

Queering Reproductive Justice in the Trump Era: A Note on Political Intersectionality

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Over the last two decades, LGBTQ and reproductive justice advocacy groups have attempted to queer reproductive justice by building coalitions and developing a shared agenda between the new movements. The recent election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States has presented a different set of challenges to this queering process. Through the examination of the political actions and stances taken by the Trump administration as well as the public discourse on identity politics and intersectionality that has emerged in the wake of Trump's election, this article explores what queering reproductive justice looks like in this changed political environment and discusses the implications of Trump's election on the potential for cross-movement coalition building. How does this political moment help us further develop the concept of political intersectionality?

Keywords: social movements, reproductive politics, reproductive justice, LGBTQ politics, political intersectionality, coalition building

As a scholar of reproductive health politics and policy, the reproductive justice movement, and gender, race, and politics, I often encounter the concepts of political intersectionality, cross-movement coalition building, and identity politics, either in my own research or in the work of others. How reproductive justice activists and organizations have attempted to form political alliances with organizations that focus on other social and political issues, such as immigration, civil rights, environmental justice, and economic justice, given that political intersectionality is central to the mission, vision, and values of the

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reproductive justice movement is especially interesting. Thus, this article explores the links between reproductive justice and LGBTQ movement.

The first half of the title of this article alludes to the title of a Reproductive Health Reality Check (now known as Rewire) blog post written by Miriam Pérez, a queer, Latina activist. In that posting, Pérez took one prominent LGBTQ rights male leader to task for his refusal to officially support reproductive rights, particularly abortion in the wake of two consolidated US Supreme Court decisions that upheld the federal ban on later-term abortions (Pérez 2007). This leader, whose opinions reflected the sentiments of a few other gay male leaders, simply did not believe that abortion and reproductive rights in general are a “gay rights issue.” In fact, he asserted that the issue of reproductive rights only divides the LGBTQ movement (Kirchick 2007). Pérez countered that “the only thing divisive about LGBT groups and reproductive rights advocacy is the insistence on keeping them apart.”

This exchange raised the following questions: What constitutes a gay rights issue, and who gets to decide that? What does it mean to queer reproductive justice? What are the implications of queering reproductive justice for political organizing and building coalitions? Are intersectionality and queerness incompatible frameworks?

Subsequently, I conducted an interpretive study to answer these questions and to explore the ways in which activists have attempted to build coalitions and to develop a shared agenda between the LGBTQ and reproductive justice movements (Price 2017). I traced the history of political collaborations between these movements and created a narrative analysis of the discourse to accompany this history. I collected and analyzed narrative data from 46 documents from 14 LGBTQ, reproductive justice, and multi-issue feminist organizations; interview transcripts from the Voices in Feminism Oral History Project housed at Smith College; and transcripts from Reproductive Justice for All: A US Policy Conference, which was held at Smith College in 2005.

As I was finishing this project, Donald Trump was elected as the 45th president of the United States, a surprising result that plunged this country into a continual spiral of collective, contentious soul searching and public debate. His election reopened discussions regarding gender, race, socioeconomic class, sexuality, immigration, and religious affiliation, and his actions and postelection policy decisions have shown that building *intersectional* political alliances is more important than ever. It is no longer sufficient for progressive social movements and advocacy groups to focus on single-axis political issues; they must now

embrace issues they may have not considered to be part of their political bailiwick due to the differential impact Trump's policies have on their constituents. This may mean building cross-movement coalitions as well as coalitions *within* their respective movements.

Intersectionality has been described as a theoretical framework, a methodology, an organizing principle, an activist strategy, political praxis, and lived experience simultaneously (e.g., Berger and Guidroz 2009; Carbado et al. 2013; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Hancock 2007a, 2007b; McCall 2005; Nash 2008; Simien 2007; Tungohan 2016). As a theoretical framework, intersectionality challenges the notion of a "universal women's" experience and grapples with the complexities of multiple identity categories; it links individual lived experience to larger social and political structures and institutions. As a methodology, intersectionality is used as a guiding principle for research design. It helps shape research topics and questions, research methods, and the populations studied, and it forces researchers to grapple with the power dynamics inherent in academic research (Berger and Guidroz 2009).

