

## **Feminist Institutionalism and Feminist Political Economy: A Dialogue on Gender, the State and Representation<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

The relationship between gender and institutions has long been an interest of feminist political scientists seeking to understand how power and inequality are produced and reproduced through governmental and nongovernmental structures and processes. Recently, feminist institutionalism (FI) has provided most of the thinking on gender and state institutions. While Driscoll and Krook (2009) claim that few feminists frame their research in relation to institutionalism, I believe that institutionalism is the dominant frame in feminist political science and policy studies.

I argue that FI has made some valuable contributions to the literature on gender, representation, and state feminism. However, it suffers from a lack of serious attention paid to feminist political economy (FPE). For its part, FPE has said very little about the workings of state institutions and policy machinery. Thus, I seek to initiate a dialogue between FI and FPE that can inform a developing feminist political economy of representation. I begin by outlining the main ideas, strengths, and weaknesses of FI. Then, I point to some key insights that can be taken from FPE. Finally, I suggest that the concept of gender regime, which incorporates the assets of both FI and FPE, is most useful for analyzing women's representation.

### **Feminist Institutionalism**

There has been growing attention to exploring FI as an analytical framework. In 2006, an international collaboration called the Feminist Institutional International Network (FIIN) was launched (Lovenduski 2011), followed by a June 2009 edition of the *Politics & Gender* journal dedicated to FI, and a new edited volume published in 2011 entitled, *Gender, Politics, and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism*. The goal is to "integrate gender and neo-institutionalist perspectives" (Krook and Mackay 2011 1).

#### *What is FI?*

According to Kenny, the "basic premise of new institutionalism is that institutions do 'matter'" (2007 92). Chappell argues that feminist scholarship on the state has been preoccupied with ideology and diverging feminist views of the state as explanatory factors, and she would like to bring "a stronger institutional focus to bear on feminist political science" (2002 6). Therefore, some have looked to new institutionalism or neoinstitutionalism, bringing about an "institutional turn in feminist political science" (Krook and Mackay 2011 2) aimed at bridging feminism and new institutionalism (Kenny 2007).

There are theoretical and methodological divisions within neoinstitutionalism, so there are at least four different forms of institutionalism with which feminists are engaging: rational choice, sociological institutionalism, discursive institutionalism, and historical institutionalism, (Krook and Mackay 2011; Lovenduski 2011). Feminists disagree about whether all of these are equally promising, with some preferring a synthesis (Krook and Mackay 2011), but many showing an affinity for the historical variant (Lovenduski 2011; Waylen 2011).

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Very briefly, rational choice focuses on the behaviour of micro-level actors to explain the origins and outcomes of institutions at the macro-level. Institutions are evaluated in terms of the incentives created for cooperation or competition. Some feminists are particularly sceptical of the assumptions and individualistic orientation of rational choice orientation.<sup>2</sup>

Sociological institutionalism is associated with organizational theory and is primarily concerned with critiquing the institutions and processes of Weberian bureaucracy. It moves between the micro and macro levels and challenges notions of institutional rationality and efficiency by uncovering the myths, cultural norms, symbols, interest, and social context that work to legitimize institutions (Mackay et al. 2009).

Discursive institutionalism spans the micro- to the macro-level. It is fixated on the influence of ideas and discourses on actors, institutions, and power relations. Kulawik (2009) sees discursive institutionalism as a bringing together of historical institutionalism and discourse analysis.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, historical institutionalism is based on the assumption that “the role of actors within a political system can be understood only by investigating, over time, the nature of the institutions within that system” (Chappell 2002 8). Some of the central features of a historical institutionalist approach are that it disaggregates the state, it takes a broad definition of political institutions, studies the interaction between institutions, and takes an “embedded and dynamic view of state” (Chappell 2002 8). Waylen posits that historical institutionalism is best able to advance our understanding of structure and agency, and to explain why change occurs (2011). For Chappell one of its main strengths is its ability to comprehend social behaviour by examining institutions over time (2002). Smith adds that historical institutionalism views “state institutions, as well as state policies, as potentially independent variables that structure political conflict and shape the mobilization of social forces” (1999 14).

Notwithstanding these variations, together, they form a distinct neoinstitutionalist approach (Krook and Mackay 2011, and there are certain characteristics of neoinstitutionalism that some feminist scholars have found especially useful. They have appreciated the expansive definition of institutions, the focus on the ways institutions shape political behaviour, and the importance of comparing institutions across time and place (Chappell 2002; Lovenduski 2011). The concept of path dependency, from historical institutionalism, has resonated with many feminist political scientists, interested in how initial choices about policy affect future ones and how policy legacies affect policy change for women (Chappell 2002; Krook and Mackay 2011; Kenny 2007). Kenny (2007) points to several ways in which neoinstitutionalism and feminist political science

share a number of common preoccupations. Both share an understanding that seemingly neutral institutional processes and practices are in fact embedded in hidden norms and values, privileging certain groups over others. Both are centrally concerned with explanations of institutional creation, continuity, resistance and change. Both emphasise the *historicity* of power relations, opening up the possibility of institutional resistance and power reversals (2007 95).

Nevertheless, feminists have stressed that neoinstitutionalism as it currently stands, is inadequate, as it does not account for the gendered nature of institutions (Lovenduski 2011; Kenny 2007). Neoinstitutionalism has as much, if not more, to learn from feminist political science, which demonstrates that institutions are not neutral – they have a “normative element” (Lovenduski 2011 viii). Therefore, FI is about bringing a gender lens to bear on neoinstitutionalism, and in doing so, makes some significant contributions.

### *Contributions*

FI poses a challenge to mainstream political science and public policy studies and raises some questions with which good social science research must contend. Krook and Mackay (2011) outline some of the starting queries for feminist institutionalists:

<sup>2</sup> Kenny and Mackay (2009) conclude, for instance that “Amanda Driscoll and Mona Lena Krook’s bold ambition to create a feminist rational choice institutionalism seems likely to flounder because of epistemological incompatibilities” (273).

<sup>3</sup> For a good explanation of the difference between discursive institutionalist and poststructuralist approaches to discourse analysis, see Rönnblom and Bacchi, 2011.

how are formal structures and informal 'rules of the game' gendered? How do political institutions affect the daily lives of women and men, respectively? By what processes and mechanisms are such institutions produced, both reflecting and reproducing social systems, including gendered power relations? How do institutions constrain actors, ideas, and interests? Finally, what is the gendered potential for institutional innovation, reform, and change in pursuit of gender justice, and what are its limits? (1).

Sawer and Vickers (2010) also highlight the need to ask "how such political architecture has affected women's citizenship and whether women were active in its design" (17).

Tackling these issues is vital to exposing the gender insensitivity of neoinstitutionalism. In general, neoinstitutionalism lacks a gender analysis of power, discourse, and interests (Grace 2011; Mackay et al 2009). Mackay et al. see FI as a way to "remedy some of the difficulties associated with certain other institutionalisms, such as an overemphasis on a narrow conception of the 'rational' actor and on formal institutions and practices" (Mackay et al. 2009 254). Overall, as Chappell puts it, FI can "undo the taken-for-grantedness' of institutions, to show how much of what is presented as 'neutral' is in fact gendered" (Chappell 2002 11).

