

# Amaya Gaines

Major: *Political Science*

Major: *Policy Studies*

Minor: *Leadership Studies*

Mentor: **Dillan Bono-Lunn**

## ***Policy Solutions Waiting to Be Seen: Applying Intersectionality Policy Process Analysis to State Anti-Poverty Programs***

### **ABSTRACT**

Individuals and communities located at the juncture of multiple social identities are often subjected to the binary option of invisibility of their nuanced experiences or hypervisibility of single components of their identities. This conflict is especially relevant to social policy, given the inseparability of welfare policy and social identities including race, gender, and class. Therefore, it is imperative that an intersectional lens be applied to accurately evaluate the efficacy of federal and state-level anti-poverty policies for the American poor, especially those occupying multiple marginalized identities. Driven by personal reflection and new perspectives gained about the unique experiences of Black womanhood, this project proposes the intersectional policy analysis of state-level anti-poverty policy, specifically applied to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), incorporating a comparative case study of six U.S. states.

### **PERSONAL STATEMENT**

Stepping into adulthood, I have learned to appreciate the ways in which experiencing society as a Black woman continues to shape my vision for myself, making me more aware and intentional in personal exploration and reflection. The simultaneous celebration and cautious hyper-awareness of my identity has always been present throughout my life. Black womanhood is an experience that, like a pair of eyeglasses, has given me a clearer perspective on the world. While appreciating and celebrating my blackness, I remain acutely conscious that the world does not always share these emotions, instead classifying blackness as “other.” Being the lone Black body in several microaggressive spaces has taught me that the world will often brand me with its own expectations, with justification based on the sight of my melanin alone. Those experiences encouraged me to find refuge in literature examining compounding identities and the resulting unique experiences of those occupying multiple statuses. I realized that existing at the juncture of blackness and womanhood placed me in a unique location that is often overlooked and minimized to existing in one space without acknowledging simultaneous existence in the other. Before my studies at Elon, I conducted a year-long descriptive and comparative study of racial disciplinary disparities within my high school. Not only did my study highlight flaws within disciplinary policies, but it also exposed me to the multi-layered experiences of discrimination and oppression faced by individuals with similar and different identities to mine, in and out of the classroom. At Elon, I have continued to research the unique, multi-faceted outcomes that occur due to overlapping marginalized

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identities, and to serve in roles that aim to disarm injustice and inequity in social and political systems through my coursework in political science and policy studies and within my Leadership Fellows cohort.

While educating myself about intersectionality and critical race theory and their interrelation with political and social systems, I have found my contribution to a discourse that often presents a binary option of invisibility or hypervisibility to those who are economically, socially, or politically vulnerable. Policies that are formulated, implemented, and evaluated without considering the interrelated nature of oppression and inequity run the risk of rendering multiple marginalized communities invisible. Having found a discourse that centers the experiences of marginalized individuals and communities, my curiosities about identity and policy have thrived, and have become main areas of focus as an undergraduate and individual striving to be an agent of social change. Upon graduation from Elon, I will pursue a joint degree in public policy and law, both of which will prepare me for a career as a policy analyst or counsel. Through a career in public policy I hope to promote social change and equity through policy that centers the needs and experiences of communities that are overlooked and underserved.

Through the Lumen Prize, I will continue to cultivate knowledge as a policy scholar and immerse myself in experiences that will equip me for graduate study, policy research, and advocacy on behalf of people facing layered forms of oppression. This project will assert the importance of intersectional policy analysis and identify the varied ways in which people experience state-level social policy based on intersecting identities.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **Focus**

Intersectional approaches have become primary analytical tools for understanding the ways that multiple forms of disadvantage accumulate, creating obstacles that are not conventionally acknowledged. Rooted in Black feminist thought, intersectionality was initially a metaphorical framework constructed to articulate how race and gender interact to shape Black women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality as a framework has increasingly been applied to research practices across a variety of disciplines. Despite the diffusion of intersectionality into other discourses, less attention has been paid to applying intersectionality to public policy (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). The methods for integrating intersectionality into policy development, implementation, and evaluation are still evolving (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011).

