first measure is the composition of academics. Existing research has presented the gender composition of academics in Politics and International Relations departments before. This research shows that the number of women in the profession is increasing in a way that is "incremental" rather than transformative (Plfaeger-Young et al., 2019: 1).

[Table 2 here]

[7] When a scholar, article, or grant could conceivably fit under more than two categories we made a judgement about the two sub-disciplinary areas that were most relevant, based on, for example, the literature or network of the academic in question or the purported primary contributions of an article or grant. Area/regional studies was coded when an academic's research interests (or a journal or grant's scope) and contribution to literature was to understanding a single area or region (e.g. France or Latin America), with the exception of European Union studies. Comparative politics was coded when an academic's research interests (or a journal or grant's scope) and contribution to literature was to understanding a more general phenomena using case studies (e.g. authoritarian regimes or corruption). In total, in our survey of academics working in institutions across our three time periods we double-coded 626 out of a total of 1,030 data-points.

Our dataset on the composition of seven research-intensive departments mirrors this trend, as highlighted in Table 2. In relative terms of proportion of male and female academics, in 1998 85% of academics in our dataset were men and 15% were women; in 2008 76% were men and 24% were women; and in 2018 67% were men and 33% were women. This general trend was reflected in each of the seven departments we examined. In absolute terms, the number of female academics in our selection of departments has increased: from 35 in 1998, to 93 in 2008, and to 130 in 2018. The number of male academics within these institutions is double (265) the number of female academics (130). Taking the relative and absolute figures together suggests that the overall gender balance of the seven departments in our sample is improving, thereby mirroring trends in the wider field (Plfaeger-Young et al., 2019).

[Table 3 here]

Plfaeger-Young et al. (2019) identify a "gender seniority gap" – the proportion of men to women at each level of seniority – as being more persistent. Our dataset also mirrors this trend, as Table 3 shows. For example, in 1998, there were just 2 female professors in our dataset (4.25% of all professors, 1% of all positions). By 2018 this has risen to 29 (22% of all professors, 7% of all positions). There was also a significant rise in the number of male professors (from 45 to 102 between 1998 and 2018).

Our second and third measures are journal articles and editorial board membership. The gender composition of authors in *Political Studies* mirrors the trends in overall composition of the field, even though it is an international journal. In relative terms, the percentage of male authors has decreased from 85% in 1996-1998, to 76% in 2006-2008, and to 68% in 2016-2018. In absolute terms, there were 17 female authors in our first snapshot (1996-1998)

compared to 89 in our final snapshot (2016-2018). Likewise, the gender composition of the broad editorial team (including editors, associate editors and editorial board members) at *Political Studies* follows this trend too. The percentage of male board members has shifted from 77% and 76% in 1998 and 2008 respectively to 54% in 2018. The number of female appointments to the board has risen from 5 in 1998, to 10 in 2008, and to 18 in 2018.

Our fourth measure is research grants. In relation to successful ESRC grant applications between 2006 and 2018, 74% of grants were awarded to male principal investigators (PI) compared to 26% to female. Translated into absolute or monetary terms, male PIs have received around £30m compared to female PIs who have received around £6m. There is also a difference in the average value of awards. Male PIs on average receive around £210,000 while female PIs are awarded an average £118,000.

Our next two measures are PSA committee membership and RAE/REF panel membership. In 2000, 7 of 27 overall members of the Executive Committee were women; by 2008, 7 of 21 members were women; and by 2018, 7 out of 14 members were women. With RAE/REF panel membership, a similar pattern is visible. The panel in 1996 consisted of 8 men and 1 woman; the three following panels in 2001 (9 men and 3 women), 2008 (11 men and 4 women), and 2014 (16 men and 5 women) were similar; and the initial 2021 panel consists of 4 men and 5 women.

Our final measure is PSA prizes. Since 1998, the Harrison prize for the author(s) of the best article in *Political Studies* has been awarded to 27 different men but to only 1 woman (in 2010). Between 1987 and 2016 (the last time it was awarded), the Mackenzie prize given to the authors of the best book in political studies has been awarded to 33 men and 1 woman (in 2016). Since 2005, the Richard Rose Prize for a young scholar in British Politics has been awarded to 11 men and 2 women (although it should be noted that this is broadly representative of the proportion of male-female British politics academics in our sample, as presented in Table

2 below). Finally, the Berlin Prize for lifetime achievement has been awarded to 13 men and 2 women (in 2013 and 2014). Overall, 90% of all prizes have been awarded to men.