For instance, FI has problematized the concept of path dependency, showing how policy change is a gendered process, with "gendered legacies," and distinct obstacles to *feminist* policy change (Mackay 2011 187; Grace 2011). Feminist institutionalists have sought a "middle notion of path dependence" (Waylen 2011 151) that can capture the real constraints for women in the policy process, while also leaving room for agency. Kenny (2011) points out that "gender norms and gender relations are particularly 'sticky' institutional legacies with which to contend, but also that gender – at both the symbolic level as well as the level of day-to-day interaction – is primarily a means through which institutional reform and innovation can be resisted" (40).

FI establishes some foundational premises from which to examine institutions, the foremost being that all institutions are gendered. As Grace (2011) explains, "[a] gendered institution means that gender is present in the 'processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power' within that site" (99). She concludes that "just as HI [historical institutionalism] makes the case that institutions matter, FI makes a stronger case that they matter quite differently for women" (Grace 2011 111).

These insights contribute not only to neoinstitutionalism, but also to feminism. Some feminist approaches have downplayed the need to theorize the state (Allen 1990), raising tactical concerns (Brodie 1995). In answering Skocpol's call to "bring the state back in," FI is redirecting attention to "institutions as a major determining variable shaping feminist strategies" (Chappell 2002 8). With FI primarily, though not exclusively, focused on formal institutions, research at the micro and meso levels of the state has proliferated (Driscoll and Krook 2009) and has emphasized variations across and within states (Krook and Mackay 2011).

One of the consequences of this shift has been to generate new thinking about change and agency. This is fitting for FI, which is characterized by a normative commitment to social change for women. Mackay (2011) insists that "[i]nstitutions are not just a constraint but also may act as strategic resources" and "may be regenerated" (185-186). Likewise, Chappell (2002) highlights "how gender norms influence the political opportunity and constraint structures faced by feminists, and ... illustrates when and how feminists can unsettle the entrenched norms in order to use institutions for their own ends" (11). FI has clearly made a positive impact on neoinstitutionalism and feminism by pushing both to reconsider how they view state institutions. Yet there are some shortcomings in FI.

### *Weaknesses*

Here, I will outline three weaknesses in the FI approach: its analysis of power, its conceptualization of change and agency,<sup>4</sup> and its insular point of reference.

One of the strengths of FI, its attention to what is happening at the micro and meso levels of institutions, is also one of its weaknesses. Stemming from neoinstitutionalism, FI shares its aversion to social theory. As Smith (2008) explains, "[p]recisely because historical institutionalism focuses on the

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<sup>4</sup> Feminist institutionalists themselves are aware of these weaknesses. Mackay (2011) and Lovenduski (2011) recognize the need for a better understanding of change and agency.

mid-range level, it does not have a theory of history or an over-all theory of social power” (21). Therefore, Graefe (2007) posits that

[a]lthough historical institutionalism may look at institutions as products of struggle, it generally cannot theorize that struggle since it does not come down on a particular theory of society, be it a pluralist one or one structured by social relations such as gender or class. It seeks to ground explanation and determination in a limited range of political (and occasionally collective bargaining) institutions, and thus consciously sidelines consideration of the contribution of deeper economic and social structures (to say nothing of agency) to policy variation in time and space (33).

This reluctance to examine wider structures of power is especially problematic for understanding marginalized social relations, including gender.

Early feminist work saw the cause of gender inequality in macro terms, as systemic and structural, through the lens of patriarchal states and institutionalized male power (Barrett 1980; Ferguson 1984; MacKinnon 1989). For FI, this is too deterministic and monolithic, failing to distinguish between different types of state institutions (Krook and Mackay 2011). While bringing valuable nuance to some feminist interpretations, FI scholars have also oversimplified this structural analysis. For instance, Chappell (2002) rejects conspiratorial notions of patriarchal institutions, which she associates with the radical and socialist feminism of MacKinnon, Ferguson, Eisenstein and Brown. Chappell stresses that the state does not always operate to oppress women, is not inherently patriarchal and does not represent “only male interests” (11). The problem is that none of them really make such crude claims. They actually emphasize struggle and contradictions. In fact, they would likely agree with Chappell’s own conclusion that we should “see the individual institutions that comprise it [the state] as ‘culturally marked as masculine’ and as operating largely as the institutionalization of the power of men” (2002 11).

Where they might differ, is that they demand a more comprehensive theory of “the power of men” and the mechanisms by which it becomes and remains institutionalized. This does not rule out the reality that there will be differences within and across within states, but it does require a theory about how power operates at the societal, structural level. Having aligned with neoinstitutionalism, FI is relinquishing a central feature of feminist political science – the desire to comprehend how power functions. Consequently, much of FI work errs on the side of description over analysis and does not attempt to answer the ‘why’ question.

Take, for example, some of the FI research on federalism and multilevel governance. Much of it outlines the advantages and disadvantages for women, and demonstrates that the ways in which power is divided between levels, or scales of government, is gendered. Grace (2011) provides that in Canada

[t]he principles upon which federalism was established at Confederation in 1867 have had a lasting impact on the way in which federal and provincial governments have responded to women’s policy objectives ... The division of powers also set in place normative ideas that women’s issues were best left to the local jurisdiction, which became further institutionalized during welfare state development (99-100).

But this does not tell us *why* and *how* these ideas became dominant – what were the relations of power that put this into place? Sawyer and Vickers (2010) do stipulate that federations and their constitutional division of powers were created before women had political rights, which is a partial answer. Yet an explanation, such as that from Cameron, elaborated below, goes much further in teasing out the role of national identity and social reproduction. Alas, this work has had little impact on FI. Brennan (2010) also shows that in Australia the constitution reflected the public/private divide.

As another case in point, Chappell (2002) introduces the interesting concept of the “logic of appropriateness” (11) to draw attention to the ways in which value systems and gender norms are attached to institutions and limit what is possible. Citing Chappell, Mackay et al. (2009) indicate that

[h]er analysis of the ‘logic of appropriateness’ that underlies the norm of bureaucratic neutrality demonstrates that it is profoundly gendered. Indeed, using evidence from Australia, Canada and the UK, she argues that the more embedded and enforced the norm of neutrality is, the harder it will be for feminists to advance ‘biased’ claims of gender equality (259).

Elsewhere, I have shown that such expectations about neutrality are certainly an obstacle for state feminists (Findlay 2008). However, is this 'logic' merely a set of ideas? Whose ideas are they? How did they become dominant? Many feminist institutionalists reject theorists such as MacKinnon and Ferguson who use patriarchy as a theoretical frame. Yet when MacKinnon (1989) notes that "rationality is measured by point-of-viewlessness" (162), she is drawing attention to the crucial point made by femocrats, that their knowledge is considered not to be 'expertise,' but rather, ideology, and that this process of value-making does not occur outside of social relations. Surely a central factor in defining which policy actors and options are 'appropriate' is capitalism and the relations of production and social reproduction. In a capitalist economy, the range of 'acceptable' policies is limited (Graefe 2007), and unequal gender relations demands "theorizing the agency of female actors as bounded" (Mackay 2011 190).

