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Theoretical Triangulation as an Extension of Feminist Intersectionality in Qualitative Family Research

We propose the theoretical triangulation of feminist intersectionality, critical, and symbolic interaction perspectives as an innovative qualitative family research approach. Theoretical triangulation draws on alternative theories as analytical frameworks to explore different viewpoints about research phenomena. Feminist intersectionality provides a rich examination of phenomena at the intersection of conditions of power, privilege, and oppression; critical and symbolic interaction theoretical perspectives provide for additional depth of analysis and critique of the complex dynamics that shape family life. Theoretical triangulation exposes underlying mechanisms that facilitate and constrain agency, as well as the forces and conditions that create or maintain inequities. Understanding these mechanisms extends knowledge beyond categories of difference and oppressed–oppressor dualities to illuminate the potential for social change with a social justice agenda.

Researchers involved in family scholarship seek to understand and strengthen families through the study of relationships among family members and the examination of social forces and conditions likely to influence individual and family well-being and functioning (Gilgun, 2012). Family relationships, however, are complex and dynamic, given the interplay of private and public pressures. It therefore can be difficult to identify the many layers of meanings, influences, strengths, and challenges that shape experiences within families. Theoretical underpinnings provide family researchers with sets of interrelated ideas conducive to the description and explication of (a) particular experiences, (b) hidden dimensions of phenomena, (c) linkages among apparently disparate ideas, and (d) value systems embedded in layers of meaning (Knapp, 2009). For example, symbolic interaction theory (e.g., Gilgun, 2013), feminist theory, (e.g., Allen, 2001; Allen, Lloyd & Few, 2009), critical race theory (e.g., Collins, 1989, 2000), and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Few-Demo, 2014) are widely used to inform family scholarship. Family research is further guided by specific sets of beliefs and assumptions orienting the choice, design, focus, and intent of investigations (e.g., Ferree, 2010; Fox & Murry, 2000; Gilgun, 2012, 2013; LaRossa & Wolf, 1985; McDowell & Fang, 2007; Risman, 2004; Thompson, 1992). In conducting qualitative inquiry, researchers thus create opportunities to consider multiple levels of meanings and to examine intersecting influences on families' everyday lives from the perspective of family members themselves (Allen, 2000; Gilgun, 2012; LaRossa & Wolf, 1985; Zvonkovic, Sharp, & Radina, 2012).

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Congruent with the goals of family scholarship to uncover the complexities that underpin family functioning and well-being, and to bring to the fore often invisible relations of power, inequality, and inequity (Dill, McLaughlin, & Nieves, 2007; Ferree, 2010; Few-Demo, 2014), we propose theoretical triangulation as an extension of current feminist intersectionality perspectives in qualitative family scholarship. Triangulation is a strategy to "explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 195). Theoretical triangulation draws on alternative theories as analytical frameworks to explore different facets of or viewpoints about research phenomena (Cohen et al., 2011; Rothbauer, 2008). We further identify theoretical triangulation as different from theoretical integration (Kushner & Morrow, 2003). Theoretical triangulation involves a pragmatic process of inquiry that draws on distinctive yet complementary theoretical perspectives to generate deep understandings and explanations. Theoretical integration, in contrast, would require full theoretical unification and essentially lead to the creation of a new and distinctive theory. Our use of theoretical triangulation permits the exploration of phenomena from the relatively autonomous yet complementary lens of selected feminist intersectionality, critical, and symbolic interaction theories.

Our contention is that while feminist intersectionality provides a rich examination of phenomena at the intersection of conditions of power, privilege, and oppression (most commonly focused on gender, race, and class), the addition of critical and symbolic interaction theoretical perspectives provides for additional analysis and critique of the complex mechanisms and dynamics that shape family. We therefore assert that, compared to the use of any one perspective, theoretical triangulation of each of these perspectives facilitates a deeper consideration of forces and conditions that are embedded in the historical, symbolic, structural, and ideological contexts of everyday life, and the examination of how these facilitate or constrain individual or family agency. In our view, theoretical triangulation thus fosters both exposure and critique of the mechanisms by which social injustices and inequities emerge and are perpetuated in the everyday life of family members (Dill et al., 2007; Dill & Kohlman,

2012). Through an in-depth understanding of these mechanisms, it becomes possible to highlight the strengths and challenges that influence family functioning and well-being, and to determine where opportunities for advocacy of social policy change or program development (Dill & Kohlman, 2012) can best and most effectively support families across their many diversities.

We first discuss the underlying premises of each of the three theoretical perspectives and emphasize the contribution and value of using each of these as a complementary lens in the analysis of qualitative data. We illustrate key implications of our approach to theoretical triangulation by presenting exemplars from current family scholarship informed by feminist intersectionality, critical theory, or symbolic interaction theory perspectives. We then describe our approach to theoretical triangulation. We conclude with a brief discussion of the strengths and challenges facing qualitative researchers who choose to engage theoretical triangulation in their research with families as a means to advance family science and to contribute to knowledge that carries an emancipatory potential in practice with families.

