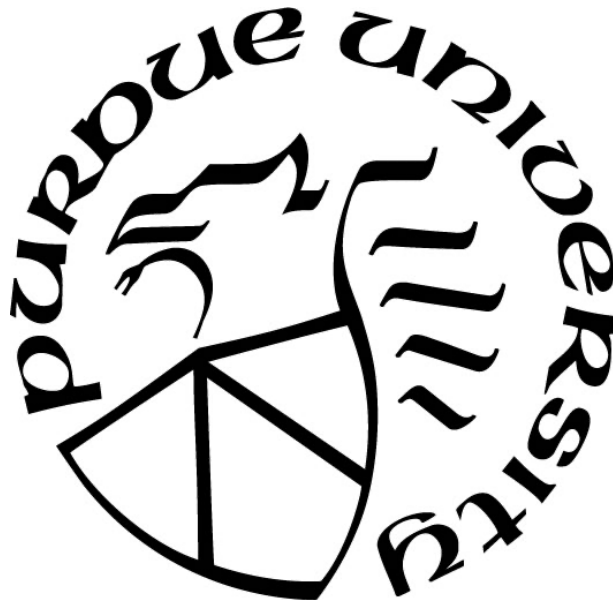# RECONCEPTUALIZING POWER IN AMERICAN POLITICS:
BLACK WOMEN LAWMAKERS, INTERSECTIONAL RESISTANCE,
AND POWER

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science
West Lafayette, Indiana
August 2021

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For Mami

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to open my acknowledgment section in a phrase that Mami would respond with when I completed a significant task, "Tiene que dale gracias a Dios," in which I am always thankful to God and todo Los Santos. I want to take the time to acknowledge and thank all the efforts of Mami, Luz Diaz. Mami is the cornerstone of my development as a person and is why I was able to finish this dissertation. Every time imposter syndrome reared its ugly head, anxiety was high, and depression set, I would remind myself that Mami worked two to three jobs in a country where she barely knew the language in a working-class environment where she survived and succeeded. Even though she was always busy, she would take the time to share her life stories, effectively teaching me a working-class feminist praxis. It was through all her love, labor, and grace that I can now support her. Te quiero mucho Mami, I love you. We both struggled, but we are both successful.

I want to shout out to my committee. First, I am forever indebted for the opportunity to work and learn from my advisor/titi/academic mama Dr. Nadia Brown. Dr. Nadia Brown created a space that I could be my entire self. This space allowed me to develop critically as a scholar and person. I would not have been able to complete the dissertation without her. Next, I want to thank my other academic titi, Dr. Valeria Sinclair-Chapman, who reminded me to stand for my ideas but never allowed me to slack on my work. I am grateful for every conversation with Dr. Valeria Sinclair-Chapman because they were always fun and always fruitful. Next, I want to thank Dr. Rosalee Clawson for all substantive support. Whether it was conversations about pedagogy or Dr. Rosalee Clawson taking the time to help me study for exams, I am incredibly thankful for all her hard work. Next, I want to thank Dr. Natasha Behl for accepting me with open arms when I needed it the most. I am incredibly grateful for how Dr. Natasha Behl showed

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up for me and pushed me to think more critically about my project. Words cannot express my love, pride, and gratitude for my committee. It would take serval lifetimes to repay them for all their labor, care, and love. So, I will make sure to pay it forward.

I want to take the time to shout out to my Purdue family. It takes a community to make a doctor, and every one of these individuals was critical in completing my degree. I want to acknowledge my big academic brother Dr. Fernando Tormos-Aponte for all the support, always putting me on game, and helping me strategize. Next, I want to shout out to Dr. Nyron Crawford for being a fantastic mentor and sounding board. Next, shout out to Dr. Aria Halliday, Dr. Tyler Conner, Dr. Jonathan Freeman, Dr. Kadari Taylor-Watson, Dr. Kaitlin Kelly-Thompson, Dr. Summer Forester, Dr. Torrie Cropps, Dr. Nadra Guizani, Dr. Michelle Campbell, Dr. Tiffany Montoya, Dr. Ryan van Nood, and Dr. Wes Bishop. Finally, I want to acknowledge the friends that became family Sherryl Miller, Vanessa Saqib-Vicente, and Emma Noelke.

I want to take the time to give a special shout to my titi Carina Olaru for the support and words of wisdom. Carina is a brilliant and hardworking individual that cares for the community. Thank you for the support in the early stages of my work, helping me with professionalization as a teacher, your lessons, and the space you created that allowed me to be my whole self. Also, a special thank you to Dr. Meghan Wilson. You are an amazing friend and mentor who helped me navigate academia. Your constant love, support, and validation meant the world to me.

I want to shout out my little academic siblings from Purdue, Michael Simrak, Jasmine Jackson, India Leaner, and MJ Strawbridge. I am super excited to see all that you do in the future! I want to shout out to my Howard/NCOBPS family Dr. Najja Baptist, Dr. Ashley Daniels, Dr. Gabby Gray, Dr. Princess Williams, Dr. Jessica Stewart, and Dr. Brandon Davis.

I want to shout out the people that became my academic family through the pandemic Dr. Periloux Peay, Dr. Rachel Torrez, Dr. Kelly Zvobgo, and (soon to be a doctor) Kiela Crabtree. All the time we spent during Zoom watching Hot Ones and movies was the space I needed during a pandemic, writing a dissertation, and being on the job market. I love y'all.

I am super grateful to the broader academic community Dr. Julian Wamble, Dr. David Manzona, Dr. Danielle Lemi, Dr. Vlad Medencia, Dr. Angela Ocompo, Dr. Jenn Jackson, Andrene Wright, and Dara Gaines. They showed me that there could be a welcoming individuals in academia. In addition, I am highly grateful to the folks I met at Wheelock College, Jamie Boussicot and Dr. Detris Adelabu, who provided critical support to apply to graduate school. Thank you to the community of local organizers Sheila and Frank Rosenthal, Mel Gruver, Vanessa Pacheco, and Chris Hegarty.

A special thanks to Lendsey and Adam for their connections that got me a space to live in Atlanta. Thank you so much to Simone May, Mrs. May, and Dr. May for allowing me to live in their house for the duration of my fieldwork. Their kindness was crucial for the completion of this dissertation.

I am grateful for the support from my family. Thank you, Titi Milli, for always looking out, and all the time we spent when I would come back home. Thank you to my shorty, Jessica. Shout to my day one's Luis Lopez and Dominic Sanders. Shoutout to my dog-child Kilala. Thank you to Alejandro and Emily for always looking out for Mami. Shout to my city, Beantown.

I want to acknowledge the spaces like the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, Decolonial Politics, and Interpretivist Methods Clinic for creating crucial spaces in political science that allow individuals to do dope work. Without these spaces, I would not be able to see myself in academia. Thank you to all those individuals that came before that created a

foundation of academic knowledge. A special thanks to Dr. Dixon and Melissa Danner for all their work in Summer Research Opportunity Program and the Advancement for Graduate Education and the Professoriate. These programs supported historically underrepresented individuals in graduate schools at Purdue University, like myself. Shoutout to the Black Political Science Excellence - NCOBPS and Latinx Graduate Student in Political Science GroupMe channels are constant support, love, and dialogue. Shout out to the Purdue Social Justice Coalition and the Peoples Mic for all the organizing and advocating we did over the years. Thank you to Vienna Coffeeshop. Shoutout to all the supportive individuals that I met through Twitter.

I want to shoutout the love from my fraternity Sigma Lambda Beta, International Fraternity Incorporated, especially the InfAAmous Alpha Alpha. I want to shout out the Cuzzos of the Ryde of Die Zeta Phi Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated and the Beta Omicron Chapter of Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated for always being family and being about it.

This section is a testament to the community it takes to complete a doctorate. If I forgot you, please blame my head and not my heart. The love and support that I received led me to become the first in my family and friends to earn a doctorate. Thank you so much, everyone.

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation is an exploratory study examining the power dynamics that Black women lawmakers navigate in Georgia General Assembly. My project focuses on re-conceptualizing power in legislative studies by centering on the lived experiences of Black women lawmakers. I build on previous work to develop my theory of intersectional resistance. I defined intersectional resistance as individuals with intersectionally marginalizing identities pushing back on behaviors, events, and norms that attempt to marginalize them or their constituents to advance their agenda in the state legislature.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Defeating fear of otherness means knowing who you are and what you're trying to accomplish and leveraging that otherness to our benefit. Knowing I'd never be invited into smoke-filled rooms or to the golf course, I instead requested individual meetings with political colleagues where I asked questions and learned about their interests, creating a similar sense of camaraderie." (Stacey Abrams 2018, 49)[1]

This quote by the former Democratic minority leader and 2018 Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams provides insights into how Black women lawmakers in the minority party navigate power dynamics in the Georgia General Assembly by resisting norms. The tension between marginalization and resistance creates a point to investigate the concept of power in legislative studies. Abrams recognizes that her "otherness" as a Black woman lawmaker in a White male-dominated institution would never receive an invitation to the "smoke-filled rooms or the golf course." Her quote suggests that there are places that she is unable to enter because of how she marginalized by others as a Black woman. Abrams' quote illuminates the micro-political power dynamics that are often attributed to personal relationships among lawmakers but have the (un)intended consequence of marginalizing legislators outside of the power structure. Despite the severe implications of "otherness" for policymaking and representation, these dynamics are not new and have existed for years. For example, Smooth (2002, 2008) empirically shows how Black women lawmakers are often left out of the policymaking process because legislative friendship groups happen along racial lines.

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[1] This quote is from Stacey Abrams's autobiography, *Minority Leader: How to Build Your Future and Make Real Change.*

However, Abrams' writes, "I instead requested individual meetings with political colleagues where I asked questions and learned about their interests." She actively recognizes that her marginalization is taken place because of the behaviors of other lawmakers which impeded her ability to participate as a legislator fully. This does not stop Abrams from transgressing the norms and quotidian politics of the Georgia General Assembly. Instead, she resisted the Georgia statehouse's norms by transgressing the expectations to advance her political agenda. Abrams shows us that there are two forms of power occurring, the first is the behaviors that create norms of marginalization and the second are the strategies implemented by Abrams.

This quote by Abrams frames this project as an alternative way to understand a particular dimension of power within state legislatures, particularly in the context of the Georgia state legislature. In this dissertation, I specifically examine how Black women lawmakers in the minority party in Georgia's House of Representatives in the 2019-2020 legislative session are marginalized, but still draw on their intersectional identities to resist both the informal and formal power structures to further their political agenda. I develop an alternative framework that centers on Black women lawmakers' lived experience in order to contextualize their marginalization, but also to illustrate how they have agency to advance their agenda. I define *intersectional resistance* as the ways legislators with intersectionally marginalized identities pushback on sets of behaviors, institutions, statements, rules, norms, and events that marginalized them, vulnerable populations, or their districts in order to advance their agenda. To be clear, I do not seek to generalize the experiences of Black women lawmakers rather I want to understand how (mostly) freshmen Black women lawmakers in the Democratic party navigate the power dynamics and advance their own agenda within the super majority Republican state legislature of the Georgia General Assembly.

My theory helps to contextualize the quotidian politics of minority party Black women lawmakers as they navigate the power dynamics in the state legislature that often marginalize them. Scholars have suggested that, in many ways, power is an elusive concept that can shift in meaning depending on the context and boundaries of the discussion (Allen 1998; Lukes 2005[1974]; Dowding 2012; Hearn 2012). In the legislative studies sub-field in American politics, many dimensions of power were defined between the 1950s and 1970s, which assumes that power is about domination (Dahl 1957; Brachrach and Baratz 1970; Haugaard 2002, 2017 Hearn 2012). Legislative studies scholars have both been attentive to the ways Black women lawmakers are marginalized in legislatures (Smooth 2002; Hawkesworth 2003; Brown 2014) and paid attention to the nuances of power in the legislature (Battista 2011; Mooney 2013). However, legislative studies have not interrogated the undergirding logics of the current conceptualizations of power as domination. The implications for empirical examinations of power means that if power is not demonstrated in the ways that are expected, in this case as domination, then the analysis is not about power. This means that scholars can miss the nuance ways that Black women lawmakers in minority parties strategize to advance their agenda because of the ways legislative studies scholars have replicated the underlying assumptions of power as domination in various empirical work.

The classic political science definition of power as domination fundamentally essentializes *all* political elites' behaviors regardless of their social location, which is problematic on two fronts. The first point of contention is that scholarship that centers on the identity of political elites demonstrate that a legislator's positionality influences their behaviors (Cohen 1999; Swers 2002; Brown 2014). On the second front, political institution marginalizes Black women lawmakers (Smooth 2002; Hawkesworth 2003). The current conceptualizations of power

do not account for the social location of Black women lawmakers. Instead, the current framing effectively creates theoretical blinders that do not effectively capture the power strategies of Black women lawmakers. Scholars have shown the importance of contextualizing and centering the experiences of Black women (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 1999; Harris-Perry 2011; Brown 2014; Bailey and Trudy 2018). These canonical texts on power did not consider Black women lawmakers (Dahl 1957; Bachrach and Baratz 1962). To be clear, I am not criticizing scholars like Dahl (1957), who did not have the foresight to consider Black women when they developed theories of power because minorities and women did not have a sizable presence in elected office. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, in which minority representation increased, had yet to yield high numbers of these underrepresented groups (Lublin 1997; Tate 2003).[2] Instead, I critique scholars in legislative studies who have continuously implemented canonical definitions of power in their examination of power in legislative institutions (like statehouses and Congress) without re-evaluating the canonical definitions and the implications of the lawmakers' race-gender identities and party status

The specter that haunts the scholarship on power in legislative studies has been politically salient identities that are not wealthy cis-White males. This matters for discussion on understanding the behaviors associated with power as they relate to the institution and the lawmakers' race-gender identities with the increasing diversification of legislatures. The implications then matter for how scholars comprehend political elites' behaviors and how the behaviors of Black women lawmakers in minority parties advance their agenda. Thus, this project's focus is to further understand the meaning of power based on the perspectives of Black women lawmakers in the minority party. I seek to get a richer understanding on how Black

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[2] It is important to note that trends for Black women becoming legislators have consistently gone up while other groups like Black men and White women have stagnated (Orey and Brown 2014; Bedolla, Tate, and Wong 2014)

women lawmakers in the minority party navigate power dynamics and their power strategies in the Georgia General Assembly. I pose the questions: how do Black women lawmakers in the minority party navigate power dynamics at the Georgia statehouse? How do Black women lawmakers generate and use their power strategies in the Georgia statehouse? How does their positionality play a role in their decisions to pick specific actions over others to advance their agenda in the Georgia General Assembly? The next section outlines my argument.

Re-evaluating Scholarly Discussion of Power and Political Elite Behaviors: Why This Matters

The increasing diversification of legislative institutions calls for a deeper understanding of marginalized populations' relationship (i.e., race, gender, and minority party status) in office to power. Scholars have shown that the mechanisms that prevent discrimination in the formal political process and the creation of minority-majority districts in the Civil Rights Act of 1965 diversified legislative institutions like state legislatures and Congress (Lublin 1999; Canon 1999; Edwards 2013). However, minority men's election to legislative offices have stagnated over time, while the rate of minority women, specifically Black women, has consistently increased over time (Smooth 2006; Orey et al. 2006; Orey and Brown 2014). This continual increase of minority women entering office has even been seen in the recent elections for the United States House of Representatives in 2018 with the most diverse class of minority women in the history of the United States. At the state level, Center for American Women and Politics reported an increase in Black women lawmakers' representation from 2.3% in 1999 to 4.3% in 2019 (Dittmar 2019). Black women lawmakers made up 10.3% of women state legislature in 1999 and increased to 15% in 2019 (Dittmar 2019). I contend that with an increasing demographic change for the political elite, scholars need new theories that more effectively explain the behaviors of

Black women lawmakers by focusing on their experiences. As such, in order to understand the political behavior of Black women lawmakers' in the minority party scholars should re-evaluate the initial conceptualizations of power within legislative institutions.

Political science as a discipline has long been guided by the idea of studying power (Kaplan and Lasswall 1950; Hanes, Smith, and Wallace 2017). The major assumption that undergirds power is the idea of domination, modeled as person A making person B do what B would not otherwise do (Dahl 1957; Bachrach and Baratz 1960; Haugaard 2002). Since then, the field of legislative studies has studied power working from this assumption. Therefore, much of the original conceptualizations spawned questions about formal influence, perceived influence, party control and agenda-setting (Smooth 2001; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Bratton 2005; Volden and Wiseman 2010; Brown and Banks 2014; Edwards 2018; Reingold, Haynie, and Widner 2021). However, to assume that power operates, and the power strategies are the same for all lawmakers in all social groups in state legislatures are points of contention. Instead, I assert that power and power strategies in legislatures do not work in the same way for all political elites. This dissertation interrogates the underlying assumptions that political science has had with political power in legislative studies. Continuing to operate under such assumptions limits the understanding of how scholars' study political elite behavior and the nature of political power. These assumptions create theoretical blinders to understand the behaviors of Black women lawmakers in minority parties in their use of political power strategies and how they navigate power relationships.

The representation literature shows that the identity of the representative that is reflected in the demographics of the constituents matters for the types of legislations that reflects the constituents' needs and wants (Swers 2002; Minta 2011). The implication is that not all

lawmakers behave the same way because their identity shapes the types of policy they advocate for and their symbolic representation (Whitby 1999; Cannon 1999; Swers 2002; Tate 2003; Minta 2011). The behaviors of political elites also matter along intersecting identities which means not just looking at Black and Latinos as monolithic categories but also considering intragroup variation. This empirical evidence indicates that identities factor in explaining the legislative behaviors of political elites. Identity matters for Black women lawmakers because it influences how they navigate legislative institutions. For example, Black women legislators' identities inform how they make decisions matter for understanding their decision making, including but not limited to race-gender, age, and motherhood (Brown 2014a). Black women legislators are more likely to pass progressive bills than Black men, White women, and men colleagues (Orey et al. 2006; Reingold and Smith 2012; Reingold, Haynie, and Widner 2020). Black women lawmakers are more likely to vote for legislation that benefits both the Black community and women (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Bratton et al. 2006; Brown and Banks 2014). Thus, the empirical evidence indicates that not all lawmakers behave in the same way because identity influences the type of bills they sponsor and how minority legislators symbolically represent their constituents. Furthermore, Black women lawmakers are not able to fully participate in the legislature as compared to their White men counterparts (Smooth 2002; Hawkesworth 2003).

Lawmakers bring in their cultural norms and ways of understanding the world based on their social location. The process through which lawmakers come to understand the world means that society's bias and prejudices are reflected in legislative institutions that privilege some while marginalizing others. Marginalization is a dynamic process that limits individuals' and groups' access to resources, participates in politics, and decreases inclusion in-group members. For

example, canonical work by Ture and Hamilton (1992[1967]) contends that racism is one form of marginalization that racial minorities face which is made up of multiple institutions that create a system that unfairly advantages Whites (and Whiteness) regardless of whether it is explicitly intended to. This framework is extended in the theory of intersectionality to understand the ways that multiple forms of oppression (like racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, etc.) can work together to marginalize Black women uniquely because of their social location (Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Collins 1991). Political science literature has shown the ways that legislative institutions marginalize Black, Latina, and White women (Kathlene 1994; Hawkesworth 2003). For instance, Black women lawmakers are not included in final decision-making processes, and their legislative friendship circles are delineated along racial lines (Smooth 2002, 2008). Furthermore, White men lawmakers are more likely not to believe that Black women lawmakers face unique challenges (Barret 1997). However, scholars find that Black women lawmakers are likely to incorporate progressive legislation and that a certain percentage of women in the legislature means that there is an increased chance that women-friendly bills are passed (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Orey et al. 2006). Since there is a growing number of Black women legislators as compared to other race-gendered groups, more attention must be given to expand on the knowledge built by prior scholars.

There has also been a call for scholars to incorporate qualitative methods to study how political elites get bills passed into laws (Volden, Wiseman, and Witter 2013; Johnson 2018). This is because many of the studies implement quantitative-positivist methods that collect whether or not legislation was passed. The limits to the current scholarship are that there is not a deeper understanding of what these strategies look like, how lawmakers implement these strategies, and why lawmakers choose a particular strategy over another. Therefore, it is critical

to understand the power strategies used by Black women lawmakers in minority parties to navigate their legislative institutions. I define power strategies as the sets of actions that legislators do to advance their political agenda in response to the power dynamics to their particular context. I contend that to understand certain power strategies of Black women lawmakers in minority parties; we must understand the production of their work as sites of resistance.[3] Resistance is defined as how those in a subordinate social location respond to their oppression by institutions (Hollander and Einwohner 2004; Johansson and Vintage 2016). Resistance does not exist in a vacuum but rather as a response to the conditions individuals are subjected to (Courpasson and Vallas 2016; Scott 1990, 1985). Power as resistance is a different framework in understanding how political elites behave compared to more traditional understandings of power as domination. The following section summarizes how legislative studies scholars have conceptualized power and the implications this has had in the legislative studies field.

What Do We Mean by Power in Legislative Studies?

While political science claims the title of the discipline that studies power, there has been interdisciplinary authors on the subject of power like M. Haugaard's *Power: A Reader*, a four-part volume called *Power and Politics,* and *The SAGE Handbook of Power* edited by M. Haugaard and S. Clegg, and even a Journal of Political Power. In this interdisciplinary scholarship, students of power fiercely debate the definition, conceptualization, and measures of the concept of power. The puzzle here is that while this work takes the understanding of power in

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a multitude of directions, much of the work in legislative studies have fixated on the initial conceptualization. In response, my work centers on Black women lawmakers' lived experiences to understand both the formal and informal power(s) that expands how legislative studies conceptualizes power.

One of the earliest conceptualizations of power was defined by Weber (Haugaard 2002), reiterated by Dahl, as the relationship between two entities where A makes B do what B would otherwise do depending on the scope of influence of A (Dahl 1957). Dahl's primary concern in his work was not just trying to conceptualize power but responding to C. Wright Mills claims that the United States political system controlled by a few wealthy elites that ruled through national politics, military, and business. This debate's details are further examined in chapter two, where I develop my theoretical framework for the dissertation. The implications for this work were varied for legislative studies scholars.

The literature on political influence is one vein of scholarship that has focused on political elites' behaviors. Power in this vein of scholarship has been conceptualized by perceived influence or the lawmakers' perspective on who is seen as influential (Francis 1962). Legislative studies scholars find that White peers do not see their Black peers as influential (Smooth 2002; Barrett 1997). Furthermore, Black women lawmakers do not see themselves as part of the spheres of influence (Brown 2013).

While Dahl's conceptualization of power addressed certain aspects of power, he missed other dimensions. Bachrach and Baratz (1970, 1963) conceptualize power as the act of manipulating the community's values, myths, political institutions, and procedures that can limit the scope of the real decision to focus on issues that are not controversial, reducing the scope of decision-making to relatively safe issues (948). This translated to studying the agenda-setting

stage of the decision-making process as a site to interrogate power because of who chooses what issues get on the agenda and why. This conceptualization of power translated to a whole host of ways to examine power in legislative studies.

Agenda setting serves as a way to understand how political elites use formal structures to shape policy outcomes. Formal structures like rules and leadership positions provide political elites with the capacity to shape outcomes (Preuhs 2005; Gerber, Maestas, and Dometrius 2005; Jeydel and Taylor 2003).[45] This work in legislative studies is one approach to studying formal dimensions of power in the legislature. However, legislative studies have failed to examine the differences in politically salient identities in this process. In this same dimension of agenda-setting, scholars studied how Black women represented their constituents (Bratton et al. 2007; Bratton 2002). Brown and Banks (2014) have shown that Black women tend to sponsor more bills that directly affect both the Black community in general and women compared to other race-gender groups in 2005, but less so in 2011 in the Maryland state legislature. While agenda-setting as representation is necessary, this work does not examine the nuances of power dynamics for Black women lawmakers. The goal of the representation scholarship is to understand the substantive policy decisions, but not the strategies that were implemented to have the policy become law. Other forms of power that are given considerable attention is the role of majority political parties in the state legislature.

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[4] Power has also been framed as effectiveness, for example, scholars point to the importance of the balance between bill sponsorship and speaking on the floor (Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003)

[5] Many of the studies that examine different aspect that impact agenda setting as power in legislative institutions like the role of parties, rules to declining reporting bills, and the type of legislature (for example career opportunity or professionalize legislature) do not center the Black women lawmaker (Jenkins and Monroe 2015; Anzia and Jackman 2014; Clucas 2007, 2001; Cox and McCubbins 2005).