This leads to the second concern I have with FI – the way it conceptualizes the relationship between state institutions and society in terms of change and agency. Neoinstitutionalism and FI are responses to society-centred perspectives such as pluralism and neo-Marxism. Smith (2008) holds that these approaches "assumed that the state's actions were driven by social forces, that state decisions reflected the power of the dominant forces in society, and that political institutions played almost no independent role in shaping policy and political outcomes" (20). In contrast, neoinstitutionalism highlights "the independent causal power of states and state institutions" (Smith 2008 21). FI also attributes significant autonomy to institutions. Krook and Mackay (2011) submit that, "[t]o say that an institution is gendered means that constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture or 'logic' of political institutions, rather than 'existing out in society or fixed within individuals which they then bring whole to the institution'" (6). Here, institutions can drive change independently from society.

Portraying state institutions as having minds of their own, and distinct personalities, attributes too much autonomy to the state, and sets the state outside of the society in which it exists. Eschewing society-centric stances, some feminist institutionalists go too far in the other direction, where social forces are tangential. Consider that Lovenduski (2011) identifies the focal point of FI to be the action "between and within" state institutions (viii). What happens on the outside gets left out.

Again, some of the FI literature on federalism and multilevel governance is indicative. As noted above, there is a growing strand of work that asks whether federalism and multilevel governance (MLG) are good or bad for women (Findlay 2011). One line of FI thinking views MLG pessimistically as a major obstacle to feminist progress. Because in many federations, women had little to no influence over the constitutional division of powers, and constitutions are difficult to change (Sawer and Vickers 2010 4), MLG is said to stall progressive policy change. Grace (2011) shows how federalism has allowed for "blame avoidance" in Canadian child care policy. This, combined with the exclusionary, closed-door style of intergovernmental relations in jurisdictions like Canada, creates significant difficulties for women's activism (Sawer and Vickers 2010; Grace 2011).

Yet this can lead to an over-emphasis on MLG as the *cause* of the challenges for feminist advocacy. Grace (2011) considers federalism to be a chief limitation for feminist policy, since "[f]ederal government elites have often been preoccupied with responding to provincial concerns to the detriment of including policy communities and alternative policy prescriptions" (101). Undoubtedly an accurate observation, it nonetheless assumes this would be different in the absence of federalism, which is doubtful in Canada's liberal, residual welfare regime. Gray (2010) warns that MLG should not be viewed in isolation from political party conflicts and powerful interests. Similarly, Chappell (2002) quotes an insight from Graham White that "the most marginalised will be as marginal in a federal system as they are anywhere else" (168). This does not mean that MLG is irrelevant, but that it should be placed in the larger social, political, and economic context.

It also portrays MLG in rather static terms. Research from Australia reveals that "[w]omen have contested the division of responsibilities between the federal and State governments in a number of policy areas and actively attempted to reshape the contours of policy responsibility" (Brennan 2010 37). Also, Chappell cautions that "similar political architecture in different countries does not necessarily produce the same opportunity structures" (Gray 2010 27). For example, a centralization of power can happen in both federal and unitary systems, and federalism can allow for both progressive and regressive policy innovation (Gray 2010 23). Therefore, institutions are not the defining issue, it is power relations.

In order to develop a thorough feminist understanding of MLG, the analysis must reach beyond neo-institutionalism and the fixation on institutions over the systems of power relations in which they are

embedded. This calls into question the institutionalist orientation that is reluctant to point to the balance of social forces as an explanation. It also makes for awkward treatments of agency.

Neoinstitutionalism is weak in dealing with agency (Lovenduski 2011), so FI continues to grapple with this question, and in the process, seems to be oscillating between ascribing too little and too much. In order to understand impediments to women's movement activity, many feminist institutionalists supplement neoinstitutionalism with the additional tool of political opportunity structure (POS) (Chappell 2002). POS draws from barriers research, and holds that "[t]he nature of the political architecture affects how women organise to advance gender claims and where they focus their attention" (Sawer and Vickers 2010 10). However, POS has been criticized for being reactive (Vickers 1997), portraying the women's movement as merely responding to external constraints. When Chappell (2002) puts forward that "[w]hat neoinstitutionalism offers, is a framework that highlights the independent effect that *the pattern of interaction between various institutions within a given policy* can have on the behaviour of social actors" (8), there is a one-way relationship, with limited space for social actors to influence institutions or to change political opportunities.

Thus, in response to the rigidity and confinement of path dependency and political opportunity structure, some have sought to accentuate women's agency. Chappell uses a more flexible version of POS, which she describes as being "interested in how political actors can both take advantage of existing opportunities and create new ones" (2002 9). Others have also tried to shed a more optimistic light on women's political options, with Sawer and Vickers (2010) stressing "the institutional choices available to women in the world of politics" (3). In the process, FI swings to the other extreme, toward choice inflation.

Let us return once again to federalism and MLG as a case in point. Unlike the pessimists above, some feminist institutionalists are quite optimistic about the political opportunities provided by MLG, highlighting the democratic benefits of devolution, the "subsidiarity principle" and local governance, the multiple entry points for social movements and the potential for policy experimentation at local, subnational, national, and international levels (Sawer and Vickers 2010). If one government is unsympathetic to a citizenship claim, it is argued, women in MLG systems have a second resort and political leverage (Gray 2010; Chappell 2002; Brennan 2010). Some even maintain that MLG permits a form of "dual citizenship," "double-democracy," "federalism advantage" or "forum shopping" (Sawer and Vickers 2010 5; Gray 2010 21; Vickers 2011 129).

In her work on the nonprofit sector, Kathy Brock (2010) has distinguished between descriptive and normative classifications of the relationship between the state and civil society. The optimists above present a description of the options available to feminist activists in their interaction with states, but offer little judgment about whether these options are adequate, or what specific configuration of institutions would be more desirable for women's equality. The optimists remain committed to a neo-institutionalist approach that fails to account for the gendered democratic deficits across institutions at all levels of government. Smith (2010) maintains that

traditional approaches to the study of political institutions can be used to provide foundational insights into the dynamics of change for social movements based on gender or sexual orientation. However, these approaches do not assist us in understanding how institutions themselves are gendered in the sense of how institutions specifically encode gender relations; rather they treat institutions as mechanisms and tools with which activists must contend (109).

*Feminist* institutionalism certainly works to uncover the ways in which institutions are gendered, but those institutions continue to be treated largely as given -- "as mechanisms and tools" that women's movements have at their disposal. With MLG, there is a political shopping mall from which to browse and choose.

At its base, this assumes that at least one level of government is democratic, or even more democratic than the other. The idea is that feminists can shop around the political marketplace until they find a political party and/or environment that fits best. The problem with this approach is that it emphasizes quantity over quality, when "local or regional government may be weaker in federal systems" (Sawer and Vickers 2010 5). And it is quite possible to have a system where neither government is particularly democratic, or open to progressive change. What if none of the political parties or climates available are particularly receptive to feminist public policy? This in fact, more accurately captures the situation under neoliberal globalization.

