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Intersectionality as the ''New'' Critical Approach in Feminist Family Studies: Evolving Racial/Ethnic Feminisms and Critical Race Theories

This article presents one of the first comprehensive reviews of intersectionality literature for a family studies audience. The purpose of this article is manifold: (1) to review the interdisciplinary scholarship on intersectionality as a theoretical approach, paradigm, or method; (2) to review methodological considerations using intersectionality as a theoretical guide to conduct research; and (3) to examine how contemporary family scholars are utilizing an intersectional approach to examine the complexities of identity, relational process, and social interactions with larger institutional forces. I conclude with an evaluation of the benefits and challenges of using an intersectional approach to the study of contemporary families.

The title of this article is suggestive of three things. First, it suggests that racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race perspectives are evolving into something else in feminist family studies. Second, it suggests that there is some progressive ''movement'' in the way that some feminist family studies scholars are incorporating

racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories into their research. A third possible meaning is that family scholars who are somewhat interested in integrating racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories into their work are no longer labeling their examination of the politics of location (Crenshaw, 1993; Few, 2007) as a racial/ethnic feminist perspective or a critical race perspective but as an examination of *intersectionality*. I should be clear that my intention here is not to pit intersectionality theoretical approaches against racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories, for intersectionality as a concept is fundamental in the articulation of racialized and gendered analyses and serves as an extension of racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories.

It is my belief that as family scholars move toward using more sophisticated statistical means of analyzing individual and group processes, they will incorporate elements of an intersectional approach to studying the complexity of the processes occurring in specified contexts. Most family scholars will describe their method as intersectional, provide justification for controlling categorical variables (e.g., race, ethnicity, social class), and either fail to acknowledge or ignore the feminist and critical race theoretical origins of their methodological choice. Intersectionality and intersectional analysis are the future of mainstream family science. This article serves as a review for those interested in intersectionality as a theory, paradigm, or method in family studies. Thus, the purpose

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of this article is manifold: (1) to review the interdisciplinary scholarship on the concept of intersectionality as either a theoretical approach, paradigm, or method; (2) to review methodological concerns with using intersectionality as a theoretical guide to conduct research; and, finally, (3) to examine how contemporary family scholars are utilizing an intersectional approach to examine the complexities of identity, relational process, and social interactions with larger institutional forces.

THEORY, PARADIGM, OR METHOD? DEFINING INTERSECTIONALITY

There is some debate as to whether intersectionality is a theory, a paradigm, or a method. First, I define some key terms. According to Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson, and Klein (2005), theory is an explanation of naturally occurring events, a narrative or a constructionist perspective in the development of knowledge about phenomena, and a vehicle for empowerment and change for those studied. I view theory as a general proposition or a logically connected system of general propositions that establishes a causal or explanatory relationship between two or more variables, with the understanding that when describing variation in human behavior, ''reality'' should be conceived as socially constructed.

A paradigm is not a singular theory that explains a phenomenon but a framework consisting of universally recognized assumptions, theoretical approaches, methodologies, and scientific achievements that are commonly accepted by members of a scientific community (Kuhn, 1970). Kuhn's (1970) landmark book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is of relevance here in that Kuhn described how paradigmatic change occurs in scientific communities. For instance, he argued that the evolution of scientific theory emerged not from a linear accumulation of ''facts'' but rather from an intellectual crisis resulting from anomalies that question the veracity of an established framework of thought. Rival scientific camps emerge that present alternative paradigms to these long-held assumptions. The challenger paradigm will likely be accompanied by numerous anomalies, partly because of its novelty and incompleteness in articulation. The status quo in any discipline generally opposes any type of conceptual change by limiting or refusing to publish research using these

new ideas. Some contemporary family studies scholars certainly might liken the integration of feminist theories, critical race perspectives, and an intersectionality approach as constituting a challenger paradigm that dares to suggest that there is a more comprehensive means for studying diverse families than what is offered by traditional theories and methods (Lloyd, Few, & Allen, 2009; Walker, 2009). Finally, scientific method is defined here as a set of principles and procedures that researchers use to develop questions, collect data, and reach conclusions about a specific phenomenon (Acock, van Dulmen, Allen, & Piercy, 2005).

On the basis of these definitions, I conceptualize intersectionality as a theoretical framework that guides methodological considerations and data interpretation. It is not a method in and of itself. However, intersectionality could be conceived of as a budding research or methodological paradigm (Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005) that moves us away from thinking of intersectionality as merely providing a description of the unique experiences of a singular master social group or subgroup (Hancock, 2007). Instead, researchers are encouraged to examine the fluidity, variability, and temporality of interactive processes that occur between and within multiple social groups, institutions, and social practices.

If we are to think of intersectionality as a theory, then we must consider assumptions or tenets. Greenwood (2008) outlined four tenets of intersectionality. First, the concept of intersectionality asserts that social identities are neither exclusive nor discrete and that this complexity may cause conflict among identities (Crenshaw, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Second, social identities are grounded in ideological and symbolic domains (Crenshaw, 1993). Third, social identities and their ''associated systems of representation'' are historically and contextually situated (Crenshaw, 1993). Finally, although identities are embodied within individuals, these identities operate within and are affected by structures of power (Greenwood, 2008). To advance an intersectionality theoretical framework that is sufficiently inclusive, a researcher must consider how individuals and groups, who are situated by multiple social locations and whose social identities may overlap or conflict in specific contexts, negotiate systems of privilege, oppression, opportunity, conflict, and change across the life course

and geography (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1993; Hancock, 2007; King, 1988; Lloyd et al., 2009; Mohanty, 1992; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Wing, 1997, 2000). In summary, we must think of intersectionality theory as simultaneously political, symbolic, categorical, relational, and locational.

