

Critical Psychology without Social Theory in the US? Nancy Chodorow, Feminism and Relational Psychoanalysis

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Abstract

In this paper I primarily focus on the relationship between critical psychoanalytic psychology and social feminist theory in the US. I argue that relational psychoanalysis has the potential of becoming critical psychology and underscore the critical underpinnings of the relational school in contemporary psychoanalysis. I claim that critical psychoanalysis shares with feminist social theory a strong focus on concepts such as relationality and situated knower. However, unlike feminist theorists, relationally oriented psychoanalysts largely sidestep class, gender or race in their analyses and theorize little about social issues. I argue this point by focusing on the theoretical evolution of Nancy Chodorow. Chodorow's work shows an important paradox at the heart of critical psychoanalytic psychology. On the one hand, Chodorow's early work shows a deep concern and understanding of the relationship between the psychological and the social. Yet, in her latest work she retreats from social theory and focuses on individual meanings and processes in psychodynamic therapy. I claim that social theory, and particularly awareness about class and gender, needs to be more strongly incorporated by relationally oriented analysts in their practice and theorizing. Chodorow's latest work indicates the strength of a conservative trend in contemporary psychoanalysis and I argue that this academic trend needs to be challenged

Keywords: relational psychoanalysis, critical psychology, feminism, Chodorow, social theory

Introduction

My argument in this paper starts from the assumption that an exciting school of psychoanalytic psychology, relational psychoanalysis, which developed within North American psychoanalysis in the last twenty years, has the potential to become critical psychology.¹ In one important respect, relational psychoanalysis *is* critical psychology because it advances a new, socially oriented account of self, as well as more democratic forms of psychoanalytic theory and psychoanalytic practice.² However, relational psychoanalysis is not yet a fully developed psychological theory that critically investigates social and institutional norms that contribute to human oppression. Some relational psychoanalysts are aware of social oppression and power dynamics in their theory and practice, but the core theoretical work in relational psychoanalysis is reluctant to fully incorporate awareness about sexism, racism, and other forms of oppressive norms. By focusing on the work of major US feminist and object relation theorist, Nancy Chodorow, this paper wants to show that

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²By critical psychology, I understand what Ian Parker (1999) calls "a systematic examination of how some varieties of psychological action and experience are privileged over others, how dominant accounts of 'psychology' operate ideologically and in the service of power."

relational psychoanalytic theory is at the crossroads. Relational theory could either follow Chodorow's retreat from incorporating social theory in psychoanalytic thinking or it could become more aware of the importance of class, race and gender in its practice and theory. I argue that relational thinking needs to follow the second route and fully engage with an exploration of oppressive norms.

Four major changes in psychoanalytic theory indicate that relational psychoanalysis has an important potential for becoming critical psychology. A relational model of the self theorizes a new epistemological framework, which replaces a psychoanalytic focus on the individual with a focus on relations. A relational model explores a two-person psychology within the therapeutic setting, in which the analyst and analysand are seen as mutually constructing the therapeutic process. A relational model sees the primary goal of psychoanalytic therapy neither in tracking down lost memories, nor in healing the developmental needs of the patient, but in changing the basic relational world of the analysand. A relational model sees the analyst and the analysand as deeply caught in a relational matrix and understands the change in therapy is inevitably located within the relation that the *two partners in thought* (Donnel Stern) develop and elaborate.

In addition, relational psychoanalysis has an important critical component because it shares with feminist epistemologists a strong focus on relationality and the self as "situated knower." Various relational psychoanalysts are feminists (Jessica Benjamin, Muriel Dimen or Lynne Layton are good examples), yet many relational theorists who advocate relationality do not use nor draw upon feminist epistemology (I have in mind thinkers such as Stephen Mitchell or Donnel Stern). If some relational theorists were influenced by feminism, many male theorists sidestep the gains of feminist thought.³ However, like many feminist epistemologists who were passionately involved in generating a theory of human connectedness, relational psychoanalysis heavily theorizes a self by relationality. Both feminist epistemologists and relational psychoanalysts emphasize the necessity of our connectedness and dependence upon others as key to our emotional and intellectual development. Both feminist epistemologists and relational psychoanalysts show the many layers of our personalities and emphasize multiplicity and discontinuity as core experiences of our inevitably embedded selves. Both feminists and relational psychoanalysts urge us to think about how knowledge is situated in particular contexts. Like feminist subjects, the participants in therapy are located in their particular positions and historical contexts and knowledge emerges according with the power positions of participants in the therapeutic relationship.

