

## INTRODUCTION

# Movements to End Gender-Based Violence and Rethinking Feminist Advocacy

My Master had power and law on his side; I had a determined will. There is might in each.

Harriet Jacobs

In 1996, a headline in the *Washington Post* read: “Abused Immigrant Slain After Plea for Legal Services Help Is Denied” (Claiborne, 1996). The article reported the story of Mariella Batista, who was killed by her intimate partner after she was denied legal services and an order of protection based on her immigration status. Mariella’s story highlighted an important gap in public policy on gender-based violence: although survivors qualified for legal services and orders of protection under the recently passed Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), people like Mariella were excluded from such protections due to their immigration status. Legal services, though, were not the only policy benefits Mariella could not access. She was also excluded from public assistance under the 1996 welfare law and was not eligible for public housing benefits through the United States Housing Act. Without legal services, public assistance, and housing options, Mariella struggled to find protection and economic independence from her abuser.

These kinds of policy gaps exacerbate inequalities among women by race, ethnicity, and citizenship status. In the case of VAWA, there were several policy gaps that prevented women like Mariella from being able to access protection and resources under the law. As with many other pieces of legislation in the United States, the Act was structured to address one single issue (i.e., gender-based violence) and did not account for how gender-based violence intersected with other issues such as immigration, poverty, and racism. In doing so, VAWA further marginalized women whose experiences with violence overlapped with these other issues.

However, policies like VAWA changed over the next twenty-seven years to better serve women like Mariella. Since 2014, immigrant women who experience domestic violence are eligible for legal services, can apply for a U Visa for legal immigrant status, are eligible for public housing, and can access public benefits such as welfare. Why does VAWA change over time and what accounts for this transformation? In this book, I argue that “intersectional advocacy” helps explain these transformations and that they are occurring within and beyond VAWA on behalf of intersectionally marginalized groups. I define intersectional advocacy as *advocacy for linkages between policies and issues that reflect the experiences of intersectionally marginalized groups positioned between more than one problem area*. Throughout the pages of this book, I show how intersectional advocacy transforms the US policy system to be more equitable and effective in solving public issues.

I spoke with 43 organizational leaders and examined the behaviors of more than 100 others who participated in congressional hearings on VAWA and it is clear that these advocacy organizations are leading these efforts and in the process are challenging traditional approaches to policymaking. For example, Margarita and Margie from the Latina Network (LN)<sup>1</sup> are constantly thinking about women like Mariella and how traditional law and policy systems fail to fully serve them. Margarita says, “we do not believe that there are master recipes or one-size-fits-all type[s] of [policy] solution[s] to the issue of domestic violence. When other folks come up with those type of models or type of solutions, we’re skeptical . . . when we’re working with communities of color.” Instead, Margarita and Margie advocate for issue and policy linkages between domestic violence and other issues such as poverty, housing, immigration, and racism. Margie explains why they advocate for these policy connections: “when people ask me what do [these other issues] have do with domestic violence? [I say] it does in a lot of ways. Because we’re thinking about empowerment; we’re thinking about creativity; we’re thinking about those are the women and moms that support their children when the father or the abusive partner is deported.”

Margie and Margarita are not alone. Jada, the director of Sisters Against Violence (SAV),<sup>2</sup> is also advocating for linkages between issues to better serve survivors who are marginalized by both their gender and their race/ethnicity. She says, “women of color have a very – we have a very difficult road because we’re always caught in between [issues] . . . we cannot have racial justice without gender justice, right? . . . [This type of advocacy] can be very difficult, but it’s worthwhile.” These are the people behind intersectional advocacy, and they are using it to pressure policymakers to adopt issue and policy linkages between gender-based violence and other traditionally distinct

<sup>1</sup> This is a pseudonym to protect the organization that participated in this research.

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policy areas: housing, immigration, minimum wage, paid leave, tribal rights, welfare, incarceration, and healthcare.

Examining these practices of intersectional advocacy helps to answer the central question posed in this book: How do advocacy groups intervene in policymaking processes to represent intersectionally marginalized populations? To fully answer this question, I first consider the counterfactual: How do groups that *do not* represent these populations engage in policymaking? By examining these groups' advocacy during the legislative development of the VAWA, I identify how they constructed and reinforced boundaries between problem areas that harmed intersectionally marginalized women. This harm illuminates how the structure of public policy can contribute to growing inequality in the United States and why there is a need to change this existing structure. I then compare this traditional public policy approach with those led by organizations that represent intersectionally marginalized populations. I find that select organizations engage in a distinctive form of advocacy: they establish linkages between VAWA and policies on welfare, immigration rights, and tribal rights (i.e., intersectional advocacy). These linkages address how intersectionally marginalized groups are positioned between more than one policy problem. The remainder of the book presents research on this practice in additional political settings, at varying levels of government, and among different advocacy groups.

Intersectional advocacy in this text is primarily explored within the context of movements to end gender-based violence. These movements are a critical space for understanding the challenges and possibilities of advocating for an issue that often intersects with other problems such as poverty, racism, mass incarceration, immigration, and unaffordable housing. This overlapping feature with other issues makes this movement an ideal observation site for how advocacy groups represent people who are positioned between multiple issues. While this is the primary context for the book, intersectional advocacy as a concept can travel to other policy spaces, additional issues, and alternative state contexts. Intersectional advocacy is ultimately a framework for deciphering a nuanced approach to policymaking and the strategies, leadership, and tactics among those that effectively use it to transform policy and law institutions.

## THE POLITICS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is a long-standing problem in the United States. It refers to harm against a person or group of people because of their perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. The advocacy organizations presented in this book focus on two types of gender-based violence: domestic or intimate partner violence and sexual assault. These forms of violence are particularly pervasive in the United States, where more than 10 million adults experience domestic violence each year and a person is sexually assaulted every

68 seconds (Department of Justice, 2020). Between 2016 and 2018, the number of incidences of intimate or domestic partner violence increased by 42 percent (Smith et al., 2018), and in 2018 partner violence accounted for 20 percent of all violent crime (Morgan, 2018). At the same time, the number of reported sexual assaults increased by 146 percent, affecting one in five women (Morgan, 2018). Among people who are marginalized by more than one identity (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, immigration status), rates of domestic violence and sexual assault are even greater (The National Center for Victims of Crime, 2018). Current efforts to address gender-based violence are falling short as millions of people become survivors of one of these forms of violence.