As an activist strategy or praxis, intersectionality has been incorporated into the political strategy of social justice activists; that is, some advocacy organizations have used political intersectionality as a normative framework for developing political agendas and strategies (Tungohan 2016; Zavella 2017). Within this framework, "activists cultivate flexibility and negotiate dynamics of difference and solidarity in relation to axes of power in local movement contexts" (Zavella 2017, 509). Moreover, political intersectionality addresses the ways in which the intersections of identity, oppression, and privilege are entrenched in public policies and the policy-making process as well as how some constituencies may be further politically marginalized within social justice movements.

This article builds upon my previous work that examines how activists and advocacy groups create intersectional political alliances within *and* between social justice movements (Price 2017). This article (and my previous work) employs intersectionality as a theoretical framework and political praxis. It explores what coalition building looks like when intersectionality is the organizing principle, and it further develops a theory of political intersectionality. The reproductive justice movement is an ideal candidate for these pursuits because intersectionality is at the core of its mission and values. Additionally, reproductive justice organizations actively seek coalitions with organizations from other social justice movements as a political organizing strategy.

The article briefly summarizes the political efforts of reproductive justice and LGBTQ advocacy organizations to “queer” reproductive justice, specifically the ways in which they have attempted to build solidarity and coalitions between their respective movements through hosting meetings and other activities, and through the strategic use of rhetoric. This discussion is based on my aforementioned study. The discussion that follows addresses the relevance of political intersectional strategies for these movements after the election of Trump to the presidency in light of his political and policy actions and the reemergence of the public discourse disparaging identity politics and intersectionality. Finally, I discuss the ways in which we can broaden our understanding of political intersectionality as a normative concept and framework for political praxis. I begin by situating the study of intersectionality within political science.

INCORPORATING INTERSECTIONALITY INTO POLITICAL SCIENCE

This article contributes to the larger conversation about the application of intersectional theory and analysis in political science research. Over the years, feminist political scientists have argued fervently for the incorporation and mainstreaming of intersectionality in the discipline (Dhamoon 2011; Hancock 2007; Jordan-Zachery 2007; Simien 2007; Weldon 2006). This academic advocacy has led to *Political Research Quarterly* (PRQ) and *PS: Political Science & Politics* publishing dedicated special symposia on intersectionality in 2011 and 2009, respectively (Ortbals and Rincker 2009; Simien and Hancock 2011). While the mini-symposium in PRQ presented theoretically and methodologically focused articles from four subfields of the discipline (political theory, American politics, comparative politics, and public policy), the PS symposium focused on the intersectional issues that arise while conducting fieldwork. Moreover, Hankivsky and Cormier (2011) have discussed how intersectionality can provide useful insights for policy researchers and policymakers, while Weldon (2006b) argued for the incorporation for the inclusion of intersectionality on comparative research, specifically examining how axes of identity and difference are defined and employed differently in other national contexts. As the literature on intersectionality has grown, some political scientists have cautioned against inadvertently rendering the lived experiences of African American women or the contributions of African American

women scholars to intersectionality theorizing invisible in the process (Alexander-Floyd 2012; Jordan-Zachery 2013).

Intersectionality analysis has been applied to empirical studies. Some political scientists have conducted studies on women of color in state legislatures using intersectionality as a conceptual framework. For instance, Fraga et al. (2008) examined how Latinas have employed strategic intersectionality to build cross-group coalitions, while Smooth (2008) examined the complexity of power and influence that African American women have in legislative institutions. Smooth showed how the entrenched race and gender norms (based on the experience of white men) have limited African American women's access to top leadership positions and appointments to key committees in state legislatures. Collins and Mayer (2008) examined the ways in which gender and race may influence judicial decisions, particularly on the federal appellate bench. In her study of Proposition 8, the 2008 ballot initiative that banned same-sex marriage in California, Wadsworth (2011) examined the effects of the intersection of race, sexual orientation, and religion on the coalitional strategies to mobilize various communities against the initiative. These and other studies have gotten us closer to understanding the dynamics of intersecting identities, oppressions, and privileges within political institutions and structures in political practice.