Intersectionality as Political and Symbolic

Crenshaw (1991, 1993) is credited as being among the first to articulate intersectionality as a theoretical framework in a legal studies context. A critic of identity politics, Crenshaw (1991, 1993) identified three types of intersectionality—*structural intersectionality*, *political intersectionality*, and *representational intersectionality*. Crenshaw used the exemplars of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform to demonstrate how these types of intersectionality are different. Structural intersectionality refers to the connectedness of systems and structures in society and how those systems affect individuals and groups differently. It is also the production, operation, and maintenance of specific social systems (e.g., patriarchy, capitalism, heteronormativity) and structures (e.g., laws, policies, culture) that maintain privilege for some individuals and groups while either restricting the privileges of others (i.e., differential treatment) or oppressing the rights of others. Structural intersectionality constitutes the political, economic, representational, and institutional forms of discrimination and domination. Political intersectionality refers to the how traditional feminist and antiracist politics have contributed to the marginalization of racial/ethnic minority women. Historical examples include the American suffragists' exclusion of African American women in their struggle for political franchise (e.g., voting rights), Margaret Sanger's refusal to allow African American women to participate in her sexual health movement, and second-wave feminist scholarship that clearly defines *women's* experience as that of White, American or European, middle-class, and educated women. Crenshaw (1991) suggested that ''racism as experienced by people of color who are of a particular gender—male—tends to determine the parameters of antiracist strategies, just as sexism as experienced by women who are of a particular race—White—tends to ground the women's movement'' (p. 1252). This concept emphasizes the fact that racial/ethnic minority

women are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas and often are disempowered or destabilized as a result of this intersectional conflict of identities or locations. However, it is racial/ethnic minority women's specific racialized and gendered experiences that may define, confine, and/or conflate interests of the entire group. Representational intersectionality consists of the ways that cultural constructions of racial/ethnic minority women influence the framing and priorities of political agendas and creation of laws to discriminate, castigate, and control racial/ethnic minority groups. Cultural constructions are derived from the depiction of individuals and groups through media, texts, language, and images. Representational intersectionality refers to the way that race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic images in society come together to create unique and specific narratives that shape and inform policies, laws, and institutions.

Intersectionality as Analytical Categories

McCall (2005) addressed how to consider intersectionality as a methodological paradigm. She identified a continuum of three main ''approaches to the study of multiple, intersecting, and complex social relations,'' based on ''how [researchers] understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life'': *anticategorical complexity*, *intracategorical complexity*, and *intercategorical complexity* (pp. 1772–1773). The anticategorical approach challenges the use of socially constructed categories because such categories are created through discursive discourses, artificially defining power relations between categories and social structures (McCall, 2005, p. 1779). This approach is a kind of postmodern critique of categorization per se, or an ''anti-categorical critique of categorization'' (McCall, 2005, p. 1779). For instance, because gender and race are recognized as products of discourses and a postmodernist critique deconstructs those categories, the categories of gender and race become artificial and invalid concepts. McCall (2005) related this approach to the goals of racial/ethnic feminists, who, she argued, tend to critique specific types of categorization or labeling instead of examining the actual process of categorization.

It should be noted that although racial/ethnic feminists and critical race feminists embrace ''critical essences'' that define unique and collective historical experiences, determine goals for social justice, and identify prescriptions for social transformation to eradicate inequalities, they do not necessarily generalize experience at the expense of within-group diversity (Collins, 1998). For example, there is a recognition in Black feminist and womanist writings that there is no monolithic Black woman that represents the experiences of all Black women and Black men across social classes, national origin, sexuality, or time. However, there is an acknowledgment that race and ethnicity place individuals who identify or who have been identified as Black similarly within the intersectionality matrix. There are shared histories of discrimination and oppression as a racial and ethnic group in specific contexts (e.g., American slavery, Jim Crow era, Civil Rights movement).

The intracategorical approach ''interrogates the boundary-making and boundary-defining process itself'' (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). McCall (2005) suggested that to engage this type of approach effectively, the researcher must first identify a single social group or group category that is represented by an individual who has been excluded from the initial analysis of intersection of master categories (e.g., Black lesbian families, minority gay fathers). McCall (2005) stated:

> The intersection of identities takes place through the articulation of a single dimension of each category. That is, the ''multiple'' in these intersectional analyses refers not to dimensions within categories but to dimensions across categories—for example, one dimension on each of the categories of social location of race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation. (p. 1781)

The researcher then either examines how this single social group is situated within a specific social setting or how specific symbolic representations (e.g., ideologies, values) may influence the construction of identities for this group, or examines how the single social group negotiates both context and symbolism simultaneously. Case studies and personal narratives (e.g., autoethnography) are often the chosen methods for engaging this type of approach, for it is hoped that within-group variability and complexity can emerge during the analysis (e.g., Goldberg & Allen, 2012;

Lorde, 1984; Moore, 2010; Weston, 1991). However, this approach may lend itself to a myopic interpretation of a phenomenon if only subgroups are representative of social experience.