Movements to end gender-based violence in the United States have emerged, overlapped, contradicted each other, disappeared, and resurfaced on several occasions over the course of US history. There is not a sole or cohesive movement that addresses gender-based violence but rather a long history of struggles, resistance, organized activism, and advocacy led by different groups of women in varying contexts. The resistance against gender-based violence has taken a variety of forms across different groups of women, because a woman's vulnerability to sexual misconduct, her recourse, her rights recognized by the government, her capacity to resist violence, and the activism, coalitions, and organized groups that she mobilizes to address this issue are all deeply shaped by gender, class, race, and ethnicity.

Carving out a policy space to address gender-based violence is a difficult task that activists and advocacy groups have struggled to create over the last 100 years. It is a difficult task because gender-based violence is enabled and validated by several interlocking practices, norms, laws, and policies that allow people to abuse their power over others. In the following sections, I explain how systems of subordination historically and contemporarily create environments and opportunities for gender-based violence. Advocacy groups respond to these systems in different ways depending on the other identities their members hold. I explain why that is the case by showing how interlocking systems of oppression create variations in gender-based violence by gender, class, race, and ethnicity. I then briefly discuss how individuals and groups respond to these systems with different forms of resistance and what makes the structure of advocacy groups unique in how they respond to these issues. Advocacy groups are not monolithic and are in tension with one another when they differ in the types of changes and impacts that they aim to have on political institutions and US democracy more broadly. I highlight these tensions to carve out the stakes of intersectional advocacy – what happens in its absence to public policy and why it matters for populations of survivors who are marginalized across more than one identity. Finally, I discuss my approach to studying and defining the term “intersectional advocacy” and provide a road map for the remaining chapters that follow.

## PATRIARCHAL SYSTEMS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Patriarchal systems exist all around the world and have been in place for thousands of years. These systems are consistent laws, policies, practices, values, expectations, cultural norms, relationships, and ideologies that all define and enforce gender inequality. Before 1920 in the United States, these systems granted white men the right to own property, open a bank account or credit card, join the workforce, hold appointments in elected office, vote, and make decisions for the household. Meanwhile, not only were women not granted these same opportunities but, under the doctrine of coverture (marriage law), the husband had ownership rights over his wife and legally was entitled to control her income, property, and residence (Calvo, 2004). While women could vote starting in 1920, it was not until 1970 that they could legally take out a credit card or have property in their own name (Pateman, 2018). Women's subordination to and economic dependence on heterosexual white men allowed for the control and domination of women through gender-based violence (Pateman, 2018). This control was institutionalized among spouses; marital sexual assault was not recognized by law and domestic violence was viewed as a private matter among family members (Alvarez, 1990).

**Movements to Confront Patriarchy**

As activists and advocacy groups confronted these systems, they did so without institutionalized power. Without this power, several coalitions, activist groups, and advocacy organizations organized what is now referred to as the "anti-rape and battered women's movement." White, middle-class, and heterosexual women predominantly led this movement, which emerged out of feminist consciousness-raising groups, when white housewives would gather together and discuss their common experiences with sexual and domestic violence (Schechter, 1982). White women who participated in these discussions started to change how they talked about violence. Instead of rationalizing acts of violence as private incidents in the home, women from these groups began discussing sexual violence within the context of male-dominated institutions – institutions like the congressional body that passed laws that made men legally superior to women (Koss & Harvey, 1991). At this time, there was not a policy space for gender-based violence, and these groups wanted to change that.

Advocacy groups in this movement sought to create laws that would identify sexual violence as a crime, protect survivors from men, and provide them with medical attention (Arnold, 2017). To provide survivors with medical attention, feminist groups in California and Washington, DC established the first Rape Crisis Centers (RCCs) in 1971. The first domestic violence shelters opened in Arizona and California between 1973 and 1974 (Arnold, 2017). The establishment of RCCs and shelters pressured the federal

government by the mid-1970s to provide funding for RCCs through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and the Department of Labor's Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). However, only RCCs that had traditional hierarchical structures and credentialed staff qualified for the available funds (Arnold, 2017). These restrictions meant that grassroots organizations and community health centers that predominantly serviced survivors of color and low-income women with medical care could not access these resources (Wilkes, 2019).

While predominantly white feminists successfully pressured the government to identify sexual violence as a public issue that deserved federal funding, their efforts primarily benefited white, middle-class women who were able to access these types of mainstream institutions. Without these resources, advocacy groups representing American Indian women sought to fill these gaps. For example, the Indian Law Resource Center, the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, and Mending the Sacred Hoop established the first outpatient treatments for American Indian women so that they would not be removed from their land to seek medical help and could access culturally specific healing practices (Le May, 2018).

Meanwhile, other coalitions, such as the Combahee River Collective, were in tension with this movement. The Combahee River Collective was a Black feminist collective among activists in the Boston area in 1974 that brought attention to how both the white feminist movement and the civil rights movement failed to address their needs and interests as Black women and, in particular, as Black lesbians (Taylor, 2017). Even though the "anti-rape and battered women's movement" advanced institutional support for gender-based violence, Black feminists in this collective highlighted the dangers of confronting patriarchal systems without attention to other forms of oppression. Barbara Smith, Demita Frazier, and Beverly Smith were the primary authors of the Combahee River Collective statement, which articulated the difficulties that queer and trans Black women faced due to the multiple forms of oppression they encountered and proposed a new approach to addressing issues such as sexual violence, police brutality, and school segregation that was oriented toward their positionalities. Why was the Combahee River Collective unable to fully support the broader anti-rape movement without attention to multiple forms of oppression? In the next section, I briefly explain how patriarchal systems are interconnected with additional systems of oppression that, together, uniquely impact how people experience gender-based violence by race, ethnicity, and class.

#### INTERLOCKING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE

Patriarchal systems are not alone in inequitably distributing power among the population by identity characteristics; additional systems are similarly engrained into the US fabric of policies, laws, practices, cultural expectations,

and values that allow select groups to abuse their power and dominate others. In this section, I highlight a few of these additional systems – colonialism, slavery, white supremacy and capitalism – that all magnify gender-based violence for certain populations by gender, class, race, and ethnicity. These systems are interlocking. They reinforce one another to produce institutionalized gender-based violence against women of color, in ways that are different from other populations such as white middle-class women, LGBTQ women, or men of color. While systems of slavery or colonialism in the United States can be viewed as archaic systems, I argue that they have long-lasting impacts on gender-based violence for these groups today. Understanding how these systems interlock to produce conditions of gender-based violence that are different for low-income women and women of color is important for grasping why intersectional advocacy emerges to connect multiple issue areas together in order to better serve these populations.

