

Measuring Women's Political Empowerment across the Globe

Strategies, Challenges and Future Research



Edited by
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Catherine Bolzendahl
and Farida Jalalzai



Gender and Politics

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Amy C. Alexander • Catherine Bolzendahl
Farida Jalalzai
Editors

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Gender and Politics

ISBN 978-3-319-64005-1

ISBN 978-3-319-64006-8 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64006-8>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017956105

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Cover illustration: Spring Images / Alamy Stock Photo

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature

The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*To the friends and family that have empowered us.
To the empowerment of women everywhere.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful for the support we have received from a variety of sources that has enabled us to turn our interest in women's political empowerment into a rich compilation of scholarship. First, we thank the contributors to the volume. It has been a joy to work with such a talented and diligent group of scholars. Second, we gratefully acknowledge the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for funding the workshop that launched this project. With their support, we brought a group of leading scholars together at the Thyssen Foundation headquarters in Cologne, Germany. The ideas that emerged from that intensive and exciting conference helped us envision this volume, and many of the participants are now contributors to this book. Third, for institutional support of many kinds, we would like to acknowledge the European Union Seventh Framework Research Project PERDEM (Performance of Democracy, grant agreement number 339571), the Department of Political Science at Gothenburg University, the Quality of Government Institute at Gothenburg University, the Gender Governance Link Project (www.ggl-project.com), the UC Irvine Center for the Study of Democracy and Department of Sociology, and the Political Science Department and the Hannah Atkins Endowment at Oklahoma State University. We are grateful for the insights and recommendations we have received through the review process which strengthened the final product. We thank Palgrave for all of their support at all stages of this collection and thank Johanna Kantola and Sarah Childs for including us in their Gender and Politics Series as well as Ambra Finotello who saw promise in this project and Imogen Gordon Clark who helped us make it to the finish line. Finally, we send our love and thanks to our families; we could not have done this without you.

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Intersectionality and Women's Political Empowerment Worldwide

Melanie M. Hughes and Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow

When we measure “women’s political empowerment” around the world, it is crucial that we understand that women’s political experiences vary, and that empowerment for some women may not mean empowerment for all. Women’s progress varies across countries and across groups within countries. Some groups—be they racial, ethnic, or religious minorities; indigenous or immigrants; or sexual minorities—elect and appoint women in higher numbers than others (Celis et al. 2014; Hughes 2011, 2013; Reynolds 2013). Within-group differences influence how women and other marginalized groups mobilize, make political claims, and win concessions from the state (Evans 2015; Htun and Ossa 2013; Lépinard 2014; Sainsbury 2003; Strolovitch 2006; Verloo 2013; Walsh and Xydias 2014; Weldon 2011).

In recognizing and unpacking differences among women, contemporary scholars often invoke the word “intersectionality.” Legal scholar

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A.C. Alexander et al. (eds.), *Measuring Women's Political Empowerment across the Globe*, Gender and Politics,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64006-8_4

Kimberlé Crenshaw first coined “intersectionality” to better understand how the legal experiences and outcomes of Black women in the United States are shaped simultaneously by their sex and their race (Crenshaw 1989, 1991). Crenshaw criticized that sexism and racism are artificially analyzed as distinct, or are simplistically added together. Instead, she argued, forces of oppression intersect in complex and often compounding ways. Over the last 30 years, intersectionality has taken feminist scholarship by storm, and has been applied in many countries, in a wide array of disciplines, and across a broad range of intersecting social hierarchies—not only gender and race, but also class, ethnicity, nation, religion, sexuality, ability, and age. Intersectional concepts have even been integrated into United Nations resolutions on human rights (Yuval-Davis 2006).

It is important to recognize that Crenshaw was not the first scholar to theorize the racial and gendered oppressions experienced by Black women (e.g., Beale 1970; Combahee River Collective 1982; Davis 1981; King 1988; Smith 1983), nor are the ideas associated with intersectionality uniquely American. Indeed, for decades feminists worldwide have articulated the ways that women from marginalized groups and women from the Global South face multiple oppressions (Black 2000). As Jennifer Nash (2008, 3) argues clearly, intersectionality “provided a name to a pre-existing theoretical and political commitment.”

