

WOMEN, THE FAMILY, AND POLICY

A Global Perspective



Edited by
Esther Ngan-ling Chow and
Catherine White Berheide

Women, the Family, and Policy

A Global Perspective



Edited by

Esther Ngan-ling Chow
and
Catherine White Berheide

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS

Production by: Ruth Fisher
Marketing by: Dana E. Yanulavich

Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany

© 1994 State University of New York

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced
in any manner whatsoever without written permission
except in the case of brief quotations embodied in
critical articles and reviews.

For information, address the State University of New York Press,
State University Plaza, Albany, NY 12246

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Women, the family, and policy : a global perspective / edited by
Esther Ngan-ling Chow and Catherine White Berheide.

p. cm. — (SUNY series in gender and society)

Includes index.

ISBN 0-7914-1785-9. — ISBN 0-7914-1786-7 (pbk.)

1. Women—Government policy. 2. Family policy. 3. Women in
development. I. Chow, Esther Ngan-ling, 1943– II. Berheide,
Catherine White. III. Series.

HQ1236.W643 1994

305.4—dc20

93-847
CIP

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Preface

This book examines how the system of domination created by the interaction of patriarchy, socioeconomic development, and the state transforms women's position within and outside of the family worldwide. The volume celebrates new scholarship generated by feminist critiques and Third World perspectives by challenging conventional thinking and by providing theoretical insights into the linkages between macro-changes and micro-interaction in women's everyday lives.

This book originates from the first editor's transformative experience of growing up in a Third World country, witnessing Hong Kong's industrialization and its enormous effects on women's lives and families, especially among the urban poor. Brought up in a female-headed household for a major part of her life, the first editor has cherished still-searing memories of what it is like to be a Third World woman. Bare survival has motivated the daily struggles of generations of Chinese women. These women have offered hope but encountered despair in the bittersweet mixture of their lives. The first editor's mother, a prime example of these women, made her daughter aware of her Third World existence, planted the seed for her feminist ideals, and ignited her desire to seek intellectual enlightenment.

Like them, the first editor worked as a child laborer in factories, combined housework and schoolwork as a young girl, worked as a seasonal street vendor and as a home-based subcontracting factory worker, fought for low-cost housing as an assistant housing manager, and volunteered monthly in a welfare agency as a case worker. This variety of work experiences provided first-hand insights to the issues this book addresses. These personal experiences, together with those of other contributors, demonstrate that although women's participation in economic development is beneficial to some extent, the system is constructed to intensify male domination, favor capital accumula-

tion, and place women in subordinate positions within class, race, gender, and culture hierarchies.

The first editor's experiences inspired in her a feminist vision of and commitment to translating women's everyday experience into feminist analysis and praxis. As a Third World feminist trained in the United States, she uses her own experience in particular historical, political, and social locations and her interest in culture, consciousness, knowledge, and the politics of empowerment for people in an international context to advance feminist thought.

The editors' collaboration can be traced as far back as 1980, when our paths from the East and the West met. We were both participants in a conference sponsored jointly by Research Committee 32, Women and Society, of the International Sociological Association, and by the Bulgarian Sociological Association and the Committee of the Movement of Bulgarian Women. This meeting cemented feminist connections by building a network for scholars, researchers, policy-makers, and activists from different parts of the world. It provided us an intellectual impetus to relate our research to global concerns. We became cognizant of our shared feminist ideas and research interests, laying the foundation for our subsequent collaborative work over more than a decade.

The conception of this book stems more specifically from our professional experiences while organizing program sessions for two World Congresses sponsored by the International Sociological Association. We first organized and co-chaired a session on "Women and the Family" at the 1986 Congress in New Delhi; later, Marcia Texler Segal and the first editor organized and co-chaired another session on "Women and Development: Variations in Changing Political Economies" at the 1990 Congress in Madrid. These inspiring conferences provided an opportunity to get together with potential contributors and exchange ideas for this book. Our participation in meetings of the International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women and of the Association of Women in Development further exposed us to international feminist scientific communities, broadened our perspectives regarding Third World concerns, and forged feminist coalitions across cultures. We proceeded with scholars in different fields and from various parts of the world.

This anthology represents our efforts to address the interlocking of the economy, the family, and the state that impinges on women's lives globally. We focus on recent debates, feminist critiques, and Third World challenges to mainstream scholarship in three specialized fields—sociology of the family, women and development, and gender and the state. Drawing literature from diverse sources and weaving threads from discussions of theory in these different fields, we use an

analytical framework that places women at its center in order to examine their lives from both feminist and Third World perspectives.