Sub-disciplinary composition

Table 4 shows the composition of sub-disciplines in our dataset of seven research-intensive departments in 1998, 2008, and 2018.[8] There was overall growth in the number of academics in our seven departments, especially the 65 per cent increase between 1998 and 2008. Growth in absolute numbers could facilitate stark change in sub-disciplinary composition, especially if one sub-discipline was increasingly dominant or devalued. Our findings do not suggest that. Even though some sub-disciplines have doubled or quadrupled in absolute terms along with the overall growth of those seven departments, the overall trend of sub-disciplinary composition across these departments is relative stability and gradual evolution over time. With the exception of British politics (more on which below), all sub-disciplines have grown in absolute terms between 1998 and 2018. Hires and retires can sometimes feel as if they are coming thick and fast but the accumulated effect on the *relative* composition of sub-disciplines seems relatively gradual. Indeed, the average change across the eleven areas between 1998 and 2018 was 3 percentage points. This suggests that explaining the relative sub-disciplinary composition of our sample requires a historical account that can trace how this composition first emerged. Nevertheless, some trends at the level of sub-disciplinary composition can be observed across our twenty-year timeframe.

Three sub-disciplines – international politics, political theory, and area/regional studies – have double-digit proportion of the departments across the three snapshots. International politics is consistent as the largest sub-discipline with an average of 24% across the three

[8] Note that our data on sub-disciplines refers to the proportion of the field rather than headcount. Since we gave ourselves the option of giving two sub-disciplinary codes to each academic in our dataset, we cannot present data on the headcount (1,030). To work out the composition of the field as sub-disciplinary proportion, we instead used the total amount of codes (1,651).

periods, which is unsurprising given that it has its own major learned societies, journals, and frames of reference. The other sub-disciplines to register a double-digit proportion are British politics in 1998 and comparative politics in 2008 and 2018. Amongst the smaller sub-disciplines, political economy and gender have doubled in proportion and environmental politics has increased four-fold, albeit all from low bases of 1-3% in 1998. British politics and area/regional studies have reduced in their proportion, with British politics more than halving in its proportion.

[Table 4 here]

These findings suggests that no sub-discipline is now or is becoming dominant over appointments – a key resource in academics' capacity to contribute to knowledge – in our selection of seven research intensive departments across our twenty-year timeframe. We can quantify diversity of sub-discipline over time by adapting a method developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979). While their method was designed to calculate the "effective number" of parties in a political system, we have adopted this calculate the "effective number" of sub-disciplines in a field of study.[9] If each of the eleven sub-disciplines in this study had a perfectly equal split in the composition of the field, then the "effective number" would be 11. Conversely, if one sub-discipline had a 100% proportion and the others had 0%, then the effective number would be 1. The higher the number, the more pluralist the discipline is. The effective number of sub-disciplines in our dataset was 6.2 in 1998, 6.6 in 2008, and 7.5 in 2018.

[9] The effective number of parties is a measure which takes account of the relative weighted proportion of parties within a political system in a way which can account for both the number and significance of smaller parties. Imagine that each of the eleven sub-disciplines we have identified had an equal 9.09% overall proportion. The Laakso and Taagepera approach invites us to turn this percentage into a fractional share (0.0909); square each of those shares (0.008266); add together the resulting eleven identical figures (0.090891); and divide 1 by that number (11).

This suggests that the composition of sub-disciplines in our selection of departments is becoming more diverse across the twenty-year snapshot of the study, albeit gradually.[10]

Our dataset allows us to see how male and female academics are distributed across the sub-disciplines in our sample. Table 5 highlights the proportion of male and female academics in each sub-discipline between 1998 and 2018. These numbers need to be treated with caution, however, especially with the smaller sub-disciplines, where trends may be random. Nevertheless, some trends are noteworthy. Although gender is a small sub-discipline in our sample, it seems an outlier with regard to male academics: those that study gender are predominantly women, and in our 2018 dataset there are no men who specialize in gender. International politics, which has the largest proportion of the academics in 2018, saw its proportion of male academics in our dataset decrease from 86% in 1998 to 63% in 2018 across our dataset, while the number of women specializing in international politics has increased in absolute terms from 11 in 1998 to 63 in 2018. In 2018, British politics has the largest proportion of male academic academics in our dataset in that year (86%).