In this chapter, we make the case that an intersectional approach is crucial to researching and understanding women’s political empowerment worldwide. We begin by providing a brief introduction to intersectionality as a concept. Then, we consider how an intersectional perspective changes our conceptual and methodological approaches to studying women’s political empowerment. To illustrate our argument, we provide examples of how an intersectional approach contributes to—and complicates—research on women’s political empowerment.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO INTERSECTIONALITY

There is no single, agreed-upon understanding of intersectionality. Instead, intersectionality captures a range of ideas, approaches to scholarship, and social justice projects (Cho et al. 2013; Choo and Ferree 2010; Collins 2015; Hancock 2016; McCall 2005). Intersectionality’s intellectual and practical appeal allowed it to spread far and wide, but has also been a cause of considerable debate among, and criticism from, feminist

and critical race scholars (Alexander-Floyd 2012; Anthias 2012; Bilge 2013; Davis 2008; Erel et al. 2011; Hancock 2016; Knapp 2005). Making sense of what intersectionality has to offer the study of women's political empowerment is therefore not a simple and straightforward task.

We take as our starting point Paxton and Hughes (2016)'s argument that intersectional research aimed at understanding women tends to share four important elements. Intersectionality: (1) recognizes differences among women; (2) sees stratifying institutions as inseparable; (3) explicitly references power; and (4) acknowledges complexity. We briefly explore each of these points, in turn.

1. *Intersectionality recognizes differences among women*

Intersectionality challenges ideas that women are a fixed, monolithic group and instead finds that women from different groups have distinct experiences. For instance, as Crenshaw (1991) articulated that in the United States, "[W]omen of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color, and sexism in ways not always parallel to experiences of white women" (p. 1252; see also Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996; West and Fenstermaker 1997). When women's differences are not made explicit, it is women from dominant social categories—often White middle-class women from the Global North—who are the implicit object of study (e.g., Davis 1981; hooks 1984). Intersectionality demands us to make explicit 'which women' are being referenced or researched (Smooth 2011), and calls for specific attention to the experiences and outcomes of women of color and women from the Global South, who are marginalized not only in societies, but also in academic scholarship (Alexander-Floyd 2012; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Luke 2001).

2. *Intersectionality sees stratifying institutions as inseparable*

Intersectional research takes a stand that gender cannot be understood in isolation from other social systems that structure inequality in society. One cannot privilege gender as *the* defining category for identity (Hancock 2007). Instead, gender is "interlinked," "interconnected," "interlocking," and "mutually constructed" with race, class, and other axes of social organization (Adib and Guerrier 2003; Collins 2000; Matsuda 1990; Stasiulis 1999). Yet, it is not always immediately obvious how to look

simultaneously at multiple axes of social organization. Mari Matsuda (1990, 1189) suggests that scholars should “ask the other question”:

The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call “ask the other question.” When I see something that looks racist, I ask, “where is the patriarchy in this?” When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, “Where is the heterosexism in this?” When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, “Where are the class interests in this?”

Thus, intersectionality encourages a “gender and approach” that pays simultaneous attention to gender, race, and class—sometimes called the “big three” or the “trinity” (Anthias 2012, 4; Monture 2007, 199)—but increasingly also to ethnicity, nation, religion, sexuality, ability, and age.

3. *Intersectionality is an analysis of power*

Intersectionality demands that we explicitly account for power relations.¹ Intersectionality scholars theorize that differences such as gender, race, and class combine to form intersecting social hierarchies (Glenn 1999; Weber 2001). These intersections are said to create a “matrix of domination,” through which individuals experience both privilege and oppression or multiple oppressions (Collins 2000; hooks 1984). An intersectional approach reveals that not all women occupy the same position in the social hierarchy, and is specifically interested in the ways that social inequalities are produced, reproduced, and resisted (Baca Zinn and Dill 1996; Dhamoon 2011; hooks 1984). Intersectional analyses understand power operating at multiple levels: at the individual level shaping lived experience and subject formation; at the inter-subjective level in relations among actors; at the organizational level in social, political, and economic institutions; and at the representational level in discourse information flows (Anthias 2012; Yuval-Davis 2006).