This article presents an analysis of the coalition-building efforts between two significant social justice movements. Research on coalition building in political science (and sociology) has traditionally focused on resource mobilization; the costs and benefits of joining coalitions; the creation of collective strategic plans; and the development of shared goals, values, and interests. What do these processes look like when activists and advocacy organizations employ an intersectional framework? How does this help us further understand political intersectionality?

THE PROJECT OF QUEERING REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Rooted in human rights doctrine and social justice principles, reproductive justice is an analytical and political organizing framework that places reproduction within “a broader analysis of racial, economic, cultural, and structural constraints on [the] power” of individual women and entire communities (ACRJ 2005; Luna 2009). Reproductive justice activists and scholars critique and reject the “pro-choice” paradigm

underlying the political work of mainstream reproductive rights groups, such as NARAL Prochoice America, the National Organization for Women, and Planned Parenthood. They claim that the “pro-choice” paradigm has been too narrowly focused on abortion rights and is too reliant on the liberal ideal of individual freedom and autonomy. While the mainstream pro-choice movement has spent all its efforts focused on the right *not to have* children, it has neglected to see the importance of the right *to have and raise* children (Price 2010). For example, sterilization has been a divisive issue between white feminists and feminists of color. Historically, white feminists have fought for access to sterilization, which was often denied them by medical providers. On the other hand, feminists of color have fought against the systematic, coercive sterilization of low-income, communities of color (Wilcox 2002). As legal scholar Dorothy Roberts argues, “The feminist focus on gender and identification of male domination as the source of reproductive repression often overlooks the importance of racism in shaping our understanding of reproductive liberty and the degree of ‘choice’ that women really have” (1997, 5).

Intersectionality is central to the mission, goals, and principles of the reproductive justice movement. Reproductive justice activists argue that for us to truly understand reproductive oppression and freedom, we must move beyond thinking about reproduction in terms of gender, and we must understand how sexuality, reproduction, and general health and well-being are connected to other social justice issues such as economic justice, environmental justice, immigration, prison reform, and LGBTQ liberation (e.g., see Gaard 2010; Generations Ahead 2009; Parker 2014; Piepmeier 2013; Richardson 2006; Roberts and Jesudason 2013; Sasser 2014). Not only does this mean that reproductive justice organizations should be attentive to other social justice issues as they develop their political agendas and strategies, it also means that these groups should actively work collaboratively with organizations from other social movements.

Meanwhile, some LGBTQ activists have been pressuring LGBTQ leaders, particularly from mainstream groups such as the Human Rights Campaign and GLAAD, to broaden their political agendas. These critics believe that the LGBTQ movement has been too narrowly focused on marriage equality and military service to the detriment of many members of its community who feel further marginalized because of gender, race, class, and other markers of difference. Marriage equality and the military ban, they argue, are issues that only benefit the most

privileged members of the LGBTQ community; the agenda is grounded in the experiences of white, gay males, that is, the “status queer” (Vaid 2012). Accordingly, the LGBTQ movement needs to adopt an intersectional framework in its political work; it needs an agenda that addresses the needs all of its members.

Many types of collaborations and intersectional political organizing occur between the movements. A few LGBTQ advocacy organizations, such as the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, have embraced reproductive justice as a part of their political agendas, while many reproductive justice organizations, such as the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health and Forward Together (formerly known as Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice), have incorporated LGBTQ issues into their grassroots organizing. Moreover, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (the Center) in New York (2003) created the “Causes in Common” project, which brought together activists from the LGBTQ liberation, reproductive rights, and reproductive justice movements to work toward creating and implementing a shared vision of reproductive freedom, sexual liberation, and social justice. Additionally, the Center states that it has publicly supported reproductive rights since the 1980s.

