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The social movement for reproductive justice: Emergence, intersectional strategies, and theory building

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Abstract

This article reviews the literature on the reproductive justice social movement and provides an overview of its main theoretical and empirical foundations and contributions. It begins by tracing the emergence of reproductive justice, grounding it in longstanding histories of resistance and Black feminist theorizing. It highlights intersectionality as a social movement strategy and tactic embraced by reproductive justice activists, and highlights reproductive justice organizing and scholarship that contributes to our theoretical understandings of the racial politics of reproduction and abolition. In so doing, this piece makes two interrelated contributions. First, it argues reproductive justice generates material and theoretical contributions beyond the scope of what is possible for reproductive health and rights frameworks. Second, it demonstrates that bringing reproductive justice into the focus of sociological inquiry is important for advancing social science scholarship.

KEYWORDS

feminisms, gender, human rights, intersectionality, race, reproductive justice, social movements

1 | INTRODUCTION

Although people have been shaping change and building for reproductive justice and freedom for centuries, the term “reproductive justice” (RJ) was coined relatively recently in 1994 by a group of 12 Black and African American women called Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice¹ (Bond Leonard, 2017; Luna, 2020; Silliman

et al., 2016; Zavella, 2020). The term developed into a framework for collective action and a platform for building an international movement years later in the early 2000s (Luna, 2020; Zavella, 2020). Now commonly defined as the right to have children, the right to not have children, and the right to care for families in safe environments, this three-pronged definition loosely structures a multifaceted approach to social movement organizing. For example, the right to have children can encompass fertility access, combatting sterilization abuse, birth justice, and doula support; the right to not have children includes access to birth control and abortion; and the right to care for families in safety and with dignity ties into adoption justice, childcare support, environmental racism, family policing (foster “care”), education systems, and prisons and policing. Reproductive justice is at once a theory, a framework, and a praxis, or a specific invitation to reflect and act upon the world in order to transform it and ourselves (Cho et al., 2013; Freire, 1996[1970]; Southerners on New Ground, 2016; Zavella 2017).

This review makes two interrelated arguments about reproductive justice. First, I join other scholars in highlighting the frame and theory as an expansive one, arguing that it *enables* both material and theoretical contributions that the limitations of reproductive health and rights frameworks prohibit.

Second, and relatedly, I argue that bringing reproductive justice into the fold of sociological scholarship is materially, theoretically, and epistemologically generative. Despite the popularity and importance of reproductive justice in social and academic worlds, few sociologists have taken up the nearly thirty-year old movement, theory, and framework as a focus of study. Aside from notable exceptions (García, 2020; Gutiérrez, 2008; Kimport & Jesudason, 2013; Luna, 2020), sociologists have largely focused on reproductive health and rights movements and strategies, instead leaving reproductive justice to anthropologists (Zavella, 2016, 2020), scholars in gender and women’s studies (Price, 2017, 2018), reproductive justice scholars and organizers (Greenlee et al., 2020), and scholars in applied disciplines like social work (Lidell, 2018), law (If/When/How, 2021), and nursing (Altman et al., 2020). Yet, reproductive justice has occasioned work attentive to critical themes for sociological scholarship of social movements, especially intersectionality, framing, and collective identity formation. Further, as a movement fundamentally concerned with intersectionality as a practice, reproductive justice calls on the expertise of sociologists of race, class, gender, migration, sexuality, criminalization, and the state.

This review proceeds first with a selective overview of the literature on the reproductive justice social movement. I explore a number of empirical studies addressing its emergence, location in social movement fields, strategies, and theory building. I then turn to directions for future research.

2 | SEEDING A MOVEMENT: THE EMERGENCE AND FRAMING OF REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

The 1994 coining of reproductive justice is embedded in deep histories of organizing for reproductive freedom. In order to understand the deliberate movement framing founders chose, it is critical to understand the political climate they were working within and against.

