

Theory of Intersectional Advocacy

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

Audre Lorde

What does bail bond reform have to do with gender-based violence? For the organization Communities for Survivors (CFS), these two issues are interlocking. The executive director, Angela, shared why she is coleading a campaign for a bail bond reform bill. She says there is a need for “a good bill that would make the criminal justice system fairer for people of color in general and people who do not have the economic means to bail themselves out . . . racial justice is part of survivor justice . . . it helps us fight back on the narrative that tough on crime is supportive of victims of violence.” While Angela may see the connections between the criminal justice system, bail bond reform, and justice for survivors of violence, the US policy system is not structured in a way that embraces these multi-issue interventions. Across levels of governance, these issues are separated from each other through institutions and practices such as policy design, bureaucratic organizations, and budget appropriations (Thurston, 2018; Weir et al., 1988). This separation makes it difficult to address these multiple issues simultaneously. Angela is undertaking an uphill political battle that requires her to strategically consider how to (1) redraw issue boundaries to reflect the issue connections between gender-based violence, racial justice, and the criminal justice system; (2) develop policy linkages that address these issues together; and (3) change the institutions and structures that reinforce these problems. Angela’s undertaking is a form of advocacy that is practically and theoretically distinct from other types of political engagement. I refer to it in this book as “intersectional advocacy.”

I define intersectional advocacy as *advocacy for linkages between policies and issues that reflect the experiences of intersectionally marginalized groups positioned between more than one problem area*. Intersectional advocates like Angela seek to change how the US policy system defines, categorizes, and constructs policies around issue areas to better reflect how intersectionally marginalized groups are positioned between more than one problem. Throughout this book, I use the term “intersectionally marginalized” to describe populations that are marginalized across more than one axis of their identity (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation). Angela seeks to change how the policy system responds to Black women by intervening in the policymaking process to propose linkages between racial justice, criminal justice reform, and gender-based violence. Sometimes these linkages are conceptual: defining and framing these problems in relation to one another. Other times these linkages are policies in the forms of amendments, provisions, and new legislation that connect a policy on criminal justice reform to another on gender-based violence. Intersectional advocates like Angela are strategic in how they confront the US policy system to propose and push for these linkages.

We can understand her strategies, behaviors, and motivations through the lens of several scholars from political science, public policy, sociology, gender and sexuality, race and ethnic studies, and Black feminism. The concept of intersectional advocacy emerges from bridging the work of these scholars across disciplines to understand how advocacy groups like CFS, which Angela represents, intervene in the policymaking process to represent intersectionally marginalized populations. In this chapter, I draw from this scholarship to explain a distinct form of advocacy that fundamentally aims to change the US policy system in ways that we need to understand if we are committed to developing and implementing policies that are inclusive, equitable, and just. To fully communicate this radical shift in policymaking, in the next few sections I explain how existing US policies and governmental systems produce inequality among people across race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

THE AMERICAN STATE

The concept of intersectional advocacy necessitates an understanding of the United States as a “state,” which highlights the different layers of government and statehood that shape policymaking. The state as a concept has been theorized by scholars in different ways. Early scholars defined the state predominantly as a political organization associated with violence, “a human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 1965, p. 33). Within this definition, Weber (1965) outlines the functions of a state: legislative action, protection and public order, administration of justice, administrative branches to cultivate education, social welfare or other cultural interests, and a military. These administrative features and taxation as a mechanism to maintain these functions legitimize

state power (Tilly, 1993). Institutional arrangements then regulate the lives of civil society through governance, laws, and policies (Levi, 1989). These conceptions of the state are largely materialistic, emphasizing the power of statehood through force and its many institutional arrangements. Yet state power is not solely derived from physical forces.

State formation illuminates the ways in which the state is also immaterial – and these features are critically important for intersectional advocacy, which contests their meaning. Through state formation, institutional arrangements are codified and embedded with immaterial concepts of administration, ideology, concepts of family rights, beliefs about race and gender, and power dynamics in civil society (Adams, 2007; Corrigan & Sayer, 1991; Day, 2002; Gorski, 2003; Ikegami, 1997; Wong, 2018). As Gorski (2003) underscores: “states are not only administrative, policing, and military organizations. They are also pedagogical, corrective, and ideological organizations” (p. 165). These immaterial components of the state are central to processes of state formation that account for how the state reinforces or changes the meaning of these ideologies over time. Indeed, statehood is a culmination of this process by which “species of capital” are established (e.g., fiscal systems, citizenship requirements, school systems, police force) that allow the state to be “the holder of a sort of meta-capital granting power over other species of capital or their holders” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 67). It is through this “meta-capital granting power” that the state elevates the status of some groups while diminishing those of others. This disproportionate distribution of power, status, and resources often occurs through law and policymaking.

Scholars attuned to how these processes result in racial inequalities argue that the American state is also a “racial state.” Omi and Winant (2014) make the case that “through policies that are explicitly or implicitly racial, state institutions organize and enforce the racial politics of everyday life” (p. 105). Lieberman and Lapinski (2001), for example, found that the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) policy, when it was distributed federally, resulted in large racial disparities: eligible Black people received less coverage than their white counterparts. These outcomes are part of a process of exclusion by the state that are not only racialized but also gendered. Another example is one of the centerpieces of the New Deal, Old Age Insurance (OAI), which included provisions that disqualified workers in the agricultural and domestic industries (Gordon, 2012; Lieberman & Lapinski, 2001; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Williams, 2004). This was an implicit racial and gendered policy; nine out of ten African American women workers were ineligible for OAI based on these criteria (Mettler, 1998). Although OAI never explicitly denied African American women these policy benefits, by excluding industries where they were concentrated, this policy had a racialized and gendered effect. The American state also creates conditions for income inequality through policymaking. Financial deregulation by the government is one example. Financial deregulation policies provide corporations with more discretionary power

over their workers; groups such as the Labor Law Reform Group then leveraged this status to develop a strike insurance fund that denied union demands for wage increases (Linder, 1999). Efforts such as these led to the decline of both unions and existing union power, which largely affected low-income workers who depended on these unions to provide them with fair working conditions (Hacker & Pierson, 2010). Thus, the state can also reproduce income inequalities by not implementing policies that would better protect more vulnerable populations.