Political Party and Power in Legislative Studies

The study of majority party control in one way to study power in legislative studies. Much of the theorizing around party influence on roll call voting was developed focusing on Congress (Aldrich 2006; Cox et al 2011, 809). Krehbiel (1993) argues that party influence on roll call votes is insignificant because the legislators are concerned with reelection, so the voting of legislators is influenced by the public. The conditional party theory developed by Alrich and Rhode (1997) argue that party influence on voting for bills does matter but on the conditions the majority party is homogenous on their views on the issue which means 1) more power and resources are given to leadership, 2) the majority party will allocate more power and resources, and 3) policies that are chosen will be the center of the majority party and center of the full House (547-548). Cox and McCubbins (2005) develop the cartel model in which they argue that political parties are the primary way to advance the collective interest when the majority party is in control, they can shape it by negative agenda control (blocking legislation from coming to a vote) or positive agenda control (majority passing bills that favor the majority party when more heterogenous).

These theories that were developed in the context of Congress were also applied to studying the power of majority political parties in state legislatures. Cox, Kousser, and McCubbins (2011) show how majority party control the agenda to screen out bills that would split the membership of the majority party. Battista and Richman (2011) demonstrate the influence of political parties vary depending on the state legislature but find that in lower houses majority political parties influence roll call votes when it comes how diverse the state is, chambers with careerism, and close votes on issues. Jenkins and Monre (2015) demonstrate across 85 state legislatures in the United States that majority parties are success rate is 90.4% compared to minority parties at 66.7% (169). Barry (2018) finds that in Georgia, Michigan, and

North Carolina that party control of the legislature is statistically significant when it comes to influencing bills becoming law. In the next section I focus on scholars in other disciplines that centered their theories of power on subjugated communities.

What Do We Mean by Power Part II? Identity Centric Theories and Implications in Legislative Studies.

The two theoretical frameworks of Black power and feminist power similarly consider who is being affected by power and how marginalized groups can generate power. Ture and Hamilton's *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* was initially published alongside the American debate on power. It analyzes how African Americans have been dominated and demonstrates how the African American community can have power.[6] Ture and Hamilton (1992 [1967]) conceptualize Black power as 1) racial unity, 2) the control of the image and material lives of Black people by Black people, and 3) African American politicians working for the African American community. Black power developed specific logics about power that parallel (and differs) from feminist concepts of power.

In context to gender relations and power, much of the initial theorizing on power focused on the systemic structures that exist and how men are socialized to dominate women. One vein of theorizing focused on women's power is in empowerment, which is how women use their energy and resources to build up individuals and groups to act on specific issues (Miller 1992). While useful to theorize empowerment as power this line of thinking gets pushed forward by other conceptualizations of feminist form of power that moves beyond centering the idea of motherhood and oppression to the active concept of feminist power. Allen (1998, 2009) argues

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[6] Ture and Hamilton not only conceptualize Black power but address the oppression of the African American community. The previous scholars only theorized around the ways that power is produced, and for most of them is how their theories deal with dominating others.

that a feminist definition of power unpacks domination, uses empowerment, develops collective

solidarity among women, and shows how women are resisting. This multifaceted

conceptualization of power has many moving parts, similar to Black power.

These identity-centric theories of power parallel in a couple of ways. First, they both deal

with the ways that power has worked against both groups. For Black power, it is racism, and

feminist power, it is sexism. The second parallel is that both are thinking about power as

collectives for Black power through unity under a racial banner to control the Black community

by the Black community and for feminist power is uniting under a collective as a sisterhood to

resist domination. This indicates that for identity-centric theories of power, collective action

matters for generating power. This is a stark difference from the classical theories of power

because it is not just about domination but how to resist domination and strategize to gain control

over their community. Where-as classic theories of power (e.g., Dahl) operate in a unidirectional

form of power, *identity-centric theories of power*, are at the very minimum, bi-directional if not

multi-directional. This means that power is not just flowing in one direction, but that the

contention means there are forms of power pushing back.

These identity-centric theories on power translate to understanding power in legislative

studies. Marginalization can exist in the systemic behavior of legislators. Kathlene (1999) shows

how men's aggressive legislative styles of talking over women impact committee hearings.

Gender politics scholars have developed the critical mass theory to explain how a specific

threshold percentage of women officeholders can influence legislatures to produce more women-

friendly bills (Swers 2002). For Black politics scholars, New Orleans Black lawmakers'

collective action was crucial to ensuring that constituents that were displaced post-Katrina were

still able to participate in elections by making sure they received absentee ballot (Holston 2012).

Collective forms of power in the state legislature exist, and scholars have examined this without calling it power. Identity-centric theories of power then translate to studies of legislative behavior. While these theories (and succeeding empirical work) show how identity-centric theories of power can be conceptualized and studied, there are still limitations.

Black women Lawmakers Power Strategies: Intersectional Resistance

As shown earlier, the current literature in legislative studies has not reexamined longstanding concepts of power. This limitation extends too in the identity-centric theories of power. Black power scholars have not considered the ways racial unity can imply that men are the focus of race (Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith 2015 [1982]; James, Foster, and Guy-Sheftall 2009). For feminist power, the concept of sisterhood breaks down when centering the voices of Black women political actors and their critiques of White women sisterhood because this means primarily supporting White women's issues and not Black women's issues (Reagon 1983; hooks 1984; Taylor 2017). To not recognize this tension in identity-centric theories of power means that a narrow understanding of power is ineffective at understanding Black women lawmakers' political power. Black feminist scholars and students of intersectionality have pointed to Black women's unique social location (Crenshaw 1989, 1991). However, even though Black women can face unique forms of marginalization, this does not mean that Black women have been static in their response. Quite the opposite, historically, Black women have resisted their conditions, whether that be grassroots organizing or being part of the formal political system (Hunter 1993; Gallagher 2007). Theoretically and practically, much of Black women's cultural, political production can be examined as a site of resistance (Collins 1991).

I contend that to understand certain forms of Black women lawmakers' power strategies there is a need to center on their lived experiences. Drawing from Black feminisms and literature

on intersectionality, I respond to the power literature in legislative studies by developing

intersectional resistance theory. *I define intersectional resistance as how legislators with interjectionally marginalized identities push back on oppressive behaviors, rules, institutions, and moments that impact them or their communities to shape the outcomes in the legislative process to advance their agendas*. This orientation towards legislative behavior means that Black women lawmakers navigate the statehouse in unique ways to advance their agenda. In sum, a different framework is required to analyze how marginalized members of state legislators experience and navigate legislative power dynamics. With a focus on Black women, I can draw from intersectionality theory to better examine how lawmakers from this social group resist both the formal and informal legislative powers intended to marginalize them in the statehouse. In the next section, I explain the interpretivist approach, why I decided for this approach, and how I implemented different qualitative methods to generate data.

Methodological Approach

Philosophical Underpinnings: Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

I decided to take an interpretivist approach to interrogate the concept of power in legislative studies due to the philosophical underpinnings of interpretivism: phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology and hermeneutics are centered on the concept of understanding (*verstehen*) of the participants that are the focus of the study, and that the researcher's perspective shapes the knowledge process (Yanow 2014, 9). This also means that individuals that are the focus of the study filter the world through their own understanding which is historically and socially contextualized. *Verstehen* then is concern with the meaning that occurs through subjectivity and intersubjectivity of human actions. From this perspective, priori knowledge not only exists for the researcher, but also the individuals. The implication for this

approach is that the researcher cannot be a neutral observer. Science is not about controlling variables, rather the approach is about examining the complex array of interactions between individuals, institutions, and system that generate meaning and shape the material world of the interviewees.

It is important to note that there are some differences between phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology posits that meaning making takes place in the "lifeworld" of the individuals which focuses on the everyday mundane interaction with others (Yanow 2014, 12; Schwarts-Shea and Yanow 2012, 42). The goal then for the researcher is to take the known common-sense rules making them uncommon. In contrast, hermeneutics focuses on how the values and beliefs are constructed through artifacts like visual images, physical objects, acts as written text, and spoken word (Yanow 2014, 15; Schwarts-Shea and Yanow 2012, 42). In this regard, much of the analysis in the hermeneutic traditions goes through an iterative process between the text and context to understanding the meaning of the artifact (Yanow 2014, 16). There are some philosophical differences between phenomenology and hermeneutics, however in terms of using methodology that are informed by these philosophies the differences are subtle.

Interpretivism

The philosophical underpinnings of interpretivism give room from the complex, messy, and, often times, serendipitous nature of studying the social world. The science of interpretivism is not about objective researchers in sterile environments, controlling varying aspects of the study, but rather, about the systematic exploration of power through centering the experiences and reflexivity. Interpretivism does not assume that there are "real" social entities, rather that shared meanings and power relations structure the social world and the study of the social world (Schaffer 2016, 2). This approach to science analyzes the everyday intersubjectivity between

individuals which make up unspoken and known rules (Yanow 2014, 12). The scientific approach of interpretivism provides a standard of not attempting to test concepts the goal is to understand the everyday practices of those being studied in a specific context (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 23).

One major task is to not replicate the normative claims of power as domination while at the same time being open to when/if domination emerges. Interpretivism gives room to account for certain dimensions of power in how they have been conceptualized while at the same time not overlooking the voices of those who are interviewed. To do this I implement the interpretivist tenets of mapping, exposure and intertextuality. Mapping means to get the "lay of the land" of the research site in order to gain exposure and intertextuality (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 84). Exposure means that the researcher is exposed to the wide variety of meaning made by relevant participants whether face-to-face or written (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 85). Intertextuality is the way that different data sources can cite each other linking together in a way where the researcher can interpret the meaning (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 86). In the next section, I explain how I used political ethnography as participant observation and semi-structured interviews to generate data.

Case Study: Georgia General Assembly

From an institution's perspective, Georgia General Assembly is a prime location to study political elites' behaviors as they relate to understanding power. The Georgia General Assembly is a bicameral legislature with a house and senate serving two-year terms. Political elites receive an average of $17,000 for being a representative. Lawmakers in the Georgia General Assembly are in legislative session between January and ends in April. However, the prefiling period takes place from November to January. Prefiling is the process of making the legislation known to the

public and starting the process of sending the bill to specific committees (O.C.G.A. § 28-1-17).

Georgia General Assembly is considered a citizen legislature which means lawmakers are in

office for 40 legislative days, little to no staff, and little to no ambition to seek higher office

(Squire 1992; Smooth 2002; Howard, Fleischmann, and Engstrom 2017).

Scholars that have studied Black women lawmakers' legislative influence have shown

that professionalized legislatures provide the best context for Black women lawmakers to

develop influence (Smooth 2002). Professionalized legislatures create an environment where the

knowledge of the legislators becomes crucial for a lawmakers' influence which means that Black

women lawmakers can be influential because of their specialization in specific policy areas like

health, education, and economic development (Smooth 2002). The puzzle from an institutional

standpoint is how do Black women lawmakers generate power in a semi-professionalized

legislature?

As of 2019, 315 Black women serve in state legislature in the United States which

include 243 in state houses and 74 in state senates (Dittmar 2019). The Georgia General

Assembly was chosen because it is one of the legislatures with the highest percentages of Black

lawmakers and, in 2019, had the highest percentages of Black women lawmakers (15.3%)

(Dittmar 2019). There are four reasons why the demographic make-up that make Georgia

General Assembly a prime location. First, many identity-centric theorists of power and gender

politics argued that a collective of women and minoritized lawmakers is vital in influencing the

institution. Second, the Georgia legislature has consistently had Black women lawmakers at high

percentages over time, which means I can count on Black women lawmakers in office in the

Georgia legislature. The third reason is that due to the higher-than-average percentage of Black

women lawmakers in the Georgia General Assembly I can take into account the variety of

experiences from the varying positionalities since Black women lawmakers are not a monolith (Brown 2014). The last reason is that from the number of Republican officials has decreased from the previous legislative session to the 2019-2020 legislative session. This is crucial for the project because many theories of power centered on unrepresentative individuals frame the importance of working as a collective to shape outcomes that reflect their interests.

Due to COVID-19 the Georgia General Assembly shut down before crossover day. However, 5 semi-structured interviews were conducted through a snowball sample approach, exposure at the field site, and contacting through campaign websites. All the respondents were Black women lawmakers' part of the Georgia House of Representatives, the lower state house. Four out of the five respondents were in their first legislative term in office, and one had been elected in 2015. Two respondents had bachelors, two respondents had masters, and one had a doctorate. The professions of the lawmakers included engineering consultant, information technology, accountant, social worker, and lecturer at a local university. All the Black women lawmakers interviewed were part of the Democratic Party, currently there are now Black legislators in the Republican Party in the Georgia legislature. In total the interviewees are members of fourteen committees.[7] All the lawmakers had sponsored or co-sponsored bills in the 2019-2020 legislative session that range from 9 bills to 27 bills. I gave respondents in this dissertation pseudonyms to keep anonymity to protect the respondents over from backlash for speaking out.

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[7] These committees include committees including Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight, Higher Education, Interstate Cooperation, Defense and Veteran Affairs, Special Rules, State Planning and Community Affairs, Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight, Health and Human Services, Juvenile Justice, Code Revision, Human Relations & Aging, Interstate Cooperation, Science & Technology, Industry and Labor, and Small Business Development

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to center the voices of the participants to examine their experiences in relation to how they view power in the Georgia General Assembly. Semi-structured interview is an approach that allows the researcher to have develop questions while at the same time allowing the conversation to flow by asking follow-up questions which maximizes data collection (Legard, Keegan, & Ward 2003, 141-142). The particular focus is how Black women lawmakers process events and moments by focusing in on their experiences within the responses (Maxwell 2013, 30-31).

Once the Institutional Review Broad approved my study, I emailed all the Black women lawmakers in the Georgia General Assembly. I used the names on the Legislative Black Caucus website as a reference. I only received two responses: one accepting and one denying the request for an interview. At the end of the first meeting, I asked the first respondent if she would be able to put me in contact with other Black women lawmakers. She took her phone out to contact three other members. This approach put me in contact with two other members who agreed to be interviewed. Another strategy that also assisted in securing interviews were my observations because I was physically present at committee meetings, events, and was spending time at the state capital. Being physically present in the state house was the most effective approach to scheduling interviews. I was able to schedule two interviews when lawmakers were transitioning between committee meetings. Three out of the five lawmakers mentioned seeing me at the committee meetings. In fact, one Black women lawmaker stopped me as I was walking into the building because I smiled to ask, "I've seen you around, what organization are you part of?"

All the interviews were between 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. Four out of the five lawmakers were interviewed in their offices. While lawmakers have their own offices, there were anywhere between 4-8 offices in an office space. All the lawmakers shared between 2-3

secretaries. This means that the institution provides a secretary that assists in going through the lawmakers email and scheduling their meetings. Since the Georgia General Assembly is in session during 40 legislative days, each of the lawmakers were extremely busy. Many of the interviews took place in the afternoon and evening.

Due to COVID-19, the legislative session was shut down on March 13, 2020. This made securing interviews much more difficult. I adapted to the situation by contacting the lawmakers through emails that I found through their campaign websites and professional social media accounts. This put me in contact with four more Black women lawmakers. However, out of these four contacts I was only able to interview one lawmaker. Many of the lawmakers stopped responding to emails while one lawmaker communicated that COVID-19 negatively impacted their personal and professional lives.

Political Ethnography as Participant-Observations

Another qualitative method that I implemented was political ethnography as participant observations. An interpretivist ethnography, as Geertz (1973) states, requires thick description, which means that an ethnographer is immersed in a research site, using all of the senses (sight, sound, touch, feel, and taste) to take notes of the everyday moments. While this form of ethnography was developed from the field of cultural anthropology there are debates about the differences between anthropology and ethnography (Inhold 2017). Political ethnography signifies the focus on the micro dynamics of power (Schatz 2009). What political ethnography does is expand how and what can be considered a study of power, such as a coffeeshop or slaughterhouse. Political ethnography as participant observations allows the researcher to jot notes on their surroundings within the field site to examine the everyday micro-political moments. The goal of political ethnography is to become immerse within the research site. This

approach is one tool in generating data to study in the everyday operations within the Georgia General Assembly.

The physical location of the Georgia legislative branch is made up of two separate building one for the House of Representatives which is called Coverdell Legislative Office Building (CLOB) and the other for the State Senate the building is called the State Capitol. Floor sessions for both the House and the Senate meetings occur in the State Capitol. While the House of Representatives meetings and offices are located the Coverdell Legislative Office Building. CLOB is made up of 7 floors including the ground level where there is a small convivence store along with offices and storage space. In CLOB, the first floor is the security entrance where individuals have to show some form of identification like a driver's license. Floors two through six are made up of offices and meeting spaces. In terms of the rooms where the committee meetings are held there are two sections, one where the lawmakers sit, and the other where the public sits. Each meeting space has a podium where lawmakers and the public can speak on their opinions on the bill.

I was present for the legislative days from February 18th, 2020 through March 13th, 2020. I arrived each day between 10:30 am to 11 am and left between 4 pm to 6 pm. Accountments for committee meeting and floor sessions were shared on the Georgia General Assembly website, on TVs in elevator exit in CLOB, and printed on pieces of paper in the State Capitol in front of the office's spaces. At any meeting there were generally between 15 to 40 people depending on the size of the space. Depending on the day the buildings be full of life like a festival in the middle of a city or the deafening silence of a graveyard.

When I observed committee meetings, I took a specific set of notes. Using my notes application on my iPhone, I noted the time I entered and counted how many individuals there

were in the room. I repeated counting people and the time throughout the committee meeting. I noted when the time started and what committee I was observing. I noted who was talking by their name and what I perceived to be their race-gender identities. I noted the bills being presented, who presented them, who supported the bill, and made notes on what was generally discussed. I also noted the time the meeting ended.

During floor sessions, I arrived either before the floor session started or 20-30 minutes into the session. The public could access the gallery, but there was a fixed number allowed. Some days had more individuals than others because the legislature was recognizing the work of an organization or local high school that won their district competitions. The public could sit in the gallery if they were quiet, not wearing hats, and did not leaning on the railing of the balcony. There were ushers that enforced the rules. The floor sessions started with the preacher of the day which meant a religious figure from a Christian church would come to lead a prayer and start the floor session. Following the prayer, the floor session starts with the Clerk of the House reading the agenda of resolutions and bills that will be discussed that day. Once the agenda was read resolutions were read outload by the Clerk which then signaled to the lawmakers that they could come up to the podium. Resolutions focused on honoring certain individuals, recognizing historical figures or organization, or statements by the lawmakers. Afterwards, the floor session would transition to bills that were approved by the committees in which a lawmaker would present the bill on the podium at the center of the floor in order to answer questions. Lawmakers push a button which notified the Speaker that a lawmaker wanted to ask a question then the Speaker asked if the lawmaker wanted to take questions on the bill. The lawmaker presenting the bill could either accept or deny questions. After the last question is asked, or the lawmaker presenting the bill stops answering questions, the lawmakers present would vote on the bill. The

Speaker opens the voting machine which is shown on a giant screen where lawmakers have a limited time to vote for or against the bill.

During this time, I noted who was speaking, what I perceived to be their race-gender identities, the exchange, what was said, and who was in the audience. The floor sessions are generally chaotic in that members are on their phones, speaking, or walking back and forth from the back room. Sometimes the Speaker would have to silence the members of the house in order to quell the noise. The only individuals allowed on the floor during floor sessions are the members, media, and children who are in the Pages program.[8]

Critical Reflexivity

Following the interpretivist principals, the process of data collection and analysis was influenced by my positionality. There were moments that I felt that my identity garnered more access to participants and times when it did not. I met different individuals, including a director of a program, who thought my project would garner interest from the Black women lawmakers whom I was trying to interview. However, I was met with obstacles when it came to trying to set up interviews. One is that, due to the structuring of resources by the statehouse, lawmakers primarily rely on one of the shared secretaries. When I was trying to schedule an interview, one of the secretaries told me that they did not hear from the lawmakers or see my email. While this moment was structured, I am sure that being non-Black Latino, an unknown individual, and not a constituent, shaped my interaction. The secretaries in this context are gatekeepers because they have direct access to the lawmakers and do their scheduling but kept me from scheduling interviews with the lawmakers. Furthermore, my positionality shaped my interactions with

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[8] The Pages program is where children and teens give info to the legislatures from a desk out front of the room where the floor meeting takes place.

lawmakers. Even though I do not believe that the lawmakers were lying to me, I am sure that the responses from the interviews could have been different if my identity was different. If this study were to be replicated, another scholar from a different positionality might have different findings.

Outline of Chapters

The second chapter of this project focuses on laying out the theoretical framework of *intersectional resistance*. I flesh out the debate on power with particular attention to power theories in legislative studies and politically salient identities. I draw from Black feminist, intersectionality, power, and resistance literature to develop the theoretical framework and how it applies to Black women lawmakers. The third chapter of this project, *Bringing the Folding Chair: Institutions, Behavior, and Intersectional Resistance,* uses an institutional lens to examine how Black women lawmakers in the minority party of the Georgia Hose of Representatives experience the statehouse. Specifically, I focus on how the different dimensions of powers of the institution and the behaviors of white male Republican's shape how Black women lawmakers in the minority party navigate committee meetings and floor sessions in the legislature. The fourth chapter, *Heavy is the Crown: Policymaking and Intersectional Resistance* focuses on how informal norms and the institutional structure of the policy process emerge to steal the labor and marginalized Black women lawmakers' in the minority party efforts in policymaking. In this chapter, I demonstrate how power is (in)formal obstructs Black women lawmaker capabilities and the role that resistance plays in response to the policymaking process's marginalization. In the fifth chapter, *Interpretations of Power: Perception of Power from the Worldview of the Lawmaker,* I center the voices of Black women lawmakers in the minority party of the Georgia House of Representatives by asking them to define what power looks like in the Georgia

legislature. Particular attention centers the experiences of the lawmakers concerning the effect of their race-gender identities and minority party status. The sixth chapter summarizes the findings of this project and draws out the implications for future work in American politics, the understanding of power in legislative studies, and the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY OF INTERSECTIONAL RESISTANCE

Introduction

I develop the theory of *intersectional resistance* to address how the scholarship on power has not accounted for the social location of Black women lawmakers and its influence on their legislative behavior. *Intersectional resistance* refers to how legislators with doubly marginalized identities push back on behaviors, societal norms, and legislative rules that attempt to marginalize them or their districts to advance their agenda. Traditionally, concepts of power generalize the types of behavior, assuming that everyone is behaving in the same way. Not accounting for the lived experiences of Black women lawmakers erases how their social location shapes how they navigate race-sexism in legislatures. Dominant theories emerge from observations that center cis-White males that fail to account for the differences in social location (Hawkesworth 2015). The implications of this led scholars to incorrectly assume that social science theories should apply equally to anyone involved in the political process.

My particular focus is on how conceptions of power have theorized from the experiences of cis-gender White men, does not adequately account for how those from marginalized position to access and exert power. As such, legislators who wielded power and those who held less power within governing bodies were determined to be a byproduct of legislative behavior. I posit that scholars have incorrectly assumed that behaviors associated with power are systematically about domination (Allen 1999; Haugaard 2010). Furthermore, advancements in the interdisciplinary literature of political power literature have developed alternative ways of understanding power (Haugaard and Malesevic 2008; Clegg and Haugaard 2009, 2012; Hearn2012; Caballero *forthcoming*). I contend that to assume that while all race-ethno-gender

legislators can (or may) behave in similar manners, existing theories of power assert a problematic view that legislative dynamics are the same for all identity groups.

I use the existing assumptions about behaviors and structures[9] related to power in legislative studies to expand on them by focusing on the social locations of Black women lawmakers. This means that existing forms of legislative power such as holding leadership positions or partisan control of the legislature are present. The shift in focus then becomes how legislators with doubly marginalized identities navigate power dynamics. Specifically, how do Black women lawmakers navigate power dynamics in the legislature? How do Black women lawmakers generate power to shape the outcomes in their legislature? The focus then is on the behaviors of Black women lawmakers within the legislative process. I argue that the behaviors associated with power for Black women lawmakers are marked by resistance defined as the individual(s) creating alternative strategies in opposition to marginalization (Scott 1990; Courpasson and Vallas 2016; Johansson and Vintage 2016). Resistance happens between the individual(s) marginalized by their peers, institutions, and the marginalized individuals' attempts to shape outcomes.

This chapter shows how the American debate on power has conceptualized power and how subsequent work replicated these logics to study power. In this section, I argue that these theoretical frameworks are problematic because they de-contextualize, essentialize, and make normative claims about power. I follow this by looking at how Black power and feminist power theories conceptualize power. I term Black power and feminist power as *identity-centric theories of power* because they explicitly center identity in their theorizations of power. Then, I complicate the conversation of the current *identity-centric theories of power*.