These efforts have resulted in the expansion of the definition of reproductive justice to include sexual justice, which encompasses, among many things, the right to pleasure and adult consensual sexuality, the right to gender identity and expression, and the freedom to form the relationships and families of one’s choosing. This expansion of the boundaries of reproductive justice did not happen overnight. It evolved through a series of meetings, conferences, political initiatives, reports, and vision statements over the years. For example, a meeting convened in May 2003 by the Causes in Common program of the LGBT Community Center of New York (2003) brought together a group of 25 activists from the reproductive justice and LGBTQ movements that resulted in the creation of Causes in Common Pledge of Commitment that was signed by more than 70 organizations. Through these activities, reproductive justice and LGBTQ activists and organizations have been able to find common ground and build solidarity (Price 2017).

The first step toward building this solidarity was the recognition that these movements have similar intersecting histories of oppression and share the same political opponents, namely social and political conservatives who blame the breakdown of the American family on

the “immorality” of sexually active women who seek abortions and the LGBTQ community. Second, activists in these movements acknowledged that they share many of the same political principles and goals. Bodily integrity and autonomy, in particular, are two concepts that are central to both movements; the rights to control one’s own body and to decisions about one’s life are central to reproductive and sexual justice. This includes, but is not limited to, the right to security and control over one’s body, the preservation of personal safety, the right to sexual expression, and the right to health and well-being (Correa and Petchetsky 1994/2013). As the LGBT Community Center of New York (2003) argues in its Causes in Common statement:

The common ground for our movements has a long and rich history even though we have often been strategically divided. Contraception, medically safe abortion and reproductive technologies have resulted in the relative freedom of heterosexual men and women to engage in sex for pleasure, entirely separate from reproduction. The freedom and legitimacy of sexual activity without reproduction as an outcome is as fundamental to the liberation of LGBT people as it is to heterosexual women and their male partners. (7)

In terms of legal rights, the Causes in Common coalition see the connection between reproductive freedom and sexual liberation through the lens of the right of privacy, which served as the basis of the key US Supreme Court decisions that legalized contraception and abortion (i.e., *Griswold v. Connecticut* 1965, *Eisenstadt v. Baird* 1972, and *Roe v. Wade* 1973) and struck down anti-sodomy laws (*Lawrence v. Texas* 2003).

This sense of commonality and solidarity has been further expanded by other activists and advocacy groups. For instance, in a blog post for URGE (United for Reproductive and Gender Equity), Tanisha Humphrey (2013) argues that reproductive justice is intricately connected to queer rights as it matters for:

The 19-year-old gay man who was kicked out of his house for coming out, moved to a big city for the first time in his life, and is just trying to figure out what his identity means. The married lesbians who are thinking about having a baby. The teenage couple facing an unintended pregnancy. All are searching for that necessary freedom. We want to share our families and therefore our lives without the cultural or political pressure invading our decisions. We want to get married, to have a baby, to not have a baby, to have sex, to not have sex. We can and should be working together to guarantee this for each of [sic] interlocking and intersecting communities.

POLITICAL INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE TRUMP ERA

The election of Donald Trump to the US presidency in November 2016 exposed the still lingering social and cultural schisms among American voters; it is an electorate split along the lines of gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, immigrant status, and citizenship. Trump's actions as president have illustrated the continuing importance of building strategic political alliances across social movements and political issues (i.e., political intersectionality), especially between the reproductive justice and LGBTQ rights movements. Through his executive orders, selection of candidates for cabinet-level appointments, proposed legislative agenda, and impulsive, incendiary Twitter posts, the intent of his political agenda is clearly to reverse the political and social gains made by marginalized groups in this country, particularly during Barack Obama's administration.