The state, through these many different functions (e.g., institutions, laws, policies, and financial appropriations), regulates the lives of people by determining their access to opportunities, resources, and power. The federal government's delegation of the implementation of social welfare programs to subnational actors meant that local bureaucrats and policymakers exercised discretion to disproportionately deprive Black people of access to welfare assistance, food stamps, health insurance, and housing assistance. For Black women who retired later in life, the state's exclusion of agricultural and domestic industries from OAI meant that Black women lost thousands of dollars over their lifetime compared to their white counterparts. For blue-collar workers who suffered injuries, the state's financial deregulation of corporations meant some of them did not access unions to advocate for paid leave or disability insurance. Advocates of gender, class, and racial justice recognize how the state functions in these ways through public policies, perceiving the state as "sites of struggle" (Randall & Waylen, 1998, p. 15).

Intersectional advocacy is a response to how the state regulates the lives of marginalized groups through policies, laws, and the distribution of resources that create conditions of inequality by gender, race, and class. Groups practicing this form of advocacy view law and policymaking processes as important sites of intervention, for these sites also open up opportunities to replace old repertoires that are "parochial, direct and segmented" with new ones that are "national, flexible, and based on modular forms of actions" (Tarrow, 2011, p. 55). Intersectional advocacy emerges from an understanding of how the multidimensional state harbors, produces, and reproduces inequalities by differences in identity such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender. In the next section, I focus on how ideologies about gender translate into state policies and laws that reinforce gender-based violence.

PATRIARCHY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

There are many types of systems, practices, policies, and laws that shape people's vulnerabilities to violence and their recourse for addressing this issue. The concept of patriarchy is useful for understanding underlying ideologies about gender and domination that inform these state functions. Patriarchy captures processes of domination that lead to outcomes in which "men are the powerful, women the powerless; adults the powerful, children the

powerless; white people the powerful, Black people and other nonwhite peoples the powerless. In a given situation, whichever party is in power is likely to use coercive authority to maintain that power if it is challenged or threatened” (hooks, 2000, p. 118). The state often enforces this domination through law, public policy, and the distribution of resources, which then shape people’s social and institutional lives by gender.

The state’s role in reinforcing and reproducing these patriarchal institutions is part of a long history of contracts, laws, and policies that structure economic and legal life by gender (Htun & Jensenius, 2020; Htun & Weldon, 2018; Pateman, 2018). For example, prior to the 1970s, financial laws stipulated that women could not legally take out a credit card or have property in their own name; these laws incentivized marriage between a man and woman, requiring women to be subordinate to their male partners on whom they depended for financial security (Pateman, 2018). Moreover, under the doctrine of coverture (marriage law) the husband had ownership rights over his wife and legally was entitled to control her income, property, and residence (Calvo, 2004). In the 1980s, marriage fraud laws provided the alien male spouse with unilateral control over his female spouse’s immigration status (Chen, 2000). Thus, legal rights across marriage, finances, and immigration all were enforced and reproduced by the state to elevate the dominant position of men while subordinating women.

Expectations of heteronormativity are similarly structured into the state;¹ accessing state benefits such as welfare, child support, and marriage rights are all dependent on intimate heteronormative relationships (Koyama, 2001). Social institutions (e.g., marriage, heterosexuality, the family) then reinforce and reproduce these inequalities by gender, sex, and sexual orientation (Collins, 2009; hooks, 2000; Nash, 2018; Pateman, 2018). Patriarchy provides a concept for understanding how the state, through these functions, reinforces norms of female subordination, heterosexuality, and male domination. Identifying patriarchal institutions and policies was important for feminists, especially in the late twentieth century, to identify the state’s role in reproducing gender-based violence. Patriarchal legislative institutions relegated cis women’s issues to the private sphere;² “the political then [was] the domain of [primarily white] men and male issues [whereas issues that affected women] like reproduction, contraception, childcare, rape, sexual abuse and battery and so on are pre-defined as outside the ‘proper’ realm of politics” (Alvarez, 1990, p. 28). Patriarchy was thus engrained into the legislative processes, and as such,

¹ Heteronormativity refers to a worldview that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation.

² The prefix “cis” means “on the same side as.” Thus, while people who are transgender move “across” genders, people who are cisgender remain on the same side of the gender they were initially identified as at birth.

political officials who were a part of this system were not incentivized to alter the power arrangements that are embedded within it.

Masculine-structured political institutions further reduced the significance of gender-based violence as an issue in the political sphere, because its “devalued status [as an issue was] assigned in social and political life to characteristics and people associated with femininity. In this reading, ‘gender’ is divisible into *masculinities* and *femininities*, which are ‘stereotypes, behavioral norms, and rules’ assigned to those people perceived to be men and those people perceived to be women” (Sjoberg, 2006, p. 33; emphases in original). Gender-based violence often ran counter to these expectations of femininity and heteronormativity (McDonagh, 2002). For example, being a good wife was couched in the heterosexual norm of taking care of a husband’s sexual needs; therefore, an issue such as marital rape, which contests this expectation of a heterosexual woman, lost the political attention of the state under these circumstances (Bergoffen et al., 2010).

Patriarchal institutions also regulated state responses to violence against trans, queer, and lesbian women in its reinforcement of norms, expectations, and power around heterosexual and cisgender categories (Cohen, 2005; Jennings & Andersen, 2003; Johnson & Henderson, 2005). These categories often relegated violence against LGBTQ survivors to the private sphere and allowed for heterosexual categories to be used as a tactic for abuse. For example, abusive partners of LGBTQ survivors were able to use these norms to their advantage by suggesting that others would not believe the relationship between same-sex partners was real – and thus intimate partner violence was invisible. Moreover, abusive partners of LGBTQ survivors could threaten disclosing the sexual orientation of a survivor to their family or community (Calton et al., 2016). By organizing social institutions, laws, and family norms around heterosexuality, the experiences of violence among LGBTQ members are discarded, made invisible, and accompanied by further stigma and alienation. Identifying and recognizing the ways in which patriarchy is enforced and reproduced by the state illuminates why social movements to address gender-based violence have emerged over the course of US history.