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[9] For this study, structures, informal norms, and informal institutions are used interchangeably

The following section sets the foundation for *intersectional resistance* by explaining and defining power, resistance, and intersectionality by focusing on Black women's politics. This subsection shows how power is being studied for this project, stripping away the normative claims from previous scholarly debates. In the intersectionality subsection, I not only explain what I mean by intersectionality, but I also show how Black women lawmakers are marginalized in legislative institutions (Hawkesworth 2003; Smooth 2002, 2008). In the resistance subsection, I center "everyday resistance" as an analytical concept and how it applies to Black women's politics. This subsection builds on the power and intersectionality subsections because domination creates marginalization as a condition of existence that allows resistance to become a salient phenomenon. Explicitly showing how legislative institutions can be sites of marginalization is essential because resistance cannot exist without domination (Courpasson and Vallas 2016). This idea also shows how legislative institutions consist of people who bring in their prejudices and stereotypes with their interaction with lawmakers. Then it becomes imperative that we understand the dimension of social interaction as a part of the institution. However, the institutions themselves are not neutral in design but are a byproduct of a white supremacist, patriarchal, homophobic, and capitalist society. Along with social interaction, the institutions themselves, via rules and norms, shape Black women lawmakers' conditions to navigate in the legislature.

American Debate on Power: Implications of Political Elite Behavior and Studying Legislatures

Early debates on power shaped the discipline's understanding of power and de-contextualized and created particular proxies for power that misconfigure the political behaviors of legislators from marginalized backgrounds. The American debate on power took place

between the 1950s and 1970s which influenced political science, especially American politics, decades after (Haugaard 2002; Hearn 2012).

The American debate on power started with C. Wright Mill's *The Power Elite*. In this classic sociology text, Mills shows how power is centralized nationally in the United States.[10] Mills (1956) develops the ruling elite model, posited that the system of power in the United States was in the hand of a few called the power elite. The implication is that these few individuals who were in power moved between three specific institutions the military, government, and business in the United States (Mills 1956). The implications here are that power is for a select few individuals from an upper-elite class that was a formal part of these institutions. These individuals had a large role in the governance of the country. In turn, Mills defines power as the wealthy class's status of individuals who controlled national institutions that decided how society in the United States operated.

In contrast, Dahl (1958) critiques the power elite model as insufficient because political elites are not a homogeneous group. He argues that they have different interests and different scopes of influence. Due to these differences, Dahl claims that researchers need to pay close attention to regular key decisions advocated by political elites.[11] Dahl contends that the United States is a pluralist society where many competing interests can be involved in politics, which moves away from Mills' claims that the United States' control was in the hands of a few elites (1961). Dahl (2002 [1968]) further narrows the definition of power, using Weber's definition, as the relationship between two entities where A makes B do what B would not otherwise do.

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[10] For this paper's purposes, I focus on the scholars that paid attention to the role that political elites have within legislative institutions. Consequently, I focus less on Lukes (2005 [1973], Parsons (1963), and others.
[11] In Dahl's *The Concept of Power*, Dahl makes a reference on page 208, "Because the study does not provide an answer to the question, we do not know how to interpret the significance of the "pyramidal" power structure that assertedly exists" then he further critiques "Regional City" which are references to C. Wright Mills work in *The Power Elite.*

Dahl's conceptualization of power required that many variables are in plain sight for the scholars. For others, this argument did not suffice because power often is covert. Bachrach and Baratz (1970, 1963) conceptualize power as manipulating the community's values, myths, political institutions, and procedures that can limit the scope of the actual decision to focus on issues that are not controversially reducing the scope of decision-making to relatively safe issues or non-decisions. This concept translates to concentrate on the agenda-setting stage of the legislative-making process as a site to study power. In practice, Bachrach and Baratz demonstrate that person A uses social and political values and institutional approaches to address issues that are harmless to person A but at the cost of person, B being able to bring attention to their issue.

In empirical studies on power in the legislature, effectiveness and perceived influence fit this frame. Perceived influence focuses on who the representatives see as the most influential. Studies on legislative effectiveness concentrate on the rate at which legislators can make bills into laws (Smooth 2002; Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Wiseman and Holden 2014). Along with key observable differences, the undergirding idea behind this form of power is domination. Controlling other people's behaviors is seen through the frame of being influential and effective at their role. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) advance the concept of non-decision maps onto the studies of elite political behavior in the legislature by analyzing how the rules, norms, and institutional practices are leveraged by individuals (or groups) to benefit them over another. The implication then is that the agenda only addresses safe issues for the individual (or group) in control. In sum, this is an integral part of understanding power dynamics between individuals based on a domination model that seeks to control others' behavior.

These foundational studies are insufficient to understand how legislators from marginalized backgrounds navigate power dynamics or wield power. Power as domination pushes four ideas that are problematic in the studies of power and Black women lawmakers' behavior. The first idea is what I call the outcome model. Similar to the criticisms that Bachrach and Baratz (1970s) had to Dahl's work (1957), the main concern has been with observable key decisions. This idea translates to the outcome model focusing on statistics and positivist methodological framing as a mode of analysis. This model centers on understanding the outcome of the legislation, like roll call votes. This has resulted in a myriad of studies that focus on leadership positions (Preuhs 2005), effectiveness (Volden and Wiseman 2014), party control (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Jenkins and Monroe 2015), rules (Anzia and Jackman 2014), committees (Fenno 2003), critical mass (Bratton 2005) and context of districts (Clucas 2001, 2007) as ways to study the power in legislatures.[12] The outcome model has been at the center of the studies of Black women lawmakers' political behavior (Orey et al. 2006; Bratton et al. 2006; Brown and Banks 2014). Thus, the outcome model makes invisible other forms of legislative activity that can shape the legislative institution's outcome. It is important to note that the legislative process is often not just what happens in front of the scenes but also in the background (Kingdon 2012). For example, scholars who focus on leadership positions, such as chairing a committee, may often lose sight that they sometimes take credit for another legislator's work (Hawksworth 2003). By failing to take a comprehensive approach to assess legislative power scholars do not acccount for the labor before the roll call vote. Scholars have indicated that much of the work for Black lawmakers occurs during the amendment phase or outside of the

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[12] Legislative effectiveness is the rate at which lawmakers can turn their bills into laws while accounting for variables like party control, leadership position, committee, ideology, district makeup, and coalition partners (Volden and Wiseman 2010). Critical mass is the idea that a certain threshold (15%) of the total makeup of the legislature is women then this, theoretically, leads to more women-friendly bills (Bratton 2005)

formal policy (Whitby 1997; Smooth 2002). This means we lose valuable data and understanding when there is only a focus on the final vote. Solely looking at the outcome or roll call votes obscures the work that minority legislators do behind the scenes (Tate 1994).

The second idea is that normative claim that power is solely about domination. Key architects of power in political science assumed that domination is the primary function of power, leading people to believe we know power when we see it because it is domination only (Dahl 1957; Bachrach and Baratz 1970; Hagaaurd 2018). This model is the most evident in "one actor makes another do something that they would not otherwise" (Haugaard 2018, 95). Haugaard (2010) explains that one of the central problems with the theoretical development of power is that many of the initial architects, like Dahl, slipped between normative claims and empirical, theoretical analysis. If we empirically examine the concept of power, then applying normative political theories assumes that power *ought* to be about domination instead of examining what *is*.

Moving away from normative political theory towards empirical theory, Haugaard writes, "power is a family resemblance concept, which entails that there is no single 'best; definition of power…these family members can legitimately change their meaning depending upon which *language game*s are being played" (Haugaard 2010, 420). For social scientists, family resemblance means that scholars will work within a paradigm to create multiple uses. In contrast, language games mean that social scientists create specific local usages with different goals and traditions (Haugaard 2010, 424). There are overlapping characteristics for the ways that scholars have written about power, but there needs to be an explicit understanding of the scholars. Scholars tend to switch from one language game to another by conflating different theories of power or claiming empirical theories even though they make normative claims.

Haugaard (2010) gives us three criteria for examining an empirical, theoretical framework than a normative political theory. The first proposition is that power is not inherently negative (Haugaard 2010, 432). The implications of power as domination means that power is something to escape from, but legitimate forms of power exist. *Power to* is a concept that denotes the actor's capacity for action (Gholer 2009). *Power over* is the extent to which A making B do what B would otherwise do, but this is where B consents to power over because B sees in the long term that they still have the opportunity to gain power (Gholer 2009; Haugaard 2010, 2012). The second proposition moves away from normative claims by ensuring the researcher focuses on the social subject instead of projecting onto the social subject the researcher's standard (Haugaard 2010, 433). The third proposition is that framing power as a family resemblance concept means that power can exist in multiple forms (Haugaard 2010, 434). For example, power over is domination when only thinking about it in terms of Dahl's conception, but it gains new meaning when introducing Allen's understanding of power as emancipation (Haugaard 2010, 433-435). Applying these propositions moves us away from the normative claims, which assumed that power is only about controlling other people's behaviors.

The third logic is that power as domination expects political elites to control other political elites' behaviors. This logic narrows the scope of understanding the behaviors associated with power. This assumption promotes the idea that all behaviors related to power are systematically about controlling someone else's behavior. This assumption essentializes the behaviors associated with power disregarding the role of identity in political elites' behaviors. Scholars who have centered identity in the studies of political behavior noted that identity plays a significant factor in considering the issues they address (Swers 2002; Tate 2003; Minta 2011;

Brown 2014; Brown and Gershon 2016). Along with essentializing, power as domination does not contextualize the studied group's social location.

The fourth logic that power as domination advances is the de-contextualizing of the social location of Black women lawmakers. Studies of power in legislative studies have primarily focused on the scope of how to control behavior. Still, there is little to no account for the social location of Black women lawmakers. The power as domination model is a one-directional analysis, which means the focus of the analysis is strictly on one individual (or group) controlling another individual (or group). Centering on the social location means focusing on the experiences of Black women lawmakers as they navigate the legislative institutions. Unique forms of marginalization play a role in understanding the behaviors of political elites. Smooth (2002) and Hawkesworth (2003) show how Black women lawmakers face different consequences at the state and federal levels. For example, Hawkesworth (2003) explains Black women lawmakers often have their ideas stolen from their peers. In turn, Black women lawmakers have to find ways to get their bills to become law and still receive credit for their legislative work. At the same time, Black women lawmakers animate the legislative institutions with presence and labor. For example, Orey et al. (2006) and Brown (2013) show that Black women lawmakers can make their legislation into law and create influence even when they do not feel like they have power. If the focus is on controlling behaviors, scholars cannot imagine how marginalized positions shape the legislature's outcomes. An analysis that does not center the social location of Black women does not recognize the bi-directional analysis of power.

Defining *Power*s

Here, I advance the study of power in legislative studies by contending that the subject of power is not only about domination. In this regard, I follow scholars Haugaard (2010), Hearn

(2010), and Downing (2012) that there are multiple definitions of power. Thus, my understanding of power draws from Clegg (1989), Hayward (2000), and Haugaard (2012, 2018). To properly contextualize the role of identity and power related to navigating power dynamics within the legislature, for Black women lawmakers, there needs to be a delineation between the first and second dimensions of power.

As noted before, the first dimension of power pertains to the individual level or first dimension/episodic/agent form of power (Dahl 1957, Clegg 2002 [1989], Haugaard 2012, 2018). This dimension is usually focused on A, making B do what B would otherwise not do. Here, scholars theorized that this could occur in two ways: legitimate power over or domination (Haugaard 2010). The first dimension of power has the possibility of more actions than legitimate power over or domination. The first dimension is about "a wider capacity for action" (Haugaard 2018). A wider capacity for action means that resistance (creative strategies to oppose marginalizing forces) can be part of a capacity for action, especially since the first dimension is about the relation between two individuals (or groups).

Along with the first dimension (episodic/agent) of power, this project also interrogates the second dimension of power as *structures* (or *dispositional* levels) (Bachrach and Baratz 1960, 1962; Clegg 2002; Haugaard 2010, 2012). As mentioned earlier, when Bachrach and Baratz write about non-decisions, they discuss how structures can include and exclude specific issues stripping away the normative claims of domination (Haugaard 2012). Within the statehouse, this means there are different formal structures. For example, Speaker of the House is a formal structure that comes with specific privileges that, in the Georgia Statehouse, can determine committees for legislators. However, power also operates in informal structures.

The informal structure is what scholars identify as stable patterns of social behaviors. The repeated behavior pattern reinforces the repetition, which is given meaning by historical, geographical, and societal context (Haugaard 2003, 2012; Hearn 2012, 9). These structures can be formal (Speaker of the House) and informal (patriarchy).[13] Both formal and informal structures give the individual capacity for action, but they do not have to act on that capacity (Clegg 2002[1989]; Haugaard 2010). In terms of the latter, legislative institutions represent a microcosm of society, which means the representatives bring their own biases (including sexist, racist, and other marginalizing attitudes). These racist and sexist views are given meaning by the larger historical and societal context (Tatum 2003; Glaude 2016). In the next section, I focus on the *identity-centric theories of power* of Black power and feminist power. I provide an overview of the claims of each theory of power and how they inform this project.

Identity Centric Theories of Power

The previous scholars that theorized power failed to theorize the role of politically salient identities. The two theoretical frameworks of Black power and feminist power consider power asymmetry and how marginalized groups can generate power. Ture and Hamilton's *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (1992[1967]) was initially published around the same time as the American debate on power but not included in the conversation. Yet, *Black Power* is a classic text that theorizes the role of race and power. To understand how Ture and Hamilton's (1992[1967]) pioneering work relates to the subject of power, we must engage with the problems they raised.

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[13] There is a difference between formally and informally. For this project's purposes, formally means the rules that govern the statehouse and the different institutional components that serve specific goals to keep the statehouse function. Informal are sets of recurring behavior that do not have to exist but can, given meaning by a broader historical and societal context.

For the Black community in the United States, one major issue has been how the United States as a settler-colonial project created racial capitalism that effectively subjugated them. Slavery has caused African Americans' historical trajectory to differ from other groups creating a different historical context. Formal institutions of slavery evolved into Black codes, Jim Crow laws, and mass incarceration to marginalized Black people in the United Sates (Alexander 2010). While these social structures evolved, the underlying system stayed the same. Ture and Hamilton (1992[1967]) identified this system as racism, a system made up of different structures (e.g., education, law enforcement, etc.) that values and advantages Whites while doing the opposite for Black people and other minorities. The political structures that shape community life are also implicated in the systemic marginalization of Black people in the United States. Racism is the old values and institutions that govern the United States.

To deal with values and institutions of racism, Ture and Hamilton (1992 [1967]) frame the quest for Black power in the context of modernization, which transforms the old values and institutions into new ones, resulting in the elimination of racism. They contend that this would happen by 1) questioning old values and institutions, 2) finding new and different political structures that solve political and economic problems, and 3) broadening political participation to include more people in decision making (Ture and Hamilton 1992[1967]), 39). Black power is the quest for African Americans to shape the meaning and material livelihood of Black people through self-determination. According to Ture and Hamilton (1992[1962]), African Americans need to close racial ranks, meaning that organizations need to be led by Black people.[14], which is especially important for coalition building since, historically, Black people have been on unequal footing with white people for most cases. Thus, they argue that African Americans have to

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[14] This comes from their observations of other racial-ethnic groups organizing for their community

determine for themselves what they need with a strong base before entering in coalition with white liberals (Ture and Hamilton 1992[1967], 77-78). Coalitions constitute a significant portion of the text because Black organizations have been used and co-opted by white organizations.

Ture and Hamilton (1992[1967]) provided case studies that focused on organizing, failing, and applying the principles of Black power would have advanced the situation for African Americans. For example, with the backdrop of the Voting Rights Act of 1964, there was an increase in voter registers for Black people in Lowndes County, Alabama. The result was a call to action by the Black community and leaders. They write, "These people did not have to argue Black Power; they understood Black Power" (Ture and Hamilton 1992[1967], 115). The mobilization centered on electing Black people from within the community. The Lowndes County Freedom Organization took charge of organizing the Black community, including driving Black people to the polls, calling county offices for a finalized list of voters, and poll watchers. However, a massive white countermobilization undermined the efforts of the Lowndes County Freedom. Ture and Hamilton (1992[1967]) point to this moment as modernization via Black power.

While in this case study, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization did not win, it is essential to contextualize a few things. First, the Black community had to face fear from the terrorizing of White people in the area. During the Civil Rights Movement, many individuals were not only beaten but also killed in the South. This terrorization also took place on election day. Second, the Voting Rights Act gave them legal teeth to report the injustices at the polls. The white people in the county developed a counter mobilization by implementing fear tactics to keep Black people away from the polls and landowning White people who were dropping off the Black people that worked on their land to vote against the members of Lowndes County

Freedom Organization. This means that getting Black people to the polls is about having debates and promoting candidates, and overcoming fear of retaliation by White individuals. Thus, Black power is not just about power, but the process of getting to generating power. Generating power means developing creative strategies to fulfill the vision of putting Black people in charge for the material benefit of the Black community.

Black power is central text to understanding the role of race concerning the subject of power. This theoretical framework posits that racism is a system of domination to marginalized African Americans. However, Black power asserts that African Americans can generate power by closing racial ranks and using self-determination to shape the symbolic and material lives of Black people. This grassroots effort translates to generating power to shape the outcomes in favor of what the Black community demands. This theoretical framework recognizes racism's marginalization (power as domination) and Black power (power as collective action and resistance). I posit that Black power falls within resistance because those that implemented these principles have to fight back against racism.

Understanding some of the tensions that exist within Black power means contextualizing the political ideology of Black nationalism. As a political ideology, Black nationalism calls for varying degrees of separation between the Black and White communities economically, politically, and culturally. Ture and Hamilton 1992[1967]) state explicitly Black people integrating into the White middle class means tokenizing Blacks, implies that Whites are superior to Black people and that Black people would need to give up their identity (53-55). The call for separation is due to the ongoing legacy and evolution of racism in the United States (Alexander 2010). However, there are multiple strains of Black nationalism (Spence, Shaw, and Brown 2005; Price 2009). As it relates to Black women, one tension between Black nationalism

is over ideas of leadership and framing of issues. Conservative strains of Black nationalism

center, partly, on patriarchal gender norms considering men the leader of the Black community

and Black women staying at home raising the children (Dawson 2001). Even throughout *Black

Power*, the authors' writing switch from Black community or Black people to Black men (Ture

and Hamilton 1992[1967]). While there are sexist notions in some iterations of Black

nationalism, Black women have worked to advance gender issues within the Black nationalist

organization (Smooth and Tucker 1999; Taylor 2000). For example, Amy Jacques-Gravy

advanced feminist ideas within a conservative Black nationalist model through her writings for

the Universal Negro Improvement Association's newspaper (Taylor 2000). Even in the Black

Power movement, Black women directly shaped the goals and actions.

The second tension lies within the Black nationalist perspectives that posit race is a

fundamental category of analysis (Dawson 2001). As a theoretical framework, the focus

essentializes race, which becomes problematic because, many times, the implications of race

mean a focus on Black men (Crenshaw 1989). The authors of Black Powe write race as an

essentialized category through the text (Ture and Hamilton 1992[1967]). While this theoretical

framework provides a bi-directional understanding of power (domination and Black people

shaping outcomes), there is a need to expand the analytical categories to race-gender, which

requires using feminist text to interrogate how scholars understand power relates to gender and

interrogating Black power from a feminist perspective.

Feminist Power

The theorization of power from the feminist perspective parallels and differs from Black

power. For example, similar to the racist systems that have oppressed Black people, sexism has

oppressed women. Patriarchy, like White supremacy, is embedded in a society where men have

advantages over women (Hearn 2012). These conditions created debates within feminist theory about how to understand power and gender. The task for feminist scholars was to understand womens' relationships to power.

In the canonical work of Amy Allen's (1999), *Feminist Power: Domination, Resistance, and Solidarity*, she expands the concept of power related to gender. Allen (1999) contends that the previous models' problem is the limited scope and incomplete view of power. Feminists had three general models that centered on gender and power. One model viewed power as a resource, which framed power as a possession where women's goal was to have the same power as men (Allen 1999, 10). One major problem here is that framing conflates resources and power, which means that marginalized groups could not gain such access unless those in power let them. The second model was power as domination where men oppress women. Radical feminists like Catherine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, and Carole Pateman generally saw power as men's explicit subjugation of women (Allen 1999, 14). This model is limiting when examining cross-cutting identities. For example, White upper-middle-class women still hold social power over poor men of color. The last model is power as empowerment or how women use their energy and resources to mobilize individuals and groups to act which came from the metaphor of how women give life and raise children. Power as empowerment becomes problematic on two fronts(Miller 1992; Allen 1999, 18). . The first, for power scholars, the perspective of empowerment missed the point that the mother-child relationship is one of power because the parent has an ultimate say in what happens to the child. The second problem is that this model assumes that women can or want to have children. Each of these models presented an incomplete understanding of power from the feminist perspective.

Allen (1999) expands the concept of power by incorporating resistance and solidarity along with domination. Concerning the concept of domination and empowerment, she writes, "I contend that it makes no sense to think of these two conceptions of power as opposed to one another" (128). She argues that power is not just about domination; rather, power is a multifaceted concept that depends on the context to understand power. She argues that for scholars interested in the feminist subject of power, there are three major components.

The first component is power-over which is "the ability of actors to constrain the choices available to another actor or set of actors in a nontrivial way" (Allen 1999, 123). This definition is important for three major reasons. The first is that this definition covers non-decisions and how sometimes actions can be intentional or unintentional (Allen 1999, 124). The second reason is that this covers the ways overt and covert actions can constrain behavior (ibid). The third reason is that definition considers power between particular relationships and the power that actors wield because of cultural, social, institutional, and structural relationships (ibid). This definition also gives spaces for the ways that oppression can occur within a group dynamic.

The last two components inform how resistance and solidarity are part of a feminist definition of power. The second is power-to define as "the ability of an individual actor to attain an end or series of ends" (Allen 1999, 126). The last component is power-with "the ability to act together for the attainment of an agreed-upon end or series of ends" (Allen 1999, 127). Solidarity is an important feminist interest because marginalized groups have come together to pool resources, shape discourse, and shape outcomes, even though they were in a subordinate position. Resistance is an important feature of a feminist conceptualization of power because of the challenge and/or subverting domination. In this case, women are challenging and subverting sexist behaviors and patriarchal structures.

While Allen's conceptualization of power helps understand how feminist scholars have addressed power in different and multifaceted forms, there are still limitations. Even though she acknowledges there can be within-group marginalization, this tension also exists with solidarity (Allen 1999, 122). Allen's work becomes static because it does not emphasize the importance of contextualizing cross-cutting identities and marginalization. The feminist principle of sisterhood (solidarity) argues that women need to mobilize as a collective to generate power because of oppression that women face from a patriarchal society (Allen 1999). However, the sisterhood principle has long been contentious because of the long historical racism from White women to Black women (Reagon 1983; Taylor 2017). Black feminists have argued that sisterhood in the White liberal sense is grounded on the idea of being oppressed, which creates weak ties of the coalitions, instead of working through the messiness of coalition-building (hooks 1984). Solidarity needs to be contextualized within the working relationship of the particular groups.

Power(s), Resistance, Institutions, and Intersectionality: Building Intersectional Resistance
Power(s)

I focus on the behavioral and institutional dimensions of power related to how Black women lawmakers navigate the state legislature. Part of the framework is focused on the behaviors of Black women lawmakers as they relate to the formal and informal structures of the statehouse. The statehouse is an institution of different formal structures designed to perform specific policy process functions. For example, lawmakers can introduce bills to a committee. If the committee approves the bill, then the bill is sent to the Speaker, who presents it in a floor session. If the house members approve and the senate version is approved, it goes to the governor to sign or veto the bill. I contend that informal structures also layer this formal structure.

Informal structures are sets of behaviors informed by larger ideologies. [15] They are informal because they do not exist formally within the rules of the statehouse. Some of these larger ideologies are patriarchy and white supremacy. These ideologies then become informal structures because of the repeated behaviors that legislators enact within the statehouse based on the historical context of the identities. For example, a White legislator calling a Black legislator an epithet is a racist act because the larger ideology of white supremacy informs the specific act and the enduring historical context of inequality between White and Black folks. These racist and sexist behaviors create a marginalizing environment for non-Whites.

The analytical framework analyzes the behavior dimension related to (in)formal structures by focusing on the formal and informal structure. This analysis gives space for the ways that Black power and feminist power inform *intersectional resistance*. I contend that both Black power and Feminist power conceive a bi-directional model of power. The first direction of power is domination, like racism and sexism, which causes marginalization. The second direction then is the oppositional act (resistance) to domination. Specifically for Feminist power, there is an engagement with a multi-directional analysis, called intra-group marginalization and resistance. An example of intra-group marginalization and resistance is if a Black queer woman pushes back on homophobic statements or actions against another Black individual.

