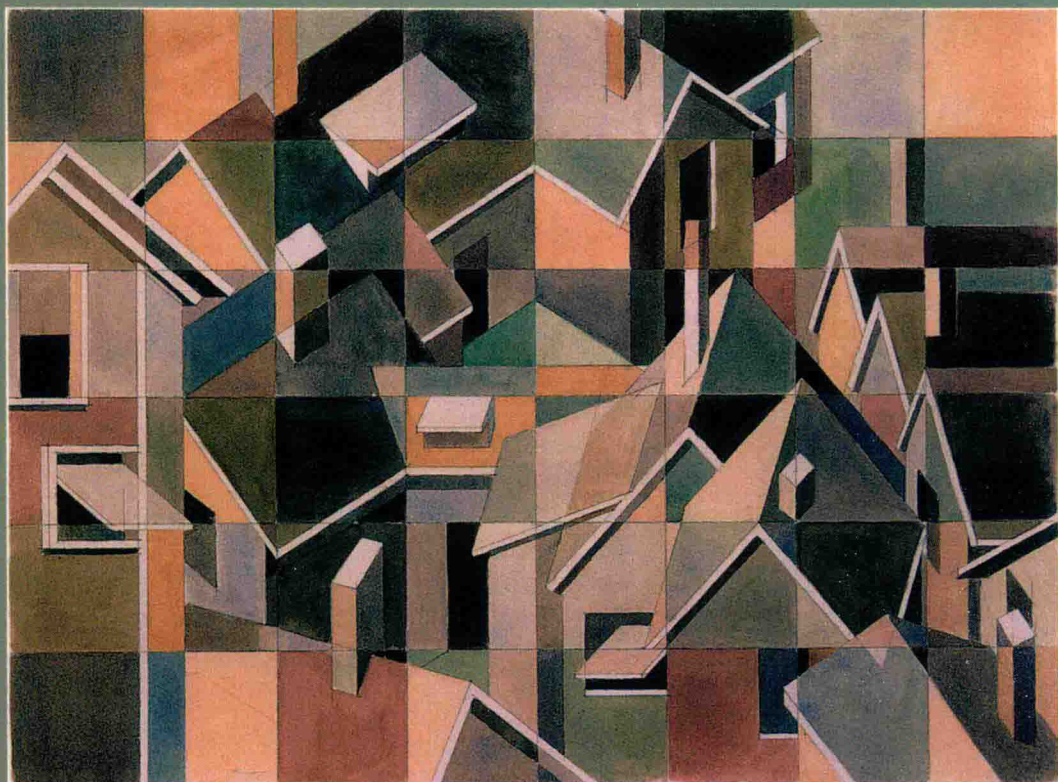


Studies in Feminist Philosophy

# Family Bonds

GENEALOGIES OF RACE AND GENDER



Ellen K. Feder

图书馆

# Family Bonds

---

## *Genealogies of Race and Gender*

Ellen K. Feder

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2007

# OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Inc., publishes works that further  
Oxford University's objective of excellence  
in research, scholarship, and education.

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi  
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi  
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece  
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore  
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Copyright © 2007 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016  
[www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com)

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,  
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Feder, Ellen K.

Family bonds : genealogies of race and gender / Ellen K. Feder.

p. cm.—(Studies in feminist philosophy)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-19-531474-8; 978-0-19-531475-5 (pbk.)

1. Race—Philosophy. 2. Race awareness. 3. Sex role—Philosophy.

4. Foucault, Michel, 1926–1984—Political and social views. I. Title.

HT1523.F43 2007

305.8001—dc22

2006052466

Printed in the United States of America  
on acid-free paper

## Family Bonds

*Studies in Feminist Philosophy* is designed to showcase cutting-edge monographs and collections that display the full range of feminist approaches to philosophy, that push feminist thought in important new directions, and that display the outstanding quality of feminist philosophical thought.

