



# 20

## Intersectional Advocacy and Policymaking Across US States

Kathleen Marchetti

Advocacy groups working on behalf of people typically underrepresented in US politics (e.g., women, racial minorities, the poor) frequently advocate for policy benefits on behalf of their constituents. These organizations have undoubtedly changed the face of US politics and policy by encouraging political participation within disadvantaged communities, supporting the political candidacies of those traditionally underrepresented in office, and diversifying issue agendas. However, research has shown that organizations do not represent all people equally in the policy process. Specifically, people facing multiple levels, or intersections, of disadvantage are relatively less likely than their more advantaged counterparts to be represented by US state and national advocacy groups. As many advocacy groups cite local, state, or national policy change as a goal, underrepresentation of disadvantaged communities in advocacy can shape government actors' attention to intersectionality when developing public policy. Thus, lack of attention to intersectionality in advocacy could possibly inhibit the achievement of social justice policy goals on behalf of marginalized communities. This leaves open the question of whether inequalities could be reproduced by the very organizations working to make the political process more equitable.

To better understand organizations' representation of marginalized groups, the social justice capacities of organizing, and possible policy outcomes, one

---

K. Marchetti (✉)

Department of Political Science, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA, USA

e-mail: [marchetk@dickinson.edu](mailto:marchetk@dickinson.edu)

© The Author(s) 2019

O. Hankivsky, J. S. Jordan-Zachery (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Intersectionality in Public Policy*, The Politics of Intersectionality, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98473-5\\_20](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98473-5_20)

451

must consider the factors that shape organizations' agenda-setting behaviour (their attention to particular issues over others). The goal of this research is to understand what motivates advocacy groups' inclusion of intersectional issues, that is, issues that address the effects of multiple identities (e.g., race/class/gender) that can produce advantage or disadvantage in society and politics, on their policy agendas. Advocacy groups focusing on issues of social justice have the potential to shift lawmakers' attention to the needs of marginalized communities within the policy process. As such, understanding patterns of attention to these types of issues informs scholars, advocates, and the public about who the political process represents and how to diversify the voices included in policymaking.

Examining both variation in advocacy groups' issue agendas *and* the political conditions that shape advocates' decision-making provides a nuanced understanding of what drives attention to intersectionality in advocacy. This analysis uses an original survey of over 700 advocacy groups active in 14 US states to measure differences in intersectional advocacy across individual groups *and* political contexts. Specifically, this research considers how political factors such as party control of governing bodies, the racial and gender composition of state legislatures, and the strength of states' economies shape the issue priorities of groups advocating for state-level policy change. Inferential statistical analysis shows that several aspects of states' political environments shape organizations' attention to intersectionality in their policy agendas. In addition, a case study of policy congruence between advocacy groups' issue priorities and state legislative agendas demonstrates that intersectional issues are less likely than non-intersectional issues to move successfully through the policy process. These results suggest that attention to intersectional disadvantage in US state-level advocacy and lawmaking is contingent, contextualized, and less prevalent than the representation of issues addressing single axes of identity. Prior to discussing these findings, the concept of intersectionality in organizing, the connections between social justice advocacy and policy change, and the data used in this study are explained in more depth.

## Background

### Intersectional Advocacy

Critical race theorist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw is often credited with coining the term "intersectionality" to describe the unique experiences of women of colour who are marginalized along lines of both race and gender. In

her work on violence against women of colour, Crenshaw (1991) notes the erasure of these women from feminist and anti-racist activism:

Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling. ... Because of their intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both. (1242–1244)

The framework of intersectionality examines how biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, and sexuality interact on multiple levels and contribute to people's systemic privilege or oppression. Intersectionality also recognizes that descriptive identities, though discrete, do not exist in parallel to one another. Rather, they come together, intersect, and overlap to shape the totality of a person's viewpoints, concerns, and experiences.

As intersectional identities shape individuals' lives, they also affect the issue concerns and policy preferences stemming from people's lived experiences. These concerns and preferences can be represented in the democratic process through the work of advocacy organizations. For example, in their study of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) in Oakland and San Jose, CA, Chun et al. (2013) demonstrate how identity-based organizations can employ an intersectional lens in their social justice work using "the particular grievances of one group as a point of entry into a larger struggle" (921). The diversity of AIWA's issue agenda, which ranges from providing English language classes for immigrant women to protecting the rights of garment workers in their places of employment, embodies the intersectional experiences of the group's constituents while furthering broader goals related to social justice.

Chicana feminist activism in the 1960s and 1970s, black feminist organizing that accounted for class, race, and gender oppression, and the inclusion of forced sterilization as an issue of reproductive justice for women of colour (WOC) and people with mental and physical disabilities all serve as examples of how intersecting identities shape both lived experience and the issues put forward by US social justice organizations.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, many advocacy

---

<sup>1</sup> Within this project, social justice organizations are defined as those focused on bringing about a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for individuals typically marginalized or disadvantaged by and within mainstream institutional practices and structures.

organizations make explicit claims regarding their representation of intersectionally marginalized people and the potential for policy change on behalf of these communities (Strolovitch 2007). These representational claims are made more important given research showing that people facing intersections of disadvantage, particularly in terms of income and education, have lower rates of participation in US politics (Verba et al. 1993; Hershey 2009). As such, advocacy organizations serve as crucial representatives of marginalized communities within the US political process.