### **Colonialism and Gender-Based Violence**

In the initial phase of European colonialism in the Americas, sexual violence against American Indian women was a primary tool of colonialization. These sexual acts of colonialization are recorded as early as the 1500s when Michele de Cuneo wrote in his diary about capturing and sexually assaulting an American Indian woman (Castillo & Schweitzer, 2001). Systematic sexual violence against American Indian women continued for centuries, as colonizers intervened in the reproductive lives of American Indians and sought to gain control of their communities and land (McClintock, 2013). By the 1800s, laws were in place that reinforced and supported this maltreatment of American Indian women. For example, the Indian Act of 1850 allowed white people to indenture American Indian women and children as domestic servants, making them more vulnerable to instances of sexual and domestic violence (Reséndez, 2016).

The interconnectedness between patriarchal systems and colonialism for American Indian women meant the issue of gender-based violence was deeply connected to other issues such as land rights. Thus, it is not surprising that activism led by American Indian women around gender-based violence was intertwined with reclaiming land rights that protected them from colonizers and the US federal government. For example, in the 1800s, Cherokee women organized against the Indian Removal Act and successfully pushed the US government to renegotiate the Treaty of 1819 by providing more sovereignty rights to the Cherokee tribe and protections for American Indian women from sexual and physical abuse by Americans (Miles, 2009).

Colonialism today continues to impact the experiences of American Indian women with gender-based violence. Those living on reservations cannot access the resources or medical attention they need because of the way that the United States structures resources for gender-based violence around sovereignty.



American Indian survivors then are expected to choose between accessing resources they need and appealing to a foreign government for assistance (Jacobs, 2009; Smith, 2001). When violence occurs on reservations, American Indian women have limited access to legal or social service responses, especially when violence is committed on reservations by non-Indians, due to jurisdictional problems and lack of funding (Deer, 2006; Whittier, 2016). Additionally, leaders advocating for these types of changes, such as Winona LaDuke, Louise Erdrich, Eve Ensler, and Patina Park, explicitly linked the gender-based violence of American Indian women with issues of land sovereignty when they filed a submission requesting United Nations (UN) intervention to support the human rights of American Indian women by addressing US colonialism (Le May, 2018). Among this population, addressing gender-based violence cannot be severed from issues of land sovereignty or US colonialism.

In Puerto Rico, advocacy groups such as the *Colectiva Feminista en Construcción* also underscore how gender-based violence on the island is a product of colonialism. Puerto Rico is a commonwealth territory of the United States; US forces invaded Puerto Rico in 1898 and occupied it during the Spanish-American War. It was not until 1952 that US Congress approved that Puerto Ricans could elect their own governor. The territory and colonial state relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States limits the power and representation of Puerto Ricans to make decisions about how resources on the island are allocated and protected (Roure, 2011). These restrictions impact gender-based violence for Puerto Rican women by creating conditions of poverty that lead to greater instances of femicide and limit Puerto Rico's agency in deciding how to address this issue (Ortiz-Blanes, 2021). Contemporary and historical systems of colonialism uniquely impact American Indian women and Puerto Rican women's experiences with and recourse for gender-based violence in ways that are not applicable to other groups. Moreover, among these populations, gender-based violence is not a standalone issue but one that is interrelated with land sovereignty and a commonwealth status.

### Slavery and Gender-Based Violence

From the early colonial period, Black women were subjugated through sexual violence as part of the system of chattel slavery. Paying attention to how Black women historically resisted slavery highlights how sexual violence was deeply interconnected with this system. During chattel slavery, it was a common and legal practice to rape and abuse enslaved women (Feinstein, 2018). Within this oppressive context, Black women resisted these violent practices. For example, Harriet Jacobs, an enslaved Black woman from North Carolina, wrote about her experiences with sexual violence in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,



documenting the ways she resisted her sexual exploitation and bringing awareness to the violent experiences of enslaved Black women (Jacobs, 1861).

At a time when Black women had little to no sovereignty over their bodies, others, such as Celia Newsom and Margaret Gardner, also engaged in acts of resistance that challenged the laws and practices that had left enslaved women vulnerable to acts of sexual violence. In an act of resistance to avoid her children returning to the abuse that a life of slavery would hold, Margaret Gardner killed her own children (Weisenburger, 1999). Celia Newsom killed her slave master after years of sexual violence, and her trial was the first in which a lawyer attempted to defend a woman by citing the 1845 law in Missouri that declared it a crime “to take any women unlawfully against her will and by force, menace, or duress, compel her to be defiled” (McLaurin, 1991). Newsom’s case pioneered the notion that rape could be a defense in a murder case and prompted the question of whether the law could protect enslaved women from sexual assault by their masters. Unfortunately, her experiences with forced intercourse were stricken from the record, and the Missouri Supreme Court denied the appeal of her guilty verdict and sentence (McLaurin, 1991). These examples of Black women’s resistance illuminate how their experiences with gender-based violence were deeply tied to the ways in which slavery was used to control them.

Even after the end of chattel slavery in the United States, this system had long-term implications for how and why Black women were continually targeted for sexual and physical violence. After the Civil War and emancipation, white mobs – especially members of the Ku Klux Klan who were in opposition to emancipation – organized and committed acts of sexual violence against Black women (Wade, 1998). In 1866, one of the earliest organized anti-rape efforts occurred when a group of Black women testified before Congress that a white mob engaged in gang rape during the Memphis Riot (Ryan, 1977). Black women such as Lucy Smith, who was sixteen years old at the time, testified about the sexual violence she and others experienced during the riots. These were the first known testimonial experiences with sexual assault delivered in the US Congress (Rosen, 2009). Black women such as Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, Fannie Barrier Williams, and others formed Black women’s clubs to organize anti-rape and anti-lynching campaigns (Giddings, 2009). These efforts established some of the first Black women’s clubs and organizations to address gender-based violence, such as the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC), the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Hine, 1989). These groups addressed sexual violence alongside a range of issues important to Black women’s experiences, including health, sanitation, education, racism, and women’s suffrage (Appiah & Gates, 2005). For Black women, gender-based violence was interconnected with these other issues, because they all stemmed from the historical legacy of slavery.

## White Supremacy and Violence

Slavery in the United States in part contributed to broader systems of white supremacy that likewise impacted Black women's experiences with gender-based violence. These systems also impacted women marginalized by other racial and ethnic identities such as Asian American, American Indian, and Latina women. Systems of white supremacy reproduced racial hierarchies that were part of slavery: allocating the most power to white people in the United States and the least amount of power to Black people; other racially and ethnically marginalized groups are then situated in this hierarchy between white and Black people (Omi & Winant, 2014). For example, post-slavery Jim Crow laws, state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation until 1968, explicitly provided more resources, better facilities, opportunities for employment, and education to white people while denying them to African Americans (Ryan, 1977). These laws also reproduced ideologies and beliefs about African Americans as being less deserving of individual rights, benefits, and equal treatment (Lopez, 1994). Black women during the time of Jim Crow were especially vulnerable to acts of sexual violence, which is a tool of domination to reinforce this racial hierarchy.

