Filling the Glass: Gender Perspectives on Families

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Filling the Glass: Gender Perspectives on Families

Abstract

The challenge feminist scholarship posed to family studies has been largely met through the incorporation of research on gender dynamics within families and intersectional differences among them. Despite attention to gender as performance and power in more diverse families, the more difficult work of understanding the dynamics of change among institutions including the family and using intersectional analyses to unpack relationships of power is only beginning. Reviewing the contributions researchers have made in these areas over the last decade, and applying the idea of circuits to the study of carework, this paper points to promising practices for both improving research on gender and families and contributing to the slow drip of institutional change.

Two decades ago, I (1990) argued against a purely social psychological understanding of gender as a socialized role carried by individuals and primarily produced in and by families. Instead, I suggested that to think of gender in a more multi-level and dynamic way would also demand thinking of families differently. Drawing on feminist research, I challenged the functionalist assumptions that families were separate spheres of interaction with internally unitary interests, a natural and universal specialization of roles, and a foundational position in the social order. Invited to assess how gender research informs family studies now, I focus on both what has changed and what remains marginalized in relation to this agenda. In this paper, I suggest that the half-full, half-empty glass metaphor aptly describes how the field has responded in the past decade to the challenges of analyzing gender as a significant social relationship.

The fullness of the glass is apparent in the volume of empirical research on families that takes gender relations rather than sex roles as its core analytic concept for thinking about women and men (see overviews in Coltrane and Adams, 2008; Lloyd et al. 2009). Especially at the micro-level, the dynamics of gender as power (Bittman et al 2003) and as performance (Fox and Murry 2000) have emerged as topics of general concern. The emptiness is revealed by the continuing force of functionalism in defining a normative standard family, still considering family structure difference in terms of deviance (Walker 2009) and gender as a "role" in a single institution rather than an inequality that cuts across multiple institutions (Risman 2004). The massive increase in attention to family diversity has only begun to be connected to the dynamics of change within and across multiple institutions and to the relations of gender with other inequalities, as McDowell and Fang (2007) pointed out. Wills and Risman (2006) emphasized the progress made but point to a continuing challenge to go

beyond a token recognition of gender. I suggest that the field of family studies has not been able to fully incorporate gender analyses because it still rarely places families more explicitly into a dynamic field of economic and political changes in which the struggles over gender relations, as well as over other forms of inequality, are acknowledged to be collective as well as individual. Without such an analysis, family change continues to be seen more as a crisis than an opportunity for challenging pervasive structures of societal inequalities.

Rather than presenting a representative sample of "gender research" in family studies, this review focuses on the studies that do engage family, gender and social change in theoretical and empirical interaction, using this work to show the value family scholars gain by taking such a multi-level and dynamic view of gender. It begins with a brief overview of the places where gender has been best incorporated within family studies and then looks at research that moves past a micro-macro division to ask intersectional, multilevel questions about gender dynamics. This perspective, still often found only at the margins of family studies, approaches families as an institutional site in which gender-based relations of inequality are often contested, sometimes changed, and always connected to other gendered institutions and inequalities (Cooke, 2006; Haney and Pollard 2004, McDowell and Fang, 2007).

The two dynamic threads that I follow are the *contested multi-institutional relationships* among families, states and markets that are gendered in locally specific, temporally dynamic and systemically meaningful patterns, and *gender as a structural inequality* in relationship to other inequalities such as race, class, age and sexuality. I then use feminist research on care to demonstrate some contributions of a simultaneous institutional and intersectional analysis of gender and families. I point to issues of

contradiction and resistance that this research poses for understanding changes in gender relations, not just "on" or "in" the family, but as wide-ranging societal transformations in which the institution of family matters. I conclude by suggesting that attention to power and change will inevitably make studies of gender and family political.

ASSESSING THE PARAMETERS OF GENDER AND FAMILY RESEARCH

In order to see what a gender perspective brings to family studies, it is first necessary to recognize the vast transformation of the field created by feminist critique. These began with the arguments by Jessie Bernard that there are gendered experiences of the institution ("his" and "her" marriage), continued with the challenges to the dominance of role theory in the 1980s and the political fights over gendered changes in family relations in the 1990s (see earlier decade reviews by Ferree 1990, Fox and Murry 2000). Feminist research on families still engages the questions generated by these struggles, building an impressively large body of research (reviewed by Lloyd et al 2009) and making the relevance of gender hard to ignore, even for those who feel the challenges to patriarchal marriage go too far (Waite and Gallagher 2003, Wilcox 2004).

Indeed, the glass is so full of studies considering gender as a variable that reviewing all this work would be impossible (consider the gender comparisons offered in many of the articles in this issue, particularly on LGBT families, work-family relations, family policy, and power, conflict and violence). This review regretfully omits many such studies and also points to the comprehensive set of reviews in Lloyd et al (2009) as well as fine discussions of gender and family issues in Calasanti and Slevin (2006) and Coltrane and Adams (2008) to cover some of the other gaps.

A broad sense of what has been accomplished by bringing gender into family studies can be conveyed by considering how well-incorporated some topics have become despite how radical they seemed when first introduced. Most conspicuously, assessing the causes and consequences of the division of household labor in married couples has become routine , with much of this research proceeding from the assumption that gender itself, not merely a rational allocation of time, lies at the root of this (for excellent recent contributions, see Gupta 2006, Treas and deRuijter 2008). There has been much attention to the "irrationalities" in these arrangements, particularly focusing on assessing the claim that wives who earn more than their husbands engage in a compensatory display of gender conformity by doing more domestic labor (Bittman et al 2003, Cooke, 2006; Gupta 2007). Micro-level social constructionism as an approach to gender relations has lost its novelty, but as Deutsch (2007) argued, much of this work has been more about "doing" than "undoing" gender. Overall, the idea of the household as a place in which gender is produced and performed (a "gender factory" as Berk memorably called it, 1985) through the provision of housework and childcare has become commonplace.

