



## Representational Politics in the Learning Sciences: Foundations, Limits, and Alternatives

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**Abstract:** In this conceptual paper we interrogate the use and misuse of representational politics within the learning sciences community, including our research, our professional society, and our departments. We argue that representational politics are a necessary but insufficient strategy for advancing equity and justice, and that in many cases they act as a detour that moves us away from more impactful strategies to address harm. To do this, we outline the philosophical underpinnings of representational politics and work through the limitations of these strategies when implemented in our field. We argue that the learning sciences should focus equity and justice strategies around collective liberation approaches rooted in historicized analysis of power and a commitment to solidarity.

### Introduction

As the field of learning sciences has grown and begun to embrace a more politically and ethically oriented stream of work, we have seen an increased attentiveness to questions of representation. Representation comes up when we ask who is included in our classes, society, and society leadership; whose perspectives are centered in journals; and whose lived experiences are at the center of our research. These shifts are aligned with broader themes in academia and higher education, where multicultural notions of diversity have been central to strategies for addressing inequity and for marketing oneself and one's institution. Building from theories of multiculturalism (Banks, 1993; Kymlicka, 2010), we describe increasing representation as when we elevate the people, experiences, cultures, etc. of a particular group in a specific venue, such as a study, movie, professional society, or career field. For those being represented, the presumption is that greater representation means a higher likelihood that someone will speak on their behalf (that is, not only represent their culture but also advocate for their needs). For institutions, the presumption is that people from diverse backgrounds will have diverse experiences, and that this diversity enriches our communities through contact with new ideas. These assumptions form a theory of change that we can call *representational politics*.

Critics of multiculturalism have long argued that representational politics does not successfully produce these outcomes, and that it is a flawed theory of change when aiming for more just relations (e.g., Dhamoon, 2006). They have argued that increasing representation does not meaningfully attend to the distribution of resources, histories of colonization, and ongoing systems of power that reproduce inequality. Further, they argue that representative politics distract us from substantive interventions toward justice.

In our work (Veal et al., 2023), we have closely examined theories of change towards social justice to understand their assumptions, meaningfulness, and limits. To describe the paths that we take in the interest of pursuing equity and justice, but which do not serve to get us there effectively or efficiently, we use the term *equity detours*. We build on Gorski's (2019) notion of racial equity detours in his work on antiracist education to explore the traps that we see emerging in the learning sciences alongside the shift to do work of greater political relevance that supports the well-being of all learners. Because representational politics is an alluring but flawed theory of change, we characterize it as one such equity detour in the learning sciences. While many efforts to increase representation in the learning sciences—whether that is representation among our field's researchers, or among those learners in the research—have been productive, interrogating the concept will help clarify its limits and thus grow our field's relevance to the major ethical issues of our time.

In this paper, we briefly provide an overview of key philosophical concepts embedded within commitments to representation as a strategy for creating equity, including a brief overview of perspectives from both multiculturalism and feminism. We then describe a series of challenges that we see emerging in the learning sciences when representation politics are at the center of our equity work. We conclude with a discussion of what other philosophical, political, and epistemic commitments could be made more central if we as a field choose to move away from a superficial approach to representation.

Before we begin, we need to offer an important caveat: having a diverse community is a worthy and important goal, and we do not seek to critique expanding diversity. We support the hard work that has gone in to diversifying our field since its outset. Intentionally diversifying our research sites and fields can result in new

insights, challenge white supremacist and other taken-for-granted assumptions in our theories of learning (e.g., Members of South Asian Learning Sciences Research Collective, 2021) and begin to dismantle historical barriers to participation in the learning sciences for some minoritized people. We have seen an array of efforts in the learning sciences aimed at this goal (e.g., Tsovaltzi et al., 2022). In so far as these efforts *do* elevate underrepresented voices and change the array of perspectives afforded power in the classroom or in the field, such efforts can make space for new ideas, kinds of engagements, and will for structural change. We therefore do not think representation projects should be abandoned in the learning sciences; rather, we take this opportunity to explore their limits and highlight where diversifying needs to be partnered with other equity and justice moves to ensure systemic, material change. While we know that diverse representation enriches our community, it does not on its own do the work of addressing past harms, attending to power relations, or remaking the distribution of resources that we see as the work of equity. We now turn our attention to why.

