

A Continuing Engagement with Endangered and Excluded Scholars

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Institutions can flourish by finding innovative methods to affirm the most admirable ideals articulated at their foundings. Some of IAS's greatest ideals reflect its origins in the 1930s, at the time of the Great Depression and the emergence of totalitarian and other non-democratic governments around the globe. When, in 1933, Germany's National Socialists passed a law excluding non-Aryans and political dissidents from civil service jobs, the ensuing social cataclysm resulted in a flood of German university professors seeking positions abroad. Urged on by faculty members such as Oswald Veblen, the Institute ultimately responded by supporting assistance projects to help scholars endangered by Europe's political upheaval. These initiatives were, as then Director Abraham Flexner conceded in correspondence, partly self-interested steps for an institution committed to developing, at the highest levels, not only mathematics but fields of humanistic studies, politics and economics. IAS was poised to take advantage of the situation created by political crises abroad, but pragmatism was accompanied by idealism, and a dedication to challenging political barriers that hinder the pursuit of knowledge, as well as to providing a haven for individuals confronting such barriers, played a decisive role.

Early in 2017, after the issuance in the U.S. of an executive order banning immigration from seven predominantly Muslim countries, a group of Members from across IAS formed what they called the "History Working Group" to research these early moments in the Institute's existence and to affirm its "founding ethos in our precarious present." The current article builds on the work of the original contributors to the Working Group, by surveying outreach efforts in the Institute's recent history. Attention to the less distant past is helpful for understanding how to uphold its finest ideals going forward, and, notably, it reveals that the Institute's endeavors to support individuals hampered in their work by political obstacles has extended not only to endangered scholars but to scholars confronting structural forms of bias—including bias that is gender-, race-, class- and geography-based—and who are for this reason at risk of exclusion from the pursuit of knowledge. This commitment to excluded or underrepresented scholars, like IAS's commitment to endangered scholars, dates to the institution's first years. Documents from the early 1930s, such as the Institute's Certificate of Incorporation, assert that "in the appointments to the staff and faculty as well as in the admission of workers and students, no account shall be taken directly or indirectly, of race, religion, or sex." This longstanding devotion to non-discrimination is reflected in the Institute's continuing efforts to meet the challenges of reaching out to underrepresented groups.

Patterns of Representation

One broader issue that IAS, like other institutions aspiring to an international reach, confronts is the underrepresentation of specific regions. "We have," as former Director Peter Goddard explains, "been aware that our ability to know where to find [the best people] is limited." Certain parts of the world have been largely absent, in particular Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Faculty and Members have traditionally come from countries with scientific traditions that are well-established or connected to better represented institutions elsewhere. For the years 2003-2017, the best represented countries among members in terms of citizenship were the US (44 %), Germany (7 %),

Israel (5.7 %), Great Britain (4.9 %) and France (4.8 %). The proportion of members from Europe (East and West) amounted to 33.4 %, from Asia to 10.4 % (3.8 % from China, 2.3% India, 1.2 % South Korea, 1.1% Japan). Scholars from the Middle East, Latin America and Africa, on the other hand, have made up tiny proportions, 1.3 % from the Middle East (without Israel), 1.2 % from Latin America and 0.4 % from Africa.