There were several cases of sexual violence against Black women in the time of Jim Crow that mobilized activist and advocacy groups, especially in 1919 when Recy Taylor and Flossie Hardman were sexually assaulted. When Flossie Hardman's supervisor was found not guilty of committing sexual assault, Black activists organized a boycott that put her employer's grocery store out of business (McGuire, 2010). During these boycotts and twelve years before sparking the Alabama Bus Boycotts, Rosa Parks launched the Alabama Committee for Equal Justice to address sexual violence among women of color. These anti-rape efforts and organizing tactics played a pivotal role in helping to establish organizational infrastructure and strategies of resistance for the civil rights movement (McGuire, 2010).

Systems of white supremacy impact all racially and ethnically marginalized groups in the United States, but they uniquely shape women of color's vulnerabilities to gender-based violence. As Black leaders established organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), women like Rosa Parks attempted to influence these organizations to address sexual misconduct and represent Black survivors of sexual violence (Theoharis, 2015). This task was not easy; organizations like the NAACP were not structured to address both racism and sexism, and thus Black women leaders had to persuade other organizational members that issues like sexual violence aligned with the NAACP's mission and goals (Sartain, 2007).

Today, advocacy and activist groups continue to face systems of white supremacy and to emphasize how these systems impact Black women's experiences with gender-based violence differently than other groups. For

example, a 100 years later there are still Black women like Flossie Hardman who are segregated in industries that lack financial security and make them more vulnerable to predatory practices of sexual harassment and assault (Conley, 2010; Dozier, 2010; Katznelson, 2005). While Jim Crow is no longer an institution, state-sanctioned violence against Black people is considered the “New Jim Crow” (Alexander, 2020) and continues to further legitimize violence against Black women. Black women’s access to social service programs and economic benefits continues to be disproportionately limited, making them more likely to be financial dependent on family members and partners that can abuse this power (Keane & Wolpin, 2010; Wacquant, 2009; Wallace, 2002). For Black women, gender-based violence cannot be separated from police, military, and economic violence against Black communities (Collins, 1998a; C. M. West, 2002; T. C. West, 1999; Wyatt, 1992). This is why advocacy groups representing Black people often identify state violence (i.e., police brutality, incarceration, discrimination) and economic violence (social services and programs that are racially and economically exclusionary) as closely related to intimate partner violence – because they shape the conditions of subordination that provoke violence among communities of color (Beal et al., 1970; hooks, 2014a).

Some of these groups today are part of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The BLM movement comprises groups that center the leadership of Black women and queer and trans people in seeking the liberation of Black people. Part of this movement encompasses campaigns and efforts to bring awareness to Black women’s experiences with state-sanctioned violence, such as the “Say Her Name” campaign, which names Black women who have experienced violence and murder by police officers (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Ransby, 2018). Groups outside this movement are also challenging that gender-based violence is confined to systems of patriarchy. For example, “INCITE!” is a group that advocates for adopting anti-violence strategies that address the broader structures of violence (e.g., colonialism, white supremacy, racism) that shape the conditions of gender-based violence that trans, queer, and women of color experience (INCITE!, 2017). Black women activists and advocates continue to straddle different movements as they voice the ways their experiences with gender-based violence are motivated by interlocking systems of oppression.

Systems of white supremacy also impact other racial and ethnic groups in the United States in ways that intersect with gender-based violence. For example, there is a long history in the United States of institutionalizing sexual narratives about Asian American women. In 1875, the Page Act prevented Chinese women in particular from entering the United States because they were believed to be “lewd” prostitutes, even though many were coming to reunite with their husbands who had already immigrated (Peffer, 1999). Moreover, in the mid-twentieth century, US wars and military bases, particularly in China, Japan, the Philippines, Korea, and Vietnam, introduced American soldiers to Asian

women as sex workers or on-base service workers (L. Wong, 2018). Many American troops would come home with perceptions of Asian women as submissive and sexually exploitative (L. Wong, 2018). These perceptions were then normalized via popular culture, especially through two binary and highly sexualized tropes known as the Lotus Flower and the Dragon Lady – both of which reinforced the expectation that Asian women were submissive, sexually subservient, and sexually exotic (Shimizu, 2007). These characters highlight how systems of white supremacy are not just laws or policies embedded in the state but also cultural references, beliefs, and stereotypes enmeshed in US norms.

In 2021, the killing of six Asian Americans – Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong Yue, Xiaojie Tan, and Daoyou Feng – is interconnected with this history and these engrained systems of white supremacy that reinforce violence against Asian American women. Similar to other examples in this section, advocacy and activist groups such as the Red Canary Song and the Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition Against Hate organized protests to “Stop AAPI Hate” and are contextualizing these sexual and violent acts along this longer history of racism, gender, and migration to the United States (Namkung, 2021). In addition to this activism, advocacy groups such as Kan-Win continue to forge issue connections between sexual violence, racism against Asian Americans, human trafficking, and immigration when advocating against gender-based violence.

Issues of immigration in particular continue to make Asian Americans without US citizenship vulnerable to gender-based violence. This vulnerability determines their options for escaping intimate partner violence and, similar to immigration law from the Page Act of 1875, political institutions reinforce these vulnerabilities. For example, Congress strengthened the power of the male spouse in immigration law, giving him unilateral control over the alien spouse’s immigration status, and this control enables abusive spouses to exploit the threat of deportation (Chen, 2000; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Abusers can exploit this legal vulnerability by destroying the survivor’s immigration papers, threatening to withdraw their petitions for immigration, and threatening to call authorities to have them deported (Dutton et al., 2000; Orloff & Kaguyutan, 2002; Salcido & Adelman, 2004; Villalón, 2010). Similar to Black women, the gender-based violence of Asian Americans cannot be severed from interconnected issues such as immigration or racism that are products of interlocking systems between patriarchy and white supremacy.

### **Capitalism and Gender-Based Violence**

Capitalism in the United States includes many different types of systems that determine the ownership and control of labor, property, and goods. Here, I focus on the distribution, cost, and management of labor to highlight how capitalism engenders environments for sexual exploitation among the most

socioeconomic vulnerable populations. Capitalist systems are reinforced by an absence of public policies and laws to regulate market conditions. Deregulation of the economy enables private actors to make decisions about the free-market economy often at the expense of vulnerable and marginalized workers (Fleming & Morris, 2015; Leong, 2013; Omi & Winant, 2014). For example, private actors can prioritize profit margins instead of paying workers a living wage, offering health benefits, and providing paid-leave options, as well as cutting hours or wages, which affects people's livelihoods (Jayaraman, 2021). Without reliable wages and benefits in these industries, workers are more likely to experience financial instability, poverty, debt, and health issues due to unaffordable treatment (Jayaraman, 2021).