A second major accomplishment lies in the now-common acknowledgement that the work-family balance issues faced primarily by women reflect large, historically and politically meaningful shifts in gender arrangements (Moen and Roehling 2004, Stone 2007, Williams, 2000). Structural research provided tools for understanding the complexity of this transformation, showing how families reflect wider but nationally and historically specific expectations about self and society (Cherlin 2009, Rosenfeld, 2007) and how the material conditions of production and reproduction have changed (Coontz 2005, Peterson 2005, Thistle 2006). Even those who are skeptical about the merits of the dual career family and

gender equality as societal norms connect them to an ongoing restructuring of the economy (e,g, Wilcox 2004).

Third, the lens of family studies has widened to include more studies of gender relations as shaping diverse family types, including lesbian and gay families (Goldberg 2009, Oswald 2002, Stacey 2005), transnational families (Parrenas 2001, Mahalingham et al 2009), and families of color in the United States (Few 2007, Hill 2005). Research on poor and non-poor single mothers has proliferated as well, analyzing both the challenges of material survival and the impact of cultural expectations on their struggles to "do family" in the face of continued normative disapproval (Hays 2002, Hertz 2006, M.Nelson 2003). These studies provide an essential knowledge base for seeing gender relations within the family as interconnected with other forms of social inequality that are also materially changing and culturally contested.

Nonetheless there is also good reason to present the glass as half empty, and to argue that a gender perspective is still profoundly marginalized. Critical reviews of family policy studies have shown how, even in gender-political controversial domains such as gay parenting (Stacy and Bilbarz 2001) or extramarital childbirth (O'Connor 2001), most research designs accept the gender norms of the status quo as unfailingly appropriate. Although the discourse of family change has been deeply politicized for at least two decades, and perhaps much longer (Adams, 2007, Coltrane 2001, Smock 2004), the dominant framing of the debate has been that the status quo represents "science" and only feminist claims are "political" (Presser 1997). Pitting "family" against "feminism," conservative American activists vigorously mobilized both at home and abroad to argue for the continued institutionalization of different family responsibilities for men and women (Buss and Herman

2003). The connection between gender arrangements and family change, although a theme throughout the social science of the 20th century (Smock 2004), has been often framed in family studies as a "threat" to the (functional) family of "today," as Coltrane (2001) noted a decade ago. In response, much American social policy adopted the cause of "healthy relationships" as those organized around gender difference (Heath 2009).

Walker (2009) recently deplored how little feminist research entered mainstream family journals and how difficult she found it, as the editor of this journal, to bring in a critical, socially dynamic gender analysis, when many of the research studies she reviewed still spoke primarily to what she called a "deeply conservative" functionalist agenda: one in which married, heterosexual, white, middle class families with young children and a harmony of interests appeared as the norm (2009: 19). She applauded the contributions of particular researchers, but her overall conclusion was one of missed opportunities for the field as a whole. Additionally, the on-going conceptualization of gender as a "role" situated within the family as a single institution depoliticizes the processes that connect inequalities across multiple institutional sites, which contributes to framing the issue of gendered family change in individualized and social problem terms, as Allen (2001) and Coltrane and Adams (2003) noted.

The chief difference between emphasizing the full or empty state of the glass may be found in whether the "gender analysis" being included is defined more or less loosely. A loose definition of gender as a variable distinguishing women and men as individuals or defining relationships located within the context of family is omnipresent. It may even employ the theoretically disconcerting language of "gender role," which either encapsulates "gender" within a single institution or turns "role" into a synonym for cultural stereotype. Far

fewer studies use the feminist-inspired and theoretically rigorous definition of gender as a relationship of power connected to institutional processes organizing – and changing – families. Even though stressing the half-full glass, the broad review of family journals by Wills and Risman (2006) found an important gulf between family studies that considered gender at all, which made up 26% of the articles between 1992 and 2002, and those that explicitly brought in a feminist perspective (about 6%).

Overall, it is important to acknowledge that families are increasingly seen as a place where gender matters, but also to recognize the limited ways that gender is seen to matter. Gender too often remains personalized to the level of individual struggles and depoliticized by reducing social inequalities to differences. Feminist questions about conflicts of interest within the family and the connections between families and changes in culture, economics and politics have entered the field of family studies, but have often been more about adaptation than transformation, as some reviewers have already noted. For example, Stacey and Bilbarz (2001) asked whether the defensive claim that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are “not different” from the heterosexual norm needs to be challenged by considering when and how sexual norms deserve to be transformed in ways that these parents may be able to do more effectively. Danby (2007) similarly asked whether the feminist focus on gender relations in couples (whether married or not, gay or straight) is an effective way of challenging normative boundaries on “the family” even for heterosexuals. Bringing “gender” into family studies but trying to make it uncontroversial and apolitical by disconnecting it from the ongoing struggles over what kinds of gender relations are socially valued and supported is a pyrrhic victory.

Over the past decade, some researchers have challenged the domestication of gender studies with a more dynamic, multilevel and critical understanding of gender. McDowell and Fang (2007) critically reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of multicultural family scholarship, saying that gender scholars are beginning to assume that:

> "dynamics within families, and those between families and broader social systems, are reciprocally influential. Relationships between family members are deeply influenced by social discourses and material realities associated with the social locations of each member and the family as a whole. Likewise, power dynamics within families, and the role families play in the transmission of cultural and social knowledge, continually influence broader social structures." (p. 555).