Studies in this book represent an intellectual collaboration of internationally committed scholars. Their chapters contain both theoretical models and empirical evidence for understanding global linkages between macro- and micro-forces, the dialectics of material and ideological circumstances, and intimate connections between objective conditions and human subjectivity in the lives of women and their families.

We hope that offering diverse viewpoints and cross-cultural studies to illustrate the main themes of this book will stimulate provocative analyses. We also hope that this volume will inspire those who share our commitment to translating feminist thought into collective action for the liberation, empowerment, equality, and humanity of all people.

E.N.L.C.
C.W.B.

Acknowledgments

First, we thank all the women and their families worldwide who contributed to this volume, either as segments of aggregated data or as individual foci for analysis. They form the soul of this book; without them, the spirit of global feminism and Third World struggle could not be fully understood. We are indebted to the chapter authors for their generosity, dedication, and commitment to this project. Their scholarly work articulates the voices of many invisible women globally and raises our intellectual horizons.

Rachel Kahn-Hut, Irene Tinker, and Mounira Charrad especially provided helpful critical review of and constructive suggestions concerning the introduction. They, along with Marcia Texler Segal, Joan Acker, Montserrat Sagot, Chin-Chun Yi, and Susan Tiano, offered solid support and encouragement throughout this project.

We particularly want to acknowledge support received from both the American University and Skidmore College. At the former, Betty T. Bennett, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Austin Barron, Associate Dean for Curriculum/Faculty Development, provided initial funding. Helen Koustenis, Johanna Foster, Heather Alderman, Lisa Silverberg, and Ke Bin Wu helped as needed with administrative tasks, proofreading, and research assistance. The first editor's bright graduate students in the Gender and the Family Seminar provided insightful suggestions on some chapters.

Skidmore College provided a faculty research grant, generous travel funds, and clerical assistance. David Seligman, former Associate Dean of Faculty, and David Burrows, Associate Dean of Faculty, were instrumental in obtaining research and travel monies. Deborah Sutherland, Georgia Boothe, and Geraldine Retizos offered cheerful and timely administrative support. The second editor's brother and sister-in-law, Andrew and Jane White, and her student assistants, Sangki Kwon and Kerry Gemmett, helped with the proofreading.

Numerous other people provided spirited support throughout the years it took to bring this project to fruition. Bonnie Thorton Dill and many colleagues from our feminist network within Sociologists for Women in Society (Margaret Andersen in particular) shared their experience and wisdom in academic publishing. Carla Howery energized us when the project seemed to make slow progress. Elaine Stahl Leo spent numerous hours and endless effort rendering valuable editorial services on demand, even on short notice. Luciante Li, Lauri Christiansen, Fu Liu, Helen Moy, and Peggy Dennis, who have devoted their lives to homemaking, occasionally helped the first editor with childcare and have put up with her when she was totally immersed in the exciting, yet tiring, process of producing this volume.

We also owe a great deal to Rosalie Robertson, our SUNY Press editor, who has given us her expert guidance. Her seemingly endless patience in answering our questions is deeply appreciated. In addition, we would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for SUNY Press who provided critical readings of the manuscript and valuable suggestions.

Last but not least, our thanks to our beloved children—Paul, Jennifer, Daniel, and Sarah—for allowing us to take precious family time for our professional work, and to our spouses, Norman and Bruce, who enthusiastically gave us unwavering support, sharing our hope and love for a better world. This book has been a testing ground for our friendship, which has deepened as we have shared our feminist vision and scholarship, transforming our ways of thinking as well as ways of living.

Contents

Preface	ix
Acknowledgments	xiii
Introduction: Studying Women, Families, and Policies Globally	1
<i>Esther Ngan-ling Chow and Catherine White Berheide</i>	

PART I: CHANGING STATE POLICIES, WOMEN, FAMILIES, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 1	Women, Families, and Public Policy in Sweden	33
	<i>Joan Acker</i>	
Chapter 2	Repudiation versus Divorce: Responses to State Policy in Tunisia	51
	<i>Mounira Charrad</i>	
Chapter 3	The Impact of the One-Child Policy on Women and the Patriarchal Family in the People's Republic of China	71
	<i>Esther Ngan-ling Chow and Kevin Chen</i>	
Chapter 4	Working without Wages in Australian Welfare	99
	<i>Cora Vellekoop Baldock</i>	
Chapter 5	Women's Work, Wealth, and Family Survival Strategy: The Impact of Guatemala's ALCOSA Agribusiness Project	117
	<i>Rae Lesser Blumberg</i>	

