MACRO-MICRO LINKS IN GENDER STRATIFICATION*

1989 Presidential Address

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Since the study of macro and micro interrelations requires measurement of reciprocal effects over time, the problem is usually conceptualized more narrowly. This paper demonstrates how macro-micro links in a theory of gender stratification can put societal problems in context and show how these problems are reflected in individual lives. Industrialization disturbed gender stratification patterns when macrotrends in mortality, education, fertility, labor force participation, and artificial infant feeding (which enabled a baby to survive separation from its mother) increased women's productivity compared to men's. But the same trends so increased the cost of children that population maintenance has become a problem in the West. Measures to stabilize fertility must spread childrearing costs more widely, thereby improving women's status.

The 1989 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association had, perhaps for the first time, two themes. One was the AIDS crisis, a health care nightmare which is now becoming a subject for sociological research. The other theme, and the topic of this address, concerns the interrelations of macro and micro theory and research. It is a broad theme, almost as broad as the discipline itself. There is good reason for such breadth.

The privilege of choosing a theme for the annual meeting increases the tendency for presidents to take themselves very very seriously. As Erving Goffman observed in the address that he was too sick to deliver in this room seven years ago, when presidents of scholarly associations take office, they find a podium attached. They are encouraged to demonstrate that they are indeed obsessed by what their election proved they were already known to be obsessed by and they are led to feel that what they represent is just what their intellectual community wants represented. Presenting their addresses, they come to feel like temporary guardians of the discipline. "However large or oddly shaped the hall, their self swells out to fill it" (Goffman 1983, p. 1).
Sobering. Thus, the macro-micro theme, which is broad enough to encompass almost everybody's favorite obsession.

* I am grateful to William Form for suggesting this topic and for criticizing this paper.

The interrelationships of macro- and microlevel theory and data concern all social and behavioral sciences that study both individuals and collectivities like nations, firms, and large organizations. The basic problem is to explain how persons affect collectivities and how collectivities affect persons over time. However, to conceptualize and measure reciprocal effects over time is a formidable undertaking. We are only at the beginning of the beginning of this task (Campbell 1983). In practice, most scholars conceptualize the problem only along one direction, from micro to macro or from macro to micro, the approach of this paper.

THE CONTEXT IN SOCIOLOGY

To set my remarks in context, I first briefly review the history of the problem in sociology. Few scholars debated macro and micro relations until the 1960s when Homans tried to reduce sociology to social behaviorism (Collins 1988a, p. 376). His attack on macrosociology was joined by interpretive sociologists who (with a few notable exceptions) tended not to share Homans' view of the requirements of scientific research. Their theories tended to be radically anti-collectivist (Alexander 1987, p. 54) and they were being attacked for failing to take social structure into account. The actor was not seen as bringing a previously defined collective order into play (Alexander 1988, p. 87). Much of the ensuing discussion was conducted

by militant microsociologies as a war against macrosociology although they disagreed sharply over the type of microsociology to replace it (Collins 1988a, p. 386).

During most of this period, macrosociologists paid little attention to the controversy because, first, it seemed irrelevant. As Goffman (1974, p. 13) said, social organization and structure can be studied quite nicely without reference to social psychology. Macrotheory must account for patterns of social relations not on the basis of motives but on the basis of external constraints and opportunities for social relations created by population composition and the structure of positions in the social environment (Blau 1987, p. 75).

Second, the controversy was muddied by disagreement about the meaning of the words micro and macro. Everyone agreed that micro refers to something small. Beyond this, sociologists divided into two camps.

One camp included interpretive sociologists, who tended to equate macro with "quantitative" and micro with "qualitative" sociology. This definition puts their own work, based on individual data, in the micro category but it implicitly excludes other work based on individual data (status attainment, for example) when those data are collected with methods that involve a quantitative and qualitative mix like that of survey research. To my knowledge, no other social and behavioral science scholars so use these words. As Berger, Eyre, and Zelditch (forthcoming) point out, it is wrong to use micro to mean a small unstructured action system while macro refers to a large unstructured system without action. This treats the analytic aspects of micro- and macrotheories as being correlated when in fact they are independent and raises fruitless questions about relationships.

The other camp includes everyone else: macrosociologists, exchange theorists, life course theorists, and so on. Whatever else they disagree about, they tend to equate micro with individual- and macro with collective-level events, using the words much as economists do.