However, where I diverge with the feminist power model is not on the framing but rather a proper contextualization. Not only does the study of power require context, but so does the study of identity. To grapple with marginalization and power then the unique social location of Black women has to be part of the framework. The implications then are how the social location

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[15] When I write larger ideologies, I mean to imply that they are beliefs that inform the society outside of the statehouse.

of Black women lawmakers impacts their ability to navigate the statehouse and how Black women lawmakers respond to how the statehouse operates.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality increased in popularity as a concept in the academy over the last couple of decades (Hancock 2013; Carbado et al. 2013). Intersectionality is a women of color feminist theory (Collins 2015) that advanced in the academy by Black women scholar-activist.[16] This theoretical framework is about the examination of power through the nuances and complexities. By intersectionality, I mean the ways that identities are categories that are given meaning and shaped materially by the structures and systems based on time and geography (Dhamoon 2015; Rice, Harrison, and Friedman 2019). Intersectionality is one framework to examine Black women's experiences in the legislature, but it is not the only one. Yet, intersectionality is not shorthand for the study of Black women (Nash 2011). Instead, I engage with intersectionality as a particular framework that gives meaning to how structures and systems work with one another to shape the lives of marginalized individuals.

Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in the 1989 article *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*. Her work shows through court rulings that remedies for discrimination cases exclude Black women. This eraser from the juridical process for justice in the court results from judges on the courts thinking that Black women should be benefiting from antiracist and feminist policies when in reality, the opposite was true. Both antiracist and

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[16] Examples of how intersectionality is situated in Black feminist thought one can look at Sojourner Truth's *Ain't I Woman*, Claudia Jone's *An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!*, and Combahee River Collective's *Black Feminist Statement* that showcases the tenets of intersectionality in different historical periods. These examples showcase the enduring legacy of intersectionality within Black feminist thought.

feminist remedies for discrimination erased Black women. Antiracist remedies for discrimination focused on Black men and feminist remedies for discrimination focused on White women.

Intersectionality as a framework analyzes how structures create systems that shape the symbolic and material lives of Black women in society. Due to the unique social location of Black women in American society and culture, they can face distinctive forms of marginalization from institutions, structures, and norms (Crenshaw 1989, 1991). Thus, applying the logic of intersectionality requires having a multilevel analysis (micro, meso, and macro) and that identities cannot be separated (McCall 2005; Hancock 2007; Dhamoon 2015). Intersectionality logic treats identity as creating the structures based on time and place (Strolovitch 2012; Collins 2015). As an example of this, studying Black women in the 1960s will be different in 2020. But also, that a queer Black woman who is middle-class from the northern part of the United States will have a different set of experiences than a poor, straight Black woman from the United States South.

Another important logic becomes the "both/and" approach instead of the "either/or" approach. Intersectionality logic frames to harms that occur from systems of the as "both/and" instead of the ways that single-axis identity explains as "either/or. This means that Black women's harms can be both racism, sexism, and a combination. According to Crenshaw (1989), sometimes the harm can come from racism, sexism, and both, but that this is the investigator's task to unpack the focus of the research project. This discussion of institutional/system harms conceptualizes power in a specific way. As Hancock (2007) explains the power thesis,

> "It identifies the hegemonic (ideas, cultures, and ideologies, structural (social institutions), disciplinary (bureaucratic hierarchies and administrative practices), and interpersonal (routinized interactions among individuals) playing fields upon

which race, gender, class, and other categories or tradition interact to produce

society." (72).

Intersectionality frames the examination as a multilevel process. The social construction of

identity is informed by the quotidian politics, institutions, and systems that shape the lived and

material realities of women of color. Power then is not about a single form, but rather about

multiple forms of power that converge to shape the lived and material experience. Thus, I argue

that the more precise conceptualization of power in the intersectionality is not power rather

powers. While this is a small shift in terms of spelling, conceptually *powers* open up the analysis

to how the possibilities of multiple flows of power that are converging. An analysis of *power*s

could take up the different concepts illustrated by Hancock (2007) or parts of them.

Intersectionality is inherently a framework that examines *powers* in the particular time and place.

Turning attention to empirical work on Black women lawmakers in legislative

institutions, we can conceptualize marginalization's interpersonal and structural dimensions.

Hawkesworth (2003) shows how Black Congresswomen are often times silenced, and their

White male peers steal their work. Smooth (2002) shows how Black women legislators in

Georgia and Mississippi are excluded from informal legislative processes that decide bills.

Further, White male legislators often see Black women legislators as uninfluential (Smooth

2002; Barret 1997). Black women are least likely to be a part of friendship groups that determine

collaborators in legislative institutions across racial lines (Smooth 2002; Barret 1997).

Furthermore, scholars have examined the racial and gendered dynamics of incorporation into the

state legislature to show that those from marginalized identities are often excluded from

positions of influence, and when they are informal positions of power, they are not likely to

translate to formal power for Black lawmakers (Haynie 2006; King-Meadows and Schaller

2006). However, other work shows that Black women lawmakers are just as likely as their peers

to pass legislation (Orey et al. 2006; Bratton et al. 2006; Brown and Banks 2014). However, intersectionality also provides space for Black women to contest domination.

The latest wave of intersectionality scholars, Hip Hop Feminism, gave space to intersectionality as a way to study resistance (Nash 2011). Hip hop feminist interrogates the ways that rap is a site of marginalization and empowerment. Early work on intersectionality focused on the way stereotypes were projected onto Black women (controlling images) (Harries-Lacewall 2011; Nash 2011). Some recent scholarship in the latest wave of intersectionality research goes beyond marginalization. In writing on hip hop feminist scholars, Nash (2011) writes, "Pough's analysis retains a focus on the race/gender intersection but pushes beyond marginalization to ask how race/gender operate to both constrain *and* enable black sexual imaginations" (467). Nash (2011) points to how hip-hop feminists explain how Black women rappers use their sexuality in rap to create a space of freedom where previously Black women were silenced. I contend that to understand how Black women lawmakers navigate power dynamics and develop power strategies in the legislature; we need to focus on resistance.

Resistance

I contend that resistance is a source of power for Black women lawmakers because of the conditions of marginality in the state legislature. The last section shows that misogynoir attitudes and institutions also exist in the state legislature because the state legislature is a microcosm of society. These conditions then make resistance a viable approach to politics for Black women lawmakers.

In James Scott's canonical text, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance,* and his subsequent theoretical work, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts,* he writes about the individual behaviors of resistance. The behavioral (episodic/ 1st

dimension) form of resistance or known as "everyday resistance," sought to explain how individuals can enact resistance, which is a departure from the collective organizing of resistance. Scott (1985) draws on ethnographic data from Malaysian villages how subjugated farmers resisted those in the ruling class that owned the land. Scott (1985) points out that mass collective action and revolution sometimes is not a viable option, but that there is a constant struggle to gain material needs (like food and labor), so peasants have "ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (29). In later work, Scott (1990) explains elite's dominant norms (public transcripts) reflect the elites. Yet, resisters have discourses that are out of the public view like "speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict or inflect what appears in the public transcript," which can have a hidden meaning which he terms "hidden transcripts" (18-19). Scott (1990) calls this "infrapolitics of subordinate groups," the forms of resistances that are low cost and low visibility but can enter the public, which creates open defiance.

Drawing on Scott's (1985, 1990) work, I seek to situate resistance at the behavioral level (Courpasson and Vallas 2016; Johansson and Vintage 2016). According to Hollander and Einwohner (2004), resistance is an oppositional act that describes an action that is going in direct contradiction with marginalizaition. However, resistance as a concept is not a binary of "resisting" and "not resisting." Instead, it is best to understand resistance as a concept that needs to be contextualized (Scott 1990; Hollander and Einwohner 2004; Johansson and Vintage 2016). For example, Frederick (2017) finds that among a similar group of differently-abled mothers rearing children, resistance towards surveillance manifests. For example, some differently-abled mothers were out in society showing that they could raise their children like any other parent. At

the same time, some chose to be more hidden because these mothers did not want the state to take away their children for being seen as unfit parents (Frederick 2017). Similarly, Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) theorized that resistance looks different depending on the type of marginalization. Thus, studying resistance as an analytical concept is studying oppositional social action practices while contextualizing time and place (Scott 1990; Johansson and Vintage 2016). This discussion of the politics of resistance is inherently embedded within Black women's politics.

Like developing the concept of intersectionality and even thinking about political representation, much of the scholarship shows how Black women's theories and work are connected to their lived experiences (Crenshaw 1989; Harriss-Perry 2011: Brown 2014). Thus, I situate some Black women lawmakers' actions as resistance politics connected to their lived experiences. To be clear, I do not assume that all Black women engage with resistance; rather, most of the work Black women organizers and politicians engage in acts that can be thought of as resistance. Collins (1991) argues that Black women's labor can be defined by resistance. She stated, "energy can be fostered by creative acts of resistance" because much of the labor is aimed at the good of the Black community. Likewise, Zenzele Isoke's (2013) *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* examines through a Black feminist lens how Black women in Newark, New Jersey, practice politics of resistance to improve the conditions of the city for the Black community. Isoke (2013) argues that Black feminist resistance is a complex relationship that "transcends attachment to ideological purity" to create the ability to work with and across other ideological spaces to "incite diverse forms of political insurgency" (21). Isoke (2013) weaves together the politics of empowerment to explain that the goals of Black feminism is to change how power is distributed and politics of transformation to explain how Black women engage in

politics through innovative and formal ways like "movement-building, cultural politics, and grassroots organizing" (2013, 26). Thus, a Black feminist project of resistance is specific to advancing liberation for the Black community.

Historically, one can look at examples in the American South where Black women domestic workers organized a massive strike in 1881 to get higher fees for their services and autonomy for their labor (Hunter 1993). Similarly, Black women's politics engage in resistance. Gahllagher (2007) shows how post-World War II New York presented Black women a unique opportunity to run for local political office in ways not seen before in American politics because of the proportional representation system of that time. This meant that the local political parties were endorsing a more diverse pool of candidates. Political parties running Black candidates in the 1940s created a path for Representative Chisolm to run. In her work, Representative Shirly Chisolm (D-NY) had to defy racist-sexist attitudes of being portrayed as ineffective, too rigid, and too ambitious as a leader (Simien 2015). As an example of resistance in Chisolm's career, she appealed her appointment to the agricultural committee and was assigned to the transportation committee because her district was premeditatedly urban with little green space. Chisolm did not let those with institutional power regulate her to committee assignments that did not advance the needs or interests of her constituents (Curwood 2015; Simien 2015).

In this project, resistance is examined at the behavioral level in opposition to dominating forces that creates marginalization. This point is important because resistance (pushing back on forces) cannot exist without domination (oppression) creating marginalization. Marginalization then is a condition to understand how intersectional resistance becomes a power strategy for Black women lawmakers. The implication for conceptualizing resistance in this fashion means that those attempting to neutralize the resistors' efforts are not resisting the resistance. Instead,

they are attempting to uphold the status quo preventing marginalized individuals from changing the outcomes. In theoretical terms, resistances can only exist for individuals being marginalized. Marginalization takes place within the institution and due to larger historical processes and societal context. So, when resistance is being written, this means that the pushback from the marginalized individual(s) is an attempt to advance their agenda. Those that exist to benefit from the status quo attempt to reinforce the status quo to create equilibrium for their status quo.

I do not claim that all Black women lawmakers engage in resistance in the same manner. As noted earlier, resistance is an orientation towards politics based on opportunity and positionality (Scott 1990; Johansson and Vintage 2016). I am arguing that resistance can manifest in multiple ways based on the lawmaker's positionality and the institutions that they are navigating. Scholars studying Black women's politics argued that Black feminism could manifest in multiple forms based on political ideology. For example, the Combahee River Collective broke away from the liberal vision of the National Black Feminist Organization for the agenda not incorporating critiques of capitalism and heterosexism (James 1999, 2000; Harris 2011). Both organizations began organizing because they saw a vision for specific solutions for the Black community, which means that there can be liberal and radical forms of Black women's politics. The last point is that resistance is a praxis that connects the lived experiences of Black women lawmakers to their strategies to shape the outcomes in their legislative institutions grounded in resistance (Griffin 2012; Williamson 2017).

Institutions

Political institutions, state legislatures operate within a particular set of rules, norms, and operating procedures that guide a set of expectations for lawmakers' behavior. Framed as the "new institutionalism," March and Olson (1984) point out patterns in the political science

scholarship bringing the role of the state back as a central explanatory variable for explaining the organization of politics as a response to the behavioral movement in political science. This turn in political science was a response to the behavioral movement (Lecours 2005; March and Olson 2006). According to Polbsy (1968), to be considered an institution requires the following: 1) membership is recruited for the purposes of the institution by those within it, 2) there is a complex process where there is a clear and expected division of labor, but there is interdependence within the institution, and 3) rules and procedures guide internal business. Institutions become an explanatory variable for understanding how legislators' behavior is restricted. Institutions are how contextual features like rules and norms constrain and define the individual's expected repeated behavior (Crawford and Ostrom 1995; Diermeir and Krehbiel 2003; March and Olson 2006).[17] However, feminist scholars pointed to the limitations of the institutionalist scholarship for not recognizing how institutions can be gendered.

New institutionalism ignored the role of gender within institutions. Feminist institutionalism focuses on the gender dynamics by showing institutions are not gender-neutral, and there is a gendered process within the institution (Kenny 2007). Early scholarship that focused on gender within institutions looked at men's attitudes towards women in the legislatuy how many women were needed to influence the institution (Kanter 1977; Deutchman 1992; Considine and Deutchman 1996). Most recently, tenets of feminist institutionalism argue that there needs to be a focus on the roles of gender within the institution, formal and informal analysis, a focus on power dynamics via gender, and examining how policy change happened or not (Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell 2010; Thompson 2018).

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[17] It is important to note that there have been different approaches to intuitionalism- rational, sociological, historical, and even more recently, a new form called discursive institutionalism (Hall and Taylor 1996; Schmit 2008). However, the focus of this section is less on applying a particular approach but more so on focusing on what the institution of the Georgia legislature is and what should be expected from the lawmakers.

Feminist institutionalism analyzes gender as the primary category of analysis within the institution (Krook and Mackay 2011). However, gender as an analytical category is further complicated with the role of race, sexuality, and class (Acker 1992; Cohen 1999). In legislative studies, Hawkesworth (2003) analyzes the ways legislative institutions are raced-gendered that marginalized Black congresswomen in the 103rd and the 104th Congress. Black congresswomen face a different form of marginalization that can include being made invisible by their bills being taken, being silenced on issues they were advocating for, and their resources being taken (Hawkesworth 2003). This indicates that for Black lawmakers that Congress is an institution that marginalizes them based on their identities.

Intersectional Resistance

To understand Black women lawmakers' power strategies there needs to be a focus on the behavior dimension in relation to the structures. *Intersectional resistance* focuses on how Black women lawmakers resist behaviors and structures. Thus, this theoretical framework has a multi-power analysis that focuses on the role of domination and how Black women lawmakers navigate/resist them. This means that Black women lawmakers are being marginalized by multiple forms of power, including formal rules and informal norms. In context to marginality, resistance can become a power strategy to advance their agenda. Thus, I define *intersectional resistance* as legislators with doubly marginalized identities resisting (in)formal norms through developing creative strategies to advance their agenda for them or their districts.

The tenets of *intersectional resistances* require three specific focuses of analysis that center the (in)formal norms of the institutions and systems of oppression (the powers thesis)[18]

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[18] Powers thesis reframes Hancock's (2007) idea of the power thesis from a singular form to powers which implies the multifaceted nature

that shapes and gives meaning to the legislative behavior. The first tenet is to contextualize the formal institution and processes by bringing upfront the analysis of institutional space (e.g., break rooms or committee meeting), the institution's rules, and formal authority within the institution (i.e., Speaker of the House). Lawmakers are expected to abide by the statehouse's rules that include the formal policy process and how to interact with the formal structures.

The second tenet examines the informal norms, which are defined as repeated acts by the lawmakers that are not explicitly stated in the rules. The formal norms (or rules) keep institutional stability which is a set of expected behavior that ensures the institution continues to perform its role. Informal norms are behaviors in which are not outlined by the rules, consistently emerge, and are enforced outside of official sanctioned channels (Helmke and Levitsky 2004; Azari and Smith 2012). Some informal norms can include jokes or be late to meetings. The third tenet is to study the (in)formal behavior within an analysis of the wider societal systems of oppression (e.g., white supremacy or patriarchy). This means that (in)formal norms can be differentiated between the actions that are racist/sexist and those that are not.

The first three tenets shift the understanding of power to powers which means that there are multiple flows of powers that converge to shape lawmakers' behaviors in a particular legislative, institutional context. Thus, once understanding how marginalization emerges, there can be an examination of how resistance is a legislative behavior. The first three categories of analysis are crucial to recognize resistance at the behavioral level because resistance does not exist without marginalization. Thus, we can recognize resistance based on how Black women lawmakers are responding to their marginality. Resistance can emerge in many ways like direct confrontation, adapting to the environment, messages, and creative strategies. Resistance can also be seen as when the Black women lawmakers' agenda is advanced. For example, Black

women lawmakers can resist the institution and process to advance their policy ideas directly to others in authority that can implement their idea. This also means that resistance can be a direct response due to the situation. One example is the outward show of protest because of contradictory statements made by other lawmakers. There are certain forms of resistance that can advance Black women lawmakers' agenda, and there are forms of resistance that do not. Resistance is an important focus of analysis to understand how Black women lawmakers navigate power dynamics.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the theories of power and how they manifested in legislative studies' empirical work. I argued that the current understanding of power as domination essentializes political elites' behaviors and de-contextualizes the conditions of marginality that Black women lawmakers face. I showcased how identity-centric theories of power think about power as not just domination but also how marginalized groups can achieve power. In this project, I argue that a multi-analysis of power effectively explains why Black women lawmakers choose certain strategies over others. I define power as how (in)formal structures and behaviors marginalized Black women lawmakers in legislative institutions. Thus, the first part of the analysis focuses on the context of the institutions' formal rules that shape lawmakers' behavior. The second part explores how informal norms emerge in particular institutional contexts and if these informal norms play a role in marginalization. The third part examines how Black women lawmakers resist (in)formal dimensions of the institution in an effort to to the legislature to advance their agenda.

CHAPTER 3: BRINGING THE FOLDING CHAIR: INSTUTION, POLITICAL ELITE BEHAVIOR, AND INTERSECTIONAL RESISTANCE

Introduction

Black women legislators' behaviors are shaped by the institution. In turn, the institution is shaped by both formal rules and internal norms that may marginalize Black women lawmakers. This is a multi-constituted process. My interviews with Black women Georgia state legislators in the minority party coupled with my observations in the statehouse demonstrate that legislative power is multifaceted and is highly dependent on both the formal and informal structures of a political institution. I argue that Black women lawmakers in the minority party use intersectional resistance to challenge these rules and norms. This chapter is animated by the following questions: How does the institution influence the behaviors of Black women lawmakers? Why do Black women lawmakers choose certain actions over others in navigating the institution? How do institutional power dynamics impact the decisions of Black women lawmakers?

In this chapter, I show how Black women lawmakers in the minority party navigate different parts of the legislature like committees or floor sessions. In the next section, I go into the methods and data. In the third section, I provide an overview of how the Georgia General Assembly operates. In the fourth section, I center the observational data from my time at the Georgia legislature to analyze the role that informal norms play in structuring the legislature. I argue that the role that (in)formal norms play in structuring legislative behavior gives room for racist, sexist and other problematic behaviors to emerge. In the following sections, I show how Black women lawmakers in this study experience committee meeting and floor sessions. I conclude by analyzing how multiple forms of power converge to shape lawmakers' behaviors in

the Georgia legislature to spotlight Black women lawmakers' use of intersectional resistance. My framework of intersectional resistance foregrounds the institution to understand the behaviors of political elites. I contend that the how and why institutional structures and norms matter are central for understanding intersectional resistance as a form of political behavior.

Methods and Data

In order to document how the informal and formal rules of the legislature dictate the political experiences and legislative behavior of lawmakers, I paid particular attention to place. By focusing on where the legislators spoke with me, I am able to differentiate between the locations in which lawmakers felt most comfortable in explaining how power is institutionalized. The space – mostly defined as break rooms, floor session and committee hearings – serve as the backdrop for my observational data. The interpretivist tradition allows for me to map the research site to gain exposure to the wide variety of meaning made by relevant participants whether face-to-face or written and to use an intertextual analysis to understand the way the data repetition occurs across different sources (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, Ch. 5).

I draw on semi-structured interviews and observations to center the voices of the lawmakers to examine their experiences in relation to how they view power in the Georgia General Assembly. Semi-structured interview is an approach that allows the researcher to have develop questions while at the same time allowing the conversation to flow by asking follow-up questions which maximizes data collection (Legard, Keegan, & Ward 2003, 141-142).[19] This

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[19] The initial research design specified applying unique methodologies to include varying members of the legislature, but due to COVID-19 the Georgia General Assembly shut down before cross-over day. Once my IRB was approved, I requested an interview via emailed to every Black women lawmaker at the Georgia Statehouse. I only got two responses one accepting the interview and another declining an interview. At the first interview, I asked Rep. Baily to if she would be able to put me in contact with others which led me to Rep. Stevens. The second strategy that help me get interviews was showing up at committee meetings and asking legislators for an interview which got me a meeting with Rep. Grey and Rep. Yang. Once the legislature was shutdown, I found various

allows me to examine how lawmakers process events and moments by focusing on their experiences as verbally expresses (Maxwell 2013, 30-31). Here, I asked lawmakers about their experienced or observed power in the Georgia General Assembly.

Georgia General Assembly

The Georgia General Assembly consists of two chambers, the House of Representative is the lower chamber, and the State Senate is the higher chamber. The Georgia General Assembly is classified as a citizen legislature. Lawmakers need outside sources of income to supplement their low salaries as state legislators. Furthermore, the legislature is defined by lawmakers from small districts, and representatives tend not to have ambitions for higher office (Howard, Fleischmann, and Engstrom 2017, 149). The institutional support for lawmakers is extremely minimal which means that much of the legwork is done by legislators. Every legislative office has one or two administrative assistants who are tasked with answering the phones, interacting with visitors and responding to emails. The Statehouse is made up of 56 state senate members and 180 state house members which they serve a term of 2-years (Ballotpedia, n.d.). The Georgia General Assembly meets for 40 legislative days between the second Tuesday in January to April (Ballotpedia, n.d.)

The structure of the Georgia General Assembly itself is made up of variety of leadership positions and committees. The State Senate has Lt. Governor and Senate President, President pro tempore, along with both Majority and Minority Party have the Leader, Whip, Causes Chair, Vice-Chair, and the Secretary.[20] The Georgia General Assembly also has a variety of

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campaign websites, professional Facebook, and Twitter which was how I interviewed Rep. Robbins. There were three other legislators that initially responded to being able to be interviewed, but then never responded to follow up emails. I got in contact with 8 lawmakers, but only able to interview 5 Black women lawmakers.

[20] Currently still trying to find the scope of responsibilities for some of these positions because they are not stated explicitly on the website, in the rules, or constitution.

committees. There are 29 committees in the State Senate and 46 in the House. The Speaker of

the House has a variety of privileges granted by the office. The Speaker appoints members to

committees, controls floor debate, maintain order on the floor, suspends debate, requires

members to attend legislative session, can change order that bills appear on calendar, makes

decision about appropriateness of amendments, also determines which bill is sent for review, and

controls of activity in visitors' galleries (Howard, Fleischmann, and Engstrom 2017, 160).

The norms of the legislature vary depending on the where the legislators are in legislative

session or committees. Norms of collegiality are dedicated by the Rules, Ethnics and Decorum of

the House the Representatives. Legislators are forbidden to make disparaging remarks to other

lawmakers (i.e., legislators address each other in formal language Mr., Mrs., Ms., or

"gentleperson from") (Howard, Fleischmann, and Engstrom 2017, 178).

Observations of the Georgia State Legislature as an Institution

In this section, I further contextualize the Georgia General Assembly based on the

observations and interviews to explain norms that have not been analyzed. In spite of the formal

rules, I observed several instances of legislators engaging in informal behavior. One of these

causal behaviors were labeled as joking. Different forms of jest were observed in committee

meetings and legislative sessions. Legislators from members to those in leaderships would 'crack

jokes' meaning that lawmakers would take the time to detract from formal business to say

something to make people laugh. These jokes would happen during their turn in speaking on

committee hearings or floor sessions. This behavior was evident in several circumstances, for

instance when a legislator was responding to questions or asking questions. Legislators would

even ask the officer that was presenting their bill to yield for a question just to make a joke.

Another causal norm was tardiness. In many instances' lawmakers would show up late to

committee meetings or not at all. For example, a vice-chair of a committee communicated that he had to text the chair to see if he was coming, the result was cancelling the meeting because the chair was still in another meeting. During committee meetings, similar to legislative session, lawmakers can be seen texting, sleeping or talking to other members. These social norms of indicates that the legislature has a level of casualness because of the jokes, late start or cancelling of the meetings. One possible explanation for norms like late start or cancelling is the formal structure that lawmakers only meet formally for 40-legislative day. This means, that all formal business such as committee hearings or floor sessions are done at this time. The institutional structures and informal norms provide context for how the legislature operates.