In this paper I focus on the work of Nancy Chodorow, an important North American object relation social thinker who wrote *The Reproduction of Mothering*, a classic feminist treatise that introduced psychoanalytic object relations to social theory. Chodorow's main thesis is that practices and institutions of gender inequality are generated by "social structurally induced psychological processes." In other words, Chodorow shows that boys and girls are differently socialized according with different social patterns that stem from the unequal distribution of labour. Because daughters and sons are raised primarily – and even exclusively-- by mothers, men and women have relational tendencies that emerge from their relationship with mothers and absence of fathers. Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* is an example of social psychoanalytic theory, which draws on both relational and feminist epistemology by emphasizing the importance of relationality and dependence on caretakers.

³ I owe this observation to Lynne Layton.

However, Chodorow moved from being heavily invested in social theorizing to analyzing the personal meanings that develop in therapy. In *The Power of Feelings*, Chodorow's new theoretical emphasis is upon individually constructed meanings and tends to ignore structural factors of inequality. I argue that Chodorow's recent theoretical development sidesteps a deep investigation about the role of class, race or non-heterosexual gender in psychoanalytic therapy. Unfortunately, Chodorow's latest work points to a conservative direction in modern psychoanalysis, where social factors are considered at best secondary to understanding therapeutic processes. The work of Neil Altman and Lynne Layton, however, shows that a socially sensitive psychologist can not understand human behavior without a deep exploration of class and gender. Chodorow's focus on individuality obscures that social world is part of her responses, as well of her patients. An increased attention to the social context of the treatment and to the social component of the therapist's responses would make us aware of the role of social factors in therapy. By focusing exclusively on individuals, Chodorow neglects the important lesson of relational psychoanalysis that people behave differently within different relations and that the relational matrix is deeply embedded in the social world.

I believe that Nancy Chodorow's case of an object-relations, feminist thinker withdrawing from investigating the social components of psychoanalytic theory represents a warning for the relational psychoanalytic movement. I believe that relational psychoanalysis is at the crossroads. It could define itself more strongly as critical psychology and incorporate awareness about social discrimination in its theory and practice. It could also follow the route of Nancy Chodorow's work and withdraw from a deep engagement with social theory. I claim toward the end of my paper that relationally oriented psychoanalysts who use social theory could be both aware of individually created meanings in analysis as well as of the structural dimensions of inequality. This paper is an effort to urge relational psychoanalysts to become more aware of oppressive social norms within their therapeutic practices.

Relational theory as critical psychoanalytic psychology

Relational theory became in the 1990s the most important conceptual framework in American psychoanalysis, as relational publications started to dominate the US psychoanalytic scene (Mills 2005, 156; Aron 1996, p.1). Largely developing from the post-doctoral psychoanalytic program at NYU, and consolidated with the establishment of *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, the relational theorists were referred to as the American Middle School (Aron 1996, p.15). In a book that arguably launched relational theory, Mitchell and Greenberg claim, "The most significant tension in the history of psychoanalytic ideas has been the dialectic between the original Freudian model, which takes as its starting point the instinctual drive, and an alternative comprehensive model initiated in the work of Fairbairn and Sullivan, which evolves structure solely from the individual's relation with other people" (Mitchell and Greenberg, 1983, 20). The new relational theory starts with both external (intersubjective) and internal (intrapsychic) *relationships* as being crucial for the psychoanalytic technique.

Within the relational model, the first major change in the psychoanalytic epistemology is that "relations with others, not drives," are "the basic stuff of mental life" (Mitchell, 1988, p.2). The unity of investigation is no longer a single mind or a single individual. Psychoanalytic investigation moves from the individual as a separate entity to "an interaction field within which individual arise and struggles to make contact and to articulate himself" (Mitchell, 1988, p.3). If Freud views mind as fundamentally monadic, as something that is "inherent, wired in, prestructured, pushing from within", then the relational model views mind as dyadic

and interactive. The mind seeks contact and engagement with others and the analysis moves towards investigating patterns shaping those interactions. Both the classical Freudian theory and the relational model contain elements that investigate both the inner life and the relationships with others. However, the point where these two theories differ is whether interaction is viewed as an expression of “preformed forces or pressures,” or whether mental content is viewed as shaped by the establishment and maintenance of connections with others. Relational theorists (Aron, 1996, p.10; Chodorow, 1979, p.67) argue that the key incompatibility between the classical Freudian model and the relational model is that the Freudian model has individualistic assumptions, whereas the relational model has as key foundational premise the individual in social relations. What fundamentally changes in relational theory is that mental content is neither universal nor formative, because bodily experiences and events are potentials that derive their meaning from the interaction with others (Mitchell, 1988, p.4). The mind has a relational structure and its contents are shaped by the interaction with the social environment.