Some sociologists in this large residual category see the problem as one of showing how micro affects macro in a theoretically generalizing way (Collins 1988a, p. 244). For sociologists, the natural unit of observation has been the individual. Thus, the analysis must move from the individual level of observation to the system level where the problem of interest usually lies (Coleman 1987, p. 153) But how to move remains an unsolved problem that requires the integration of exchange theory and macrostructure (Blau 1987, p. 84). The extent to which the problem is solvable remains to be seen.

Other sociologists have taken a macro-to-micro approach. One fruitful example is the life course perspective. It mixes history, social psychology, and demography with powerful quantitative techniques that can now handle both the timing and sequencing of events (Blalock 1989). Life course theorists examine cohort and period effects on individuals with data taken from historical demography, social history, and recent longitudinal studies (Elder 1984). These studies necessarily focus only on the industrial era because they require data that can be analyzed quantitatively.

Like the life course theorists, I, too, am concerned with macro-to-micro effects — but not just in the industrial era. Since 1970, my favorite obsession has been gender stratification, how women's power and prestige relative to men's varies by time and place. The only way to develop an adequate theory is to compare the impact of ecological conditions and subsistence technologies on social organization and individual behavior over time. Only a theory that takes both preindustrial and industrial technology into account can put into context concrete problems that U.S. society faces today and demonstrate how these problems are reflected in individual lives.

PERIOD EFFECTS ON A 1967 COHORT

The events that I experienced led me to conclude that the macro-micro link is best approached as a substantive problem using comparative and historical data—which make sense only in the context of a general theory. I begin by describing the direction in which my work was shoved by period effects on the 1967 crop of Ph.D.s.

Entering graduate school in the 1960s, I chose sociology because it examined societal constraints on individual behavior. Perhaps I wanted to know why I had been a housewife for 14 years when I liked books better than housework. I saw stratification as the heart of sociology. Duncan and Schnore's (1959) POET model (population, organization, ecology and technology) included the variables with the most power to explain stratification comparatively and his-

torically.[1]

By 1970, the black power movement and a new wave of the women's movement signalled that something had gone awry in stratification theory. Women and blacks were nearly invisible in it. In introductory sociology texts, women appeared primarily as mothers or prostitutes.[2] Blacks appeared in a chapter euphemistically entitled "Race Relations," as if racial interaction were symmetrical.

In response to these gaps in stratification theory, the concepts of institutional racism and sexism appeared, highlighting the ascriptive qualities of race and sex in contrast to those of class, which at least offered chances for mobility. Also, it now seems clear, especially since Karen Mason (1984) pointed it out, that class and SES vary among individuals in all settings but gender stratification in a particular setting is a constant across individuals regardless of their economic status. But neither Marx nor Weber had said much about race and sex. What to do?

My response was triggered by a question that popped up at a college curriculum committee meeting in Urbana in 1972. I was earnestly defending the merits of women's studies courses when a learned linguist airily waved his hand and declared that women's studies was only a passing fad. The women's movement wouldn't last. I was shocked. But I had to ask, would it or wouldn't it? Why or why not? The basic theoretical question was, of course, what factors shape stratification patterns and what makes these patterns change?

The answers appeared piecemeal in the course of teaching introductory sociology and sex stratification. In 1972 I first used Lenski's (1970) text. It was based on his 1966 analysis that showed how the distribution of power and prestige was affected by use of a particular subsistence tool. His account, which covered all human societal types, gave theoretical underpinning to core sociological concepts by showing how ecology and technology affect stratification. The ecological evolutionary approach emphasizes strategy selection, which puts the study of production and expropriation in a new light. The approach assumes that persons (who enact strategies) are the units of behavior but it permits analysis of populations in terms of strategy differences without erroneously inferring system-level behavioral dynamics from individual traits (Cohen and Machalek 1988).

A given ecology and technology permit a range of outcomes, limiting the ways that humans can organize themselves. Such factors as rainfall and temperature coupled with the use of a particular major subsistence tool affect the division of labor which, in turn, affects social organization and stratification. One could thus present Joseph in Egypt as a world-class bureaucrat. His management skills were called into being by the invention of the plow, which created a food surplus so large that writing and counting had to be invented to keep track of it.

The ecological evolutionary context was a fine fit for my race lectures, based on van den Berghe's (1967) analysis of the confluence of ideational and technological factors that drove racism to historically unprecedented peaks of virulence in the nineteenth century: A wrong-headed interpretation of Darwinian theory — the notion that people in technologically-advanced societies were more fit than others — was used to justify the exploitation of people in horticultural and herding societies all over the world. I also leaned on Fusfeld's (1973) account of the way that technological trends had affected black employment rates in the United States.