Forum shopping treats collective organizing as simply a tactical 'choice' or 'rational' political calculation (Mahon et al. 2007) and requires that feminists in Canada abandon their national project

based on fundamental values of universal citizenship (Sawer and Vickers 2010). There is an immense difference between a national child care system and thirteen separate child care regimes. Sawer and Vickers (2010) also expose the gender-blindness in the notion that MLG “offers citizens the right of choice and exit,” noting women’s lack of mobility (7). In addition, forum shopping requires substantial resources, is not always easy, and in Canada, has reaped few rewards (Mahon and Collier 2010; Brennan 2010; Sawer and Vickers 2010).

Here, the rational choice influence is evident. Rational actors make calculated decisions in the absence of structural limits. There is little reflection on how “the wide range of strategies open to these activists” (Chappell 2002 7) are circumscribed by neoliberal restructuring, downsizing, and decentralization (Sawer and Vickers 2010). Hence, irrespective of their location at different ends of the agency spectrum, the MLG pessimists and optimists share in their need for greater consideration of social forces and power relations.

This might be remedied through a diversification of influences. FI has not cast its intellectual net very widely. This insularity has meant that feminist institutionalists have rarely explored or engaged with other perspectives that have been integral to feminist political science. There are only a few exceptions, where some have turned to poststructuralist and queer theory (Kenny 2007; Mackay et al. 2009; Smith 2008, 2010). And there has been little dialogue between FI and FPE. FI seems to operate largely as though FPE doesn’t even exist. Because, as Krook and Mackay (2011) point out, “[i]nnovative conceptual tools and approaches ... are needed in order to address the considerable challenges posed by the turn to institutions,” (8) it makes sense to widen the range of theoretical influences. If FI is willing to draw from rational choice, which many see as very unfriendly to feminism (Kenny and Mackay 2009), then why not give FPE a chance?

### **Feminist Political Economy**

I want to be clear that my goal is not a synthesis of FI and FPE. What I am simply suggesting is that an active exchange of ideas between FI and FPE would be fruitful. This would certainly enhance FI, but FPE would also benefit from this dialogue. FPE has provided very little analysis of questions of state institutions, governance and representation. In turning its attention to these issues, it can build on the strengths of FI, while also addressing its weaknesses. In this section, I will begin with a short description of FPE, and will then identify what I believe are the central theoretical and conceptual contributions of FPE: structural inequality; social reproduction; intersectionality; and multiscaler analysis that can be applied to the study of state institutions and representation.

#### *What is FPE?*

Maroney and Luxton (1997) refer to political economy as “a holistic theory, on the one hand, and a framework for radical action, on the other hand” (86). In other words, political economy is both a theory and a practice. The critical Canadian political economy tradition has examined the interaction of economic, social, cultural, and political forces and the distribution of social power between classes, making links between broad social change and public policy. It foregrounds “how the organization of the economy affects the shape of policy-making and policy outcomes, and suggests that variation in policies across space and time may result from differences between economies and the organization of economic actors” (Graefe 2007 21). It posits that the political and the economic are not separate and that private relations affect the public (Graefe 2007).

*Feminist* political economy (FPE) builds on this foundation. It is also heavily influenced by socialist feminism, and draws from liberalism as well (Luxton 2006 13). It has also integrated some of the tools of post-structuralism, including discourse analysis (Graefe 2007), and is increasingly informed by anti-racist and post-colonial theory. It considers “the historical intersection of gender, class, race/ethnicity, colonialism, state, politics, ideology, sexuality, and identity.” Viewing the state as “a contested terrain,” FPE asks the question, “how is a gender order ... organized by the state, and how can women organize against their subordination?” (Maroney and Luxton 1997 87). Unlike some strands of FI, which have largely dispensed with society-driven approaches FPE does not see the state as outside of social relations.

Voices from within FI have identified the need for theory building, and progressing beyond description to analysis (Mackay 2011; Krook and Mackay 2011). This is where FPE can be constructive.

Structural inequality, social reproduction, multiscaler analysis and intersectionality, are under-utilized resources that can be directed toward gendering institutions and understanding governance.

*Structural Inequality: Power, Agency and States*

The fundamental difference between FI and FPE is their theorization of power, agency, and states. In much of feminist political science and feminist theory, inequalities in power are seen as structural. However, Kulawik (2009) points out that in neoinstitutionalism, “research designs start from real-world puzzles and are problem-driven, rather than aiming at a general theory” (263). According to Kenny and Mackay (2009),

while new institutionalists acknowledge that some groups are privileged over others, they are often criticized for underplaying the importance of power relations, and power is still a relatively slippery concept in the new institutionalist literature ... Historical institutionalism is frequently criticized for its overly conservative view of institutional power relations, emphasizing the power that past decisions hold for future developments (275).

Kenny and Mackay (2009) are not entirely satisfied with these “distributional models [of power, which] are less likely to employ Foucauldian concepts of power as dispersed and constitutive” (275-76). Interestingly, they do not consider political economy approaches to power.

In so far as “historical institutionalists emphasize the importance of the overarching context” (Waylen 2009 248), they probably hold the closest affinity to FPE. However, Graefe (2007) notes that even though historical institutionalism does emphasize the importance of context and power relations, it does so without regard for structure. This distinguishes it from political economy, where inequality is structural in character, and there is a hierarchy of social forces. From this view, “[a]lthough they provide points of leverage for subordinate actors to exercise power through the state, the overall mix of institutions and projects within the state nevertheless favour the exercise of power by the relatively dominant” (Graefe 2007 28). Thus, when Kenny (2007) refers to the “continuity of the power of the powerful” (92), this sounds much more compatible with FPE than FI.

Structural inequality captures the enduring nature of hierarchies of power and challenges pluralist understandings of competing interests (Graefe 2007). Without viewing gender inequality as structural, FI risks falling into a pluralism that refuses to prioritize any explanatory factor. If, as Lovenduski (2011) says, “[f]eminist institutionalists recognize that political explanation is about ideas, interests, and institutions, which are intertwined” (ix), what drives the various emphases on these factors? Or, when Waylen (2009) stresses the role of actors in bringing about change, how is the relative power of these actors accounted for?

Furthermore, structural inequality leads us to fixate on the *consequences* of institutional arrangements for power relations. In her discussion of comparative political science, Vickers (1997) indicates that “its frameworks for comparing usually focuses on the characteristics of political systems rather than on the consequences of different kinds of systems for people’s lives” (120). Feminist variants of institutionalism go part of the way to correcting this, but not nearly far enough. As said above, they err much more on the descriptive side of Brock’s (2010) typology than the normative. For example, Chappell (2002) explains that Australian bureaucracy is more open to advocacy than in Canada, and that the Charter makes the litigation strategy more open to advocates in Canada. This describes well the respective institutional openings in the system, but provides no evaluation of the political and economic implications for marginalized groups.