PART II: STRATEGIC AND PRACTICAL GENDER INTERESTS, FAMILIES, AND POLICIES

Chapter 6	Controlling Less Land, Producing Less Food: The Fate of Female-Headed Households in Malawi <i>Catherine White Berheide and Marcia Texler Segal</i>	145
Chapter 7	The Urban Street Food Trade: Regional Variations of Women's Involvement <i>Irene Tinker</i>	163
Chapter 8	Women, Political Activism, and the Struggle for Housing: The Case of Costa Rica <i>Montserrat Sagot</i>	189
Chapter 9	Fertility, Selective Recruitment, and the Maquila Labor Force <i>Susan Tiano</i>	209
Chapter 10	Childcare Arrangements of Employed Mothers in Taiwan <i>Chin-Chun Yi</i>	235

PART III: CONCLUSION

Chapter 11	Perpetuating Gender Inequality: The Role of Families, Economies, and States <i>Catherine White Berheide and Esther Ngan-ling Chow</i>	257
About the Contributors		277
Index		281

❁ Introduction ❁

Studying Women, Families, and Policies Globally

Esther Ngan-ling Chow and Catherine White Berheide

The global persistence of gender inequality and concern regarding the future of the family in a rapidly changing world have inspired in scholars and lay people alike a new interest in how state policies affect the status of women and families during the process of economic development. To explore this issue, one must address several central questions: How do particular political economies around the world transform gender and household relations? How do state policies attempt to deal with these political economic realities? How do women and their households both initiate and respond to state policies? What are the policy implications of women's and households' survival strategies?

This book explores the intricate relationships among changes in women's positions, family structures, socioeconomic development, and social policies from a global perspective. By focusing on the interconnections among gender, the economy, the family, and the state, it examines how state policies affect gender and household relationships in countries with various types of political economies and under different historical and cultural contexts. The state operates differently in socialist or capitalist economies and in democratic or authoritarian regimes, as well as at various stages of economic development. The state as a form of public patriarchy is intimately related to the family as a form of private patriarchy. Both interact with the economy to produce policies that have significant effects on women and families. As a result, state policies differ in their degree of sensitivity to women's

issues and have produced (directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally) mixed outcomes for women and their families. In turn, the ways in which individuals and their families respond to particular state policies may transform them.

For example, Sweden is the only society in the world that has as an official goal the equal participation of fathers and mothers in child-care (Hass 1992). It also has the oldest and most generous paid parental leave policy. Yet Acker shows how some of these same progressive Swedish policies which have women's interests at their center, while benefitting women to some extent, still reinforce gender inequality in both private and public contexts. Sagot shows how low-income women in Costa Rica reacted to the limited government policy by becoming politically active, which resulted not only in helping to meet their families' basic housing needs, but also empowered these women and eventually altered state policies on housing.

We also examine the interaction of the family, the economy, and the state with gender, as these multiple forces (the "quadruple overlap" as Blumberg puts it) affect policy formation and household relationships in countries at various stages of political and economic development. We neither subscribe to a particular theory nor a typology of developmental stages. To enhance our understanding of the diversity of social life, we do not classify countries according to a hegemonic hierarchy such as the world system to study variations in their political economies. Instead, we seek to understand how gender and household relationships are socially constructed as they are shaped by a multiplicity of macro- and micro-forces at different times and places. We do offer a general analytical framework by delineating different arguments from the studies presented in this book and by highlighting the common threads that link various theoretical analyses into an integrated whole.

Our analytical framework is inspired by and derived from feminist and Third World perspectives in three specialized fields of study—sociology of the family, women and development, and gender and the state. Rather than treating feminist thought as a monolithic approach or seeing the Third World as a homogeneous group, we have recognized contributions of various feminist perspectives from different parts of the world.¹ The collection of studies that we include here reflects a broad spectrum of Third World experiences and contexts.² Before we delineate the linkages in our analytical framework, we first discuss the development of these three specialized fields and highlight the major ideas in each that have led to their theoretical convergence.

The Convergence of the Sociology of the Family, Women and Development, and Gender and the State

As the women's movement has expanded throughout the world, feminists have challenged mainstream scholarship in many different disciplines by legitimizing gender as a distinct principle of social organization and by critiquing conventional theories. Sociology of the family, women and development, and gender and the state have developed independently of each other. In contrast to the relatively long historical tradition of family studies, studies of women and development and of gender and the state emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as changes in the global political economy unfolded. These changes had particularly wrenching consequences for women, although the consequences were ignored in both the mainstream development and political economy literatures.