Founders sought to broaden their organizing scope beyond a legal right to “choose” abortion; they incorporated human rights framing in order to create something entirely new (Luna, 2009, 2020; Ross et al., 2017). Founders (or foremothers as they have since been affectionately referred to) and social movement organizers that followed deliberately avoided pro-choice framing. First, founders knew intimately that “the abstract freedom of choice was of meager value without the meaningful options from which to choose and the ability to effectuate one’s choice” (Roberts, 1997, p. 309). Decades of organizing history had supported this. While *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion in 1973, anti-choice IL Representative Henry Hyde effectively blocked the use of federal funds for abortion services with a provision to an appropriations bill known now as the *Hyde Amendment*. Thus, the right to choose was an overly individualist frame and left the most marginalized among us unconsidered (Price, 2010).

While it remained legal for anyone to “choose” to get an abortion, that option was inaccessible for many marginalized people. Hyde effectively blocked and still blocks abortion funding for pregnant people using Medicaid,

Medicare, Children's Health Insurance Program, and Indian Health Services; people incarcerated in federal prison, and many federal employees, except in cases where pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or if pregnancy endangers the life of the pregnant person (All Above All, 2020). In the United States, most people who have an abortion are already struggling financially. Further, Medicaid coverage is disproportionately higher amongst people living below the Federal Poverty Level, women of color, and single parents (All Above All, 2020). While state governments are permitted to craft their own legislation overturning *Hyde*, at the time of writing only 16 have done so (*ibid*).

Additionally, the pro-choice/pro-life dichotomy did not resonate with many women of color at the time. As Silliman (2002) highlights, emphasizing individual choices "discounts the ways in which the state regulates populations, disciplines individual bodies, and exercises control over sexuality, gender, and reproduction (xi). Further, the pro-choice pro-life paradigm fails to capture how law enforcement and policing devastate women of color and their communities (Silliman, 2002). Instead, a reproductive justice framework that accounts for critiques of intersecting systems of oppression remains more appropriate.

In the creation of such a framework, founders brought human rights insights and expertise from delegations at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo Egypt (Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, 2005), and multiple delegations prior (Luna, 2020). They addressed the capacity for people and entire communities to thrive, attending to physical, mental, spiritual, political, social, and economic well-being (Luna, 2009; Ross et al., 2017). Focusing on human rights intertwined understandings of reproductive rights and social justice, thus moving beyond individualist notions of care (Leonard, 2017).

As Luna's research demonstrates, this framing was the result of much deliberation amongst reproductive justice founders and members of SisterSong: Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective members (2020) (hereafter SisterSong). Now widely recognized as the reproductive justice coalition, SisterSong carefully considered a human rights approach to organizing for reproductive justice, and decided it was foundational. Human rights framing was included in trainings, conferences, and surveys, and stressed to organizations and individual members as a strengths-based tool for organizing.

The framing of the reproductive justice movement thus positioned it in a complex social movement field of key players working in various ways towards reproductive freedom. Reproductive justice not only moved beyond and away from a pro-choice label, but was situated in a social movement field with reproductive health and rights as well. In 2005, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (now Forward Together) published a groundbreaking report on reproductive justice "and how it connects and differs from reproductive rights and health" (Zinzi, 2020). The report demonstrated that for a reproductive health framework, lack of access to reproductive health services is framed as a lack of information, data, or services; thus, strategies for change rely on expanding services, research, and access, particularly prevention and cultural competency in communities of color (Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, 2005). For reproductive rights, the problem is framed as a lack of legal protection for the right to reproductive health care, and thus proposed solutions and strategies are primarily legal or administrative at state and federal levels (*ibid*, 2005). Finally, for reproductive justice, ability to exercise self-determination as it relates to all societal institutions requires supporting the leadership and power of marginalized women and people, building social and political power, advancing concrete agendas at individual, community, institutional, and societal levels, a commitment to multiracial, -generational, and -class networks, and building a network of social justice and human rights organizations (*ibid*, 2005). The reproductive justice movement is thus positioned uniquely in a field of people, movements, and institutions working in various ways towards reproductive freedom.

3 | LOCATIONS OF RESISTANCE FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

In addition to seeding a new contemporary movement, Black women and women of color have worked to advance justice within mainstream reproductive rights and health movements. Take, for example, abolitionist scholar Angela Davis's reflections on the "almost-lily-white complexion of the abortion rights campaign," (Davis, 1983, p. 203) of

the early 1970s. Black women navigated marginalization within these social movement organizations, where white women sidelined women of color in favor of “getting the job done” (Ross, 1998, 2006).

