

# Chapter 1

## CHARTING A COURSE FOR BLACK WOMEN'S STUDIES IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

*Only the black woman can say, when and where I enter . . .  
then and there the whole race enters with me.*

—Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*

This book represents a conscious and deliberate effort to chart a course for black women's studies in political science. According to Mack Jones, distinguished professor of political science at Clark Atlanta University and founding president of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, the responsibility of black political scientists is to “develop a political science which grows out of a black perspective” and so the chapters that follow are united by this goal (1977, 16). Understanding that it is important, but not enough, to say that the general concern from which the book originates is the paucity of scholarly research devoted to black feminist voices in politics, I maintain that the integration of leading historic black female activists aids in the explanation and understanding of group consciousness in general and black feminist consciousness in particular, as both are rooted in lived experiences with interlocking systems of oppression. Perhaps the best way to understand the simultaneity of oppression faced by black women is to study the proponents of black feminism as they engaged in public debate and grassroots activism, assuming that black feminist consciousness has in some ways shaped, or at least informed, their political activities in light of the historical contexts, material conditions,

and lived experiences that beget their acute sense of awareness. For that reason, this chapter devotes scholarly attention to one of the first black female intellectuals to focus on the race-sex correspondence in black women's lives: Anna Julia Cooper.

As the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the intellectual roots of black feminism and its relevance to politics go back a long way. Overcoming racism and sexism has had a profound impact on African American women, inspiring them to actively participate in tremendously successful grassroots campaigns. Starting with the antislavery and women's suffrage movements, black female activists were among the first to speak out against racial and sexual oppression in the United States (Lerner 1972; Shanley 1988; Terborg-Penn 1998; Olson 2001). Anna Julia Cooper's seminal work, *A Voice from the South*, is considered the earliest and most visible manifestation of black feminist consciousness. Writing in 1892, prior to W. E. B. DuBois's declaration that the problem of the twentieth century was the color line, Cooper asserted that women of African descent were "confronted by a woman question and a race problem" and remarked that "while our men seem thoroughly abreast of the times on every other subject, when they strike the woman question, they drop back into sixteenth century logic" (see Loewenberg and Bogin 1976, 244; Washington 1988, xxix; Cooper 1995, 45). Given her status as a member of the black intelligentsia, her comments call attention to the male-dominated character of black leadership and raise questions about conventional notions of respectable manhood and true womanhood at the turn of the century. Taken together, these statements capture the essence of black feminist thought as interlocking systems of oppression circumscribe the lives of African American women.

A consummate teacher, intellectual mind, and much sought after lecturer, Anna Julia Cooper was critical of educational systems that failed to consider the needs of African American women. Given that she subscribed to bourgeois notions of respectability and genteel femininity that prevented her from recognizing the intellectual and leadership abilities of black women laborers, Cooper advocated liberal arts education for black female elites (Giddings 1984; Guy-Sheftall 1995; Gaines 1996; James 1997; Olson 2001). Cooper opined, "We can't all be professional people. We must have

a backbone to the race” (Giddings 1984, 103) and attributed agency to black women college graduates. Her condemnation of the women’s movement and its leaders, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for their unwillingness to oppose racism in women’s clubs was accepted and applauded by black male authority until she expressed disapproval of those conservative black male leaders who marginalized the plight and potential of black women in their discussions of the race problem (Harley and Terborg-Penn 1978; Giddings 1984; Guy-Sheftall 1995; Gaines 1996; James 1997). Despite an academic career that lasted longer than that of DuBois, her political philosophy on a variety of issues ranging from women’s rights to black liberation and from segregation to literary criticism has been virtually ignored and forgotten by contemporary scholars. Cooper, whose political philosophy was ahead of her time, has not garnered nearly as much scholarly attention as her black male counterparts, although her scholarship and political activism compel juxtaposition with fellow black leaders, specifically DuBois in whom she found an ally (Harley and Terborg-Penn 1978; Giddings 1984; Gaines 1996; James 1997; Olson 2001).