Another marker of the casualness is the petty politics that ensue in the legislature. I conceptualize petty politics as the behaviors of individuals reacting to a personal manner to obstruct the goals of the person who crossed them. This is a version of the personal is political, but solely for the function to get back at individuals. Petty politics can be exemplified in Rep. Stevens explaining the ways that casualness of the legislature become an unfair environment, she said,

> Everything is politics, and that's the part that I don't like because the longer we play politics, the more we're, like, "Well, I'm not gonna give you a hearing, because you voted yes on that thing I wanted you to vote no on, or you voted no on a thing I wanted you to vote yes on, or, that one time, you voted against my bill, or that time you voted against the budget," or something, "and so I'm gonna punish you." Or, they won't say "I'm punishing you." They don't have to say it. They just- Your bill is DOA [Dead On Arrival], and there's nothing you can do about it. You can't change it. You can't make them hear your bill.

Informal social norms are an important unit of analysis in examining how institution functions. Rep. Stevens points to how other lawmakers display a level of legislative pettiness as a response

for the action. This is another measurement for casualness in the Georgia legislature, what Rep. Stevens describes here is a toxic work environment. Legislative duties require that lawmakers to make decisions on legislation for their constituents or whether they agree on the bill or not. This presents a problem for Rep. Stevens because other lawmakers are gating keeping formal process of the legislative process because she is performing her legislative duties. While this is political nature, the informal norm of a toxic work environment is due to not being given the opportunity to participant in the formal process because lawmakers are upset at Rep. Stevens for performing her duties. Legislative casualness can be measured by the tardiness, jokes, and toxic work environment which are all informal norms. These informal norms are seen through the systematic behavior of the lawmakers. These social norms further contextualize the Georgia General Assembly in ways that cannot be explain by just looking at rules or agenda setting. As Rep. Stevens frames the legislature, she says, "Nothing around here is fair, I've learned that."

Everyday Forms of Marginalization: Black Women Lawmakers Experiences within the Legislative Institution

The Black women lawmakers in my study repeatedly noted that their colleagues behaved inappropriately at times. This inappropriate behavior was most often a form of sexism, White supremacy and/or patriarchy. All the legislators who participated in this project identified habitual and repeated problematic behaviors from their colleagues.[21] The process of the repeated actions is a social structured process that is given meaning by social context (Clegg 1989[2002]; Hearn 2014). Repeated behaviors that are systemic and oppressive such a white supremacy and patriarchy are part of power dynamic that marginalize those who are not White or male.

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[21] Problematic behaviors, as I defined them, are behaviors that for reinforced and are given meaning by larger systems of oppression. Problematic behaviors are behaviors that perpetuate harm via psychological or through meaning.

One action that emerged through multiple interviews was that male colleagues, specifically white male Republican legislators, explicitly addressed Black women lawmakers in dismissive or degrading manners. One example, Rep. Torres explained multiple instances in which her white Republican male peers called their female peer's "girl" or "gal." To learn more, I asked Rep. Robbins for clarification,

> Researcher: There are rules about how lawmakers need to interact with each other. It sounds like those kinds of rules aren't followed. If I am understanding this correctly?
>
> Rep. Torres: Right, exactly, that's what I was saying or hearing some refer to someone as gal. I am like really?!

While many might view this instance as minor, these everyday moments shape the experiences of Black women lawmakers. Not addressing a lawmaker by a proper title goes directly against the rules of the legislature. From this perspective, the expectation is that addressing house members in their formal titles would be followed by everyone because it is part of the rules for the Georgia House of Representatives. These everyday moments of willfulness to ignore the formal rules of the legislature is signal who is more powerful hierarchy as marked their consistent ability to break the rules with little consequence. Conversely, those without power are often forced to accept the behavior of colleagues who act outside the formal rules of the institution.

Not only is being called "girl" or "gal" as opposed to legislator or Ms. in violation of the Georgia state legislature rules, but it is also a racialized term to denote a lack of respect for Black women that was often used during Jane Crow. Unfortunately, Rep. Robbins experience was not unique. Others reported being called girl which points to this diminutive reference to a colleague and legislative peer as a is a repeated act among some lawmakers who hold power. Calling women "girl" or "gal" in this context devalues the position of women in elected office because of

the role that white supremacist-patriarchy has in structuring the meaning of the race-gender identity of the lawmakers. These actions are tied to the directly to the enslavement and Jane Crow in which Black women were routinely called diminutive titles.

White Republican males used this type of informal behavior in manner that undermined the legislative institution. The rules are considered a formal dimension of power that structures the legislature which, in the Georgia House of Representatives, explicitly state that all lawmakers have to address other lawmakers within the legislature with formal titles and with respect. However, for the Black women lawmakers the rules were written to create an equal playing field but, were subverted by repeated behaviors of white Republican men who are most likely aware of the larger societal context in which Black women lawmakers would find this term offensive. This societal context, particularly in a Southern state, gives meaning to interactions even though there are formal rules for how lawmakers should behave.

Next, because the Republican party enjoys a supermajority in the legislature the GOP members face little repercussions when they act outside of the formal rule structure. Rep. Grey explains how being unchallenged as the party-in-government leads to problematic statements made by their white male Republican colleagues. Rep. Grey says,

> But in this- in Georgia, one party has been in charge for so long that they are entitled to it. They don't have to change. What's the benefit of them changing? They have the numbers to pass whatever they want. They are unchecked. So, they can do what they want. There was- there was this- one of my- another one of my counterparts, a friend of mine, was at the break room. And there was a representative talking. [He] was a Republican, and he was talking to a bunch of his friends, and they were joking with him. And he's a large guy, and they said, "Do you think...when you die, are you going to fit in a regular size coffin?" And he said, 'Well, probably not, but I want you to, uh, find a big, old incinerator. Burn me up. Put my ashes in a douchebag so I can run up in a woman one more

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time before I die." Out loud. In front of everyone. Mm-hm. So... unchecked, no reason to be checked.

This joke is unequivocally sexist and should not have been made in the statehouse let alone by a legislator. This joke constitutes a hostile workplace environment at nearly any other workplace but politicians in the majority party are seemingly are held to a different standard. Furthermore, this recounted experience points to an interaction between a white male Republican and in which the sexist joke was a response to fat-phobic taunt. The friends of the white male Republican use jokes as a way to demean his body as a fat man. In turn, the white male Republican directly responded with a sexist joke as a way to assert his social status as a heterosexual male. The jokes are given meaning because of the larger societal context of fat phobia and hetero-patriarchy.

Fat phobia is a belief system that has roots in that thinness represents a commitment a moral standing of control creating a culture that views fat people as lazy and undisciplined thus the body itself becomes a marker for social status with roots in anti-Black racism (Oliver 2006; String 2019). This is because being fat has not been found to be the *cause* of death that is culturally believed in the United States (Oliver 2006). This translates to a whole slew of issues where fat people face marginalization from different aspects of society (for more read Rothblum and Solovay 2009). The initial jokes towards the white Republican male was othered by the jokes pointing to his weight effectively facing humiliation, not because he is seen fat, rather because in the United States culture has constructed fat as another category to be made fun of.

The larger societal context of hetero-patriarchy explains why the response to a fat-phonic statement is a sexist joke. Hetero-patriarchy is embedded into structures, governing sytems, culture, laws, and social norms that reinforce and configures social life to make normal the gender binary, male dominance, and hetero-sexual relationship through practice (Cohen 1997; Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013; Strolovitch, Wong, and Proctor 2017). The sexist joke by the

white Republican man is a reminder to everyone in the room that even though he is fat that he is still a straight man. He should be able to enjoy the privilege of this social identity regardless of his girth. The joke was a way to skirt being demeaned because of his size by using his heterosexual identity as a marker of dominance.

Turning our attention back to Rep. Grey's larger point, this joke was possible because of the Republican party holds a supermajority in the Georgia state legislature. Their partisan control allows some behaviors to go unchecked and white male Republicans routinely engage in informal activities that undermine the rules of Georgia state legislatures. The power that the majority party in a legislature has is usually reserved to discussion of how this party can move their bills into laws and determine how the legislature operates (Cox, Kouser, and McCubbins 2010). Yet, Rep. Grey's comments also showcase that this unchecked behavior often creates a hostile work environment for women of color. White male Republican members of the Georgia state legislature are able to make these sorts of comments because they are in the majority party but also because white heteropatriarchy privileges their standing in American society. Thus, the rules are undermined by the partisan control which is layered by the informal behaviors of lawmakers who hold both privileged identities and majority status in the legislature.

This informal norm than is one avenue of power because not only does it explain how lawmakers behave, but it is also how there is a capacity to be able to enact (Allen 1999; Göhler 2009; Haungaard 2010). The informal behavior of some members of the legislature has political consequences for minority party members and particularly Black women lawmakers. The kind of jokes that are told are an indication of this power inequity. As Rep. Grey notes, this was not just the joke, but also that the men felt comfortable enough to speak in such a problematic and sexist way in a shared space without fear of repercussion.

The experiences within the legislature matter for understanding how Black women lawmakers navigate the process. These experiences that happen within legislature provide a way to contextualize what they face when they walk in the statehouse. This can also be seen by the way individual's physically respond to Black women lawmakers when they find out their profession. Rep. Steven's explains,

> I've been told, like, and I see it - even in the conversation. I'll be having a conversation with someone, we'll be talking, um, and then once they find out I have a Ph.D., they straighten up a little bit more. Their tone or demeanor changes a lot. And I'm like, why does it have to be that way? Like, why can't I just be respected as the individual. But I think that automatically, they see "young," they see "Black," they see "woman," and they just think I'm not really that important yet.

She notes that the signal from staff and lawmakers in the legislature that she is not important because she is a young Black woman. Harris-Perry (2011) argues that Black women have to enter "crooked rooms" because they are not read as individuals rather as stereotypes. In this case the crooked room is the halls of the legislature. While Rep. Stevens is not directly mentioning a specific stereotype, yet she explicates that she is an a "crooked room" because her peers do not see her as important. Rep. Stevens only becomes important once her other legislators or staffers learn of her academic credentials. Because her doctorate carries social status her peers seemingly respect her more. In this case, the degree signals here worth rather than her raced-gendered identity.

This quotidian interaction among peers, in her place of work, is a daily reminder that Rep. Stevens' is not seen as full member in the Georgia state legislature because of her race, age, and gender. Black women lawmakers in my study expressed they routinely experienced

marginalization because of these informal behaviors by white male Republicans and other. This happens in spite of the formal rules of the legislature.

Along with these kinds of sexist, racist and ageist experiences in the statehouse, other institutional components become sites of marginalization and resistance as well. I define institutional components as spaces where formalized duties are performed for the institution such as committees and the formal legislative session to show that these quotidian moments are occurring while at the same time recognizing that these different institutional components make up the legislature.

Committees

Committees are an extremely important institutional component of the legislature and legislative process. Specific committees are designated to deal with specific policy or institutional matters. Committees are sites of power because of what gets – or does not - addressed on the agenda (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Brown and Banks 2014). From the perspective of these lawmakers, internal committee dynamics between their peers and, their respective, chair showcase respect and value become politicized through a gendered process. Again, patriarchy plays a defining role how the Black women lawmakers who participated in this research explained their interactions with male lawmakers who served on their committees. The women's narratives give greater understanding to what the Black women lawmakers endure in legislative committees.

In one example, Rep. Yang explains that she was confused because the chair of her committee responded to her legislative behavior as outside the norm of the Georgia statehouse. Rep. Yang explains,

In one of my committees a couple years ago, the former chair, um, said, "You've asked too many questions! You only get one question." And I thought, oh my, are we here to vet this bill? So yeah, so, uh, there are a lot of unwritten rules, which is interesting. It feels as if you ask a question, you're challenging the author of the bill. Versus if I'm asking a question, I'm genuinely trying to understand. That's how you came off when you were asking your question earlier in the committee.

This exchange between Rep. Yang and the chair is a traditional example of power as domination. This is because the chair is in charge of the proceedings during committee meetings. The chair of this committee sanctioned Rep. Yang via telling her she could only ask one question. Even though from Rep. Yang perspective she did nothing to warrant being sanction because she was asking questions about the bill which is one of her formal duties as a legislator. Specifically, this is an informal strategy limits the scope of inquiry for Rep. Yang meaning that she is not able to do her job effectively.

Furthermore, Rep. Yang shared another example of the chair diminishing her ability to fully function as a legislator. She believes that the chair was using his leadership position as a means of reducing her line of question as superficial to the bill rather than instrument to understanding the proposed legislation. Rep. Yang said,

Rep. Yang: Oh, then in one of my committees- I won't name it. Again, I think I shared that I'm kind of outspoken. I was told by a chair who was a male that I will respect him or I will be removed from the committee.
Researcher: What?
Rep. Yang: So my response was, I didn't ask to be on here, and you will respect me.
Researcher: Ooh. Fire.
Rep. Yang: I don't really know what the dynamics were, whether it was race, gender, or a combination. But yeah.
Researcher: What was the interaction over, like, what caused it?

Rep. Yang: I didn't agree with something in- that was, well- a bill. And, uh, that was in committee, you know.

Rep Yang is chastised by the committee chair because her questioning and disagreement over the bill is viewed as an inappropriate line of inquiry. The committee chair attempted to use his formal and institutionalized powers to silence her., Next, Rep. Yang response of, "I didn't ask to be here," is a reminder to the committee chair that she was assigned to this committee by the Speaker and as a minority party member, has little authority to her committee placement. Just as much as the committee chair does not want Rep Yang to be on the committee, she too is noting that she was not an enthusiastic member of this committee. In doing so, does not acquiesce to the committee chair's beratement, rather she resists the chair authority by pushing back in her response to his characterization of her disagreement with this bill as a form of disrespect. Furthermore, an intersectional analysis aids in the examination of how the Black women lawmakers in this study experience the Georgia state legislature In the conceptualization of intersectionality, Crenshaw (1989) theorizes that the harms that Black women experience can stem from racism, sexism, and misogynoir. This kind of harm then can be disorientating because there is not a direct linked that Rep. Yang can point to say that her unpleasant interaction with her committee chair was because she is a Black woman.

While Rep. Yang detailed a negative experience with her committee chair, Rep Grey's interactions with her fellow committee members also indicates that Black woman lawmakers may be undervalued in the Georgia statehouse when they attempt to perform their legislative duties. She explains

So, I have one [male representative] behind me, one [male representative] to my right. The one behind me wanted help passing local legislation. And instead of tapping me on the shoulder and saying, "Hey, can you support this for me?" He tapped my male counterpart and said, "Can you ask Grey this?" … This guy

behind me didn't even respect me enough to tap me on the shoulder, and I'm right in front of you.

This interaction of hypervisibility and invisibility points to how Rep. Gray was ignored by a male legislature, but her vote was simultaneously desired. I later learned that this conversation was had among Republican white male legislators who did not want to directly ask Rep. Gray, a Black woman Democrat. Instead, the men talked among themselves, assuming that their priviliedge position in the statehouse would be enough to compel Rep. Grey to join on to this bill although she was not given the respect of a personal invitation to engage with her colleagues about the bill. Rep. Grey notes that she felt disrespected because she was not directly addressed as an equal. Animated by sexism, Rep. Grey questions if this interaction would have happened differently if she were a man. Gender dynamics between colleagues is especially central in the meaning of labor for some of the legislators' responses. Because the legislature is simply a microcosm of the larger society, these actions that reify the racist and sexist structure that animate Black women's experiences write large.

Likewise, Rep. Yang expresses how value is politicized through a gendered labor process.

The gender dynamics are interesting, I've had to speak to a couple of the men about, um, their disregard and their disrespect. And some of the men have probably not appreciated how I've communicated [this] with them. Mm-hm. Um, I come to the table that we were all elected. And I value my voice in time as much as you. One of the things that I thought was really, really interesting, one of the conferences, we were (inaudible). If something wasn't done that the chair didn't do, then someone said, "Well, he had to work, so he's busy." And I thought, I have to work and I'm busy. And I was like, this is weird. So yes, the men valuing the men's time or their careers outvalue mine for whatever reason. So they didn't feel like you- whatever it was that I had to do for a living or get by, [it] didn't

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weigh as much. So, we can excuse this person for not doing what they were supposed to do. But I need for you to do what you say you're going to do. So that was…that was interesting.

Rep. Yang's frustration with her male colleagues are explicitly centered on the devaluation of her time over that of her male peers and those with leadership positions. Furthermore, she paints her committee chair is incompetent at best, as he is unable to balance his legislative duties with other demands on his tie. In turn, he often drops the ball and expects other pick up his slack. His lack of follow through in turn, prevents her from being able to perform her duties. Regardless of the formalized power that the chair has, Rep. Yang finds herself in a precarious position that curtails her abilities to accurately perform her duties because the chair has not completed his legislative tasks. Rep. Yang is also busy and yet finds the time to accomplish her legislative responsibilities and thusly, wonders why the chair cannot do the same. This contention around labor signals to her that men in general, and the chair specifically value their time over that of their female counterparts.

Floor Sessions and the Speaker of the House

Legislative sessions are when the members of the Georgia House of Representatives all meet at in the state senate building to vote on bills or honor guest that were invited by the lawmakers. Many of the lawmakers named the legislative session as complex time of navigating multiple forms and displays of powers. The rules of the Georgia General Assembly outline that the Speaker has control of the proceedings during the legislative sessions. This means that the Speaker is the one that determines how the session operates and has the ability to control the behaviors of other lawmakers. For example, I observed the Speaker use his gavel to signal to lawmakers that were talking in the chamber to lower their volume. The lawmakers complied.

Formalized procedures in the legislature are a form of a power because they dedicate an expected outcome over how lawmakers will likely behave, or they grant certain positions within the legislature the capacity to control the behaviors of other legislators. Once bills are approved by the committee and put on the agenda by the Speaker, lawmakers are given the opportunity to explain the bill. During this time other lawmakers can ask questions about the bill. However, whether or not they are heard is dependent on how many questions the presenter of the bill is willing to listen to and engage with. This procedure ultimately means that a lawmaker can arbitrarily decide when to stop answering questions from his or her peers. Several of the women in my study expressed deep frustrations with this formal rule in the Georgia state legislature that ultimately provides legislators with sole discretion on when to stop debate on a bill. For example, Rep. Stevens explains,

> There are all these procedures, so I don't just get to speak when I want to speak. And I only get to speak when I'm called on. And then a person can answer that question and then not yield for me to follow up. And, so, because of procedure, it's very easy for a person to, honestly, tell a lie and get away with it because...I'll give you an example. Today, there was a bill that came up, and actually, the bill - I'm sure the bill was fine; I voted for it - but, um, I had a question about the bill. I pushed my button. I had a question. Whoever the person was presenting the bill took the three questions and then decided, "I'm done, I don't want to answer any more questions." So, I didn't get to ask my question, so I didn't get an answer to my question. Someone else asked the question during parliamentary inquiry, which is kind of, like, after we're voting, and that person didn't get an answer to their question because the answer was, "You've got to ask the bill's author." And it's like, well, we can't; he sat down.

Rep. Stevens highlights the formal procedures, via the rules, that lawmakers follow during the floor sessions of lawmakers' presenting their bills. This formalized process can limit how lawmakers engage with the legislator that is presenting the bill. This rule introduces biases into

how a bill is formally vetted by member of the Georgia state legislature. Indeed, the formalized processed can be layered with interpersonal dimensions via informal norms. Often times, interpersonal dynamics may come into play in how or who a legislator decides to field questions from during the legislative session. Rep. Stevens provides an example of this. She notes,

> Rep. Stevens: I've actually had the Speaker of the House kind of embarrass me on the floor, that way.
> Researcher: Wait, are you serious?
> Rep. Stevens: Where I stood up, and I brought up a pertinent inquiry, and he was like, "Well, I don't really care about that" and everyone laughed. I'm just not the kind of person who likes to be the butt of a joke. That's just not my thing 'cause I didn't come up here to play.

As previously analyzed in this chapter, jokes are a common place within Georgia state legislature. However, as Black woman who made to feel as she was the butt of a joke by the Speaker, Rep. Stevens' quote demonstrates the interconnectedness of the formal and informal norms of the statehouse. Here the Speaker's joke to Rep. Stevens effectively stopped her from asking a question about a bill. The informal norm gives room for the Speaker to use his formal position to halt Rep. Stevens ability to ask questions on the bill during the legislative session. But again, the informality in which the Speaker prohibited her from asking a question was deeply felt as a sign of disrespect by Rep. Stevens.

My observations in the Georgia statehouse confirms that legislative sessions are a major site to examine how power dynamics materialize between different lawmakers. For instance, a Black women lawmaker, Rep. Wilson, asked questions about wording in HB 913 which was a bill that focused on foster youth and child adoption during the legislative session. Rep. Wilson, along with others, expressed concerns about the implications of language used in the bill that may have intentionally added pressure for people trying to adopt children. This bill was

presented by a white male Republican and the individual and did directly respond to Rep. Wilson's initial question. In turn, Rep. Wilson asked a follow-up question in which she sought o explain her view on the proposed language was restrictive. Specifically, she feared that the bill's language would criminalize individuals who later changed their mind about adopting. As Rep. Wilson was speaking, the white male Republican started to speak over her. Yet, Rep. Wilson continued to speak. In response to the competing vocals, the Speaker hit his gavel and declared that, "there will be no debating." After the Speaker quelled the discussion, the bill was voted for and it was passed.

This interactions between the bill's sponsor, Rep. Wilson and the Speaker provide insights in how both the formal and informal rules converge to silence Black women lawmakers as well as Black women's agency as legislators. First, in his formal capacity as Speaker, this lawmaker was able to use the formal rules of the legislature to silence the interactions between the bill sponsor and Rep. Wilson. The Speaker is the one who manages the floor session and, because of the rules, is controlling the behaviors of the lawmakers. However, during the exchange Rep. Wilson did not stop framing her responses via questions. According to the rules, during floor sessions members of the House when chosen to speak have to frame their response in questions. Although Rep. Wilson was still responding in a question format and she was being cut off by the lawmaker presenting the bill the Speaker stopped the exchange. However, I observed similar instances of what the Speaker referred to as "debate" during legislative sessions between White men legislators, but the Speaker did not interfere by silencing members. Rep. Wilson's experience stands out because of the uniqueness of the Speaker's engagement on this legislative debate and that it happened to a Black woman lawmaker. This observation was confirmed by lawmakers who were interviewed for this project.

During their interviews Rep. Yang and Rep. Robbins all confirmed this moment was problematic. Particular because it showed how the Black women lawmakers uniformly expressed that they are not treated equally compared to other lawmakers. Rep. Yang provided a detailed and thoughtful reaction to this encounter.

> Researcher: Were you at the legislative session the other day where an incident took place between the speaker and Representative Wilson.
>
> Rep. Yang: Oh, that was a moment. So, we were over here looking at the deal. I don't think she was being argumentative. And so that is what men and what white people do to Black women. They automatically box you into being argumentative or angry when we're passionate. And we're trying to get our point across. Especially when we're right. But I think what we were saying- first of all, he wasn't listening. And we were thinking if she had brought line 582 and 583 of the bill then maybe he would go back and understood what she was saying. And at some point, I guess you got to decide, okay. He's not gonna change, so what do we do?

Rep. Yang framed that particular moment, controlling images of the Sapphire stereotype (Harris-Perry 2011) as the the angry Black women archetype that animated the Speaker's decision to intervene in the legislative debate. The Speaker's formal position alongside of his perceived misogynoir fused together to shape how Rep. Wilson was treated in Rep. Yang's perspective. Rep. Wilson's passionate argument on the floor was read through a race-sexist lens, which in Rep. Yang's estimation was a justification to control the behaviors of a Black woman lawmaker.

Similarly, Rep. Grey noted another instance that pointed to how misogynoir functions in the legislature. She retold an occurrence where a Black women lawmaker was arrested during the legislative session because of being associated with a protest that was occurring at the statehouse. Rep. Grey explains the moment,

Rep. Grey: We had a senator- this was before I was sworn in- who was arrested. And we still don't know why they said that she was a part of a protest. They asked her to leave. She didn't. They arrested her. So, a Black woman- and the law says you cannot arrest anyone. You can't arrest the senator during a session in the Capitol and they one hundred percent did that. And it's a- it's like a law, just, like, rules, and they still… and the Speaker did nothing, like, no one in power, like, uh, you know- Mm-mm.

Researcher: That's wild.

Rep. Grey: Yeah, the lawsuit is still pending, so, yeah. Doubt they would have did that for a white woman.