This continues today, perhaps more insidiously under the co-opted guise of “reproductive justice.” As Luna points out, the usage of a term does not necessarily demonstrate an understanding of its origins, and may not reflect actual reproductive justice work (2011, p. 236–237). Many scholars and activists have had concerns about co-optation and the devaluation of Black women and people of color’s labor and theorizing (Luna, 2011; Zavella, 2020). Take for example a public news exchange in 2014, in which Planned Parenthood failed to credit the reproductive justice movement for shaping and propelling efforts for reproductive freedom, and took credit for challenging the “choice” model of reproductive advocacy. National leaders in the reproductive justice movement responded, including SisterSong executive director Monica Simpson, initiating a public response from Planned Parenthood and eventually a meeting about tensions and working relationships between several organizations concerning the pro-choice label, tensions across movements, and honoring the work of Black women and women of color (Simpson, 2014; Simpson & Richards, 2014).

These tensions are ongoing. A recent public report based on 42 qualitative interviews uncovered widespread racist discrimination towards women and people of color, especially Black women, at Planned Parenthood and NARAL, two of the most powerful reproductive rights groups in the United States (O’Connor, 2020). Both organizations have statements on racial and/or reproductive justice, or have otherwise used these constructs in their work. Thus, despite professed commitments to a set of values, be they reproductive or racial justice, the testimonies of Black women and women of color demonstrate there is a wide chasm still between framing and praxis.

In addition to fighting against invisibilization within mainstream movements, Black women and people of color have also organized against reproductive injustice outside of so-called women’s movements for centuries. Scholars have traced both organic and organized resistance for reproductive justice back to the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Eddins theorizes marroonage (escape from slavery) as both a liminal space between enslavement and freedom and an organic act of reproductive justice resistance (2020). In an examination of marronnage in colonial Haiti (Saint Domingue), Eddins notes that the child-woman ratio for the Maniel maroons of the Baoruco mountains, the best-known settlement of fugitives from colonial Saint Domingue, was more than double that of enslaved women on nearby coffee and indigo plantations and over twice as high for women on sugar plantations from the 1770–1791 (2020, p. 566). The Maniel Maroon roster details that pregnancy and motherhood did not preclude women from marronnage. Thus, while dangerous, Eddins notes that “for those who successfully escaped and resettled in a self-liberated community, marronnage was effective for exercising their own version of reproductive justice. By escaping slavery, women exerted agency over their lives and those of their children, while also protecting their right to live and rear children in safer circumstances than Saint Domingue’s plantations” (2020, p. 576). Thus, these women exercised their rights to have children and care for families on their own terms, tenets fundamental to bodily autonomy and reproductive justice.

Similarly, as legal scholar Dorothy Roberts’s groundbreaking scholarship demonstrates, Black women in the United States struggled in myriad ways to resist the reproductive violence of slavery. They fought back against the sexual violence of white male enslavers and overseers, feigned illness, endured severe punishment, and escaped from plantations. They fought to keep their families together, sometimes returning to plantations after fleeing and other times turning to court systems (1997). They refused to bear children for slave masters, managing their own birth control and abortions. However, as Roberts notes, it is nearly impossible to ascertain the differences between self-managed care and infertility and miscarriage caused by the violence of slavery.

Relatedly, as García (2020) documents, reproductive justice timelines must begin at 1492 or earlier; white European colonizers have long been invested in controlling the reproduction of Indigenous women and people. As young members of California Latinas for Reproductive Justice have argued, beginning discussions of reproductive justice before 1492 helps honor the bodily and reproductive autonomy of Indigenous women outside “the scope of colonialism” (García, 2020, p. 449). The reproductive resistance of Native people continues through genocide, through the forced removal of children (Briggs, 2005; Silliman et al., 2016), the violation of treaties, and ongoing

environmental racism. Women of All Red Nations (WARN) organized against the genocidal sterilization of Native women, amongst other reproductive health issues. Additionally, the Women's Health Dance Program and Mother's Milk Project, organized in Akwesasne by Mohawk midwife and activist Katsi Cook, "promote Native sovereignty through Native women asserting control over the birthing process" (Silliman et al., 2016, p. 130).