In the rest of this review, I examine the gender research of the past decade that avoids the implicitly functionalist "separate spheres" model of family structures, social interactions, or individual beliefs and behavior by bringing the wider political and cultural context of these processes into its study design. This research not only studies what the gender relations of the present are like, but also attempts to explain the interests and injustices connected to these arrangements, how and by whom they are being resisted, and why, in the interest of gender as well as family justice, they can and should be changed.

ANALYZING GENDER: THEORETICAL ADVANCES AND CHALLENGES

The challenge for gender analysis in this decade has been to integrate the structural story of transformation at the macro-level with a consideration of women's and men's individual and collective agency in families and family politics. Like social constructionist views of families (e.g. Holstein and Gubrium, 1999), a gender perspective emphasizes the agency of persons and organizations, the meanings that social action carries, and micro-

processes of interaction. But unlike social constructionism, gender analysis situates these meanings and micro-processes in a context of multiple, intersecting historical forces – economic, demographic, political – that are both material and discursive (Deutsch 2007, Risman 2004, Martin 2009). Like structural analyses of culture (Cherlin 2009) or the economy (Thistle 2006), these analyses make conflict and change over time visible, and may consider the political interests or policy directions more or less explicitly (Gornick and Meyers, 2009). But unlike studies that remain solely macro-level, these studies also bring in individual and collective agency as part of the story. They highlight the cultural and material resources that people and groups bring to their struggles, and seek to identify practices with potential for changing structures of inequality (Jacobs and Gerson 2004, Macdonald forthcoming, Williams 2000).

This sort of gender analysis of the family as an interactive institution integrated with politics, the economy, and civil society and entwined in relations of inequality based on race, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, and age remains “alternative” rather than mainstream, as feminist reviewers have often pointed out (e.g. Calasanti and Slevin 2006, Few 2007, McDowell and Fang 2007). Its integration of macro, meso, and micro concerns represents both a contribution that gender theoretical research distinctively added to the understanding of families in the past decade, and a promising direction for moving the field forward.

Theoretical advances

A gender perspective or gender analysis has also been called gender relations theory, gender as a social structure, gender as an institution, and an intersectional gender analysis (Risman 2004, Lorber 2005, Martin 2003a). At its core, the gender perspective rejects gender as a static norm or ideal, and instead defines it as a social relation characterized by power

inequalities that hierarchically produce, organize and evaluate “masculinities” and “femininities” as the contested but controlling practices of individuals, organizations and societies. The differences between and among women and men are thus not only socially constructed but also politically meaningful. Individual gendering activities are situated in larger structures that have their own institutionalized gender practices and meanings (Martin 2003a). The macro-micro dynamic is thus integral to this perspective (Anderson 2005).

Over the past decade, research that addresses gender as a multi-level structural relationship (Risman 2004) has added to, rather than replaced, the micro-social view of gender as an interpersonally evaluated performance, or “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987), an approach which continues to grow in theoretical sophistication in its own right. The social constructionist view of gender has itself expanded to encompass more concern with interactional analyses of multiple inequalities (“doing difference,” Pyke and Johnson 2003), the material and discursive resources available for struggles to “undo” gender (Blume and Blume 2003, Deutsch 2007, Risman 2009), and the contradictions between what is “said and done” and varying degrees of awareness in the “saying and doing” (Martin 2003b). Macro-structures are identified not solely with the material inequalities of power and resources, but also with cultural schemas and the discourses of difference, power, and belonging that define social groups such as nations, races, and genders (Gal and Kligman 2000, Hancock 2004).

Such macro-level culture is evidenced in specific gendered discourses of identity and value. Gender analysis attempts to untangle how women use such cultural narratives. For example, Martin (2009) looked at variation in how mothers conveyed norms of heterosexuality to their children, and Pyke and Johnson (2003) identified the tensions in self-

conceptions of daughters of Korean and Vietnamese immigrants in relation to the narrative of absolute opposition between patriarchal Asian and egalitarian white American cultures (Pyke and Johnson 2003). Such culturally grounded identities are then put at stake in negotiating gender, for example in conflict between mothers and nannies over good mothering, (Macdonald 2009) and between parents and children over gendered behaviors (Kane 2006). The reverse is also true: such struggles at the interactional level are understood as part of the slow process of transforming cultural norms, what Sullivan called the "slow drip" version of a gender revolution (2004).

As it has grown and developed, gender theory has approached families not as a separate sphere at all, but as only one of a number of interlinked institutions where gender relations are constructed, reproduced and transformed (Albiston 2007, Coontz 2005, Moen and Roehling 2004, Presser 2004). This gender perspective understands politics in terms of ongoing multi-level struggles over the nature of intersectional power relations, not merely those occurring in formal institutional contexts in and around governments and social movements (Brush 2003, Pascale 2007). For example, the politics of care does not only encompass the important macro level questions of when and how states and markets should be used to complement and support family-based care (Daly and Rake 2003, Gornick and Meyers 2009). It also refers to the meso level organizational conditions under which care is provided in specific cases, how these draw on and create social inequalities, and when and how such institutions are changed (Hobson and Fahlen 2009, Presser 2004). It includes micro level questions of individual identities and interpersonal relationships among careworkers, employers and recipients of care as sites of struggle (Macdonald, forthcoming, Tuominen 2003). Each of these levels is seen as relating systematically to each other, with gender a

meaningful structural relation needing analysis at and between each level (Risman 2004). Gender as an inequality operates in, on, with, and through family as an institution on all these levels.