These economic outcomes disproportionately impact low-income women and especially Black and Latina women, the groups most concentrated in these low-wage industries (Woody, 1992). The structure of the distribution of labor by gender and race within low-wage industries is in part explained by racialized history in which people themselves were and are used as capital (i.e., chattel slavery) for the state's economic gains (Dawson, 2014, 2016). In the workforce, poor working conditions enable predatory practices among these workers, such as sexual exploitation among low-wage women workers and especially women of color (Aizer, 2010; Browne, 2000; Kilbourne et al., 1994; Tangri et al., 1982). Because there are fewer protections within these industries for workers, these groups have limited options for recourse, making them prime targets for sexual exploitation (Jayaraman, 2021).

Outside the workforce, these economic circumstances determine the disproportionate distribution of economic resources by gender, race, and class and limit low-income women's financial resources, which heightens their economic reliance on partners, thus diminishing their ability to leave abusive relationships (Ake & Arnold, 2017; Websdale & Johnson, 1997). This economic vulnerability cannot be alleviated among low-income women "as long as poverty denie[s] them safe neighborhoods, adequate health care, decent housing, good childcare, and efficient transportation" (Kessler-Harris, 2003, p. 268). The US capitalist system provides the incentives, conditions, and laws for the free-market economy to monetize goods and services without having to account for the extent to which they are unaffordable or inaccessible to people by gender, class, and race. As low-income women navigate low-wage industries that suppress their wages, do not provide healthcare benefits, lack childcare options, and do not offer consistent hours of work, they are increasingly at risk for both economic and sexual exploitation inside and outside the workforce. Capitalism and patriarchal systems thus reinforce one another by coproducing the conditions for economic and gender inequality.

As early as the late 1800s, several organizations and activists addressed patriarchal and capitalist systems together through labor policy advocacy (Kessler-Harris, 2003). In 1844, the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association testified before the Massachusetts legislature for new labor requirements that

would improve women's physical well-being (Mattina, 1986). Since this historical moment, advocacy organizations such as the Women's Trade Union League, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Ladies' Auxiliaries (LA) of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW), and the National Council of Negro Women emerged throughout the twentieth century to focus on gender, class, and racial inequality through labor policy changes. Today, organizations are connecting these work conditions additionally to the issue of gender-based violence. For example, Women Employed advocates for paid-leave laws, affordable caregiving policies and programs, and eliminating the tipped minimum wage in relation to their policy advocacy to address sexual violence in the workplace. Women Employed is an advocacy organization based in Chicago that seeks to address economic inequality among women through policymaking and advocacy. For Women Employed advocates, it is impossible for them to address gender-based violence in the workforce without also changing laws, policies, and programs that address how capitalist practices reinforce economic inequality by gender, class, race, and ethnicity. One policy area alone cannot address the multitude of ways that economic inequality is embedded throughout normalized and accepted capitalistic practices. In Chapter 6, I share how Women Employed pursues policy linkages between these issues and how these connections mobilize their supporters around these policy initiatives that undercut these systems.

There are additional systems of oppression that interlock with patriarchy that uniquely shape how different groups by race, ethnicity, class, ability, and sexual orientation are vulnerable to, experience, and are able to access recourse for gender-based violence. I briefly highlight in this section on "Interlocking Systems of Oppression and Violence" a few of these systems to illustrate four different points: (1) historical systems of oppression connect to contemporary conditions of gender-based violence; (2) different systems of oppression uniquely impact groups by gender, class, race, and ethnicity; (3) interlocking systems of oppression reveal how issues become interconnected with gender-based violence; and finally, (4) activist and advocacy groups have been making these connections for hundreds of years. In Chapters 1 and 2, I delve deeper into these points as I show how public policy can be a mechanism for reproducing and maintaining these interlocking systems of oppression. Each of these points is relevant to how advocacy groups are oriented today around the issue of gender-based violence and why select groups engage in what I am calling "intersectional advocacy."

## ADVOCACY GROUPS

Advocacy groups play a particular role in these movements to end gender-based violence and, at some level, accept the structure of US institutions in that they often do not propose completely dismantling or rebuilding them. Instead, they

propose changes in laws, policies, the representation of political officials, and how political categories are defined, implemented, and regulated by the state. These strategies have advantages and limitations. Advocacy organizations are able to influence legal and policy changes to some degree, but they cannot eliminate the structures or the systems of inequality that produced them.

In considering the change these groups can affect through public policy, I follow the approach in Roth (2004) for understanding advocacy organizations by identifying the nuances of how these groups approach and view US institutions differently. In doing so, the “recognition of feminist organizing in different communities allows us to ask questions about who came to feminism, how they came to feminism, and how feminism was done in different social spaces” (Roth, 2004, p. 4). I apply this gradient approach to understanding advocacy groups by considering a variation in how organizations engage in what Strolovitch (2007) calls “affirmative advocacy.” Affirmative advocacy is a framework of representational redistribution that recognizes equitable representation for disadvantaged groups (e.g., women of color, immigrants) and requires proactive efforts to overcome biases and inequalities within American political institutions. According to Strolovitch (2007), advocacy organizations engage in this practice “to redistribute resources and attention to issues affecting intersectionally disadvantaged subgroups in order to level the playing field among groups” (p. 10). In this book, I build off Strolovitch’s (2007) conceptualization of affirmative advocacy by examining not only how these groups represent disadvantaged groups and redistribute resources among them but also how they directly engage with US policy institutions to advance these outcomes.