While DuBois has long been viewed as an intellectual giant, Cooper has been largely ignored—unexamined. The mother of black feminism, Cooper deserves special recognition for her intellectual prowess. She was a well-respected figure during an intense period of civil rights activism, marking the rise of black female-led institutions and organizations (Harley and Terborg-Penn 1978; Gaines 1996; Olson 2001). Mirroring the reality of this black woman intellectual, as she has been effectively written out of history, black feminist theory has not garnered much scholarly attention in political science. That is to say, in spite of the progress that has been made in recent years, too few political scientists deem African American women and black feminist theory worthy of intellectual inquiry. I am optimistic, however, that the present study will stimulate more theoretical and empirically based work on the subject.

Despite the emergence of the study of women and politics within the discipline of political science, efforts to transform the curriculum and integrate perspectives of African American women have met with limited success. Few political scientists have written books and journal articles about African American women as political actors—candidates for elective office, grassroots organizers, party

activists, voters, or partisan, ideologically engaged citizens—when African American women have a long history of actively participating in politics via antislavery networks, civil rights organizations, and black feminist collectives (Collins 2000). Still, they remain largely invisible. The near absence of scholarship on and by African American women in political science constitutes a void in the literature. This book fills the void by drawing a material link between those who have written about African American women as political actors and those who have engaged in black feminist theorizing. It does not profess to be a comprehensive survey of black feminist scholarship; rather, it demonstrates ways in which black feminist theory can inform quantitative analyses of black attitudes toward gender equality and feminist priorities. Until recently, no black political scientists had examined the level of support for gender equality and feminist priorities among African American men and women. Only Michael C. Dawson (2001) and I (Simien 2001) have pursued this question by using a national survey of the adult African American population.

In his book *Black Visions*, Michael C. Dawson provides empirical evidence derived from the 1993–1994 National Black Politics Study (NBPS) to support his claim that contemporary black political preferences are related to various historical political ideologies (e.g., black Marxism, black nationalism, black feminism, black conservatism, disillusioned liberalism, and radical egalitarianism). In his chapter, “A Vision of Their Own: Identity and Black Feminist Ideology,” Dawson (like myself) develops and validates a measure of black feminist consciousness that is true to its theoretical origins. He finds that black feminism has an important effect on blacks’ perceptions of the desirability of multiracial coalitions (e.g., African Americans who support a black feminist ideology are most likely to support political alliances with individuals outside of the black community). For this reason, Dawson suggests that black feminism has the greatest potential to overcome social difference and bridge common humanity with the racial specificity of blackness as it recognizes interlocking systems of oppression (Fogg-Davis 2003). While Dawson’s chapter has much to offer scholars doing empirical work on the simultaneity of oppression faced by black women, it falls short of providing a thorough and complete literature review that draws a material link between black feminist theorizing and mainstream political science.

Drawing on the same black feminist literature as I, Dawson determines that black feminist consciousness has three core ingredients: an understanding of intersectionality, a focus on community-centered politics, and an emphasis on the particular experiences of black women. However, he offers no review of the extant literature in political science relative to black feminism and his conceptualization of this construct as it differs from the mainstream conceptualization of group consciousness by political scientists. A unique and contrasting feature of my book, as compared to Dawson's chapter, is that I offer a particularly useful review of the literature on black feminist consciousness, gender (or feminist) consciousness, and race consciousness accompanied by an incisive critique of the dominant approaches used by political scientists to measure these specific strands of group consciousness. I consider all three bodies of literature in my effort to present both a broad and a balanced assessment of black feminist consciousness. The advantage to this approach is that black feminist consciousness is discussed relative to political science and dominant methodological approaches used hitherto by political scientists.

One of the leading scholars of black public opinion, Dawson does not compel survey researchers and public opinion scholars to rethink (or even consider) many of the following problems inherent to empirical investigations of group consciousness among various race-sex groups, including question wording and response choices, model misspecification, and measurement error in the independent variable. Arguing that models that fail to include all relevant variables will consistently lead to biased results that purportedly apply to all African Americans or women when political scientists fail to consider in-group variation between and among individual members of the group in question, I breach the wall between black feminist theorizing and mainstream political science by identifying ways in which public opinion scholars have ignored, conceptualized, measured, and modeled the intersection (or interaction) of race and gender consciousness. All in all, my book offers a great deal more by adding yet another voice to the debate surrounding black feminist sentiments, cross pressures, and the hierarchy of interests within the black community with an overriding purpose. Ultimately, I wish to show how the omission of black feminist voices causes survey researchers to ask the wrong

questions and base their empirical work and conclusions on uninterrogated assumptions—that, for instance, all of the women are white, and all of the blacks are men.