By defining power as a multi-level and dynamic relation that enables, constrains and gives meaning to action, recent gender analyses of families have focused much-needed attention on both institutions and intersectionality (Haney and Pollard 2004). Institutions consist of the social formations through which persons and groups are organized in meaningful relations over time (Martin 2003a). Families are social institutions existing in a multi-institutional field in which social processes (such as production, reproduction and representation) are organized through gender inequality, although never by this relationship alone (Walby 2009). Intersectionality refers to the active interaction of the various relations of inequality such as race, class, sexuality, gender and age within and across all of the institutions of society (Anderson 2005). All families embody individual intersectionality, since all members have a gender, race, age, and nationality. Families as institutions are also located in a nexus of these structural relations of inequality within and across all other institutions (economic, governmental, religious, and civic) at all levels from the local to the transnational (McCall 2005).

In the following sections, I separately review contributions to the understanding of institutional and intersectional analysis of families offered from a gender perspective. Afterwards, I illustrate the potential for integration of institutional and intersectional issues by comparing American and European feminist approaches to understanding of care as a gendered system that links families and individuals within and across diverse institutional inequalities at multiple levels of analysis.

INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS: SITES AND CIRCUITS OF GENDER POWER

A dynamic gender analysis treats institutions such as families, states, and markets as interconnected *sites* rather than separate spheres or even discrete systems (Howell 2007). At the sites of family relations – both in and across individual households -- gender power gets exercised and institutionalized. Gender and family relations also depend on what Howell (p. 424) called the "circuits" connecting families with many other institutions, such as government and formal employment, in particular settings. Walby (2009) portrayed these circuits as feedback loops, both positive (stabilizing) and negative (destabilizing) for the relations of inequity. She further argued that older notions of systems theory were wrong, not because they focused on feedback, but because they assumed equilibrium and treated sites as if they were closed systems. Viewing gender only in relation to family, class in relation to the economy, race in relation to states and nations distorts analyses of these inequalities and institutions by hiding the dynamics of change. For example, the legal definition of marriage and allocation of benefits on that basis is today an obviously contested and changing institutional circuit between family and state, simultaneously organized by gender, sexuality, age, and nationality. To grasp the implications of this struggle for families demands studying processes across levels of analysis and institutional domains.

From structures down and from agents up

The institutional aspect of gender relations theory places families in a social context larger than themselves. Moving beyond "separate spheres" ideology, it deals explicitly with the issues of stability and change, the unevenness and contradictions of gender relations within and across social locations, and the balance between structure and agency in those sites. Albiston (2007), Hobson and Fahlen (2009), Jacobs and Gerson (2004), Moen and

Roehling (2004) and Presser (2004) have offered varying conceptualizations of the circuits of work and family that follow this model.

In turn, the activity emphasized by a dynamic institutional approach moves analysts away from seeing either women or men as "actors whose interests could be read directly from their economic position by invoking utilitarian assumptions," toward a conception of them as "boundedly-rational, operating with repertoires – of collective action, of organization, of identity – that are culturally constituted in ways specific to time and place" (Adams, Clemens and Orloff 2005, pp. 36-7). The power of inequality is not only economic or demographic, but also expressed in cultural knowledge, interactive experiences and self-understandings (Martin 2003b). These discourses and schemas provide tools for making personally meaningful choices, but are themselves imbued with implicit and explicit gender, race, sexual and national meanings (Johnson and Pyke 2003, Martin 2009). Actors do not make "free" choices, but do express individual agency through the cultural values, political projects, and personal intentions they embrace (or resist); society itself is a recurring human accomplishment (Connell 2002).

The historicity emphasized by an institutional approach to gender also makes it meaningful to ask when and how specific structural gender relations become "deinstitutionalized," as Cherlin (2004) has argued in the case of contemporary American marriage. Feminists also explore the "reinstitutionalization" of gender on a fundamentally different cultural and material bases, not only in the U.S. (Goldin 2006) but also transnationally (Cha and Thebaud 2009, Connell 2008, Peterson 2005) and in other specific locales, such as post-socialist states (Adler 2004 Gal and Kligman 2000, Rudd 2000). Particularly in studies of fatherhood, gender research has emphasized both the evidence of

change in individuals and families (Coltrane 2004, Townsend 2003) and the obstacles to remaking fatherhood on significantly more egalitarian terms (Hobson and Fahlen 2009, Lister 2009). The risk remains that changes in gender relations become framed as the inevitable outcome of a single force, modernization, rather than as objectives of struggles that are typically contradictory in their processes and results.

Contestation and change

A gender analysis that is self-consciously attentive to both structure and agency explores the processes of contradiction and contention in change over time (Allen 2001, Coontz 2005, Coltrane 2004, Risman 2009). Rather than individualizing culture schemas as personal "attitudes" or de-historicizing cultural demands as "traditional," an institutional approach to gender analysis defines culture as a powerful force operating at all levels, but one that is locally specific and contested. For example, gender as a category does not just exist but is defined by state action. In the U.S., the first challenges to laws limiting marriage to "a man" and "a woman" came at the margins of these gender categories, since existing marriages with transsexual partners needed to be validated or invalidated by the courts' deciding what is "a man" and "a woman," just as earlier courts ruled on who belonged to which racial categories. The state-by-state inconsistency of these legal definitions of gender underlined how arbitrary they are, as were those rules that once defined racial categories for the purpose of preventing miscegenation (Lenhardt 2008). Relations of gender and sexual inequality also inspire collective resistance to the state on family issues, as in LGBT movements' direct efforts to eliminate the gender specificity of the right to marry the person of one's choice.