MOVEMENTS AND ADVOCACY

Movements to end gender-based violence in the United States have emerged, overlapped, and contradicted each other on several occasions. Starting in the 1960s, though, women’s advocacy groups within these movements began to visibly target the US policy system by advocating for new legislation and policies to prevent intimate partner violence and other forms of gender-based violence (Htun & Weldon, 2018; Weldon, 2002). These efforts over decades effectively influenced the passing of state policies (Weldon, 2012) and the enactment of the landmark federal legislation on gender-based violence known as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) (Ake & Arnold, 2017). How women’s advocacy

groups strategically sought these types of policy changes to address a single issue (e.g., gender-based violence) is well-documented (Ake & Arnold, 2017; Banaszak et al., 2003; Clemens, 1997; Goss, 2012; Kessler-Harris, 2003). However, most of these scholars focus on advocacy on behalf of women without disaggregating strategies that represent women who are marginalized across additional axes of their identities. This lack of attention to intersectionally marginalized groups eclipses an understanding of how advocacy organizations serve these populations differently (see Richie, 2012; Strolovitch, 2007; Weldon, 2012).

Attention to the advocacy organizations that represent and prioritize intersectionally marginalized groups reveals different approaches to engaging with the American State and US policy system. For example, advocacy organizations representing women of color often focus on issues that are not traditionally considered racially or gender motivated problems but do disproportionately affect women of color, such as public housing (Williams, 2004), domestic worker conditions (Hondagneu-Soleta, 2007; Nadasen, 2015), welfare benefits (Nadasen, 2012), and immigration (Chen, 2007). This advocacy demonstrates both the pervasiveness of oppression across a continuum of social identities and how different subgroups of women formulate ideologies of resistance that deviate from those of mainstream women's organizations. These ideologies are most certainly related to where low-income women and women of color lie differently on the social hierarchy and how their rights and opportunities are positioned between multiple struggles (Cobble, 2004; Robnett, 1997; Springer, 2005; White, 1999). Thus, there is a fragmentation of women's organizing, especially by race, ethnicity, and class – where multiple groups of women are working on gendered issues but from very different organizations and with varying issue priorities (Richie, 2012; Strolovitch, 2007; Weldon, 2012). How women can be marginalized across these additional identity characteristics is key to understanding why these advocacy groups differ in the issues they underscore, the policies they propose, and the strategies they deploy when trying to influence the US policymaking process.

INTERSECTIONALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND BLACK FEMINISM

Black feminists offer many useful frameworks and concepts for understanding marginalization across multiple axes of identities. As Deborah King notes, “the necessity of addressing all oppressions is one of the hallmarks of Black feminist thought” (King, 1988, p. 43). Black feminism is characterized by its multidimensional approach to liberation that attends to the ways in which sexism, class oppression, and racism are bound together. The ways these systems relate to one another are often understood through the concept of “intersectionality.” The Combahee River Collective, a collective of Black feminists who offered a statement of their politics in 1974, are often pointed

to as authoring one of the foundational texts of contemporary Black feminism. In their statement, they frame their politics as being “actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression, and see[ing] our particular task [as] the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking” (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 218). By engaging in this practice, Combahee and other Black feminists are “creating alternatives of self-governance and self-determination, and by using it [they] can more effectively prioritize problems and methods that center historically marginalized people in [their] communities” (Carruthers, 2018, p. 10).

As the Combahee Collective statement points out, there have always been Black women activists “who have had a shared awareness of how their sexual identity combined with their racial identity to make their whole life situation and the focus of their political struggles unique” (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 218). Black contemporary feminism is thus an evolving product of these projects, interventions, and activism. Early conceptions of Black feminist theory engaged with the concept of the “double bind,” which referred to the experience of being both Black and a woman (Feal, 2002). Others have characterized this double-bind experience as a form of oppositional consciousness, the state of belonging to a group (i.e., Black people) while at the same time not belonging to another (i.e., Black men). This dual positioning renders Black women vulnerable to the structural, political, and representational dynamics of both race and gender subordination. This experience is particularly relevant to how Black women experience violence – and contest it.

Some Black feminist scholars theorize resistance within the context of systems of gender and racial domination starting with precolonial experiences of violence. White (1999) discusses how enslaved Black women actively resisted rape, separation from their children on plantations, and forced pregnancy. In doing so, they enacted an early resistance to both gendered and racial oppression aimed at Black women. Harriet Jacobs’ emancipation narrative in 1861, for example, is one of the documents written from this perspective that illuminates early Black feminist resistance to both slavery and sexual abuse. She says: “When he told me that I was made for his use, made to obey his command in everything; that I was nothing but a slave, whose will must and should surrender to his, never before had my puny arm felt half so strong” (Jacobs, 1861, p. 39). Following this trace of enslaved Black female as both a subject and an object of violence, Black feminists writing about this period underscore the relationships between violence, race, gender, and political subjectivity under the conditions of slavery and continued Black oppression. In these texts, they demonstrated how separating anti-racist and feminist politics that frequently intersect created new dilemmas for Black women. To theorize, understand, and address the intersecting nature of these structural dimensions of oppression, one tool Black feminists offer is “intersectionality theory.”