## Conflicting roots of representational politics

We begin with an incompressible history that highlights two competing intellectual communities in which the cruciality of representation to increasing equality were developed: multiculturalism and feminism. Multiculturalism as a political and epistemic project has often been at the heart of what we currently understand as equity, diversity, and inclusion work. Multicultural politics have most often been focused on celebrating difference (Banks, 1993) through a lens in which the “three S’s” are at the core: Samosas, Saris, and Steel Drums. The three S’s reflect the idea that we center food, traditional dress, and music as the heart of culture and difference. The mainstream uptake of this focus suggests that to create a more equitable society, we need to create the metaphorical “stained glass window” or “tossed salad,” where diverse cultures are brought together into a beautiful mosaic of coexistence and tolerance of difference. Representation, within this political and philosophical tradition, is central because it focuses on the visibility of difference; we need to see the different cultures and bring different cultural practices into contact with each other as a path toward improved relations. Unfortunately, this celebration of culture tends to exist without attention to the powered relations and histories that create and sustain injustice. Multiculturalism as an equity strategy has been criticized for its erasure of material harms (Dhamoon, 2006), for its use to further dispossess First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people (Cardinal, 1969; Coulthard, 2014), for its willful ignorance of structural racism (James, 2009), and for its inability to move us toward a more just society (Kymlicka, 2010). These critics argue that multiculturalism is insufficient at attending to the root causes of inequality and discrimination, and often ineffective at even creating the spaces of tolerance and interaction across difference. Despite these critiques, multiculturalism has secured hegemonic space within educational practice, and can tacitly or explicitly form the basis of representational politics.

At the same time that multiculturalism was emerging as a dominant liberal philosophy, more radical philosophies regarding representation were also emerging from social movements. The idea of identity politics initially emerged through radical Black queer women’s organizing and was documented through the work of the Combahee River Collective and their influential statement from 1977. This foundational piece of Black feminist writing, rooted in lived experience from locations within interlocking systems of oppression, framed identity as a source of political radicalization and a more accurate place from which to understand and analyze the structure of society. This group argued that impacted people need to be at the front of the work, though:

the women of [Combahee River Collective] did not define “identity politics” as exclusionary, whereby only those experiencing a particular oppression could fight against it. Nor did they envision identity politics as a tool to claim the mantle of “most oppressed.” They saw it as an analysis that would validate Black women’s experiences while simultaneously creating an opportunity for them to become politically active to fight for the issues most important to them. (Taylor, 2017, p. 11)

The representation of minoritized people, which in the Collective included Black, queer, socialist women, was central to any political project because their knowledge of how the world works, their experiences of multiple forms of oppression simultaneously, and their deep investment in changing those relations of power was a powerful lever for organizing towards social change. For the Collective, representation, solidarity, and internationalism were political strategies toward liberation.

In a similar vein, further Black feminist scholars and other standpoint epistemologists argued that who you are and where you sit at the intersections of social relations of power shapes what you know and how you see the world. These early feminist theorizations argued against the so-called objectivity and neutrality of dominant thought in sciences and sociology and demonstrated the ways that the types of knowledge that those fields produced was rooted in the standpoint of white men (Collins, 1986; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1992). Ideas of

standpoint epistemologies locate people's ways of knowing within their social locations. For example, standpoint epistemology argues that Black women understand and experience the world differently than white women and Black men based on how relations of patriarchy and racialization shape their lived experiences.