[Table 5 here]

Our second and third measures are *Political Studies* articles and editorial board membership. Table 6 shows the number and proportion of articles published across different sub-disciplines within *Political Studies* between 1996-98, 2006-08 and 2016-18. The sub-disciplinary composition of articles in *Political Studies* does not necessarily mirror the trends in sub-disciplinary composition above (and nor should we expect it to, given the international character of the journal). Political theory represents both a high proportion and absolute number of articles in *Political Studies* across the three snapshots, although its relative proportion has

[10] Note that we report this number to indicate the direction of travel in our dataset. We do not necessarily suggest that the number ought to be as close to 11 as possible.

gone from 36% in 1996-98 to 23% in 2016-18. With British politics, the absolute number of articles has remained consistent but its relative proportion has shrunk from 17% to 9% as the overall number of articles in the journal has increased. The most significant change is in EPOP, which has gone from 5 articles and a 4% proportion in the 1996-8 volumes, to 68 articles and a 24% proportion in 2016-18. Gender, political economy, environment, and European Union studies have consistently small proportions of published articles (less than 10% over the timeframe). As expected, international politics also has a small proportion of articles (between 2-5% over the timeframe).

[Table 6 here]

Our fourth measure is research grants. Figure 1 shows the total value of ESRC awards made to the different sub-disciplines between 2006 and 2018. The two sub-disciplines that have received the most funding are British politics and EPOP at around £7m each. Comparative politics and public administration/policy follow up with around £5m each. International politics, area/regional studies, and European Union studies are next with £2-3m each, followed by political economy and environmental politics that received £1-1.5m. Finally, gender and political theory both received just under £1m. (It should be noted, however, that while time is a valuable resource for all academics, some research is more dependent on resources than others).

[Figure 1 here]

Figure 2, meanwhile, illustrates the monetary total of successful ESRC grants in terms of sub-discipline and Principal Investigator (PI) gender. It is important to note that our dataset

only accounts for PIs and not the overall research term who may also benefit from the resources and prestige of the grant. Nevertheless, the Figure highlights how male PIs in EPOP and British Politics receive high amounts of research funding, when compared to both other sub-disciplines and especially to women in their own sub-disciplines.

[Figure 2 here]

Discussion

With regards to gender composition, we confirm existing studies that highlight the increase in the relative percentage and absolute number of women in the field. This shift is reflected in the gender composition of articles published in *Political Studies*, as well as the composition of various boards, committees, and panels (although PSA awards and prizes perhaps buck this trend). Whether this speed of change is sufficiently fast or not is not a question we can answer here. In terms of interpretation, Pflaeger et al. (2019: 1-3) provide an overview of recent research that examines the barriers that women face in both Politics/IR departments and in Higher Education more generally. Given the existing research on gender composition, we will focus the remainder of this discussion on sub-disciplinary composition (and its interaction with gender composition).

With regards to sub-discipline composition, it is important to foreground a limitation of our dataset – for which we only had the capacity to collect and code data on seven research intensive departments – in this area before discussing results. The extent to which these trends might be replicated across the entirety of the field and beyond our sample is impossible to decide definitively without further data collection. Focussing on seven research-intensive departments may skew the results. For instance, there are some anecdotal accounts within the field that suggest that the distribution of sub-disciplines might be uneven across departments;

less research-intensive departments may be more open to so-called "critical" approaches, which might include some gender-focused political studies. With this caveat in mind, we offer some reflections based on the findings.

The overall trend we find in sub-disciplinary composition across these departments is evolution rather than transformation. Out of the sub-disciplines we coded, none have grown dominant, none have disappeared, and nearly all are growing in absolute terms. Editorships, board membership, and committee appointments are more fluid than academic appointments. We are therefore unsurprised to see more change in these areas across our dataset. Nevertheless, the evolution of three sub-disciplines seem especially noteworthy within our data: British politics, EPOP, and gender. In the remainder of this section, we will offer some speculative reflections on the evolution of these three sub-disciplines.