Unfortunately, scholars have found that the invisibility or erasure of intersectional experiences in activism can be common. Advocacy organizations frequently claim to represent broad constituencies that contain intersecting identities within their boundaries (e.g., within the broad constituency of “women,” class and gender intersect for low-income women, and sexuality and gender intersect for lesbians) (Young 2000; Cohen 1999; Kurtz 2002). These intersections of experience and identity can be ignored as activists and scholars focus on how inequality *generally* matters in society and politics, rather than what types of inequality matter and in what circumstances (Dill 1983; Marchetti 2014).

In addition, group supporters with relatively more education, time, and money typically have the best ability to communicate their concerns to group leaders. As a result, advocacy agendas can reflect the preferences of these more advantaged supporters to the detriment of constituents with fewer resources (Miller 2008; Berry et al. 2006). These differences in attention are important as advocacy groups’ favouring of more privileged supporters can shift broader policy agendas towards the interests of people who are more advantaged in the political process to begin with. Many assume that organizing will facilitate the representation of disadvantaged interests in US politics; evidence to the contrary calls into question the value of advocacy on behalf of those typically marginalized in the policy process.

Though intersectional advocacy can be challenging for organizations, there are circumstances in which it does occur. For instance, Chun et al. (2013) and Tungohan (2016) consider how organizations address immigration status, gender, class, and race/ethnicity in their advocacy on behalf of US and Canadian women workers. In both cases, the groups studied by Chun et al. (2013) and Tungohan (2016) explicitly identify issues of marginalization and identity as central to their organizations’ mission and issue focus. As Strolovitch (2007, 48) points out, these types of organizations “derive their legitimacy from their claims to represent weak and marginalized groups rather than by channeling or augmenting the power and influence of already powerful groups.” By claiming to work on behalf of individuals connected by a single

axis of identity (e.g., the National Organization for Women (NOW) works for “equality for all women”), advocacy organizations imply the representation of *all* members of these marginalized groups, which necessarily includes people facing intersections of privilege and oppression. Adopting an intersectional framework in studies of advocacy provides a more complete view of how organizations distribute attention, engage in agenda setting, and provide political representation for multiple groups in society.

Analysis grounded in intersectional perspectives also provides answers to both normative and empirical questions regarding how and why particular interests are represented in the policy process. By focusing on the factors that shape organizations’ intersectional advocacy, this study builds on previous research in the US showing clear disparities in attention to people disadvantaged by intersections of race, class, and/or gender (in addition to other identities). Though these previous works demonstrate *how* US advocacy groups represent intersectional identities, they do not explain *why* groups distributed attention in these ways. Through an examination of the factors shaping organizations’ policy agendas, this study examines the conditions under which women’s rights, racial minority rights, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) rights, economic justice, and disability rights groups represent intersectional issues in the US policy process.

## The Importance of Context

To account for variation in representation across both organizations and political context, this study examines differences in organizations’ agenda-setting behaviour across US states. By examining advocacy at the subnational level, one can analyse the effects of variation in party control, public opinion, citizen and legislative ideology, and numbers and types of organizations using cross-sectional data.<sup>2</sup> In this study, organizational agenda setting is conceptualized as being driven by two major sets of forces: (1) the lobbying context (e.g., the strength, diversity, and size of the interest group community) of the state in which the organization works and (2) the legislative context (e.g., party competition, ideological climate, legislative professionalism) of the state in which the organization works.

---

<sup>2</sup> Though this framework and many of the examples cited in this section focus on the US context, research on intra- and international organizations in a variety of non-US countries demonstrates connections between political context and organizational behaviour. In addition to those cited here, some of this research is summarized in Marchetti’s (2015) review of the use of surveys in interest group research and has been published in *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and the *Journal of European Public Policy* (among others).

For example, organizations operating in US states with large populations of citizens and interest groups face higher levels of competition for legislators' time and may streamline their agendas as a way of maximizing opportunities for success (Minkoff 1997; Staggenborg 1995). Alternatively, more diverse group populations might facilitate alliances and collaboration among advocacy groups on intersectional issues (Heaney 2004; Hojnacki 1997) or encourage individual organizations to focus on niche issues that may be intersectional in nature (Browne 1990; Gray and Lowery 1996). In addition, the presence and activity of oppositional groups can affect organizations' lobbying strategies (Holyoke 2003) and likewise may shape groups' agenda-setting behaviour. In studies of organizations lobbying in the European Union (EU), scholars find that groups' decisions to Europeanize their lobbying strategies (i.e., to lobby EU institutions as well as their own national governments) are driven by their resource levels and the national-level political context in their home countries (Beyers and Kerremans 2007; Eising 2007; Klüver 2010). As such, political context (e.g., legislative receptivity, party control, length of time in session) also affects advocacy organizations' tactics and agenda setting.