Within a few months of his term, Trump drafted executive orders that suspended the entry of travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries (a.k.a. the Muslim Ban) into the United States, allowed organizations to opt out of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) (a.k.a. Obamacare) regulations on religious grounds, and defunded the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (The White House 2018). Additionally, he rescinded a 2014 executive order issued by Barack Obama that strengthened the oversight of nondiscrimination protections regarding sexual orientation and gender identity for federal contractors, and he reinstated the global gag rule, which prohibits international nongovernmental organizations that receive US family planning funding from performing abortions, providing information and counseling about abortion, and referring patients to abortion providers (The White House 2018).

The US Census Bureau's plans to include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity on the 2020 Census as well as the American Community Survey and other official federal data collection activities were recently canceled, reportedly due to pressure from the Trump administration (Green 2017). Activists have argued that the exclusion of these questions only further marginalizes the LGBTQ community, as it renders the community invisible.

Many of Trump's candidates for cabinet-level appointments have taken public political stances that are anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQ, anti-immigration, and anti-civil rights; these are the political perspectives that they bring to their positions. For instance, while serving as governor of Indiana, vice president Mike Pence signed the most restrictive abortion regulations in the nation and led the charge to prohibit the granting of

state funds to Planned Parenthood (Bowles 2016). Tom Price, Secretary of Health and Human Services, has a long legislative record of opposing legal access to and public funding for abortion, and he was against the contraceptive coverage mandate in the ACA. In fact, Price has a 100% political rating from the National Right to Life Committee, a leading anti-abortion advocacy group (Kutner 2016). During his tenure in Congress, attorney general Jeff Sessions voted against the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and campaigned for restrictions on Muslim immigration into the United States (Lee 2017; Serwer 2017). In the past, Sessions has publicly stated on the record that several leading African American civil rights organizations, such as the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Council, are “un-American” and promote “anti-American values” (Lee 2016). Both Pence and Sessions opposed the repeal of the ban on LGBTQ people to serve in the military, and Sessions has publicly opposed *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), the US Supreme Court decision that ruled that bans on same-sex marriage are unconstitutional (Bowles 2016, Serwer 2017).

Emboldened by Trump’s win, conservative Republican members of Congress resumed their efforts to defund the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) and its regional affiliates by specifically preventing these organizations from receiving Medicaid reimbursement for services rendered and other federal funding (US House of Representatives 2017). Although previous Congressional attempts to defund Planned Parenthood were unsuccessful, it is believed that Trump will likely sign any defunding law that is passed, unlike his predecessor Barack Obama. Reproductive rights and justice activists argue that this funding ban will disproportionately affect low-income people, people of color, people in rural areas, and the LGBTQ community. The PPFA provides sexual and reproductive health care and educational services to LGBTQ people, including hormone therapy for transgender patients (ACLU 2017; Allen 2017; PPFA 2017a, 2017b; Redden 2017). In fact, Planned Parenthood centers in 16 states offer hormone therapy (Allen 2017).

Evidence of continued political collaboration and support between the reproductive justice and LGBTQ movements has emerged in examples of political intersectionality in practice. On March 8, 2017, in response to congressional efforts to defund Planned Parenthood, a coalition of 30 LGBTQ and ally organizations led by the National Center for Lesbian Rights sent a letter in support of Planned Parenthood Federation of America to the top leadership of the US Senate and the US House of

Representatives (ACLU 2017; NCLR 2017). In the letter, the coalition stressed the importance of Planned Parenthood's health and education services to LGBTQ communities, stating that it has been at "the forefront of providing safe, welcoming spaces for LGBTQ people, when others in the health care system have been less welcoming" (ACLU 2017, 2). The letter also alludes to the other challenges, such as racism and living in rural areas, that members of LGBTQ communities also face in accessing healthcare. The list of signatories included a range of advocacy organizations, including Advocates for Youth, the American Civil Liberties Union, GLSEN, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Black Justice Coalition, and the National Center for Transgender Equality.