4. *Intersectionality acknowledges complexity*

An intersectional perspective is anything but a simple equation. Intersectionality scholars contend that one cannot simply average or add up the experience of being a racial, ethnic, or religious minority to the experience of being a woman and deduce the experience of being a

minority woman (Bowleg 2008; Hancock 2007). That is, the idea of some groups being doubly or multiply oppressed does not fully account for complexities at the intersection (Collins 2000; Walby 2007). Research shows that ethnic minority women may experience outcomes similar to their more privileged counterparts (e.g., Folke et al. 2015), or be afforded certain advantages or opportunities and outperform ethnic minority men or ethnic majority women on some metrics (e.g., Celis et al. 2014; Hughes 2011, 2013), and that women from marginalized groups are often situated in multiple groups that pursue conflicting agendas (Crenshaw 1991). Intersectional research clearly points to patterns that are complex and contingent across groups, contexts, and time.

INTERSECTIONALITY CHANGES THE WAY WE ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Given these complex and contingent patterns, we next ask how taking an intersectional approach could inform the study of women's global political empowerment. How might intersectionality change the questions we ask, and how we would approach answering them?

First, we know that rather than approaching the study of "women" as a group that shares a common outcome, an intersectional perspective assumes *at the outset* that women's outcomes vary. Instead of asking "To what degree are women politically empowered and why?" our first question should be, "*Which women* are politically empowered and why?" It is insufficient to measure and analyze the category of "women"; we must consider meaningful within-group differences and ask about women from marginalized groups that may otherwise be ignored. In this framework, we might ask: To what degree are women of color, immigrant women, indigenous women, working-class women, and lesbian and bisexual women politically empowered? Which women are empowered by efforts to promote social change and, in particular, to what extent are women from marginalized groups empowered?

Recognizing differences among women also encourages us to consider whether and how political empowerment itself may look different for different women. Authors of this book consider women's political empowerment from various perspectives and, at points, from a wide-angled lens: Empowerment is not only women's greater presence in elected political positions but gains in women's political interest, knowledge, and engagement; improvements in public assessments of women's political

capabilities; women's greater ability to support the actors, policies, and issues that align with their interests; and women's political claims-making to enhance their security, resources, and achievements (see Chap. 1). Intersectionality challenges all of that by demanding close-ups and re-shoots for the specific intersections of which women are a part: What do gains in women's engagement look like for women from different groups? What are the political interests and claims most relevant to different groups of women? Overall, then, intersectionality encourages us to revise our pictures of women's political empowerment if we focus on women of color, immigrant women, indigenous women, and other intersectional groups.

Second, we know that an intersectional approach sees stratifying institutions such as gender, race, and class as inseparable and unranked. Thus, rather than assuming that "gender" shapes the experiences of women in certain ways, we must look to other axes of social organization. Instead of asking "How does gender shape women's and men's political experiences?" we should ask, "How does gender intersect with other stratifying institutions to shape women's and men's experiences?" Although not every study must consider all axes, the study of women's political empowerment cannot and should not ignore the varied forces of oppression that politically disempower women. We must "ask the other question," thinking too about racism, classism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of oppression.

Intersectionality and women's political empowerment are not academic, ivory tower concerns, but rather they are frameworks to reveal the lived experiences of the advantaged and the disadvantaged alike. Consider the widespread horrors of the sexual assault of women refugees. One might see sexual assault as a women's issue and a gender-based problem. Yet, an intersectional analysis reveals that these political acts of aggression are rooted both in the "othering" of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities and the gender ideologies that construct women as the bearers of the culture and the symbols of the nation (Pittaway and Bartolomei 2001). Studying the political empowerment of women refugees may best be done by questioning the ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and poverty together shape the political vulnerabilities and insecurities of millions of refugee women.

Third, intersectionality is a framework for revealing the bases and exercise of power, and thus directs us to a particular way of thinking about power relations as structural, relational, and multi-level. In this volume, women's empowerment is conceptualized as a process of transformation

from limited to greater agency, whereby women are moving toward equal levels of political influence, representation, and integration that undermines patriarchal social structures. Intersectionality directs us to consider structural dimensions of this process. We should consider: “How is power produced and reproduced?” “Who benefits from the power relations as they are?” We should examine “[H]ow and why particular intersections of power systems become salient and generate inequalities” (Severs et al. 2016, 348). Thinking about power relationally, we must consider resistance: “When, where, and how do some women resist the simultaneous oppressions of sexism, racism, and classism?” “Which women are able to do so, and why?” As power relations are often part of enduring social structures, we should also ask about the duration of inequalities inherent within the relations between intersectional groups: “How long have these intersectional political inequalities been, and how have these unequal power relations behaved across time?” Intersectionality also reveals that power operates at multiple levels simultaneously. Intersectionality allows us to understand how privilege and oppression shape women’s individual political transformations, how power shapes relations among women within political organizations and institutions, and how political divisions are represented in discourse and images.