But sex stratification remained a puzzle. The first course I taught was more descriptive than theoretical, except for the part based on Oppenheimer's (1973) account of long-run effects of economic demand on women's entering the labor force. Actually, the literature on women's employment during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was not the problem. Although skimpy, there was enough to suggest how the current women's movement paralleled what I came to call the men's movement.

In the West, both movements represented a response to men's and women's massive entry into the wage labor force. The men's movement emerged during the nineteenth century. Male workers, erstwhile peasants, serfs, and slaves, began to fight collectively for what they saw as their fair share. The current wave of the women's movement similarly emerged when women workers, erstwhile housewives, began to struggle for what they had come to see as their fair market share. The men's movement is called "the labor movement" but this is misleading. Women played almost no part in it.

[1] See Namboodiri (1988) for a cogent statement on the importance of ecology in social research.

[2] The degree of change since that time is less than one might hope (Ferree and Hall 1989).

Indeed, one of the movement's objectives was to restrict the number of hours women could work for pay in order to give them more time at home to care for children. Such measures knocked women off the seniority ladder, thereby decreasing their ability to compete for high-wage jobs.

If the labor force literature was fairly satisfactory for theory, the fertility literature presented a real stumbling block. Demographers, suffering a terrible case of period effects, offered little help. As Ryder (1979, p. 359) put it, the baby boom had badly dented their theory of the demographic transition and they had retreated into the empty safety of empiricism.[3]

Help came, instead, from economics and anthropology. Economist Ester Boserup (1970) was first to link polygyny and women's productivity on a comparative basis (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 1988b), demonstrating that women's ability to support themselves and their children was a critical factor in sub-Saharan polygyny. To my knowledge, anthropologist Ernestine Friedl (1975) was first to link work, fertility, and sex stratification in foraging and hoe cultures, thereby showing what factors caused variation in the gender distribution of power and prestige. Anthropologist Jack Goody (1976) extended Boserup's research, showing that property transmission is decisive in socio-economic systems (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 1988b), which suggested why gender stratification in plow societies differed so sharply from that of foraging or hoe cultures. Then Rae Blumberg (1978) put the approach into the Lenski (1970) ecological evolutionary context, which highlighted gender stratification variables across all societal types.

A MACROTHEORY OF GENDER STRATIFICATION

I summarize a general theory that has emerged from such research in order to show how it applies to a cluster of macro (social) and micro (personal) problems that men and women face today. The theory is not well known in either social science or women's studies.[4] It has therefore not received the kind of criticism it needs.

As Friedl (1975) suggested, the basic questions are: Why do men and women do certain tasks, and which ones yield the most prestige and power? The answers suggest two principles of sex stratification which Friedl applied to foraging and hoe cultures. I then use these principles to relate production, reproduction, and stratification in societies based on herding, plow, and industrial technology (see Huber and Spitze 1988).

The first principle applies to the family. Producers in the family economy have more power and prestige than consumers. Historically, women's work has been constrained to mesh with pregnancy and lactation lest the society fail to reproduce itself and die out.

The second principle applies to the society. The most power and prestige accrue to those who control the distribution of valued goods beyond the family (Friedl 1975). Few men attain such positions. Almost no women have done so.

In foraging societies, men hunted the animals that were large enough to be distributed and consumed beyond the nuclear family. Women never hunted large animals because spending an uncertain period of time away from camp made nursing impossible. Since younger women were constantly pregnant or lactating to offset high death rates, the need to maintain population thus immobilized women, thereby excluding them from the most productive work.

In hoe cultures, men monopolized land clearing and, after the invention of metallurgy, warfare. Since warfare brings in more surplus than does landclearing, men outrank women more in advanced than in simple hoe cultures. But in both types women's food production equals men's on average because the hoe is used near home. Since divorce has little effect on the subsistence of either of the spouses or their children, divorce rates are high, higher than in our own society (Friedl 1975). Women's ability to support themselves permits permits what Spitze and I (1988, p. 488) have called "populist polygyny." Nearly everyone marries. Since women marry young, men marry old, and the death rate is high (as in sub-Saharan Africa), the sex-ratio paradox tends to be resolved.