At the macro level, culture appears as discourses of commonsense, appropriateness and normality – what have been termed “ideologies” and “cultural models” (cf. Cherlin 2009 on “expressive individualism”). Pascale (2007) showed how individuals made use of macro level race and gender discourse in micro ways, by defining who they are in terms of what can be taken for granted. Attention to cultural discourse thus provided her a context for understanding “accountability” (a key term in an interactional understanding of doing gender) in more historically and locally situated terms. This approach rejects the traditional-modern dichotomy, instead trying to expose the various intensifications and reformulations of cultural norms that follow no one linear “progressive” path (Armstrong 2003, Macdonald 2009, Wade 2009)

For example, despite their common “modernity,” the US and Western Europe differ strikingly in the “common sense” of public discourse about gender and families, with changes coming in sometimes contradictory directions. For example, Jenson argued that, in the wake of feminist movements as well as economic change, the current policy thinking of the European Union has shifted to privilege the child and its parents rather than the worker and his dependents (2008). Although strikingly less gendered, this new model directs attention away from the elderly to focus instrumentally on children in terms of “developing human capital” rather than either achieving gender equality or meeting human needs.

Although stressing human capital and deferring to the demands of the market is a long institutionalized (albeit highly problematic) U.S. norm, contestations in actual American family policy are sharply divided by class. More affluent families get framed by a discourse of making policy more “family-friendly” (Jacobs and Gerson 2004, Stone 2007). Poor families get framed as needing more “work-discipline” and paternal engagement and

influence (Christopher 2004, McCormack 2005). Haney and March (2003) show how sharply policy-makers' understandings of fathers as disciplinarians and income providers diverge from the caring engagement poor women themselves want from men in relation to their children. Problematizing such market-driven demands is essential to an institutional approach to gender, putting contestations within families and between families and employers in the context of current and future changes in employment relations for both men and women (Moen and Roehling 2004). For example, neither women nor men easily resist institutional demands for "overwork," but institutional demands for long hours reinforce gender-specific inequalities (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). Husbands' longer hours push their wives down as well as out of the labor force (Cha 2009) and mothers' longer hours lead them unwillingly to "opt out" of career tracks (Stone 2007).

An institutional approach sees tension and contradiction in gender expectations within and across sites as characteristic rather than exceptional, both historically (Adams 2007, Smock 2004) and in the present (Gerson 2002, Sullivan 2004). Martin (2003b) emphasizes how all institutions rely on conscious discourses of legitimacy and unconscious routine practices, both of which can be challenged and transformed, but which often operate along separate tracks. Thus inconsistency between discursively legitimate claims ("we share household labor equally") and the routines of practice (who does what and when) should be expected among individuals as well as across social locations such as race and class. Rather than a "stalled revolution," this represents the predictably inconsistent nature of the circuits connecting household labor with other institutional sites (Jenkins-Perry and Claxton 2009, Lang and Risman, 2007, Sullivan 2004).

Institutional analyses combining the macro structures of definitional and sanctioning authority with the local level of implementation and resistance are particularly fruitful when they simultaneously highlight individual and collective agency as well as state power. For example, US states' efforts to impose their definitions of gender appropriate roles on the categories of man and woman, husband and wife, by emphasizing gender difference as the means to healthy relationships have encountered local resistance, as Heath (2008) showed in her study of a state-sponsored relationship training course in a conservative state in which lesbian couple participated without local objection. Comparison between the resistance strategies available to and used by American and Dutch mothers confronting state case workers highlights the interplay of nationally specific cultures and state regulatory powers in making gender-based claims effective (Korteweg 2006). Research that brings in the relations among gendered institutions as such, not only looking at identities and interactions within the family, offers an important tool for exposing such contradictions and explaining change.

INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS: LOCATIONAL AND RELATIONAL MODELS

In the past decade, gender analysts have theorized more specifically how social structures, political discourses, interpersonal practices and individual experiences of inequality are shaped not by gender alone but in interaction with race, class, age, sexuality, disability and other relations of inequality (Ferree 2009, Few 2007, Hancock 2007, McCall 2005, McDowell and Fang 2007). The long and fruitful tradition of feminist scholarship by women of color provides the base on which current theory builds.

Despite differences in specifics, any perspective is today called intersectional if it takes multiple relations of inequality as the norm, sees them as processes that shape each other, and considers how they interactively define the identities and experiences – and thus

analytic standpoints – of individuals and groups (see reviews in Choo and Ferree, 2009, Davis 2008, Hancock 2007, McCall 2005). While feminist research made intersectional gender analyses possible, this perspective has also been fruitfully challenged and enriched by queer theory (Danby 2007, Goldberg 2009) and studies of race/ethnicity, colonialism and citizenship, as reviews by Few (2007), Mahalingham et al (2009) and McDowell and Fang (2007) emphasize. Intersectional gender research continues to share with feminist research a compelling interest in understanding inequalities (rather than differences) and identifying the potential for change in (rather than adjustment to) the status quo (Allen 2001).

Although gender scholars have enthusiastically embraced intersectionality, its very ubiquity hides the variety of meanings it carries (Davis 2008, Hancock 2007, McCall 2005). One significant distinction is between locational and the relational versions of intersectional analysis (Ferree 2009, Choo and Ferree, 2009).

Locational intersectionality

The locational approach derives from thinking of intersections as defining groups (Crenshaw 1989) and draws strongly on feminist standpoint theory (McGraw et al 2000). A focus on intersectional locations emphasizes the identity categories and social positions that are found when multiple forms of subordination co-occur (e.g. poor, black, single) and makes particular efforts to bring the standpoint of such marginalized persons and groups into the research design. Studies of lesbian mothers (Goldberg 2009, Mamo 2007), of urban women's experiences with welfare rules and family poverty (Haney and March 2003, McCormack 2005), and of immigrant domestic workers (Hontagnu-Sotelo 2001, Parrenas 2001) have not only illuminated what these socially devalued individuals face, but also used their standpoint theoretically to gain insights into the workings of the intersectional systems of disadvantage.