According to McCall (2005), researchers who engage the intercategorical approach primarily attend to ''the nature of relationships among social groups and, more importantly, how they are changing, rather than with the definition or representation of such groups per se'' (p. 1785). This approach is multigroup and comparative in its emphasis, in that all imaginable dimensions of multiple categories are considered and submitted to a simultaneous comparative analysis plan using quantitative methods. This process-oriented model of intersectionality places primary attention on context and comparison at the intersections as revealing structural processes organizing power (Choo & Ferree, 2010). McCall (2005) named this approach as the most complex and encumbering for scholars to engage. She argued that the complexity required in the design and method to analyze intercategorical intersectionality is one of the reasons few scholars attempt to do it. Simply, the insurmountable axes of differences across and within categories cannot be isolated and desegregated easily. In referencing her own earlier work, McCall (2001) concluded:

> No single dimension of overall inequality can adequately describe the full structure of multiple, intersecting and conflicting dimensions of inequality . . . [and] some forms of inequality seem to arise from the same conditions that might reduce other forms, including, potentially, a conflict between reducing gender inequality and reducing inequality among women. (p. 1791)

Intersectionality as Relational and Locational

In her decade review, Ferree (2010) classified intersectionality into two approaches: *relational intersectionality* and *locational intersectionality*. In the relational intersectionality approach, the focus of analysis is how individuals handle conflicts, cooperation, and inequalities that are rooted in cultural discourses and practices and are expressed in institutional structures. According to Ferree (2010), the locational intersectionality approach draws heavily from standpoint theories, which emphasize identity categories

and social positions that are created when multiple forms of subordination or oppression occur. She critiqued the locational intersectionality approach for what Hancock (2007) termed *content specialization*. In other words, content specialization may lead researchers to continue to study group differences from within those same traditional, dominant discourses that impose marginalization, define ''problems,'' and are located at the center of analysis while simultaneously ''shelving'' the standpoint of the multiply marginalized groups from the center (p. 428). Therefore, it becomes possible that multiply marginalized groups are not studied in relational context to other social structural systems.

In part because of the push for conducting international research, scholars have examined the articulation of intersectionality beyond interpersonal and domestic borders to historical institutional effects on individuals and social groups. In this way, relational and locational intersectionality are examined simultaneously at the macro level of analysis. For example, Bose (2012) argued that researchers must examine national-level gender inequalities that are based on intersecting axes of transnational (e.g., migration, crime and criminal justice systems), regional (e.g., integrated economies), unique national issues (e.g., policies that create inequalities in education, property, voting rights) and trajectories (e.g., public health, nation building, militarization, political instability). Lugones (2007) asserted that researchers must consider a global lens in investigating relationships interacting within an *intersectionality matrix* (Crenshaw, 1993). For instance, Lugones (2007) argued that researchers must contextualize the coloniality of power, as exemplified in the work of Quijano (2000), and acknowledge theorizing by Third World feminists, racial/ethnic feminists, and critical race theorists (p. 189).

Lugones (2007) also problematized gender itself, noting that systems of coloniality produce multiple genders among the privileged and oppressed. For Lugones, multiple genders may include how gender is performed and constructed by class differences and extent of oppression or privilege experienced or differences in gender and sexual expression. This notion of multiple genders has been contested by other feminist-minded intersectionality scholars and variable-oriented researchers because it puts into question whether any real solidarity

within-group can occur, and it fragments variables or categories into ''ever-exponentially increasing sub-categories'' (Hancock, 2007, p. 66). The golden rule of parsimony is violated, and quantitative analyses may become overwhelming with so many variables.

In answer to this concern, I turn to the work of Yuval-Davis (2006) and Choo and Ferree (2010). These scholars argued that our methodological analyses must place more emphasis on process-centered models of interactions rather than becoming muddled down in an endless fragmentation of social categories. In other words, for example, our focus should be on the process of racialization rather than races primarily, and on gendering and gender performance rather than counting multiple genders to examine how the power and agency of individuals and groups are negotiated in the face of enabling and constraining forces (e.g., institutions, laws, policies, family and cultural norms) over time (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006). An emphasis on process does not belittle the significance of unpacking social categories, for the experiences of multiply marginalized groups or subcategories can be intentionally examined by using those groups as independent variables in quantitative designs or as informants in qualitative designs.

GROWING EVIDENCE OF INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES IN FAMILY SCIENCE

Family studies has a rich history of feminist theorizing on individuals and groups ''doing'' family, on power within the gender relations of close relationships and in institutional structures, on the complicity of sexual and gender identities, and on integrating feminist principles into research and praxis (Allen, 2000; Baber & Allen, 1992; De Reus, Few, & Blume, 2005; Fox & Murry, 2000; Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1982; Leslie & Sollie, 1994; Lloyd et al., 2009; McDowell & Fang, 2007; Osmond & Thorne, 1993; Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2010; Thompson & Walker, 1995; van Eeden Moorefield, Martell, Williams, & Preston, 2011; Walker, 1999, 2009; Walker & Thompson, 1984). In the early 1980s, Black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, Barbara Smith, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Gloria Hull (now known as Akasha Gloria Hull) delineated a foundation for Afrocentric revisionist history in family sociology while integrating an ethic

of care and a call for social justice on the behalf of those studied, and simultaneously challenging the normative gaze of Whiteness (Blume & De Reus, 2009; West, 1982). Only recently have we seen movement by family scholars to include racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories in their research on racial/ethnic minority families or in compilations that document the status of feminist research on families (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010; De Reus et al., 2005; Ferree, 2010). In doing so, these pioneer scholars are actively carving out a space to validate the utilization of intersectional analysis in family studies, and they are providing a foundation for a kind of paradigmatic shift in the kind of tools we use to research diverse families.