The proportion of academics working in the area of British politics in our selection of research-intensive departments has contracted from 12% in 1998 to just over 5% in 2018. As noted above, British politics is the only sub-discipline in the dataset to decline in absolute numbers between 1998 and 2018. Publications in *Political Studies* also mirror this: the proportion of articles published on British politics in *Political Studies* has fallen from 17% to 9%. This is in contrast to other resources such as grants and representation. In relation to ESRC grants, British politics has received the most funding of any sub-discipline, receiving 17% of awards. Meanwhile, 26% of the PSA Executive in 2018 engages in research in British politics, and 10 of 35 winners of the Mackenzie prize conduct research in British politics. Our data suggests that British politics is a predominantly male sub-discipline.

Although our data is limited, the evolution of British politics as a sub-discipline could reflect wider trends in the field of political studies. That 40% of the academics coded as British politics specialists are professors (compared to 18% across the dataset) – and that all of those professors are men (compared to 78% across the dataset) – might suggest that earlier career

academics are choosing different specializations. This may lead to a cohort effect that could explain the gender disparity in this particular sub-discipline. This cohort of established, peak-career (and seemingly mostly male) British politics specialists may explain their high proportion of ESRC funding when compared to other sub-disciplines. With regards to funding, the ESRC is explicitly committed to international funding (i.e. funding researchers based in the UK to research international phenomena), although British politics may be a unique selling point for political studies because most other sub-disciplines are likely to have overlap with other disciplines (e.g. international politics and development studies, political theory and philosophy, or area/regional studies with specialist area studies disciplines). This may be especially the case when combined with EPOP (see below).

On the other hand, it may be the case that British politics has also started to fall out of fashion. This was surely the spirit in which Andrew Gamble made the following provocation in an article on 'Theories of British Politics' published in *Political Studies* in 1990: 'are there good intellectual reasons rather than expedient ones why students should be asked to study British politics rather than the politics of some other country?' (1990: 404). As UK higher education has internationalised through globalising processes and the REF (with its emphasis on "internationally excellent" over "nationally recognised"), the specific study of British politics has perhaps become less incentivized for academics and departments alike – which may hold more for the research-intensive departments in our sample compared to the rest of the discipline. Academics in these departments may have shifted away from situating their work in British politics literatures and approaches, started to study British politics in comparative context, or may just study British politics less altogether. Meanwhile, the declining proportion of space in *Political Studies* may have also been facilitated by the creation of new outlets for British politics work, including *British Politics* and, to a lesser extent, the PSA journal *British Journal of Politics and International Relations.* The birth of these journals

may coincide with the internationalisation of *Political Studies* (although our data cannot confirm this).

EPOP is a second sub-discipline that seems noteworthy. Over the three snapshots in our dataset, EPOP represents around a 6% proportion of the seven research-intensive departments, with a small increase across the time period. It is interesting to compare this to publications in *Political Studies*, with the proportion of EPOP articles increasing from 4% to 24% within the timeframe of our dataset. EPOP has received a large proportion of ESRC grants with almost £7 million awarded over the period.

Like British politics, the evolution of EPOP may also provide some speculative insights into the evolution of the field. The landscape and priorities of UK science may explain the high levels research funding for EPOP. In her research on the governance of British social science, Clare Donovan (2005) has shown how an "everyday epistemology" operates in science policy, which is largely regulated by non-social scientists. As a result, the British research council system (which includes the ESRC) prioritizes positivist research: social sciences is 'forced into … natural scientific thinking' so to legitimise it as an outlet for public funding when in competition with natural sciences, medicine, and engineering (Donovan 2005, 597). Combine this with the ESRC's strategic prioritisation of quantitative work, and it is not hard to see how EPOP-style work is well placed to offer a clear and unique value added and contribution to public life – especially through public opinion polling and related election research, for which large resources are typically needed.