No prior study has so broadly explored, using a national telephone survey sample of the adult African American population, the extent to which black women and men support black feminist tenets, or the simultaneous effects of race and gender on political attitudes. Empirical assessments of black feminist consciousness are rare. Most national surveys of Americans do not include a large enough sample of black respondents and most national surveys of African Americans lack the items necessary to construct a full measure of black feminist consciousness. Thus, the analysis at hand is the first comprehensive attempt in years to gauge black attitudes toward gender equality and feminist priorities via public opinion data gathered by a national telephone survey.

Much of the data analyzed in this book come from the 1993–1994 NBPS, which is a unique study in that it contains questions that measure black feminist consciousness with multiple survey items. It was conducted between December 1993 and February 1994. Respondents were selected in two ways: (1) from a national random digit dial sample or (2) randomly from a list of households in black neighborhoods. The response rate was 65 percent, resulting in 1,206 black respondents, all of whom were eligible to vote. A full description of the survey may be found in the codebook, which was compiled by its principal investigators Michael Dawson, Ronald Brown, and James Jackson (1993). Additional data come from the 1984–1988 National Black Election Studies (NBES), which is a unique study in that it contains questions that measure sex role socialization and the comparative influence of women with multiple survey items at the core of a basic feminist belief system. The 1984 NBES was conducted from late July through November 6, 1984, with reinterviews that began immediately following the national election. The 1988 NBES was conducted from August through November 8, 1986, with reinterviews that began immediately following the national election. Comprised of 1,150 interviews of black citizens, the 1984–1988 NBES were modeled after the University of Michigan's landmark National Election Studies (NES). A full description of the surveys may be found in the codebook, which was compiled by its principal inves-

tigators Katherine Tate, Ronald E. Brown, Shirley J. Hatchett, and James S. Jackson.

Given that my objective is to chart a course for black women's studies in political science, I challenge the ways in which political scientists have traditionally defined and conceptualized group consciousness as either race or gender consciousness. More specifically, I reject the singular approach that dominates the group consciousness literature in an effort to address the simultaneous effects of race and gender. I therefore define and conceptualize black feminist consciousness, drawing on the ideas and experiences of African American women as they have endured the racism of their white sisters and sexism of their black brothers. I examine intra-group differences because this practice has long been omitted from feminist scholarship and black politics research.

Building on prior research, I posit that black feminist consciousness arises from an understanding of intersecting patterns of discrimination. Because the totality of black female experiences cannot be treated as the sum of separate parts, they must be analyzed together. If race and gender are studied as separate categories, one cannot explain how attitudes might change as a result of cross-pressures to subordinate the interests of black women so as to protect black men from racism. With this in mind, I start with a discussion of black feminist consciousness, providing a brief overview, offering a definition, and emphasizing themes that delineate its contours. To underscore the importance of studying black feminist consciousness and its determinants, I discuss the limitations of available data and quantitative approaches used hitherto by political scientists, as well as omissions in feminist scholarship and black politics research. By so doing, the present study sets itself apart from the extant literature on specific strands of group consciousness in political science.

### **In Defense of Ourselves: Black Feminist Theorists**

Since slavery's abolition and women's suffrage, the character of black women has been attacked and impugned repeatedly, stereotypes of black women have been promoted for political ends