Thus, turning to reproductive justice means focusing not only on the right to *not* have children as defined by the legal right to privacy or a constitutional right to have a legalized abortion, but also on the rights to have children, to wrest control over one's bodily autonomy, and to care for families in safety and with dignity. It is only through turning deliberate attention to a reproductive justice frame, theory, and praxis that scholars are able to fully trace the sociopolitical contours in which people resist domination, create other worlds, and thrive on their own terms.

Scholarship on more recent 20th century examples of activism detail multiple social movement organizations and coalitions working towards reproductive justice, oftentimes prior to the coining of "reproductive justice" and its rise to national recognition as a social movement. Native American people continue to resist genocide and settler colonialism, fighting for sovereignty alongside bodily autonomy; Black women founded the National Black Women's Health Project and organized against racism within the women's rights movement; and Asian American women organized against racist immigration restrictions designed to control families and reproduction, to name a few examples from Silliman et al.'s historic writing on women of color's organizing for reproductive freedom (2016).

4 | INTERSECTIONALITY AS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE STRATEGY

Reproductive justice was seeded at the intersection of multiple identities, and with the explicit consciousness that intersecting systems of power produce unique lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Ross et al., 2017). As a movement, reproductive justice "has embraced intersectionality at a definitional level" (Luna et al., 2020, p. 436). Given this, its theoretical precursors may be found in such Black feminist texts as the Combahee River Collective statement (2017), bell hooks's writings on feminist theory (2015), Patricia Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought (2009), and Kimberlé Crenshaw's key articles on intersectionality (1989, 1991).

In her 1991 piece, Crenshaw defined intersectionality at three different levels: structural, political, and representational. The first, structural intersectionality, documents how social structures produce the conditions for qualitatively different experiences based on race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and other axes of power and domination. Reproductive justice activists may operationalize this through reproductive justice 101 trainings that highlight for attendees the different reproductive histories and experiences of various racial groups, rural communities, trans and queer people, immigrants, and disabled people, for example.

The second, political intersectionality, delineates how separate politics of racism and sexism operate to marginalize women of color and Black women specifically. In reproductive justice movement spaces, this may translate to promoting the leadership of Black women and women of color specifically. The third prong of Crenshaw's intersectional framework, representational intersectionality, addresses the often-disempowering cultural constructions of Black women and women of color, akin to Patricia Hill Collins's theorization of "controlling images" (2009). Here, reproductive justice practitioners may utilize billboard campaigns, artwork, or storytelling as tactics to wrest control of public narrative and define their lives and experiences on their own terms.

Scholars and activists working within the reproductive justice movement often weave structural, political, and representational intersectionality together in their organizing, writing, and cultural work. This is evident in the empirical and theoretical strategies outlined below, whether they focus primarily on framing, collective identity, emotions, coalition, or culture.

Scholars have addressed intersectionality as a social movement strategy within social movement organizations (Chun et al., 2013) and across coalitions (Cole, 2008; Cole & Luna, 2010). As Cole notes, the challenges of coalition-building necessarily engage with uneven power dynamics and with the messiness of defining similarity and

difference (2008). These themes are unsurprisingly salient for reproductive justice activists, for whom intersectionality as praxis is especially relevant. Luna identifies two dominant logics used to construct collective identity within the women of color organizations that make up SisterSong (2016). The first, “same difference,” helps create solidarity by presenting group differences as similar enough in their difference from an “other” to suggest a position of solidarity (i.e., women of color similar enough in their differences from men and white women). The second, “difference-in-sameness,” facilitates iterative questioning and engages the ways in which women of color have diverse lived experiences amongst themselves. As Luna argues, holding each strategy in tension with the other is critical for moving reproductive justice organizing forward.