With standpoint epistemology in mind, diverse representation is essential because it brings the social-location-specific perspectives and expertise of impacted communities to conversations of equity, and we benefit from the perspectives of minoritized people, who are better able to understand relations of power and the nature of society because of their positionality on the margin (Jaggar, 1983). Although standpoint epistemology has sometimes been taken up in ways that are not ultimately productive (Táiwò, 2022), which we discuss below, its crucial contribution is its contrast to the three S's, instead focusing increased representation on different ways of perceiving, being, and resisting oppression.

Taken together, these movements serve as a foundational rationale for who should be represented and why. They help us to trace how some representation practices can be entangled with larger understandings of change, whereas others (and indeed, dominant ones such as multiculturalism) can problematically focus on differences in cultural practices while ignoring differences in power. With these differing histories in mind, we now turn to representational politics as it is currently practiced.

### **Limits of representational politics**

Representational politics is a detour that positions diversifying groups as a solution sufficient to ameliorate inequity and injustice. By "diversifying," we refer to the practice of broadening the identities represented in both the populations (with whom) we study and the membership of the learning sciences. This detour often takes the form of focusing on having more Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color, disabled people, or LGBTQ2S+ people in positions of visibility, regardless of what political project is being advanced. In some cases, this means that the work is more oriented toward optics than advancing collective, historicized, and systemic interventions (Táiwò, 2022). Such an approach leaves structures of power untroubled because these efforts usually do not involve changing underlying systems or the distribution of resources. In its most extreme forms, this detour prevents substantive engagement and disagreement about how we get free because attention to justice becomes conflated with a more superficial perspective of diversity reminiscent of a college admissions brochure. Táiwò (2022) refers to this dynamic as "deference politics," or the impulse to center individual marginalized people's perspectives and automatically defer to them, regardless of the politics in which they are anchored. While on the surface epistemologies of deference resonate with the habits of the mind inherited from standpoint feminism, Táiwò argues that this approach is usually implemented interpersonally as an *alternative* to rigorous analysis, can encourage essentializing, and fails to adequately contend with the fact that those in elite positions are often so "precisely because of ways in which they are systematically different from (and thus potentially unrepresentative of) the very people they are then asked to represent" (p. 72). When sustained, collective study is substituted with deference politics, focus is shifted to litigating representation and authenticity instead of systems-level solutions that are constructive for justice for all.

As we discussed at the outset, broadening participation and representation is important. We do not think that all efforts to do so should cease. However, given the hard work our community has done towards diversifying, we see this moment as an opportunity to take a nuanced and intentional look at the landscape of representational politics, to make it less likely that our field will take equity detours. Representation is often necessary but rarely sufficient for equity projects. There is little evidence to suggest that diversifying alone succeeds at land back, unmaking racial capitalism, removing barriers, or destroying the systems that harm systemically marginalized peoples. Below, we lay out four potential problems with representation politics. We see them as non-exhaustive, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing, even as we separate them out for the purpose of further analysis.

### **Coding and bounding**

A constitutional problem of such representative approaches is the use of such logic to sort people into groups, without being able to account for the dynamism of people and the instability of these categories. This common practice carries a number of risks. The first is that it may reinforce "ludicrous statements such as referring to individuals as diverse" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 23). This habit reinscribes dominant groups (white people, men, straight folks, etc.) as normative, which itself is problematic, while also treating them as the default audience that is being attended to. This normalization of the "white gaze" decenters minoritized people, and paradoxically reinscribes the power of those already powerful.

This logic can also position identities as biological realities when they are better understood as socially-constructed categories (e.g., race, gender, ability). For example, critical race theorists and others have long argued that race is a malleable social construct (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2021; Omi & Winant, 2014). A singular focus on representation leads us to categorize people despite knowing that these social constructs are fundamentally

unstable: should a scholar of European descent who grew up in, and works in, Africa be considered a representative for Europe or Africa? How do biracial or white-passing scholars get categorized? Is it important to distinguish Han people from Lao people, or is “Asian” sufficient? Labels like “racial minority” and “underrepresented” are culturally bound, (sometimes) comprising different people in Canada than in Nigeria than in Indonesia. How do we weigh the “value” of some groups being represented in relation to others, especially when these categories often overlap? These questions expose the limits of race counting as an equity tool.