Viewing power and inequality as structural does not mean that institutions are static and unchangeable. In FPE, conflict is central to understanding power and change, as “political economy stresses how rule is constantly negotiated” (Graefe 2007 25), and “[p]ublic policies act as resources and constraints, both in identity and interest construction and in the contestation of social relations. Policies can be seen as institutionalized compromises between social forces” (Graefe 2007 26). In contrast, Kenny and Mackay (2009) maintain that neoinstitutionalism bypasses conflict and contestation. Discussing sociological institutionalism, Mackay et al. (2009) underscore its “ ‘curiously bloodless’ account ... [that] misses the power clashes and contestation among actors with competing interests” (260). This can be seen in Grace’s (2011) treatment of intergovernmental relations in Canada where she refers to “the complex architecture of Canadian federalism which presents to feminist policy advocates a



wide stretch of government to navigate (federal, provincial, territorial, and sometimes municipal), and hence a broad array of political elites to persuade” (97). Assuming that feminist policy success is likely once the obstacles to persuasion can be overcome overlooks the ways in which social conflicts are mediated through intergovernmental relations in Canada. Federalism is not just an institutional arrangement to traverse; it is an expression of power relations. Therefore, FPE has a different standpoint on how change occurs and on the agency of social forces.

Mackay et al. (2009) hold that theorizing power and agency is integral to feminist analysis. FPE stresses the contradictory nature of political action. Rather than highlighting institutional inflexibility as the cause of path dependency, for FPE, agency is constricted primarily by the balance of social forces. It recognizes that change is possible, and necessary, while at the same time it maintains a realistic estimation of agency in which the weakness of movements is seen as a key explanatory factor (Graefe 2007). The concern with how institutions structure social relations does not discard agency. How political actors, including women, mobilize, organize, influence, and create change is vital. Porter (2003) elaborates that

the forms restructuring takes involve a complex relationship between the multiple forces and sites of oppression, resistance, and efforts to bring about change ... it is important to consider further the role of the *state* not only in shaping the form that restructuring has taken but also in responding to pressures to address various concerns – including gender and other equity demands – and in helping shape restructuring in ways that can build on or attenuate various inequalities (19).

Despite the prominence it gives to structural constraints, FPE sets its sights on radical and transformative change. In this sense, it draws from the traditions of socialist and radical feminism. In comparison, the goals of FI remain quite limited, settling on seizing ‘appropriate,’ and ‘promising’ opportunities within the confines of existing institutions (Chappell 2002; Kulawik 2009). These differences can be traced to competing perspectives on the state.

It is not enough to just to bring the state back in. What is more important is *how* the state is understood and analyzed. We need to theorize the state (Graefe 2007). FPE has not yet plotted a clear course, but certainly moves us in the right direction. FPE operates simultaneously at two levels. First, it seeks to understand, and explain the relationship between the state, the market and the family, often referred to as the state-market-family nexus.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, it explores the possibilities for political action that emerge, and are created, out of this nexus.

R.W. Connell is an Australian feminist theorist. She sees the state as a component of the overall structure of power relations. Connell refers to the state as the “institutionalization of power relations” (1990 520) where “the state as an institution is part of a wider social structure of gender relations” (1990 509). Connell draws upon Poulantzas, as the states in question are of the liberal democratic variety, requiring an analysis of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism (1990). The state plays an often active role in creating and reproducing women’s inequality, and while not *inherently* patriarchal, “the state is *historically* patriarchal, patriarchal as a matter of concrete social practices” (Connell 1990 535). Nevertheless, Connell (1990) argues that a view of the state as simply patriarchal is also not enough. States vary over time and place, and are not passive instruments. States actively pursue agendas (i.e. globalization), they mobilize interests, and construct identities (i.e. ‘welfare mothers’).

Connell, while taking up some of his ideas on state process, departs from Foucault, and post-structuralism, with a political economy approach. She stresses “the process of internal coordination that gives state apparatuses a degree of coherence in practice” (1990 509-510). She elaborates on the state’s coherent activities:

Through laws and administrative arrangements the state sets limits to the use of personal violence, protects property (and thus unequal economic resources), criminalizes stigmatized sexuality, embodies masculinized hierarchy, and organizes collective violence in policing, prisons and war. In certain circumstances the state also allows or even invites the counter-mobilization of power (520).

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<sup>5</sup> Increasingly, this triad is being expanded to include the voluntary sector.

Carty and Brand (1993) also show that states pursue active strategies, including creating “conflicts which did not exist before or which were on the way to being resolved” (175), such as those related to the state’s creation of the category of ‘visible minority’.

In Canada, FPE has focused mainly in the areas of law and public policy. Fudge and Cossman (2002) outline an FPE approach to the law and the state. For them, law works to legitimate and shape power relations and dominant ideologies, it regulates social relations, it produces ruling discourses that shape social life, and it acts as a coercive force. Law works at all levels of life, from international agreements to the labour market and the family. States actively participate in the restructuring of the relationships between citizens, as well as its own relationship with them. This does not mean that the law has not been used to advance the interests of marginalized groups, but that on balance, legal norms, methods, institutions, and actors tend to support dominant ideologies of “property, liberty, the minimal state, and the rule of law” (Fudge and Cossman 2002 34). Therefore, simply changing, or educating, the personnel within legal institutions will not fundamentally alter the gendered legal system.

This approach to the state can also be seen in FPE analysis of public policy. Graefe explains that in political economy, the state is not an actor or set of institutions, it is a space of struggle and the “state does not act: rather, social forces act through the state” (2007 27). In this process, social forces act on an unequal terrain, and states cannot be assumed to be neutral or as acting in the public or common interest (Graefe 2007). The result is that, “[p]ublic policies affect the relative power of actors in reproducing social relations, but they also institutionalize social relations ... policies serve as institutionalized compromises” (Graefe 2007 26). “Without denying the role of institutions, of knowledge, or of learning, it [political economy] insists that policy making be seen as an act of power, and not simply as a technical exercise or sorting and evaluating policy options” (Graefe 2007 35).

FPE in Canada is much less developed when it comes to representation. Nevertheless, the Australian literature can provide guidance. Hester Eisenstein is a former Australian ‘femocrat’ and sees her experience “as a moment of lived political theory” (1996 xvi). Her conception of the state combines aspects of neo-Marxist, socialist feminist, post-structuralist, and post-colonial perspectives. She sees the state as patriarchal, capitalist, and racist (1996 xix), but leaves room for agency. According to Eisenstein, the Australian state, or more precisely, the bureaucracy, “was an arena in which male power and privilege were institutionalized” (1996 207), but state feminists did develop counter-strategies and had a positive effect on women’s material lives.

Due to the shortcomings of the femocrat strategy, and her focus on institutionalized power, Eisenstein (1996) is careful not to focus all of her attention on the state. Rather, she emphasizes the relationship between those working “without” and “within” and the need for mobilization outside of the state. Eisenstein argues that while women cannot avoid the state, integrating women into the state is not enough, and that sustained pressure from, and alliances with, an organized women’s movement, feminists in the labour movement, and political parties is necessary.

Sue Findlay’s work is an exception to the largely FI interest in representation in Canada. For Findlay (1995), women’s representation within the state is about the ways in which power is institutionalized in the state, or “the ruling interests that are embedded in representative institutions” (11). Influenced by the work of Mahon, Findlay (1995) sees institutions such as Status of Women Canada, as an “unequal structure of representation,” which reflect powerful interests in society and dominant sources and forms of knowledge production. Graefe also shows that less powerful groups are more likely to be located “at the periphery of policy networks and in bodies at the periphery of the state” (2007 28).

