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Introduction: Intersectional Perspectives in Policy History

Recent scholarship in women and gender history and the history of sexuality is transforming not only the categories of citizenship but also how we think about policy history. Major prizewinners, such as Alice Kessler Harris's *In Pursuit of Equity* (2001) and Margot Canady's *The Straight State* (2009), mark the centrality of gender and queer analysis to the policy project.[1] They are in keeping with the emergence of intersectionality as a reigning paradigm in feminist approaches across the disciplines. As political scientist Angie-Marie Hancock explains, "The term 'intersectionality' refers to *both* a normative theoretical argument *and* an approach to conducting empirical research that emphasizes the interaction of categories of difference (including but not limited to race, gender, class, and sexual orientation)."[2]

As a theoretical argument, intersectionality privileges the distinctions within political, social, and cultural categories, like men and women, to argue that identity is not additive, fixed, or multiple but rather that the coming together of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other factors creates distinct wholes. Although highlighting identity, it contains an implicit critique of identity politics precisely because it questions unitary approaches to group formation. Operationalizing complex or melded statuses has proven a challenge in fields dependent on large data sets in which the units of collection reflect singular characteristics like race or gender but not racialized gender. Although faced with quantitative materials with similar limitations, historians more successfully have applied the concept of intersectionality to analyzing the making, implementation, and consequences of law and social policy.

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As I previously noted in this journal, we can think of gender in policy history in terms of mobilization for or against legislation (and the administration of policies); as women or men as elected officials and members of administrations who inhabit such identities; and as the embodied meanings expressed through and by law and social policy.[3] Although the overall number of articles we might classify as women's, gender, or queer history is small, the *Journal of Policy History* increasingly has addressed standard topics in women's policy history, such as the Equal Rights Amendment, Title VII, Section 213 of the Economy Act of 1932, and the U.S. Women's Bureau. The journal has considered aspects of social welfare from various perspectives, including gender. Only recently has gender as a form of analysis, and not merely as a variable, appeared in the journal, most notably Sascha Auerbach's discussion of hiring the "right sort of man" for British educational inspectors, a critique of maternalism in late Victorian reform, and Jonathan Bell's uncovering of the significance of the homophile movement to the building of California's liberal Democratic Party in the 1960s, an extension of previous work on social rights.[4]

The articles in this special issue build upon this foundation through the practice of intersectional analysis. They are revisions of papers presented at the 2010 meetings of the Organization of American Historians and the Policy History Conference. They focus on gender, manhood as well as womanhood, and race, class, and other identity categories. Some problematize taken-for-granted notions of normality through the lens of queer theory and disability studies, uncovering how assumptions about heterosexuality and the able body shape policy solutions to social problems. In focusing on various levels of governance as well as the classification and regulation of gendered and sexed bodies, they insist that we expand the boundaries of policy history in terms of players, tactics, and sites of policymaking. They combine institutional with intellectual or discursive approaches and legislative with administrative analysis. They suggest the fluidity of the very categories highlighted by intersectional theory.

These articles range from the 1930s into the 1980s. A number remind us that policy intellectuals, political actors, and social movement activists living through the 1970s may still have seen that decade as belonging to the long 1960s more than as a prelude to a more conservative political era. That is, while historians are deep in unearthing the 1970s as "rightward bound," as the turning point for neoliberal globalization and the devolution of the New Deal order, we are reminded that rights discourse did not go away, nor did social movements stop shouting as they sought to push government to implement laws that they had a hand in passing. And feminism itself was far more diverse than standard histories give credit.[5]

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What follows represents approaches in the field today that offer both fresh looks on older questions and new archives and topics. In tracing evolving rationales for foster care, Catherine Rymph complicates understanding of the gendered expectations—male breadwinning and female caregiving—driving child welfare policy. Both voluntary agencies and public departments hoped that New Deal security measures would turn the removal of children from their parents into a temporary placement with another family. This last resort was for failed and immoral families, defined as pathological. But this multilevel investigation of federal policy, state funding, private implementation, and individual crisis reveals the inadequacy of the actual services, despite the visions of child welfare professionals for foster care. Reliance on need-based welfare monies to pay for social services tarnished recipients and jeopardized funding itself. Thus even when poverty no longer stood as a reason for child removal, at a time when immorality or incapacity became the major justification, most foster children were poor. The racialization of poverty further stigmatized those caught in the foster-care system. Rymph's study of the evolution of foster care shows the historical power of a grounded gender analysis for explicating the injuries of class. To understand policy outcomes, especially the overdetermined racial manifestations of poverty, she reminds, we must follow the money trail.

The problem of dependency that pervaded discussions of failed families haunted rehabilitation programs directed toward disabled veterans. In contrast to the G.I. Bill, which offered educational choice to the honorably discharged, Public Law 16 pushed World War II veterans disabled in service to their country into vocational programs. Sarah F. Rose uncovers the assumptions behind this focus on labor-market reentry. Seeking to renew the capacity for breadwinning, programs for disabled veterans reflected long-held notions about gender, disability, and independence. The opening up of the University of Illinois to these new students, Rose documents, served as a key moment in the history of disability policy. Students and their advocates unsuccessfully lobbied for access, but the politics of higher education and state services finally led administrators at the flagship campus to accommodate a small number. This history further illuminates how an alternative conception of disability, one that demanded institutional accessibility and challenged the dependency designation, still relied on dominant understandings of masculinity to prove the worthiness of students. In connecting gender to disability, Rose enriches the concept of intersectionality as well as expands the interpretative categories of policy history.