Groups hoping to change public policy must be conscious of the political atmosphere in which they are working and strategically craft their advocacy agendas to avoid wasting time and effort on unattainable policy goals. Potential for legislative support and success are prominent factors considered by advocates when setting their issue priorities and lobbying tactics (Heberlig 2005; Victor 2007; Meyer and Staggenborg 2012). In supportive legislative environments, groups may take advantage of political opportunities by focusing on controversial policy issues that would be unlikely to move forward in less supportive conditions. In a more closely contested legislative atmosphere, a group may focus on moderate policy goals that carry broader appeal (Meyer and Imig 1993; Minkoff 1997; Dill 1983). Though attention has been paid to how the US policy context affects organizations' lobbying strategies in the form of tactics and connections with individual legislators (Hojnacki and Kimball 1998; Berry 1977), the question of how these factors shape organizations' attention to intersectionality remains less clear.

## Data and Analysis

This research examines how context shapes policy agendas via a survey of approximately 700 identity-based advocacy groups across 14 states<sup>3</sup> in the US during the 2010–2011 state legislative sessions. All of the groups included in the study focus on one of five types of identity: race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability. The survey provides information about the policy focus and internal workings of social justice organizations that are then contextualized within states' legislative and lobbying environments. A multi-wave/multi-method survey design produced complete responses from 204 organizations in the 14 targeted states, yielding a response rate of approximately 29%, which is in keeping with typical response rates for surveys of organized interests (Marchetti 2015).

The survey asked respondents to provide information about their organizations' policy agendas, specifically to list up to five issues the organization had worked on over the past year. Intersectionality in groups' policy agendas was coded according to whether each issue listed would affect the organization's primary constituency in general (e.g., a women's group focused on violence against women) or a subset of marginalized individuals within this primary group (e.g., a women's group focused on childcare for low-income mothers). This coding scheme provided the two main measures of intersectional representation used as dependent variables in statistical analyses: the *proportion* of an organization's agenda comprised of intersectional issues and the *number* of intersectional issues on the organization's agenda.

### Lobbying and Legislative Context Data

Information about states' lobbying contexts were obtained from research by Virginia Gray, David Lowery, Jeffrey Harden, and John Cluverius (2013) which includes a complete census of organizations registered to lobby in the American states in 2007. These data measured several traits of the state lobbying environment that previous studies have shown to be important determinants of interest group behaviour: *Total Groups* (the total number of advocacy groups in a state); *Difference in Private/Advocacy Group Proportions* which is the difference between the proportion of private interest organizations

---

<sup>3</sup>The 14 states are Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin.

(e.g., businesses and corporations) and the proportion of public advocacy groups (e.g., social justice organizations) within the state interest group population<sup>4</sup>; and a measure of *Legislative Party Competition*. Census data provide measures of each state's *Per-capita gross state product (GSP)* and a measure from Gray et al. (2013), *Percentage Change in GSP*, demonstrates the proportional change in states' per-capita GSP from 1997 to 2007 (the period of time covered by their study). In order to test the effects of legislative context on advocacy, the following measures are also included: demographic information about the legislators in a state (proportions of *African-American Legislators* and *Female Legislators*), *House and Senate Ideology*, *Legislative Professionalism*, and *Party Control*. In addition, the models include measures of organizations' interactions with their supporters and government officials (e.g., how frequently groups meet with their members, how frequently groups meet with legislators) and binary variables indicating the type of organization (e.g., women's rights, racial minority rights) with LGBTQ rights groups serving as the excluded (i.e., comparison) category for analysis. Table 20.1 contains information about the change in the number of intersectional issues and the proportion of intersectional issues on groups' agendas as a factor of state legislative and lobbying contexts.<sup>5</sup>

## Effects of State Legislative and Lobbying Context

In terms of lobbying context, the size of the interest group population in a given state, measured by *Total Groups*, negatively affects both the number and proportion of intersectional issues on advocacy groups' agendas. More specifically, for every additional group registered to lobby in a given state, there is a 1% decrease in the number of intersectional issues on groups' agendas and a 0.01 decrease in the proportion of organizations' agendas focused on intersec-

<sup>4</sup> Coding of private and advocacy groups based on Gray et al. (2013).

<sup>5</sup> The models were estimated using multi-level Poisson and multi-level ordinary least squares regressions, respectively. The multi-level approach accounts for the clusters of organizations at the state level with the organization specified as level 1, the state specified as level 2. The Poisson model is appropriate for a dependent variable that is a count, while the ordinary least squares regression is used for the continuous proportional measure. Coefficients for model 1 are expressed as incidence rate ratios (IRR) for ease of interpretation and can be understood in the following way: an IRR above 1.0 represents a positive change in the dependent variable, while an IRR below 1.0 represents a negative change in the dependent variable.