Scholars have used the term “intersectional advocacy” in a broad way to identify advocacy that “occurs on behalf of multiply disadvantaged subgroups” (Dwidar, 2021; English, 2021; Marchetti, 2014). This growing body of research focuses on who organizations represent (English, 2021; Marchetti, 2014; Strolovitch, 2007) and how they advocate for these interests, especially through lobbying (Dwidar, 2021; Junk, 2019; Lorenz, 2020; Marchetti, 2014) and rulemaking (English, 2021). These studies tend to characterize all advocacy undertaken on behalf of multiply disadvantaged groups as intersectional. While this work has contributed valuable insights, especially for our understanding of the politics of representation, it has not engaged with how these very systems, institutions, and processes can contribute to the oppression and marginalization of the very populations these groups are representing. In these pages, governance structures (e.g., Congress, federalism), policymaking processes (e.g., problem definition, lobbying, rulemaking), and responses to policy outcomes (e.g., policy feedback, social movements) that all influence policymaking are contested by the advocacy groups presented here. *By illuminating the American state’s policies throughout this book, I highlight advocacy groups that not only represent*



*multiply disadvantaged subgroups but also intervene in the policymaking process in ways that directly challenge and transform these structures.*

In my analysis of advocacy groups, I consider Strolovitch's (2007) distribution of resources to these groups across policy issues, and in the process capture the types of policy institutions that can be reconfigured to serve these purposes. I argue this engagement is unique to organizations representing groups that are marginalized by more than one identity. This positionality motivates a distinct form of advocacy that I refer to as "intersectional advocacy." I argue that organizations engaging in this practice operate very differently from traditional organizations in that they challenge the political boundaries of policies. In Chapter 2, I show that these traditional groups do not contest these boundaries but instead reinforce them. Organizations practicing intersectional advocacy, on the other hand, are reimagining the function and structure of policy institutions by challenging these boundaries. This approach to policymaking is innovative, imaginative, and more representative of the needs of intersectionally marginalized communities. Although intersectional advocacy alone will not eliminate sexism, racism, and inequality in America, it does provide new infrastructures that reduce the impact of these inequalities in concrete ways for intersectionally marginalized groups today. It is also a practice that benefits not only survivors of violence but other groups who are similarly positioned between multiple issues.

#### DEFINING INTERSECTIONAL ADVOCACY

I offer a specified definition of intersectional advocacy to help us understand an innovative and important practice to transform the US policy system, but "intersectional advocacy" is also a collective project. This concept grows out of Black feminist literature, social movement scholarship, gender and sexuality studies theories, research in political science on advocacy groups and representation, and theories of institutional change in public policy. In Chapter 1, I take the time to credit and highlight the ways these different scholars have contributed to this work and concept. Briefly here, though, I also want to capture their contributions.

Black feminist thought grounds the concept of intersectional advocacy because "the necessity of addressing all oppressions is one of the hallmarks of Black feminist thought" (King, 1988, p. 43). Black feminists articulate how interlocking systems of oppression produce conditions of marginalization by especially race and ethnicity but also by sexual orientation and class (Cohen, 2005; Collins, 1998a, 1998b; Crenshaw, 1997; Davis, 2011; hooks, 2014a, 2014b; Morga & Anzaldúa, 2015; White, 1999). Social movement scholars build on this work by examining how groups respond to these conditions of oppression and marginalization with activism and social movements (Tormos, 2017; Townsend-Bell, 2011; Weldon, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Intersectionality in this context is studied in lots of different forms: intersectional synthesis (Cole 2008; Curtin et al., 2015; Greenwood, 2008; Irvine et al., 2019), intersectional praxis (Tormos-Aponte, 2019), intersectional consciousness (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013; Tormos-Aponte, 2019; Weldon, 2006), and political intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1997). These different concepts of intersectionality are meant to identify how groups build a consciousness around intersectionality, address power asymmetries within their organizations, and identify their organizing approaches to overlapping forms of oppression.

The concept of “intersectional advocacy” is added to this collection of terms to help specify how advocacy groups engage with public policy institutions that represent intersectionally marginalized populations. What the concept of “intersectional advocacy” adds to this growing and substantial literature is how advocacy organizations reconfigure public policy institutions to better serve intersectionally marginalized groups. In this book, I argue that issue and policy linkages are key to this reconfiguration, which is why I am using the term “intersectional advocacy” to precisely mean *advocacy for linkages between policies and issues that reflect the experiences of intersectionally marginalized groups positioned between more than one problem area*. By offering up this definition, my hope is that this concept more precisely identifies the connections between marginalization, intersectionality, and systems of oppression that these scholars and I all highlight as fundamental to addressing inequality in the United States.

#### INTERSECTIONALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

I use the term “intersectionally marginalized” to reference people who are marginalized across more than one axis of their identity. These groups are “intersectionally marginalized” in that they experience marginalization and oppression at the intersection of multiple identities that uniquely shape their experiences. There are many different ways these identities can intersect, and thus several groups that fit within this term such as women of color, low-income women, immigrant women, LGBTQ people of color, and disabled women. These examples include groups marginalized across identity categories of gender, race, ethnicity, class, ability, and sexual orientation. In this book, I primarily focus on survivors who are intersectionally marginalized by gender, class, race, and ethnicity. By homing in on their experiences, I am better able to clearly articulate how public policy is structured to produce inequalities among this group. There are a few reasons for this choice. Since this book is situated within movements to address gender-based violence, gender is a focal point for this work. Gender is an identity in these movements that has organized collective actions among advocates and activists. Gender has also remained a contentious identity in these movements, as activists and advocacy groups have wrestled with “who” the term “women” represents (Carruthers, 2018; Crenshaw, 1997; hooks, 2014b; Taylor, 2017).

Considerable attention by activists, advocates, and scholars focuses on how the collective identity of “women” in these movements favored the lived experiences of cis, white, heterosexual, and middle-class women while leaving out the experiences of all women of color, and especially Black queer women (Babcox & Belkin, 1971; Beal et al., 1970; hooks, 2000; McGuire, 2010; Richie, 2000; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Within this void, advocacy organizations emerged primarily around the collective identities of race or ethnicity and gender. This history of advocacy and the wide range of advocacy groups today that still organize their efforts around class, gender, race, and ethnicity are another reason why I focus on advocacy groups that represent these marginalized identities in this text.

Advocacy organizations that represent intersectionally marginalized groups such as women with disabilities, LGBTQ women, queer Black women, nonbinary people of color, and LGBTQ youth are all important groups that require prioritization and depth that I am not able to provide in this book. While I posit that intersectional advocacy should also apply to these groups, the empirical work presented in this book does not provide evidence that this is the case. It is my hope that this book’s research can inform and inspire others to consider how intersectional advocacy can serve these additional groups and the ways in which organizations serving these groups might expand, contest, and revise the practices that I examine here. Meanwhile, I reference these other axes of marginalization when I can draw from other scholarship that centers their experiences and focus most of my attention on low-income women and women of color. When I use the term “women” to reference these intersectionally marginalized groups, I am using it to include all people that identify in this way (i.e., nonbinary, cis and trans women).

#### POLICIES AS SITES OF CONTESTATION

I focus on advocacy groups within the context of policymaking because they are a primary lever through which governments operate to reproduce inequalities. I will argue in the following chapters that these policymaking processes reveal the relationships between the structure of the state and the concrete realities of gender, racial, and economic inequalities that survivors of violence face. For example, at the time of the New Deal, Old Age Insurance (OAI), which is now Social Security, included provisions that disqualified workers in the agricultural and domestic industries (Gordon, 2012; Lieberman & Lapinski, 2001; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Williams, 2004). These industries were predominantly comprised of Black women workers (Mettler, 1998). Although OAI was intended to be a policy that improved the economic welfare of Americans, the structure of the policy (i.e., its provisions and eligibility requirements) produced gender and racial inequities when Black women were not eligible for these resources.