Geography-related forms of underrepresentation aren't the only imbalances with which IAS has to contend. Among the most notable challenges are those related to gender and race. This is apparent with regard to IAS's faculty. Of the 112 individuals who have been appointed to the Institute since 1930, 8 have been women. The archeologist Hetty Goldman, appointed in the School of Humanistic Studies, was the first woman faculty member (1936-47). Goldman was integrated into the faculty, even though—in ways partly reflective of broader trends for the treatment of women scholars in the US at the time—her compensation package was distinctive. At the time of her appointment, she was, as the minutes of a Board Meeting from October 13, 1946 reveal, paid a monthly “honorarium” instead of the more valuable salary that her male colleagues received. The salary that Goldman succeeded in securing 1945 was, as noted in a memorandum from 1946, smaller than those of her male colleagues, and—as noted in the minutes from a meeting of the Trustees from 1943—she was excluded from a retirement plan that was made available to male Professors. Half a century after Goldman's appointment, Joan Scott (1984-2014) in the School of Social Science became the second woman Professor. More recently, these appointments have been complemented by the appointment of Danielle Allen (2007-2014) in Social Science and by Patricia Crone (1997-2014) and Caroline Walker Bynum (2003-2011) in Historical Studies. In the past years, two out of four faculty appointments in Historical Studies have been women, Sabine Schmidtke (2014) and Francesca Trivellato (2018), as is the newest appointment in Social Science, Alondra Nelson (2019).

The faculty of the Schools of Mathematics and that of the Natural Sciences have not yet included a woman. In his 2018 epistolary autobiography, *Maker of Patterns*, Freeman Dyson recalls that during 1948-49, there were four women and ten men among the young physicist Members at the Institute. “The 28 percent fraction of female physicists has,” Dyson observes, “never been equaled in the subsequent sixty-seven years.” Returning to Institute-wide trends, Danielle Allen was the first African-American to serve on the IAS faculty. When Alondra Nelson arrives at the Institute in July, she will be the second. Nor do these issues pertain solely to the faculty. The proportion of women among IAS Members over the years 2003-2017, was 40 % in the School of Social Science, 35 % in Historical Studies, 16.8% in Mathematics and 7.1 % in Natural Sciences. In the School of Mathematics, there was a clear increase in the proportion of women between 1998 (7.7%) and 2003 (16.1%), but the trend seems to have stabilized since then. Comparisons with top departments in these disciplines in the US reveal similar distributions, confirming the structural nature of the observed patterns. More detailed comparisons between institutions would have to be made for more precise analysis, but some of the most significant variations in gender representation within the various disciplines seem to reflect differences in national systems of education and childcare (see below).

By the 1970s, prompted by social justice movements in the U.S. and elsewhere, individuals in the IAS community began arguing that non-discrimination was inadequate as a measure for addressing biases with deep social and historical roots. In a 1976 draft memo to the Institute community, then Director Carl Kaysen declared that “we are learning that nondiscrimination may no longer be a sufficient response. Underrepresentation of women or minorities in a particular role or profession, for example, may reflect far more the cumulative traditions and habits of a broad

range of institutions than any conscious policies of exclusion or prejudice” (see June 22, 1976, draft memo, Director’s Office: General files, Box 2, Affirmative Action Program/IAS, from the IAS Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center). One result of this proactive attitude was a set of initiatives, many spearheaded by then Director Phillip A. Griffiths, that included recruiting women and non-white individuals for the Board of Trustees and raising money for fellowships for Members of underrepresented groups. More recently, members of the Board of Trustees, including notably some of the Board’s women members, insisted on diversity as a hiring goal for faculty positions. These different initiatives have been supported and carried forward by Griffiths’s successors, Goddard and Dijkgraaf. The latter stresses that IAS confronts special challenges in light of its small size and need to compete with large universities and also in light of the relative lack of diversity in some of the fields from which it recruits, above all, math and theoretical physics. At the same time, he insists on the importance of the issues, given the Institute’s symbolic value as an elite institution.

In 2014, during Dijkgraaf’s directorship, the Committee on Diversity was created with the mission to review IAS-wide approaches to diversity and inclusiveness, and to make recommendations for improvements. Co-chaired by Matias Zaldarriaga from the School of Natural Sciences and Trustee Victoria Bjorklund, the Committee includes Dijkgraaf, along with representatives from the Institute’s faculty, Members, staff, and trustees. Since its inception, the Committee has developed a variety of policies, procedures and resources to address diversity-related needs, ranging from improvements in childcare facilities and parental leave policies to greater focus on diversity-related questions in the Member End-of-Term Survey.