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Masculinity also takes center stage in Kevin Mumford's exploration of the production and reception of one of the most prominent policy documents in the history of social welfare. His queer reading of the Moynihan Report highlights the concern with black male passivity and manhood—and not merely men's employment—that pervades Moynihan's analysis of the black family and its gender norms. By reconstructing the research that went into its formulation, Mumford classifies the report as a liberal brief that meant to present problems amenable to policy solutions. By situating the report in the context of its sources as well as its subsequent reception by black sociologists and psychologists, he illuminates the process of horizontal displacement, that is, how one outsider group attempts to elevate its status by denigrating another, in this case, the homosexuals within. He thus shatters the very black essentialism that Moynihan himself questioned. This balanced assessment demonstrates the power of tools usually deployed by intellectual historians for illuminating Ur texts of policy history. It offers a model for analyzing the unstated presence of sexuality in policy discourse.

In a related intellectual move focused on the ideas as well as the activity of African American women, Premilla Nadasen reconsiders a landmark policy change: the 1974 amendments that placed domestic workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The *Journal of Policy History* published more than fifteen years ago the generative article on this topic: Phyllis Palmer's "Outside the Law: Agricultural and Domestic Workers Under the Fair Labor Standards Act."[6] Palmer analyzed the politics of exclusion during the 1930s and then described the coalition of white professional feminists and domestic worker advocates that lobbied for inclusion in the 1970s. Now Nadasen has brought into the conversation the policy insights and voices of domestic workers themselves that highlight the gains—and limits—of basing social citizenship through labor. Domestic workers recognized their contribution to employer households as significant, but congressmen undervalued reproductive labor—both the unpaid labor of the housewife and the paid work of the domestic. Yet the very work that legislators dismissed as worthy of labor standards provided a basis for a race- and class-bridging coalitional politics among women. Drawing upon citizenship theory, Nadasen explores the meanings of this policy battle against shifts in the structure of the job, the demographics of the workforce, and discourses of race, gender, respect, and rights. Changing circumstances, however, have made this policy victory of more than three decades ago unstable and contingent, with exclusion from social citizenship and labor rights now resting on the racialized immigrant status of the workforce.

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Claire Bond Potter similarly connects demands for citizenship rights to social movements. In comparing the tactics and strategies of feminists with gay rights activists during the Carter administration, she complicates the meaning of "insider" and "outsider" in the policy process. Despite their standing within the Democratic Party, with one of their own heading up the new Office of Public Liaison, feminists became confrontational when Carter announced his support for the Hyde Amendment. Thinking that history was on their side, they fought his movement away from New Deal liberalism, bruising his presidency without advancing their cause. The National Gay Task Force, in contrast, pursued the quietism of the earlier homophile movement rather than the boisterousness of 1970s grassroots activists and sexual rebels. It worked through networks within the government, limited demands to nondiscrimination within the civil service, and played up its reasonableness and respectability. In an important sense, the tactics of the NGTF fit into an emerging neoliberal milieu valuing meritocracy and individual achievement, while that of Democratic Party feminists did not. In this context, Carter's "malaise" speech stemmed as much from the challenge of implementing human rights at home as from crisis abroad. By turning to the politics of gender and sexuality, both women's and gay rights, Potter illuminates domestic policymaking during the Carter years in a fresh and vibrant manner.

Marisa Chappell further shows how feminist analysis illuminates a standard topic in policy history: the inside jockeying within presidential administrations between various advisers, philosophies, and political constituencies. After Sarah Palin's historic vice-presidential run, some conservative women again embrace the term "feminist," making Chappell's discussion of the free-market feminism of the Reagan years most timely. The finding that the Reagan staff viewed the "gender gap" as a problem reminds us that nothing substitutes for close archival research in revisioning the past. That free-market feminism, which promoted benefits for women from Reagan's tax, spending, and regulatory policies, could not address race and class gaps between women hardly surprises. Evoking key tropes of feminism—"choice" and "equality of opportunity"—administration feminists fought against the politics of antifeminism, but did so in ways totally consistent with their dismissal of government intervention to right the wrongs of market inequality. "Women" did not mean all women, but rather became reduced to those women more likely to vote Republican.

Chappell's intersectional perspective, and her consideration of policy in light of a shifting political economy, highlights what all of these articles share: an interrogation of policy history that in expanding the players reinforces the

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commitment of the field to understanding policy development in all its complexity.

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NOTES

1. Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 2001); Margot Canady, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, 2009).

2. Angie-Marie Hancock, "When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm," *Perspectives on Politics* 5 (March 2007): 63–64.

3. Eileen Boris, "Politicizing Women's History, Engendering Policy History," *Journal of Policy History* 21 (2009): 432–33; Boris, "On the Importance of Naming: Gender, Race, and the Writing of Policy History," *Journal of Policy History* 17 (2005): 72–92.

4. Sascha Auerbach, "'A Right Sort of Man': Gender, Class Identity, and Social Reform in Late Victorian Britain," *Journal of Policy History* 22 (2010): 64–94; Jonathan Bell, "'To Strive for Economic and Social Justice': Welfare, Sexuality, and Liberal Politics in San Francisco in the 1960s," *Journal of Policy History* 22 (2010): 193–225.

5. For example, Julian Zelizer and Bruce Shulman, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, 2008).

6. Phyllis Palmer, "Outside the Law: Agricultural and Domestic Workers Under the Fair Labor Standards Act," *Journal of Policy History* 7 (1995): 416–40.

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