The second major change is located within the therapeutic relationship. Greenberg (2001, p.362-363) argues that four major premises are accepted by relational theorists: the therapist influences the patient in “a myriad of ways”, and everything the therapist says (an much of not what is said) will affect the patient deeply; the great deal of work that happens in every treatment is what has transpired in an unexamined way between the patient and the therapist; neutrality and abstinence are myths and therapy can be conducted only to fit each particular relation; and the therapist’s subjectivity “is a ubiquitous presence in the treatment.” Relational theorists offer different answers to the traditional big questions in psychoanalysis. To the question: “What does the patient need?” relational thinkers believe that therapy moves from gaining insight through frustration to “the development of meaning and authenticity” (Mitchell, 1993, p.77). Psychoanalysis is increasingly viewed as a process that “enriches the analysand’s subjectivity” or “helping the patient to develop a rich and deeply rooted sense of self” (Mitchell, 1993, p.77-78). Stern (2010) fundamentally turns to curiosity as an important gain in the therapeutic process. To the question “what does the analyst know?” relational thinkers answer from moving from an objective, universal theory to “interpretative systems and constructions embedded in the personal experience and subjectivity of the analyst” (Mitchell, 1993, p.77). Mitchell (1998, p.9) claims that “any understanding of a mind, one’s own or another’s, is personal ... one own’s understanding.” The understandings that emerge from the therapeutic relation are embedded in a complex, fluid and mutually forming interaction. As in Escher’s image *Drawing Hands*, where each hand is both the product and the creator of the other, the analyst’s hypotheses and responses are deeply saturated with the content that emerges in her or his relationship with the analysand (Mitchell, 1988, p.3).

Relational theorists such as Stephen Mitchell see themselves as innovating and building on traditional psychoanalytic concepts. He locates himself within the critical social theory’s tradition of critique. The psychoanalyst, like the critical theorist, recognizes the problem that the old theory wanted to explain and then, from within the contradictions and inadequacies in that theory, he or she shows that a different analysis better understands the problem (Mitchell, 1993, 90). Also, the relational thinker learned the important lesson of postmodernism that there is not a single psychoanalytic reality. For Mitchell, the variety in psychoanalytic schools means that psychoanalysis does not explore a single reality or a single elephant. To the contrary, because reality is created by theoretical presuppositions, psychoanalytic schools may be sometimes grappling with giraffes or with strange hybrids (Mitchell, 1988, *viii*). The point here is that reality *is constructed* by theoretical assumptions, and different theoretical assumptions illuminate different objects of investigation. In his description of the schools in

psychoanalysis, Mitchell claims that three basic concepts with different histories, premises, metaphors and clinical implications were dominating the psychoanalytic thought. The classical drive model (Freud), the developmental-arrest model (Winnicott, Guntrip and Kohut) and the relational model (Fairbairn, Sullivan, Levenson, Racker) are the three leading models. What are the main differences among these schools? I briefly follow Mitchell's description and distinguish between different conceptualizations of therapy, the goal of therapy, and the role of the participants in therapy.

The emphasis in therapy for the drive theorists is on the recovery of memories, free association and analysis of defenses. With the developmental-arrest model, the emphasis changes to analyzing the earliest relationship of the infant with the mother. In the developmental arrest model, the drive theory is preserved, as well as the previous analytic goals, but the emphasis is put on the relationship between the mother and the child. Within the third model, the relational-conflict model, disturbances in early relationships with caretakers distort healthy development *not by freezing infantile needs in place, but by setting in motion a complex process through which the individual builds object-relations* (Mitchell, 1988, p.289). The premise that the third model challenges was that the patient's needs were frozen in time, either as pre-oedipal or Oedipal needs. The point of therapy in the relational model is to allow the analysand to recover, reconnect with, and fully experience aspects of himself previously hidden (self-organization), alter the internal structures and relationships (object ties), or put himself in a different interpersonal situation in which richer experiences of the self and other are possible (transactional patterns) (Mitchell, 1988, p.289-290).

The goal of therapy in the drive model was to "track down the libido...withdrawn into its hiding places" (Freud, 1912b). The attachment to the infantile parental images and wishes for gratification fuel neurosis and lend them durability and consistency. Whereas the goal of the therapy in the drive model is to "tame the infantile wishes by uncovering them through memory" (Mitchell, 1988, p. 281), in the developmental-arrest model the therapeutic action aims at healing the distortions generated in the relationship between the mother and the child. The analyst has to recover the real self from the false self (Winnicott), and the analyst needs to provide missing parental functions through holding (Winnicott) or containing (Bion). Within the relational-conflict model, the mechanism of the analytic change focuses on *altering the basic structure of the analysand's relational world*. The assumption of the previous schools was that neurotic problems could be primarily traced down to the patient's relation with his or her parents, whereas the relational model emphasizes primarily the transformations in objects as transformations within the relationship between the analysand and the analyst.