Both Ferree (2010) and Burton et al. (2010) conducted excellent reviews of feminist research and research on families of color over the past decade. Ferree (2010) provided a ''half-full, half-empty glass'' metaphor to describe how family scholars have wrestled with analyzing gender during the past decade. She posited that in spite of the recognition of the influence of gender in micro-level interactions (i.e., intra- and interpersonal interactions), there still remains a need for family scholars to conduct intersectional analyses on how women and families negotiate the changing sociopolitical and economic obstacles or landscapes reproduced or modified at the institutional level over time (for a further description of gender as an organizing structure at the macrosystemic level, see Lorber, 1995). In addition, Ferree (2010) noted that some family scholars are still positioning families who are White, heterosexual, American born, and middle class as the standard for determining or constructing deviance in other family structures and compositions. Thus, by default, the ways in which these ''different'' families respond to historical social inequalities are still pathologized instead of being viewed as examples of creativity, resourcefulness, or resilience.

This argument, that an ahistorical, insular, and functionalist approach to studying families has persisted as a part of contemporary mainstream family studies, was also noted by Alexis Walker (2009) as she reflected upon her tenure (2002–2007) as editor of *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Walker (2009) wrote:

> The irony of an avowed feminist editing a major, even powerful, mainstream social science journal

was not lost on me. . . . By making decisions to publish the work of mainstream family scholars, I was in Sprague's words, ''helping to naturalize and sustain their privilege in the process.'' During my editorial term, as already noted, the manuscripts I published continued to reflect the functionalist thinking long since identified by Osmond. . . . Traditional family scholars ignore the politics of location. They fail to see the relational aspects of difference and do not see the intersectionality of multiple identities that shapes individual life experience at a given time and place. (pp. 21, 23; citations omitted)

Walker, however, provided a counterbalance with which feminist-minded family scholars could rally. In this chapter, she identified qualitative and quantitative scholarship that provided exceptions to the rule and is intentional in integrating the principles of (intracategorical) intersectionality.

Ferree (2010) also offered multiple examples of how intersectional analyses have enriched feminist scholarship in her review. She charted feminist family scholars' inclusion of lesbian and gay families (e.g., Berkowitz, 2009; Goldberg, 2010); immigration work issues (e.g., Parrenas, 2001); transnational family challenges (e.g., Mahalingham, Balan, & Molina, 2009); the effects of economic and social policy on work-life balance, family leave, and family finances (e.g., Sullivan, Coltrane, McAnnally, & Altintas, 2009); care work (e.g., England, 2005); and masculinities (e.g., Shows & Gerstel, 2009). Ferree (2010) was intentional in including feminist scholarship by racial/ethnic scholars in her decade review of feminist scholarship in family studies, especially in the articulation of intersectionality as having both locational and relational properties.

Burton et al. (2010) assessed the status of research on families of color and identified emerging bodies of research that capture racial stratification processes, racial socialization processes, and macrosystemic processes. The authors credited researchers using feminist and critical race theoretical perspectives for raising family scholars' awareness of the necessity of conducting intersectional analyses with women and families of color in variable contexts, specifically advances in the conceptualization of critical race theories (e.g., Blume & De Reus, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; De Reus et al., 2005; Few, 2007), racially stratified neighborhoods and socioeconomic mobility (e.g., Burton

& Jarrett, 2004; Clark, 2007; Lareau, 2003; Lin & Harris, 2007; Massey, 2007), colorism within families and ethnic groups (e.g., Rondilla & Spickard, 2007; Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992), interracial relationships (e.g., Qian & Lichter, 2011), and the racial socialization of children (e.g., Lesane-Brown, 2006; Umaña-Taylor & Guilmond, 2010). They concluded their review by recommending that family scholars (a) integrate research and instruments developed by race and stratification researchers, such as residential and wealth inequality indicators; (b) continue to incorporate critical race and feminist theoretical perspectives into the examination of racialized systems such as colorism and interracial relationships; and (c) include critical race and colorism perspectives to stimulate new conceptual approaches about race and ethnicity and to gain ''a more robust understanding of racial socialization in families'' in an ever-increasing multicultural society (Burton et al., 2010, p. 455).