INTERSECTIONALITY THEORY AND ADVOCACY

Intersectionality is a framework developed by Black feminist scholars to capture how a multiplicity of intersecting social identities determine one's power, life experiences, political interests, and more (Cohen, 1999; Collins, 1998a; Hancock, 2007; Lorde, 2017; Nayak, 2014). This framework is part of a collection of terms that Black feminists have mobilized to examine and understand the interconnectedness of structures of oppression (Nash, 2018). These structures have long been considered by Black feminists. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (1992) in particular writes, "race not only tends to subsume other sets of social relations, namely, gender and class, but it blurs and disguises, suppresses and negates its own complex interplay with the very social relations it envelops" (p. 255). Black feminist scholars thus bring attention to the ways in which social categories such as gender and class are given meaning through processes of racial domination. While "intersectionality" is a modern term for describing the experiences of this domination (Crenshaw, 2015), others have used terms such as "multiplicative relationships" (Hancock, 2007; King, 1988), "double jeopardy," "double discrimination" (Beal et al., 1970), and "the matrix of domination" (Collins, 2009) to emphasize Black women's interrelated experiences with racism, sexism, and classism. Thus, intersectionality theory is a product of several scholarly works by Black feminists to conceptualize the lived experiences of women who are vulnerable to varying forms of domination, discrimination, and oppression.

Intersectionality theory is especially helpful for understanding the movement to end gender-based violence. Crenshaw's (1991b) conceptualization of it is particularly useful. She provides three applications of the theory: the structural dimensions of domination (structural intersectionality), the politics engendered by a political system of domination (political intersectionality), and the representations of the dominated (representational intersectionality). These concepts can all be used to understand how women's positionality shapes their experiences with violence. Structural intersectionality illustrates how violence toward women often occurs within a specific context that varies depending on their race, class, sexual orientation, citizenship status, and other social categories. For example, a woman's citizenship status (structural inequality) may prevent her from being able to leave an abusive partner who holds US citizenship and who may threaten her with deportation if she leaves. Political intersectionality captures the various ways that political and discursive practices relating to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, or citizenship status overlook the existence of women with identities across these social categories. For example, without a pathway to residency or citizenship, for immigrant women who experience domestic abuse the interests and needs of women with these identities are overlooked by processes that separate citizenship from violence. Finally, representational intersectionality refers to how multiple identities are understood normatively. For example, Latinas and

Black immigrant women who hold dual marginalized identities (i.e., their race and gender) are often oversexualized in media and film (Stockdale, 1996), which overlook the nuances in their experiences with violence.

Intersectionality continues to be a collective project that encompasses a variety of terms we can use to understand the dimensions of marginalization and how these dimensions inform both activism and advocacy on the ground. As part of this collective project, social movement scholars offer conceptual terms to understand how intersectionality informs coalition-building and social movements. Intersectional coalition-building refers to how groups build coalitions across intersectional differences (Collins & Chepp, 2013). Intersectional solidarity occurs when groups are able to establish connections across social group differences by negotiating power asymmetries together (Hancock, 2011; Tormos, 2017). Intersectional praxis refers to organizing within social movements that aim to transform overlapping forms of oppression (Montoya & Seminario, 2022; Tormos-Aponte, 2019; Townsend-Bell, 2011). Intersectional consciousness is when individuals and groups recognize overlapping forms of oppression and build these lived conditions into movement agendas (Cho et al., 2013; Greenwood, 2008; Tormos-Aponte, 2019). In this book, I add to this collection of terms “intersectional advocacy,” which more precisely explains how advocacy groups can engage in intersectional consciousness in strategic ways that reconfigure state structures (i.e., a form of intersectional praxis), such as policy institutions. This precise definition of “intersectional advocacy” helps us better understand the strategies and goals of advocacy groups operating within these broader social movements.

These different aspects of intersectionality theory are reflected in the efforts of advocacy groups on the ground that emphasize marginalization across both gender and race/ethnicity in their efforts. For example, in the 1970s, Chicana feminist discourse brought attention to specific issues that affected Chicanas as Latinas, which emerged primarily as a result of the dynamics within the Chicano movement (Garcia, 1989). Similar to Black feminists, Chicana feminists emphasized their multitude of identities – their gender, ethnicity, and citizenship status – to communicate how issues of violence uniquely shaped their lives across these identities. In doing so, they emphasized how cultural nationalism, gender and racial oppression, and classism worked in tandem to oppress Chicana women in particular (Blackwell, 2016). For both Chicana feminists and Asian feminists, thinking critically about how patriarchal family structures intersect with racial oppression was important for understanding the difficulties of removing women from households where they experienced domestic violence (Chen, 2007). For Native feminists, exposing deep connections between policies of settler colonialism, patriarchy, and political sovereignty is necessary for understanding their multiple struggles with violence in their communities (Arvin et al., 2013). These different positionalities underscore the need to address the issue of gender-based violence while accounting for these varying and overlapping identities.

Scholars have also used the framework of intersectionality to study how organizations acknowledge these different positionalities through advocacy groups. Strolovitch (2007) drew from this framework to study a range of different organizations and found that most advocacy groups do not promote the interests of intersectionally marginalized constituents, such as low-income Black women, compared to those of more advantaged constituents, such as middle-class white women. The few organizations that do affirm the interests of intersectionally marginalized populations, Strolovitch (2007) identified as groups that practice “affirmative advocacy.” Affirmative advocacy is when organizations “redistribute resources and are attentive to issues affecting intersectionally disadvantaged subgroups in order to level the playing field among groups” (Strolovitch, 2007, p. 10). Other scholarship builds from this work by studying the range of advocacy groups that affirm what Strolovitch (2007) refers to as multiply “disadvantaged subgroups.”

To capture a range of strategies in how advocacy organizations represent these groups, scholars use the term “intersectional advocacy” broadly to identify advocacy that occurs on behalf of multiply disadvantaged subgroups (Dwidar, 2021; English, 2021; Marchetti, 2014). These scholars have found that organizations advocate for “multiply disadvantaged subgroups” especially through lobbying (Junk, 2019; Lorenz, 2020), intragroup coalitions (Dwidar, 2021), and rulemaking (English, 2021). These studies primarily focus on how organizations integrate their advocacy into existing policymaking and rulemaking processes on behalf of multiply disadvantaged subgroups (Dwidar, 2021; English, 2021; Junk, 2019; Lorenz, 2020; Marchetti, 2014; Phinney, 2017). While these studies offer important insights about the strategies of these organizations, because they reflect the behaviors of advocacy groups that support and work within existing policy systems, organizations that contest these systems and policymaking processes are overlooked.