Theoretical Foundations

We present these theoretical perspectives in reverse chronology to their original development, acknowledging that each later perspective was informed by and incorporated influences from each earlier perspective. Feminist intersectionality theory is the most recent and the most evolved of these perspectives, integrating selected concepts from critical theory and symbolic interaction. Critical theory also progressed from symbolic interaction to account for issues historically imposed by social structures, associated with of power, alienation, and domination, and largely operating beyond individual control. Although the last to be discussed, symbolic interaction has the longest history in family research and is considered for its in-depth focus on individual experiences in a network of relationships.

Feminist Intersectionality Perspectives

Few-Demo (2014) recently identified that intersectionality and intersectional analysis were "the future of family science" (p. 169). Intersectionality is a view that was proposed by critical

race scholars Collins (1989, 2000) and Cren-shaw (1989, 1991) to examine how intersections among sociohistorical, structural, and political contexts perpetuated multiple inequalities, inequities, and experiences of marginalization and oppression for Black women. Feminist intersectionality is an approach that preserves this tradition and expands the focus of analysis to include an examination of power in families and society within the context of multiple intersecting and gendered identities and social location (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Dhamoon, 2011), domains of inequality (Bowleg, 2008; Few-Demo, 2014; Risman, 2004), and forms of oppression and social power in the daily life of participants (Few-Demo, 2014; Dill et al., 2007; Smith, 1992). Participants' experiences are thus considered within networks of relationships and at the intersection of racist, sexist, heterosexist, class, ethnocentric, age, able bodied, colonial, and political realities and complexities (Allen, 2000; Allen, Walker, & McCann, 2013). Intersecting axes of oppression and privilege are examined in view of the distinct properties attributed to each given a particular time, place, space, and available resource (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Dhamoon, 2011; Risman, 2004). Core intentions within feminist intersectional research further include a commitment to avoid essentialist views of experiences, and to highlight the impact of social location on knowledge claims (Olesen, 2000; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). In addition, feminist intersectional researchers reflexively question personal and social understandings of power, location, position, representation, and oppressions for their influence on the research process and the experiences of participants (Allen, 2000; Few-Demo, 2014).

Feminist intersectionality offers a very rich focus of analysis to examine the "fluidity, variability, and temporality of interactive processes that occur between and within multiple social groups, institutions, and practices" (Few-Demo, 2014, p. 170). While feminist intersectionality greatly contributes to exposing intersecting conditions of power, privilege, and oppression, we contend that, in practice, scholars may overlook some of the symbolic, social, structural, and ideological mechanisms also complicit in family interactions and experiences. We therefore shift to outline selected concepts from critical theory that serve as a complementary and supplementary sensitizing lens to inquiry.

Critical Theory Perspectives

We propose drawing on salient elements of the theory of structuration as elaborated by Giddens (1984, 1990, 1991), along with Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 2014), to highlight personal issues that stem from alienation, power, and domination (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004), and to expose mechanisms that may shape outcomes despite personal choices. We have found these two theorists' work to be complementary, though each with distinctive conceptual contributions. We concur with Tucker (1998) that there is a core shared perspective "that the structure/action duality characteristic of most social theory is a false dichotomy, for social action and social structures presuppose and require one another" (p. 69). Specifically, from Giddens's body of work, we advocate the use of the following sensitizing concepts to guide inquiry: social reproduction, reflexivity of the knowledgeable agent, practical consciousness, and ontological security within his particular view of the structure-agent dialectic. From Bourdieu's body of work, we mainly draw on the concepts of practical logic and habitus, recognizing how these are linked with other concepts such as capital, field, symbolic power, and reflexivity in his theory of practice. These sensitizing concepts, also vital in feminist work and agendas, foster specific lines of analytic questioning to examine the underlying mechanisms that enable and maintain internal and external conditions, and that often perpetuate inequalities, inequities, and oppressions.

Giddens (1984) viewed structure as a "set of rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction" (p. xxxi) and informing the existential aspects of identity and agency (McNay, 2000). In Giddens's view, as in feminist perspectives (e.g., Smith, 1987, 2005), the rules and resources that are replicated on an ongoing basis eventually grow into institutions that are well established, reproduced, and eventually routinized within social and structural practices (e.g., patriarchy, familialism, racism, capitalism). More specific to Giddens, however, is the view that *rules* become self-perpetuating *routines* on the basis of human agents' coordinated activities. Routinization ultimately becomes the mechanism that lends an aura of predictability and continuity to the personal life of agents, and that allows societal institutions to persist (Giddens, 1984). In this perspective, "agency and

structure cannot be conceived apart from one another; they are two sides of the same coin" (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 510). Individuals thus function as knowledgeable agents through whom structure comes into being as they act according to the demands of specific contexts. Concurrently, structure exists because it is experienced, remembered, and socially reproduced by knowledgeable agents.

Knowledgeable agents, however, make choices to conform to, reproduce, or challenge established rules and routines through practical consciousness (Giddens, 1991), another mechanism understood as a constant risk assessment. Practical consciousness enables social agents to decide on preferred outcomes from available choices. These decisions are enacted by way of reflexivity, in consideration of the facilitating and limiting forces and conditions of their embodied everyday context (Giddens, 1984). Decisions emerging from practical consciousness are ultimately meant to prevent the fear and loss that would emerge if perceived risks to the biographical self were identified (Giddens, 1991). In this latter case, knowledgeable agents seek ontological security, a third mechanism experienced as trust that one is able to keep on going with everyday activities without unmanageable existential anxiety (Giddens, 1990, 1991). In such circumstances, agents very often consciously select to adhere unquestioningly to rules and routines because these represent comforting patterns of behavior, even if they are rigid, unpleasant, or even oppressive.