There remain several other problems with coding and bounding. For one, other counted categories evade neat categorization in multiple ways. For example, some identities shift across the lifespan (e.g., gender and sexuality, disability). Bounding can raise questions of who counts as queer “enough,” or disabled “enough,” or poor “enough” to represent that identity. Who decides, and based on what? How can we think through racialized and ethnic hierarchies imposed through colonialism within non-dominant communities, for example when we think about white South Africans or Latin Americans and for whom we see them as speaking given those locations? How do we decide who speaks for whom? Further, there is sometimes danger in requiring people to disclose their identities to participate, for example if those identities are criminalized in their jurisdiction. The requirement that people disclose in order to participate can open people to risk and backlash even as it may offer opportunities to participate in something liberatory (or even perfunctory). Finally, an intersectional lens reminds us that these categories overlap, in contrast to binary thinking that pits representation of one minoritized group against another minoritized group because representation is framed as a limited resource.

In sum, in so far as representational politics require coding and bounding, it obscures the complexity of how persons experience their intersectional identities, leading to reductionist approaches rather than building opportunities for people to participate in dignity-affirming and liberatory practice.

### Essentializing, tokenizing, and deferring

An overfocus on diverse representation can, paradoxically, essentialize difference. Essentializing is defined as reducing socially and politically produced outcomes to biological or inherent traits. For example, gender essentialism suggests that women are inherently more emotional than men. Essentialism is often wrapped up in binary conceptions of gender (men versus women), race (Black versus white in the US), etc. Representation politics falls prey to essentializing logics in that it requires an individual from a minoritized group to literally represent the experience of that group. This assumes that experiences of minoritized groups are innate and treats those groups as a monolith. When this happens, people from dominant social locations assume that minoritized people are one and the same, or that we all think the same way, or that it is possible for us to speak for our entire social grouping authoritatively. This can lead to trafficking in damaging stereotypes, where all gay men are treated as “fabulous,” or where Black women are assumed to be “invincible” or “superhuman” (Shaw et al., 2021).

In our field, that can result in excluding some individuals from equity conversations for not being “the right kind of diverse” (as judged by majoritized people). Too often we find minoritized scholars put into positions that unfairly expect expertise or which assume that we inherently understand systems of oppression (again, under-recognizing our hard-won degreed expertise). When composing groups and committees focused on justice, lived experience is important, but so too is intentional engagement with the cultural history of justice movements. Indeed, as Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) argue, it is crucial to focus not on traits but on repertoires of practice. Over-focusing on whether one individual scholar is “sufficiently” “diverse” can result in absurdities, like arguing that people from dominant social groups have no role to play in ameliorating injustice, or that inviting minoritized scholars to speak about injustice because of their perceived identities rather than the focus of their scholarship or lived practices will strengthen the field’s justice lens.

Related to essentialism is the process of tokenization, where members of minoritized groups are invited into roles or projects based primarily on our minoritized identity, rather than other aspects (i.e., expertise and experience). It is defined as making only a symbolic and superficial effort to do something, especially by recruiting one or a few minoritized people to provide a veneer of diversity and meaningful inclusion, rather than making really substantive changes to policies, practices, etc. Representation can substitute having minoritized faces in high places without necessarily having to attend to the contribution of those people, or without making a deeper commitment to revising the core mission, vision, or values of a group or organization. This focuses on the appearance of multiculturalism and the optics of diversity without attending to historicized relations of power.

“Keeping up appearances” in this way creates spaces where deference politics can become normative in ways that are enormously problematic. For example, imagine a situation in which a small number of minoritized people (or even one person) advocates for a stance based on their own ideological foundations which is inconsistent with the evidence, histories, and structural analysis of power. Processes of essentialism, tokenization, and deference can kick in to circulate that view as a just or equitable stance because it came from a minoritized person. Such processes thus cloud our work towards equitable education.