Intersectionality posits that addressing complex social problems with one-dimensional policy solutions is ineffective. In this way, intersectionality shares similarities with other frameworks regarding the policymaking process, emphasizing that policy is not uniformly experienced across communities. Rather, intersectionality contends that critical differences and needs of communities must be acknowledged when developing, implementing, and evaluating policy solutions. Intersectionality diverges from uni-dimensional approaches beginning with the premise that targeting individual identity markers may produce a false classification of individuals and communities that does not reflect lived realities (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). More accurately, intersectionality asserts that lived experiences are created by intersecting identities. The significance of recognizing intersecting social identities, vulnerabilities, and locations of inequality is well illustrated scholarship about violence against women and workplace

discrimination (Crenshaw 1989, 1991). However, intersectionality has been largely absent in the discourse within social policy, particularly anti-poverty policies and programs.

Combating poverty and providing a substantive social safety net requires sophisticated policy analysis. Many causes and experiences of poverty risk being overlooked unless there are changes within policy making (Corus et. al. 2016). A number of policies focus on single factors related to poverty, overlooking communities with overlapping vulnerabilities, where the lived experiences resulting from one factor may amplify another. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 was considered a sophisticated policy essential to a new era of American welfare (Reingold & Smith, 2012). Through the PRWORA, Congress enacted the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, replacing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which provided cash assistance to families experiencing poverty (CBPP, 2020). In addition to block grants, TANF required a state-spending threshold known as the “maintenance of effort” (MOE). Federal TANF block grants and MOE dollars are the primary sources of funding for state TANF programs, both of which can be used by states to meet any of the goals outlined in the 1996 law (CBPP, 2020). States hold broad discretion to determine: eligibility for TANF benefits and other services, benefit levels, determination of financial need, work-related activities required to receive and maintain benefits, sanctions for noncompliance, and time limits for receipt. TANF benefits across the states are often too low and fail to assist families in meeting basic needs (CBPP, 2020). Furthermore, TANF assistance still leaves a family of three below half the poverty line, and benefits have decreased overall by at least 20 percent since 1996 due to states failing to reinvest savings from caseload declines (CBPP, 2020). Overall, TANF “is a greatly weakened social safety net that does far less than AFDC to alleviate poverty and hardship.” (CBPP, 2020).

Much of public discourse and legislation surrounding welfare has been historically intertwined with race. Both AFDC and TANF recipients saw declines in benefits and more stringent requirements when state populations and welfare recipients were more racially diverse (Reingold & Smith, 2012). During 1996 welfare reform, prominent stereotypes like the “welfare queen” weaponized the intersection of race, gender, and class-- often providing ideological justification for social policies that produced inequitable and oppressive outcomes (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). Given the multidimensional nature of both poverty as well as TANF as its policy solution, there is a clear case for analyzing this policy through an intersectional lens, with a particular focus on how individual states vary in their implementation.

Despite the recognized utility of intersectionality in policy analysis, there is a lack of research that identifies the varied ways in which people experience state-level anti-poverty policy based on intersecting identities. This project will apply intersectional policy analysis to state-level TANF policy and demonstrate the importance of intersectionality throughout the policy cycle in providing more equitable outcomes for the American poor.

#### Scholarly Process

Since this project is centered around the promise of intersectional policy analysis through the examination of a state-level anti-poverty policy, employing a research approach that integrates intersectionality into the policy making process is crucial to understanding the varied ways in which communities are affected by such a policy approach. The methodology for this research will primarily draw from the work of Bishwakarma, Hunt, and Zajicek (2007), in which the authors propose the Intersectionality Policy Process

Analysis (IPPA) model to emphasize that an intersectional policy process should include an examination of each phase of the policy process to determine the extent to which the intersectionality approach is needed, and if it is included. Hankivsky and Cormier (2011) acknowledge that the authors “present a practical guide to policy creation using an intersectionality paradigm”, which is applied to a case study of education policy in Nepal. Given the authors’ insistence that intersectionality must be integrated into each phase of the policy process, the IPPA model allows me to consistently apply an intersectional lens to policy making, both retroactively and proactively as I proof TANF programs across selected state case studies to determine the efficacy of TANF programs for targeted communities, and highlight the lack of intersectional approaches during the policy making process. The states collected for the case studies include California, North Carolina, Louisiana, New York, Illinois, and Texas. These states were selected based on their fulfilment of numerous criteria, including demographics of the states’ populations or TANF recipients, benefit generosity, and notable racial or other disparities between the state population and recipient population.