**Table 20.1** Effect of state legislative and lobbying context on intersectional advocacy

Variable	Number of intersectional issues on agenda (model 1)	Proportion of agenda that is intersectional (model 2)
<i>Legislative context</i>		
House and Senate ideology	0.99 (0.00)	0.00 (0.05)
African-American legislators	1.01 (0.02)	0.06 (0.37)
Female legislators	1.04** (0.02)	0.62* (0.34)
Party control	0.98 (0.33)	-0.92 (6.7)
Legislative professionalism	1.05*** (0.02)	0.87** (0.36)
<i>Lobbying context</i>		
Total groups	0.99** (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)
Percentage change in GSP	1.18 (0.76)	-0.00 (0.13)
Per-capita GSP	0.99 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Legislative party competition	1.03 (1.2)	1.90 (24.7)
Difference in private/advocacy group proportions	1.00 (0.02)	0.17 (0.39)
<i>Internal context</i>		
Paid staff	1.00** (0.00)	0.02** (0.01)
Member involvement	1.23 (0.35)	5.37 (6.34)
Member meeting	1.11 (0.09)	0.40 (1.8)
Member lobby	1.04 (0.14)	0.13 (2.5)
Legislator meeting	0.86* (0.08)	-4.02** (2.0)
<i>Group-type controls</i>		
Women's rights group	1.95*** (0.46)	13.72*** (5.1)
Economic justice group	1.36 (0.35)	2.50 (5.2)
Racial minority rights group	2.05*** (0.55)	11.06* (6.0)
Disability rights group	0.90 (0.27)	-3.13 (5.6)
Constant	-	26.18 (45.7)

Note:  $N = 204$  across both models. \*\*\* significance at  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\* significance at  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \* significance at  $p \leq 0.10$

tional issues. To interpret this effect in a more substantively meaningful way, one might say that for every additional 100 organizations in a given state, the number of intersectional issues on groups' agendas decreases by one and the proportion of groups' agendas focusing on intersectional issues decreases by one *percentage* point. This negative result suggests that dense interest group systems, with increased crowding and competition, could ultimately decrease advocacy organizations' representation of intersectional issues. However, *Total Groups* is the only aspect of lobbying context that significantly affects organizations' policy agendas; none of the other measures reaches acceptable levels of statistical significance in either model.

Two aspects of state legislative context significantly affect both measures of intersectional advocacy: the measure of *Legislative Professionalism* and the percentage of *Female Legislators* in the state legislature. Putting these results in terms of the states included in the study, a 16 percentage point increase in women's representation, exactly the difference between the proportions of women in Washington's (32%) and Tennessee's (16%) state legislatures, would increase the proportion of intersectional issues on groups' agendas by approximately 10 percentage points. Similarly, increasing women's representation by 25 percentage points, which is equivalent to the difference between the proportion of women legislators in Colorado (41%) and Tennessee (16%), would cause organizations to place one additional intersectional issue on their policy agendas. This finding lends support to the idea that female legislators may act as allies for advocacy groups working on behalf of marginalized constituents (Poggione 2004; Swers 2002; Reingold 2008).

In addition to the gender composition of the state legislature, *Legislative Professionalism* also increases attention to intersectional issues. A 20-point increase in legislative professionalism, roughly the difference between Wisconsin (24) and Pennsylvania (47), increases the proportion of intersectional issues on groups' agendas by slightly over 17 percentage points. A similarly sized increase in legislative professionalism would increase the number of intersectional issues on groups' agendas by one. The proxy measure of organizational resources, *Paid Staff*, has a positive, statistically significant effect on organizations' intersectional advocacy though the result is so small that its substantive effect is null.

After controlling for several aspects of internal context that might shape groups' policy agendas, group leaders' *Legislator Meetings* is the only variable that significantly affects attention to intersectional issues. This corroborates the findings above, namely, that groups' relationships with the state legislature are important determinants of the scope and content of their policy agendas. However, in this case the effect is negative rather than positive.<sup>6</sup> The number of intersectional issues on a group's agenda decreases by 14% when group leaders increase their meetings with legislators by a single unit (e.g., moving from annual to monthly meetings with legislators). Meeting with legislators also decreases the proportion of organizations' agendas focused on intersectional issues. If an organization that previously never met with legislators

---

<sup>6</sup>The measure of meeting with legislators ranges from zero to four, with zero indicating that the group never meets with legislators and four indicating that the organization meets with legislators on a weekly to daily basis.

began meeting with them on an annual basis, the proportion of intersectional issues on its policy agenda would decrease by slightly over four percentage points.

These negative effects support previous research on relationships between political institutions and advocacy organizations. Deborah Minkoff's (1997) study of US women's rights groups found that over time, many policy-focused organizations became "institutionalized," shifting their focus away from complex or controversial issues towards mainstream issues that were easier for legislators to support. In contrast, groups that were concentrated at the grassroots level, being comparatively more aware of their constituents' needs and less focused on policymakers, were more likely to prioritize the diverse interests of their supporters. When it comes to agenda setting, identity groups advocating for state-level policy change also seem to sacrifice intersectionality in favour of political expediency.