To provide more context to Rep. Grey's example, it is important to note that lawmakers are not supposed to be arrested during the legislative session unless the Speaker says they are disturbing the peace. The Speaker extended his ability to let law enforcement in by assuming that the lawmaker was with the protest group. Rep. Grey believed that the Speaker drew from stereotypes of the angry Black woman in his decision to have this lawmaker arrested. In her mind, the Speaker would not have had a white woman lawmaker who was protested at the statehouse arrested. Furthermore, Rep. Grey reiterated that this was an unlawful arrest that happened at the request of the Speaker.

Intersectional Resistance

Whiles the above examples of rampant misogynoir in the statehouse are disturbing to the legislators in this study, they all not ways in which they are actively challenging these incidents racist and sexist incidents. The Black woman lawmakers provided examples of resistance during floor session. For example, Rep. Stevens points to her ability to ask questions at an opportune time in order to shape outcomes in the legislature during legislative session. Rep. Stevens said,

I already have a reputation for...I pushed my button; I'm gonna ask an intellectual

or scientific question. I am going to question you. I'm not gonna do some cute

little...like, some people push a button and ask something really cute or try to be

funny. That's not gonna be me. I'm gonna ask you something, and I'm gonna

make you think. I remember specifically one bill about, it had nothing to do with

science, actually, but I stood up, and I asked a question, and after asking my

question, everyone around me was like, "I was actually gonna vote for it, but after

you asked that, you know what? I can't vote for that. Not in its current form." So

the bill failed. Um, so there is power when you do get to stand up and speak-

In this quote Rep. Stevens' juxtaposes her serious questions about bills and legislative processes

to the prevailing informal culture in which legislators use their time joking with one another

rather than discussing legislation. During the legislative session, Rep. Stevens connects her

ability to ask an intellectual question to shape her colleagues perspective on the legislation. In

this case, her academic training and doctorate in the natural sciences gives her academic training

to be able to ask probing questions, regardless of the subject area. While Rep. Stevens also

shared several instances of the Speaker and other legislators with power trying to marginalize

her, she is resilient. Rep. Stevens does not give into the jokes or formal rules that attempt to

silence her. Rather, she continues to ask fact-based questions and use direct lines of inquiry as a

method to prod her colleagues on the substance of a particular bill. Her resistance emerges via

questioning bills that have been rubber stamped by the Speaker that in turn influenced some of

her colleagues.

A prominent example of Rep. Grey's resistance is her use of speaking time to ask

Republicans about alternatives to anti-abortion policies that truly center children. I observed this

act of intersectional resistance several times in the Georgia statehouse. As a social worker, Rep.

Grey's frames her action as a response to the strident anti-abortions policies that were passed the

prior legislative session. Rep. Grey states,

Rep. Grey: Um, I don't know if this- if this is an underlying thing for me before the heartbeat bill. You know, one of the things that they say is if you have an unwanted pregnancy, you can give your baby up for adoption. I started introducing a child who's up for adoption every single day on the House floor. And that is my passive-aggressive way of telling them it's not a perfect thing. It's not an option for everyone. And it doesn't always work.

Researcher: Yeah, I remember you mentioning children to adopt, I think two weeks ago. And Michael, was it? You mentioned...I thought that was powerful. I was curious about what was going on there?

Rep. Grey: So, I mean, the bottom line is we have, you know, close to 400 children in Georgia that are just sitting there. And, so, the exposure is the number one reason I do it, but the underlying issue is to let you know that foster care is not a perfect entity. And this affects Black children more than it affects white children because there are more Black children available than white children. And we're not that much of the population. So, it doesn't match up with how much of the population we are. So that's- that's me passive-aggressively pushing back.

`Rep. Grey embodies resistance during these particular moments in the legislative session. Her unique strategy provides visibility for the youth that need to be adopted. Additionally, Rep. Grey notes that an overreliance of the foster care system should not be the main argument against Georgia's restrictive abortion policies. Furthermore, the recognition that more Black children than White need to be adopted should help her colleagues to understand the racialized implications of their policies. Thus, the legislative action of her during the legislative session to mention different children that needed to adopted is an act of resistance. The particular context of the legislature, passing extreme anti-abortion laws and the legislative session, animated her strategy of resistance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the experiences of the participants in different space within the institution of the Georgia General Assembly. I find that in the statehouse whether that be

breakrooms, committee meetings or the floor session the interviewees experience varies forms of

marginalization. However, I also showcase how the lawmakers who were interviewed also

showcased different forms of resistance.

CHAPTER 4: HEAVY IS THE CROWN: POLICYMAKING AND INTERSECTIONAL RESISTANCE

> I like to call that the activation energy. Um, in every reaction - in every biological
> reaction, there's an activation energy. The way I just explain it to my students
> is...it's the right place, right time energy. When two molecules have to come
> together, they have to come together exactly in the right conformation in order for
> the reaction to occur. – Rep. Stevens

Introduction

In the epigraph, Rep. Stevens, who holds a doctorate degree in microbiology, frames how her experiences with and understanding of the policy process in the Georgia General Assembly. Using this metaphor, the reaction energy is the bill that will become a law and the molecules that interact at the right place and right time is the policy process. This metaphor is used to explain that policymaking is not a linear process. Rather, some bills become a law because of luck, the right timing, or because of a particular political context. This quote from Rep. Stevens builds on the other data that I collected during my fieldwork that helps to explain how the informal norms of the Georgia state legislature determine a policy process that often requires everything "to come together in the right conformation" in order for Black women lawmakers to further their policy agenda.

In this chapter, I examine the policy process as experienced by Black women lawmakers. This chapter focuses on three parts. The first part is how (in)formal norms in the Georgia House of Representatives operate to obstruct were obstacles that prevented Black women lawmaker in doing their jobs. I label these informal norms in three thematic sections: gifting, defined as the GOP leadership gives bills for their members to sponsor legislation and policy theft, which

entails bills that are stolen from other lawmakers. I use the CROWN Act as a case study to demonstrate how the lawmakers experienced these themes. The CROWN Act is a bill to protect against hair discrimination in the workplace, housing, and education. Another policy that serves as a case study in this chapter is a needle exchange program. Taken together, these proposed bills explicate both the formal and informal norms that shape the legislative behaviors of Black women lawmakers. The third and concluding section demonstrates that resistance is a strategy to advance the agenda of Black women lawmakers. I argue that intersectional resistance is a useful framework to theorize identity in the policy process.

Literature Review

Policymaking

The current theoretical frames used to explicate the policy process (i.e., Weible and Sabatier's Theories of the Policy Process (2017, 2014), has not adequately theorized the role that identity has in the policy process. The sub-field of public policy theorizes the process of the policymaking and the application of policy. Theories of the policymaking process emphasizes the (non)actions of the government, actors, and societal influences on the outcomes of policy. This scholarship moves away from the previous work that framed policy making in a ridged staged format of the policy cycle (Weible 2018). Many of the different theoretical models incorporate the undergirding ideas of incrementalism, institutions, and bounded rationality which I explain in turn. Incrementalism sought to explain how policies do not dramatically deviate from other policies because policy makers have a few alternatives at their discretion because they have limited information (Lindbolm 1959). In this framework, institutions were central to explaining how the formalized structural of rules were crucial to understanding the development of policy (March and Olsen 1984). Next, bounded rationality argues that humans operate with limited

information which impacts the lawmaker's ability to have all information on particular policy in the process (Simon 1955). These theories of the policymaking process are intended to describe a linear logic to how a bill is made and then later becomes a law.

Initially developed by Kingdon (2010[1984]), policy entrepreneurs can couple together a problem is being brought (problem stream) to the fore front of the national mood (political stream), and the policy idea that is floating in the policy community (policy stream) together when the policy window (opportunity to get specific legislation passed) (Herweg, Zahariadis, and Zohlnhöfer 2018). Another framework Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, sought to explain how dramatic policy change happen in institutions that are design to keep the status quo (Baumgartner, Jones, and Mortensen 2018). The Advocacy Coalition Framework focuses on how coalitions change policy and how the learn from the outcomes by influencing policy subsystem which is comprised of the policy topic, territorial scope, and actors who influence on specific subsystem (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible, and Ingold 2018). However, in these conceptualizations of the policy process solely seek to explain specific phenomenon such as major policy changes or to explain how a policy becomes a law. The role of a lawmaker's identity in the policy making process is absent in this literature.

Political Representation

Descriptive representation, meaning that the representative mirrors the characteristics of the represented, influences the types of policies that lawmakers advance. Pitkin (1967) creates a typology of representation by conceptualizing descriptive representation (the legislators demographically looking like the constituents), substantive representation (the legislators passing policies that reflect the will and needs of the constituents), and symbolic representation (bills that do not bring material change to their constituents but elicit an emotional response).

Representation in these terms is thought of as the ways that legislators are advocating for their constituents in ways that effect the constituent's livelihood in materially.

The connection between descriptive and substantive representation demonstrates the ways that minority lawmakers advocate for particular groups over others within the legislature. While early work in representation showed that descriptive representation does not matter (Swain 1995), subsequent work in the field showed that descriptive representation matters for substantive representation (Lublin 1997, Cannon 1999; Tate 2003; Minta 2011). The connections between descriptive and substantive representation led to questions about how descriptive and substantive representation are linked for lawmakers and constituents from marginalized backgrounds. Mansbridge (1999) argues that descriptive representation can lead to substantive representation when the conditions of distrust in the legislature for marginalize communities, marginalized communities have un-crystalized interests, creating social meaning for marginalized communities' ability to rule, and if marginalized communities. Dovi (2002) drawing from Cohen's (1999) work argues that preferable descriptive representation can occur when there is mutual recognition and relationship between a representative and the subgroup. Next, Whitby (1997) demonstrates that the presence of Black lawmakers is most heavily seen in the amendment stages of the policy process. Similarly, Black women lawmakers advocate for varying of progressive issues during informal phases of the policy process (Smooth 2002). In sum, scholarship has demonstrated that Black lawmakers are more likely to advocate for policies that improve the conditions of Black people and other marginalized communities.

Minority lawmakers from varying social locations bring different ways to think about problems and bring innovative solutions to policy problems. For example, empirical evidence shows that Black women lawmakers are more likely to advance progressive policies that benefit

varying social groups like individuals in low socio-economic statuses, the Black community, women, children, and other Black women (Orey et al 2006; Reingold and Smith 2012; Brown and Banks 2014; Brown 2014).

While the theories of the policy process fail to investigate the role of identity in the policymaking process, the representation scholarship explicates the role that minority legislators have in the agenda setting stage of the policy process. However, assuming that all lawmakers can enter the legislature on the same footing and generalizing their behavior replicates problematic theoretical frameworks. Thus, to generalize that the policy process functions the same from all lawmakers regardless of their social groups obfuscates the reality of the policymaking process that also reproduces social hierarchies that are found in American culture. I bring these two sets of literatures together to examine how the policymaking process is informed by the social groups as well as the formal and informal rules of a legislative body.

In sum, a lawmaker's identity plays a prominent role in the policymaking process. The analysis is not on the identity itself rather how identity serves as proxy to understand how meaning is structured through the response behaviors of legislators with varying social identities. Black women lawmakers navigate the policymaking process different because of their social identities. Taken in tandem with the formal and informal rules of the legislature, Black women's positionality may present challenges to advancing their political agenda. Theorizing the policy process from this perspective moves away from the generalizing to offer a deeper contextualization of how power(s) operates for lawmakers with marginalized identities.

Data and Methods

Stages of the Georgia General Assembly Legislative Process

During the 2019-2020 legislative session there were 8 Democrats and 31 Republicans. The Georgia legislature is considered a citizen legislature because the schedule is only for 40 legislative days, small to no staff, and members usually do not seek opportunities to move up in the legislative hierarchy (Howard, Fleischmann, and Engstrom 2017). The legislative institutions of the Georgia General Assembly, like other state legislatures, has a formal process in policymaking. A legislator can draft either a bill that focuses on a propose change to existing law or adding to an existing law that is statewide or local. Another bill that a legislator can draft is a resolution which is a legislator expressing their opinion. When a legislator drafts a bill they must first go to the Office of Legislative Counsel, an office of attorneys that advise the legislator on legal issues and help draft the bill. The day after a legislator files the bill with the Clerk of the House, which is a member that is elected by the Speaker than voted in by the majority of the house members. The clerk's role is to keep track of the daily proceedings of the chamber, record if lawmakers are absent, tally votes, collect all information to produce reports on legislation, keep track of the House's activities on bills, and make copies of bills to distribute them to members and constituents. The Clerk reads the bill out loud in the chamber and the Speaker of the House decides which committee will receive the bill. This is the formal process known as first reading. On the following legislative day, the clerk reads the title of the bill in the chamber even though it is already in committee this is considered the second reading.

During committee a bill is assigned to the appropriate committees and sub-committees. A legislator then presents the bill within the committee. During this time, lobbyist or members of the public can voice their opinions on the bill. In Georgia there are "sunshine laws" which means that media has to be permitted to committee meetings to allow for more transparency for public

scrutiny per the Georgia Constitution the (Robert, Fleischmann, and Egnstrom 2017). The committee can pass a bill in three different ways: 1) pass the bill as is, 2) pass a bill with amendments, or 3) pass by substitute which means that an alternative bill was created to move forward. The committee can also recommend that the bill does not pass, or they can hold the bill which means the bill dies in committee. Another way that a bill in committee can move on to the next stage, a floor debate, is by rule 59. This procedural mechanism occurs when a member calls the chamber to vote on removing bill from the committee for a floor vote which requires two-thirds of the members that are present (Robert, Fleischmann, and Egnstrom 2017). The next stage of the policy-making process is the floor debate.

After the bill moves from committee to floor debate, the bill has to be scheduled on the calendar by the clerk of the House. However, the clerk only puts the bill on the calendar once it has been approved by the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee is a bi-partisan committee where the members are appointed by the Speaker. The Speaker of the House calls the bill and the clerk read the bills title for the third time (third reading). During this time the sponsor of the bill stands at the podium that is in middle of both legislative chambers. In order for legislators to speak about the bill, they first have to obtain permission from the Speaker and then ask the legislator presenting the bill if they can ask a question. During the floor debate there is allotted time for supporting and dissenting opinions about the bill. A simple majority is required for bill passage. A legislator that is presenting the bill can refuse to take questions. This is usually done by voting machine that is unlocked by the Speaker. Each legislator has buttons which they push during this time to approve or disapprove of the bill. By the state constitution, the only topics that require two-third votes are tax legislation, amendments on the constitution, veto overrides,

punitive action taken against member of the General Assembly or motion to change the order of business.

Once the bill gets a simple majority of the members present, then the bill is transmitted to the Senate and will follow a similar process. The Senate then either approves the bill or makes amendments to the bill which then goes back to the House. If there is any disagreement over the bill between House and the Senate then a conference committee is called for work on the final language of the bill and deal with any differences. The conference committee is made up of the presiding officer in the House and Senate and members of the standing committees that worked on the bill and voted in favor of the bill. Once the bill is passed it is certified by the clerk of the house then it is moved on for the governor to sign. The governor can either approve the bill or veto the bill. Georgia, like many other states, the governor can full veto or line-item veto which only applies to appropriation bills. Vetoing any bill by the governor requires an explanation. The General Assembly can either modify the bill towards what the governor wanted, or the General Assembly can override the governor's veto with a two-thirds majority in each chamber.

Power(s) Analysis of Policymaking

Recurring themes emerged from the lawmakers in the ways that policymaking becomes an insurmountable task because of partisanship and informal norms. Specifically, I identify two informal norms of *policy theft and gifting*. In the legislative context given in the partisan control of the Republican party these informal norms give the capacity for the appropriation of the interviewees labor. These informal norms currently serve as the mechanism for the Republican party that create obstacles for the Black women lawmakers in my study. Republican control of policymaking is a byproduct of their supermajority in Georgia but is amplified through the use of informal norms that dictate how has power in the state legislature. Unwritten in the formalized

rules of the institution, informal norms show up in ways that create undue burden placed on the minority party in general and Black women lawmakers.

Gifting

The formalinized elements of the legislature are baked together with informal norms that negatively impact how interviewees navigate the process. From the participants perspective the findings point to an informal norm of bill given being used as a way the Republican party gains success in the Georgia General Assembly. One legislator who has worked at the Georgia state house for more than three sessions explains how legislative given functions. Rep. Yang states,

> I remember- um, well, I remember there was a white male who was elected who was in a, uh, what was the world they used? Who was in, quote unquote, what they considered a competitive district. We saw, the [Republican party] gravitate to him, made sure he had legislation and [made] sure he had support. Uh, there [was a] white female Republican, we saw her get a bill two days after beginning here. To date, I haven't been offered [bills] yet. So, I found myself trying to figure it out on my own…But I saw the difference. As a matter of fact, he [Republican male colleague] and I shared a suite. I saw them [Republican leadership] go to his office and support him and do work. And I'd sit here. It still kinda happens now, though. But what I'm saying was I saw that. Was it because he was a white male? I don't know. Was it because he had a little more of an idea? I don't know. But what I do know was I saw the support he had and the lack of support I got. Didn't stop me, though.

From the formalized perspective, partisan control allows Republicans to be able to vote in a unified fashion. Republican party to not only gives bills to newly elected Republicans, but GOP legislators have an easier time navigating the policymaking process because of the guidance that they receive from their party's leadership. This means that for some Republican members they

can avoid the intensive labor of developing ideas for policies and having to strategize on how to get their bill through the House.

Policy Theft

A recurring experience that emerged for the respondents is how bills are stolen. Theft in the legislative policy making process is a symptom of how the power(s) worked against the participants through the partisan control of the Republican party. Rep. Baily explained this phenomenon,

> Rep. Baily: Now we are the minority as Democrats. So that presents another challenge not just based on being a female, but the fact that we're in a minority [party]. We don't do well, [we] put great bills out there and it doesn't get to the floor or it gets stolen. It gets stolen. Stolen or put in a Republican's bill. Some of the things that we've put out there don't make it to the floor, but it ends up in other people's bills.
>
> Researcher: Oh, what do you do to respond to that or do you just let it go?
>
> Rep. Baily: It's really hard because you're not in the majority [party]. So, you know, sometimes you just say okay at least it's getting in the bill and will help. Our ultimate job is to try our best. To do more good than harm, you know.

The act of stealing requires that one legislator (or group or legislators) has the opportunity or ability to take the property or ideas of another. Because the policy process has multiple stages of development and is under the purview of difference offices, there are several stages in which legislative ideas can be stolen. Because the majority party controls the legislative process, there are more formal opportunities for the GOP to take the legislative ideas of the minority party without attributing it to the Democrats. Next, this theft is made possible because of the informal norms in the Georgia statehouse.

Here, Rep. Bailey notes that in order for the policy to be successful, the bill sponsor needs to be a Republican member. The formal structure enables for amendments to be added to bill. Yet, Rep. Baily juxtaposes bills that have been outright stolen with having Democrat backed amendments added to existing Republican bills. This indicates that this is informal norm that attempting to coercive members in the minority party. When Democratic amendments are added to the bill, Republicans often take credit for this legislation without properly crediting the minority party for its inclusion. In this case, a minority party legislator faces two unsettling possibilities if he or she would like to see his/her bill passed: a) the bill passes with an amendment that the Democrat will not receive formal recognition or b) the legislative idea is stolen outright, and the Democrat will not receive formal recognition. In the next section I provide two policy examples of how the policy process because of power(s) operate creates a dilemma for the Black women lawmakers in this study.

Case Study 1: The Paradox of Policymaking Success: Needle Exchange, Stealing and the Meaning of Policy Success

As noted above, legislative theft is an informal norm within the Georgia statehouse that is enacted because of the formalized legislative structure enables the majority party to engage in this behavior. The Georgia legislature does not provide a high salary or robust resources for staff. In fact, many times the legislators rely on an office secretary that is shared by multiple lawmakers in the office. This lack of resources forces the legislators to find support through their owns means or volunteers. This means that crafting legislation takes an immense amount of energy, time, and resources. So, the theft of an idea for legislation is not just stealing the bill it is appropriating the labor that went into crafting the bill.

Rep. Grey explains the problem,

Rep. Kepner is the representative where... HIV/AIDS is her thing. And for years she's been trying to get an HIV program started. She had a bill for that. She had a needle exchange program she's been trying to pass for years and years and years. So, in 2018, the blue wave... and we had so many people, and now they're, you know, they [Republican party] have to look more moderate. A brand-new freshman Republican passes a needle exchange program without any problem. And he came in [to the] Health and Human Services [committee] and read it like that was the first time he'd ever read it. It was her bill. That was her HIV/AIDS program. A Republican passed it, no problem. That was her bill, word for word. All that work, and all that time and energy, and her passion, like, and she- You know, we- of course our feelings are hurt. Our egos are hurt. But the bottom line is: she wanted that needle exchange program. She wanted AIDS programs that help the community, whether it's her name on the bill or some dipshit's name on a bill. But the outcome is that she won't get any of the credit that dipshit will. And that's how the [Republican] party keeps going.

Rep. Kepner is a Black women lawmaker whose agenda included advancing a needle exchange program. The desire for the GOP to appear more moderate in the face of the 2018 blue wave was the impetus for this needle exchange program to be stolen. However, the GOP supermajority and the informal norm of bill theft already in place, enabled this bill to be effectively stolen from Rep. Kepner.

The labor of creating this bill and the legislative investment by Rep. Kepner was appropriated by the Republican party and given to a freshmen legislator. The stolen labor puts Rep. Kepner in a difficult situation creating a paradox of policy success. She cannot claim legislative credit this bill's passage, which certainly would aid her in reelection efforts. But Rep. Kepner may have a sense of satisfaction knowing that several Georgians can now take advantage of this needle exchange program which will hopefully slow the spread of HIV in the state.

The paradox of policy success is an indicator to how power(s) function in the legislature for the Black women legislators in my study. The stolen bill was sponsored by a Republican freshman which brought a lot of frustration to Rep. Grey and others. Because this bill was stolen from a Black woman representative, the lawmakers in my study were particularly frustrated by this behavior because it epitomized their marginalization in the statehouse.

One avenue of influence for Black women lawmakers in the legislature is being known as an expert in the particular policy issue (Smooth 2002). The perception of influence in specific issues means that marginalized legislators can create space for themselves in the institution. This means that the legislator can be chosen by the Party to speak on issues because they are seen as the advocate. The second implication is that the legislator can influence how the issue is addressed and the solutions for the issues. The social capital gained by being viewed as a policy expert works in favor for the legislator by both constituents and legislators who view him/her as an effective legislator. However, all the labor that the lawmakers put into crafting themselves as policy expert on certain issues can become diminished if bills are stolen. In the case of Rep. Kepner, her ideas were stolen, and she may not be seen as a policy expert.

Unlike Rep. Kepner, other Black women lawmakers resisted policy theft. I use the example of the CROWN Act demonstrate what happens when a Black woman legislator refuses to go along with policy reappropriation.

Case Study 2: The Paradox of Policymaking: The Failure of Resistance(?), the Crown Act and the Meaning of Success

In the 2019-2020 legislative session, the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act did not become a state law in Georgia. This was because of the confluence of both the informal norms and that the bill was introduced during the Republican

controlled legislature. My analysis of this failed bill shows that the policymaking process is a racialized process because of power(s) dynamics in how labor is appropriated. The CROWN Act is designed to redress a part of the historical legacy of anti-Black racism in the United States by expanding the definition of race to include hair texture and style in the Fair Employment and Housing Act and state education codes. This bill would protect Black individuals from being discriminated against because of their hair texture and those who wear protective hairstyles. Hair discrimination is an enduring legacy of the United States colonialism that has created whiteness as the hegemonic standard (Hunter 2005; Patton 2006; Byrd and Tharps 2014). This policy was initially introduced in California then diffused to a number of states including Georgia. The CROWN Act died on the first reading in the Georgia state legislature which makes it an ideal case to understand legislative power(s), resistance, and the idea of success.

The CROWN Act mobilized a group of Black lawmakers from the House which included 5 Black women legislators and one Black male legislator. Rep. Stevens explained that, "We [House members] all got on Zoom together, and had, like, a Zoom conversation, and it was amazing. It was really good because that just, like, doesn't happen often." The bill energized legislators at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic enough to galvanize supporters to gather via Zoom during an unprecedented global health outbreak. The legislators met via zoom to strategize how to get the CROWN Act passed in the Georgia House of Representatives. However, the conversations quickly became tense between these legislators as the lawmakers attempted to decide who should be the prime sponsor of the bill. According to Rep. Stevens, the lawmakers on the call quickly realized that the bill would have a greater chance of passing if it were introduced by a Republican. In essence, this meant that a Black legislator would not get credit for sponsoring the bill.