Diversity issues get addressed, not only in centrally coordinated IAS policies, but also in the four IAS Schools. In some cases the individual Schools have taken the initiative, creating their own diversity committees, as the faculty of the School of Mathematics have done, or making creative use of existing resources to support scholars in underrepresented groups in their particular disciplines. For example, as noted by Nima Arkani-Hamed—Professor in the School of Natural Science and member of the Committee on Diversity—the School of Natural Science has successfully used its junior visiting faculty positions, which are open to men as well as women, to support stellar women scientists at critical points in their careers.

Summer Schools as Steps toward Inclusion

Some of the Schools’ most visible and successful initiatives have been summer programs like “Women and Mathematics” (WAM) and “Prospects in Theoretical Physics” (PiTP). Both are residential summer programs with outreach objectives.

Now in its twenty-fifth year, WAM was founded and, for many years, organized by Chiu-Lian Terng, a Member (1979 and 1997-1998) and Karen Uhlenbeck, a current Visitor in the School who first met Terng as a Member in 1979. Uhlenbeck is the recipient of the 2019 Abel Prize in mathematics, the first woman to win this prestigious award, in recognition of the fundamental impact of her work on analysis, geometry, and mathematical physics. WAM, the summer program she co-founded, originally grew out of the Park City Mathematics Institute (PCMI), itself an IAS outreach program that started when Phillip Griffiths, now Professor Emeritus in the School of Mathematics, was Director of the Institute, and it targeted, among others, secondary and post-secondary mathematics educators. The inspiration for WAM came partly from the fact that, at PCMI, the percentage of women undergraduate students, graduate students and mathematics

researchers was very low, especially when compared to the number of women high school teachers of mathematics.

Uhlenbeck explains that, when WAM started, it struck her that the number of women in mathematics had grown during the 1960s and 1970s but had stagnated since. She wanted to design a program with an atmosphere welcoming of interactions among women in the profession and of conversations about careers and work-life-balance. From its inception, WAM has been committed to reaching out to candidates, especially undergraduates, from smaller universities and colleges, with an eye to honoring and assisting those with excellent promise from less privileged backgrounds. The program, which consists of lectures, colloquia, and panels that are organized annually around a core topic in mathematics, brings together research mathematicians and women studying math at undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral levels. Some participate more than once, resulting in significant community building. Having grown from an initial cohort of fifteen participants to over seventy this year, in 2017, WAM launched an Ambassador Program to extend the network. This program will annually fund up to three postdoctoral or advanced graduate “ambassadorships” and up to six graduate “ambassadors” to organize conferences. Additionally, as Uhlenbeck notes, “a large percentage of women mathematicians who receive recognition has been associated with [WAM] in some way either as participants or lecturers” (for details, see <https://www.math.ias.edu/wam/news>). This year WAM received the American Mathematical Society’s Award for Mathematics Programs that Make a Difference.



The Women and Mathematics Program received the 2019 Award for Mathematics Programs. Second from right is Karen Uhlenbeck who was granted the 2019 Abel Prize

The history of “Prospects in Theoretical Physics” (PiTP) is tied to that of WAM. It began when then Director Griffiths asked Chiara Nappi, a particle physicist at Princeton University, to

design a similar program targeting women in physics. Ultimately Nappi arrived at a somewhat different format. Since 2002, a two week summer program is organized around current advances in a noteworthy research area. The goal of the program for the School of Natural Science at IAS, which mainly focuses on the training of postdoctoral fellows, is to contribute to the training of graduate students as well. A special effort is made to reach out to women and minorities, as well as to graduate students coming from institutions with smaller graduate programs. It is now typical for more than a hundred students to participate. The Institute has been generous to PiTP, and, when in 2018 an unusually large pool of qualified students applied, it supplied funding for one hundred and forty-five.