Yet policy systems and policymaking processes harbor many of the inequities and inequalities that organizations representing intersectionally marginalized groups are seeking to change (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Michener, 2019; Michener & Brower, 2020; Omi & Winant, 2014). Therefore, differentiating among organizations representing intersectionally marginalized groups is important for understanding the subset of organizations that aim to challenge and reimagine existing policy systems. In this book, I bring attention to how this subset of advocacy organizations representing intersectionally marginalized groups engage with the very structures of US institutions (i.e., policy institutions) that are responsible for the marginalization and inequities these groups experience. This engagement in the policymaking process is distinct and warrants a more developed theory of intersectional advocacy. I build on this previous scholarship to develop a theory of intersectional advocacy that helps identify how advocacy organizations intervene in the policymaking process on behalf of intersectionally marginalized groups and how this engagement fundamentally changes US policy institutions.

THEORY OF INTERSECTIONAL ADVOCACY

Intersectional advocacy is defined in this book as advocacy for linkages between policies and issues that reflect the experiences of intersectionally marginalized groups positioned between more than one problem area. This form of advocacy can be observed across a gradient of strategies, contexts, and time periods, and it is practiced by different types of organizations with varying perceptions of constraints, resources, and transformative justice. Throughout the book, I explore these strategies within varying contexts to illustrate how intersectional advocacy is applied by a wide range of feminist groups. Though its application results in different goals, strategies, and outcomes among advocacy organizations, I argue there are four consistent characteristics that undergird this approach and that this advocacy can lead to policy reconfiguration. In Figure 1.1, I provide an illustration of how these characteristics are part of a sequential process for reconfiguring policies over time.

Firstly, intersectional advocacy only occurs when it represents groups that experience the issue of interest across more than one marginalized identity. It is the experiences of these groups that illuminate the difficulties of addressing issues like gender-based violence without attending to other overlapping issue areas. Secondly, to reflect these experiences of intersectionally marginalized groups in the policymaking process, individuals or organizations aim to establish issue linkages that change how problems are defined, framed, and conceptualized in relation to one another. Thirdly, to transform issue linkages into tangible policy changes, advocates encounter several types of institutional boundaries that separate these issues from one another. These boundaries are structured by the state (e.g., laws, policies, budget appropriations) and state adjacent entities (e.g., corporations, social institutions). To successfully advocate for policy linkages, advocates reinterpret, traverse, and redraw these boundaries by pressuring policymakers to adopt new policies, laws, or institutions; they also sometimes recommend dismantling existing institutions or projects and replacing them with other types of structures. These efforts I show throughout this book reconfigure policies to be more equitable, representative, and supportive of intersectionally marginalized groups. In the next sections, I elaborate on each of these characteristics and explain their importance within the context of the movement to end gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence and movements to address it are a rich case study for examining this concept and its many underlying political strategies for two

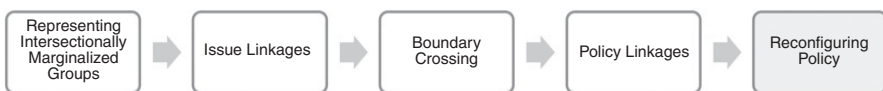


FIGURE 1.1 Theoretical model of intersectional advocacy

important reasons. First, we know from existing scholarship that this movement is a contentious space among advocates representing populations that are marginalized across multiple axes of their identities such as race, ethnicity, and citizenship status (Calton et al., 2016; Richie, 2012; Seelman, 2015; Smith, 2004; Weissman, 2013; Weldon & Htun, 2013; Wood, 2004). This allows for the examination of how advocates representing women who are marginalized by more than one identity compare to other advocates who do not take this positionality into account. Second, violence is an issue that crosscuts others such as housing (Ford et al., 2013; James et al., 2016; Kattari & Begun, 2017), poverty (Coker, 2004; Dutton et al., 2000; Mottet & Ohle, 2006; Sokoloff, 2004; Wacquant, 2009), immigration rights (Dutton et al., 2000; Orloff & Kaguyutan, 2002; Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005; Villalón, 2011; Wood, 2004; Wrangle et al., 2008), incarceration (Bumiller, 2009; Chesney-Lind, 2002; Gottschalk, 2006; Miller, 1989; Richie, 2012), and racism (Aszman, 2011; Coker, 2000; Crenshaw, 1997; Richie, 2000; Smith, 2004, 2008; Sokoloff, 2004). This interconnectedness with other issues presents advocates with several opportunities to develop unique strategies for addressing these issues together. While I focus on the movement to end gender-based violence,³ the framework of intersectional advocacy can be applied to many other issues and movements.

Representing Intersectionally Marginalized Groups

Representing the experiences and interests of an intersectionally marginalized group is a prerequisite for engaging in intersectional advocacy. I use the term “intersectionally marginalized” to refer to a group that is marginalized across more than one axis of their identity (e.g., Black women). Individuals with these multiple identities of marginalization are more vulnerable to interrelated systems of inequality and oppression. In the movement to end gender-based violence, these different positionalities matter for how these groups experience violence and how advocacy organizations represent them. In this section, I provide several examples of why these varying positionalities of marginalization importantly guide advocacy group approaches to policymaking.

Advocacy organizations that represent groups marginalized across two axes of identities – (1) gender and (2) class – often reference how both patriarchal institutions and capitalist policies work in tandem to make this group more vulnerable to domestic and sexual violence.⁴ Together, these sets of policies,

³ My reference to the movement to end gender-based violence is broad and includes overlapping movements and activism to address different forms of violence (i.e., domestic violence, sexual abuse, state violence, community violence). I use this terminology because it is how advocacy groups that I study view the political landscape that they are working within, but these initiatives and advocacy are not limited to women. They often are also for children, men, and trans people.