Fourth, intersectionality acknowledges complexity in the ways that gender intersects with other forms of marginalization. Instead of thinking only of women as oppressed, we should ask, “If/how/when are women from different groups empowered politically, and relative to whom?” An intersectional perspective also takes seriously that the same group may be empowered in one context and disempowered in the next. We should examine the instances in which the simultaneous position of women in multiple social categories may empower and disempower them. The process of women’s empowerment is not simple or linear, but complex, contingent, and varied.

INTERSECTIONALITY CHANGES HOW WE ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS

Asking different questions is also important because it may lead to different explanations for why women remain politically disempowered. To illustrate, consider the composition of national legislatures in Burundi and Romania, countries where ethnic minorities comprise between 15 and 20% of the population. As of January 2017, Burundi ranked 25th in the

world in women’s parliamentary representation; women held 36% of seats. By comparison, Romania ranked 88th in the world with 20% women. The considerable gap in women’s political representation between Burundi and Romania is evident in the first two columns of Fig. 4.1.

Why is Burundi doing so well? Research generally points to Burundi’s civil war and the role of women activists, who took advantage of political openings to press for increased representation through a constitutionally mandated 30% quota for women (Anderson 2010; Hughes and Tripp 2015; Tripp 2016). Alternatively, why is women’s political representation in Romania so low? Research points to the fall of communism, which removed policies that protected women’s participation in the labor market, delegitimized the national rhetoric of women’s political empowerment and the application of informal gender quotas, and encouraged cultural attitudes that politics is a man’s game (Constantinescu 2016; Mihalache and Drăgulin 2016; Turcu 2009; UNDP 2013). Overall, then, research generally explains the differences between Burundi and Romania with concepts or ideas that are about women or gender: *women’s* activism, *gender* quotas, *women’s* economic status, and *gender* ideology.

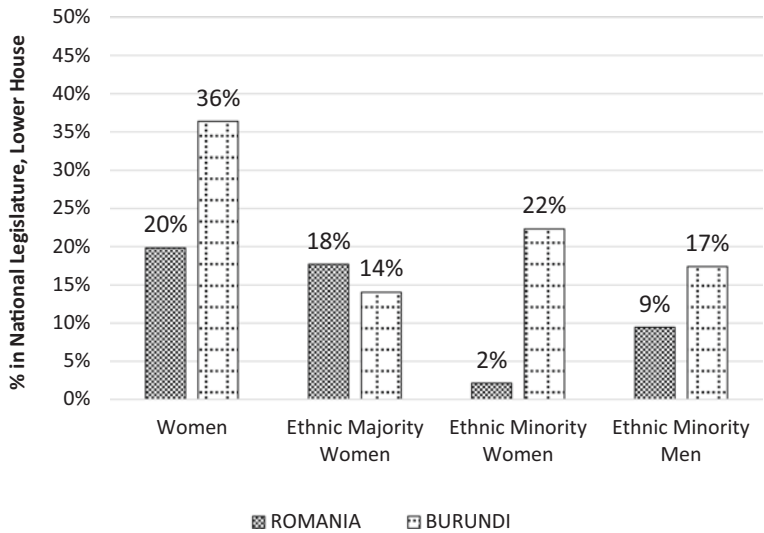


Fig. 4.1 Comparing gender and ethnic representation in Romania’s 2016 and Burundi’s 2015 national legislatures

What would an intersectional perspective offer instead? The remaining columns in Fig. 4.1 break down the legislatures of Burundi and Romania not just by gender but by majority/minority status (the Hutu majority vs. Tutsi and Twa minorities in Burundi and the Romanian majority vs. national minorities in Romania).² Perhaps surprisingly given what we know so far, we see that Romania slightly outperforms Burundi on the political representation of ethnic majority women (18% vs. 14%, respectively). It is when we compare the political representation of women from minority groups that we see where Burundi's advantage comes from—a 20% gap between the two countries. Indeed, ethnic minority women in Burundi are represented at higher levels than both ethnic minority men and ethnic majority women. Explaining differences between Burundi and Romania seems to be not just about gender but about the intersection of gender and ethnicity. The ethnic nature of the conflict in Burundi and rules for incorporating ethnic minority parties in Romania emerge as important areas of study.