The women and development field has given exclusive attention to the effect of economic development on women's changing status. A recent theoretical shift redefines development to incorporate its social dimensions, paying more heed to micro-level gender relations and household analysis while at the same time addressing broader questions about gender inequality (Beneria and Roldan 1987; Dwyer and Bruce 1988; Tinker 1990). In the early 1980s, renewed interest in "bringing the state back in" led scholars to reconsider the state, the role of policy in economic development, and its subsequent effects on women and their households (Charlton, Everett, and Staudt 1989; Staudt 1990). Studies on gender and comparative politics in the past few years have revealed how the politicization and empowerment of women, individually and collectively, have shaped state policies (Bunch and Carrillo 1990; Everett 1989; Mohanty, Russo, and Torres 1991).

This book celebrates the contribution of feminist thought, method, and praxis by integrating studies, especially those from the Third World, in these three specialized fields. Their theoretical convergence shapes the analytical framework of this book, which examines the interlocking effects of patriarchy, economic development, and the state in transforming gender relations in the family as well as in the larger society. Thus, we begin by examining how these fields have developed and intersected.

Sociology of the Family: From Micro- to Macro-levels

Sociologists approach the family analytically as an important institution in society. In documenting the historical development of the field,

Adams (1986) divides scientific family studies into four major periods; we add a fifth. During the "Social Darwinist" period, from 1860–1890, scholars such as Marx and Engels, using historical and cross-cultural approaches, attempted to discover the origin of the family and how it evolved into its current form. During the "Social Reform" period, from 1890–1920, scholars concerned with problems families faced as a result of industrialization and urbanization, particularly in the United States and Western Europe, produced policy-oriented family research. The "Scientific Study" period, from 1920–1950, saw a proliferation of research on family behavior, resulting in a large body of empirical data. During the "Attention to Family Theory" period, from 1950–1970, Adams (1986) and Christensen (1964) both argue that family scholars engaged in systematic theory building, while at the same time continuing to produce a considerable amount of empirical research. Some of the new theories, especially the more macro-sociological ones, demanded a return to comparative research.

From the early 1970s to the present, family studies has entered what we call the "Family Diversity" period. Although scholars have often considered the family as women's domain, feminists have criticized the sociology of the family for its androcentric nature reflecting primarily a white, male, and middle-class bias (Bernard 1987; Thorne and Yalom 1992). These critics argue for making women the central focus of analysis to explicate both their objective social conditions and their subjective experience (Hartsock 1987; Smith 1979 and 1987). Recent studies that look at families from the standpoint of women have brought to public attention new issues, such as control of sexuality and reproduction, housework as unpaid labor, and several forms of the victimization of women, revealing hidden problems and providing new insight into old issues about the family as a social institution.

Feminist critiques also point to the ethnocentric nature of family sociology, which tends to ignore the diversity of family patterns in the United States as well as in other countries (Beneria and Roldan 1987; Collins 1991; Baca Zinn 1990). Challenging sexist, racist, and class-biased assumptions, women of color scholars unravelled the myths of monolithic, static, undifferentiated, and consensus-based family patterns (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1988; Dill 1988; Jones 1985; Thorne and Yalom 1992). By incorporating race, class, gender, and culture into the study of families, these scholars provide a fuller understanding of the diversity of family forms, of the historical and cross-cultural development of these variations, and of their close linkage to forms of social inequality. Systematically integrating hierarchies of race and class into the reconstruction of a more inclusive family theory remains a challenge faced by scholars today.

Feminists relate diversity in family patterns to macro-social forces, leading scholars to look outside the boundaries of the family as a social institution. First, the interconnectedness between the family and other social institutions needs to be studied from a historical perspective. As Tilly and Scott (1978) have argued, the United States' shift from a subsistence-agriculture, family-based economy to an industrial, family-wage and family-consumer economy has had profound effects on family structure and women's work, which belie the general belief that the spheres of family and work are separate ones. Feminists, after scrutinizing the nature of women's work, have redefined the concept of work to include unpaid household labor, volunteer work, and emotional labor. They are also reexamining the nature of home-based production and uncovering other "hidden" work (Bose, Feldberg, and Sokoloff 1987; Christensen 1987; Daniels 1987; Hochschild 1983). These analyses relate both the visible and invisible work associated in the family to gender stratification and the capitalist mode of production outside the family.

Scholars have begun to develop analyses that transcend divisions such as "family and work" and "private and public spheres." We have identified three theoretical models which describe the relationship between family and work: a "separate sphere" model, a "spillover effects" model, and a "system interdependence" model (Chow and Berheide 1988). The separate sphere model regards family and work as separate systems, seeing the family as a domestic haven in which women are primarily homemakers who provide expressive and emotional support and work as a public arena in which men are the primary breadwinners who fulfill material family needs (Parsons and Bales 1955). Recognizing permeability between the work and family systems and the simultaneous membership of individuals in both, the spillover effects model often stresses asymmetrically the effects of work on family life rather than the reverse influence of family on work life, especially in the case of employed women (Crouter 1984).