## Forcing in and opting out

The next, related limit is around labor and responsibility. When we focus primarily on representation, even the best intentions of this detour inadvertently create more work for minoritized people—a theme we have seen come up multiple times. This downloading of responsibility means that minoritized people get positioned as responsible for fixing the systems that harm us. For example, in many situations disabled people may have to teach able-bodied people what is wrong with creating inaccessible venues, advocate for remote alternatives and accessible interventions (like sign interpretation), and effectively do all of the work, when able-bodied people can and should also be working to remove barriers to participation. Minoritized folks are expected to take the lead on equity initiatives, sometimes in the face of opposition, and do the heavy lifting to make our community, our academic society, and our research projects more equity-oriented. While this work is critical to do, and the voices of minoritized people are important, it echoes the well-documented problems of the so-called “invisible” service load on minoritized people (Domingo et al., 2022). In addition to being unfair for those who are minoritized, these expectations can sometimes ignore the effects of especially traumatic experiences. Trauma rooted in oppression can put someone in a position to know about oppression, but it is not in itself a credential for effective changemaking (Táiwò, 2022, pp. 118-120).

One other consequence of narrowly focusing on representation and downloading responsibility for equity and justice work onto minoritized community members is that it can foreclose opportunities for people from dominant groups to take responsibility for our role in equity. Accomplices can be overlooked rather than drawing on their expertise and access to dominant communities. Sometimes people from dominant groups rationalize their absence from equity work because there are “enough” Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color doing it or because privileged people need to “make space.” Decades of white anti-racist work responding to Black social movement leadership (Carson, 1995) has demonstrated the responsibility of dominant communities to take action against the systems we have power within (Roediger, 2017) and to build consensus for justice.

## Obscuring process and veiling outcomes

Another limitation of relentlessly traversing the representational politics detour is that doing so can obscure injustices beyond under-representation. Some projects will never be equitable no matter how “diverse” they are, from extreme examples like world domination and white supremacist organizations to normalized practices of STEM education toward militarism (Vossoughi & Vakil, 2018) and everyday practices whose inequitable effects can be obscured under the guise that they were endorsed by a diverse group. Philip et al. (2018) push us to question this strategy, writing that *for whom* reminds us to work through difficult questions like, “What is our notion of justice when broadening participation in STEM within an economic system focused on production at the lowest possible cost contributes to environmental degradation that disproportionately affects Indigenous communities and communities of color?” (p. 84). When we focus on representation, we can center aesthetic metrics rather than substantive ones. An assimilative politics of domination must be resisted, regardless of how well-represented minoritized people are. Finally, it is difficult to figure out what proportions of representation show that efforts to diversify have been successful. Are we aiming for proportional representation? If so, based on which population, globally? Do we over-represent (*vis-a-vis* the population) in order to make sure minoritized experience is heard?

As we have demonstrated, focusing on diversifying is an equity detour when it is reduced to a practice of coding, counting, and box-checking rather than a transformative practice within the context of other equity and justice goals. This represents a crucial difference between diversity as an “anything goes” project and diversity as an explicitly anti-oppressive project, where onto-epistemic heterogeneity is cultivated through a justice frame by intentionally honoring multiplicity (Warren et al., 2020). It is undoubtedly a fine needle to thread.

## Internationalization as a case

Internationalization is a core commitment of the International Society of the Learning Sciences. Statistics shared at recent opening sessions for ISLS conferences have shown that the vast majority of submissions have come from North America. This highlights a problem in which learning sciences theories are advanced in a relatively narrow band of contexts. However, transforming this into labeling some scholars as “representing” North America obscures a significant distinction between scholarship that enforces white supremacy versus scholarship that challenges it. It also erases consequential distinctions between white settlers, the enslaved, refugees, and scholars whose cultural history is Indigenous in North America. As Members of South Asian Learning Sciences Research Collective (2021) have noted, a representational lens must be replaced by a multicontextual solidarity lens. According to them, doing so is useful because:

- (1) it attunes us to the limits of the “nation” as a homogenizing political context even for non-WEIRD studies (for example, many indigenous communities around the world have been

displaced from land that is claimed by a nation with which the indigenous communities largely do not identify; furthermore, sometimes such settler-colonization is done by nations that were themselves once colonized by the west); (2) it attunes us to the way particular equity-relevant phenomena move across multiple contexts (for example, understanding caste discrimination as a problem in India allows us to better make sense of caste discrimination in western nations); (3) many learning-relevant equity issues are fundamentally transnational (for example, anti-Blackness has historical roots in multiple geographies); and (4) many equity issues intersect with transnational identities in inseparable ways (for example, some mechanisms of gender oppression—and resistance to such oppression—in the Middle East relate to Islam in ways that make such oppression distinct from gender dynamics as understood in the west) (p. 66)

We build on these limits by considering each of our four problems articulated above. Coding and bounding indeed make it very difficult to decide how to “count” people in terms of their relationship to the perspectives we think we are missing in the learning sciences. When people live in one country but have a cultural history with a different one, whose perspective do we think of them as representing? How can we account for the fact that communities are not nations, and cultures are not nations? Essentializing, tokenizing, and deferring can lead us to allow one person to speak for entire countries—millions and sometimes billions of people. This asks too much of those individuals whose experiences are by definition not representative (Táiwò, 2022). It also creates unequal relations wherein scholars based in the US are not assumed to speak for the US, but scholars from non-US countries can sometimes be asked to speak for their nation. These patterns’ logics suggest that efforts should focus on “elevating” or “lifting” people *up* to the learning sciences, whereas for example those who almost never face visa issues attending ISLS conferences can be positioned as not having a role to play in adjusting our procedures to ensure that scholars from any country can attend our conferences. Finally, and crucially, internationalization as a goal veils its outcomes when it takes a representational lens. Our society’s national makeup is deeply disjointed from that of the world’s population broadly. This indeed could not have happened by accident, and thus it requires affirmative response to rectify; we countenance moving in such a direction. Nonetheless, we wonder what the endpoint is. It seems to us that ISLS’s national makeup mimicking the global one would not exactly advance justice. Thus, we are pushed to ask what it would mean for our society to be healthy in terms of its multinational diversity. How will we know if we reach such a place? One answer is that, for us, justice is advanced when as many historically undervalued perspectives, with different positions within non-dominant power relations, as possible are present, and that presence is rightful (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2022), which is to say, enough people from a community are present that they cannot be essentialized or asked to speak alone for their nation.

### **Discussion and conclusion: Alternatives to representational modes for equity**

As we have demonstrated, representation is a complicated tool to use in crafting a more just learning sciences. In this paper, we sought to illustrate what is assumed when we work within representational frames for moving towards equity in the learning sciences. To be clear, we think diversifying our society, contexts, and learners is a worthy and even crucial goal. Our critique arises from efforts that see this not as a path towards equity, but as equity in and of itself. We must be circumspect about how we code and count representation even as we work towards it. Representation as a mode is so ingrained in higher education approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion that it is difficult to imagine what alternative ways of coming at the diversification goals would be. What might a more justice-attuned learning sciences practice to avoid the detours of representation look like?

One key way to avoid the detours of representation politics is a focus on collective liberation, reminding ourselves of Lorde’s (1988) point that “we do not have to become each other in order to work together” (p. 13). Many social movements orient to the idea of collective liberation. An oft-quoted line from Murrii activists is, “If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” A politics of collective liberation believes the liberation of people in dominant groups is wrapped up with and dependent on the liberation of minoritized communities (see also Freire, 1972; Lorde, 1981). Approaches framed through collective liberation understand that to get free, all of us need to participate in the work—work rooted in a deeper analysis of how systems of power are co-constituting—and commit to an ethic of shared, though historically-specific and differentiated, responsibility to unmake these systems. Whereas people often ask themselves, “Am I the right person to do this justice work?” a more generative question motivated by a collective liberation approach is, “What is the most appropriate way for me to contribute to this justice work as a collective project?” We should work together to imagine solutions to value this service more and share the responsibility; we should not rely on false binaries of oppressed/oppressor to decide who amongst us is responsible for creating a more equitable learning sciences. An example of how this could be instantiated in our community could be the LGBTQ+-themed Happy Hour event at the ISLS Annual Meeting in