This example demonstrates that an intersectional perspective changes not just the questions we ask, but the kinds of answers that might be appropriate. Focusing on the political experiences and outcomes of women from marginalized groups is important not only because they are often ignored but because our ignoring of them means we are missing out on understanding women's political empowerment more fully. To understand women's political empowerment fully, we must consider how power is also structured by other axes of inequality.

Despite all intersectionality has to offer, there are a host of challenges to doing intersectional research at all, and especially to doing intersectional research *well*. In the next section, we introduce some of the methodological challenges to intersectional research, focusing in particular on the specific challenges of cross-national intersectional survey research.

INTERSECTIONALITY CHANGES THE WAY WE DO EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

How should we do empirical intersectional research on women's political empowerment? What methods and measures allow us to recognize differences among women, see stratifying institutions as inseparable, analyze power, and acknowledge complexity? Despite over three decades of intersectional conceptualization and theory, only in the mid-2000s has intersectional research methodology begun to grow (Bauer 2014; Bowleg and

Bauer 2016; Dubrow 2008, 2013; Hancock 2013; Hughes 2015; Else-Quest and Hyde 2016; Weldon 2006). What is clear from this scholarship is both that intersectionality introduces new empirical challenges, but with the weight of robust scholarship leaning on it, these challenges can be overcome.

Given the big umbrella that is intersectionality, it is impossible to introduce and address all the many methodological issues that an intersectional approach to women's political empowerment raises. Therefore, our approach is to focus on a particular method—cross-national survey research—and consider the extent to which existing survey and non-survey data can be used to examine intersectionality. We first introduce some of the specific challenges—the mismatch between identities and demographic survey questions, the perennial “small-N” problem, and the challenges of measuring power relations—but also consider how new data sources can be created to better apprehend intersectional reality.

Measuring Difference and Complexity: The Problem of Using Demographics to Measure Identities

If the goal is to use quantitative survey techniques to understand women's political empowerment around the world—and we want to do it intersectionally—scholars face a host of methodological challenges. We know that women occupy many groups, but what are the salient categories of difference? How do women see themselves and with which social categories do women identify? Measuring identity is no simple task, and standard survey research techniques may not be adequate to capture identity in an intersectional way.

Identities are complex: they involve the perception individuals have of themselves and the characteristics that others project onto the individual. Identity is a subjective phenomenon: how people see themselves, and are seen by others, influences how they think and act. Intersectionality also informs us that the formation and mobilization of identities is about power. In Crenshaw's words: (1991, 1297) “the process of categorization is itself an exercise of power”; “identity continues to be a site of resistance of different subordinated groups.” Thus, a nuanced approach to identity is important to a sound intersectional approach.

Yet, survey research generally uses demographics to stand for identities. Demographics are defined here as characteristics of respondents that influence position in the social structure—gender, age, sexuality, disability,

race, ethnicity, and class, for example. Items that purport to measure the “standard demographics” of gender, age, and so on have been, with minor variations, asked of survey respondents in the same way for decades. This continuity perpetuated by international survey projects illuminates the role of demographics in human thought and behavior across countries and time. The severe downside is that it has inhibited a rigorous scientific exploration of identities with new survey instruments that are potentially better suited to an intersectional approach.

If we take intersectionality seriously, the conceptual mismatch between identity and demographics is especially problematic (Bauer 2014; Weldon 2006). Checking the box for “woman” does not capture important differences in women’s identities. However, it is unclear how to adapt surveys to better capture identities. Indeed, a reasonable question to ask is how quantitative-oriented intersectionality researchers can adequately measure identities without knowing strictly how the respondents see themselves, or how others see them.