In June 2017, Planned Parenthood (2017b) issued a statement of solidarity with the LGBTQ movement in recognition of Pride Month:

... Planned Parenthood proudly celebrates the resilience, strength, and activism of LGBTQ communities and reaffirms our commitment to a world where no one experiences discrimination, shame, or violence because of their gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. As we continue to fight back against those who wish to undo the progress of the last half century, we stand with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people in the struggle for full equality — many of whom turn to Planned Parenthood for health care, information and education. (1)

In contrast, the Trump administration has not officially recognized LGBTQ Pride Month, a departure from the actions of the Obama administration.

The election of Trump and the subsequent actions of his administration have amplified a sense of urgency within both movements. It not only served as a reminder to the common adversaries — socially conservative Republicans and the far right — that the movements share, but it also, from their viewpoints, relegitimized and reinforced blatant racism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia in political discourse and in the policy-making process. It marked a reinvigorated hostility toward the political agendas of their and other social justice movements (Lopez 2018; Smith and French 2016). The 2018 announcement of the retirement of US Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, who has served as the moderate center of the court and has cast deciding votes in support of abortion rights and same-sex marriage, has added to this urgency, as Trump now has the opportunity to appoint a nominee who is solidly conservative (Stack and Dias 2018). As this article went to press,

Trump nominated conservative federal judge Brett Kavanaugh for the Supreme Court vacancy. More than ever, some are beginning to realize that it is in the movements' best interests to work in coalition.

These few examples of the political maelstrom generated by Trump administration and its supporters signal that social movements and political action must move beyond single-issue and single-identity politics. A multipronged, intersectional approach is required to confront the multiple political actions and policies that continue to emerge from this volatile political climate. Coalitions are born out of necessity. Most people belong to multiple social groups and are often situated between social movements. We need to re-envision identity categories as potential coalitions rather than view them as simply affinity groups (Carastathis 2013; Duong 2012). While the reproductive justice movement has viewed itself as a coalition of groups since its inception (Price 2010), the mainstream LGBTQ movement has yet to do so. The LGBTQ movement should view itself as a coalitional movement with members who have multiple challenges, perspectives, and experiences (just as the reproductive justice movement does). The movement should be cognizant of how other issues such as immigration, reproductive justice, racial justice, and economic inequality affect members of its community.

IDENTITY POLITICS AND POLITICAL INTERSECTIONALITY

Political pundits have tried to provide cogent explanations of how and why Trump won – from Trump's ability to tap into the populist wave of discontent among white working-class voters to lack of voter turnout of key constituent groups, such as young voters and Bernie Sanders supporters (Cohen 2017; Drum 2017; Edsall 2017; Lake Research Partners 2016). Interestingly, some critics have argued that intersectionality and identity politics are to blame for the rise of "Trumpism" and the Alt-Right as well as the political failings of the Democratic Party. Intersectionality and identity politics only promote divisiveness which in turn prohibits solidarity building among members of the political left (Bartlett 2017, Lilla 2016, Michaels et al. 2016, Shivani 2017). According to humanities scholar Mark Lilla (2017), American liberalism is "slipping into a moral panic about racial, gender and sexual identity" (SR1). Although Lilla praises the political, social, and cultural victories of marginalized groups since the 1960s, he argues that the current focus on diversity and "celebrating difference" has made

younger generations of liberals and progressives indifferent to reaching out to other Americans who do not share the same individual identities. While discussing the negative impact of identity politics on the Left, Walter Been Michaels (2017) argues, “You don’t build a left by arguing over who has been most victimized; you build it by organizing all the victims.”

These arguments are not new. Many scholars and activists over the years have claimed that identity politics weakens and insulates movements — that identity politics makes it impossible for movements to appeal to a wide range of constituents and prohibits them from negotiating with potential allies (Gitlin 1995; Weldon 2006a). These arguments have simply been repackaged to suit the current political climate.