Zavella's scholarship (2017, 2020) highlights the importance of intersectionality for reproductive justice coalition building in the US Southwest. Activists from Young Women United and Strong Families New Mexico joined forces to defeat a proposed municipal 20-week abortion ban. Their coalition concretized intersectional organizing using three main strategies. First, their strengths-based organizing drew on the resiliency and spirituality of New Mexican communities. Second, they used public narratives and dialogue. Finally, they brought new movement constituents into the fold by collaborating across differences of race or religion. As this work highlights, this coalition thus addresses all three levels of intersectionality, by acknowledging qualitatively different experiences, focusing on women of color, and countering negative stereotypes as a tactic.

Similarly attentive to the “how” of organizing within feminist of color spaces, García's examination of intersectional mobilization highlights the role of difference in facilitating collective action and decolonizing language and practices at California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (2020). This work examines how Latinx feminists *do* intersectionality, what García calls “politicmaking,” by negotiating difference and, in the process, how they destabilize whiteness.

Finally, research has demonstrated that intersectional mobilization has the potential to transform service agencies to reproductive justice social movement organizations (Daniel & de Leon 2020). In this case examining the Chicago Abortion Fund, intersectionality and feminist leadership succession were instrumental in moving Black women and people of color from the margins to the center of organizing, thus shifting the framing, collective identity, and trajectory of the organization (*ibid*). For example, in line with Black feminist theory, Black women within the organization practiced lived experience as a criterion of meaning and centered former abortion fund callers in their work, creating platforms for their involvement and leadership.

Other scholars have documented the care and deliberation with which reproductive justice practitioners and activists have practiced intersectionality as a coalition-building strategy between movements for reproductive justice and other social movements. Price's research details the coalition-building between LGBTQ and RJ movements, drawing out the research, writing, event planning, and gatherings required to issue solidarity statements (2017), and reminds audiences of the necessity of building cross-movement solidarity during Trump's presidential terms (2018). Harkening back to negotiating issues of sameness and difference, Roberts and Jesudason focus on intersections of race, gender, disability and genetic technologies to build solidarity amongst reproductive justice, racial justice, women's rights, and disability rights activists around the use of reproductive genetic technologies (2013).

The shortcomings and perhaps even dangers inherent in *not* employing intersectionality or addressing social issues from a reproductive justice frame are many. As García argues, “frames and tactics birthed from non-intersectional activism reflect a tendency toward universalism that ignores the distinct experiences and perspectives that come from different social locations (2020, p. 456). This erasure contributes to co-optation, like in the very public exchange mentioned earlier, and likely in quotidian encounters as well. Further, by erasing the experiences of marginalized people, a failure to employ intersectionality in struggles for reproductive freedom leads to a myopic focus on single-issue politics, which then yields ineffectual strategies for change (Carruthers, 2018).

5 | THEORY BUILDING: STATE VIOLENCE, HARM, AND ABOLITION

A major theoretical contribution of the social movement for reproductive justice has been a framework for more complete worldviews, theories, and coalition building. The remainder of this review takes as its starting point the reproductive justice framework as a global, intersectional one. Reproductive justice is a dialectical theory, framework, and praxis, which calls upon its practitioners to embed US-focused political concerns in a global worldview of racialized reproductive oppression.

Scholars and activists have theorized how reproductive oppression is integral to US imperial and white nationalist racial projects. As abortion storyteller and We Testify founder Renee Bracey Sherman writes, “state violence and control, whether through racist policing, the criminal justice system, or the welfare system, are issues at the core of reproductive justice. They are fundamentally about whether you, or the state, have control over your body and destiny” (2020, p. 47). Thus, the history of fighting for reproductive justice is one of fighting *against* anti-Blackness, xenophobia, and settler colonial violence. In order to have the right to care for families in safety and with dignity, those structures of violence cannot exist.

The connections between reproductive violence and settler colonialism are ongoing in the United States and abroad. In Palestine, this is realized in the settler project of Israel, a state with an explicit goal of maintaining a Jewish demographic majority. This structures the reproductive subjugation, ethnic cleansing, and sterilization of Palestinian people as well as Ethiopian Jews, Yemeni Jews, and African migrants to the region (US Campaign for Palestinian Rights). Under Israeli occupation, Palestinians were and *are continuously* expelled from their homeland, criminalized, incarcerated, shackled during childbirth, and subjected to arrest raids, airstrikes, and bombing campaigns, particularly in the Gaza Strip (*ibid*). These are fundamentally reproductive justice issues, given they directly connect to freedom and bodily autonomy. For Palestinians, access to reproductive healthcare is severely limited by military occupation; for example, pregnant Palestinian women living in Kufr ‘Aqab are forced to cross militarized checkpoints while in active labor, just to reach a hospital to give birth (Hamayel et al., 2017). As authors argue, reproductive health is inextricably tied to Israeli occupation; thus, a purely legal reproductive rights-based framework would do little to address the sociopolitical determinants of access and care in these instances (*ibid*).