In providing further information about this bill, Rep. Grey explained that "Um, so, it [the Crown Act] started in the Senate with a Black woman, and it was moving through the Senate. A lobbyist got involved and felt that the best way to get it passed in the House is if all white Republicans were on it." Because all the Republicans in the Georgia state legislature are White, this would effectively mean that there would not be a Black sponsor on the bill if the lawmakers followed the advice of the lobbyist. In sum, a bill that would end race discrimination on the basis of Afro-hair texture and protective styles most commonly wore by Blacks would have to be championed by a White lawmaker in order to make it to Governor Kemp's desk. The value of the white Republican name over the Black lawmakers is indicative how the formalized policymaking process can be a racialized process.

The Black women lawmakers in my study who discussed the CROWN Act took exception to this bill being sponsored by their White counterparts to their exclusion as well as Republican attempts to appropriate the labor of Black lawmakers in bringing this bill to Georgia. Rep. Stevens explained,

> Sitting in meetings, this quickly devolved, in my opinion, into, "well, we need white people on the bill so that it's not a Black bill." I'm like, "but it's a bill about Black people's hair that no white people are not being discriminated because of the hair that comes out of their heads." …Um, then it became, "we need to get Republicans on the bill." Again, I have no problem with a bipartisan bill. I think that's amazing. I would love for the bill to be bipartisan. I don't think that Republicans should have to be top signers. I don't think that you should have to have white faces to validate a bill about Black hair… I don't think white people should get credit for giving us the ability to wear our hair.

In her analysis of why the bill failed, Rep. Stevens reiterates that a bi-partisan bill that protect against hair texture discrimination was a strategy that she preferred. But she was not in favor of having White Republicans as the only top signers of the bill. She explained that this made little

sense as Whites have not faced systemic discrimination over their hair texture. For that reason, the Black women in my study believed that Black legislators should be the ones to carry the bill through the policy process. In turn, Six Black lawmakers decided to sponsor the bill themselves. The bill ultimately died. Rep. Grey provides a postmortem analysis on the failure of the bill by stating:

> So, we started our bill in the House with all Black women. And we made a big deal out of it. We took pictures, we had a thing on the floor, but that is us pushing back. And the CROWN Act itself is, like, you use us for so much. You cannot have our hair. You cannot have our hair. That is- that is us saying, this is where we draw the line where you cannot have our- where you're not giving our hair to white people. I'm sorry. It's just...it's our hair. It's about Black hair, and he didn't want any Black people on it. That's what we did. But that was- that is us pushing back.

Three Black women lawmakers in my study we apart of the six who championed this bill. In doing so, Rep. Stevens, Rep. Grey, and Rep. Robbins decided to resist the informal norms of the legislature. They introduced this bill with full knowledge that it would not advance in the Georgia state legislature. These Black women legislators did not want the bill to be appropriated by White Republican lawmakers in order for it to succeed. This was a deliberate choice that they made.

Resistance is analytical framework to understand the behaviors of the lawmakers as it related to the informal norms and institutional control of the Republican legislature. Resistance emerged in two major ways for the CROWN Act in the 2019-2020 legislative session. First, the lawmakers had to resist the informal norm of that there needed to be a White Republican name due to their perspective that white Republicans should not gain credit for a bill that dealt with hair texture discrimination. Part of this informal norm is coupled with the labor that has been

stolen from Black lawmakers. The second part of resistance is the presentation of the issue, that

is from Rep. Grey, the Black lawmakers were pushing back on the idea that policy's that benefit

a specific group, specifically Black people and those with Afro-textured hair, cannot be

introduced in the statehouse. The bill's sponsors took pictures on the floor as a symbolic gesture

to signals to their colleagues that the CROWN Act is designed for those with Afro-textured hair

in Georgia. In this framework resistance is not just a symbolic act towards the who is sponsoring

the bill rather Black women lawmakers demonstrated that Republicans could not steal the labor

of their Black counterparts.

Resistance in the Legislature

The legislators in my study adapted to the difficulties of getting legislation passed in the

Georgia statehouse. The process is filled with roadblocks during the committee process, getting

bills heard, and policy theft that they developed creative strategies in dealing with the Georgia

legislature. This response to the institutional dimensions can be seen in how Rep. Robbin tried to

carry a bill on financial literacy in schools.

> Rep. Robbins: It's something, again, that will benefit our community and you
> know, of course, people you know, some people don't have a business degree.
> And they [Republican party] don't want to do that. Everyone was like "wow, that
> was great to have". But you know, it's okay. I did talk to the superintendent. He
> and I will be meeting to discuss it further. It's more beneficial than learning about
> the civil war.
> Researcher: Essentially you created an alternative strategy to see this work
> coming to fruition. It sounds like.
> Rep. Robbins: Right, exactly.

A policy that would mandate that financial literacy was taught in schools is viewed as a non-

partisan issue for Rep. Robbin. But, like many other bills, this policy was partisan. Robbin

believes that if she was in the majority party than her bill would have been handled more "professionally," less rude. Rep. Robbin echoed the observations of Rep. Grey and others who discussed problematic behaviors exhibited by the Republican party. However, Rep. Robbins exhibits resistance because she decided to bypass the formal legislative process and go directly to the superintendent about her suggestion for financial literacy to be taught in schools. While the structures of the legislature constrain her ability to legislate, she transgresses the policy process of the institution by directly going an individual who can implement her agenda.

Navigating the policy process in the Georgia legislature is not a linear process for the the legislators in my study. Rep. Stevens states

Um, but yeah, so, you have to push back, and I feel like, when I got here, I thought...you start at A, and then you go to B. And then, from B, you go to C. Right. And then, what I realized is between A and B, there's a whole lot of detouring that has to happen. And I didn't- I wasn't prepared for all of that. Um, there's a lot of detouring, and then, you might get on a detour and realize that there's another roadblock on the detour.

For Rep. Stevens the formal policy processes a messy process that she was not initially prepared to navigate. However, she later articulates that she learned different strategies to navigate the policy process. Rep. Stevens continues,

And, uh, so, that's really hard. I have not been successful in getting a hearing yet on a bill, so that has been the biggest roadblock. But this time, I took meetings with the Speaker and brought my bill to the Speaker. I've scheduled meetings with the Governor's office just in case [my bill] got a hearing and it did pass. I want the governor to know this is coming. And I want to know whether or not he'll try to veto it. I met up with groups that support the bill. [I]set up meetings with the Department of Education about the bill. The first year, I just directed the bill, and I thought that the process would work for me. And this time, I'm like, I

have to be a lot more deliberate, a lot more, um, like, I have to be more forceful in

putting the bill in front of people.

One dimension of gender politics scholarship frames the extra labor that women lawmakers

perform including coalition building (Fraga et al 2008; Wiseman et al 2014). My study

underscores the extant literature. Black women lawmakers in Georgia explicate that they expend

additional   labor in figuring the policy process. The policy process is not linear but filled with

many roadblocks require Black women lawmakers to strategize on how to carry their bill through

the legislature. As noted by Rep. Stevens, a strategy around this non-linear policy process is to

reach out to non-legislative stakeholders with influence who may be able to sway the opinion of

the legislative leadership. Black women lawmakers may have to develop creative to combat the

informal norms that obstruct their ability make policy.

Conclusions

The primary task of this chapter is to examine from a policy process standpoint how

Black women lawmakers carry bills through the policy process in the House of Representatives

in Georgia and why they choose certain strategies over others. Intersectional resistance is a

useful theoretical framework that works to disentangle the ways that Black women lawmakers in

the minority party in the Georgia legislature navigate being marginalized by the (in)formal

norms structuring the policy process. The results indicate that from the perspective of the

interviewees they face a number of obstacles.

The most glaring systematic behavioral component in understanding the structural

dimensions of power(s) is by the informal norms of gifting and policy theft. These different

informal norms are indicators to the role of how power(s) structures what the participants face in

navigating the policy making process. I have demonstrated that policy theft operates in

racialized-gendered terms. The Black women lawmakers in this study linked it to specific examples of how white Republican legislators have extracted their ideas, time, resources, credit, and labor. While I identify different informal norms, this does not mean that they work separately. For example, while Rep. Grey and her colleagues while the informal norm of gifting operated in partisan terms in how early career Republicans were given bills to sponsor some of these bills were the bills stolen from Black lawmakers. Partisan control impacts the formalized policy process for the Black women lawmaker as they are in the minority party.

Successful policymaking becomes a paradox for some of the respondents through the ways that these informal norms impacted their ability to navigate the policy process. The general understanding of successful policies are bills that become law. However, from this perspective we miss 1) how not everyone can pass policy in the same way even if there is a standard process and 2) how power(s) operates to structure success. For example, the needle exchange program is an idea that was stolen and given to a freshmen Republican member. From the perspective of having successful bill become laws this can be seen as success that brings substantive change to constituents. On the other hand, this has ramification for the legislator, specifically in how the legislator is attempting to carve out a space for herself as being a policy expert in the statehouse. Turning our focus to the CROWN Act, having a white Republican carrying the bill and having all white Republicans on the bill might have had the bill become a law, but this is problematic because of the appropriation of creativity, labor, and struggle. The informal norms are symptom, and has greater significance, to how the labor of Black lawmakers is stolen through bills and to take this bill means appropriating issues that do not impact white Republican and taking the credit it for it.

Black women lawmakers in the Georgia House of Representatives are structurally disadvantaged in the policy process. However, the data also indicates that the respondents are resisting structural marginalization through adapting to their work conditions and advancing their own agenda. Some respondents realized that policy making is not a linear process, but rather a process where they need to strategize the next step. This points to a dimension of gender politics scholarship of the extra labor of women legislator. From some of the interviewee's perspective, some of them advance their agenda by bring their ideas directly to stakeholders.

The onset of policy making is not an easy task for the majority of lawmakers that enter the legislature, but the legislative process is not structured the same for everyone. The extant policymaking literature does not adequately capture the dynamics of the Georgia state legislature. My work fills in this gap by reevaluating what success means when the institutions are not designed for everyone equally. While Republican members in the legislature might be passing more laws, this does not actuarily capture the meaning of success if the structure is designed to benefit the party in control of the legislature. In many ways even if Black women lawmakers are able to pass one piece of legislation it may carry more weight given the obstacles and hurdles of the informal and formal norms of the Georgia statehouse.

CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATIONS OF POWER: PERCEPTION OF POWER FROM THE WORLDVIEW OF THE LAWMAKER

Introduction

Scholars have asked about perceived influence in the legislature to understand legislative power. However, perceived influence as a concept suffers from multiple faulty assumptions that do not accurately capture how Black women lawmakers navigate the legislature. In this chapter, instead of asking which legislators are seen as influential by their peers, I focus on asking Black woman lawmakers how they defined power and how did they know when they see power in the legislature. This shift in question then expands the concept of perceived power while at the same time centering the legislative view of the respondents. This chapter is situated in the perceived influence scholarship because the concept is embedded in an interpretivist tradition of asking lawmakers how they view the legislature.

Perceived influence is a concept that asses the power of one lawmaker to change the behaviors of other lawmakers. This concept reveals bias in two ways. First, this definition reduces power that of individuals who are seen as influential but does not take seriously the robust processes that occur within the legislature. These processes can include formal rules that keep that the legislature operational as well as the informal dimensions and intrapersonal interactions that effect lawmaker's systematic behavior when interacting with the participants. Second, this definition has been presented as a generalizable view of power that cannot measure the degree of influence that a lawmaker has over another. Influence can be weighted as it may take multiple meanings or forms based on position of authority, rules, or context in which it is leveraged. As an interpretivist scholar, my intervention comes in a desire to a more precise

understanding of perceived influence by centering Black women's views within a particular

context.

The next section of this chapter reviews the literature of the concept of perceived

influence. I then apply the extant literature to the lived experiences of Black women lawmakers.

The third section presents the methods and data used for this chapter. From the data analysis, I

identify three recurring themes from the perspective of the respondents. The themes include

traditional concepts of power, informal dimensions of power, and intersectional resistance. The

last section is the conclusion.

Literature Review: Perceived Influence

The foundation of perceived influence is based on studies that asked lawmakers who they

saw as influential in the legislature. Early theorists agreed that in order to study power the

approach needed to be relational (between people) and that context mattered (March 1955;

Parsons 1963). This framing produced studies that examined general versus policy specific

influence, the role that demographics like jobs held before becoming a legislator, district

competitiveness, formal positions, and even surveying staffers to explain how power was

measured and assessed (Francis 1962; Meyer 1980; Hall 1992). More recent scholarship has

generally measured variation of the question 'who do you see as the most influential?" to include

a scale of "no influence to dictates policy" and "least effective to most effective (Clucas 2007;

Mooney 2013; Edwards 2018). This framework does not take into account of legislator's social

identities may or may not play a role in how their peers view them. As such, those that are seen

as either effective or noninfluential may be a byproduct of lawmakers holding stereotypical

views of their peers based on their gender, race, or other politically salient or marginalized

identities. As such, I propose that is necessary to center identity – for the purposes of this

dissertation – that of Black woman lawmakers, to better understand how perceived influence limits or expands current studies of legislative power.

Other scholars have taken up this task. For instance, extant literature has demonstrated that, Black women lawmakers often times do not feel welcomed in their legislative institutions (Barrett 1997; Smooth 2002). When surveyed many Black women lawmakers felt that they had to work twice as hard (Barrett 1997). Even when Black women lawmakers reach positions of influence within the legislature, they still do not feel welcomed (Smooth 2002). When framed differently, Black women lawmakers do not feel as if they are closer to spheres of power instead, they felt closer to the margins (Brown 2013). Even legislative friendship networks that are important for coalition building to influence within legislatures are delineated along racial lines for Black women lawmakers (Smooth 2002). Furthermore, when their legislative peers were surveyed findings indicate that Black women lawmakers are not as seen as facing any extra burdens and generally not as influential (Barrett 1997; Smooth 2002). What scholars find is that Black women lawmakers cannot completely assimilate to their legislative institutions which can and consequently feel excluded.

While feelings of marginalization are present in Black women legislators' responses in these studies, scholarship also presents a more nuance articulation of this marginalization. Barrett (1997) finds in survey responses indicate that while White women legislators feel that women are less able to accomplish legislative task because of personal attributes or barriers to access, Black women lawmaker respondents disagreed. Smooth (2002) demonstrates that while Black women lawmakers are not seen as generally influential in the statehouse, they are perceived to have expert knowledge over certain policy issue and in turn, have influence in the policy-making arena. Indeed, Brown (2013) shows that Black women lawmakers do not feel that they are at the

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center of power respondents also mentioned that they exert influence through formal positions, bargaining, extra-institutional mechanism like social media and community outreach, having particular knowledge, and the impact they have on their constituents.

This literature by Black women in politics scholar demonstrates that traditional concepts of perceived influence has not fully accounted for the multiple ways that Black women lawmakers resist or navigate the legislature. This literature demonstrates that Black women lawmakers respond to marginalizing conditions within the legislature with some levels of success. Furthermore, the response by Black women lawmakers finds alternative ways to be influential like becoming experts on specific policies or engaging with community outreach. This is a form of intersectional resistance. Intersectional resistance reframes the discussion about assumptions of who is influential to how do lawmakers see power in the legislature. This shift then prioritizes the voices of Black women lawmakers in an interpretive way that center how power operate in the Georgia legislature.

Methods and Data

The corner stone of this project is predicated on examining the concept of power from the perspective of Black women lawmakers. I frame this project; I frame my methodological approach in the principals of interpretivism. The interpretivist tradition of research calls for mapping the research site to gain exposure, meaning exposing the researcher to the wide variety of meaning made by relevant participants whether face-to-face or written, and intertextuality which refers to the way the data cites one another in repetition across different sources (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, Ch. 5). This particular approach to the knowledge production process specifically centers the voices of the lawmakers in a way that values the insight of their worldview. Furthermore, as my positionality as the researchers plays a role in the knowledge

production process because of my interactions with the lawmakers are acknowledge in how the data is collected and analyzed.

In draw from semi-structured interviews and observations in this chapter. The semi-structured interviews to help center the voices of the Black woman lawmakers as I examine their experiences and their view power within the Georgia General Assembly. Semi-structured interview is an approach that allows the researcher to have develop questions while at the same time allowing the conversation to flow by asking follow-up questions which maximizes data collection (Legard, Keegan, & Ward 2003, 141-142).[22] I examine the ways that lawmakers process events and moments by focusing in on their experiences within the responses (Maxwell 2013, 30-31). Semi-structures focus on the responses from the legislators to understand how they experienced or observed power in the Georgia General Assembly.

Along with semi-structured interviews I observed legislative sessions, committee meetings, and official documents to contextualize the responses from the participants. These observations allow to examine the interactions between legislators in Georgia legislature. By combining both observational and semi-structured interviews I was able to triangulate and expand the responses from the lawmakers.

Legislators in this study were asked the following questions: In your experience as a legislator, how would you define power? How do you know when a legislator has power? To

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[22] The initial research design specified applying unique methodologies to include varying members of the legislature, but due to COVID-19 the Georgia General Assembly shut down before cross-over day. Once my IRB was approved, I requested an interview via emailed to every Black women lawmaker at the Georgia Statehouse. I only got two responses one accepting the interview and another declining an interview. At the first interview, I asked Rep. Baily to if she would be able to put me in contact with others which led me to Rep. Stevens. The second strategy that help me get interviews was showing up at committee meetings and asking legislators for an interview which got me a meeting with Rep. Grey and Rep. Yang. Once the legislature was shutdown, I found various campaign websites, professional Facebook, and Twitter which was how I interviewed Rep. Robbins. There were three other legislators that initially responded to being able to be interviewed, but then never responded to follow up emails. I got in contact with 8 lawmakers, but only able to interview 5 Black women lawmakers.

code their responses, I isolate the lawmakers' responses to these two questions. My analysis of the Black women legislators' responses along with my observational data provide a deeper understanding of how the respondents navigate the institution and policy process.

My project is centered on Black women lawmakers who currently serve in the Georgia House of Representatives, the state's lower house. Four out of the five lawmakers in my study were in their first legislative terms in office, and one had been elected in 2015. Two legislators had bachelor's degrees, two others obtained their master's degrees, and one holds a doctorate degree. There are no Black Republicans serving in the Georgia state legislature.

Power in the Legislature

All of the legislators in this study directly responded to my questions about power in the Georgia state legislature. Three analytical themes were present in all of the lawmakers' responses. One of the consistent themes that emerged was traditional concepts of power including formalized institutional dimensions of power like Speaker and committee membership or assignment. These formalized positions of power undoubtedly elude the Black women in this study because they are all members of the minority party. These formal positions of power are currently controlled by the Republican majority in the Georgia state legislature. Next, lawmakers described instances of informal power. To understand the myriad of ways that Black women legislators navigate informal power structures, I build on Smooth's (2001) research which explicates how the Georgia state legislature is largely controlled through informal legislature functions. The third theme that emerges is intersectional resistance. Here, the Black women legislators in the study demonstrate how they push back on these two forms of power to exert their political will. In what follow, I showcase these thematic paradigms through the voices of the lawmakers in my study.

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Power as Formalized Structures: Partisan Control, Positions of Power, and Influence

During the interviews the Black women legislators identified traditional concepts of power such as partisan control, leadership positions, and influence as power within the legislature. These formalized forms of power are mostly indicative of holding leadership position in the state legislature. Partisanship and partisan control over these leadership positions largely animates the experiences of Black women lawmakers because they are in the minority party and excluded from several leadership positions in accordance with the rules of the Georgia state legislature.

For instance, Rep. Grey explains how those in position of authority and the majority party shape how she experiences navigating the legislature. Rep. Greys provides a very detailed account to that not only helps us contextualize the Georgia legislature, but adds nuance to how legislative studies engages with the concept. Quoting Rep. Grey at length, she states,

> … Um they [Republicans] have "Chairman" on their- on their nametag, and I just find that not only that- the name Chair- but when they address you as Chair. I just think it's strange, but it is a- it's like a dog that pees to mark their spot. You know? Yeah. That's what- that's what it feels like. Yeah. It's like, I'm Vice Chair such-and-such, I'm Chair such-and-such. You know, it's the title, and you can tell power when they don't even look at you in the face. 'I don't have to- I don't have to look at you eye-to-eye because you're beneath me. I don't have to be in the same room with you. You're- you have nothing. I have everything.'

These positions of leadership are institutional roles that grant specific lawmakers' authority over specific parts of the policy process and institution via how the rules write the scope of authority. The Chair position is a powerful role that denotes the second dimension of power in whih the power resides in the formalized role rather than an individual (Haugarrd 2010, 2018). Specifically, the Committee Chair are the only legislators who are permitted call a committee meeting and how the meeting proceeds via how much time is spent on a particular issue. In fact,

during my observation with the 2019-2020 legislative session, meetings would be postponed until the Chair arrives. During one committee meeting, the Vice-Chair waited on the Chair to arrive before starting because this Chair was the Chair of another committee which signals the authority that they have over the proceeding of the committee. This legislative maneuver is entirely left to the discretion of the Chair.

In this quote, Rep. Grey is signaling how power is positional within the institution which is what I classify as a second dimension of power, but also the informal behaviors of those in those roles which is what I term as the first dimension of power. Her quote indicates that there are two forms of power at play. First, those that occupy the formal position holds the power. Next, he metaphor of a dog marking their spot indicates that lawmakers that in these positions of authority signal and claim territory to the specific position. Dog marking their spot is a habit that canines perform to alert other dogs that they are present and take ownership of a particular space. Coupled with the dog metaphor, being made invisible signals who is worthy of the respect to be addressed in a particular space. From Rep. Grey's vantage point, we not only understand how the institutional positions of authority, but how those in the majority party have interacted with Rep. Grey. She was not acknowledged by the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the committee. Rep Grey's invisibility to her GOP counterparts was a form of marginalization. Likewise, partisan control was a frequently discussed as form of formal power that legislators viewed as a form of power.

Partisan control means that one of the political parties is in the majority party. In turn, the majority party is capable to influence the institution and policy process according to their will. For the lawmakers in this study, partisan control becomes one of the biggest forms of power that shape how the Black women legislators navigated the legislature. All the women in the study interviewed mentioned at some point during their interview that the majority party had control or

that being part of the minority did not allot them influence to pass bills. To explicate this point,

Rep. Grey shared her frustration with trying to amend bill under the purview of her committee.

She stated,

> And this is an all-or-nothing proposition. There's no shared anything. And- and
> it's not just the chairs; it's the party. So, you have freshmen Republicans who are
> passing bills left and right. And we can't get a senior Democrat to have a hearing
> on a bill. I sit on Health and Human Services. I signed on a bill with Rep. Stevens.
> Just to add the words "medically accurate" into the education system. If you're
> going to teach sex ed, it has to be medically accurate. I am on that committee, and
> the chair will not call it. Will not give it a hearing. When I see these nitwits get,
> like, the freshmen Republicans who somebody literally just handed them the bill
> right before they walked in the door, and they're in front of the hearing, like,
> "changing a youth life, one family at a time…" like, they've never read it until
> now. And we're busting our behind, right, to get a hearing, and they just hand it to
> them. It's the worst way to manage people. Like, no one ever went to an
> organizational psychology class. It creates- if this was a public entity, or private
> entity, this is a...this is a lawsuit for, um, creating a hostile work environment.

Both Houses in Georgia General Assembly have been controlled by the Republican Party since

2005 (Ballotpedia 2021). The sharp analysis of Rep. Grey showcases how partisan control

shapes multiple dimensions of the institution and policy process, as she frames it, that it is the

worst way to manage people creating a hostile work environment where it is a lawsuit waiting to

happen. While it is unsurprising that legislation would be difficult to pass as a lawmaker in

minority party, Rep. Grey compares the difficulty for even senior Democrats to pass their

legislation in contrast the ease in which freshman Republicans are able to sponsor legislation.

Adding insult to injury, freshmen Republicans are being given bills that they did not create and

because the Georgia state legislature is controlled the GOP, these legislators do not have work to

passing them as votes largely fall down party lines. This indicate that partisan control not only

allows for easier navigation by any Republican party member regardless of rank, but that freshmen Republican members are able to pass legislation with little labor.

Returning to Rep. Grey's assertion that seniority does not have privileges in the Georiga state legislature if you are a member of the minority party, she notes that Democrats are not given the same advantages of this status. Seniority status refers to the amount of time that a has had within the legislature that has allowed for this legislator's network to grow and the ability to gain more working knowledge of the legislative process. Legislators with seniority have a higher likelihood to gain social status and be perceived as an influential or powerful lawmaker. Seniority provides certain privileges such as the opportunity to serve in leadership positions. Under this system, freshmen legislators should hold relatively little status in the statehouse.