The proportion of the academics in our sample specializing in gender politics has increased over the time period of the study, rising from 1% as a proportion and 4 academics in 1998 to 2% and 16 academics in 2018. This is generally reflected in the percentage of publications in *Political Studies* that are explicitly about gender, with the proportion of publications averaging out at around 2% across the time period. Likewise, gender has around

a 2% proportion of ESRC grants. It is important to note, however, that gender may be incorporated into analyses in different ways, such as variables in theoretical models or as part of conceptual frameworks, that will not have got picked up in the coding exercise for this pilot. In terms of PSA prizes, scholars specializing in gender have won the Richard Rose Prize once, but never the Harrison or Mackenzie prizes. Although not everyone who studies gender is or should be female, our data suggests that there may be a relationship between the two: in our 1998 and 2018 snapshots, 100% of academics specialising in gender were women. Although these numbers are too small to draw definitive conclusions of any sort, we assume based on our experience of the field that this pattern extends across the discipline.

Conclusion

We started this article by reversing the classic politics question of "who gets what, when, and how" back on to the study of politics itself. To start addressing this concern, this article developed a partial audit of the composition of political studies – in the form of a pilot dataset – so to explore how various resources (ranging from jobs to prizes) are distributed along gender and sub-disciplinary lines. We found that the composition of gender and sub-discipline have shifted slowly over the last two decades. While the distribution of resources seems to be getting more even – especially with committee, editorial board, and evaluation panel membership – there also seems there is nevertheless unevenness in the distribution of jobs and grant income especially, both by gender and sub-discipline.

A quick note on what we mean by this conclusion. When we say "uneven distribution of resources", we mean it in a descriptive rather than evaluative way. This article has not developed a framework or normative yardstick for explaining or assessing this distribution. Rather, we present this initial audit of gender and sub-disciplinary composition, and invite

colleagues across the discipline to extend the discussion in that direction – about how to explain these trends and how we should judge them.

Part of that process could involve conducting further research on pluralism in political studies. To conclude, then, we will outline some suggested directions for future research on this topic:

- First, the dataset presented in this article can be extended. This will provide a foundation for stronger and more definitive claims about the composition of the field, which can then be used as the basis for explanatory research. It will also provide a chance to check and, where appropriate, improve the codes (e.g. sub-disciplines).
- Second, future research could engage with movements to decolonise the university. Although these movements have made a splash in IR in the UK and in political science in the US, these concerns have barely made a ripple in British political studies (for an exception see Begum and Saini, 2019). One recent commentary piece concluded by announcing that the author has 'little faith that [political studies] will attempt to decolonise', let alone succeed in doing so (Emejulu, 2019, 44). Given that decolonisation involves challenging the boundaries of knowledge so to, amongst other aims, 'deepen academic rigour and pursue intellectual challenge' (Shilliam, 2018: 67), it should be considered a core part of the "pluralism" suggested at in the introduction.
- Third, scholars could theorise the distribution of resources in political studies further, including developing normative benchmarks. For instance, Nancy Fraser's (1995) analysis of how the politics of recognition – i.e. when marginalised groups are made invisible, subject to cultural domination, ignored, or are disparaged – is inseparable from the politics of distribution could provide a useful frame for thinking through political studies as a site of politics.

- Fourth, future research could build on the existing work on teaching (Foster et al., 2013) by examining the ways in which the discipline is reproduced through how and what we teach – and therefore which knowledge we confer authority as central to the discipline.
- Fifth, network analysis could be used to analyse the citation practices and clusters in the field (for example in IR, see Maliniak, Powers, and Walter 2013). If citations are a form of power in academia (Ahmed, 2017: 148-154), then mapping citation practice and networks may provide important insights into how the discipline operates.

Although our findings are partial due to the pilot character of the study, they still nevertheless advance our knowledge of the discipline in the UK – and how it has been evolving over the last two decades or so. Overall, we hope that this paper will generate discussion about the discipline. Although the field is constrained by the structures of higher education, that does leave the field bereft of agency. "Who gets what, when, and how" is a fundamental question that can be asked of all politics, across all time and space. It is also a question we can be asking of ourselves.