⁴ Capitalism is referred to here as a system of economic inequality and exploitation. It is supported by structures that allow the market to regulate capital often at the expense of vulnerable and

which determine the distribution of economic resources by gender and class, limit women's financial resources, which heighten their economic reliance on partners and diminish their ability to leave these relationships (Ake & Arnold, 2017; Websdale & Johnson, 1997). The outcomes of these policies by both gender and class are striking when violence is considered among women who are not marginalized by their class status. Middle-class or high-income women have access to resources that help keep abuse private, such as safe shelters and private physicians who guard them from other institutions such as the police or social service agencies. Meanwhile low-income women who lack these resources are more likely to be subjected to state coercion and privacy invasion as they seek help from social service agencies (Chesney-Lind, 2002; Miller, 1989). In these instances, advocacy groups highlight how marginalization across two axes of identities (i.e., gender and class) influences both a woman's vulnerability to violence and her ability to escape it, as well as the different resources she can rely on to change these circumstances.

Advocacy groups representing low-income Black women focus on marginalization by axes of gender, class, and race. They draw our attention to how political and social institutions create conditions of inequality that then determine Black women's experiences with violence and their options for recourse. The majority of Black women are occupationally segregated in industries that lack financial security and make them more vulnerable to predatory practices of sexual harassment and assault (Conley, 2010; Dozier, 2010; Katznelson, 2005). State-sanctioned violence against Black people further legitimizes violence against Black women (Ake & Arnold, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991a; Richie, 1996; Thompson, 2002; Thuma, 2019). Finally, by limiting Black women's access to social service programs, they are more likely to be financially dependent on family members and partners who can abuse this power (Keane & Wolpin, 2010; Wacquant, 2009; Wallace, 2002). For Black women, gender-based violence cannot be separated from police, military, and economic violence against Black communities (Collins, 1998b; C. M. West, 2002; T. C. West, 1999; Wyatt, 1992). This is why advocacy groups representing Black survivors often identify state violence (i.e., police brutality, incarceration, discrimination) and economic violence (social services and programs that are racially and economic exclusionary) as closely related to intimate partner violence – because they shape the conditions of subordination that provoke violence among communities of color (Beal et al., 1970; hooks, 2014b). Moreover, these groups face the unique challenge of combating interpersonal and state violence simultaneously, while ensuring safety for survivors (Smith,

marginalized groups (Fleming & Morris, 2015; Leong, 2013; Omi & Winant, 2014). These structures are part of a racialized history in which people themselves were and are used as capital for the state's economic gains (Dawson, 2014, 2016). Capitalism is also represented by laws and policies that determine the unequal and disproportionate allocation of resources to people by race, ethnicity, gender, and class (Conley, 2010; Dawson, 2014; Katznelson, 2005).

2001). Black women advocates underscore the intersections of these various social and political institutions that shape the experience of violence and recourse available for Black women (Bograd, 1999; Collins, 1998b; Crenshaw, 1994; Richie, 1996; West, 2002).

Indigenous women who are marginalized across axes of gender, race, and class are similarly situated between multiple struggles that shape their experiences with violence, their resources to heal, and legal actions to take against perpetrators. Settler colonialism refers to the process of displacement and replacement of Indigenous populations by a settler state that over time develops a distinct identity and sovereignty (Arvin et al., 2013; Blackhawk, 2009; Bruyneel, 2007). Indigenous women advocates call attention to how violence against Indigenous women is historically related to settler colonialism, which is linked to the commodification and appropriation of land (Reséndez, 2016; Smith, 2001). For Native women living on reservations, the way the state structures resources around sovereignty positions them between accessing resources they need and appealing to a foreign government for assistance (Jacobs, 2009; Smith, 2001). Moreover, when violence occurs on reservations, they have minimal access to legal or social service responses, especially when violence is committed on reservations by non-Indians, due to jurisdictional challenges and inadequate funding for these services (Deer, 2006; Whittier, 2016b). Thus, advocacy groups representing Indigenous women must consider how these policies work together to reduce the autonomy of Indigenous communities, which has direct implications for how survivors of violence access resources, support, and recourse.

Advocacy groups representing Latina and Asian noncitizen women are similarly concerned with issues of autonomy as the state regulates and reduces their citizenship rights. For these groups, their marginalized identities across axes of gender, ethnicity, and citizenship status make them particularly vulnerable to immigration laws. This vulnerability determines their options for escaping intimate partner violence and their resources. For example, Congress strengthened the power of the male spouse in immigration law, giving him unilateral control over the alien spouse's immigration status, and this institutionalized control enables abusive spouses to exploit the threat of deportation (Chen, 2000; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Advocacy groups have drawn attention to how abusers exploit this legal vulnerability by destroying their immigration papers, threatening to withdraw their petitions for immigration, and threatening to call authorities to have them deported (Dutton et al., 2000; Orloff & Kaguyutan, 2002, 2002; Salcido & Adelman, 2004; Villalón, 2010). Abusers often have more leverage over women with children, as these women contend with the possibility of state-sanctioned separation from their children (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Wood, 2004).

Citizenship status also intersects with other identities such as ethnicity and class to create additional challenges for noncitizen women experiencing

violence, such as social isolation from American culture and family members who are not in the country (Bhuyan & Senturia, 2005; Erez & Hartly, 2003; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Salcido & Adelman, 2004; Villalón, 2011). They are also vulnerable to financial insecurity, which makes women dependent on their spouses (Erez & Hartly, 2003; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Salcido & Adelman, 2004). Noncitizen immigrants also have negative experiences with law enforcement. To these groups, law enforcement is often associated with its deportation function, which disrupts a family unit, sends family members to detention centers, and worsens the economic circumstances of the family (Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005; Silva-Martínez, 2016). Deportation is a real concern; there are many instances in which reporting intimate partner abuse has resulted in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) involvement (Raj & Silverman, 2002). Noncitizen women are rightfully concerned that relying on law enforcement will result in deportation; police enforcement as a mechanism for reporting violence is then problematic for noncitizen women (Erez & Hartly, 2003). These advocates highlight how social institutions (e.g., family structures, language), economic relief policies (e.g., eligibility for social services), bureaucratic institutions (e.g., police force), and laws (e.g., laws on immigration) are all interwoven to determine the capacity of noncitizen, immigrant women to avoid, address, and escape violence.