Both of these reviews are important to highlight because they render visible the importance of intersectionality as both a theoretical framework and methodological paradigm for studying (a) family processes and social inequalities among and within diverse family structures (e.g., intimate violence, family financial management, family power in stepfamilies, decision making in families with individuals with disabilities); (b) how individuals and groups interact and respond to macrosystemic processes that influence the extent of privilege, discrimination, and oppression those individuals and groups experience (e.g., immigration, intergenerational incarceration, socioeconomic mobility, health-care policies); and (c) the complexity of within-group difference as it pertains to intrapsychic and interpersonal processes of group membership, conflict, and alliance (e.g., colorism; experiences of racial/ethnic gender and sexual minorities; racial socialization, including Whiteness). Both Burton et al. (2010) and Ferree (2010) posited that there was evidence that feminist and critical race perspectives had become increasingly utilized in contemporary family scholarship over the past decade. The overall contribution that these reviews make to our field is that they indicate where our intersectional analyses are needed most in order to develop a more robust understanding of individual and family processes.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DOING INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS IN FAMILY STUDIES

For those who wish to do intersectional analyses, a vital goal is to be able to derive meaning from the observed data and interpret individual level data within a larger sociohistorical context of structural inequality that may not be explicit or directly observable in the data (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Garry, 2011). However, implementing the concept of intersectionality into empirical analysis, be it quantitative or qualitative, can be a difficult and formidable feat, especially because multiple variables must be taken into account concurrently. Garry (2011) suggested that the positivist paradigm that constitutes the philosophies behind most quantitative research approaches seems to be orthogonal to the complexities of intersectionality. She notes that interdependence, multidimensionality, and mutually constitutive relationships are the core of intersectionality, and that those characteristics contradict the positivist assumptions inherent in most quantitative approaches. Nevertheless, as Alexander and Mohanty (1997) argued, this work must be attempted because the ''relations of domination and subordination that are named and articulated through [the interaction of individuals and groups with macrosystemic] processes [such as] racism and racialization still exist, and they still require analytic and political specification and engagement'' (p. xvii). Thus, relational and locational intersectionality must be simultaneously examined to explain variability in individual and group experience and/or social phenomena. Cuadraz and Uttal (1999) posited that conducting intersectional qualitative research is not necessarily any easier than doing it quantitatively in that isolating the meaning of each social category and structural inequality is a critical analytical step to understanding intersectionality.

A quantitative researcher must analyze each category or variable and structural inequality separately and simultaneously, and to an extent, additively. The issue of conducting additive analysis prior to interactive analyses comes with quantitative research; statistical methods are additive when testing for interactions (Garry, 2011). Some feminist scholars, however, critique the additive approach because it conceptualizes people's experiences as separate, independent, and summative (Collins, 1991; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999).

Whether a researcher decides to use qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods to examine intersectionality, questions such as the following are fundamental and must be addressed in conducting comprehensive intersectional analysis: What defines or characterizes a category or variable? How are categories or independent variables conceptualized? What is the salience and variation of the relationship between categories? What is the appropriate level of analysis (e.g., individual or institutional or individual integrated within institutional)? How should variability across and within master groups and subgroups be weighed? What are the appropriate methods for making empirical and theoretical sense of the data? (For further explanation, see Cole, 2009; Hancock, 2007.)

Yuval-Davis (2006) also argued against essentialist notions of specific social locations as well as any additive formula for how individuals and groups experience the intersections of those locations:

> Each social division [location] has a different ontological basis, which is irreducible to other social divisions. . . . However, this does not make it less important to acknowledge that, in concrete experiences of oppression, being oppressed, for example, as ''a Black person'' is always constructed and intermeshed in other social divisions. . . . Any attempt to essentialize ''Blackness'' or ''womanhood'' or ''working classes'' as specific forms of concrete oppression in additive ways inevitably conflates narratives of identity politics with descriptions of positionality. . . . Such narratives often reflect hegemonic discourses of identity politics that render invisible experiences of the more marginal members of that specific social category and construct an homogenized ''right way'' to be its member. (p. 195)

Given this understanding of the limitations of content specialization (Hancock, 2007), Yuval-Davis (2006) advanced the idea that scholars should focus the debate on the conflation or separation of the different analytic levels in which intersectionality is located, not simply to debate the relationships of the locations themselves. Merely debating the constitution or interaction of social categories alone is to use the ''master's tools'' (Lorde, 1993) against one's own and to reproduce a discourse of marginalization and invisibility within groups. Thus, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, or any other social category that

''embodies'' or is labeled as ''difference'' is not a static concept or entity in definition or performativity.

Intersectionality theory challenges the logic of identity politics and, to some extent, the standpoint theories, in that intersectionality analyses simultaneously focus on within-group diversity. Within-group diversity fragments the notion that there is one unitary voice for a specific social location, such as race or gender. For example, no singular Asian American standpoint will suffice in chronicling the experiences of diverse Asian American ethnic groups in this country. In addition, researchers must also consider the fluid nature of how individuals and groups assign different meaning to social categories over time. For instance, Harper's (2011) research indicated that some multiracial college students changed their sense of racial/ethnic identity over the span of their college career as a result of interactions with a diversity of college students, exposure to critical literature about race, and shifting alliances to racial or ethnic groups. Thus, within-group analysis should capture the fluid, dynamic, and multidimensional nature of social categories such as race. Therefore, proponents of racial/ethnic feminisms, critical race, and critical race feminism frameworks are encouraged to examine and include within-group diversity. Social categories are not static, unchanging, and one-dimensional constructs.