Relatedly, Schoen’s work charts how US-funded family planning “aid” subjected women abroad to medical experimentation that would have been deemed unacceptable for privileged women within the US borders (2005). Artists and scholars have documented the collusion of US state and medical systems to test early prototypes of the birth control pill on Puerto Rican women, as well as chart the capitalist empire-building motivations for mass sterilizations of nearly one-third of Puerto Rican women in the mid-twentieth century (Briggs, 2003; García, 1982). This racist overpopulation rhetoric manifested within US borders as well, when sterilization of Puerto Rican women continued in New York (Gutiérrez & Fuentes, 2009).

In California, where there has been a “longstanding preoccupation with controlling the reproductive lives of Latinxs” (García, 2020, p. 442), xenophobic overpopulation stereotypes directly led to the sterilization of Mexican-origin women in Los Angeles, California (Gutiérrez, 2008). Firmly embedding this violence at the intersections of immigration, the medical industrial complex, and racial domination, Gutiérrez theorizes a racial politics of reproduction that accounts for historical and contemporary modes of reproductive violence. In each of these examples, attention to gender, nation-building, and white supremacy, among other structures, all strengthen the potential to address harm and produce knowledge; further, these are all core areas of *sociological* inquiry, and scholars in this discipline are well trained to turn focus to these social issues.

This work detailed above syncs with that of sociologists of race and immigration who painstakingly detail borders as historical and contemporary racial projects (Macías-Rojas, 2016), medical sociologists who detail how state and medical actors can exert power over marginalized individuals (often with impunity), and queer, feminist, and postcolonial scholars who trace how globalized systems of patriarchy and white supremacy constraint the bodily autonomy and life chances of the most marginalized among us.

Scholars have also charted how the politics of empire and nation-building are enacted within the borders of the US nation state (Beisel & Kay, 2004; Luna, 2020; Yuval-Davis, 1997). In line with Luna's theory of restrictive domestication of human rights, wherein the US construes human rights as lacking only in *other* countries (2020), these violent practices generally receive little attention. For example, compulsory sterilization programs were active in the North Carolina well into the twentieth century; victims of this ableist eugenics program were incarcerated, and went before a Eugenics Board to be sentenced to sterilization (Schoen, 2005). Two young African American sisters, Minnie Lee and Mary Alice Relf, were just 12 and 14 years old when they were involuntarily sterilized by a federally funded family planning clinic in Alabama in the 1970s. These examples, together with the mass sterilization of people using the Dalkon Shield IUD in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrate the intersections of patriarchal, white supremacist, classist, and ableist violence that structure the racialized state-building practices of the United States.

Further, reproductive justice framing allows scholars to trace violence committed against those who are policed and criminalized in ways that reproductive health and rights framing would overlook. As Lisa Marie Cacho argues, these people are not only excluded from justice but "*form the foundation of the US legal system, imagined to be the reason why a punitive (in)justice system exists [...] always already the object and target of law, never its authors or addressees*" (2012, p. 5).

In 2016, leaders from Trust Black Women, a reproductive justice collective based in Atlanta, GA, and the Black Lives Matter movement, issued a formal coalition statement which read, in part, "Fundamentally, Trust Black Women, rooted in Reproductive Justice, and Black Lives Matter are movements to affirm the value of Black lives, to protect the dignity and autonomy of Black bodies, and to dismantle systems that harm and oppress Black communities" (2018). In many ways, these leaders were making the implicit explicit, by stating publicly the simultaneity of their struggles against racialized violence and reproductive injustice. Reproductive justice had by definition been centrally concerned with the value of Black people's lives and their ability to thrive, given the contours of its founding and its affirmation of the right to care for families in safety and with dignity; and Black Lives Matter was founded by three Black queer women who affirmed the value of Black people's lives in the movement's very naming.