This public discourse is a testament to the influence and success of intersectionality as a concept. Coined in 1989 by feminist legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1991), intersectionality theory posits that we must address the interlocking effects of identities, oppressions, and privileges to fully understand the full range and complexity of women’s (everyone’s) experiences. Once confined to women’s and gender studies university courses, the term intersectionality has increasingly appeared in articles in mainstream outlets from *USA Today* to the *Huffington Post*, especially after the massive Women’s March on Washington (and its sister marches worldwide) in January 2017. In its coverage of the 2017 march, the *New York Times* ran articles that served as tutorials on intersectionality albeit these lessons mostly focused on the intersections of gender and race. In one *New York Times* article about the political tensions among the march organizers, Farah Stockman (2017) writes:

For too long, the march organizers said, the women’s rights movement focused on issues that were important to well-off white women, such as the ability to work outside the home and attain the same high-powered positions that men do. But minority women, they said, have had different priorities. Black women who have worked their whole lives as maids might care more about the minimum wage or police brutality than about seeing a woman in the White House. Undocumented immigrant women might care about abortion rights, they said, but not nearly as much as they worry about being deported. This brand of feminism — frequently referred to as “intersectionality” — asks white women to acknowledge that they have had it easier. It speaks candidly about the history of racism, even within the feminist movement itself.

Nonetheless, these critics’ arguments against identity politics and intersectionality reveal a serious misunderstanding, or even misreading, of intersectionality as a concept. First, these arguments are based on the

notion that intersectionality is merely about personal identity, that is, how individuals identify themselves in terms of their gender, race, sexuality, class, and other markers of identity. They ignore the structural and institutional aspects of oppression that intersectionality addresses. Second, these arguments implicitly employ a hierarchical view of oppression. Instead of seeing these oppressions as overlapping and co-constitutive (i.e., they each create and give meaning to the other), these critics view these oppressions as simply additive in nature, which leads to the conclusion that the more oppressions one experiences, the more oppressed one is. Last, these arguments ignore the role of privilege in intersectional analysis. It is possible for an individual person to experience sexism and homophobia *while* simultaneously having white and class privilege. The privileges may mitigate the ways in which that individual experiences their oppressions and may provide access to the material means that may make it possible for the individual to resist against their oppressions. At the group level, subgroups of people within a social movement or other political collectivity may also endure the effects of secondary marginalization; they may experience alienation and exclusion even within their own marginalized communities (Cohen 1999).

Contrary to the claims that intersectionality and identity politics have harmed the American Left, recent scholarship has shown that attentiveness to intersecting identities and oppressions in political organizing can indeed *foster* solidarity, cohesion, and political cooperation. In her study of feminist political organizing on the issue of violence against women, Weldon (2006a) argues that social movements are strengthened when organizing strategies recognize social division. She found that women of color forming their own organizing spaces, whether in caucuses within mainstream organizations or through the founding of their own organizations, does not hamper the goals of social movements. In fact, these separate spaces created by women of color strengthen women's movements and increase the likelihood that policymakers are responsive to the needs and demands of women of color, specifically, and all women in general. These separate spaces induce consciousness-raising activities among marginalized groups and help these groups better connect with the goals and principles of the main movement. In fact, marginalized groups may otherwise feel alienated from the mainstream movement without these separate spaces.

Several examples of successful cross-movement alliances are available. Sociologists Beamish and Luebbers (2009) conducted a study of a

coalition of environmental justice, peace, and antiweapons proliferation groups. Despite the differences in perspectives and philosophies among these groups, this coalition was able to successfully stop the construction of a federally funded US biodefense laboratory in Roxbury, Massachusetts, a largely African American low-income neighborhood in Boston. The social justice organization Generations Ahead brought reproductive justice, racial justice, and disability rights activists together to develop intersectional policies that addressed the issues raised by genetic technologies, despite these groups' different opinions regarding some reproductive rights issues (Roberts and Jesudason 2013). For instance, disability rights activists tend to be wary of the uses of abortion in connection with genetic testing, that is, terminating a pregnancy when a genetic test reveals a "fetal anomaly," as they consider the practice to be a form of "modern day eugenics" (Generations Ahead 2009; Roberts and Jesudason 2013). Despite these conflicts, these groups were able to find common ground and to develop a political platform that took their philosophical and political differences into account.