The first two steps in the policy analysis process are largely qualitative, as I will be exploring the agenda setting and policy formulation aspects of TANF across the six cases. Agenda setting examines how and why policymakers give attention to particular issues and how issues are subsequently framed as policy problems. Policy formulation considers policy alternatives and their relative effectiveness at addressing the problem as it is framed. Reviewing national discourses concerning welfare reform policy through an intersectional lens, agenda setting acknowledges the differential experiences of a policy across social groups, while formulation examines how one-dimensional policies have addressed the consequences of the problem for disadvantaged communities. Where applicable, notable state-level discourse will also be examined to better understand the variation in state approaches to welfare reform. In the second stage of the policy analysis, the project will continue to examine the national and state-level narratives framing proposed alternative welfare reform policies before and after the enactment of PRWORA.

The third stage, policy implementation, occurs when funds are appropriated for the policy, and the program is administered. The fourth stage, policy evaluation, determines whether the policy as it is implemented is compliant with its objectives. Using publicly available datasets, such as the Welfare Rules Databook and Census data, I will analyze variation in the administration of TANF programs across the state case studies and social groups, presenting the intersectional experiences of those impacted by state-level TANF policy. Here, the project will engage in quantitative analysis of intersectional policy outcomes of TANF for various communities.

#### Proposed Products

Scholarly article for publication:

Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics  
Policy & Society

Internship - Summer 2021, 2022

NC Summer Policy Institute, Summer 2021

Association for Public Policy and Management (APPAM) Public Policy Camp, Fall 2021

SURE, Summer 2022

PLUS Program, Summer 2021, 2022

APPAM Research Conference, Fall 2022

## **FEASIBILITY**

Although intersectionality is supported in its potential to garner new knowledge and cultivate emerging research in various disciplines and policy domains, there are challenges when attempting to operationalize intersectionality as a tool for policy analysis. Central to the critique of intersectionality, both as a framework and analytical approach, are the definitional dilemmas that arise as intersectionality becomes more expansive across academic disciplines. Intersectionality increasingly aims to address less specific social identity structures that may not be readily observable to policy analysts. These newer definitions and applications have expanded beyond race, gender, and class to include other social identities like age, education, “and other naturalized- though not necessarily natural-ways of categorizing human populations.” (Gopaldas, 2013). Because of the expansion of intersectionality’s definitional scope, Gopaldas argues that “the most difficult aspect of intersectional research is delineating a scope of study- - which identity structures to include in the analysis and why.” (2013). For the purposes of this project, race, gender, and class will define the scope of intersectionality when examining the extent to which, if it all, intersectional policy approaches were used during the process of formulating, implementing, and evaluating state TANF programs. This scope is appropriate because state and federal data detailing the characteristics and financial circumstances of TANF recipients across the states include these identity markers, and they were the original identity markers described in Crenshaw’s establishment of the intersectionality framework. To supplement my knowledge of intersectionality and public policy, and help navigate its application to the analysis of my six state case studies, I will be consulting *The Palgrave Handbook of Intersectionality in Public Policy*, written by Dr. Olena Hankivsky, who is an established scholar of social policy and intersectionality. This book highlights key challenges, possibilities, and necessary critique of intersectionality-informed approaches in public policy. Also, I am familiar with the work of the African American Policy Forum, founded by Kimberle Crenshaw, and I hope to consult with research assistants and other staff members during the research process. It is important to note that the scope of intersectionality has expanded vastly since its inception, and as more established methods for applying intersectionality develop, other identity markers should be included in intersectional analysis across multiple disciplines when possible.

Given the novelty of intersectional approaches in policy analysis, there are inevitable challenges with the proposed model being applied to the six case studies. Hankivsky and Cormier (2011) concede that the Intersectionality Policy Process Analysis (IPPA) model constructed and applied by Bishwakarma, Hunt, and Zajicek (2007) is a “practical guide to policy creation using an intersectionality paradigm”. IPPA provides useful guidance for how to integrate elements of intersectionality within a traditional four-step policy cycle, which includes the implementation and evaluation of policy. However, applying intersectionality in this way assumes a rigidity in the policy cycle that recognizes each stage as being quite distinctive from one another. Furthermore, both Hankivsky & Cormier, and Bishwakarma, Hunt, and Zajicek acknowledge that this model is the most practical for policy practitioners, as it is well suited for an intersectional policy analysis through an administrative agency. Despite not having the capabilities or expertise to apply the

model within an administrative agency, it remains the most practical approach for policy analysis in the context of exploring variation in state TANF policies.