Montreal in 2023. People who attended learned about the Prisoner Correspondence Project, an organization that works with 2SLGBTQ+ incarcerated people in Canada and the US, and dedicated time to provide concrete labor in support of the organization's ongoing work, and then were welcomed to join a social gathering immediately after. While the theme involved queer liberation and belonging, all were invited to attend, and no assumptions were made about anyone's identities—a frame that was said explicitly in the invitation and at the event. The ethos of the event was that everyone has a stake in creating a just society where 2SLGBTQ+ people have freedom.

A complementary and necessary approach to avoiding the pitfalls of representation would be conscientization, which involves historicizing political analysis and centering power relations in theorizing injustice and building toward repair. Conscientization can be thought of through Freire's notion of *conscientização*, which refers to learning to perceive inequalities of all kinds, observe contradictions, and challenge oppression (Freire, 1972). When we seek conscientization, we work to become familiar with power relations and their history. For example, activists have used the strategy of "power mapping," in which people visually map who has power to do what in order to figure out where best to push for change. A similar strategy can be used to simply make sense of power relations more generally. What is crucial here is starting to place identities historically; how and why did a group become groupable? When we do this, we become clearer on the positive or negative influences we as individuals, collectives, committee members, researchers, ISLS board members, and so on can have on our society's policies, health, inclusivity, and well-being.

Another approach would be to take on a "grow the pie" model. Consider, for example, a representative democracy in which there are 100 elected representatives. As the population grows, each representative accounts for more people, and each individual's proportional say in governance is diminished. Such is a model of representation in which there is a hard limit on how many seats are at the table, and where to gain a say in discussion you must take it from someone else. While there may be advantages of such a system in a representative democracy, there is no need to bring this way of thinking into our academic societies. Instead, we can grow the field, taking a "big tent" approach to the learning sciences and to representation within it. Of course, that doesn't mean "anything goes." We can retain our shared interest in learning and education using robust theories of learning, while holding to the belief that doing so need not include some perspectives only by excluding others within this frame. Rather than trying to reallocate how we slice a pie so that everyone gets a piece, we grow the pie. The advantage is that we needn't think of anyone's participation as coming at the expense of someone else's.

Finally, Táiwò's (2022) vision of *constructive politics* suggests several connections to the learning sciences. Constructive politics is positioned in opposition to the superficial representational moves that people make within elite institutions, which become focused on what our processes look like in order to center the "right" voices. Rather, constructive politics focuses on outcomes, the specific end results that we want to see: building new forms of systems and institutions without getting bogged down in diversity aesthetics. One form this might take is new epistemic systems. From universities to journalism, Taiwo warns of "the domination of elite interests in the production of knowledge" (p. 111). The learning sciences has a long history of valuing epistemic heterogeneity, and a potential expansion of that history could be to continue to develop new structures that bring more of what communities, organizers, and other non-elites with whom we work into consequence (e.g., Jurov et al., 2016). A question we bring into the coming years of work to make our field more just, impactful, and inclusive is this: How can learning scientists build new infrastructures that mobilize these forms of valuable community knowledge to work on the problems we see as important?

While we are critical of multicultural/liberal approaches to representational politics which can be gutted of historicized analysis of power, serve existing power relations, or move us toward deference, we see a clear path forward in reorienting toward the constructive politics of collective liberation. Diverse participation and representation is important. Our goal here is to move toward a more material and substantive form of representation where power relations are remade to attend to past harms and where we envision equity and justice work as a shared responsibility for people across difference and with different access to power and resources. Given the society's long-standing work towards diversification, we believe that the field is well positioned to embrace the Combahee River Collective's calls for solidarity and substantive commitment to systemic change.

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