Unfortunately, the locational emphasis on giving "voice" to those who are in positions of oppression has also contributed in practice to what Hancock (2007) called a "content specialization" interpretation of intersectionality: a substantive focus on the study of multiply marginalized groups in isolation from broader systems. Moreover, approaches to "disadvantaged" groups that fail to bring the standpoint of the multiply-marginalized to the center of the analysis lose the essential critical edge of intersectionality, continuing to frame group difference in terms of "social problems" as seen from the centers of power. Such tacit functionalism may be especially pronounced when researchers impose a "traditional/modern" dichotomy on their data.

Allendorf (2009) illustrated the value of shifting the normative lens of the discipline away from identifying poor mothers in relation to problems from which they need rescue. She studied pregnant women's empowerment and maternal health in South Asia not only in relation to "commonsense" issues of illiteracy, poverty, and family violence but also by bringing in variation in what the women thought important: the love and trust they had from and for husbands and mothers-in-law. Hertz (2006) used the standpoint of women who chose single motherhood to explore how American families were changing. Nelson (2004) used the economic struggles of rural white working-class single mothers to "make do" as a way of getting at both the cross-institutional work of organizing material survival and the class and gender discourses that make women's choices of who they consider "family" meaningful. This feminist emphasis on voice, standpoint, and critical analysis is essential to locational analyses of intersectionality worthy of the name.

Relational intersectionality

Framing intersectionality as relations begins by identifying processes, such as dichotomizing gender and racializing selected ethnicities, that interact to produce dynamic and complex patterns of inequality for everyone, not merely the most disadvantaged (Hancock 2007, McCall 2005, Walby 2009). Struggles and conflicts, rather than groups, are the preferred focus of study in this approach because these are understood as both ubiquitous and informative. For example, Adams (2001) looked at a "family values" campaign of the 19th century to understand what was contentious over time in American gender and family discourse, and Hancock (2004) focused on tracing the development of political discourses demeaning African American women as "welfare queens" as the context in which poor women resist such attributions (McCormack 2005).

The relational approach emphasizes that individuals contend with both institutionalized practices and cultural discourses. Pascale (2007: 48) studied how individuals used and contested "commonsense" about race, gender and class in making their own identities meaningful, treating the meaning of "difference as strategic and positional, and of identity as mobile and performative." In this light, Martin (2009) explored the discourse of heteronormativity in childrearing and Kane (2006) looked at the struggles between children and parents over gender-non-conforming behaviors. The conflict between middle-class motherhood and career success emphasized in American culture (Dillaway and Paré 2008, Kuperberg and Stone 2008) is not reflected in a similarly oppositional relationship in how important each of these identities is for each individual woman (McQuillan et al. 2008). Connell (2002) spoke not of passive locations but of active gender "projects" as

positioning decision-making individuals in relation to dynamic social structures of oppression and empowerment.

Key to many of these studies is an awareness of how relations of inequality themselves undergo change, for example, by the shift to globalized chains of production and intensification of employer demands for workers' time availability, and how these global transformations are about gender as well as race and class (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003, Peterson 2005). Relational models of intersectionality are able to incorporate the institutional emphasis on active circuits of power that work through both material and discursive means, as researchers look for specific struggles that reveal these dynamic processes. They have often studied family outside the family: for example, some explored how state support and women's childcare labor is negotiated in welfare offices by caseworkers and clients in different countries (Haney 2000, Korteweg 2006) and across US locales (Hays 2002, Mayer 2007), how and which employees claimed rights for family time from employers (Armenia and Gerstel 2006), and when and why employers resisted specific claims and claimants (Albiston 2007).

Gender, men and masculinity

Both types of intersectional analysis have helped to make family research truly about gender rather than just about women, directing attention to men as actors with gendered subjectivities and to gendered relations of masculinity operating in relation to other inequalities. Locational studies of masculinity as intersectional have proven useful to family studies in several ways. They have given voice to men who may be otherwise overlooked, for example by showing the egalitarianism in working-class compared to professional men's ideals and practices of family participation in Japan (Ishii-Kunz 2009) and in the U.S.

(Shows and Gerstel 2009) or revealing how gay fathers understand the challenges of being fathers in a heterosexist society (Berkowitz and Marsiglio 2007, Stacey 2005). They have highlighted contradictions, as when Townsend explored the standard normative case of middle-class American masculinity to pull out the different elements of self-concept that are not reducible to the single relationship of "breadwinning" and highlight inconsistencies among these parts (2003). And they have identified men's own family change projects, even among conservative Christians who are more or less consciously remaking patriarchy for themselves at the micro-level (Wilcox 2004). The best locational intersectional research has situated individual men's struggles with masculinities (their "gender projects") in relation to macro-level changes in how masculinity is institutionalized, such as the shift from local bourgeois masculinity (with church and community linked to career) to deracinated transnational types among elites (Connell 2008, Peterson 2005).

The relational perspective on intersectionality has proven particularly fruitful for unpacking the multiple layers of both oppression and privilege in action for men and boys. For example, relational gender analysis has been used to understand how racialized masculinity was used by both Euro-American and African-American teachers to stratify African-American boys in a public school (Ferguson 2000). It has also helped to explain the political hostility in France and the US among working class men toward people of color (Lamont 2000). As Lamont showed, French men took up media depictions of immigrants as "too patriarchal" and US white men saw black families as "lacking male authority," but both used the framing of others as having the "wrong" sorts of families to buttress their own self-respect as fathers. Hobson (2002) considered the various national and local frameworks that shape the process of "making men into fathers" and Hook and Calasanti pointed to the

contradictions in male single parents' dual projects of making masculinity and mothering (2008).