Choo and Ferree (2010) suggested that not all empirical studies are equally well served by any one type of intersectional analysis, and they presented three different approaches to and understandings of doing intersectionality research. They examined the methodological strengths and limitations of these three approaches to doing intersectional analysis. First, they identified the most common approach to doing intersectional research, which involves bringing the perspectives and the experiences of the ''multiply marginalized'' to the center of analysis without excluding the voices of subgroups within the targeted groups studied (i.e., avoiding content specialization). Next, they defined the second intersectionality approach in practice ''as an *analytic interaction*: a non-additive process, a transformative interactivity of effects'' (p. 131). This second, process-centered intersectionality approach focuses on analytic interactions in a nonadditive manner while weighing the importance of attending to statistical main

effects. In doing so, there is a comparative and contextual analysis of inequalities, and an examination of selected interaction effects among the various intersectional categories or variables. Bose (2012) directed our attention to how this has been done in both quantitative and qualitative studies. She described how studies of immigrants in the United States have historically used census data to research the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and class in occupational segregation and earnings inequalities across diverse groups. Regarding qualitative studies, she provided examples of the emergent international (and transnational) research that examines the effects of postcoloniality and reproduction of the racialized and gendered others in legal and political economies of developing countries. Choo and Ferree's (2010) third system-centered intersectionality approach disentangles specific inequalities with specific institutions (e.g., equating the economy with social class or the family with gender) and demonstrates how institutional systems self-generate intersectional effects of social inequalities.

Winkler and Degele (2011) offered suggestions for how to conduct an intersectional multiple-level analysis that considers reciprocal effects between various levels. They asked, How can we realize socially relevant categories of inequality methodologically and comprehend them empirically? Using Bourdieu's (1998) praxeological method, and guided by Sandra Harding's (1986) theorization of social genders, they examined the interrelatedness of categories of inequality at three levels: (a) social structures, such as institutions and organizations (i.e., macro and meso levels); (b) the processes of identity construction (i.e., micro level); and (c) the processes of cultural symbols (i.e., level of representation). These levels are linked together through the social practices of individuals and groups.

At the social structural level, Winkler and Degele (2011) instructed researchers to identify concrete relations of power and inequality-creating phenomena before analyzing their interrelatedness and changes. This social structural level can be empirically investigated for power relations that occur in structural discrimination so that categories of racism, heternormativism, bodyism, and classism can be deduced. They posited that because the process of identity construction is an ongoing process of socially constructed categories (e.g., race, sexual orientation, gender, class) interacting with one another, researchers must keep open the number and type of socially defined categories available for analysis. The number and type of categories included are dependent upon the research questions asked. Symbolic representations are the norms of justification and ideologies that are informed by numerous categories of difference, and defined by subjectification processes (e.g., racism, classism) that create inequalities and frame reoccurring structural power relations.

The significance of Bourdieu's (1998) approach to empiricism and theory in doing intersectionality work is the postulation that theoretical categories do not necessarily have to comply with analytical categories. Thus, empirical analysis begins not with theoretical concepts, but with enacted, measurable social practices and the correlation of those practices with the interrelatedness of categories of difference. An example of this premise might be a family researcher who studies the effects of discriminatory legislation, which imprisons racial/ethnic minority groups at disproportionate higher rates and for longer sentences, on family structure, social mobility, and family health outcomes of racial/ethnic minority families.

Winkler and Degele (2011) proposed flexibility and fluctuation in comparing deductive structural categories and inductive open categories on the levels of identity construction and symbolic representation (p. 57). They outlined how to conduct intersectional analysis in eight steps: (a) identifying all discoverable categories of differentiation that ''position'' participants within the research; (b) identifying the symbolic representations that inform social practices and identity constructions, thus making opposing and corroborating norms and values explicit enough to analyze; (c) discovering references to social structures, such as institutions, organizations, and laws; (d) denominating the interrelations of central categories on the levels of identity construction, symbolic representation, and social structures that are most salient to the interviewee or participant; (e) comparing and clustering of subject constructions via typologies; (f) supplementing structural data with additional or triangulating data to comparatively analyze power relations; (g) revisiting the ideologies behind symbolic representations found in macrosocietal contexts; and finally, (h) examining all interrelations and different emphases of dimensions of inequality and power relations (e.g., identifying how discourses on

classisms, heteronormativisms, and racisms are debated and interrelated with one another).

In this section, I present recent examples of how family scholars have conducted intersectional research on identity and family process. Both examples are representative of how intersectional work in family studies has become ''de-feminized,'' thus losing a critical edge in examining how context influences process. In her decade review, Ferree (2010) charged that family scholars need to conduct more research that examines the diversity of gender strategies by situating those strategies within enacted behaviors, norms, and social practices and in historical and institutional context.

Zuo's (2009) qualitative study on gender relations and family power in presocialist China is an example that demonstrates the deconstruction of relational intersectionality over time. The relational intersectionality approach emphasizes that individuals negotiate both institutional practices (e.g., a multidimensional patriarchy that is reproduced in patrilineal families) and cultural discourses (e.g., filial piety, or the Confucian cultural value that one's primary duty is to respect, obey, and care for one's parents and ancestors). Zuo (2009) studied how three aspects of family power—family financial management, major family decision making, and personal autonomy—are enacted differently by gender among couples and generation. Thus, the focus was on unpacking relational process with attention to interactions between status-based power structures and experience-based power processes at different stages of the family life course. To establish within-group diversity, Zuo (2009) recruited a sample that was diverse in terms of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. From that sample, she sorted four types of marriages on the basis of differences in the married couple's living arrangements with a husband's parent(s) and changing economic dependence on the husband's parent(s) over the life course. Using a grounded theory method, Zuo (2009) illustrated the complexity of how power is practiced and created by the intersection of gender, race, class, age, and cultural institution.