Low staffing and salary given means that Georgia lawmakers have to do heavy lifting in the development of their bills as they do not have a professional staff to assist with policy making. The Republican freshman legislators who are given bills that have been thoroughly vetted, are detailed and specifically address the partisan interests of the leadership have a greater likelihood of getting passed. This also means that these novice lawmakers are not tasked with learning how to develop and write legislation. In turn, being a part of the majority party – even a low ranked Republican – has more status than a senior Democrat in the current configuration of the Georgia state legislature. This structural advantage for is partisan. In sum, it allows for freshmen Republicans to saves time and energy during the legislative process and in turn places a burden on those in the minority party regardless of seniority.

The last conceptualization in traditional concepts of power was influence. As Rep. Robbins explains it, the scope of influence exists mostly at the behavioral or first dimension of power. Outside of the formalized legislative structure are other components of traditional

conceptualizations of power. Rep. Robbins explains the importance of using your time and energy wisely. This is a form of power. She notes,

> Well, power for me for me would be the ability to actually make a positive impact on the community. It also means having the power to also know, you know when to you know how when or how to pick or choose your battles. In addition, it also means that you know you're able to influence, you know influence where you can some things you can't necessarily. Influence or impact but you can at least you know, give it a trying effort. It all goes back to being able to influence umm… others and getting them to you know understand and see things from your advantage point.

In perceived influence literature, lawmakers identify individuals who they see within the legislature as having the most influence (March 1955; Francis 1962; Smooth 2001). This rests on the assumption that there is a form of control involved between two individuals (Dahl 1957; Hearn 2014 Haugaard 2018). However, Rep. Robbins demonstrates a slight departure in the applicability of the concept. In her view, influence is about having the ability to strategize and to view the issue from the individual who is arguing for the policy. This definition becomes less about controlling and more about having the ability to know when to argue.

Power as Informal: Informal Context to Georgia Politics

In my study, there are two ways that informal dimensions of power are conceptualized. The first relates to a systematic pattern of behaviors that are informed by larger system and historical processes that give the capacity to marginalized individuals from disadvantage communities (Tatum 1999; Glaude 2017). The second relates to decisions made in about the legislature and the policy that only includes a small circle of unknown legislators. I focus on the

latter in this section as a theme that emerged.[23] While this comes off as a conspiracy theory, four out of the five participants in the study mentioned some form of informal process that occurred that was made by individual who they were not entirely sure made the decision that shaped how the legislature operated.

In state legislatures like Georgia that are non-professional, there is an informal stage of the policy process where handful of individuals actually make the final policy decision This process in which only a select few craft the final bill was referred to as the a "man behind the curtain" effect by Rep. Stevens. Black women lawmakers are not a part of this select group of legislators. Rep. Steven's statement is consistent with previous literature that examined the Georgia statehouse. Indeed, Smooth (2001, 2008) uncovered that Black women legislators were not included on this committee. Likewise, according to the lawmakers in my study, this informal structure persists even almost two decades after Smooth's work. To demonstrate their absence, Rep. Stevens states,

> And there are powers that be that I can't see, the man behind the curtain that says
> 'it's an election year. We don't give people in the minority party." And so, the
> people who lose are the people of Georgia who would benefit from some of the
> laws, or these bills that are being put forward in the name of politics. So, I think,
> um, that the game is kind of fact.

Rep. Steven's observation is rooted in traditional definition of power - who gets, what, where- which animates her statement about elections having consequences for Democratic voters who are unable to elect their preferred candidate the statehouse. For the lawmakers, being able to pass legislation is important due to the social capital of being able credit claim to signal to their constituents that they are working for them and in turn for them (Meyhew 1974). The phrasing of

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[23] In terms of the first point, I write more in-depth about informal behavior and the implications of understanding power in the legislature.

"we don't give people in the minority party" indicates that power functions in the traditional idea of domination vis-à-vis control (Dahl 1957; Haugarrd 2002; Hearn 2012). Rep, Steven's point that "powers that be" opportunity beyond traditional forms of leadership in ways that is often unidentifiable showcases that a non-professional legislature operates in ways that formally exclude minority party legislators. The lawmakers that decide how the legislature operates control how other members function within the legislature. However, as members of the minority party, the Black women lawmakers in this study note the lack of transparency in how policy is made but recognize that there often partisan power play at hand.

My observations of the Georgia statehouse reify this claim. For instance, I followed Rep. Grey to her office to conduct the interview and as we were walking from the State Senate building to Georgia's House of Representative building, she mentioned that there would be a scheduled day off for legislators. However, she admitted that she did not know how those rules were made or who made these scheduling decisions. Whoever controlled the legislative schedule was unknown to Rep. Grey. The unknown entity is informal due to the ways that they operate in the background which situates itself in the non-decision conceptualization of power. Bachrach and Baratz (1970, 1963) conceptualize power as the act of manipulating the community's values, myths, political institutions and procedures to limit the scope of decision making. While the concept of non-decisions is usually applied to agenda setting, we can apply this example to Rep. Grey's by the ways that decisions are made in the legislature without direct and clear explanation to the members of the legislature. Yet, everyone in the legislature has to follow these reules even if they are made via an opaque process.

"Knowledge is Power": Intersectional Resistance and Advancing the agenda

Lastly, the lawmakers in this study shared experiences that demonstrates that legislative power is a form intersectional resistance. The Black women legislators showcase their agency as lawmakers when they use their voice to shape policy. Here we see intersectional resistance in two ways: 1) resistance is legislative behavior and 2) intersectional resistance is structural when applied to policy formulation. First, I show that Black women lawmakers' resist the conditions that seek to marginalize them. Next, I focus on how Rep. Bailey's lived experiences both inform her understanding of policy related to voting rights and immigration, and how she pushes back on how the policy is framed.

Resistance for legislators, in part, means working against being marginalized in the statehouse. Multiple legislators explain that even though they do not have formal power in the statehouse that as members of the minority party they still have tools that can help them to advance their legislative priorities. One such example is requesting a meeting. Black woman lawmakers in my study explained that they resisted the marginalized positions as being in the minority party requesting meetings and sponsoring legislations. For example, Rep. Yang provides an example of intersectional resistance by explicating the process of receiving a committee assignment and how lawmakers adapt to this assignment:

> So, um- what I found interesting- I still don't know how it happened, how I got appointed to Industry and Labor [Committee].. I still don't know. I just looked up one day and saw my name on an Industry and Labor Committee. I didn't ask for it. So, I don't know. Somebody made a decision, and they know why they made it. But for me, I've embraced it. Tried to learn as much as I can. Um had no idea, first of all, what Industry and Labor did. I've had to learn it these, uh, last few weeks. Learn about our workers comp system.

According to the institution's rules, the Speaker of Georgia's House of Representatives assigns lawmakers to the committees. The Speaker is able to appoint Rep. Yang to this committee, yet she was unaware of why she was placed on this committee. However, she viewed this as an opportunity to adapt to the situation by learning more and performing her duties on the committee. While this committee deals with issues outside of her expertise, Rep. Yang sought to optimize this committee assignment.

Rep. Yang later shared that lawmakers meet with the Speaker to discuss committee assignment once she learned more about the assignment process. For this meeting Rep. Yang was advised not express what committee she wanted. Instead, she opted against formalities and chose to abide by the informal power structures of the Georgia state legislature. She did not tell the Speaker what committee she'd like to serve on, but rather allowed him to pick her committee. To her mind, this allowed her more room to operate within the formalized rules of the institution by going along with the Speaker's wish's to demonstrate that she was a good colleague. This was her political calculation. She chooses to work on a committee that she was not passionate about, or honestly, well versed in the inner workings of said committee. In doing so, she created her own opportunity. Ultimately, she waited and performed her duties and ended up getting the committee she wanted. This is an example of intersectional resistance that demonstrates her agency as a lawmaker who found a workaround to a challenge or less than ideal situation.

Resistance is an individual behavior that is shaped by the conditions that the lawmakers may find themselves, particularly as a member of the minority party. Take for example, Rep. Baily framework of "knowledge is power" as a form of intersectional resistance. In this case, Rep. Baily explains how she used her lived experience as someone who became a United States citizen in 2012 to inform how she spoked out on immigration policy that would have impacted

voter registration. At one point, Rep. Baily had the opportunity to work with the Secretary of State of Georgia during a political moment when the GOP believed it was advantageous to pass legislation that would require recent citizens to present their green card to register to vote. Yet, Rep. Baily resisted this bill. She drew from her experiences as a naturalized citizen to argue that this voter suppression. She states.

> No. You [are] … not in possession of your green card. When you …become a
> citizen, you turn it in. Yeah. So, unless you memorize it you're not in position [to
> know our green card number]. But if you look at it and you say "oh my God…I
> might need that number or I'm not gonna get my application to be" - it's relevant
> to you. So, I was the only one able to pushback. They took it off. I got it removed.
> Because it's irrelevant, right? The only thing that any citizen must do who is not
> born in became a citizen of this country is go to the Social Security Office.

Rep. Baily is in the minority party which means that they do not have formal institutional power to advance their agenda in traditional ways. Yet, she was effective in getting this clause removed from the bill. The majority party had the required numbers of legislators to vote on policies and to control of the committees, yet they needed the perspective of Rep. Baily because they did not understand the implications of this clause. In turn, Rep. Baily took the opportunity to meet with the State Secretary as a moment to "push back" or resist the way the bill was being framed as she stopped the requirement from being pursed furthered. Rep. Baily recognized the implementation of this policy meant that many recent citizens, including herself, would be negatively affected. While the gravity of this moment was clear for Rep. Baily and other naturalized citizens,

Imagine if this policy were to take effect as planned A sitting member of the Georgia state legislature would be unqualified to vote as citizen in that state. Part of her pushback to this bill was born out of her own self-interest, but also was motivated by the thousands of Georgians who would be disenfranchised if this bill took effect. The everyday moment of resistance in this

setting then shapes how individuals rethink about implementing restrictive policies. Thus, the institution is being shape by altering the scope of the conversation around particularly policies (Bachrach and Baratz 1963; Scott 1990). The first dimension of power is not just about domination, but under the context of marginalization through formal structures and status in the hierarchy in society as seen through the advocacy of an immigrant Black woman legislator to demonstrate that resistance is a legislative behavior that can influence policy. Resistance as an act than becomes a strategy to transgress her seemingly powerless position in the legislature and as a marginalized individual to advance an agenda of inclusivity in voting rights.

Conclusion

I examine how the lawmakers in this study define power in order to move away from the framing perceived influence. Asking legislators to define power centers their experiences and how they have to navigate the legislature rather than provide an unidimensional view of perceived power.

The findings indicate three major types of themes in the responses. The first, legislature identified traditional forms of power in legislature which included partisan control, positions of authority, and influence. The second common response is informal dimensions that included unknown legislators that make final decisions on how the legislature operates. The third type of response that lawmakers explained is intersectional resistance. The findings indicate that there is not just one form of power that is operating in the legislature instead there are multiple forms.

The data demonstrates also more nuanced understanding of power when asking from the perspective of Black women lawmakers. While partisanship and positions of authority were identified as forms of power, legislators also indicated how the organizational structure of the legislature is a hostile work environment for Black women in the minority party. This indicates

that those who are in positions of power, which expanded to freshmen republican members, often curtail the effectiveness of the legislators in this study.

In the second section, informal dimensions of power, show the importance of contextualizing power based on the scope of the study. In this case, an unknown legislative entity is able to that make final decisions on how the Georgia General Assembly operates. In the third section, the findings point to t intersectional resistance as a form of power that emerged from the experiences of the lawmakers. Specifically, the behaviors of the participants are marked by resistance (i.e., speaking out, adapting to situation or withholding information) as responses to how formal (i.e., partisan control, positions of authority, etc) and informal flows of power (i.e., problematic behavior and exclusive entities) converge to create conditions of marginalization. Resistance becomes a form of power under the conditions of marginality when the lawmakers advance their agenda (i.e., stopping ideas from being materialized or withholding information to advance their position).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, A REIMAGINING OF LEGISLATIVE STUDIES: *POWERS*, INTERSECTIONAL RESISTANCE, AND LEGISLATIVE STUDIES

> Women of the Georgia Legislature have endured multiple sexist public comments
> while trying to represent our constituents. Today was the height of it. A member
> asked about how a bill would affect @iamcardib implants on her backside. In
> what universe is this ok? @AliveNews #GaPol

This quote from Georgia State Representative Shannon on March 15, 2021 highlights what she believes to be an inappropriate comment about rapper Cardi B's body that was made to devalue a piece of legislation. Eleven days later, on March 26, 2021, Rep. Park Cannon, a Black women lawmaker, knocked on the door to be permitted into a private bill signing of S. B. 202. Governor Brian Kemp signed S.B. 202 in a closed ceremony surrounded by all White men legislators underneath a picture of infamous Georgia plantation where the enslaved were brutally punished for behaviors that challenged the racial order. Rep. Park Cannon and others view this bill legalizing as voter suppression in a state which saw record voter turnout among Black and Brown citizens during the November 2020 general election and January 2021 Senate runoff election. Rep. Park Cannon was arrested by the police and later jailed for knocking on the door and asking to witness the signing of this bill. These incidents demonstrate the everyday forms of racism-sexism in the state legislature. As a form of resistance, Rep. Shannon, and later Rep. Cannon, publicly addressed their marginalization as Black women lawmakers in the Georgia state legislature.

In many ways this project is an inquiry in studying the real-world politics of identity, legislative behavior, and institutions from an interdisciplinary approach. By applying intersectional resistance, I reconceptualize the study of power to *powers* as a way to interrogate

the multifaceted and complex nature of powers in the Georgia state legislature. At the same time, intersectional resistance is an active challenged to the legislative process of marginalization of Black women legislators in the minority party. These power strategies are particularly useful for lawmakers who scholars assume are unable to advance their agenda. In this last chapter, I focus on the reviewing the findings, limitations, implications, and future directions.

Powers and Legislative Resistance

This study highlights the legislative tensions in how powers operate within the legislature and the responses based on the lived experiences of Black women lawmakers in the lower house of the Georgia General Assembly. In the second chapter, I developed a theoretical framework based on the Black women in Politics, Black Feminism, Political Power, Legislative Studies, Identity Centric Theories of Power, Intersectionality, and Resistance. I argued that Black women lawmakers in the minority party develop creative strategies to advance their interest in the legislature due to the context of the (in)formal norms of their legislature. This focus on how systems of oppression informed the informal norms serve to marginalized Black women lawmakers also allows us to view how they resist the behaviors of their peers and the institutional structures to advance their agenda. I contend that the field of legislative studies must understand power in a more dynamic and multifaceted way. Indeed, there are multiple flows of power that converge to shape how Black women lawmakers in minority parties experience the legislature. This allows us to see the ways that resistance shows up as a legislative behavior for Black women lawmakers.

In the third chapter, *Brining the Folding Chair*, I examine how Black women lawmakers experience the institution. Specifically, my analysis reveals the tension between minority party Black women legislators and members of the majority party who are often White men

legislators. Legislative spaces such as the breakroom, committee meetings, and floor session are contentious sites of marginalization for the women in my study. Although marginalization is an active process, resistance is also an active process that serves as an avenue to advance Black women lawmaker's personal agenda. For example, Black women lawmakers take their agenda outside of the legislature to other authority figures that could implement their ideas for them. We saw this in Rep. Robbins advocacy for financial literacy in schools. Rather than wait for the legislature to take up her bill, she went directly to the Superintendent of her district. This among other examples showcase of Black woman lawmakers used intersectional resistance to advance their legislative agendas.

In the fourth chapter, *Heavy is the Crown*, I examine how Black women lawmakers experience the policy process. I show how informal norms of *policy theft and gifting* all operate to obstruct the legislative success of Black women lawmakers. By centering on two specific cases the CROWN Act and a needle exchange program, I show how informal norms operate within the legislature that sideline Black women lawmakers' effectiveness. Furthermore, I demonstrate how resistance becomes a mode to respond to the labor, time, resources, and meaning of policy that are stolen from Black women lawmakers. As a result, Black women lawmakers navigate a policy process in Georgia's lower house that is much more complicated and nuanced than previously articulated in the extant literature.

In the fifth chapter, *Perspectives of Power*, I center the voices of Black women lawmakers to learn how they define power within the Georgia legislature. The findings indicate that not only does the formal positions of authority, rules, and party control play a factor, but also informal norms of the legislature. The findings also indicate that intersectional resistance emerges as a power strategy.

Limitations

COVID-19

   This study presents a deep dive in examining the contours of powers, identity, institutions, and legislative behavior. However, there are many limitations. The first limitation is due to the effects of COVID-19. I engaged in field research at the beginning of a global pandemic that caused the 2019-2020 legislative session to end early. This meant that it was far more difficult to be able to secure interviews or observe how the legislature operate because the session ended before crossover day. I contacted legislators through their campaign websites and professional social media accounts to secure more interviews. Furthermore, some legislators responded to be interviewed, but communicated that it was a difficult time due to their own needs to respond to COVID-19 in their professional, legislative, and personal lives. Thus, I was not able to implement the full research design that I previously envisioned for this study.

What is lost and gained by a single case study analysis

   Another limitation is generalizability. Generalizability that is considered a goal standard in positivist-quantitative research in political science. This project does not meet this type of standard specifically because the goal was not to generalize a case on power. Rather the goal was to explore the legislative view of Black women lawmakers in the minority party in the Georgia legislature during the 2019-2020 legislative session. While I cannot argue that the findings in the study can be applied to other legislatures, intersectional resistance as a framework can be used to examine other institutions. For example, applying intersectional resistance to examine how Black women lawmakers in the Maryland General Assembly navigate the statehouse to advance their agenda. Maryland legislature is a different institution with a the Democratically controlled

legislature and their own (in)formal norms. Thus, do Black women lawmakers face marginalization? If so, what role does resistance play in advancing in their agenda?

Continuing on limitation of generalizability this study is also bound by the context, time, and place of examining the experiences of Black women lawmakers in the minority party. Georgia legislature had a particular demographic make-up of lawmakers and were operating under specific rules during the 2019-2020 legislative session. This means that understanding how power function is time and place specific. This does not mean that there cannot be the same or parallels forms of powers (i.e., party control or rules) rather, that certain forms of powers might look different based on time and context. An example of this is how overtime, with the control of the Republican party in the Georgia General Assembly, more rules were developed within the legislature that centralized many of the legislative procedures to be controlled by the Speaker of the House (Howard, Fleischmann, and Engstrom 2017).

Participants

Another limitation is based on the group of participants in the study. The majority of the respondents were in their first legislative term with the exception of Rep. Yang. Because I primarily gained access to lawmakers via a snowball sample, I relied heavily on Rep. Baily's network. As an early interviewee and champion of this study, Rep. Baily put me in contact with other legislators who were all in their first year in the statehouse. As such, this study does not contain senior Black women lawmakers. The findings of this study may look different if there were Black women lawmakers that varied in seniority, State Senate, or other positionalities. This means I cannot compare responses from Black lawmakers who had seniority status or in positions of authority and comparing them to freshmen lawmakers.

From an Interpretivist Perspective

The research designed followed many interpretivist principals which included centering the worldview of the participants, intertextuality, and exposure. However, this project has other limitations. The first is incorporating the participants of this study in hearing their feedback on the analysis of the project (Soedirgo and Glas 2020, 530). Including this process would further center the voices of the Black women lawmakers that were interviewed. Secondly, I draw on intersectionality as a framework means to center the power dynamics of marginalized groups. I use this framework to work towards the liberation of those that I am studying. While I do not claim that as a working-class graduate student, I would be able to liberate any group this does not mean that I could not have found ways to support the efforts of Black women lawmakers. For example, once I wrote up my findings contact them to see if my findings can assist in helping them advance their agenda or speaking up during committee hearings to voice my support for legislation that would substantively support marginalized communities.

Implications, Why This Matters

This project follows previous scholarship by reframing social relations within legislative institutions by foregrounding how formal institutional structures (i.e., rules or positions of authority) and how informal norms that are given meaning by a wider system of oppression configure the everyday operations of the Georgia legislature (Hawksworth 2003). Thus, I advance the understanding of power by reconceptualizing to *powers*. Again, the rules and informal norms work in tandem to marginalize Black women lawmakers in the minority party and thusly, impacts the way that they navigate the legislature and the policy process. Teasing out these different phenomena while examining how they work together provides a more nuanced

understanding of the institutions and legislative behaviors. This new framework allows scholars to contextualize how Black women lawmakers are resisting marginality in multiple forms.

The implications for resistance are that 1) resistance is a legislative behavior and 2) in the context of marginality, resistance is a strategy that Black women lawmakers in the minority party enact to advance their agenda in the Georgia General Assembly. This conceptualization reimagines the relationship between power and resistance not as oppositional forces (Hayward 2000), but rather in a complex and nuanced relationship. In this case, in the context of marginality for Black women lawmakers' resistance is not only an act that emerges to respond to marginalization, but also as a way to become a more effective legislators by developing ways to advance their own agenda. This idea then moves away from the traditional understanding of influential or effective lawmakers advancing their agenda through the act of controlling of other individuals. Black women lawmakers create their own opportunities in even the most precarious situation. This becomes a mode of legislative behavior worth interrogating in other contexts.

This project focuses on the institutional structure to explain the legislative behavior. Simultaneously, this project focuses on resistance as a mode of legislative behavior that is extra-institutional. Extra-institutional are behaviors that emerge because Black woman lawmakers are restricted from the formal legislative process requires them find innovative ways to advance their legislative priorities. Thus, the implication for this project is that an extra-institutional political behavior means the institutions and legislative behaviors matter for analysis. It is not either or, but both/and understanding of institutions and legislative behavior.

Methodologically, this project showcases the importance of interpretivist-qualitative approaches to examining powers in framing legislative behaviors. One of the primary reasons for implementing interpretivist-qualitative approach allows me to interrogate how political science

as a discipline frames and studies power. However, it is important to note that there is scholarship from Black women in politics scholars centering the lived experiences of Black women lawmakers (Barret 1997; Smooth 2001, 2008; Brown 2013, 2014) as well as representation scholars (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Sinclair-Chapman 2002; Tate 2003; Bratton, Haynie, and Reingold 2006; Orey et al 2006; Reingold, Haynie, and Widner 2020) and gender politics (Hawksworth 2003) that have demonstrated the importance of Black women lawmakers in the legislature. My study builds on this work to reframe the relationship between behavior and the structural-systemic by expanding the idea that attempting to control someone else's behavior is not the only way to advance a lawmaker's agenda. Resistance is a legislative behavior that can be an effective strategy for Black women lawmakers in minority parties.

Lastly, my work demonstrates the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of power. Fields like Black feminism, political power, resistance, and sociology provide alternative ways for legislative studies scholars to examine and understand the legislature. Thinking *with* other fields means taken seriously the ways that other disciplines understand power and identity. This means that interdisciplinary approaches to legislative studies provide alternative modes of thinking which means innovative ways to examine the legislature.

Future Directions

This project has opened many inquiries to examining powers in legislative studies and political science. The first inquiry lies with the heart of the discipline of political science specifically the conceptualization of power. With the development of the political power literature, does political science still use the definition of power since the American debate on power? If so, what avenues of study open up when political science implement interdisciplinary notions of power into the study of institutions and political behavior? A specific future project is

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doing a meta-analysis of power by studying how scholars in political science journals use and implement the concept of power.

Intersectional resistance has also raised questions of institutional context. A future project could examine intersectional resistance in a professionalized legislature with the Democratic Party is in control. Would Black women lawmakers still employ intersectional resistance as a strategy if they were in the majority party? If so, how does resistance emerge? A different institutional context would provide alternative insights to how white supremacy, patriarchy, and other systems of oppression structure the institutions for Black women lawmakers.

Intersectional resistance as a theoretical concept can expand to other intersectionally marginalized groups. Other social groups like Latina lawmakers, Asian American lawmakers, Queer women of color lawmakers have their own sets of experiences that shape how they navigate legislatures. A project implementing intersectional resistance would contextualize the social forces that marginalized them to examine, if at all, resistance is a legislative behavior and does it advance their agenda. Still thinking about social groups, this project inadvertently poses other undergirding ideas, specifically the experiences of freshmen and early career Black women lawmakers. Due to the snowball approach, the majority of participants were freshmen legislators which opens up another line of inquiry. Specifically, what are the experiences of early career Black women legislators? How do they learn the institution? If they continue, how does there view of the legislature change from their first year to later in their career? How do their strategies, if at all, change for advancing their agendas? What causes their views and strategies to change?

Re-imagining a Legislative Studies

The demographics of the legislature have been changing overtime including some historic victories for marginalized populations in the United States. This means that political scientists have to interrogate long standing traditions in the discipline that were assumed to be true. Initial conceptualizations and theories that were developed in political science were done so by centering wealthy cis-White men. The implications mean that these initial understandings might not apply to those that come from marginalized backgrounds. This project presents one approach to re-imagining legislative studies by centering the lived experiences of Black women lawmakers and thinking with other disciplines to develop new approaches to understanding the institution of the legislature and behaviors of lawmakers.

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