Studies of how discourses about gender (Gal and Kligman 2000) and family (Haney and Pollard 2004) are used to interpret and manage social change for both men and women offer another type of relational analysis of intersectionality that has been particularly important in the past decade. Gal and Kligman (2000) used data from post-socialist Eastern Europe to indicate how discourses of male authority and practices of control over relations of reproduction carry particular weight in times of political uncertainty. Espiritu (2001) showed how economically marginalized immigrant families in the US used control over their daughters' sexuality as a way of claiming moral superiority to the host culture, a claim that daughters sometimes shared, sometimes contested. Using comparisons of Dutch and American discourses about teenage sexuality, Schalet (2000) demonstrated how the American "raging hormones" interpretation of teenagers fed into authorities' efforts to suppress sexual expression, to control boys as "predators," and to protect girls as their helpless "prey," whereas the Dutch view of "readiness" promoted more self-regulation by both boys and girls. Rudd (2000) described men and women in the former East Germany as sharing an understanding of their family relations as having been utterly transformed by the new capitalist order. Contested discourses over "traditional marriage" in the US and "veiling" in Western Europe provide other rich examples of intersectional relationships of inequality in the struggles over the role of the state in regulating gender, sexuality, and culturally valued family practices (Heath 2009, Rottman and Ferree 2009).

In sum, the difference between the two approaches to intersectionality can best be seen in the degree to which institutional change is central to the analysis. The locational

approach is more static: it defines groups *a priori* as marginalized or privileged and then uses perspectives from these margins to reveal relationships of power at the center and expose relations across a "list" of elements of inequality, such as race, class, gender, sexuality and age. The relational approach foregrounds struggles that reveal the multi-dimensional organization of power and privilege and draws on the discourses of all social actors to critically engage with the terms of debate advanced by powerful actors in such institutional sites as scholarship, policy-making and popular culture. Studies of even privileged white men and middle class masculinity are intersectional to the extent that they ask questions about how structural changes in class and gender relations encourage men and women to embrace different forms of family, whether gay fathers in Los Angeles "mothering" special needs children (Stacey 2005) or elite fathers left behind to pay the bills for cross-national "helicopter" mothers supervising the education of their children (Mahalingham et al, 2009).

Both relational and locational intersectional analyses complement each other and enrich a gender perspective, especially when they balance attention to structures of inequality with a concern for agency and voice. Some have pointed to the danger in locational attention to "diversity" in that it makes "cultures" appear too static, homogeneous and well-bounded (McDowell and Fang 2007, Hancock 2007). Others have argued that the relational approach risks understating the significance of historically institutionalized collective identities as standpoints for a critical view of inequalities (Anderson 2005, Davis 2008). Yet intersectional analysis of either kind implies looking at privilege and oppression as inherently multiple and contradictory opens up new opportunities for critique and change.

CONSIDERING CAREWORK AS INSTITUTIONALLY INTERSECTIONAL

Carework has long been an important feminist theory because the actual work of care is strongly tied to women, socially devalued, and incontrovertibly essential (Folbre 2001). Thinking about care provides one way of illustrating the challenges for developing a research agenda more attentive to institutional, intersectional dynamics of gender and family. (England 2005, Folbre 2004). The institutional unraveling of a system of care built on the premise of male breadwinner families has become generally obvious in both Europe and the US in recent years (Hochschild 2003, Folbre 2004). But because states differ, intersectional gender scholarship in the US and Europe has taken two different routes in analyzing care. In the US, it has followed the liberal tradition of emphasizing the marketplace, thus identifying income deficiencies and discrimination as major problems for caregivers. In Europe, feminist research has focused on how state policy interacts with personal agency around regulating time. Both offer provocative ideas for taking states, markets, families and communities seriously as macro-structures in the throes of institutional transformation and point to promising practices with which individual and group struggles can increase the slow drip of social change in the direction of social justice.

American challenges

At the heart of the American issues with families as caring institutions is the degree to which a political culture of liberal individualism resists valuing care (Cherlin 2009, Folbre 2001). Levitsky (2008) provided an exemplary study of US caregiver support groups that focused on how these family caregivers struggle to articulate their demands for more financial and social support against the grain of the discourse, pointing to how state policy, employer actions, local groups and interpersonal needs shaped the individual caregivers'

“legal consciousness,” that is, their sense of what was the right relationship between themselves and the state. Legal consciousness was also critical to Albiston (2005), who showed that employers particularly resisted men’s claims for family leave when there was any woman in their household, but that some men persevered and won legal support in their struggle to “undo” gender.

Income as a key circuit connecting American families and workplaces is one way to approach the institutional valuation of care and intersectional inequalities. A new line of research on how income inequality in couples changes over time within the marriage and in society as a whole follows this circuit to expose both material and normative change (Winslow-Bowe 2006, Winkler et al. 2005). Following the circuit of income also points to the discrimination facing mothers in the workplace, which has emerged as a promising topic is recent years. There is evidence both from labor force data and innovative experimental research (Correll et al 2007) that women who are perceived to be mothers are faced with an additional layer of discrimination on top of what they face as women, although not necessarily above what Black women routinely face (Glauber 2007). Although all fathers get a wage bonus rather than pay a cost, only non-Black married men earn more when their wives work fewer hours (Glauber 2008). But for both men and women, work with a care-giving component is paid less than other jobs of similar skill and gender (Budig et al. 2002).

The income circuit also points to how the wages of paid caregivers are suppressed by the American discourse pitting caring against earning. Interviews with employers revealed that they think that the quality of care is enhanced by the selective effects of low pay, so that only those who are willing to work “for love” will be willing to do this work (J. Nelson 2003, Whitaker 2003). Nonetheless, this underpayment contributes to high turnover, which lowers

quality of care through disruptions of personal relations. Pitting love against money as exclusive motivations also contributes to the devaluation of foster mothers, often working class women (Swartz 2004) and the racialization of eldercare (Dodson and Zincavage 2007), but is also resisted by careworkers themselves (Misra 2003, Macdonald, forthcoming, Tuominen 2003).