The concept of ontological security, linked in Giddens's work to his distinction between practical and discursive consciousness, also has been linked to Bourdieu's distinction between habitus and practical logic (Thorpe, 2011). Habitus signifies the site of convergence between individuals as agents and their sociocultural milieu as fields within the social structure that are continuously constructed in interaction and experienced through social practices, representations, and meanings (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Thorpe, 2011). Habitus thus is "a socialized subjectivity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 126) that provides individuals with "socially legitimate ways of being-in-the-world" (Thorpe, 2011, p. 220). Practical logic, like practical consciousness, reflects embodied dispositions that are evident in "what is simply done" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Kushner & Morrow, 2003; Thorpe, 2011). These concepts provide an entry to explication of apparent inconsistencies between agents' descriptions of their experience and their actions; importantly, this lens does not convey a notion of false consciousness but a recognition that "social life cannot be conducted without inconsistencies and contradictions" (Kushner & Morrow, 2003, p. 41).

Symbolic Interaction Perspectives

Symbolic interaction is a perspective that has historically been instrumental to the advancement of family scholarship (Gilgun, 2012, 2013), specifically for its focus on the interactions that family members experienced with and among each other. The particular contribution of symbolic interaction to this inquiry lies in the focus on the symbolic meanings that guide communication as individuals interact with themselves through reflexivity, with others (e.g., parents, friends, extended family members) in the present, and with their immediate environment (e.g., community members, personal and professional networks) according to historically acquired knowledge and personally defined perspectives (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2010). The focus of symbolic interaction is predominantly on individuals who act and interact within their *subjective* world, albeit under the influence of beliefs, values, and norms accepted by a larger community of individuals (e.g., family, culture). Through symbolic interaction, important information thus emerges about individual and family functioning. In addition, the challenges that family members experience within their family and proximate social world and network of relationships as they interact with the world (Gilgun, 2012, 2013; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993) become visible.

We center our attention most particularly on individual actions and interactions as driven by reflections and communications with the self to interpret the world, determine event significance, and orient decisional choices in interactions with others. We further consider the social influences existing within the symbolic world of the individual and shaping actions and choices in the context of family life. This symbolic world emerges from a "historical" world composed of acquired meanings learned over time to become "shared sets of goals, values, beliefs and norms" (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p.136) within a collectivity (e.g., culture, family, community). Acquired meanings call for particular

and recognized ways of being, doing, and thinking in the relational context (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). While these meanings may be modified following personal reflection, observations, and contextual influences from the symbolic world (Charon, 2010; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004), the need to protect the self largely influences the stability of these meanings (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) in fact purported that the more others are perceived as significant in people's world, the more these others' actions, supportive or sanctioning responses, and subjective interpretations affect how people think of themselves, and influence the choices they make to preserve their self-concept. People are, therefore, held accountable for perceived deviations from accepted social norms, often in light of "systems of meaning used in the interest of oppression" (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p. 151) within a family or community.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THEORETICAL TRIANGULATION IN FAMILY RESEARCH

We now shift to examine the influences of symbolic interaction, feminist, critical, and feminist intersectionality perspectives on family research through a discussion of selected exemplars. Our presentation order here generally follows the developmental chronology of the various theoretical perspectives, thereby reflecting our contention that each theoretical perspective contributes to the depth of inquiry as a whole. Our interest in gender and family care work in the context of personal, interpersonal, and social expectations and ideals, and across multiple intersecting diversities, including gender, socioeconomic status, and ethno-culture, guided our selection of examples from current family research to illustrate theoretical influences on knowledge generated through qualitative inquiry. Our purpose is to highlight the contribution to knowledge development that is foregrounded from each perspective singly or in combination: symbolic interaction theory; symbolic interaction and feminist theory; feminist intersectionality; feminist and critical theory; and intersectional feminism, critical theory, and symbolic interaction theory.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Burton, Cherlin, Winn, Estacion, and Holder-Tayler (2009) examined trust in low-income mothers' intimate partner unions. Their ethnographic study was guided by symbolic interaction theory and focused on low-income mothers' enactment of interpersonal trust in romantic unions. Data were generated through participant interviews and observation of everyday family interactions during paid work and child-care activities, relationship milestones, and family functions. Data analysis involved three phases of coding to identify (a) contextual and situational aspects of participants' everyday lives, (b) the conditions and strategies evident in trust/distrust interactions, (c) "the main story" about how participants used forms of interpersonal trust, and (d) how life circumstances shaped these dynamic interactions. Burton et al. found that mothers displayed generalized distrust of men (gender distrust), yet they also displayed situated trust in their romantic partners. The researchers identified four forms of interpersonal trust: suspended, compartmentalized, misplaced, and integrated trust to extend current understandings of trust and gender relationship dynamics. Although the authors included social contextual influences such as low-income, ethno-cultural minority status, and intimate partner violence experienced by many of the women in their discussion, inquiry did not focus in-depth on the larger sociocultural norms or ideologies that may have influenced women's behaviors and perspectives. As such, the findings of this particular study highlight the strength of symbolic interaction theory in examining interpersonal interactions in social context, yet a major limitation also is revealed with respect to inattention to gendered ideological and power influences on these interactions.