Relatedly, legal scholars and community organizations have done the heart-wrenching labor of documenting the reproductive violence that occurs inside of prisons and jails. For example, sterilization abuse has been a staple of often racialized abuse within these institutions (Roth & Ainsworth, 2014). Despite laws that have formally outlawed the practice, the shackling of incarcerated pregnant people continues; they are shackled on their way to healthcare appointments, for which they need clearance to attend (Ocen, 2012). Ocen argues that while shackling affects incarcerated women of all races, it is crucial to pay attention to shackling as a continuation of the historical control of Black women's reproduction in particular (2012).

With regards to other aspects of reproductive health, incarcerated people who are pregnant may be denied access to abortion or pressured by guards into getting abortions if their pregnancy is the result of rape by jailers (Roth, 2004). In their comprehensive study of health disparities for incarcerated women in the United States, Sufrin et al. find that many have tremendous medical needs that are often neglected or ignored. Further, findings of substandard prenatal care, abortion restrictions and bans, coerced birth control, and shackling during childbirth make it clear that incarceration *itself* is a reproductive justice issue (Sufrin et al., 2015). If people are incarcerated in federal prison and wish to get an abortion, they have to self-fund their abortion care due to the Hyde Amendment.

For criminalized people who are surveilled with electronic monitoring pretrial, getting clearance for healthcare appointments is required to leave the house. The net of surveillance and criminalization is wide, and it is not just people who have been convicted of a crime who get caught up in it as they navigate abortion care or endeavor to care for their families with dignity. Additionally, anti-choice protestors outside of clinics create massive disturbances, sometimes involving the police, causing a stressful and oftentimes dangerous scenario for patients seeking health care.

Because of funding barriers, targeted regulation of abortion provider (TRAP) laws, gestation limits, and clinic funding, people often need to travel for birth control or abortion care options. Travel creates additional risk for those who cannot move freely without fear of surveillance and criminalization. Sometimes travel is cross-country, requiring airplane tickets, hotel stays, food, and longer childcare. If someone or a support person they wish to bring with them has been criminalized and cannot leave the state because of an outstanding warrant, for example, then this becomes incredibly risky. Long invested in both broad studies of sociopolitical landscapes and rich qualitative pictures of lived experience, sociologists are uniquely positioned to study the intricacies of both these barriers and the ability of everyday people to address them within their own communities.

A world with true reproductive justice means that people would have access to all of the resources they need to thrive. They would have all the supports imaginable to have children, to not have children, and to care for their families. This cannot, by definition, include policing, surveillance, criminalization, or any remnants of the prison industrial complex given the harms outlined above. Instead, realizing reproductive justice for all people and communities requires the political vision of prison industrial complex abolition, which has the goal of “eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment” (Critical Resistance, 2021).

6 | CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This review has examined the emergence, strategies, and conceptual tools of the reproductive justice social movement as captured by research. Reproductive justice scholars and activists have demonstrated the utility of this framework and theory for examining intersecting systems of power and social control, as well as for organizing for bodily autonomy and the safety and well-being of families and communities.

One of the key mobilization strategies of reproductive justice rests on expanding the organizing scope beyond a myopic focus on legal abortion rights. The questions and concerns reproductive justice activists point us to, though interrelated through human rights and social justice framing, are not restricted to abortion legality. The collective identity forged within the reproductive justice social movement generates collective action around sterilization, white supremacy, immigration, fascism, and policing, to name but a few important and interrelated issues.

At the same time, in the United States and countless other countries, the right to legal abortion has been under attack for decades as right and far right conservatives slowly chip away at abortion access, so much so that in certain counties and states the legal right to abortion is for all intents and purposes meaningless. In many areas, organizers already have systems in place to overcome these legal barriers, and those pale in comparison to the challenges presented by economic, racial, gender, immigration, policing, and ableist oppression.