European challenges

The European climate for debates about care-giving is very different, since there has been a long history of variously institutionalized state protections and provisions to support mothers' caregiving work outside the marketplace (Morgan and Zippel 2003). This is now changing in ways that make the regulation of time, by states, employers and individuals the most interesting circuit to follow.

On the one hand, there has been a partially successful feminist struggle to bring norms of gender equality into the European Union's principles and policies. One very visible outcome of this has been the push to make fathers also be legally granted, sometimes even be required to take, paid time away from their jobs for childrearing (Hobson and Fahlen 2009). The conditions for men's "take-up" of fatherhood leaves reflect the details of the specific policy, national discourses around gender equality, and specific workplace cultures (Hobson and Fahlen 2009, Lister 2009). Time use data has thus been of particular importance for European research linking macro policies and father engagement (Sullivan et al 2009). Unfortunately, this push for engaged fatherhood may also draw in intolerant ways on framing European values as modern and egalitarian in opposition to those of immigrant groups, which are presented as uniformly oppressive and dangerous (Lamont 2000, Lister 2009).

On the other hand, there have been economic and political shifts toward more intensive engagement of all adults in paid labor ("activation") and toward less regulation of hours and conditions of work ("flexibilization"), with vastly unequal consequences for women and men and among women in different countries (Daly and Rake 2003). European feminists have looked critically at state time policies that endorse the principle of "fostering work-life balance," suggesting that women's own needs and perspectives have gotten short shrift in the scramble to simultaneously increase economic productivity and fertility (Lewis and Campbell, 2008. Stratigaki 2004). But they have begun important theoretical work to integrate structure and agency in this context, particularly through a capabilities approach (Lewis and Giuliari 2005, Hobson and Fahlen 2009).

Despite drastic change, policy histories also matter in setting cultural norms. For example, the division of household labor in once-socialist East Germany continues to reflect its different experiences with gender than West Germany (Cooke 2007) and East German women "stubbornly" resist conforming their family behaviors to the Western norms (Adler 2004). Hagemann (2001) drew attention to the "time politics" of German institutions, particularly the hours kept by schools, shops, workplaces and how they limit women's options, but a more generalized view of time as a circuit connecting gender relations among institutions and over the life course awaits development.

A FORWARD LOOKING CONCLUSION

Gender and family change is ongoing, but for which people and for what relations any particular change constitutes a crisis or an opportunity is and should be debatable. The circuits of time and income traced in relation to care are only one example of the broad sense of what such politics entail; many other cross-cutting multi-institutional issues with

substantial implications for families (such as adolescent sexuality, reproductive rights, or interpersonal violence) would also illuminate the power of an institutional and intersectional gender analysis for family researchers. But it is important to recognize that, in a context of struggle, not every change is progress and nearly all changes have differential effects on those who are more or less powerful and privileged. This is why studying struggles and their outcomes is so important and yet so difficult.

Some changes point to the institutionalization and intensification of relations of inequality. For example, intensified economic competition, the export of many manual labor jobs to low-wage countries, and a set of winner-take-all rules in American capitalism certainly play a role in intensifying demands on middle class mothers to begin cultivating their children's educational success, which is evident both from birth-to-three (Macdonald 2009) and after the children are in school (Lareau 2003). The "investment in children" demanded of "good mothers" today is not only about actual care work but is at least in part a symbolic sacrifice, for example in medically irrelevant refusals of a glass of wine by pregnant women (Armstrong 2003). "Bad mothers," a powerfully racialized group, are being subjected to more diverse strategies of social control (Flavin 2008) and poor women are being put into a position in which they must choose to violate standards of good care (like making sure a child receives needed medical attention) or break the rules for keeping their jobs and/or benefits (Collins and Mayer forthcoming).. Rather than showing a single "evolution" toward greater gender equality in modern societies, these studies revealed a contested race- and class-specific restructuring of gender relations.

The search for practices to transform gender relations in and through the family as an institution thus points to a continuing need for research considering the political and

economic context in which all families are situated, neither implying the US as an invisible normative standard nor erasing the difference that context makes for local struggles. If gender and family scholars hope to do justice to the real diversity of strategies and struggles around the world, articles should locate behaviors and norms in historical or policy contexts; the framing of a traditional/modern dichotomy should, like the theoretically unsupportable term “gender role,” be dropped. The circuits among family-state-market-community should be scrutinized as they flow in multiple directions, with both stabilizing and destabilizing effects on intersectional inequalities in various institutional sites. Much more explicitly comparative research, especially among the rich democracies, is needed to untangle the relations between institutions and practices in this era of change, not only at the policy level or in regard to material resources (Cooke and Baxter, this issue, Gornick and Meyers 2009), but in the ways that macro-level discourses convey the priorities of the powerful from the top down and become objects of struggle from the bottom up (Cha and Thebaud 2009).

An analysis of families, therefore, that takes seriously the institutional circuits and intersectional inequalities in which gender is everywhere involved and attempts to understand their operations over time can not be a depoliticized science. As the studies reviewed here are, such research can be rigorous in its methods and theoretically well-defined. But insofar as analyzing gender attempts to reveal power as an active, changing relationship, such research contributes to either doing or undoing the relations among institutions through which it flows. It is thus political in the broadest sense. Although feminist researchers may not find this insight particularly novel, I suggest that the best gender research of this decade has laid the groundwork for an intersectional, institutional agenda where contradiction, contestation, and change is central to studying families.

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