Decades later, the VAWA included similar types of exclusionary provisions. When VAWA was enacted, the policy was intended to provide women with additional safety, protection, and resources from violence by establishing shelters, orders of protection, and public benefits for survivors of violence. However, as mentioned, immigrant survivors without formal citizenship status were disqualified (Villalón, 2010). Similar to OAI, the structure of VAWA produced gender and racial inequities, where immigrant women were not eligible for these resources and protections by the state. Moreover, since immigration law is located outside the boundaries of VAWA, this Act alone did not completely protect or serve immigrant women without citizenship status. These are the additional policy structures maintained by the government that reproduce and maintain these inequalities. The advocacy groups that I study in this book are acutely aware of these policy structures, which is why policy institutions are a primary site of contestation for them. At the same time, these groups view policy institutions as redeemable and as key levers for social change. They do not seek to fully dismantle them but instead to repurpose them for intersectionally marginalized groups.

To advocate for these changes, groups and individuals practicing intersectional advocacy intervene in the policymaking process at different stages and at different levels to create issue and policy linkages between seemingly separate problems, laws, and policies. Issue linkages occur when these groups successfully persuade policymakers to adopt rhetorical and conceptual connections between one problem (e.g., gender-based violence) and another (e.g., mass incarceration). Policy linkages include amendments that connect separate legislation, laws, and policies to one another. These linkages can also be newly proposed policies, statutes, and laws that bring together stakeholders working across multiple problem areas. Throughout the remaining chapters, I argue that, to effectively persuade policymakers to adopt issue and policy linkages, these advocates establish policy infrastructure to hold these interventions. Policy infrastructure can be new coalitions, precedents for establishing policy linkages advocates can point back to, or networks with legislatures that support these linkages and participate in committees across issues. Both issue and policy linkages are presented throughout the book to showcase how this practice varies depending on the level of government advocacy groups are targeting for their efforts (e.g., municipal, state, federal), the types of institutional boundaries they face in making these connections (e.g., restricted funding, precedents set for laws and policies that are written separately from one another, issues pitted against each another in the problem definition of the policy), where they intervene in the policy process (e.g., problem definition, policy proposal, implementation), and which intersectionally marginalized groups they represent (e.g., Black women, Latinas, low-income women). I will return to these terms throughout the book and show how they help us understand the strategies advocacy groups use to

intervene in policymaking processes in ways that fundamentally challenge how we approach policymaking in the United States.

#### REDEFINING POLICY EFFECTIVENESS

The research presented throughout the chapters of this book challenges traditional and accepted ideas of how we evaluate the effectiveness of public policy. For example, in Chapter 2, I present an analysis of the congressional hearings on the VAWA that illustrates the harms this Act had in the 1990s on women of color as well as immigrant and low-income women survivors. I also reference work from scholars like Bumiller (2009), Richie (2012), and Whittier (2016) that illustrates how some of these harms were facilitated by tethering the VAWA to the Violent Crime Control and Enforcement Act of 1994. This 1994 Act allocated nearly 10 billion dollars for new prison construction and the authorization of the expansion of mass incarceration of people of color, including many survivors of sexual and domestic violence (Bumiller, 2009; Whittier, 2016). If a policy mass-incarcerates the US population disproportionately by class, race, and ethnicity – which includes survivors of violence themselves – is it an effective policy? Were there alternative policies that could have been tethered to the VAWA in 1996 that would have addressed gender-based violence but not resulted in the same types of harmful consequences? These are the questions I answer in Chapters 2 and 3.

The US policy system is designed to evaluate effectiveness in terms of whether it impacts the majority of a target population. One of the arguments I make in this book is that if we continue to evaluate policies in this way, they will have disproportionate effects on the most marginalized and vulnerable populations. Additionally, I make the case in Chapter 4 that this policy approach will also never fully address social issues such as gender-based violence, poverty, homelessness, or unaffordable healthcare. Intersectional advocacy is an alternative approach to policymaking that I argue more comprehensively addresses these social problems. By linking policies across social issues to intentionally address how these problems overlap in the lives of intersectionally marginalized groups, we close policy gaps and start to address the underlying systems that perpetuate inequalities in the United States.

#### MY APPROACH

Provided that there are these nuanced and layered aspects to advocacy groups, I take a mixed-method approach to peel back these layers one by one to get at the core of intersectional advocacy. Each of these layers necessitates a tailored methodological approach that fits the context and activities of these organizations. Thus I draw from several different types of methods and sources: archival textual analyses, qualitative interviews, and survey experiments. I use these methods to study how advocacy organizations

advocate for intersectionally marginalized populations in varying policy contexts.

Advocacy is a multifaceted phenomenon. It includes an ecosystem of complex organizations with varying structures, staff, sizes, descriptive representation, budgets, mission statements, origins, leadership styles, visions, and orientations to politics (Berry, 2003; Gen & Wright, 2020b, 2020c; Gronbjerg, 1991). This ecosystem is situated within a broader landscape of movements, politics, and current events (Cobble, 2004; Cohen, 1985; Hidalgo, 2015; Weldon, 2006). Within organizations, there are unique dynamics that include conflicts, disagreements, leadership processes, subgroups of supporters that are prioritized or marginalized, organizational growth, leadership changes, and staff turnover (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Jang & Feiock, 2007; Vanner & Dugal, 2020). The relationships between advocacy organizations and their supporters are evolving and constantly changing as both inform one another's goals, visions, and expectations for the organizational work (Brower, 2022; Simonofski et al., 2021). These organizations use political strategies to advance their policy goals, including tactics for pressuring political officials; framing approaches for making their proposals convincing; relationship building with other coalitions, politicians, and allies; and infrastructure building as they imagine new structures that can hold their interventions (Dwidar, 2021; English, 2021; Junk, 2019; Lorenz, 2020; Marchetti, 2014; Strolovitch, 2018). Additionally, the tangible impacts these groups have on national conversations, the design and implementation of public policy, how public officials are elected, when laws are overturned or enacted, and how the structure of political institutions changes over time are also important for understanding these groups (Bonner, 2009; Clemens, 1997; Lorenz, 2020; Phinney, 2017).