## STUDIES IN FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Cheshire Calhoun, *Series Editor*

### *Advisory Board*

Harry Brod, University of Northern Iowa

Claudia Card, University of Wisconsin

Lorraine Code, York University, Toronto

Kimberlé Crenshaw, Columbia Law School/UCLA School of Law

Jane Flax, Howard University

Ann Garry, California State University, Los Angeles

Sally Haslanger, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Alison Jaggar, University of Colorado, Boulder

Helen Longino, Stanford University

Maria Lugones, SUNY Binghamton

Uma Narayan, Vassar College

James Sterba, University of Notre Dame

Rosemarie Tong, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

Nancy Tuana, Penn State University

Karen Warren, Macalester College

Published in the series:

*Abortion and Social Responsibility: Depolarizing the Debate*

Laurie Shrage

*Gender in the Mirror: Confounding Imagery*

Diana Tietjens Meyers

*Autonomy, Gender, Politics*

Marilyn Friedman

*Setting the Moral Compass: Essays by Women Philosophers*

Edited by Cheshire Calhoun

*Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles*

Lisa Tessman

*On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*

Iris Marion Young

*Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*

Linda Martin Alcoff

*Women and Citizenship*

Edited by Marilyn Friedman

*Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment*

Bonnie Mann

*Analyzing Oppression*

Ann E. Cudd

*Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location*

Lorraine Code

*Self Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies*

Cressida J. Heyes

*Family Bonds: Genealogies of Race and Gender*

Ellen K. Feder

*For Jen, again.  
And now for Nic.*

*To interpret is a way of reacting to enunciative poverty, and to compensate for it by a multiplication of meaning; a way of speaking on the basis of that poverty, and yet despite it. But to analyse a discursive formation is to seek the law of that poverty, it is to weigh it up, and to determine its specific form. In one sense, therefore, it is to weigh the "value" of statements. A value that is not defined by their truth, that is not gauged by the presence of a secret content; but which characterizes their place, their capacity for circulation and exchange, their possibility for transformation, not only in the economy of discourse, but more generally, in the administration of scarce resources. In one sense, discourse ceases to be what it is for the exegetic attitude: an inexhaustible treasure from which one can always draw new, and always unpredictable riches; a providence that has always spoken in advance, and which enables one to hear, when one knows how to listen, retrospective oracles: it appears as an asset—finite, limited, desirable, useful—that has its own rules of appearance, but also its own conditions of appropriation and operation; an asset that consequently, from the moment of its existence (and not only in its "practical applications"), poses the question of power; an asset that is, by nature, the object of struggle, a political struggle.*

—Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

## Acknowledgments

From the beginning, this project has been about telling stories. It seeks to tell stories in different ways and to ask questions about the meanings of these different tellings. I have been fortunate that so many people have taken an interest in the stories I tell here about gender and race, and especially gratified that many have shared their own stories along the way. Sometimes they told stories of childhood experiences on the gender border and what *they* most enjoyed doing with Barbie or Ken. More often, they recounted stories of their own children and the different sorts of gendered behavior they manifested, speculating on the effects of gender variance with respect to their own status as parents.

Some years ago, I spoke to an old friend about the founding of Levittown, the subject of chapter 2. My friend had grown up in a mostly Jewish and Irish development on Long Island that had been built by William Levitt's company in the early 1960s. I told her what I'd learned about the "Homeowner's Manual" that all new residents of Levittown received. These manuals had all sorts of "do's and don'ts" that would be "strictly enforced." These included lawn-mowing guidelines, the requirement of permission to change the color of the house, and the prohibition of fences and clotheslines.

Yes, she nodded, she remembered that they couldn't have clotheslines. And she remembered something else: Her parents' annoyance every summer when their next-door neighbors placed lounge chairs on their *front* lawn. "What do they think this is, a stoop?" To their children, on the phone to other neighbors and extended family, they would exclaim, "A stoop! They must think this is some kind of stoop!" For my friend, reflecting on the story of Levittown, it became clear that it was the conviction that her parents had left "the stoop" behind in Brooklyn that provoked these seasonal fits of pique. She also had the sense that there was some connection between "the stoop thing" and the threat in her mother's voice when she told my friend and her younger sister to be home at such-and-such an hour and "don't make me yell out for you." "Yelling out," like passing hot days on the



stoop among neighbors, was something that happened in the ethnic “neighborhood,” not on the tidy streets of “the development.”

My friend’s story gripped me for many reasons. It offered a vivid illustration of the success of European assimilation and the internalization of the discipline that made that assimilation possible. But it was something more than another example of the kind of power I examine here. Despite the fact that her parents’ frustration over the neighbors’ behavior was for her a vivid memory, the story was a new one—a result of knowledge she had just acquired about rulebooks and marketing practices employed by Levitt’s company (including financial inducements to European Americans to leave the city and the exclusion of people of color). Where it had first been another illustration of how nutty her parents could be as she was growing up, the story of “the slippery slope to the stoop,” as she now told it, was a depiction of the requirements a middle-class “whiteness” entailed and that her parents vigorously assumed, requirements she had unconsciously embraced, informing her own aspirations and judgments.