Measuring Multiple Axes at Once: The Problem of Too Few Cases

A second challenge for intersectional survey research on women’s political empowerment is the “small-N” problem—when there are too few observations in the sample to permit the desired analysis. Intersectionality asks us to look at multiple categories of difference at the same time. Yet, to perform the multivariate quantitative techniques popular in analyses of survey data, we need an adequate number of people in each group or category we hope to analyze. For instance, if we think that the intersection of gender and class is necessary for our study, and we want a detailed class schema (i.e., more than two nominal categories), then we face the problem of having too few cases in a given gender*class category. Or, if we are studying the experiences and outcomes of women from marginalized groups, we need to be aware that many marginalized groups are numerical minorities. Without specific targeted sampling procedures such as over-samples of categories of interest, there may not be enough men and women from the marginalized group to allow rigorous intersectional analysis with the extant statistical techniques.

Data from statistical agencies has its own problems. Sub-national, national, and cross-national data on individuals and their social categories are often collected by statistical agencies staffed and directly funded by national governments. To get the data needed for intersectional analysis, researchers face several challenges. One, the office may have never

collected data on the intersectional demographic of interest, i.e., insufficient measures. Two, the office could have collected such detailed data, but is reluctant to provide the raw data for researchers to retrospectively construct intersections. There are a couple of reasons for this: (1) the under-funded office perceives a high cost involved, or (2) the office is uncertain about the protocol for releasing micro-data of that type. The office's reluctance to release micro-data could be because they are uncertain as to how to comply with their government's data privacy policies. In some countries, the offices may have never developed a coherent policy of how to release these data to the public. As is typical for governmental offices everywhere, in the face of challenges to their official guidelines, the office may simply decide to not release the data that they have. In the worst case scenario, the office may have had collected these data in the past, but due to military conflict or short-sighted data storage policies created by their government, these data may have been destroyed.

Researchers have options to contend, or not, with the "small-N" problem in cross-national survey research. On the one hand, we can try to do our best with the number of cases we have. We can limit the number of intersections and the content of intersections, i.e., create only those intersectional groups that have a sufficient number of cases. Or, when analyzing a concept with multiple categories, such as social class, we can meaningfully combine those categories, i.e., "pooling categories." On the other hand, we can pursue various strategies to increase our overall sample size. This can be achieved in various ways: (1) Pool countries within one survey wave, i.e., "pooling countries"; (2) Pool the same country across multiple survey waves, i.e., "pooling time"; (3) Pool countries and time; or (4) Harmonize different datasets of the same country, i.e., "pooling international survey projects." At this point, intersectional researchers who pursue quantitative strategies have few best-practices guidelines. It appears that, at the moment, the disciplines of psychology and health sciences—and not sociology or political science—are at the forefront of this kind of research (e.g., Bauer 2014; Else-Quest and Hyde 2016).

Measuring Power Relations in the Social Structure

We know that power relations are at the heart of all intersectional research and their explicit measurement is a requirement to apply intersectionality to women's political empowerment. The approaches commonly used to analyze survey data often assume structural power relations between individuals, groups, and the state—and as such are often not explicitly

measured (a critique also made by Bowleg and Bauer 2016). The obvious problems of quantitatively measuring a power structure abound: Power is notoriously difficult to directly observe, let alone measure. Sexism, racism, classism, ageism, and others, are a description of the structures of power, and some form of them should be directly accounted for in multivariate equations featuring intersectional groups. If we are to explicitly model power relations, we need to devise measures of it that are comparable across nations and that are appropriate to the theoretical model undergoing the empirical test. If intersectionality is about power relations, then it demands a direct measurement of power relations. Quantitative accountants of intersectionality rarely, if ever, measure power relations directly and thus are at risk of not properly contending with a core aspect of intersectionality.

We Are at the Beginning

Researchers have only recently begun to tackle the serious methodological challenges involved in the quantitative empirical analysis of intersectionality worldwide. In this chapter, we can only summarize what is, and speculate a little on its future. In sum, intersectionality can be examined with existing survey data only if the researcher is willing to limit the number of countries and years. The data situation has to be sufficient, i.e., there are data that can approximate intersectional groups and the cases can be embedded in contextual data from which a power structure can be measured. Since the major cross-national surveys emerged only in the 1970s, and only some countries collect and release micro-data from their population census, there are severe limitations in constructing an intersectional, international, and over-time measure of women's political empowerment. Today, the best that can be done is to go in-depth on a few countries within the last few decades.