Each chapter presented in this book offers a unique lens to view these groups in action as they make strategic decisions to engage in intersectional advocacy. To fully understand why organizations participate in this practice, I open the book by bringing the American state into full view in Chapter 1 and show the ways in which its policies reinforce gender, economic, and racial inequality. I situate this institutional function within a larger historical context of patriarchal systems that I argue reproduce these inequalities in ways that must be understood when it comes to addressing gender-based violence. The chapter then introduces the concept and theoretical underpinnings of intersectional advocacy, which is an outgrowth of Black feminism theory, social movement scholarship, race and ethnic politics, and gender and sexuality studies, as well as the empirical work that follows.

To fully understand the innovative potential of intersectional advocacy, one needs to understand the traditional policymaking process that it confronts. In Chapter 2, I make a case that policy boundaries contribute to inequality in the United States. Drawing from a textual analysis of the congressional hearings on the VAWA and newspaper articles covering the Act, I present evidence that the

policy boundaries in the VAWA harmed intersectionally marginalized groups. Moreover, I show how advocacy organizations that did not represent intersectionally marginalized groups contributed to the setting of these policy boundaries by participating in the policymaking process. By showing how advocacy groups that do *not* represent intersectionally marginalized populations intervene in the policymaking process, I illustrate what is at stake with traditional approaches and the ways that mainstream advocacy groups have participated in it.

In Chapter 3, I start to answer the overarching question of this book: How do advocacy groups intervene in policymaking processes to represent intersectionally marginalized populations? Here, I examine how advocacy organizations representing intersectionally marginalized groups have participated in this policymaking process. Analyzing the testimony and statements from advocacy groups during congressional hearings on the reauthorization of VAWA over the past twenty-five years, I find that select organizations were successfully advocating for linkages between policies and issues that reflected the experiences of intersectionally marginalized groups positioned between more than one problem area. These linkages were between VAWA and policies on welfare, immigration, and tribal rights. In this chapter, I identify this practice as “intersectional advocacy” and explain how advocacy groups in this setting engaged in it to change VAWA policy over time. I found that VAWA changes in remarkable ways that better represent and serve intersectionally marginalized groups.

In Chapter 4, I consider the applicability of this practice by asking to what extent does participation in intersectional advocacy vary depending on the level of government or political context where the advocacy takes place? Drawing from a qualitative analysis of forty-three interviews with organizational leaders, I examine how intersectional advocacy was applied at the municipal, state, and federal levels. I find that these organizational leaders strategically established policy connections between gender-based violence and unaffordable housing, inaccessible healthcare, and mass incarceration. I explain how issue and policy linkages vary across these problem areas and the level of government that advocates are situated within. I also describe the types of institutional boundaries they encountered as they intervened in these policymaking processes. Ultimately, I find the practice of intersectional advocacy transcended these three different levels of government and that groups deployed unique strategies depending on these varying contexts.

What explains why these groups take on the practice of intersectional advocacy? In Chapter 5, I answer this question from an organizational perspective. Drawing again from the qualitative analysis of interviews with organizational leaders, I examine the features of their advocacy organizations. I find that there are four constitutive features of their organizations that were related to their engagement in intersectional advocacy. Despite a commitment to intersectional feminism, one of these organizations did not have all of these



features and it also did not fully participate in intersectional advocacy. By discussing this case, I demonstrate how an analysis of the four organizational features also helps to identify why groups such as these do not fully take on this practice. I then explain how organizations with commitments to intersectionally marginalized groups but that have not actualized them through intersectional advocacy can change their varying organizational structures to take on this approach.

What remains then from this organizational analysis is an examination of the role of supporters in intersectional advocacy. While membership in women's advocacy organizations has decreased over the years (Skocpol, 2013), supporters who volunteer their time to advocacy organizations to advance their policy goals have been largely overlooked. Having volunteered on an advocacy board for a women's organization for five years, I was struck by how important supporters are to these organizations. In Chapter 6, I present two original survey experiments with the supporters of this organization that also engages in intersectional advocacy. Each experiment contained authentic policy platforms that presented either an intersectional advocacy approach or a traditional single-issue policy alternative to supporters. The findings from these experiments answer my final question: Does intersectional advocacy resonate with the intersectionally marginalized populations it aims to serve, and if so, to what extent does it mobilize them to participate in the policymaking process? I find that, yes, intersectional advocacy will mobilize supporters, especially intersectionally marginalized women of color, but only if these groups perceive a connection between the two issues linked by the policy platform. I also find evidence that there is a tool that organizations can use to ensure supporters make these connections. This chapter highlights the role of supporters in advancing these policy efforts while showcasing tangible and practical approaches organizations can use today to engage in intersectional advocacy.

Finally, while I study intersectional advocacy in the context of movements to end gender-based violence, this concept transcends across other movements and additional policy spaces. The book concludes with a discussion of the current state of policymaking in the United States and how intersectional advocacy illuminates the many policy gaps that contribute to inequality. Throughout this discussion, I reference the challenges and the possibilities of applying this practice in US politics. If we are invested in addressing inequality and oppression, we need to take a closer look at these policy systems and reimagine them. Intersectional advocacy provides a road map for rethinking these institutions and policymaking practices.

Together, these chapters provide an examination of the policymaking process from the vantage point of advocacy organizations – how they understand it, participate in it, challenge it, and how some advocate for transforming it. Those that aim to transform it by advocating for linkages between problem areas, policies, laws, and statutes are what I call

“intersectional advocates.” Throughout this book, I explain several different factors that motivate this participation in the policymaking process and the strategies these groups deploy to successfully make these connections. As these advocates contest and reimagine policy, they encounter several institutional boundaries that reinforce a policy system where issues are separated from one another. I show how they traverse these boundaries and, in the process, fundamentally influence the reconfiguration of these policy institutions. These reconfigurations seek to close gaps in public policies that affect millions of people in the United States.

Before engaging in this research, I spent more than five years working directly with nonprofit advocacy groups and four of those years serving on an advisory board for a women’s advocacy organization. Today, I continue to work directly with dozens of these groups. I share this experience because it provides me with an up-close-and-personal look into the activities, challenges, and innovation that take place within these organizations. The people leading these groups are working at overcapacity, are poorly funded, and are overextended as they try to solve nationally pressing social issues with limited resources and power. And yet, they are extraordinary in their drive, creativity, innovation, perseverance, direct impact on the communities they serve, and persuasiveness to policy and lawmakers as well as inspiring, especially to me. It is my hope that, after reading this book, you feel compelled to support them in this work. Whether you are a policymaker, lawmaker, politician, activist, educator, social worker, student, or concerned denizen, it is my hope that these groups compel you to be a part of this change. The stakes of not supporting these organizations and intersectional advocacy are high: growing inequality, public issues that worsen over time, and people that continue to be trapped within policy gaps. These advocacy groups cannot do it all alone.