My friend’s reflections were a genuine gift to me, for they attested to the possibilities for new stories that Foucault’s method offers. I was moved, too, by my friend’s engagement with the project. I have been fortunate throughout the development of *Family Bonds* to have had many people offer the generous attention that has made its completion possible. It is a privilege to acknowledge their contribution.

I am grateful to two women who shared stories that appear in these pages. First I must thank the mother I call “Mary,” who candidly recounted her experience as a mother of a child with an intersex condition. I also thank Daisy Myers, who, with her family, integrated Levittown, Pennsylvania, in 1947. After reading her remarkable memoir—composed in the early 1960s at the urging of Pearl Buck but not published until 2005—I was honored to meet with her just as I was completing the final draft of this manuscript.

I owe thanks to those who encouraged my project in its earliest stages, including Mary Rawlinson, Eva Feder Kittay, Ed Casey, Irene Klaver, and Sharon Meagher. Repeated thanks are owed Eva Kittay. Though our shared surname does not mark a biological tie, her sustained attention to this and other projects gives meaning to the term “family bonds.” The debt I owe her is immeasurable. My former colleagues at Vassar College, in particular Uma Narayan, Jennifer Church, Mitch Miller, and Angela Y. Davis, kindly read and commented on a first draft of chapter 3 one evening into the wee hours.

Many others have commented on various parts of this work that I have presented at conferences and invited talks over the years, including those at the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, American University, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, the California Roundtable on Race, George Washington University’s Human Sciences Seminar, and Feminist Ethics and Social Thought. My presentation at American came in my second year of teaching there, and I am fortunate to have enjoyed the collegiality of supportive colleagues ever since. A very early version of what is now chapter 3 first appeared in *Philosophical Studies* 85,

nos. 2–3 (1997). Two articles that became chapter 4 appeared in *Radical Philosophy Review* 7, no. 1 (2004) and in *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007). I thank Eduardo Mendieta, Alison Bailey, and Jacquelyn Zita for their comments on those essays.

I am indebted to those who offered careful readings of different chapters: Alia Al-Saji, Barbara Andrew, Marcos Bisticas-Cocoves, Edgardo Menvielle, Gail Weiss, Amy Oliver, Andrea Tschemplik, Shelley Harshe, and Michael Schmidt. All helped shape my arguments in critical ways. I am particularly indebted to those who read and commented on the entire manuscript at various stages, and I was truly fortunate to have in these readers just the variety of perspectives the project required. Carolyn Betensky always knew what I was really trying to say even when I couldn't quite get it out. Deborah Cohen and Eileen Findlay kindly and critically cast historians' eyes on the project. Falguni Sheth pushed me to achieve greater clarity. Alison Flaum brought an uncommon generosity and wit to a thorough reading of the final manuscript. With a similar generosity of spirit, Karmen MacKendrick read the book at "both ends"—from what she assured me were its "good bones" at the outset, to the final, fuller-bodied project. I am also grateful for the supportive and helpful comments offered by Andrew Cutrofello, Jane Flax, Charles Mills, and Dee Mortensen.

I owe thanks to many people for their work on the details of assembling this book. At American University, Shelley Harshe assisted me with all manner of manuscript preparation with remarkable good cheer. Lara Zoble at Oxford University Press has always been available with answers, advice, and reassurance, as has her successor, Brian Hurley. Carol Hoke provided a sensitive reading of the manuscript, Valerie Hazel gamely took on the preparation of the index, and Christine Dahlin expertly guided its production. Cheshire Calhoun and Peter Ohlin have been wonderfully supportive throughout the process. For their assistance with the collection of images that are reproduced here, I thank the librarians at Temple University's Urban Archives, particularly John Pettit, and Ann Glorioso at the Levittown, New York, public library. I also thank Elizabeth Connor, who prepared the line drawing in chapter 5, and Michael Wyetzner, whose beautiful watercolor appears on the cover of the paperback edition.

Finally, I thank my partner, Jennifer Di Toro, to whom I owe more than I can say, and our son, Dominic, who has brought such joyful noise to our days.