Given the state of social science methodology, there are a few obvious directions in which to go. One is to design new surveys. There is surprisingly very little research on how to collect survey or other statistical data with intersectionality in mind (for example, the best treatise on the topic remains Warner's 2008 and Bowleg's 2008, articles). With little research on this, we are far even from a best-practices approach. To address the "demographics vs. identities" problem would require a minor revolution in survey design. The obvious answer to solving the "too few cases" problem is to collect far more cases, but would require much more funding for

social scientific surveys, or a methodological breakthrough in how to more efficiently and economically collect more and better survey data. Accounting for power structures is easily solved theoretically, but requires careful attention to the measurement of the power structure, which no one has ever done, or at a minimum, a multi-level approach.

CONCLUSIONS

Intersectionality is important because it forces scholars to focus—first and foremost—on the inherent complexity of women’s political life. Intersectionality points out the ways that women are internally a diverse group, brings other forms of oppression into the center of study, explicitly references power, and acknowledges the complexities of social and political life. Before intersectionality, scholars often ignored the particular experiences and outcomes of women from marginalized groups. The political empowerment of women of color, of immigrant women, of indigenous women, of working-class women, of lesbian and bisexual women, and of women from the Global South deserves attention from social scientists.

The intersectional perspective is a powerful instrument: It encourages us to ask different questions that need asking. It pushes us to look for answers in new places. We more fully comprehend the political life of women from diverse experiences, and thus women’s political empowerment. Yet, intersectional research is not easy. What it means to do intersectional research is contested, and there is surprisingly little methodological guidance for how to do intersectional scholarship—especially quantitatively. This may be because some intersectional scholars see quantitative techniques as wholly inappropriate for intersectional scholarship. As with all methodological tools, quantitative research does not fully embrace all of the insights that intersectionality has to offer; yet, intersectionality is an awesome opportunity to push quantitative scholars to develop new, flexible methods and pursue a wider array of choices for data, measurement, and analysis.

For academics, one way forward is to build connections across disciplines. Hancock (2016) argues that intersectionality is an interdisciplinary endeavor with a long history. Yet, the current boom of intersectionality methodology research in health (Bauer 2014) and psychology (Else-Quest and Hyde 2016) rarely cite the directly relevant work that has been published in political science for the last decade (e.g., Hancock 2007; Hughes 2015; Weldon 2006). For intersectionality to better inform research and

activism in women's political empowerment, for it to advance beyond the endless re-inventing of the wheel; it is time for the various disciplines that discuss intersectionality to read each other.

For policy makers, intersectionality is a new and powerful resource that reveals the deep and hidden political lives of women and girls. With intersectionality as a guide, policy makers can find new paths that lead out of the current state of stale solutions and political deadlock. Intersectional insights meet the breakthroughs in data and communication technology to target specific populations in need. Social policy can be made smarter: more efficient, more effective, and with greater returns to society.

For activists on the frontlines of the battle for women's political empowerment, growing recognition of intersectionality by academics and policy makers may feel like the sunlight that finally broke through the clouds. Shared intersectional insights into the sources of identity, power, and oppression engender a fellowship between protestors, professors, and politicians.

We hope, as many before us have, to push intersectionality from the margin to the center of the study, policy, and practice of women's political empowerment. Its particular focus on power, on forces of oppression and resistance, and its application to multiple levels of analysis make intersectionality a valuable asset for scholarship of all stripes. We emphasize, here, that intersectionality is worldwide—in democracies and totalitarian states, and in republics and kleptocracies. Women and girls are everywhere, and gender remains a forceful institution across time and space; the political lives of women and girls everywhere are best understood as intersections, rich and deep. The complexity that intersectionality recognizes—and the difficulties of applying intersectionality empirically—is a great opportunity for scholars to take advantage of what intersectionality has to offer research on all women's political empowerment.

NOTES

1. However, some scholars argue that recent intersectionality scholarship has been pushing power to the side (e.g., Anthias 2012) and has not been taking full advantage of what intersectionality has to offer when it comes to theorizing power (Severs et al. 2016).
2. In the 2016 elections, minority groups included Albanians, Armenians, Bulgarians, Czechs/Slovaks, Croatians, Germans, Greeks, Hungarians, Italians, Jews, Lipovans, Macedonians, Poles, Roma, Ruthenians, Serbs, Turks, and Ukrainians.

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