### *Social Reproduction*

A feminist political economy of representation can provide a distinctive perspective on power, agency and states because of its analysis of structural inequality. Central to this analysis is the concept of social reproduction. Bezanson and Luxton (2006) define social reproduction as

the processes involved in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the labouring population, and their labour power on a daily and generational basis ... Embedded in a feminist political economy framework, social reproduction offers a basis for understanding how various institutions (such as the state, the market, the family/household, and the third sector) interact and balance power so that the work involved in the daily and generational production and maintenance of people is completed (3).

For Bezanson and Luxton (2006), social reproduction involves the care of people, as well as the transfer of knowledge, social values, cultural practices and identities. Responsibility for social reproduction shifts over time, and is redistributed differently within the “state-market-family/household-third sector nexus,” thereby restructuring the gender order (Bezanson and Luxton 2006 5). FPE is concerned with the impact of various configurations of responsibility on social relations. For instance, state involvement in social reproduction has the effect of supporting families, and women in particular, yet at the same time acting as a form of social control and surveillance (Bezanson and Luxton 2006).

Social reproduction also figures prominently in Fudge and Cossman’s framework. They posit that in a capitalist society, there is a contradictory relationship between production, including waged work, and social reproduction, the work (paid and unpaid) that must be done to maintain the working population (2002). States are involved in mediating the contradictions between production and social reproduction, and in the process, states regulate the gender order. This is echoed in Graefe’s (2007) discussion of policy compromises aimed at stabilizing the social order. Fudge and Cossman note that gender orders are not static. They vary according to the extent to which social reproduction is organized by the market, households or the state, leaving space for political agency. Further, while the restructuring of the gender order complicates feminist struggle, the contradictions also create new forms of opposition and alternative conceptions of citizenship (Fudge and Cossman 2002).

While Bezanson and Luxton and Fudge and Cossman operate at a fairly high level of abstraction, Porter (2003) uses an FPE approach to study the welfare state more specifically. Porter also analyzes the work-state-family nexus. She puts forth a dynamic view of the nexus, and production and social reproduction, as both structuring, and being structured by, social relations, while also emphasizing women’s agency as political actors. She highlights the significance of pressure outside of the state, as well as the divisions within the state for FPE (2003). Porter proposes “a model for policy analysis; with a framework that can shed light on how particular policies came about, the constraints faced by various groups as they attempt to influence policy directions, and the possibilities for and limitations on new forms of restructuring” (2003 14). These FPE perspectives offer alternative accounts of state variation, policy change (or preservation), and women’s agency that hinge on social reproduction.

If we turn back to Grace’s (2011) study of federalism and social policy in Canada, she found that “the federal government’s commitment to developing a national child-care framework ... was cast in terms of reconciling work and family and promoting healthy child development rather than women’s economic independence or women’s equality” (103). To explain why this is the case, Grace points to the “institutional landscape” of intergovernmental relations situated within a neoliberal and the social investment discourse (Grace 2011 111). Social reproduction as an analytic device could enhance this approach by locating institutional arrangements, policy choices and discourses within the power relations of the state/market/family, as seen below in Cameron’s work.

Unfortunately, examinations of social reproduction and state institutions are relatively rare at this point. As mentioned earlier, the FPE literature is underdeveloped in a number of areas. In particular, work is scarce that examines representation and governance through the dynamic of social reproduction. This is a clearly a place for future research and for expanding the influence of FPE, and where this study aims to make an impact. Another contribution that FPE can make to institutional learning is to introduce a multiscaler analysis to the discussion.

### *Multiscaler Analysis*

Recently, MLG has been a popular fascination in FI, but Mahon et al. (2007) distinguish between the concepts of MLG and multiscalerity. They explain that MLG is heavily influenced by rational choice theory, where the self interest of actors is the primary driver. The language of ‘levels’ denotes a hierarchical view of the relations between governments, and a stubborn “methodological nationalism” (Mahon et al. 2007 41). Alternatively, a multiscaler approach combines macro political economy with a relational understanding of space and place, taken from geography. The political economy of scale addresses “the way that social actors construct, contest, and negotiate larger societal arrangements at particular scales” (Mahon et al. 2007 59). In particular, “scale theorists are interested in how interscaler rule regimes operate to reinforce (or counteract) class and gender inequality” (Mahon et al. 2007 53). Scale is a social relation.

Like the multiscaler approach, FPE is attuned to the interaction between the micro, meso, and macro scales. Given the widespread use of the political opportunity structure in FI, it is oriented toward

certain kinds of micro and meso institutions (Driscoll and Krook 2009), such as legislatures, political parties, bureaucracies, constitutions and federalism. These are unquestionably important, and deserve more scrutiny from FPE. Where FPE distinguishes itself is in its attention to the meso level of the family, household, and labour market. FPE also excels at the macro scale, paying close attention to colonialism, globalization, restructuring, and the institutions of global governance (i.e. the World Bank, IMF, NAFTA, EU).

There has been greater awareness of globalization within FI, focusing on the restructuring of government, budget cuts, downsizing, decentralization, marketization, constitutional reorganization, and shifting governance to the subnational and supranational levels (Hausman and Sauer 2007; Outshoorn and Kantola (2007). Generally, resource mobilization and political opportunity structure are used to analyze these trends. This recent literature has certainly developed the field of feminist institutional analysis significantly. However, there are still some research gaps.

FPE provides a critical lens through which to analyze the existing literature on representation, state feminism and the politics of scale, which is not built on a very strong theoretical foundation. In most of these studies, the women's movement and state feminism tend to be abstracted from wider political and economic processes which are often inadequately considered. Globalization and restructuring are theorized as new institutional (re)formations. But shifting the scales of governance, as has occurred under decentralization, or as Mahon et al. call it, 'downscaling,' is much more than an institutional shuffle. Scale is integral to social conflicts in Canada (Graefe 2007 27), such as regional and class cleavages (Brodie 1990; Mahon et al. 2007) as federalism has filtered and framed class and gender relations. The political economy of scale is about "the power-laden and contested nature of interscaler arrangements" (Mahon et al. 2007 53). Globalization has brought a fundamental political and economic transformation of states, markets and families, or the gender order.

Cameron (2006) has shown that in Canada, social reproduction, or "the recreation of the population from one generation to the next" (45), is central to understanding the gendered underpinnings of federalism. The constitutional division of powers reflects the prevailing assumptions of the gender order at the time of Canadian confederation, based on the public/private divide. Chappell also refers to Helen Irving's observation about federalism in the Australian context. Irving says that

[f]or the most part, the domestic and familial – the sphere which constituted the greatest sources of interest to women activists – is left to state jurisdiction, often meaning in this period, to the private sphere. The nation, it might seem, is public and male, and the state the sphere of the female (Chappell 2002 162).

For women's movements, like in 'English' Canada, that have a distinct preference for national social policy and standards (over the 'patchwork'), this presents a significant challenge (Sawer and Vickers 2010).