These examples highlight why the experiences of violence among intersectionally marginalized populations lead advocates to consider additional and overlapping issue areas in their advocacy. They also illustrate the direct role of the state in determining the conditions of inequality that these groups face. While these examples are not all encompassing of the many ways in which identities map onto these experiences, they do communicate the relationships between identity, marginalization, state interventions, and advocacy. Intersectional advocacy emerges in response to these relationships as it seeks to address an issue (i.e., gender-based violence) that is shaped by these many conditions. To do so, advocacy organizations representing these groups develop and advocate for issue linkages.

Issue Linkages

Issue linkages are rhetoric, framing, and problem definitions that identify one issue in relation to another. In this section, I draw from existing literature to describe one example of how advocates on the ground advocate for an issue linkage between gender-based violence, state-sanctioned violence, and mass incarceration. Advocacy groups representing queer Black women and low-income Black women such as Women of Color Against Violence, The Defense of Battered women, and INCITE! have built campaigns to solidify issue linkages between gender-based violence and mass incarceration. These groups view the mainstream movement approach to end gender-based violence by criminalizing the action to be a problem. Relying on and expanding the criminal legal system

is seen among these groups as an outcome that further criminalizes communities of color, especially Black men and Latinos (Bumiller, 2009; Coker, 2004; Dasgupta, 2003; Goodmark, 2013; Haney, 2010; Miller et al., 2011; Richie, 2000). Organizations such as these underscore how these laws and policies add to existing community violence and state harm.

Black cis, trans, and queer advocates sought to address this issue by organizing campaigns that aimed to dismantle the criminal justice system often under the framework of abolition. They did so by linking abuses of the carceral state with the struggle to eradicate sexual and domestic violence (Richie, 2012; Smith et al., 2006; Thuma, 2019). For example, advocacy groups such as Love & Protect, INCITE!, and the California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP) developed the campaign “Survived and Punished” to coalesce existing defense campaigns and build a larger movement to support survivors and abolish gender violence, policing, prisons, and deportations. Other campaigns like “Say Her Name” were also created to call attention to police violence against Black women and girls while also promoting changes in the legal cases of survivor-defendants (Thuma, 2019). These efforts all aim to reconceptualize and redefine gender-based violence in relation to mass incarceration and state-sanctioned violence. These issue linkages can also change how resources are allocated. For example, advocacy groups affiliated with the Audre Lorde Project and the Anti-Violence Project representing Black transwomen advocated for redirecting resources from the criminal legal system to the development of alternative violence prevention and intervention strategies (Jordan et al., 2019).

These examples highlight the strategic decisions of advocacy organizations to link together the issues of gender violence to state-sanctioned violence and mass incarceration. What this literature does not provide, however, is how these groups transform issue linkages into policy outcomes that change how the state responds to these problems. This is the added value of a study on intersectional advocacy. In the next section, I explain how these agendas and broader campaigns to advocate for issue linkages are translated into actionable policies and laws.

Boundary Crossing and Policy Linkages

As these advocates push for policy linkages between issues, they encounter a variety of different institutional boundaries that they often have to confront and traverse. Policy linkages are amendments, new policies, and funding that link one policy to another. This is a strategic endeavor that I capture in my study of advocacy organizations. For example, in Chapter 4 of this book, I explain how the organization Communities for Survivors (CFS) transformed its issue linkages between gender-based violence and criminal justice into a policy linkage that was part of a bail bond reform initiative. Working in collaboration with other organizations, they wrote a bill that would take

away the bond requirement for defendants pending trial. Advocates from CFS view bail bonds as a product of mass incarceration, incarcerating people (which includes survivors of violence) because they are too poor to afford cash bail. Gender-based violence has often been an issue that political groups historically used to justify bail bond reform (Bumiller, 2009; Richie, 1996); thus, presenting these two issues as interconnected in the form of this policy is peculiar to most politicians and advocates. In this example, CFS is crossing issue boundaries to reform policies around incarceration – connections that legally do not exist. This instance of boundary crossing is often an action these groups have to take to establish policy linkages.

Why is intersectional advocacy a difficult approach to practice that underscores the contributions these groups are making by advocating for issue and policy linkages? The state reinforces social policy boundaries that advocates seek to rearrange by maintaining that “various social benefits [remain] operationally, fiscally, and symbolically separate from one another” (Weir et al., 1988, p. 9). These structural boundaries around public policy are established by a long history of a growing administrative state (Lawson, 1994). The welfare state – an extensive institutional set of policies in the United States that promotes the economic and social well-being of its citizens – offers a key example of how and why the state develops rigid policy boundaries. The welfare system in the United States began in the 1930s during the Great Depression when state systems were unprepared to respond to the volume of requests from individuals and families without work or income (Voegeli, 2012). The Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932 was then the first welfare initiative that provided an initial state structure for welfare (Howard, 1997). Since then, other welfare policies were layered onto this one: the Social Security Act of 1935, cash assistance programs such as the Aid to Dependent Children, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and so on. As these policies were layered or replaced, the administrative state grew to include new bureaucratic positions, policies, laws, and programs for managing welfare.

These state structures set the boundaries for what welfare policy was – and what it was not. These policy boundaries separated welfare from policies on immigration, crime, housing, policing, and so on through its singular focus on economic well-being (Raphael, 2015). In Chapter 3, I discuss how advocacy organizations contest these boundaries of welfare to include the issue of gender-based violence. Among organizations and individuals practicing intersectional advocacy, addressing the issue of gender-based violence necessitates some type of boundary crossing into state structures that operate outside the scope of their core issue (i.e., gender-based violence).