(e.g., the matriarch, the jezebel, and the welfare queen), and black women have been blamed for numerous social and political ills (Davis 1981; Jewell 1993; Roberts 1997). Feeling called on to defend black womanhood and reject a plethora of cultural images that support stereotypes about intelligence and innate ability, black feminists from Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells-Barnett through bell hooks and Patricia J. Williams have explored the related ideas of “dual consciousness,” of writing “from the borders,” of theorizing as an “outsider” making creative use of their marginal status as “seventh sons” or “outsiders” with unreconciled strivings and warring ideals (W. DuBois 1994, 2). Black feminist theorizing then constitutes a pragmatic response to those circumstances that impinge the lives of black women (James and Busia 1993; Collins 1998, 2000; P. Williams 1991). For black female intellectuals who produce such independent specialized knowledge, the “outsider status is a kind of unresolved wound,” whereby the burden of race and gender discrimination almost ensures the rejection of their intellectual work on epistemological grounds by a more powerful insider community (P. Williams 1991, 89). This sort of rejection is due to their lack of control over the apparatuses of society that sustain ideological hegemony and make the articulation of a self-defined standpoint difficult (Collins 1998, 2000).

In this sense, the present study can be added to a relatively short list of scholarly work that poses a fundamental challenge to the paradigmatic thought of a more powerful insider community. By demonstrating that the dominant conceptualization of group consciousness has been ineffective in articulating the politicized group consciousness of black women, this analysis urges public opinion scholars and survey researchers to reconsider the ways in which social scientists traditionally measure specific strands of group consciousness. It is argued here that black female intellectuals in particular, and black women in general, readily recognize disadvantage and discrimination due to their “dual identity” and their “politicized group consciousness” stemming from day-to-day encounters with race and gender oppression. The idea is that interlocking systems of oppression (racism and sexism) predispose black women to double consciousness. This notion of double consciousness connotes an acute sense of awareness.



Black women begin to see themselves through the eyes of others and measure their self-worth by the tape of a hegemonic society that expresses contempt for cultural images that promote negative stereotypes of black women for political ends (W. DuBois 1994, 2). Given that black women face discrimination on the basis of race and gender, it is likely that many black women possess a sense of group consciousness derived from their unique disadvantaged status in the United States. Similarly, it is quite possible that many black men are cognizant of and sympathetic toward the particular predicament of black women because they suffer from race oppression and class exploitation in the occupationally segregated labor market (M. King 1975; Stone 1979; D. King 1988). Thus, black women and men share a common experience that makes their individual fate inextricably tied to the race as a whole (Davis 1981; Jaynes and Williams 1989; Dawson 1994).

### **Defining Black Feminist Consciousness**

Any discussion of black feminist consciousness must begin with some sort of definition, based on the literature derived from the ideas and experiences of black women. Many black academics, feminist scholars, and grassroots activists argue that African American women are status deprived because they face discrimination on the basis of race and gender. Having to bear the burdens of prejudice that challenge people of color, in addition to the various forms of subjugation that hinder women, African American women are doubly disadvantaged in the social, economic, and political structure of the United States. African American women occupy the lower stratum of the social hierarchy, are predominately found in clerical and service jobs, and are most likely to be single heads of households (Malveaux 1990; Rothenberg 1995; Rowe and Jeffries 1996; Smith and Horton 1997; Browne 1999). African American women also lag behind other race-sex groups on practically every measure of socioeconomic well-being: income, employment, and education. As a result, they are subject to multiple burdens—joblessness and domestic violence, teen pregnancy and illiteracy, poverty and malnutrition—which define their cumulative experience with race and gender oppression in the United States.

Much of the important work on black feminism comes from a small cadre of black female intellectuals outside of political science. The work of Audre Lorde (1984), Paula Giddings (1984), bell hooks (1984, 1989), Barbara Smith (1995), and Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2000), among others, is both theoretical and qualitative. While these scholars provide a range of perspectives, several recurring themes that delineate the contours of black feminist thought appear in their work. I discuss the most salient themes in the following section.