A second example of intersectional research is Trail and Karney's (2012) widely cited quantitative study on how American low-income groups experience marriage (e.g., relationship problems) and whether their values and marriage standards have implications for policy initiatives to strengthen marriages in those communities. They noted that although previous studies have focused on a subset of low-income populations (e.g., unmarried women, parents), those studies did not sample respondents by income and race, and lacked comparisons among low-income, moderate-income, and high-income populations. They asserted that understanding how the values of a broader sample of people with low incomes (e.g., men and women, nonparents and parents, single and married couples) relate to similar populations of higher income people will give scholars and policy makers a more comprehensive picture of how family values may contribute to high divorce rates and low marriage rates among low-income individuals. They cited Choo and Ferree's (2010) article on using an intersectional approach to mine social inequalities to support their goal in determining how the context of multiple group memberships combines to affect disadvantaged populations. They solicited a stratified random sample from multiple states, including a sample of Florida residents receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and directly compared income groups while statistically controlling for potential confounding variables (e.g., age, marital status). Significant main effects of income were followed up by tests of simple effects between income categories, and the authors examined all interactions among gender, race, and income using hierarchal regression.

Trail and Karney (2012) found that most low-income individuals had similar or more traditional values than high-income respondents on most family values items and were similar to moderate-income respondents on most items overall. There was no significant difference among income groups in how they valued marriage as an institution. The authors concluded that the values of low-income populations were more nuanced than ''pro-marriage'' and may reflect a practicality that takes precedence over an idealist notion of marriage and positive exposure to effective diverse households (e.g., single-parent households with positive child outcomes). They also found that low-income populations did not endorse higher romantic standards for marriage than did higher-income populations, and they did not report more relationship problems with relationship-centered behaviors

(e.g., communication, problem solving) than did higher-income populations. Low-income groups (including the TANF sample) may experience more challenges due to external stressors (e.g., financial problems, bad ''friends,'' substance abuse) than what other income groups experience. Their findings put into question the appropriateness of marital enhancement interventions that focus primarily on interpersonal processes for low-income populations.

In the two examples that I have described, the researchers did not explicitly profess to examine marriage from a critical race or feminist orientation. Yet they were explicit in noting the importance of using an intersectional approach (i.e., intercategorical intersectionality, locational and relational intersectionality) to attain a more complete picture of variation in human behavior and agency in specific contexts. Both research designs attend to analyzing within-group diversity and examining how couples respond to simultaneous interactions among gender, race, income, socioeconomic status, and culture (i.e., values). Without claiming herself to be a feminist, Zuo (2009) explored power in gender relationships, acknowledging how those relationships are grounded in a patriarchal system. She integrated racial/ethnic feminist scholarship with mainstream scholarship on power to explain women's agency over the life course. I believe that Zuo's article represents what a critical lens could add to representing variation in women's behavior in different marital and residential contexts. I think Trail and Karney's (2012) article best represents the future of intersectional research in family studies. I am particularly intrigued by how a critical race theoretical lens could have added nuance to Trail and Karney's interpretations of their results.

Trail and Karney (2012) noted differences for low-income Black and Latino men in terms of those men reporting higher levels of substance abuse and relationship problems (e.g., infidelity). The authors offered financial problems and ''discrimination'' as possible reasons for the differences. By using a critical race theoretical lens, the authors could have briefly explored the interactional effects of institutional and social inequalities on low-income racial/ethnic minority families' ability to negotiate social practices and policies that have produced intergenerational patterns of family disintegration or instability (e.g., social welfare laws that encourage single parenthood,

the Adoption and Safe Families Act that inadvertently created higher foster-care drift of African American children and expedited termination of parental rights) and have limited family (or racial/ethnic) group access to higher education, economic opportunities, and formal support resources. The behavior of the men who participated could have been situated in historical context to unpack findings that perpetuate stereotypes about the behavior of racial/ethnic minority men and their families.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK WITH EVOLVING INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES

Racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories inherently provide a guiding theoretical framework for conducting any type of intersectional analysis. Although there is evidence that the inclusion of racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theory is present in publications in premier family studies journals, intersectionality as a theory or a method has yet to be fully embraced by family scholars. Intersectionality theory is an extension of and a product of racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race feminist theories. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework or a methodological paradigm offers several benefits for investigating family process dynamics and institutional effects on families in this country's ever-changing demographic landscape (e.g., shifts in racial/ethnic populations, social mobility); the effects of social, economic, and health policies on families in global and transnational contexts (e.g., war, employment, immigration, education, sexually transmitted diseases); the complexities of biracial and multiracial identity development (e.g., mental health outcomes, family-of-origin relationships, interracial or interethnic marriage, postracial-ity); and the multigenerational, marginalizing effects of incarceration on families. To conclude this review, I present the advantages and limitations of using intersectional approaches as a means of identifying implications for work that remains to be done.

