



Gender Is Not Proxy: What Intersectionality Tells Us About Diversity in Canadian Politics



Historically, Canadian political scientists have paid very little attention to race, privileging instead a focus on region, language, or ethnicity. When other aspects of diversity were considered, gender was often used as a proxy to understand the experiences of all politically marginalized groups. In this paper, I show why an intersectional approach is needed to understand diversity in Canadian politics. I look at the decision points that structure legislative recruitment and candidate emergence, including those made by parties, voters, and the candidates themselves. Each decision point either expands or limits the possibilities for more diverse representation. Building on the gender and politics literature, this study asks whether and how these patterns differ when race and intersectionality are integrated into the analyses. Focusing on more than 800 political aspirants in Canada, I show that legislative recruitment varies by race, gender, and their intersections. Whereas white and racialized women aspire to political office at roughly the same rates, their experiences diverge at the point of party selection. Political parties' efforts to diversify politics have mostly benefitted white women, and a greater emphasis on the electoral trajectories of racialized women and men is needed.

Professor Erin Tolley is the Canada Research Chair in Gender, Race, and Inclusive Politics and an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University. She is an expert on the relationship between socio-demographic diversity and Canadian politics, with a specific interest in race, gender and representation in political institutions. She is the author of the award-winning book, *Framed: Media and the Coverage of Race in Canadian Politics*, the co-editor of six books, and the author of a number of articles and chapters on diversity and politics. She was previously a researcher and policy analyst in the Canadian civil service and a faculty member at the University of Toronto.

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