First, black feminist scholars have focused on the concept of intersectionality. This is the notion that “race, class, gender, and sexuality are co-dependent variables that cannot be separated or ranked in scholarship, political practice, or in lived experience” when classism and heterosexism constitute twin barriers linked with racism and sexism (Ransby 2000, 1218). For this reason, Tamara Jones (2000, 56) reminds us that African American women “don’t have the luxury of choosing to fight only one battle” because they contend with multiple burdens. Similarly, Adrien Wing (1997) argues that the actuality of layered experiences cannot be treated as separate or distinct parts when interlocking systems of oppression uphold and sustain each other in contemporary American society. Second, black feminist scholars have addressed the issue of gender inequality within the black community (Collins 2000; Harris 1999; hooks 1984, 1989; B. Smith 1995; Smooth and Tucker 1999). During the civil rights movement, black women were not recognized for their numerous political activities, such as behind-the-scenes organizing, mobilizing, and fund-raising (Payne 1995; Robnett 1997). Positions of leadership were reserved for black males. Wendy Smooth and Tamelyn Tucker (1999), who cite the Million Man March as yet another classic example, argue that in more recent years black women’s activism has been ignored and black men have been given credit. Other scholars charge that the black church has validated the patriarchal nature of black male–female relationships through its biblical teachings and exclusion of black women from the clergy, key decision-making processes, and financial governing boards (Stone 1979; Higginbotham 1993; Harris 1999). Thus, black feminists recognize that gender inequality exists within the black community and point to the patriarchal

nature of black male–female relationships within the context of the civil rights movement, the Million Man March, and the black church whereby leadership roles were reserved for black men (see, for example, Stone 1979; Harris 1999; Alexander-Floyd 2003).

Third, black feminists have maintained that feminism benefits the black community by challenging patriarchy as an institutionalized oppressive structure and advocating the building of coalitions. Black feminists have made conscious efforts to avoid attacking individual black men in order to work with them to further their cause of equality and justice for women. Collins (2000) maintains that black feminism is a social justice project and that building coalitions is central to advancing that project. Deborah Robinson (1987, 83) avers that the “black community must move from the position of singular activism for the good of the movement” because progressive black women are committed to struggle against both racism and sexism. In short, black feminism benefits the struggle for black liberation rather than divides members into factions because the fight against economic exploitation, gender subordination, racial discrimination, and heterosexism are intimately related to the pursuit of social justice (Ransby 2000).

Fourth, black feminists insist that a sense of belonging or conscious loyalty to the group in question (i.e., black women) arises from everyday experiences with race, class, and gender oppression (D. King 1988; Guy-Sheftall 1995). Shared experiences with interlocking systems of domination then drive black women and sympathizers to political activism (Robinson 1987; L. Williams 1987; Wilcox 1990, 1997). The individual who comes to realize that she shares a common fate with other black women, and that her individual life chances are inextricably tied to the group, begins to view collective action as a necessary form of resistance (Dawson 1994). Since the mid–1970s, black feminists and sympathizers have come to accept rallies, marches, and press conferences as necessary acts of resistance to Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court, the exaltation of Mike Tyson upon his release from prison, and the Million Man March. This stage of group identification, whereby individuals see themselves as sharing a common fate with other black women, is referred to here as linked fate with black women.

### Empirical Approaches

While the concept of black feminist consciousness is rich and well developed, empirical assessments of black feminist consciousness have been more limited. Political scientists have taken two main approaches to studying support for gender equality and feminist priorities among black women. First, scholars have used survey items for black women that were designed to tap feminist consciousness among white women. Both Pamela Conover (1988) and Elizabeth Cook (1989) have used this problematic approach to measure feminist consciousness. They assume that white feminism and black feminism are comparable. This is, in fact, an empirical question. A compelling body of literature suggests that there are many differences, both historically and in contemporary times, between the ways in which black women and white women experience sexism in this country. Thus, I argue that using survey items designed for white women results in a measurement of support for white feminism among black women—not black feminist consciousness. Second, political scientists have measured gender identification and race identification and then used the interaction of these two variables to create a measure of the politicized group identification of black women (Robinson 1987; Gay and Tate 1998). This measurement strategy is faulty because it assumes that race and gender identification are separate constructs. It has several problems, especially when considering that the hierarchy of interests within the black community prioritizes race over gender. For example, race identification became equated with an assertion of black masculinity during the black power movement with the rise of such nationalist organizations as the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party (Tate 1994). By prioritizing the lived experience of African American men and equating it with the black political agenda, the black power movement treated the struggle of black women against patriarchy as antithetical to the larger community narrative of racial discrimination. In light of this example, interaction terms composed of one measure of race identification and one measure of gender identification are far too simplistic. Ostensibly, this measurement approach fails to assess the simultaneity of oppression along with the hierarchy of interests within the black community.