The proportion of women in PiTP varies annually between 12 and 20%, roughly the proportion of women in graduate programs in Theoretical Physics. Although in the beginning there were special lunches for women participants, these lunches were, upon the request of men participants, opened to men as well. While it is true that most younger women who have faculty positions in Theoretical Physics in the U.S. have gone through PiTP, so has—Nappi reports— “just about every younger male theoretical physicist.” One way to understand the challenges of increasing the number of women in theoretical physics is to consider trends in different parts of the world. Nappi explains that the proportion is significantly higher in Italy and some Latin American countries, likely because here there aren’t separate tracks for going into teaching and research. So, women who initially aspire to become teachers can more easily switch to research. Other important factors affecting representation in different countries are the availability of day-care facilities for children and the existence of structured high school curricula, with precise math and science requirements, which make it as natural for women as for men to choose science and math in college.

PiTP has made progress broadening the range of regions from which its participants come. Starting as an overwhelmingly U.S. program, by 2008, 30% of PiTP’s participants came from 15 countries outside the U.S. By 2017, that percentage was 40% with even more countries represented. Many of PiTP’s participants from developing countries come through the International Center for Theoretical Physics in Trieste.

Outreach Efforts Aimed at Regional Diversity

With an eye to fostering regional diversity in particular, the Institute has supported a number of projects in the sciences. This includes the Science Initiative Group (SIG), established at IAS in 1999. Co-founded by Director Griffiths, SIG aspired to provide guidance for the Millennium Science Initiative (MSI). This project supported centers of scientific excellence in the developing world by helping to fund master’s and doctoral programs at regional, university-based networks in sub-Saharan Africa. Building on its success, SIG has, as Peter Goddard puts it, “moved on.” In 2017, the flourishing organization was transferred to the beneficiary countries, so that its staff and board members function as advisors for pertinent initiatives in the targeted developing countries. Nor is SIG the Institute’s only contribution to regional diversity in the sciences. IAS provides support to initiatives such as the recent Institute for Theoretical Physics in São Paulo, and, earlier, it supported the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste. Since its founding in 1962 by the late Nobel Laureate Abdus Salam, ICTP has been a leader in efforts to advance scientific expertise in the developing world.

Some of IAS’s initiatives to overcome obstacles to geographic diversity have been launched by the School of Social Science under the guidance of Didier Fassin. Since his 2009 appointment as

James D. Wolfensohn Professor, Fassin has been troubled by the disproportionate number of Members from North America and Europe. He has led the School in broadening its recruitment efforts, with the result that, since 2015, the School has been able to host at least one scholar from each of the six major continents every academic year. But the success of the endeavor has been partial, and Fassin has taken seriously hurdles for scholars coming from the developing world, including not only a relative lack of information about institutions like IAS, but also a lack of funding for sabbaticals. He organized a more accessible Institute experience in the form of a summer program, inaugurated in 2015, with nineteen scholars from Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. The program—funded in major part by the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond—ran over three years, with the same participants meeting for two weeks, each time in a different location, from 2015-2017. The first two-week summer session was hosted by Fassin at IAS, the second session was hosted by Nancy L. Green and Denis Cogneau in Paris at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, and the third session was hosted by Björn Wittrock in Uppsala at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Uppsala. Despite challenges related to differences in academic and linguistic background, the program was a success. All of the initial participants participated in the first two sessions, with only two missing from the third for health-related reasons. The Mellon Foundation has now agreed to fund the program for at least six more years, to be organized in three two-year cycles. In each case, the first session will be hosted by Fassin at IAS, and, for the second, the group will be split, with one set hosted by Sarah Nuttall at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, where the proceedings will continue in English, and a second set hosted by Mara Viveros at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá, where the proceedings will be in Spanish.