Contrary to those who emphasize institutional factors, and the political opportunity structure, political economists see the politics of scale as a reflection of social forces. Thus, multiscale is neither an opportunity, nor an obstacle, it is a reflection of social and political power at any given time and place, and it is a tool with which to understand these relations. To complete the FPE toolkit, let us turn to intersectionality.

### *Intersectionality*

Intersectionality is an innovation of post-colonial and anti-racist feminism. It has also begun to integrate elements of queer theory and critical disability studies. Intersectionality locates inequality within multiple and overlapping forms of oppression, social relations, and systems of power, including capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, racism, heterosexism, ableism.

Anti-racist/post-colonial feminism offers both a critique of the state, and of common feminist theories of it. Carty and Brand explicitly draw attention to the ways in which the state produces and reproduces not only unequal gender and class, but also race relations. They begin their essay with the following statement:

The Canadian state does not relate to all people(s) equally, and as far as it relates to women at all, it tends to treat Native, South Asian, Black, Chinese and other non-white groups of women as quantitatively aberrant and qualitatively homogeneous (1993 169).

Bannerji adds that the “state and the ‘visible minorities,’ (the non-white people living in Canada) have a complex relationship with each other. There is a fundamental unease with how our difference is construed and constructed by the state, how our otherness in relation to Canada is projected and objectified” (1996 105). Armstrong and Connelly also point out that the state is contradictory not only in the sense that it can mitigate and reinforce women’s inequality, but also that it can advance the interests of some women and not others (1999 2). Feminist state theorizing, therefore, must account for the different relationships that women of colour have with the state, providing a significant challenge to FPE.

Many Aboriginal women have introduced serious critiques of many feminist approaches to the state and public policy. For example, in the area of violence against women, the ‘traditional’ feminist critique has been centrally targeted at the public/private dichotomy, which, it has been argued, constructs violence against women as a private concern, and justifies non-intervention by the state into the realm of the family. But all do not share in the desire for the state to intervene in cases of intimate violence, particularly when it involves the criminal justice system. Many commentators have argued for a more nuanced view of the state, stressing that levels of state intervention and regulation, as well as the desire for it, differ by race, class, sexual orientation, and ability.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, FPE focuses heavily on the shift from a Keynesian gender order based on the male breadwinner model, to a neoliberal gender order based on a dual earner model of the family. Even though most feminist political economists are aware that the male breadwinner model acts as an ideal type at the policy level, some of the detail within the models gets lost in broad comparisons between the Keynesian and neoliberal gender orders. It is not always evident that FPE has fully accounted for the reality that many families of colour (and working class families) have never experienced production and social reproduction in the same way as white, middle-class families. In this way, Dua provides a very useful intervention into FPE. She demonstrates that the construction of the nuclear family cannot be considered outside of racism and nation-building, and the exclusion of families of colour from the male breadwinner model. Yet at the same time, Dua stresses the centrality of the nuclear family/male breadwinner model to racialized and marginalized groups – acting to scrutinize and regulate their lives (Dua 1999).

Millbank (1997) also problematizes feminist treatments of the public/private dichotomy, but from the perspective of lesbians and their encounters with the law. While the realm of the ‘private,’ has been shown to be a dangerous place for many women, Millbank (1997) argues that “the absence of any space conceived by the law as ‘private’ where lesbians, or at least lesbian mothers, are concerned” (281) signals the need for a more complex feminist theorization of the private, and of the right to privacy. She takes lesbian mother’s experiences with child custody cases as an example. In these cases, where women are inappropriately asked about the intimate details of their sex lives, and are pathologized, and constructed as dangerous (Millbank 1997), privacy takes on a different meaning. Such work challenges ‘traditional’ feminist theorizing, as well as practical public policy prescriptions.

By now, knowledge of the interaction of race and sexuality with the state’s most coercive elements is fairly well developed, much more must be done to understand these relationships with other sections of the state. And there is still much to be learned from feminist interrogation of the state and about the dangers of failing to take into account women’s differing experiences of family.<sup>7</sup> But intersectionality is beginning to be taken up more broadly in feminist research, and in FPE in particular. Some, such as Porter (2003), have integrated critiques from women of colour and anti-racist feminists reminding that the male breadwinner model was not universal. Her framework includes

numerous variables – labour markets, unpaid work in the home, family work/life patterns, race and ethnicity, political struggles, gender ideologies, juridical norms, state policies ... as part of a dynamic whole in which there are ‘multiple strands of determination’ and complex processes of interaction and change (Porter 2003 13).

She goes on to say that “race, class, gender, sexuality, and other axes of domination constitute mutually constructing systems of oppression, manifested through a variety of institutions including

<sup>6</sup> Koshan (1997), Crenshaw (1990), Native Women’s Association of Canada (1991).

<sup>7</sup> For instance, many Aboriginal women remind us that historically, matriarchal forms of kinship are more familiar to them than patriarchy, and Afro-American feminists have insisted that their families have often served as support systems in a racist society (see Koshan 1997, hooks 1981, Dua 1999, Porter 2003).

schools, housing, and government bodies” (2003 18). It does not appear to have had the same effect on FI. Kenny (2007) is concerned that “while historical institutionalists acknowledge that some groups are privileged over others, little attention is paid to major social divisions such as gender, race or class” (Kenny 2007 96), and Kenny and Mackay believe “there are still significant limitations to new institutionalist conceptions of power, which continue to pay little or no attention to major social divisions such as gender and race” (Kenny and Mackay 2009 275). So far, the feminist interventions into neoinstitutionalism have introduced a gender analysis more than an intersectional one.

Together, structural inequality, social reproduction, multiscaler analysis and intersectionality, make FPE an indispensable framework for understanding social inequality and state institutions. Still, with some notable exceptions,<sup>8</sup> it must be reiterated that FPE has engaged very little with the central research questions of FI. In this final section, I suggest that the gender regime literature provides FI and FPE with a conversational juncture in which issues of governance, representation, and democracy can be deliberated.

## Gender Regimes

Despite their differences, FI and FPE also have commonalities. For one, they both struggle to have more influence in their wider fields and face hostility, or at least indifference, to feminist analysis. The feminist interest in NI has not been reciprocated. NI has made little progress in integrating a gender analysis (Kenny and Mackay 2009). FPE has faced similar resistance within political economy circles. Each challenge their respective roots, as they also belong to the family of feminist political science,<sup>9</sup> which “is explicitly concerned with recognizing how institutions reproduce gendered power relations, but perhaps more importantly, with how these institutions can be challenged and reformed” (Krook and Mackay 2011). FI and FPE coalesce around centring the institutionalization of power relations and how to achieve change.

For this reason, both have turned to, and helped to shape, the gender regime literature. Gender regime theory highlights the “ways in which institutions reflect, reinforce, and structure unequal gendered power relations in wider society” (Krook and Mackay 2011 6). The state is important for feminists to study because it is a key site where the unequal power relations (including gender, but also class, race, sexuality, and ability) in society are institutionalized. Through the ‘institutionalization of power relations,’ social inequality is reflected, and reproduced by, and within, the state, and becomes embedded within state institutions and policies. This entails not simply that social inequalities are mirrored in the state, but that the state takes an active role in structuring and restructuring them. As such, the transformation of social relations cannot be achieved without also transforming the institutions that mediate and structure those relations.