Feminist and Symbolic Interaction Theory

Doucet (2001) explored domestic responsibility among heterosexual couples in Britain, examining emotional and interhousehold responsibility as two distinct conceptualizations of domestic responsibility related to child care. The study was guided by a feminist focus on domestic and community life and a symbolic interaction focus on human relations, complemented by a family sociology focus on gender divisions of domestic work. Couples were recruited who explicitly identified as "consciously attempting to *share* the work and responsibility for housework and child care" (Doucet, 2001, p. 333). Data were

generated through individual interviews with each member of the couple and one joint couple interview. Individual interviews elicited participant experiences of employment and their perspectives on gender equality and differences, and parent influences and relations. Joint interviews stimulated reflection and discussion about current and past household processes related to diverse tasks and responsibilities and elicited participants' meanings of domestic responsibility in addition to divisions of responsibility. Data analysis was guided by a relational method that emphasized "social relationship issues in narratives and reflexivity processes in research" (Doucet, 2001, p. 335).

Emotional responsibility and interhousehold responsibility were central aspects of couples' experiences of sharing domestic responsibility for children. Emotional responsibility reflected ongoing and interdependent relationships between parents and their children; "response-ability" meant knowing and attentiveness to others' needs and was shared to varying degrees by mothers and fathers within households. Interhousehold responsibility reflected relationships within and between households and social institutions (e.g., schools, workplaces, the state) that were involved in a comprehensive scope of care work with children and was more resistant to sharing. For women, "mothering properly" (p. 341) was the norm defining responsibility, whereas for men, masculinity informed the need not to be "looked at oddly by other men" (p. 342). Doucet's (2001) findings revealed the persistence of gender ideals in the division of domestic responsibility, particularly in relation to the meanings of mothering and fathering responsibilities for participants. These findings highlight the combined contribution of feminist and symbolic interaction perspectives, to reveal persistent gender influences on parent work. A limited account is, however, offered of intersecting mothers' and fathers' social locations relative to income, education, employment, culture, or interactions with the expert systems that also may be defining their perceptions of what constitute a "good mother" and "good father."

Feminist Reading of Critical Theory

Walters and Whitehouse (2012) explored the ways that employed mothers reflexively understood and managed gender inequity in the division of unpaid house work in Australia. The study was guided by theories of reflexive modernity, specifically Giddens's concept of reflexivity in intimate relationships and "a feminist reading of Bourdieu's conception of embodied practice" (p. 117). Data were generated through individual interviews with women who had returned to the paid workforce, predominantly in managerial or professional positions following childbirth and parental leave. Interviews elicited women's perspectives on and satisfaction with their household and workplace experiences. An interpretive categorical data analysis strategy was used with focus on evidence of women's reflexivity about the division of household labor and their accounts of persistent gendered household roles.

Study findings provide compelling evidence of women's reflexivity, that is, their self-awareness of limited available choices about equitably sharing unpaid housework with their spouses, despite their social positioning as well-educated, "upper echelon," employed women. Women explicitly articulated dissatisfaction with the gendered divisions in their household labor and their awareness that these divisions reflected gender inequity with their spouses. Women's accounts were interpreted as evidence of reflection that is consistent with Giddens's conceptualization of reflexive modernity. Walters and Whitehouse, however, concluded that Giddens's concept of reflexivity was not useful in explaining the misalignment between women's reflexive understandings of gender inequity in housework and their apparent acceptance of and inaction to change their situation. The researchers offered an explanation of women's apparent acceptance of this misalignment using Bourdieu's concepts of reflexivity and habitus: Women's reflexive understandings of gender inequity were insufficient to counter the habitus embedded in the normative socialization of women to the primacy of care. The study illustrates the theoretical contribution of a feminist reading of critical theory to understanding gendered family experiences. Arguably, however, the study would be enriched by attention to women's meanings of work and family foregrounded in symbolic interaction theory and inclusion of greater sample diversity in family composition as well as socioeconomic status, ethnicity and race, sexuality, and ability emphasized from a feminist intersectionality perspective.

Feminist Intersectionality

Elliott and Aseltine (2013) examined the ways that mothers' protective care work for adolescent sons and daughters were shaped by gender, class, race, and age as intersecting "axes of inequality" (p. 722). Their work was guided by a feminist intersectionality perspective, informed by Black feminist and critical race feminist theory. Data were generated through individual interviews with an urban and socioeconomically diverse US sample of White, Black, and Latina women. Interviews elicited women's beliefs about, experiences of, and strategies used in care work to protect their sons and daughters from perceived threats, primarily criminal vulnerability for boys and sexual vulnerability for girls. Elliott and Aseltine explicate key intersecting influences on women's perspectives and actions. Reported findings, including illustrative participant quotes and researcher interpretation of participant experience in relation to personal, family, and social conditions, contribute to a deeper understanding of the multiple forces that shape these women's protective care work. Contrasting perspectives grounded in social class differences were clearly evident in most but not all experiences. Differences related to race emerged as prominent for some experiences. Gender was explicit in women's perception of primary threat to sons or daughters but was woven more implicitly into women's strategies to protect their adolescent children. The study richly illustrates the contributions of feminist intersectionality as a research approach to generating deep understanding of the multiple forces and conditions that shape family life. This understanding might be further deepened by including a symbolic interactionist focus on women's meanings, for example, of mothering and family, and a critical theory consideration of ontological security and practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) or practical logic and habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Theoretical Triangulation in Practice in Our Research Programs