In herding societies, low rainfall, a short season, or mountains preclude growing crops. The need for water and grazing land makes war a major means of subsistence, enabling elites to control both economy and polity. Women lack

[3] Demographers are becoming more theoretical. See, for example, Smith's (1989) suggestions for integrating theory and research on institutional determinants of fertility.

[4] "Feminist theory" tends to be an idealist enterprise that takes little heed of organization, population, ecology and technology.

access to major subsistence tools; warfare and herding are conducted far from home. These conditions permit what Spitze and I (1988, p. 428) have called "elite polygyny." A few rich men have many wives while some poor men have none.

Desert conditions similarly affect baboon social organization (Collins 1988b, p. 38). In arid lands where food is scarce and exposure to predators extreme, Hamadrayas baboons organize along military lines. Males dominate. Among Hamadrayas in forests where food is plentiful and trees offer protection from predators, males are not dominant and females mate promiscuously. Thus, the environment rather than genetics seems to evoke different social patterns.

In Eurasia, the iron-shared plow vastly increased the food supply but depressed the status of ordinary people. Iron weapons enabled elites to extract heavily from peasants (Lenski 1970, p. 177). Women's share of food production decreased relative to that in hoe cultures. Larger fields further from home impede nursing (Blumberg 1978). The plow's effect on inheritance patterns also degraded women (Goody 1976). The plow makes land the chief form of wealth. Since land tends to be an impartible inheritance, the number of legal heirs must be limited. Monogamy prevails. Divorce is rare. Women's sexual behavior must be constrained lest a man's property go to another man's child. The richer her family, the greater the constraints placed on her — footbinding in China, suttee in India.

Industrialization first emerged in northwest European plow kingdoms. Men continued to use the most productive tools, which ensured that their wages would exceed women's. Other macrotrends disrupted patterns adapted to plow cultures. Five trends that occurred in sequence were most disruptive.

First, infant mortality declined. This trend greatly reduced the number of births needed for population replacement.

Second, the spread of mass education redirected wealth flows within the family (Caldwell 1976). For the first time in history, economic returns on parental investment in children went to the children, making them a less attractive pension instrument (Parsons 1984). In the West, economic incentives to reproduce have vanished like the snows of yesteryear.

Third, spurred by the decline in infant mortality, the spread of mass education (compulsory in Europe by about 1880), and rapid economic growth between 1860 and 1910, fertility began its long decline in the West. Economic growth triggers demographic change by fueling ambition and opening opportunities (Lesthaeghe 1983).

Fourth, about 1910 the introduction of safe methods of artificial feeding wiped out the survival advantages of breastfed babies. For the first time in human history a mother could work away from her baby without endangering its life.[5]

Fifth, after the preceding four changes were well along, an increase in the demand for women workers induced a steady rise in women's labor force participation in this century, helping to launch a new women's movement. Increases in economic demand trigger social movements by producing a demand for labor that cannot be met in the usual ways (Chafetz 1984; Chafetz and Dworkin 1986).

MICROCONSEQUENCES OF MACROCHANGES

Taking a long view, these macrolevel changes soon transformed social patterns adapted to plow cultures into patterns better adapted to industrial work. Pervasive mass media allow for rapid value change and great homogeneity of values (Preston 1986, p. 178; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 1988a). Friedl's (1975) two principles of stratification permit theoretical interpretation of the new and emerging patterns.

The first principle is that producers outrank consumers. Compared to men, women are more productive now than in plow societies. Early industrialization increased the U.S. female/male wage ratio by almost 50 percent. By 1885, it reached the 1970 value of about .56 (Goldin 1987, p. 214). Since 1970, the wage ratio again increased because, unlike the 1950s, women who are more educated are now more likely to be employed than are less educated women.

[5] The relation of breastfeeding to fertility, infant death, and women's work during industrialization has received little study. A skimpy literature suggests that the need for women's wages may curtail breastfeeding and thereby affect fertility and infant mortality. Strong evidence suggests that European fertility rose before 1880 because of a shortened period of nursing (Dyson and Murphy 1985). Infant mortality may have risen because of maternal factory work and unsafe bottle feeding (Hogan and Kertzer 1986). Sussman (1982) reports the grim consequences of French wetnursing practices at that time.

The sex wage gap may nearly close for younger workers by century's end (Smith and Ward 1985).

As expected, women's increased productivity has eroded legal and customary restraints on their behavior. For example, marriage as an institution has declined since 1960 [6] as indicated by postponement, fewer persons ever marrying, a lower ratio of time spent in wedlock, and shorter marital durations (Espenshade 1985).[7] Recent divorce rates imply that two-thirds of all first marriages may dissolve (Martin and Bumpass 1989). Divorce rates reflect spouses' ability to support themselves (Brinton 1983) although women's post-divorce income is less than 70 percent of its pre-divorce level (Stirling 1989).