Finally, though not a variable of primary interest, group type significantly affects attention to intersectional issues. In terms of the number and proportion of intersectional issues on policy agendas, *Women's Rights* and *Racial Minority Rights* groups pay more attention to intersectional issues relative to LGBTQ rights organizations, which serve as the comparison group. In contrast, there are no significant differences in the attention paid to intersectional issues by disability rights, economic justice, and LGBTQ rights organizations.

These results indicate that state political environments can facilitate or prevent organizations' representation of issues addressing intersectional identity. We cannot assume that groups retain complete autonomy when setting their policy agendas. Rather, organizations' relationships with legislators, diversity and professionalism of legislative bodies, and size of the advocacy community all shape the extent to which they advocate along intersectional lines. Given the common goal of policy change across the social justice organizations included in this study, the issues on which they advocate have the potential to be addressed and passed into law by legislative bodies. That is, these groups have the simultaneous goals of representing the interests of marginalized communities *and* achieving policy goals on their behalf. However, the issues put forward by advocacy organizations are not guaranteed a space on legislative agendas. Comparing organizational policy agendas to the policy priorities of their corresponding state legislatures further explicates the above findings regarding the effect of political context on intersectional advocacy.

## Colorado Case Study

Colorado serves as a useful case study of the relationship between organizations' policy agendas and that of state legislatures as it comprises a sizable proportion of the overall study sample of organizations (24 groups total, 12% of the overall sample) and has variation on several of the key legislative variables shown to significantly affect attention to intersectional issues. In order to understand how the intersectional issues mentioned by organizations map onto their state policy agendas, state legislative records for the 2011–2012 legislative terms were queried using key words corresponding to the issues identified by organizations. For example, if an organization listed the general issue area of “reproductive rights” as one of their key foci, the Colorado state legislative database was queried for key terms like “abortion” and “contraception” to reflect this policy area. Focusing on bills proposed during the 2011–2012 legislative sessions captures both concurrent and subsequent introduction and movement of policy issues relative to the timing of the survey.

For each policy issue listed by an organization, information regarding the number and movement of relevant bills was recorded. The 24 organizations active in Colorado focused on 92 policy issues, and Table 20.2 presents the distribution of intersectional versus non-intersectional and total issues within Colorado's organizational and legislative agendas, respectively.

Of the 92 issues included on organizations' policy agendas, 52, or approximately 57%, were included on the 2011–2012 state legislative agenda. Interestingly, the within-issue-type representation rate for intersectional issues is comparatively higher than the within-issue-type representation rate of non-intersectional issues. That is, 16 out of the 24 intersectional issues on Colorado organizations' policy agendas were also included on the state legislative agenda resulting in a 67% representation rate for intersectional issues. Meanwhile, 36 out of 68 non-intersectional issues on Colorado groups' agendas were represented on the state legislative agenda for a non-intersectional issue representation rate of around 53%. However, the 24

**Table 20.2** Colorado organizational and legislative policy agendas

	Organizational policy agenda	Legislative policy agenda
Intersectional issues	24	16
Non-intersectional issues	68	36
Total issues	92	52

intersectional issues mentioned by organizations comprised only slightly over one-quarter (26%) of the 92 issues listed by Colorado-based advocacy groups and the 16 intersectional issues that were also taken up in the state legislature comprised around 31% of the 52 organizational issues represented on Colorado's legislative agenda. As such, the *overall* representation of intersectional issues on Colorado's 2011–2012 legislative agenda is lower than the overall representation of non-intersectional issues.

The 52 policy issues addressed by the Colorado state legislature covered 242 separate legislative bills. Returning to the example of an organization's listing of "reproductive rights" as a policy focus, four bills on abortion and two bills on contraception (for a total of six bills) could relate back to this single policy issue. Each bill had a unique path through the policy process, which was measured along a five-point scale with higher values indicating further progress.<sup>7</sup> The *average* movement of bills dealing with intersectional and non-intersectional issues was calculated for each organization and then for the sample as a whole. On the five-point bill movement scale, the average movement for bills addressing *non-intersectional issues* was approximately 2.7 indicating that, on average, bills addressing non-intersectional issues were passed by either the upper or lower house of the Colorado state legislature during the 2011–2012 legislative sessions. This is in contrast to the average movement for *intersectional issue* bills, which was nearly a full point lower on the five-point bill movement scale at 1.6. This indicates that on average, bills addressing intersectional issues were more likely to die in committee after introduction in either the House or Senate and were comparatively less likely than non-intersectional issues to be passed by the full legislative body. Overall, intersectional issues were less likely than non-intersectional issues to be introduced and moved successfully through the state policy process.