In our research programs, we have examined family member experiences of individual and family well-being, functioning, and decision making in everyday family life, and how these experiences are shaped by personal, family, workplace, and social conditions. Individual studies have been guided by theoretical triangulation of what has evolved as a feminist intersectionality along with critical and symbolic interaction perspectives. Our research programs have included institutional ethnographic, grounded theory, and narrative studies that explored (a) employed mothers' everyday decision making about personal and family care work, (b) mothers' trust in self and others in the context of a personal legacy of childhood violence experiences and in the context of adult experiences of domestic violence, (c) mothers' and fathers' experiences of trust in self and others in interactions with expert systems when children experience conditions of health and illness, and (d) mothers' and fathers' transition to first time parenthood.

An intersectional feminist perspective directed attention to participants' experiences and issues as they defined them, and to the ways these were constructed within gendered ideologies and at the intersections of social institutions and related expectations. Complementing the feminist intersectional perspective, we used a critical perspective first to gain additional depth and scope of understanding of the mechanisms operating within the intersecting social, economic, ideological, and political contexts that inform and perpetuate practices and policies in the workplace, school, health, and social service systems. Second, a critical perspective guided us to explicate the ways that these mechanisms influenced participants' experiences of everyday life. More specifically, the particularly salient concepts from Giddens's (i.e., reflexivity of the knowledgeable agent and ontological security) and Bourdieu's (i.e., practical logic as alternative to false consciousness) have guided our understanding of men's and women's choices and decision making in relation to personal and family care work. We mainly focused on the exploration of facilitating and constraining rules, routines, expectations, ideologies, and practices to highlight forces and conditions shaping family members' everyday life. Through these salient concepts we also were able to explicate the mechanisms underpinning their efforts to meaningfully influence circumstances in view of, or in spite of, the pressures to conform and maintain status quo within their family (Kushner, 2005; Pitre, Kushner, Hegadoren & Raine, in press; Pitre, Kushner, Raine, & Hegadoren, 2013). The complementary perspectives of both feminist intersectionality and critical theory directed our attention to relations of power, oppression, and domination. In addition, we attended to

internal mechanisms perpetuating disadvantage and advantage in families, as well as sources of inequities and social injustices in participants' interactions with social structures. A symbolic interaction perspective directed depth in attention to participants' meanings, for example, of parenting, health and well-being, and trust that guided their actions and interactions with family members, and with individuals in the workplace, school, health, and social service systems.

Data generation methods have included extensive use of in-depth interactive interviews with participants. We reviewed documents such as workplace and social policies that provided resources and constraints, and located them within the larger political context to gain perspective on the multiple forces and conditions that may inform participants' choices and actions both as individuals and as parents. Through data analysis guided by theoretical triangulation, we identified critical intersections among personal, family, and social contexts that shaped participants' choices, interactions, and actions, including recurrent tensions arising from social ideologies of "good mother," "good father," "good family," and "good worker," as well as sociopolitical ideology of individual responsibility for personal and family well-being. Taken together in our research programs, these individual studies have advanced our understanding of intersections of agency and structure in the lives of families facing various challenges, individual and family strengths in the face of apparently unmovable mechanisms of power, and the limitations of policies and programs apparently designed to support family well-being in varying conditions of everyday life. We have brought to light multiple complex intersections among family relations, functioning, and personal history; levels of complexities as parents interacted with social ideology, social structures, and expert systems' established practices; and perspectives about the rules and routines that inform complexities and that ultimately guide individual, social, structural, and political approaches to circumstances (Kushner, 2005; Kushner & Harrison, 2011; Kushner, Pitre, Williamson, Breitkreuz, & Rempel, 2014; Pitre et al., 2011; Pitre et al., 2014). We ultimately have been able to deconstruct and to critique mechanisms of power affecting family life so as to challenge current practices and to propose alternatives to current routines, procedures, and worldviews (Kushner & Harrison, 2011; Kushner et al., 2014; Pitre et al., 2011; Pitre et al., 2014).

"Doing" Theoretical Triangulation: A Graphic Representation as a Heuristic Tool to Guide Research Programs

In our research programs, we ultimately aim to provide a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of overt and covert influences on everyday family life, through the perspectives of research participants in our studies. To achieve our goal, we examine distinctive facets of family experiences and we consider family phenomena from the theoretical triangulated perspectives of feminist intersectionality theory, critical theory, and symbolic interaction theory. We have developed an image that guides our work, and is useful to illustrate how we explore qualitative data generated through in-depth interviews to understand everyday family experiences.

