

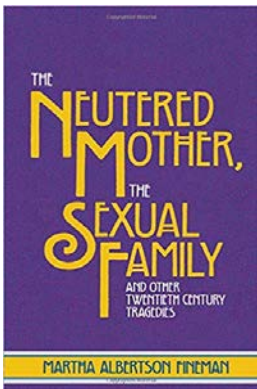
CALL FOR PAPERS

Commemorating Scholarly Milestones: The Legacy of *The Neutered Mother* at Twenty-Five Years

March 6-7, 2020

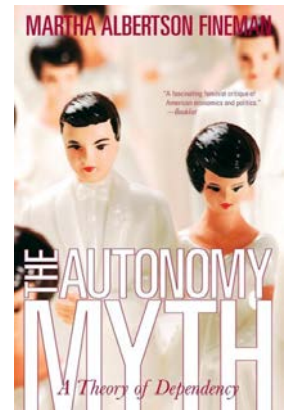
Emory University, Atlanta

We are pleased to announce a workshop commemorating the publication of one of Professor Martha Albertson Fineman's most influential books – *The Neutered Mother, the Sexual Family and Other Twentieth Century Tragedies* (1995). Twenty-five years after its publication, *The Neutered Mother* continues to exert a powerful influence on critical and feminist legal studies, as well as the social sciences and humanities at large. We warmly invite a range of scholarly, pedagogical, critical, and creative responses to this important book, as well as reflections upon how it has shaped work on the family, as well as individual autonomy, dependency, vulnerability and the vulnerable subject.



Calling for nothing less than a radical reform of family law and a reconceptualization of intimacy away from “sexual affiliation” and marriage, toward dependency and caretaking, *The Neutered Mother* argued against existing legal and social policy discussions privileging the marital family. In doing so, it scrutinized the definitions of “family” and “mother” in both popular and legislative circulation, while contesting society's refusal to support and respond to the needs of caregivers. This book offered a crucial step toward redefining America's most pressing social policy problems arguing for the development of a theory of collective responsibility for dependency, as well as re-envisioning the social institution of the family.

The analysis of implications of dependency continued in *The Autonomy Myth, A Theory of Dependency* published a decade later. In that book, Fineman argued that those charged with administering U.S. social policy have long considered the marital family household as both separate and self-sufficient at the cost of the well-being of actual families and their children. In a paradigm-shifting move, Fineman challenged the liberal vision of autonomy and independence that fuels an ideal of self-sufficiency. Foregrounding the “inevitable dependency” that all experience at various stages in our lives, as well as the “derivative dependency” that arises because caretakers need resources to effectively do the work of care, she showed institutions beyond the family have an inescapable and vital role to play in the reproduction of a just society.



These earlier works argued for the centrality of dependency and caretaking, laying the foundation for the current focus on “embodied” and “embedded” vulnerability. Fineman explores how our embodiment necessitates dependency on social institutions throughout the life course. The implications of embodied vulnerability suggest an inevitable inequality in social relations and urges moving beyond equality and discrimination as paradigms to address social justice and the role of social institutions and relationships in the reproduction of a just society.

The workshop will be organized into panel sessions engaging with these two books, as well as sessions on vulnerability theory and the concept of the universally “vulnerable subject” to replace the liberal legal subject in defining what constitutes a “responsive state.”

We are interested in a broad range of approaches and scholarly reflections on the impact of these works and the ideas and concepts they advance.

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Issues for Discussion May Include:

- How has the liberalization of gender roles and sexuality interacted with the public/private divide in responsibility for dependency since publication of *The Neutered Mother*?
- Why have conceptions of autonomy remained so resilient?
- What is the relationship between sex equality and neoliberalism?
- What new discourses have emerged in recent years to challenge “the autonomy myth”?
- What distinctive role does law (as opposed to politics or culture) play in the construction of the neoliberal subject?
- How has the tension between gender neutral laws and gendered parental laws shaped the discourse on gender roles in parenting?
- How should the state shape the social identity of “parent?”
- What is the role of the family (“private”)-a-vis the state (“public”) in regard to dependency?
- What is the appropriate role of the state in the organization and operation of the family?
- How has our conception of the sexual family changed socially and legally in the last twenty-five years?
- What is the proper role of the state in supporting or discouraging reproduction?
- What “twenty-first century tragedies” should be considered in an update of the book?
- How have social movements (e.g. economic empowerment and LGBTQIA rights) utilized vulnerability theory concepts?
- What is the proper role of the state in responding to rising income inequality in the face of neoliberal hegemony?
- What are the roles and functions of social identities in vulnerability theory?
- How are social identities constructed and defined? How are “social identities,” such as parent or spouse, different from “demographic identities,” such as gender, race, or class?

Vulnerability and Resilience Background

Reading at:

<http://web.gs.emory.edu/vulnerability/>

Submissions Procedure:

Email a proposal of several paragraphs as a Word or PDF document by **January 13, 2020** to Mangala Kanayson (mkanays@emory.edu).

Decisions will be made by **January 17, 2020** and working paper drafts will be due **February 24, 2020** so they can be duplicated and distributed prior to the Workshop.

Workshop Details:

The Workshop begins **Friday, March 6th at 4:30 PM** at Emory University School of Law. Dinner follows Friday’s session. Panels continue **Saturday, March 7th from 9 AM to 5 PM**; breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The workshop is being convened by:

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Human Condition Initiative**