## Conclusion

When setting policy agendas, advocates must consider the constraints and opportunities offered by the political context in which they work. This research demonstrates that several aspects of US state political contexts shape

---

<sup>7</sup> Bill movement was measured on a five-point numerical scale: 0 = a bill had not been introduced, 1 = a bill was introduced but died in committee in the legislative body in which it was proposed, 2 = a bill was passed by *one* legislative body (either the House or Senate) but died after moving to the second legislative body, 3 = a bill was passed by *both* legislative bodies (the House and Senate) but was not signed into law or vetoed by the governor, and 4 = a bill was passed by both the House and Senate and was signed into law by the governor.

the attention paid to intersectionality in advocacy and state legislative agendas. While women state legislators seem to create a supportive environment for the discussion of intersectional issues, groups' relationships with state legislators can serve as a double-edged sword in the achievement of intersectional social justice goals. Indeed, the more time advocates spend in the halls of the state capitol, the less attention they pay to the needs of intersectionally marginalized communities. Time spent lobbying can be necessary as many advocacy groups make policy change a goal of their efforts and push for inclusion of their policy priorities on legislative agendas. However, in the context of this study, marginalized communities do not fare particularly well in terms of their representation on state policy agendas. Issues that address intersectional disadvantage are less likely than non-intersectional issues to be taken up by state legislators. When intersectional issues do appear on legislative agendas, they do not move far in the policy process.

These findings are in keeping with other large-*N* studies showing social justice organizations' seemingly limited capacity for intersectional advocacy (e.g., Strolovitch 2007; Marchetti 2014). However, they differ from small-*N* studies that clearly demonstrate intersectional work by organizations in both US and international contexts (e.g., see Tungohan 2016; Chun et al. 2013; Berger 2004; Walsh and Xydias 2014). Large-*N* studies focused specifically on intersectional advocacy are generally few due in part to a lack of information about populations of identity-based advocacy organizations and their corresponding issue agendas. However, this study's methodology could be replicated across countries, states, and/or localities in an effort to understand how organizations outside of the US represent intersectionally marginalized constituents.

Identifying populations of organizations is a time-consuming and occasionally murky process, but organizational datasets like the INTEREURO project reduce barriers to researching organizations in diverse political and social contexts. The INTEREURO project (<http://www.intereuro.eu/public/>) aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical and empirical understanding of the role(s) that interest groups play in the European polity. This project includes a survey of the entire EU interest community as well as national-level surveys planned or already conducted in seven countries as of 2017. Data gathered by the INTEREURO project could lay the groundwork for future cross-national, large-*N* research on intersectional advocacy and policymaking. As scholars will have access to information about populations of advocacy organizations across EU member states, they could design and implement surveys of social justice organizations within or across these countries. Indeed,

research on transnational advocacy networks (Zippel 2004) and intersectionality and EU policymaking (Verloo 2006; Rolandsen Agustin 2013; Fredman 2005) suggests this may be a particularly fruitful venue for exploring attention to intersectionality in intra- and international organizing.

Questions remain as to the most effective methods for facilitating intersectional advocacy and for calling attention to the use of an intersectional lens in social justice activism. Some suggest that attention to intersectionality in social justice organizing could be facilitated through better communication and collaboration across constituency groups. For example, in their study of marginalized groups' access to political power in Bolivia, Htun and Ossa (2013) conceptualize unity around common goals as a political achievement for identity-based organizing. Activist women overcame racial, location, and class differences in their successful campaign for a gender parity law in the Bolivian parliament, a goal which the authors describe as "a majority issue affecting all women" (6). Similarly, in their study of intersectionality as a social movement strategy in two US organizations, Chun et al. (2013) argue that "Collective political struggle *requires* the creation of strategic group positions adaptable to forging coalitions within and across identity groups" (923, emphasis added).

On 21 January 2017, people in 673 cities across the world marched in solidarity for human rights and gender equality under the broad umbrella of the "Women's March on Washington."<sup>8</sup> Originally organized in response to the November 2016 election of US President Donald Trump, the Women's March on Washington evolved via the internet into a worldwide collective action on behalf of a number of explicitly intersectional goals. Though "women's rights as human rights" served as a unifying principle, march organizers adopted an intersectional lens in their articulation of additional values and principles. These issues, which ranged from police brutality against communities of colour to economic justice and reproductive freedom, were intended to be inclusive, diverse, and non-comprehensive.<sup>9</sup> This collective action placed intersectional lived experience at its centre, encompassing issues of race, class, gender identity, sexuality, and (dis)ability within a single framework. This type of advocacy can be conceptualized as *both/and*: it includes *both* the experiences and concerns of people in positions of privilege *and* those of people facing intersectional oppression. Though the Women's Marches' long-term

---

<sup>8</sup> Adam, Karla. "Worldwide, people rally in support of Women's March on Washington." *Washington Post* 21 January 2017.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.womensmarch.com/mission/>.

policy effects remain to be seen, these actions serve as examples of organizing that unites diverse constituencies while recognizing and valuing intersectional difference.