Conceptualizing the state as the institutionalization of power relations (IPR) allows us to determine how various forms of oppression are interconnected at the level of the state, and at different levels of the state. It places the state *within* rather than *outside* of society and social relations. As Connell puts it, “[t]he state ... is only part of a wider structure of gender relations” or is “one of the principle substructures of the gender order” (1990 520), and of the social order generally.

This does not preclude the internal struggles inside and between state institutions that are stressed in gender regime theory. As Krook and Mackay (2011) maintain, “reciprocal relationships” of cause and effect are always at play (7). FI and FPE agree that feminists must account for variation within and between states, or across space and time (Connell 1990 521-522). Porter makes the point that struggles outside, and within, states are important to policy outcomes. Within states, gender relations differ by sector – the legislature, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the military, police, social services, clerical, etc. – or what Connell calls the “gender structuring of state apparatus” (Connell 1990 524).

Contextual or national differences are significant. Distinctions must be made between women’s relationships to previous Keynesian welfare states and current neoliberal states, for example. FPE uses the concept of the ‘gender order’ to refer to the particular form that gender relations and discourse take in a given time and place. A relatively stable, or institutionalized, gender order is eventually challenged by

<sup>8</sup> For instance, Mahon (2005, 2007); Mahon et al. (2007); Jenson (2008); Jenson et al. (2003).

<sup>9</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this paper, an unsettled question is whether the goal is for each to integrate gender into these existing paradigms, or to create a new and autonomous feminist political science framework.

shifting social relations, bringing about a new gender order (Fudge and Cossman 2002). Feminists have also adapted Esping-Andersen's welfare state typologies to show that distinct gender regimes exist along the Liberal, Corporatist, and Social Democratic spectrum, and that states differ in their regulation of gender relations (O'Connor 1993; Sainsbury 1999).

There is also consensus on the explicitly political and normative nature of feminist institutional critique. Kenny and Mackay (2009) explain that "[f]eminist political science has as a central feature a transformative agenda. That is to say that feminist political science is explicitly concerned not only with recognizing how institutions reproduce gendered power distributions but also with how these institutions can be changed" (276). For Connell, theory should tell us "not whether feminism will deal with the state, but how, on what terms, with what tactics, toward what goals" (Connell 1990 531). Gender regimes provide a framework for answering these questions, and FPE can enrich this work.

I take from FPE not only the focus on structural constraints, but also on women's agency and struggle. For FPE, the gender order (including the relations of production and social reproduction) is contradictory, and in flux. This creates pressures to re-regulate the gender order, and spaces for new forms of social organization. Within the wider gender order, there is also room for variations in gender regimes. I consider variations in gender regimes to be critical to an FPE approach to state institutions as it introduces social reproduction to the gender regime scholarship. Mahon demonstrates that path-breaking can happen, and that there are internal conflicts, contradictions and 'alternative logics' within regimes that can reorganize social reproduction (2005). This distinguishes FPE from FI in that changes in states over time are explained as primarily social, rather than institutional processes. As a case in point, feminist political economist Sylvia Walby "conceptualizes gender regimes as societal, and theorizes change occurring when transnational, socioeconomic forces precipitate crises and institutional restructuring results" (Vickers 2011 132).

FPE sees social reproduction as central to both the ways in which state institutions are structured, and to women's access to democracy and representation. Different gender regimes provide alternative constructions of representation and democracy. Even though social reproduction has been central to FPE examinations of institutions of welfare state regimes, social and family policy, little has been written about the relationship between social reproduction, democracy, and representation. I submit that the state/market/family nexus can be as useful to understanding representative institutions as it has been for redistributive ones.

In reference to state administration, Sue Findlay, shows that there is a hierarchical ordering of administrative institutions, or an "unequal structure of representation," drawing from Mahon. For Mahon (1977), the organization of state institutions represents the economic power structure, and the federal bureaucracy is ordered based on the dominant class fractions. However, in Mahon's approach, power relations are viewed in a limited way – in reference to the relations of production. When one considers those at the top of the power structure (Finance, International Trade, Industry), in relation to things like Health, Immigration, and Women's Issues, it is not only about class fractions, it also indicates a valuing of production over social reproduction, and re-inscribes the public/private divide. Bashevkin (1991) and MacIvor (1996) have made comparable observations about other political institutions such as political parties and the allocation of Cabinet portfolios.

Within departments and agencies, the public/private, production/social reproduction dichotomy is also reproduced. Sue Findlay draws attention to sexual division of labour inside the state, between managers and other personnel (1995 17). Even after 20 years of federal employment equity policy, marginalized groups continue to be underrepresented in upper management and concentrated in clerical and temporary positions. The principles of Weberian organization, such as neutrality, expertise and categorization are premised on the profoundly gendered ideology of the public/private divide, and neoliberal public administration is reconfiguring the public and private (Findlay 2008).

In addition to the structuring of state administration, the gendered division of labour associated with social reproduction affects women's ability to participate democratically (Phillips 1991). Women have less time to engage directly in decision-making and the policy process. This has become more pronounced as the shifting gender order brings more women into the paid labour force, and has increased their work in the spheres of both production and social reproduction. Therefore, policies aimed at re-balancing work and family, are essential not only to substantive, but also to procedural democracy. In concert with such policies, a re-thinking of the relationship between representation and participation is in order. Representation should account for women's lived realities, which interfere with their ability to

participate. The goal of representation then, should be to supplement, and facilitate, the participation of marginalized citizens – to move toward a feminist democratization of regimes.

Where it departs even more sharply from FI is that an FPE perspective on political practice must demonstrate a generous degree of state skepticism. Carty and Brand (1993) submit that

[b]ecause the state in capitalist society, by virtue of its goals and interests, does not operate within the interests of the working class – to which most immigrant and visible minority women belong – the limitations of any state-formed organization with a mandate to do so must be recognized and questioned (170).

Feminist practice requires a realistic view of state power that takes democracy as its starting point. Engaging with the state, therefore, is only a first step in transforming it.

In terms of strategy, Connell advocates the democratization of state structures, which means moving beyond representation to more participatory forms of politics (Connell 1990 536). This falls in line with Eisenstein's support for strengthening links between feminists inside and outside of the state, funding for social movement groups, and gender-based budgeting (1993). Feminist engagement with the state must not be simply an end in itself, or an encounter with pre-existing structures, it can be a conscious, active, transformative process. Incidentally, the extensive FI literature on representation can be a valuable resource for FPE in democratizing gender regimes.

### **Conclusion**

A genuine dialogue between FI and FPE is long overdue. FI has broken new ground in the study of gender and institutions. This work is indispensable to constructing an FPE perspective that takes representation, governance and democracy into account. FPE provides FI with fresh analytical tools to employ on state institutions: structural inequality, social reproduction, multiscale analysis and intersectionality. While not aiming for synthesis, there is a constructive discussion to be had, and the gender regime literature offers a hospitable meeting place. This project is one attempt at growing the conversation in order to extend the stretch of FPE beyond its traditional foci. I believe this provides the best path to feminist democratization and radical social change.



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