The third model emphasizes the mutual interdependence of the family and work systems, viewing each system as having independent as well as joint effects, directly and indirectly, on the other and its members (Ferree 1990; Gerstel and Gross 1987; Jones 1985; Kanter 1977; Pleck 1977; Sokoloff 1980). Failure to see this interconnectedness results from "functionalist fixation" reflected in the separate sphere and spillover effects models, which clearly translate gender into two distinct terrains, roles, and sets of sex-typed characteristics, one for men and one for women. A "separate but not equal" principle implicit in these two models gives primacy to work over family, to production over reproduction, and to instrumentality over expressiveness; conse-

quently, both models serve as ideological supports maintaining the existing patriarchal system. Overall family research and theory has moved away from the separate sphere and spillover models to the system interdependence model for it offers a more profound understanding of the complexity of social realities in the United States as well as in the Third World.

Critical of family sociology at both the individual and the societal levels, feminist analyses underscore the importance of understanding linkages between micro-interaction within families and macro-structural forces by showing how both relate to social inequality. Feminists question various forms of inequalities between men and women, such as: the distribution of power and resources; control of sexuality and reproduction; and responsibility for household labor, childcare, and productive activities in the formal and informal economies. Rather than taking such inequalities for granted, recent feminist analyses challenge traditional family theories by explaining how social institutions (including the family, the economy, the state, education, and religion) maintain the ideological and material bases for patriarchy, thereby perpetuating gender inequality (Andersen 1993; Chafetz 1990; Hartmann 1981; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1988).

The desire to eliminate barriers to all forms of equality leads feminists to translate their theories into collective action. Except in the welfare and poverty fields, policy research in the United States has just begun to focus on the role of the state and its relation to gender and the family (Diamond 1983; Hyde and Essex 1991; Piven 1984). Recent research in the United States has examined the role of the government in collaboration with corporations in shaping family policies such as the Child Care and Development Block Grant legislation that Congress finally passed in 1990, as well as the Family and Medical Leave Act that Congress passed and President Clinton signed in 1993 after President Bush vetoed it twice. This book examines the implications of family research for social policy.

Women and Development: From Macro- to Micro-levels

At the outset, women and development focused on changing the priorities and practices of development assistance agencies and gradually became incorporated into research and university curricula (Tinker 1990). After two decades, this field now encompasses the ideas and goals of advocates, practitioners, and scholars from the developing countries of the South and the industrialized countries of the North, who work together to influence government policies, to design

programs, and to advance knowledge that benefits women worldwide.³

Fernandez Kelly (1989) identified several major perspectives in economic development. Based on neo-classical economics and mainstream sociology, modernization theorists argue that poor countries need to adopt the economic, political, and cultural patterns of the industrialized countries to become "developed." This theory was attacked in the 1960s for implying Third World "backwardness" and for failing to indicate the deleterious effects of colonialism and imperialism. Neo-Marxist critics, among others, denounced modernization for ignoring the exploitation of "less developed" countries by industrialized ones.

The proponents of "dependency" theory articulate the "longstanding 'unequal exchanges' between advanced and less-developed nations" (Fernandez Kelly 1989, p. 614). Its critics point out that it tends to see Third World countries as homogeneous entities without much differentiation in economic growth and standards of living among and within them. This theory also tends to view these countries as influenced by a monolith of imperialist and advanced industrialized nations. World-system theorists tend to over-simplify the positions of countries in the global economy by using the taxonomic divisions of "core," "periphery," and "semi-periphery." Finally, the latest approach to development focuses on the new international division of labor, examining the movement of capital investments of multinational corporations throughout the global economy.

Feminist critiques have made specific contributions to the field of women and development. First, their analyses question the concept of development itself as one shaped by the primary value Western thought places on rationality and by the capitalist notion of linear progress in economic development. Boserup (1970) challenges the assumption that societies following the path of Western industrialization will improve their standards of living and thus benefit women.

Various studies have documented how the gendered nature of the development process and practices limits their positive effects on women's lives. The issue, as Rogers (1983) explains, involves "problems of perception" when Western male experts regard women as merely mothers/wives and fail to see them as participants in economic sectors, thus excluding them from the development process. "While [women] represent 50 percent of the world population and one-third of the official labor force, they [account] for nearly two-thirds of all working hours, receive only one-tenth of the world income and own less than one percent of world property" (United Nations 1980, p. 5). Women throughout the world consistently work harder and longer hours than men (United Nations 1991).