The Image of a Coin as a Heuristic

Our coin image as a heuristic to explore the added value of theoretical triangulation to feminist intersectionality approaches currently in use to study families (Figure 1), draws on Ritzer and Goodman's (2004) view of agency and structure as two sides of the same coin and therefore as inseparable.

We depict the two sides of this coin as laying side by side (as if the coin had been bisected) to reveal the forces existing within each side of the coin as well as those that bond the two sides together through the intersection of multiple and complex forces and conditions. Figure 1 therefore represents the diverse vantage points from which we proceed with data analysis. We focus on the particularities of each side of the coin. On the family agency side of the coin, we explore the dynamics within their family unit, as these are shaped in relation to the personal experiential history of each member, to family composition, and to family functioning. On the social structural side of the coin, we explore influences of ideologies, social institutions, and expert systems on family experience. We also attend to the complexities inherent in the in-between space, a space that is usually invisible but that nonetheless bonds the two sides of the coin. We contend that structural forces wield great power (large top arrow from structure to agent) and impose on individuals and families

FIGURE 1. THE EXPERIENCE OF AGENCY WITHIN THE FAMILY AT THE INTERSECTION OF STRUCTURAL INFLUENCES: TWO SIDES OF A COIN AND THE IN-BETWEEN SPACE.
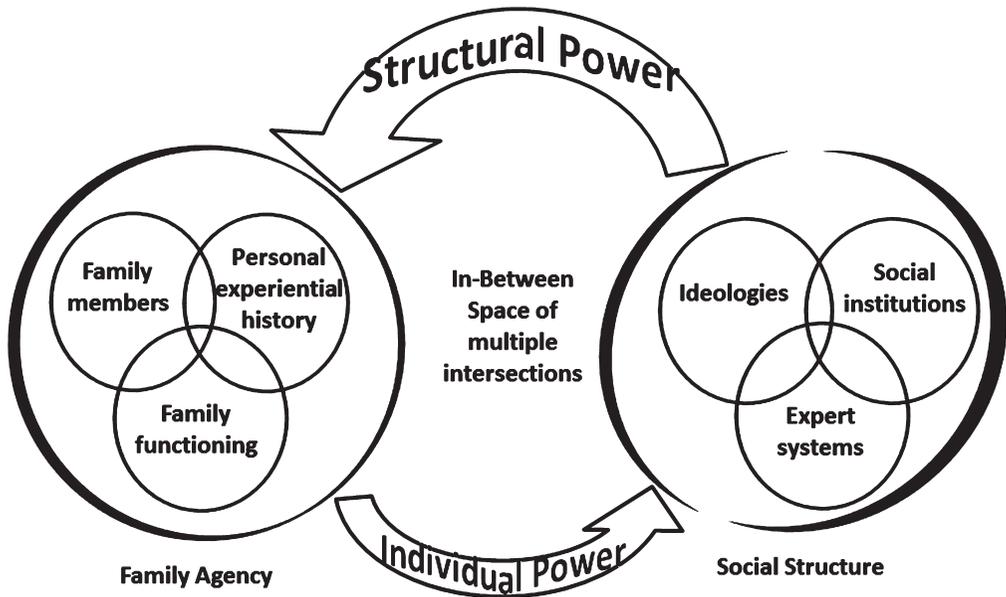
in ways that sometimes facilitate but that most often constrain the agency of family member as knowledgeable social actors. At the same time, as family members engage with the structure on multiple and complex levels (smaller arrow from agent to structure), they contend with forces beyond their control and may find themselves in positions of ongoing oppression, stigmatization, or marginalization despite efforts to exercise their emancipatory potential. This figure provides conceptual focus, in inquiry guided by theoretical triangulation, to offers us as qualitative family researchers the opportunity to purposefully examine multiple family realities from several, diverse, complex, and intersecting vantage points. In the following sections, we demonstrate how we have used this approach and discuss the potential benefits of considering this view as an approach to further enhance feminist intersectionality research strategies.

The Image of the Coin and Theoretical Triangulation

Our research approach to analyzing qualitatively generated data involves an exploration of similarities and differences as we recruit participants who share an experience but who come from different social locations, including from mainstream and privileged conditions as well as from marginalized and disadvantaged conditions. This line of inquiry reflects accepted qualitative research methods (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, & Silverman, 2007) and approaches to intersectionality research (Choo & Ferree, 2010).

The family agency side of the coin. We begin with an examination of emerging interactions within the circle of family member agency. On this face of the coin, we depict three interconnected circles, identified as family members, personal history, and family functioning. At the most elemental level, and given that our research programs focus on mothering, parenting, and everyday family life, we view families as shaped by individuals who are informed about family functioning by their own personal history and who come together to form their own family unit. We pose questions that guide us to an understanding of the ways men and women experience and manage evolving aspects of family life. We specifically use symbolic interaction premises to explore the interplay of family members' understandings of the rules, routines, expectations, and roles that inform

member interactions and support or impair family functioning. We further consider the power of personal history as we examine interpretations and meaning attributions.

We also recognize that understandings of family functioning and the choices and decisions made within families are influenced by forces beyond the family unit. We thus use critical theory and feminist intersectionality premises to inform our examination of the mechanisms that may create and perpetuate relations of domination, oppression, and privilege within the family circle. We explore intersections within the historical (personal and social) and symbolic world of family and seek to understand how these may shape intersections with structural, ideological, and political forces and conditions to facilitate or constrain family members' agency.