Thus, many social movement organizations and actors become urgently focused on abortion access, court cases (local, federal, and Supreme), and reallocate attention, time, money, and personnel to fighting attacks from mounting or cemented threats to abortion access. This tension is worth scholarly time and attention. Given the scholarship reviewed here, this points to the need for further investment in reproductive *justice* organizations so that they may build their capacity for movement work in the face of such access needs. As the scholarship reviewed here has demonstrated, the reproductive justice framework enables a more comprehensive, holistic approach to movement building than do reproductive health or rights frameworks. Future scholarship, especially sociological, would benefit from this focus.

A gift of such an expansive framework is that there will always be directions for future research. These need not always indicate previous gaps or oversights in the literature, but instead allow us to follow the lead of social movements. Bringing reproductive theory and framing more fully into the fold of sociological research and analysis can happen in several ways. First, scholars may identify and design research projects alongside reproductive justice activists and organizations through the tenets of community-engaged research. This approach centers the knowledge and expertise of those grounded in reproductive justice struggle, many of whom are most impacted by

the systems of oppression they are seeking to transform. Further, sociological research paradigms must locate the lived experiences (micro) of everyday people within relevant structures (macro) that impact the realities of the communities in which they live, including white supremacy, patriarchy, and colonialism, for example.

Reproductive *justice* analysis would require sociologists and researchers in general to position or theorize their objects of study or findings in relationship to the broader reproductive justice framework. For example, a study of the Intersex Justice Project's campaign to #EndIntersexSurgery could be framed using reproductive justice theories of bodily autonomy, consent, and the freedom to live in safety and with dignity (Intersex Justice Project). Additionally, sociologists who study ethnic cleansing, settler colonialism, and nation-building might structure their analysis with reproductive justice framing of the right to have children, the right to not have children, and the right to care for families in safety and with dignity. Finally, sociological research into reproductive justice can be shared beyond the academy, ideally with the expertise and collaboration of community members and relevant stakeholders. Scholars can make deliberate choices about sharing their research in non-academic formats, including co-authored op-eds, community presentations, art installations, zines, and policy recommendations, for example.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuing economic crises, and continued visceral public reckonings with white supremacist violence, intersectionality seems a likely starting point for future investigations. Access to affirming reproductive health care is critical, and as news stories of limited hospital beds and ventilators abound, future sociological scholarship may chart the paths between disability and reproductive justice theories and praxis, especially as the public learns more about chronic illness and disability related to COVID-19. There is already a strong foundation to build from, as activists and scholars alike have affirmed that disability justice is a reproductive justice (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013).

Second, given barriers to healthcare access, attention to economic downturn and worsened reproductive health outcomes may also be necessary. There are several reproductive justice-centered collectives and organizations who take seriously the intersections of economic justice and reproductive care, including abortion funds, all of which would be important starting points and leaders in such projects. Sociologists are well-equipped to tease out these intersections. Additionally, in the absence of adequate state care, organizers have created mutual aid collectives, including those devoted to groceries and household supplies (Khawaja et al., 2021), medical expenses, diaper drives, and general wealth redistribution. These mobilization strategies have long histories in community care, and examining them from a reproductive justice framework would be particularly important for building sociological and transdisciplinary scholarship.

Finally, myriad applied studies point to police violence specifically as a determinant of poor reproductive health outcomes (Cross, 2014; Premkumar, 2017). After multiple protests against police murder and brutality in 2020, several journalistic articles pointed to the harmful effects of tear gas, which police and military used against protestors. These articles discussed harmful effects related to menstruation, pregnancy loss, and overall reproductive health (Gregory, 2020; Taylor, 2020). Future research would benefit from understanding how reproductive justice and prison industrial complex abolition overlap in their praxis; how and whether activists and organizations identify and work at their overlap or in coalition with one another; and the potential for these frameworks to bring people together to care for their communities in the wake such harm, to build other worlds, and to shape change.

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ENDNOTE

¹ The Black women who founded the reproductive justice movement are Toni M. Bond Leonard, Reverend Alma Crawford, Evelyn S. Field, Terri James, Bisola Marignay, Cassandra McConnell, Cynthia Newbille, Loretta Ross, Elizabeth Terry, 'Able' Mable Thomas, Winnette P. Willis, and Kim Youngblood.

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