Before social justice organizations are able to employ *both/and* advocacy frameworks, they must contend with crosscutting pressures to simplify their policy agendas and demonstrate expertise or need along single axes of identity. Feminist and intersectionality scholars argue that groups' tendency to place representation, advocacy, and public policy within a majoritarian framework is problematic as it reproduces tyranny of the majority, can result in colour- and gender-blind conceptions of intersectional experience, and skews political representation towards the needs of the numerically, politically, or resource-dominant (Guinier 1994; Carbado 2013; Smooth 2011; Goldberg 2008). Strolovitch's (2007) concept of affirmative advocacy serves as an alternative to these frameworks, positing that groups could (and should) employ a redistributive concept of issue representation, treating attention to different types of disadvantage as a means of enhancing social justice (212). Conceptualizing issue representation in a redistributive way positions intersectional advocacy as central, rather than peripheral, to the achievement of social justice on behalf of marginalized groups. Similarly, in her study of two grassroots organizations working on behalf of migrant domestic workers, Tungohan (2016, 348) argues "intersectionality is best advanced through a multi-pronged advocacy approach" that addresses multiple stakeholders in varying social and political contexts.

Intersectional advocacy may require the engagement of a variety of actors in occasionally contradictory ways (e.g., employing traditional lobbying one day while engaging in protest the next). As a starting point, groups might educate state legislators regarding the ways intersectionality shapes their constituents' lived experiences and policy preferences. In her study of black women serving in the Maryland state legislature, Brown (2014) finds that these legislators' raced-gendered identities affect their support and opposition to policy proposals that affect marginalized communities in intersectional ways. Brown (2014) demonstrates the capacity of state legislators to employ an intersectional lens in their policy work; advocacy organizations would do well to recognize and capitalize on this potential.

By examining the effect of variations in political context on intersectional advocacy, this research further explores the social justice capacity of organizing. From broad social movements to small citizen councils, advocacy has long been a cornerstone of democratic governance. Remaining today are questions regarding the equitable distribution of attention within advocacy and the capacity for organizations to transform the policy process on behalf of

marginalized constituents. By understanding the factors that facilitate or inhibit intersectional advocacy, scholars and practitioners gain a better understanding of the power dynamics guiding the relationships between people and policymakers and the extent to which organizations represent the interests of many rather than the interests of the few.

## References

- Berger, M. T. (2004). *Workable Sisterhood: The Political Journey of Women Stigmatized Women with HIV/AIDS*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Berry, J. (1977). *Lobbying for the People: The Political Behavior of Public Interest Groups*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Berry, J., Portney, K., Lissm, R., Simoncelli, J., & Berger, L. (2006). *Power and Interest Groups in City Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.
- Beyers, J., & Kerremans, B. (2007). Critical Resource Dependencies and the Europeanization of Domestic Interest Groups. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14(3), 460–481.
- Brown, N. (2014). *Sisters in the Statehouse: Black Women & Legislative Decision Making*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Browne, W. P. (1990). Organized Interests and Their Issue Niches: A Search for Pluralism in a Policy Domain. *Journal of Politics*, 52, 477–509.
- Carbado, D. W. (2013). Colorblind Intersectionality. *Signs Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 811–845.
- Chun, J. J., Lipsitz, G., & Shin, Y. (2013). Intersectionality as a Social Movement Strategy: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates. *Signs Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 917–940.
- Cohen, C. J. (1999). *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 1241–1299.
- Dill, B. T. (1983). Race, Class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood. *Feminist Studies*, 9, 131–149.
- Eising, R. (2007). Institutional Context, Organizational Resources and Strategic Choices: Explaining Interest Group Access in the European Union. *European Union Politics*, 8(3), 329–362.
- Fredman, S. (2005). Double Trouble: Multiple Discrimination and EU Law. *European Anti-Discrimination Law Review*, 2, 13–21.
- Goldberg, S. B. (2008). Intersectionality in Theory and Practice. In E. Grabham, D. Cooper, J. Krishnadas, & D. Herman (Eds.), *Intersectionality and Beyond: Law, Power and the Politics of Location*. Cavendish: Routledge-Cavendish.