# Contents

1. Foucaultian Method: A New Tale to Tell, 3
  2. The Family in the Tower: The Triumph of Levittown and the Production of a New Whiteness, 25
  3. Boys *Will* Be Boys: Disciplinary Power and the Production of Gender, 45
  4. Of Monkeys and Men: Biopower and the Production of Race, 69
  5. Thinking Gender, Thinking Race: Strategies and Contradictions, 86
- Notes, 101
- References, 125
- Index, 139

## Family Bonds



## Foucaultian Method

### *A New Tale to Tell*

---

Feminist and critical race theorists alike have long acknowledged the “intersection” of gender and race difference; it is by now a truism that the ways that we become boys and girls, men and women cannot be disentangled from the ways in which we become white or black men and women, Asian or Latino boys and girls. Such theoretical analyses have contributed in important ways to discussions of how gender is “raced” and how race is “gendered.” And yet, there has been little comparative analysis of the specific mechanisms that are at work in the “production” of each, that is, how they are intelligible as categories, together with the ways these categories come to make sense of us—as raced and gendered human beings. Recognizing important differences between the production of gender and race can help feminist and critical race theorists “think together” these categories without conflating and thus misunderstanding the specific mechanisms of each.

I propose that in Foucault’s analytics of power we may find critical tools for understanding and addressing the gap between the reality, which is always a complex production of difference, and our analyses, which seem generally to focus on one sort of difference to the exclusion of another. Even as Foucault’s failure to address the production of gender in a sustained way has been rightfully and frequently noted, feminist theorists have found Foucault’s later (or “genealogical”) work useful for understanding the production of gender and the specific expression of power that captures its operation.<sup>1</sup> In fact, as Susan Bordo has noted, Foucault’s famous interest in the body and its “disciplining” coincided with feminist contentions that the “‘definition and shaping’ of the [gendered] body is ‘the focal point for struggles over the shape of power’ ” (Bordo 1993, 17). In Bordo’s own feminist Foucaultian analysis in “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity,” for example, she observes that women’s preoccupation with

the "pursuit of an ever-changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity" effectively renders female bodies "docile bodies," "bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, 'improvement'" (ibid., 166). The successful fashioning of the docile body thus relies ultimately on the internalization of standards, rules, and norms that are the focus of Foucault's analyses. In other words, even as women's active cultivation of femininity may be promoted by images in magazines or other media and reinforced by means of rewards and punishments via any number of social institutions, the real mark of what Foucault calls "disciplinary power" is its deployment by individual subjects who direct this power inward, applying it to their own bodies, their own selves.<sup>2</sup>

While feminist applications of Foucault's ideas are now commonplace, comparable applications of his analyses of power to questions concerning race have been more limited.<sup>3</sup> Foucault's work published before his death in 1984 reflects a virtual silence with respect to the deployment of race as a category of difference. Unlike gender, which, as Simone de Beauvoir famously noted, was not the result of some "occurrence"—that is, it has no clear beginning or "historical facts" that can explain the category or the subjection with which it is associated (Beauvoir [1949] 1989, xxiv)—the idea of "race" has origins traceable to the early modern period, from which time attributions of racial difference have entailed exploitation, enslavement, and even genocide.<sup>4</sup> It is for this reason that Foucault's conception of power as *pouvoir*, a concept that emphasizes "productiveness" over "repressiveness" and the possibilities of "resistance" over "determination," fails to describe the operation of "power"—in the more conventional, encompassing sense—with respect to the history of racist oppression.<sup>5</sup>

Foucault in fact clarifies that the conception of power as *pouvoir* was not intended to describe these sorts of power relations. In "The Subject and Power," he writes that "slavery is not a power relationship when a man is in chains, only when he has some possible mobility, even a chance of escape. (In this case, it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint)" (Foucault [1982] 1983, 221).<sup>6</sup> Simple "constraint" is certainly too limiting a concept to describe the specific expression of power involved in the forms of racist exclusion prevalent today; "disciplinary power" inadequately captures the particular kind of power at work in the contemporary promotion of white supremacy. For example, de facto residential segregation—the racial homogeneity that has generally marked neighborhoods in the United States since the Second World War (see, e.g., Massey and Denton 1993)—can no longer be attributed to an obvious sort of "constraint" as laws proscribing discrimination have now been in place for decades. Nor, it appears, can an ascription of "disciplinary power" genuinely explain the great disparities in wealth and resources evident when comparing the status of white and nonwhite communities. The multiplicity of measures denying black women reproductive freedom relative to white women (see, e.g., Roberts 1997) are similarly difficult to characterize in these terms, as is the disproportionate number of black men

involved in the criminal justice system (see, e.g., Maguire and Pastore 1998). Although it is compelling to describe the production of gender as a function of disciplinary power, then, we cannot simply extend that analysis to the production of race.