The social structure side of the coin. Concurrent with our focus on family agency, we also concentrate on the social structure influences on family experiences. Guided by critical theory and feminist intersectionality premises, we examine how ideology, social institutions, and expert systems' established politics and practices might intersect in a particular historical, structural, and political context to inform each other. For example, expert systems, including legal, judicial, school, health-care, and social service systems are characterized by power arising from established practices and protocols informed by ideological perspectives (Collins, 1989, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Giddens, 1984). These serve to uphold the rules and routines that are often constructed through patriarchal, class, heteronormative, ethnocentric, and colonial societal norms and structures (Allen, 2000; Giddens, 1984). Practices and protocols that originally may have been devised to support or protect therefore also carry the potential to harm through unintended consequences that arise from unexamined or unchallenged routines and procedures (Giddens, 1984). We draw on symbolic interaction premises to examine the forces and conditions that may influence individual service providers' choices and decisions when compelled to enact expert systems' rules, routines, policies and practices in their interactions with families.

The invisible "in-between" space. Once we have a sense of the dynamics and intersections that exist within the families' interactions

and experiences, as well as within the social, structural, and political forces and conditions that inform practices and policies, we finally consider intersecting axes of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Dill et al, 2007; Dill & Kohlman, 2012; McCall, 2005). We locate this portion of our analysis in the space in between faces of the coin. Examining this space enables sources of and mechanisms fueling injustices and inequities to be exposed, named, examined, and challenged (Kushner et al., 2014; Pitre et al., 2011; Pitre et al., 2014). Aspects of complexity analyzed from feminist intersectionality premises thus are meant to (a) bring to light domains of inequality resulting from the exercise of power, (b) expose concurrent manifestations of oppression and inequities, (c) explore interactions between social location and multiple and gendered identities in view of existing rules and norms (Bowleg, 2008; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Dhamoon, 2011; Dill et al., 2007; Few-Demo, 2014; Risman, 2004; Smith, 1992), and (d) reveal the influences that inform choices, decisions, and consequences and that often reside beyond individual control.

From this particular vantage point, we attend to mechanisms at work for individual family members as well as for the family as a collective unit. More specifically, we explore mechanisms of structural power and domination and seek to expose how the pressures exerted on individuals and families work to limit self-determination and emancipatory potentials. In our work, then, we are mindful of need to expose, at the individual family member level, circumstances that advantage one member yet disadvantage another. We also are mindful of the need to examine circumstances in relation to emancipatory potential for the family as a collective unit. Finally, because interactions among historically, socially, structurally, and politically prescribed or derived aspects of society have been established to maintain social order (Giddens, 1984), we also attempt to explicate the decisions that individuals make in light of available choices when they resolve to conform, resist, defy, or emancipate from associated constraining circumstances (Ferree, 2010).

The Image of the Coin and Feminist Intersectionality Research

In summary, through the presentation of this figure as a heuristic to guide data analysis and

interpretation, we concur with Few-Demo's (2014) assertion that researchers 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" (pp. 170–171). Few-Demo (2014) presented this synopsis of multiple authors' position to summarize underpinnings of intersectionality, at the same time as she proposed approaches to intersectional analysis that consider multiple domains of influence (e.g., political, symbolic, categorical, relational, locational) as a means to advance intersectionality theory. While we propose an approach to analysis and interpretation specifically designed to consider and illustrate multiple complex facets of interactions and intersections as we examine family phenomenon from a theoretically triangulated perspective, we do not purport to advance intersectionality theory. We rather suggest strategies that may expand the depth and breadth of understanding achieved by feminist intersectionality.

The figure we propose as a heuristic tool ultimately may facilitate the process of intersectional analysis, as many authors have identified difficulties in determining which complexities to highlight and explore, and have advocated vigilance and explicit rationale in the choice of intersections to examine (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Davis, 2008; Dhamoon, 2011; Few-Demo, 2014; McCall, 2005) within a given study. Our figure, representing the multiple depths of analysis that we utilize to conduct our research, certainly has helped us remain focused on particular intersections with the explicit understanding that others would be left aside rather than ignored or overlooked in the analysis of data. In using this approach, we also are candid about our aims. We ultimately seek to expose relational evidence of social inequities as they are experienced within families and under the influence of internal contextual forces and conditions, and to examine the dynamics that permit the social reproduction of power, privilege, oppression, and marginalization at the intersection of agency and structure (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Dill et al., 2007; Dill & Kohlman, 2012; McCall, 2005). We also aim to give voice to multiply-marginalized people at the same time as we are mindful to avoid essentializing experiences (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Dhamoon, 2011; Few-Demo, 2014;

Yuval-Davis, 2006; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). In seeking to accomplish these three goals, we work from the assumption that agents' voice (individual family members and families) is less powerful to influence structural changes (smaller bottom arrow) that will enhance their life than is the voice of the structure (larger top arrow) to shape their experiences and often to limit their capability to change their life. The tensions that exist within the invisible space at the interface of agency and structure thus are far from reciprocal, and we concur with intersectionality researchers from all disciplines that unless this uneven distribution of power is exposed, it is impossible to challenge social inequities and injustices.