The second principle is that the most power goes to those who control the distribution of valued goods beyond the family. In a modern context this refers to elite positions in economy and polity. Few women hold such positions. Women still are hindered by behaviors and expectations related to fertility.

Feminist scholars have tended to focus on these expectations and behaviors while ignoring basic trends in fertility, apparently seeing it as a benign constant rather than a variable. This is understandable considering the problems posed by rapid population growth in the Third World but it is an error nonetheless. It makes for myopic theories about women's status, as I point out below.

The major fertility-related expectation that restricts women is that of childrearing, which lowers occupational aspirations. The obverse is that people expect grown men but not grown women to work for pay. Only 12 percent of the respondents to a 1978 national survey thought a mother with school-age children should be employed; only a third thought a married woman, even if she had no children, should work for pay (Huber and Spitze 1983). Such expectations hinder women, for example, by making family migration largely unresponsive to the wife's work (Spitze 1986). Belief in a differential obligation to work for pay may be the aspect of women's work most resistant to change (Spitze 1988).

The major fertility-related behaviors that disadvantage women involve time spent in housework and childcare. Women in the 1980s do less housework than in the 1960s and men do a little more, but men still do much less than women (Gershuny and Robinson 1988).

Fertility-related expectations and behaviors are in flux. Continuing macrotrends in education, employment, and fertility churn the microlevel relentlessly, leaving in their wake vast discrepancies in thought, feeling, and behavior. Such microlevel discrepancies were the object of Hochschild's (1989) recent study of the second shift in two-job marriages. A complex interplay of gender ideology, feeling, and behavior determines the division of labor. The supply of male commitment to share child care was far lower than female demand for it, making for high levels of marital tension. Such tension may spread since less educated women have begun to catch up with college women in adopting a feminist stance toward a gendered division of labor (Mason and Lu 1988).

In contrast to behaviors and expectations, actual fertility trends are in less flux. Except for the period of the baby boom, U.S. fertility has been declining for 200 years.[8] Will it level out at zero population growth or go on down (Huber 1980)? If down, how far, how fast? Demographers don't know. The West may be experiencing a population implosion (Bourgeois-Pichat 1987). Childlessness is up (Jacobson, Heaton, and Taylor 1989). Marriage is down. Trends set in motion by the Industrial Revolution have put us into a new game.

From a macrolevel perspective, immigration could improve demographic stability. At the microlevel, however, the issues posed by large-scale immigration would be divisive. Public concern with a growing immigrant community would increase as its share of total population growth rose. Many writers doubt there can be a

[6] Even the health benefits of marriage have been questioned. Much excess mortality among the never-married results from selectivity. Poor health deters some persons from marrying (Kisker and Goldman 1987).

[7] Divorce has decreased marital duration in this century but not as much as death did in the last century. Current U.S. mortality rates permit average marital durations of 45 years; the real average is 27 years (Watkins, Bongaarts, and Menken 1987). In contrast, nineteenth century French marriages averaged 20 years (Tabah 1980).

[8] Below-replacement fertility has had a surprisingly long history in the United States (Sanderson 1987). A new study also reports that the sharp drop in black fertility in the rural South from 1880-1940 resulted from voluntary measures rather than from disease or poor nutrition (Tolnay 1987).

politically acceptable immigration solution to allay fears of population decline (Espenshade 1986, p. 258). Thus, the demographic situation suggests three sources of political concern.

POLITICAL CONCERNS

One is the vague fear that the human race might die out. The dinosaurs did. Why not us? Second, some pollsters and politicians worry that the nation is losing its will to live, especially its ability to conduct a really decent war. A third concern is with the funding of pension plans as the proportion of workers declines.

These political concerns will tend to reawaken interest in fertility and the problems posed by population decline. Such problems are not new. About a century ago, many northwest European countries, concerned about population decline, instituted programs to make childrearing more attractive. Typically such programs awarded modest grants to induce women to stay home and have babies. No one ever demonstrated the effectiveness of such programs. They would cost even more today because the proportion of educated women is larger and the loss of women's market productivity would be greater.

If the old approaches to the problem of population maintenance seem doubtful, what new ones might work? I briefly note three possibilities. All would significantly affect gender stratification.