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Table 1. Overview of dataset

Measure	Selection	Timeframe	N
Academics	Aberystwyth, Essex, Exeter, LSE, King's College London, Oxford and Sheffield	1998, 2008, 2018	1,026
Journal articles	*Political Studies* articles (excluding special issues, responses, and editorials)	1996-1998, 2006-2008, 2016-18	395
Journal editorship	*Political Studies* editors, associate editors, and editorial boards	1998, 2008, 2018	103
Research grants	Completed grants awarded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)	2006-2018	195
Committee membership	PSA Executive Committee	2000-2018	345
Prizes	PSA research prizes: the Harrison Prize, the Mackenzie Prize, the Richard Rose Prize, and the Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize	1987-2018	95
Evaluation panel membership	Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and Research Excellence Framework (REF) panels	1996-2018	66

Table 2. Composition of gender in seven politics departments by number and percentage

	1996-98	2006-08	2016-18
Male	201 (85%)	298 (76%)	265 (67%)
Female	35 (15%)	93 (24%)	130 (33%)
Total	236 (100%)	391 (100%)	395 (100%)

Table 3. Composition of gender in seven politics departments by seniority by number and percentage			
	1996-98	**2006-08**	**2016-18**
Professor			
Male	45 (96%)	114 (86%)	102 (78%)
Female	2 (4%)	19 (14%)	29 (22%)
Total	47 (100%)	113 (100%)	131 (100%)
Senior lecturer/reader			
Male	35 (90%)	44 (73%)	88 (68%)
Female	4 (10%)	16 (27%)	31 (32%)
Total	39 (100%)	60 (100%)	129 (100%)
Lecturer			
Male	49 (77%)	68 (68%)	49 (58%)
Female	15 (23%)	32 (32%)	35 (42%)
Total	64 (100%)	100 (100%)	84 (100%)
Teaching/research fellow			
Male	2 (67%)	50 (72%)	24 (49%)
Female	1 (33%)	19 (28%)	25 (49%)
Total	3 (100%)	69 (100%)	49 (100%)
Undefined			
Male	70 (84%)	22 (76%)	2 (100%)
Female	13 (16%)	7 (24%)	0 (0%)
Total	83 (100%)	29 (100%)	2 (100%)

Table 4. Composition of political studies sub-disciplines in seven politics departments by number and percentage			
	1998	**2008**	**2018**
International Politics	83 (24%)	142 (23%)	170 (25%)
Comparative Politics	26 (7%)	67 (11%)	70 (10%)
Environment	3 (1%)	10 (2%)	29 (4%)
Public Administration/Policy	22 (6%)	47 (8%)	52 (8%)
British Politics	43 (12%)	45 (7%)	35 (5%)
Political Theory	41 (12%)	61 (10%)	83 (12%)
Area/Regional Studies	77 (22%)	120 (20%)	101 (15%)
European Studies	21 (6%)	48 (8%)	31 (5%)
Gender	4 (1%)	11 (2%)	16 (2%)
Political Economy	11 (3%)	38 (6%)	47 (7%)
Elections and Public Opinion	17 (3%)	36 (6%)	44 (6%)
Total codes	348 (100%)	625 (100%)	678 (100%)
Total academics	236	391	395

Table 5. Sub-disciplinary composition of gender seven politics departments by number and percentage			
	1998	**2008**	**2018**
International politics			
Male	69 (86%)	109 (77%)	106 (63%)
Female	11 (14%)	33 (23%)	63 (37%)
Total	80 (100%)	142 (100%)	169 (100%)
Comparative politics			
Male	23 (88%)	53 (79%)	49 (70%)
Female	3 (12%)	14 (21%)	21 (30%)
Total	26 (100%)	67 (100%)	70 (100%)
Environmental politics			
Male	3 (100%)	9 (90%)	16 (55%)
Female	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	13 (45%)
Total	3 (100%)	10 (100%)	29 (100%)
Public administration/policy			
Male	20 (91%)	38 (81%)	34 (65%)
Female	2 (9%)	9 (19%)	18 (35%)
Total	22 (100%)	47 (100%)	52 (100%)
British politics			
Male	41 (98%)	38 (84%)	30 (86%)
Female	1 (2%)	7 (16%)	5 (14%)
Total	42 (100%)	45 (100%)	35 (100%)
Political theory			
Male	32 (78%)	50 (82%)	59 (71%)
Female	9 (22%)	11 (18%)	24 (29%)
Total	41 (100%)	61 (100%)	83 (100%)
Area/regional studies			
Male	57 (79%)	86 (72%)	66 (66%)
Female	15 (21%)	34 (28%)	34 (34%)