Participants in the inaugural Summer Program in Social Science, September 2015

It is important not to underestimate the complexity of efforts to promote regional and gender based diversity, which are inextricably caught up with other forms of exclusion. For instance, the different IAS Schools are likely to find it easier to find women scholars from regions of the world that are otherwise well-represented among their memberships. When they do identify women or men from less well-represented regions of the world, these individuals may well have privileged class backgrounds, and be educated in elite universities in Europe or the U.S. The risk, then, is that steps to address “representation” on a geographic or gender basis may, unwittingly, reproduce class privilege in countries in which only elites have access to international education. It is for this reason important to include class-based access to education in meaningful debates on representation.

Endangered Scholars at IAS Today

The Institute’s programs for reaching excluded scholars have co-existed with the continuation of its historical commitment to endangered scholars. The School of Social Science has played a guiding role, recruiting Members whose livelihoods, or lives, are threatened by authoritarian and repressive governments. Under Fassin’s leadership, the School has hosted five at-risk scholars. Three were co-funded by the Scholar Rescue Fund (SRF), an organization, run by the Institute of International Education (IIE), that provides fellowships for endangered scholars.

IIE was founded in 1919 to promote cross-border cooperation between students and scholars. Its first notable accomplishment, in 1921, was to get the US government to create a non-immigrant student visa, enabling students to bypass immigration quotas imposed by the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and, later, the Immigration Act of 1924. Throughout the twentieth century, the IIE provided assistance to endangered scholars from Europe, Russia, Asia and Africa. In 1933, the IIE founded the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German (later: Foreign) Scholars, on which sat both Abraham Flexner, the first Director of the IAS, and Oswald Veblen, a founding Professor of the Institute, both of whom were driving forces behind the institution’s outreach to endangered scholars. The Emergency Committee assisted three hundred and thirty scholars in moving to the United States, including IAS Professor Kurt Gödel, Visitor Emmy Noether, and many other prominent academics, like Richard Courant, founder of the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences at New York University, and novelist Thomas Mann. In 2002, the IIE founded the SRF to formalize its commitment to endangered scholars. SRF awards fellowships of one-to-two years to threatened academics, providing funds up to \$25,000 to cover scholars’ stipends. The SRF has awarded more than a hundred fellowships to Syrian scholars since the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011. Before the Trump banned the issuance of visas to Syrian nationals, more than half of these scholars used their funding to come to the US.

The first at-risk scholar in the School of Social Science was selected as a Member in 2015. Inspired partly by the fruits of this first experience, Fassin brought in a second scholar at risk in 2016 as a visitor. A year later, three endangered academics from, respectively, sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, and a former Soviet Republic joined the cohort of new Members. One was affiliated with SRF, and the other two were funded by the School of Social Science. Recognizing the success of this project, the School of Historical Studies admitted a scholar at risk in 2017. Both Social Science and Historical Studies have taken steps to bring in more endangered scholars.

Looking Forward in Light of the Past

In surveying IAS's legacy of dedication to excluded and endangered scholars, we should bear in mind that the individual Schools face distinctive challenges. It is true that, to quote Fassin, "in the social sciences and in historical studies, regional diversity can have a scholarly value itself." Indeed, a diversity not only of regional perspectives but of perspectives related to race-, gender- and class-based social identity can internally inform the kind of understanding sought by social and historical researchers. Although structural features of the disciplines thus affect the way scholars in different fields approach issues of inclusion, IAS's Schools resemble each other in being heirs to an eminent tradition of preserving scholars' safety and combatting region-, gender-, race-, class- and religion-based obstacles that derail the progress of knowledge. However proud we are to claim this heritage—and we should be proud—carrying it forward will require not only hard work, good judgment, courage and an openness to risk but also the humility to learn from missteps.

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Alice Crary, Johan Heilbron, and Ian Jauslin were members of the Institute's History Working Group. Crary and Heilbron were Members in the School of Social Science in 2017–18, Jauslin in the School of Mathematics in 2016-18. Crary is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford and the New School for Social Research. Heilbron is Director of Research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and Member of the Centre Européen de Sociologie et de Science Politique. Jauslin is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Physics Department at Princeton University.