I suggest that there are seven reasons family studies scholars should consider using an intersectional approach in their research. First, using an intersectional approach provides a foundation for embracing racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race feminist theories in the examination of family and community processes, and interactions between individuals

and groups. An intersectional approach requires placing the experiences of individuals, groups, and the institutions that create and sustain social inequalities into historical context (Crenshaw, 1993). Second, integrating an intersectional approach may compel some researchers to think about their own positionality and complicity in maintaining hierarchal relationships with those studied. Intersectional analysis allows us to ''dismantle the master's house'' with different tools (Lorde, 1993) and to identify ''the oppressor within us'' (Lorde, 1984, p. 37). The value of self-knowledge or self-reflexivity (Allen, 2000) is not simply for moral self-improvement or to increase trustworthiness in our research, but it also enables us to undertake the very hard work of understanding and deconstructing the implications of Eurocentrism in both traditional family studies and feminist approaches to scientific inquiry. Third, employing an intersectional approach requires researchers to consider how an analysis of the politics of location and the intersectionality matrix (De Reus et al., 2005; Few, 2007) provides rich, complex information about how people ''do'' or perform close relationships and roles within multiple systems, identity development, family processes, and generativity, and how they interact with symbolic representations and social structures (e.g., culture, institutions, laws) across the life course, generations, and time. Fourth, an intersectional approach not only encourages researchers to conduct analyses of within-group diversity at multiple levels of simultaneous interlocking interactions but also indicates that there may be variability in how individuals and groups assign meaning to multidimensional social categories over the course of time. Fifth, because of variability in socially constructed meanings and power relations, a creative mixed-methods research design becomes critical in capturing a more complete contextual understanding of interactional processes (e.g., Harper, 2011). Sixth, by utilizing an intersectional approach, researchers are critically engaged in family studies literature and the literatures of other fields of inquiry, which fosters interdisciplinarity and is critical to uncovering the multiple and simultaneous identities and interactions across and within groups and categories. Minority voices or minority experiences within master categories may not be decentered from analysis, and the argument for comparative research becomes more salient (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; McCall,

2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Finally, for those who are not feminist oriented and for those aspiring feminists who find postmodern, racial/ethnic feminisms, or queer theoretical assumptions too restrictive in describing their own identities and positionality, an intersectional approach can provide a broader framework for analyzing behaviors, processes, and relationships.

Just as there are benefits to using a certain framework or method, there also are challenges or costs. The first possible cost is whether or not scholarship produced by racial/ethnic scholars will be rendered invisible if one merely needs to claim that she or he is taking an intersectional approach. In other words, will the mainstreaming of intersectionality in family studies ameliorate the political characteristic that is so embedded in the tenets of racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race feminist theories? There is no tenet in an intersectional approach that a researcher must own or profess any specific political allegiance (e.g., self-identification as a feminist, intentional inclusion of feminist and critical race scholarship). Depending on the motivations of the researcher and the intersectional approach that the researcher chooses to engage, there could be an active depoliticizing of minority experience and a disengagement from the goal of social justice (Zack, 2005). Thus, the visibility of minority standpoint scholarship such as racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race feminisms may be at risk with a research focus that is more process oriented than invested in content specialization. Intersectionality should not be reduced to a statistical equation with multiple interacting variables. In addition, a researcher's goal in using an intersectional approach need not be inherently feminist oriented despite the fact that its humble beginning was inspired by the labor of racial/ethnic feminists and poststructuralist feminists. It is a possible future that social justice and empowerment become obsolete goals in intersectional research. The possibility for participating in activist scholarship or having social justice as a goal for researchers may eventually be lost.

A final matter to consider is the challenge of conducting intercategorical analyses (Choo & Ferree, 2010; McCall, 2005). McCall (2005) described the complexity required to analyze intercategorical intersectionality as being formidable. From an intersectionality perspective, race and gender are not reducible to individual attributes; theoretically, they are social location categories that constitute an

intracategorical diversity. Again, individuals may assign different meanings to those social location categories over the course of time. The categories are not static, which is a presumption of additive quantitative analyses. Of particular difficulty is isolating the insurmountable axes of differences across and within categories. Thus, we must face the challenge of designing a study that adequately captures the complexity of the intersectionality matrix. Mixed-methods research designs may be the key to capturing changes in meaning making over time and to analyzing processes between, within, and among categories, as well as within a macro sociohistorical context (e.g., national trends, historic events, culture, structural constraints such as policies).

In conclusion, this article represents one attempt to articulate a possible new trajectory for racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race perspectives in family studies—intersectionality as both a theoretical framework and a research paradigm—while examining how contemporary feminist family scholars are engaging intersectionality approaches. I acknowledge that the study of how race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, and a host of other categories that denote difference interact to produce different social, health, economic, and political outcomes is growing in relevance as families and communities are changing in complexion, constituency, and access to resources. Although the terms *intersectional approaches* and *intersectionality theory* have not gained the same kind of visibility or traction as racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories as of yet, I can envision how this may change as family scholars seize opportunities to explore, teach, and refine intersectional approaches as both theoretical framework and methodological paradigm. Family studies as a field has had to refine how ''family'' is studied. Now is the time to rethink how we ''do'' feminism in order to better study changing and diverse families. I hope that in this process, the tenets and founders of racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories remain central and visible in interpreting and designing intersectional research.

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