Total	72 (100%)	120 (100%)	100 (100%)
European union politics			
Male	18 (90%)	32 (67%)	20 (65%)
Female	2 (10%)	16 (33%)	11 (35%)
Total	20 (100%)	48 (100%)	100 (100%)
Gender			
Male	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)
Female	4 (100%)	10 (91%)	16 (100%)
Total	4 (100%)	11 (100%)	16 (100%)
Political economy			
Male	8 (73%)	25 (66%)	36 (77%)
Female	3 (27%)	13 (34%)	11 (23%)
Total	11 (100%)	38 (100%)	47 (100%)
Elections and public opinion			
Male	15 (88%)	31 (86%)	32 (73%)
Female	2 (12%)	5 (14%)	12 (27%)
Total	17 (100%)	36 (100%)	44 (100%)

Table 6. Composition of articles in *Political Studies*

	1996-98	2006-08	2016-18
International Politics	6 (5%)	9 (5%)	6 (2%)
Comparative Politics	7 (5%)	20 (10%)	31 (11%)
Environment	3 (2%)	5 (3%)	2 (1%)
Public administration/policy	17 (13%)	27 (14%)	21 (7%)
British Politics	22 (17%)	25 (13%)	25 (9%)
Political Theory	47 (36%)	53 (27%)	66 (23%)
Area/regional studies	13 (10%)	11 (6%)	45 (16%)
European Union studies	6 (5%)	5 (3%)	10 (4%)
Gender	2 (2%)	3 (2%)	6 (2%)
Political Economy	4 (3%)	3 (2%)	4 (1%)
Elections and Public Opinion	5 (4%)	35 (18%)	68 (24%)
Total codes	132 (100%)	196 (100%)	284 (100%)
Total articles	96	129	184

Figure 1. ESRC research grants (total awarded) by sub-discipline

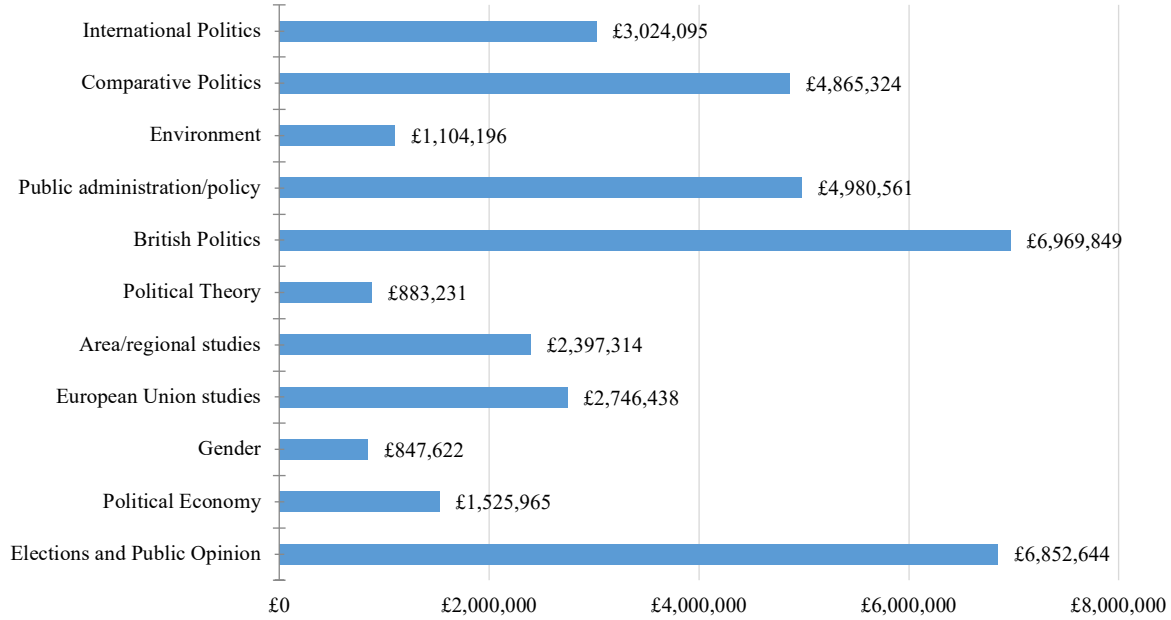

Figure 2. ESRC research grants (total allocated) by sub-discipline and gender