One type would require a national state more coercive than any yet seen. The trends that lowered fertility would have to be reversed. By far the most important would be to limit women's education, say, to the completion of tenth grade, in order to reduce their ability to compete for high-wage jobs. However, the number of educated women is probably already too high to make such a measure politically feasible. Someone is sure to suggest outlawing contraceptive devices but such measures would probably be ineffective for the long run. In the West, the demographic transition occurred without fancy gadgets. People who don't want children figure out what to do.

A second approach would reconnect fertility and retirement security by allocating benefits entirely or partly on the basis of worker contribution to childrearing (Demeny 1987). This would shift responsibility for a macroproblem to the microlevel. Although the yuppie generation might find this solution radical, it is quite traditional, having served the human race from its beginnings. Currently, the persons who foot the bill for rearing the next generation of workers are in effect giving a free ride to those who for whatever reason do not share those expenses.

A third approach would spread costs over the body politic by making parenthood more attractive to persons who want to remain in the labor force. A basic problem with childrearing is that paid work and leisure are increasingly more attractive. Parents are on call 24 hours a day, perhaps one reason that children decrease marital satisfaction (McLanahan and Adams 1987). Parenting might be more acceptable if better day care and more attractive nursery schools professionalized motherhood as medicine now is. Only 50 years ago, physicians were also on call 24 hours a day (Keyfitz 1986).

The disadvantage of such a program is its cost. The taxpayers would have to be committed to the idea that population maintenance is extremely important because programs to improve childcare would benefit the children of the rich and poor alike. Historically, measures to benefit poor people have never been popular. Recently, measures to improve children's economic status have been swamped by successful efforts to improve the status of the aged, particularly those in middle-income groups (Preston 1984; Wilson, 1987). However, since poor mothers typically rear a large share of the next generation of workers (Blake 1985), programs that improve early childcare and education could potentially provide high returns on the investment. Improvements in what economists call child quality could increase the potential for macroeconomic growth.[9]

Politically, the third approach seems most probable. No one seems to want women out of the labor force. Both men and women like the money that women earn. In turn, measures that make parenting more attractive would also improve women's market position. The more women's economic status resembles men's, the fewer the differences in men's and women's

[9] It may be costly in the long run to ignore the effects of the mother's employment status and working conditions on child outcomes. Data recently gathered from the grown children of mothers first interviewed in 1967 permit the estimation of such outcomes for poor children, whose mothers were oversampled. The analyses suggest that the mother's working conditions affect such outcomes as verbal intelligence (Menaghan and Parcel 1989; Parcel and Menaghan 1989).

power and prestige. Thus, the more that voters become concerned about low fertility, the better it will be for women. For the first time in human history, technology has made it possible for women's economic productivity to equal men's. Whether this possibility will ever be realized remains to be seen. In agricultural societies, women's reproductive capacity was the basis of their subordination. In industrial societies, their reproductive capacity may be the basis for their social equality.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have tried to demonstrate how a macrotheoretical and historical approach to gender stratification illuminates (in a way that the micro-macro approach does not) how a series of macrolevel trends during industrialization relate to one another and to people's trials and triumphs at the microlevel. Thus, the abortion issue, child care, rising divorce rates, social security financing, immigration, and tax schedules are linked in the context of an historical theory. Individual family members who confront these problems reflect evolutionary social changes in a microcosmic snapshot.

Thus, changes in rates of social behavior have resulted from a variety of macrotrends. These rate changes typically reflect individual decisions in small groups like the family, personal dilemmas like abortion, conjugal conflicts over the division of household labor, and prejudices such as men's barring women from a work group. Macrotrends are internalized as personal problems. The causal sequence is clear. Yet once personal decisions are multiplied over a large population and stabilized (as in the desire for fewer children) collective problems emerge: how to sustain economic growth, how to provide for retirement pensions, how to provide personnel for the armed forces.

Clearly, the evolutionary perspective discussed here is strongest in explaining the origin, persistence, and interrelations of problems in gender stratification. This is an impressive achievement. But the approach offers few guidelines to explain and predict the short-term direction of social change. Nor does it explain why individuals select some choices over others. This is a challenge that structural theories must confront. At this stage in the development of sociology, the best short-term strategy is to press the micro-macro link for all it is worth to see how much structure and change it can explain and to push the macro-micro link for all it is worth to determine how well it can explain short-term change. Meanwhile, we need to gear up to confront the formidable task of explaining reciprocal effects over time.

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