Another limitation of the empirical research is its tendency to focus on feminist support among women without assessing the level of support for these same principles among men (Robinson 1987; Wilcox 1990; Gay and Tate 1998). Given the emphasis of many black feminists on building coalitions with black men and the rise of the men's movement to end patriarchy, it seems most appropriate to examine the extent to which black men endorse black feminist ideals. For this reason, I investigate the level of support for black feminist consciousness among African American women and men.

Arguably, the best measurement approach is one that captures the simultaneity of oppression with multiple items for various themes at the core of black feminist thought. This approach requires a model true to its theoretical origins, embracing several interrelated attitudes and beliefs derived from the ideas and experiences of African American women. The specification of basic models and the analysis of strategies employed must capture the core themes that define this unique angle of vision, arising from an understanding of interlocking systems of oppression. The project at hand addresses this need by presenting and evaluating a scale of black feminist thought, which is both reliable and internally coherent.

## Overview of the Book

As Virginia Sapiro (2002, 21) puts it bluntly, "It's the context, situation, and question, stupid" that best illustrate problems inherent to theorizing about the relationship between gender and public opinion when using empirical survey research and polling data. For this reason, I begin each chapter with a leading black female activist in the context of (or amid) historical situations that precipitated her development of black feminist consciousness. Most of the African American women featured here have made vast contributions to the American political system, yet they have gone relatively unnoticed—Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Sojourner Truth, Frances E. W. Harper, Maria W. Stewart, Mary Church Terrell, and Nannie Helen Burroughs. Each black female heroine sets up a fascinating puzzle, raises a stimulating question, or invites the reader to follow a line of argument. For example, the argument that I will make later in this book is that individual (or ascriptive) characteristics are less

important than those factors rooted in lived experiences that make one ever so cognizant of interlocking systems of oppression. It is my view that objective conditions and concrete experiences warrant the development of black feminist consciousness—the ability to recognize that African American women face discrimination on the basis of race and gender.

African American women thereby provide the necessary background for a fuller appreciation of the claim that individual (or ascriptive) characteristics are less important than those factors rooted in lived experience, shining a light on material conditions and historical circumstances crucial to understanding multiple perspectives and realities as they relate to the unequal distribution of power and privilege in the United States. It is my hope that this approach might enable readers to critically evaluate American political processes, considering how our knowledge of the relationship between gender and public opinion might change if the history and experiences of these women were taken into consideration. Along the way, I will suggest that black women are not the only group who struggle with multiple group identities. It is quite possible for other race-sex groups to be cognizant of and sympathetic toward the particular predicament of African American women because they too suffer from race oppression, class exploitation, gender discrimination, and heterosexism in contemporary American society.

At the heart of this book are answers to the questions, How does the absence of black feminist voices impair our understanding of group consciousness? What factors make individuals more or less likely to adopt black feminist views? Are men just as likely as women to support black feminist tenets? Does black feminist consciousness lead black men and women to actively participate in American political processes? How important is black feminist consciousness relative to race consciousness in determining various modes of black political behavior? The analysis of survey data allows me to address critical questions that many black academics, intellectuals, and activists have devoted significant energy to debating without, to my knowledge, much empirical evidence that speaks to the normative components of the debate surrounding black feminist sentiments, cross pressures, and the hierarchy of interests within the black community. Social scientists, for the most part, have not investigated the simultaneity of oppression faced by

black women or the core themes underlying black feminist consciousness using survey data and quantitative techniques. My overarching purpose is then to legitimize the study of African American women in politics through empirical survey-based research, which interrogates dominant approaches used hitherto by political scientists to measure either race or gender consciousness.