We have chosen to include in each face of the coin intersecting circles that reflect the dimensions that are integral to our research programs. We, however, encourage researchers to identify the categories within each side of the coin that fit their research program focus, phenomena, and population under scrutiny. We further acknowledge that the theoretical premises that inform our analyses are used for a particular purpose, given the focus of our research programs. These too can be modified in light of the researcher's lens and the phenomenon under study.

QUALITATIVE FAMILY RESEARCH WITH AN EMANCIPATORY AGENDA

Qualitative research is generally speaking endlessly creative and makes it possible for researchers to utilize multiple lenses to interpret data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Qualitative researchers thus are opened to diverse perspectives and utilize their interpretive tools to represent the many complexities that shape experiences and that drive choices and decisions. Qualitative emancipatory scholarship further includes a social justice agenda. Researchers engage in work that has the potential to make a positive difference in the world, arguably to be transformative, to bring forth social change (Denzin, 2010; Dill et al., 2007; Dill & Kohlman, 2012). This agenda may include some or all of the following: (a) bringing to light social inequities; (b) giving voice to economically underprivileged, often silenced, marginalized, or stigmatized populations; (c) exposing and critiquing sources of power, alienation, or dehumanization; and (d) emphasizing manifestations of resistance toward self-determination and

autonomy including encountered challenges in view of social, structural, and political forces beyond individual and family control (Denzin, 2010; Dill et al., 2007; Dill & Kohlman, 2012, Mies, 1999; Smith, 1992; Sprague, 2005; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Researchers' ultimate goal thus is to work toward a more equitable society, one that recognizes, illuminates, legitimates, celebrates, and embraces diversities (Dill et al., 2007; Roberts & Jesudason, 2013).

We have argued that through the explicit use of theoretical triangulation, the underlying mechanisms that facilitate and constrain agency and the forces and conditions that create or maintain inequities can be exposed. We also assert that understanding these mechanisms extend knowledge beyond categories of difference and oppressed–oppressor dualities (Allen 2001; Ferree, 2010; Roberts & Jesudason, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006) to illuminate potential for change in the status quo (Allen, 2001; Ferree, 2010). We finally maintain that possibilities for authentic alliances toward social change (Dhamoon, 2011; Dill et al., 2007; Roberts & Jesudason, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006) are not only possible but also imperative for researchers to consider in their program of research.

While we consider the approach to research we have described here as potentially transformative, we also are mindful of the challenges for family researchers in extending their work to fulfill the emancipatory mandate. As an approach to inquiry, researchers who undertake the study of families from the perspective of theoretical triangulation of feminist intersectional, critical, and symbolic theory are encouraged to begin with a stance that recognizes participants as expert knowers whose contributions to research also involves a social justice agenda of their own. In addition, as the choice to approach research from this perspective usually stems from a commitment to generate knowledge with emancipatory potential, it is important to consider the findings not only in view of the individuals involved in the research endeavor but also more broadly for the benefit of families, communities, and populations for whom the knowledge is intended (Dill et al., 2007). Interpretive researchers who work with an emancipatory intention also may be challenged to ensure ethical practice, particularly with respect to working with marginalized and vulnerable populations whose circumstances of disadvantage may compel a default to expert knowledge and "doing for" rather than shared knowledge and "doing with" (Ferree, 2010). Ultimately, however, one of the greatest challenges associated with a transformative agenda resides in the current neoliberal political context, language of diversity, and policies that are explicitly designed to dilute, disarticulate, co-opt, and colonize knowledge production, and to undermine radical politics of social justice (Bilge, 2013; Dill et al., 2007; Dill & Kohlman, 2012). Furthermore, the need to produce knowledge that is understandable as well as considered credible, legitimate, and scientific to those who are in power may ultimately "[valorize] difference without consequences, recognition without redistribution" (Bilge, 2007, p. 409) and undercut the visibility or the support given to those living in minorities and experiencing related challenges.

In conclusion, we assert that the use of theoretical triangulation that integrates feminist intersectionality with critical and symbolic interaction as complementary perspectives in the conduct of qualitative family research (analysis and interpretation) represents both an innovative interpretive lens and an avenue toward emancipatory scholarship. This form of interpretive inquiry not only "fits itself to the relation between the individual and society" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2010, p. 31) but also allows the voices of traditionally silenced populations and historically embedded, often marginalized phenomena to be elevated to the public realm so that individual, family, and community challenges and underlying causes of the causes become more difficult to ignore. Roy (2003) aptly described this intentional outcome of emancipatory scholarship: "The trouble is that once you see it, you can't unsee it. And once you've seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing becomes as political as an act of speaking out. There is no innocence. Either way, you're accountable" (pp. 6–7). We contend that family scholarship will be advanced and enriched as researchers undertake the research approach that we have described and illustrated here. Importantly, from our perspective, the knowledge generated through this approach to family scholarship serves the discipline's interest in expanding understanding of family in all its complexities. We also anticipate that the generated knowledge may challenge normative platforms and elicit transformative changes in the moral interest of using knowledge to

produce social change that fosters emancipatory shifts and that eventually leads to equity and social justice for all families.

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