An integral component of the proposed products of this project are opportunities to present and publish my research, along with experiential learning. Due to COVID-19, numerous conferences, camps, and seminars have been postponed, cancelled, or adapted to a virtual format. Should proposed events become virtual, I still fully intend to pursue those opportunities to present my research remotely. In the case of cancellation, my mentor and I will work to identify other relevant opportunities to present my project offered across a number of formats, whether in-person, hybrid, or virtual. An additional challenge in planning for experiential opportunities such as conferences and internship programs will likely be the ambiguity of dates for these events in the future. My mentor and I will continue to monitor the dates and format for each of the events, and make the necessary adjustments as event details become available. I also plan to study abroad during the 2022 Winter term. Although this experience will not be related to my research, I intend to establish methods of communication with my mentor while abroad to ensure the timely development of my scholarly article.

Relevant coursework in my department of political science and policy studies, such as PST 225: Introduction to Public Policy and PST 301 Policy Analysis, have prepared me to complete this research. These courses, along with independent research prior to and during my studies at Elon have provided me with opportunities to engage with theories and frameworks regarding the policy process, intersectionality and critical race theory. Future coursework, particularly POL 220: Research Methods in Political Science and Policy Studies, will aid me in further developing an understanding of research methodologies while focusing on concept formation, research design for problem solving and the measurement of data and data analysis. Additionally, POL 328: Race & Ethnicity in American Politics will expand my knowledge of the ways in which race and ethnicity are intricately linked to the American political system. Also, my experience with conducting descriptive and comparative research prior to my studies at Elon has given me a sound foundation for engaging in the research process. Because this project will require working with Stata, a general-purpose statistical software package primarily used in the field of political science, I intend to acquire the skills necessary to operate this tool through my mentor, Dr. Dillan Bono-Lunn, who has extensive experience working with this statistical software.

## **BUDGET**

### Tuition

Fall 2021, Spring 2022 (Junior Year): \$7,250

Fall 2022, Spring 2023 (Senior Year): \$7,250

Total: \$14,500

### Books

- The Palgrave Handbook of Intersectionality in Public Policy (Olena Hankivsky & Julia S. Jordan Zachery): \$300

Total: \$300

### Conferences & Camps

#### Association for Public Policy and Management (APPAM) Spring DC Regional Student Conference

APPAM Student Membership: \$80 (\$40/year)  
Preliminary Program Registration Fee: \$25  
Anticipated Conference Registration Fee: \$100  
Travel ( Plane ticket to Washington, D.C.): \$200  
Housing: \$300  
Meals: \$120  
Total: \$825

#### APPAM Public Policy Camp (Location TBD)

Travel: \$300  
Housing: N/A  
Meals: \$60  
Total: \$360

#### APPAM Fall Research Conference

Travel: \$300  
Housing: \$310  
Meals: \$200  
Total: \$810

#### Presentation Materials

SURF Poster  
Total: \$60

#### Graduate School/Law School Admissions Preparation

Graduate School Applications: \$900  
LSAT Prep Program (LSAC): \$120  
GRE Prep Program: \$1,400  
GRE Test Fee:\$ 205  
LSAT Test Fee: \$200  
Total: \$2,825

#### Data Tools

Stata I/C Perpetual License for Students: \$225  
Net-Course 101, Introduction to Stata: \$95  
Total: \$320

Grand Total: \$20,000

## **PROPOSED EXPERIENCES and PRODUCTS**

Experiences

Products

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Summer 2021	Attend NC Summer Policy Institute  Tentative Public Policy Internship	Begin Agenda Setting section of article.
Fall 2021	POL 220: Research Methods in Political Science & Policy Studies  (Tentative) POL 301: Race & Ethnicity in American Politics  2 SH, LUM 498  APPAM Public Policy Camp	Agenda Setting section of article completed.  Application for Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE).
Winter 2022	Study Abroad *see feasibility	Formulation section of article completed.
Spring 2022	2 SH, LUM 498	Implementation section of article completed.
Summer 2022	Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE)  (Contingent on SURE) Public Policy Internship	Evaluation section of article completed.  Graduate program search, GRE/LSAT preparation.
Fall 2022	2 SH, LUM 498  APPAM Fall Conference	Begin graduate school applications, GRE/LSAT. Complete the GRE/LSAT  Working draft of article completed, ready for final edits.
Winter 2023	Respond to calls for proposals by research conferences.	Send proposals to APPAM, Pi Sigma Alpha student conferences (due January 2023)  Prepare scholarly article to send to journals (Pi Sigma Alpha, Policy & Society, etc.)  Continue graduate school applications, GRE/LSAT
Spring 2023	2 SH, LUM 498 Present Research at the following conferences Spring Undergraduate Research Forum (SURF)	Scholarly article ready for publication.

	APPAM DC Regional Student Conference Pi Sigma Alpha Student Conference	
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