- Gray, V., & Lowery, D. (1996). A Niche Theory of Interest Representation. *Journal of Politics*, 58, 91–111.
- Gray, V., Lowery, D., Harden, J., & Cluverius, J. (2013). Explaining the Anomalous Growth of Public Sector Lobbying in the American States, 1997–2007. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 4, 580–599.
- Guinier, L. (1994). *The Tyranny of the Majority*. New York: Free Press.
- Heaney, M. T. (2004). Issue Networks, Information, and Interest Group Alliances: The Case of Wisconsin Welfare Politics, 1993–99. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 4, 237–270.
- Heberlig, E. S. (2005). Getting to Know You and Getting Your Vote: Lobbyists' Uncertainty and the Contacting of Legislators. *Political Research Quarterly*, 58, 511–520.
- Hershey, M. (2009). What We Know About Voter-ID Laws, Registration, and Turnout. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 42(1), 87–91.
- Hojnacki, M. (1997). Interest Groups' Decisions to Join Alliances or Work Alone. *American Journal of Political Science*, 41, 61–87.
- Hojnacki, M., & Kimball, D. (1998). Organized Interests and the Decision of Whom to Lobby in Congress. *American Political Science Review*, 92, 775–790.
- Holyoke, T. (2003). Choosing Battlegrounds: Interest Group Lobbying Across Multiple Venues. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56, 325–336.
- Htun, M., & Ossa, J. P. (2013). Political Inclusion of Marginalized Groups: Indigenous Reservations and Gender Parity in Bolivia. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 1(1), 4–25.
- Klüver, H. (2010). Europeanization of Lobbying Activities: When National Interest Groups Spill Over to the European Level. *Journal of European Integration*, 32(2), 175–191.
- Kurtz, S. (2002). *Workplace Justice: Organizing Multi-Identity Movements*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marchetti, K. (2014). Crossing the Intersection: The Representation of Disadvantaged Identities in Advocacy. *Politics, Groups and Identities*, 2, 104–119.
- Marchetti, K. (2015). The Use of Surveys in Interest Group Research. *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, 4(3), 272–282.
- Meyer, D., & Imig, D. (1993). Political Opportunity and the Rise and Decline of Interest Group Sectors. *Social Science Journal*, 30, 253–271.
- Meyer, D., & Staggenborg, S. (2012). Thinking About Strategy. In G. Maney, R. Kurtz-Flamenbaum, D. Rohlinger, & J. Goodwin (Eds.), *Strategies for Social Change* (pp. 3–22). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Miller, L. L. (2008). *The Perils of Federalism: Poor People and the Politics of Crime Control*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Minkoff, D. (1997). Organizational Mobilizations, Institutional Access, and Institutional Change. In C. Cohen, K. Jones, & J. Tronto (Eds.), *Women Transforming Politics* (pp. 477–498). New York, NY: New York University Press.

- Poggione, S. (2004). Exploring Gender Differences in State Legislators' Policy Preferences. *Political Research Quarterly*, 57, 305–314.
- Reingold, B. (2008). Women as Officeholders: Linking Descriptive and Substantive Representation. In C. Wolbrecht, K. Beckwith, & L. Baldez (Eds.), *Political Women and American Democracy* (pp. 128–147). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Rolandsen Agustin, L. (2013). *Gender Equality, Intersectionality, and Diversity in Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Smooth, W. (2011). Standing for Women? Which Women? The Substantive Representation of Women's Interests and the Research Imperative of Intersectionality. *Politics & Gender*, 7(3), 436–441.
- Staggenborg, S. (1995). Can Feminist Organizations Be Effective? In M. M. Ferree & P. Y. Martin (Eds.), *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement* (pp. 339–355). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Strolovitch, D. (2007). *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Swers, M. (2002). *The Difference Women Make*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Tungohan, E. (2016). Intersectionality and Social Justice: Assessing Activists' Use of Intersectionality Through Grassroots Migrants' Organizations in Canada. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4(3), 347–362.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H., & Nie, N. H. (1993). Race, Ethnicity and Political Resources: Participation in the United States. *British Journal of Political Science*, 23(4), 453–497.
- Verloo, M. (2006). Multiple Inequalities, Intersectionality and the European Union. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 211–228.
- Victor, J. N. (2007). Strategic Lobbying: Demonstrating How Legislative Context Affects Interest Groups' Lobbying Tactics. *American Politics Research*, 35, 826–845.
- Walsh, S. D., & Xydias, C. (2014). Women's Organizing and Intersectional Policy-Making in Comparative Perspective: Evidence from Guatemala and Germany. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 2(4), 549–572.
- Young, I. (2000). *Inclusion and Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zippel, K. (2004). Transnational Advocacy Networks and Policy Cycles in the European Union: The Case of Sexual Harassment. *Social Politics*, 11(1), 57–85.



# 21

## Bringing Intersectionality into Danish Public Policy

Heidi Lene Myglegaard Andersen

### Introduction

The Ottawa Charter of the World Health Organization (WHO 1986) initiated the implementation of a host of policies focusing on the social determinants of health and on reducing health inequalities. Internationally and in Denmark, there is a gap between the theoretical developments and the development of practical solutions in health promotion (Dean and McQueen 1996; McQueen et al. 2012a). An integrative and multifaceted community health perspective has often been recognized and formulated in different WHO policy papers and programmes (McQueen et al. 2012b; Kickbusch and Gleicher 2012; Labonté 2011), and this perspective is recognized internationally as a means to address inequality in health (Hancock 2009; Craig 2005; Woodall et al. 2010). Despite this, the perspective has not been implemented in Danish national health policies, which instead are based on a new public management (NPM) perspective with a linear planning approach leading to an administrative division into silos and fragmentation (Andersen 2015a; Fosse 2011; Vallgård 2008, 2010). One important barrier to integration of health

---

H. L. Myglegaard Andersen (✉)  
University College Absalon, Roskilde, Denmark  
e-mail: [hean@pha.dk](mailto:hean@pha.dk)

© The Author(s) 2019  
O. Hankivsky, J. S. Jordan-Zachery (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Intersectionality in Public Policy*, The Politics of Intersectionality, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98473-5\\_21](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98473-5_21)

471