It is not identity that prohibits solidarity; it is ignoring racial, gender, or any other type of inequality within a group or political collectivity that destroys solidarity. Downplaying differences only perpetuates a false universalism that is based on the experiences of the dominant group within the movement which then leads to a superficial consensus (Roberts and Jesudason 2013). With that said, what does political intersectionality look like in practice?

Political intersectionality is different from structural intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991). As Verloo (2013) states, "Structural intersectionality occurs when inequalities and their intersections are directly relevant to the experiences of people in society. Political intersectionality indicates how inequalities and their intersections are relevant to political strategies and how strategies regarding one axis of inequality are seldom neutral toward other axes" (899). In other words, structural intersectionality addresses the effects of oppression, such as racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, trans oppression, and able-ism, on the people's lives, whereas political intersectionality concerns the tactics employed by political actors to achieve their political goals and how those tactics may include or exclude groups of people within a movement or other collectivity. Attention to political intersectionality means addressing how political visions, goals, and agendas are created and implemented and who gets to make those decisions. It means examining how — or even if — multiple perspectives and experiences are considered when specific

political and policy issues are chosen and prioritized, and whether the collective is cognizant of who is or will be affected by the its efforts as well as how issues affect various groups of people within the collective differently.

The reproductive justice movement has employed different intersectional strategies in its political work. For instance, it does not consider itself a monolithic movement, but a coalition of different social groups such as African American women, Latinas, Asian American and Pacific Islander women, Native American/indigenous women, Arab/Middle Eastern women, young people, trans people, lesbians, queer women, and their allies (Price 2010). It acknowledges that these different groups have their own unique political challenges and concerns, while simultaneously recognizing that these groups share some common interests and goals. Although many of these groups have founded their own separate advocacy organizations, such as the Black Women's Health Imperative and California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, many of these groups are members of SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, an advocacy network of individuals and organizations. Moreover, SisterSong strives to ensure that there is satisfactory representation of diverse communities on its board of directors, formerly known as the management circle, and it has separate caucuses of specific groups of women of color and ally groups within its structure. The caucuses provide these groups with dedicated spaces that allow them to develop policy recommendations specific to their communities that can, in turn, be incorporated into the larger agenda of SisterSong.

The mainstream LGBTQ movement has yet to see itself as a coalition of groups and communities with overlapping interests (Vaid 2012). However, many activists have begun to create their own organizations to address the issues that pressing for the specific LGBTQ communities that they serve, such as the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the National Center for Transgender Equality, and the National Black Justice Coalition. This trend has occurred in response to the marginalization that they have felt within mainstream LGBTQ organizations.

As for coalition building *between* movements, there is still room for theorizing what that looks like in practice. Some individual activists and advocacy organizations within the reproductive justice and LGBTQ movements have taken crucial steps in building alliances over the last two decades. Specifically, they have taken the first steps toward building solidarity and mutual understanding by identifying common adversaries and political principles and goals. Much of this work has been done

through the efforts of entrepreneurial political actors, such as Miriam Pérez, the queer, Latina activist mentioned previously. Due to their involvement in both movements, these political entrepreneurs have served as the conduits for fostering cross-movement alliances. The election of Trump may have had a unifying effect among these movements. Given the sense of urgency within the current political climate, it may take more than individual political entrepreneurs to maintain enduring alliances. Additionally, within cross-movement intersectional alliances, who determines the collective agenda, and what does the agenda-creation process look like?

Political intersectionality is pertinent not only to the actual political organizing strategies and policy agendas of activists but also to the *study* of social movements, race and gender politics, public policy, and intersectional politics. The case study of collaborative political work between the reproductive justice and LGBTQ rights movements provides a site for examining intersectional coalition building. Ultimately, political scientists and other social scientists must continue to conduct studies that help us build a theory and praxis for political intersectionality.

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