Scholars theorize “boundary crossing” in a variety of different contexts. I draw mostly from Star and Griesemer’s (2016) broader conception of boundary crossing, which is the practice of inhabiting several intersecting worlds that are “both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to

maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use and become strongly structured in individual site use” (p. 393). Studying boundary crossing thus requires an examination of loosely connected systems (Star & Griesemer, 2016). These loosely connected systems (i.e., policies and laws) provide advocacy groups with “resources for the creative acts of recombination at the heart of innovation” (Sheingate, 2003, p. 192). I posit that, as advocacy groups seek to institute policy linkages, they encounter a variety of structural boundaries. While these boundaries may appear rigid, it is these loosely connected systems of policies and laws that offer pathways for crossing and reconfiguring these boundaries.

In the movement to end gender-based violence, advocacy groups on behalf of intersectionally marginalized populations often cross institutional boundaries to advance their political goals. Sometimes these are legal boundaries, like those between the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and welfare policy. Other times these are definitional boundaries, such as budgets allocated at the state and city level to address specific issues such as housing or education, but not violence. And often these are legislative boundaries that reinforce separation between issues such as incarceration, violence, and poverty. While policy linkages reflect the needs of women who experience overlapping instances of oppression, these linkages do not fit into state structures that separate these issues from one another through laws, policies, budget appropriations, and social institutions. Thus, advocates who take on an intersectional advocacy approach are often engaging in this action of boundary crossing in order to connect issues they perceive as interlocking. There is less scholarship detailing this engagement. While scholars study boundary crossing in a few ways – how groups cross boundaries to change market problems to collective action efforts (Thurston, 2018), reconfiguring institutions within a policy area (Rocco et al., 2017), crossing policy boundaries for temporary political goals (Béland, 2009), and borrowing strategies from one regime of policies and applying them to another (Ramanathan, 2021) – none of these scholars consider how crossing boundaries across policies to establish issue and policy linkages can reconfigure the policies themselves. Throughout the book, I bring attention to how advocates cross institutional boundaries to advocate for issue and policy linkages. In the process, I argue that these groups are leading efforts to reconfigure policy boundaries.

Policy Reconfiguration

Advocacy that crosses institutional boundaries to establish issue and policy linkages between gender violence and other issue areas often leads to policy reconfiguration. This reconfiguration is the product of advocates’ creative recombination of resources to “develop new ideas, tactical repertoires, and infrastructures to challenge existing policies” (Rocco et al., 2017, p. 14). In Chapter 3, I demonstrate how these policies change incrementally as a product of several

issue and policy linkages – what I refer to as policy reconfiguration. I draw on Banaszak, Beckwith, and Rucht's (2003) conceptualization of reconfiguration for capturing the process that leads to this outcome. They argue that the fundamental character of the nation-state involves undergoing state formation, which is a constant state of change. When fundamental changes (e.g., the Great Depression, the Civil Rights Act, the women's movement) occur, formal and informal state powers can be reconfigured to potentially shape a new state model, thereby changing the relationship between states and their polity (Htun & Weldon, 2018). Reconfiguration then occurs in two processes: (1) through structural changes within the state and (2) by the changing relationship between the state and civil society. Together, these two processes reconceptualize the institutional roles of the state (Banaszak et al., 2003).

Intersectional advocacy has the potential to reconfigure one aspect of the state: its policy institutions. Policy institutions “reflect and contribute to power dynamics that reinforce and magnify the position of their creators” (Montoya, 2016, p. 374). By reconfiguring the boundaries of policies, I argue that advocates are transforming the policy function of the state by shifting these power dynamics. This transformation is a process of modifying, eliminating, and reinventing policies to better meet the needs of intersectionally marginalized populations. Intersectional advocacy is then a process of establishing issue and policy linkages between distinct issue areas that modify, eliminate, and reinvent the existing boundaries for policymaking. These changes alter the relationship between the state and these groups by changing how the state represents their interests and how it distributes resources to them through these policies. For example, when the state links together policies through amendments and provisions that grant citizenship rights to immigrant women that experience intimate partner violence, approve their eligibility for welfare, and provide them with access to public housing, these policy linkages all work together to change the distribution of power to intersectionally marginalized populations. Policy institutions are then reconfigured to redistribute resources that not only more comprehensively address a social problem but also change dynamics between “the powerful” and “the powerless” by distributing resources across distinct issue areas. When the state changes how it organizes its policies in this way, people are no longer marginalized across these institutions because they are not trapped within policy gaps that do not account for their unique positionalities. This is a potential outcome of policy reconfiguration that occurs incrementally as a result of several micro-changes and transformative shifts in how policies are connected to one another.

CONCLUSION

Scholars across disciplines provide important insights for understanding marginalization, oppression, social movements, advocacy groups, and policymaking. In this book, I draw from this interdisciplinary scholarship to

make sense of a unique form of advocacy that I refer to as “intersectional advocacy” and define as *advocacy for linkages between policies and issues that reflect the experiences of intersectionally marginalized groups positioned between more than one problem area*. As organizations and individuals engage in intersectional advocacy, they encounter the American state, which encompasses several institutions with powerful logics that have “the capacity to conquer, enslave, surveil and imprison” (Morgan & Orloff, 2017, p. 1). As advocacy groups reconfigure policy boundaries, they are contesting the established norm that the state is made up of “static structures of political opportunity” and reinterpreting it as a set of organizations that can “transform the character of states or their constituent institutions” (Morgan & Orloff, 2017, p. 3). And transform *they do*. In the following chapters, I present evidence that advocacy groups are leading efforts to create issue and policy linkages that “transform the character of their constituent institutions.” To fully understand these remarkable transformations and the nuances of this approach, in Chapter 2 I present an example of advocacy that reinforces policy boundaries. I then explain the harms of this approach on intersectionally marginalized groups. By doing so, I underscore what is at stake if these policymaking processes and outcomes are maintained, while illuminating policy alternatives that intersectional advocates present to us.