What these examples do suggest is that even if, as many have suggested, race and gender work in complementary ways, they do not work in the *same* way, which fact has presented a challenge to theorists who are trying to think the two categories together. The project of this book is to explore the nature of this difference and this difficulty. In this introduction I explain my effort to make use of Foucault's methods to understand the operation of gender and race. While, as so many feminist theorists have compellingly shown, the deployment of gender is best understood as a function of disciplinary power, I will argue that the deployment of race is primarily a function of what Foucault calls "biopower," an expression of power that is bound up with the state apparatus.

Foucault's "genealogical" work, particularly *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, has been prominently featured in feminist theory and frequently cited in work by critical race theorists. His earlier, "archaeological" works, up to and including *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, are more concerned with the examination of the discourses in and through which we think and act and have received comparatively less attention.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, Foucault's archaeological method significantly informs the genealogical work that follows it. This introduction demonstrates the important role that archaeological method—together with the genealogy that comes later—can play in thinking about the production of race and gender, illuminating the historical contingency of these categories of difference, which take shape and become meaningful at particular times and in specific geographic locations. As my present interest is in contemporary formations of race and gender in the United States, I take as the focus of my analysis cases that emerged here in the second half of the twentieth century.

To think about race and gender together, I ultimately contend, we must attend especially to a third figure, "the family," the critical site for the production of difference. By "the family" I mean both the social formation and the normative idea that shapes our understanding of what the family is or is supposed to be. I argue that disciplinary power—and the production of gender with which it is associated—may be located *within* the family, the privileged location of the internalization of social norms. By contrast, biopower—what Foucault sometimes characterizes as a "regulatory" power that he explicitly associates with the production of race—issues from outside and acts *upon* the family. While I contend that examination of the family should occupy a central place in examinations of the production of difference, I also note that the family has significantly receded in contemporary feminist theoretical analysis. This displacement of the family is an important development in the discipline; its examination provides us an opportunity to trace the deleterious effects of conceptions of gender that have come to dominance, as



well as the possibilities for reconceiving these understandings, and is where I begin.

## Toward an Archaeology of Gender

### *Feminist Theory: Privileging Gender, Obscuring Race*

Thinking critically about the family constituted the focal point of feminist theoretical analysis at the beginning of the Second Wave. Redress of what Betty Friedan ten years earlier had called “the problem that has no name,” that is, the suburban woman’s confinement in the home (Friedan 1963), was taken in the burgeoning activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s to entail a much broader set of demands pertaining to woman’s position in the family. These included the legal reforms that brought about reproductive choice, the recognition of marital rape, and the founding of battered women’s shelters and day-care centers (Nicholson 1986; Echols 1989). Feminist theory and in particular Shulamith Firestone’s *Dialectic of Sex* ([1970] 1979) and Gayle Rubin’s “Traffic in Women” (1975) provided the most developed critiques of women’s identification with the domestic sphere and foregrounded the figure of the family as the primary instrument of women’s subjection. Despite the significant differences between Firestone and Rubin—differences that would come to characterize, for most of the rest of the century, principal and competing methodologies of feminist thinking—each places the institution of the family and women’s position within it at the center of her analysis.<sup>8</sup> While feminist theory since that time can trace its focus on gender as the most salient object of analysis to Rubin’s 1975 treatment, the work that emblemizes this shift in emphasis from the family to women’s role is perhaps *The Reproduction of Mothering*, the book that came to be so closely identified with feminist theories of gender throughout the 1980s.<sup>9</sup>

In this 1978 classic Chodorow argues that gender identity is acquired in the family. To understand, as she writes, how women “are produced” as women, with the “social and economic location” (Chodorow 1978, 13) that production entails, we must examine the disparity between the positions men and women assume in the family. Both girls and boys will enjoy a primary emotional bond with their mothers, but the development of boys’ and girls’ identities (and the affective capacities with which these are associated) must then diverge at the oedipal stage to facilitate girls’ assumption of the mother’s position—generally restricted to the private sphere of the family—and boys’ assumption of the father’s, which occupies the public sphere beyond the family. This divergence in development is responsible, according to Chodorow, for the assignment of the different positions that characterize what she calls “the social organization and reproduction of gender” (ibid., 7).

Even as *The Reproduction of Mothering* came to occupy a prominent place in feminist theories of gender, it also came to stand, as Chodorow