The following outline of this book offers a snapshot of the analysis to come in each chapter. Designed to direct attention to a variety of topics relevant to the book, it sets up an expectation in the reader's mind. The transparent narrative style makes the survey data and empirical analysis accessible to both undergraduate and graduate students. The book also serves as a resource for others doing similar empirically based research, regardless of methodology.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature, examining the range, scope, and content of extant literature on group consciousness. I start by answering two key questions that are directly related to the conceptualization of black feminist consciousness. First, how has the dominant conceptualization of group consciousness been ineffective in articulating the politicized identification of black women? Second, what have been the main approaches to studying the relationship between specific strands of group consciousness and political behavior? Along the way, I expose the deficiencies and limitations of dominant approaches that fail to consider the complexity of black female experiences: dual identity, cross-cutting versus consensus issues, and the hierarchy of interests. Unmasking problems inherent to research design and question wording, I argue that the choice of data to be analyzed and the interpretation of those data rest on a narrow and exclusive definition of group consciousness. No prior study has gone on to ask why, if this should be so, and clarify the findings when public opinion scholars and survey researchers traditionally measure race *or* feminist consciousness, not the intersection (or interaction) of these variables.

Chapter 3 provides evidence that black feminist consciousness is empirically distinct from race identification, and feminist identification. I begin by discussing the concept of black feminist consciousness and how it might be empirically measured. Using factor analysis, I examine whether the principal components of black feminist consciousness differ across gender. I then assess the level of

support for black feminist consciousness, reporting the dimensionality of black feminist consciousness as it differs for black women and men when estimated separately. As it turns out, black men are equally and, in some cases, more likely to support black feminist tenets than black women.

Chapter 4 empirically tests various research hypotheses about the determinants of black feminist consciousness. Despite numerous studies of the determinants of feminist consciousness in the last decade, research on the determinants of black feminist consciousness has been far less common. Assuming that public opinion scholars and survey researchers are genuinely interested in how individuals adopt feminist views, social scientists must consider whether variables that predict one feminist perspective have a similar effect on another (Henley et al. 1998). The chapter takes up this task by (1) examining whether variables that affect feminist attitudes among white citizens have a similar effect on attitudes toward black feminism among African Americans and (2) considering whether the determinants of black feminist consciousness differ across gender among African Americans. More specifically, I investigate the effects of marital status, age, income, education, employment, religiosity, place of residence, interviewer sex, race identification, and power discontent on black feminist consciousness.

Chapter 5 empirically tests several research hypotheses about the overall impact of black feminist consciousness on various modes of black political participation. This chapter develops and tests a theory of the effect of black feminist consciousness along with demographic variables on black political participation. While few scholars have demonstrated the critical importance of black feminist consciousness as a determinant of political activism, even fewer scholars have investigated the simultaneous effects of race and gender consciousness on black political participation (notable exceptions being Robinson 1987; Wilcox 1990, 1997; Gay and Tate 1998). To date, the literature stops short of considering whether black feminist consciousness serves as an impetus for active participation in politics. By so doing, this chapter expands the standard socioeconomic model of black political participation to include black feminist consciousness.



Chapter 6 offers an interpretation of the results and concludes with a discussion of the research. Here, I set out to do three things. First, I review the findings of previous chapters and discuss their contribution to extant literature. Second, I assess the limitations of the data and methodology used here. Third, I consider what my findings mean for the future of feminist scholarship and black politics research. In the end, I make several recommendations.

I urge political scientists to design survey items that capture the simultaneity of oppression, privileging the lived experience of African American women so as not to silence black feminist voices. Otherwise, the study of public opinion and political behavior will remain largely limited with little prescriptive utility for individuals and groups that confront interlocking systems of oppression amid shifting political, historical, and material conditions. Of course, the move toward a more inclusive discipline with prescriptive relevance to marginalized groups can only be undertaken by those genuinely committed to social justice. My broadest goal is then to assist others in developing a framework within which to critically evaluate the American political system, disputing taken-for-granted views and considering black feminist perspectives that counter the mainstream.

As stated earlier, the book sets itself apart from previous empirical investigations of black feminist consciousness as it speaks to debates that exist both within and outside of political science. Following Mack Jones's (1977, 16) directive to "develop a political science which grows out of a black perspective" and abandon mainstream approaches, the book squares with an African American intellectual tradition derived from the "specialized knowledge" of a black woman's standpoint (see also Collins 2000, 34). All things considered, social scientists must begin to pay closer attention to in-group variation by controlling for confounding influences, considering the usefulness of alternative methodological approaches, and interrogating presumed group cohesion.