Further, the *analyst's role* fundamentally changes. For the drive theorists, the analyst's function is "to cull the infantile wishes and fears" from the disguised forms in which they hide (Mitchell, 1988, p.282). For the developmental-arrest theorists, the analyst doesn't meddle, because he needs to play the part of the good-enough mother (Winnicott) to the patient's infant. For the relational theorist, the analyst discovers himself or herself within the structures and strictures of the repetitive configurations of the analysand's relational matrix. The common premise of the two schools challenged by the relational model is that the analyst is outside the relationship, either by analyzing objectively the patient (drive theorists) or by providing missing parental functions (developmental-arrest theorists). Within the relational model, the analyst can work with the patient only from the roles that the patient places him or her. He or she is deeply situated within the relational matrix, and that is place from which

he/she can do work. The analyst is a situated knower and his knowledge emerges within particular relations.

Similarly, the role of *the analysand* takes a different emphasis within the new relational school. For drive theorists, recovering hidden memories starts with the frustration of the analysand. The point of classical therapy is to frustrate the analysand's infantile wishes so as to bring them out within transference. Whereas the Freudian analysand is frustrated, then the developmental-arrest analysand is unformed, awaiting for necessary conditions for growth. In this model, it is not the frustration of old desires, but the provision of something new (even if not wholly gratifying) that generates analytic leverage. Trauma is dealt with within a new empathetic medium. Unlike the two previous models, the emphasis in the relational model is neither on frustration, nor on holding. The analysand is viewed as a participant to the process of understanding the damaging patterns in his or her life. Both the analyst and the analysand struggle to overcome the imbalances of previous development. In the classical model, the patient "misses" or is wrong, and the analyst provides objective interpretations (Mitchell, 1988, p.299). In the developmental-arrest model, the analysand (like the customer) is always right, and the analyst is a facilitator for allowing the patient's self to grow (Mitchell, 1988, p.299). Within the relational model, the analyst and analysand are in mutual relationship where "the analysand is struggling to reach *this* analyst" and "the problem is no longer past significant others, but how to connect with, surrender to, dominate, fuse with, control, love, be loved by, use, be used by, *this* person" (Mitchell, 1988, p.300).

Botticelli (2004) believes that politics and psychoanalysis should remain clearly separated, yet my argument is that they are historically and theoretically interconnected. Botticelli claims that a significant tension is at the heart of relational theory. On the one hand, it brings into psychoanalytic theory democratizing impulses such as an emphasis on mutuality, concerns with questions of authority and self-disclosure. On the other hand, the consulting room seems to provide an alternative world, where the social impulses for reform are lived only within that space. He argues that despite the language of some relational theorists, "Those in power have little to fear: this is an insurgency that does not go beyond the therapy office." Botticelli's premise is that psychoanalysis and politics are completely different endeavors, and that "the practice of psychoanalytic writing or therapy, whatever its political content, in itself cannot be considered a form of political activity." His claim goes back to Freud's wish to "keep psychoanalysis out of politics" (Mitchell, 1974).

Yet, I argue that the relationship between politics and psychoanalysis is more complex than clear separation. Samuels (2004) challenges the thesis that analysis and therapy inevitably "siphon off rage" that might more constructively be deployed in relation to social injustices. He sees that the reverse often happens and that "experiences in therapy act to fine down generalized rage into a more constructive form, hence rendering emotion more accessible for social action." Whereas Samuels uses questionnaires to argue that analysis involves forms of politics, I contrast the feminist work of Nancy Chodorow with the work of relationally oriented thinkers such as Altman and Layton to argue that psychoanalysis has great potential for social critique. However, before I analyze the work of Chodorow, I investigate the relationship between critical psychoanalysis and feminist theory and claim that the two theoretical orientations overlap in important respects. They share an important focus on relationality and situated knower. They developed roughly around the same time. Mitchell's work and feminists' work are mutually formative. In short, although I agree that relational theory is torn between democratic impulses and strictly therapeutic concerns, I suggest that this tension is important for critical psychoanalysis. I believe that psychoanalysts need to be

aware both their therapeutic methods as well as of the social underpinnings of their profession. To keep social concerns separated from psychoanalytic concerns is to refuse the lesson of relational theorists, that is, to refuse to awareness about how individual concerns are deeply shaped by social factors and viceversa. The question is, however, whether relational psychoanalysis is going to fully become critical psychology and strongly engage topics such as power relations and social norms.

Critical Psychoanalytic Psychology and Feminist Theory

The relation between relational psychoanalysis and feminism constitutes a practical standpoint for analyzing whether critical psychoanalytic theory has significant potential to critique and change unjust societies. The entrance of a great number of women into the field of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis had a dramatic impact on the mental health field in the US. Philipson (Aron, 1996, p.20) argues that the shift from a drive model to a relational model occurred because of the new gender composition of the field. Arguments around the usefulness of psychoanalysis for feminism such as the feminist attack on Freud in the 1970s (Kate Millet, Germaine Greer), or the subsequent defense of Freud (Mitchell, 1974), greatly informed the work of relational feminist theorists. Nancy Chodorow opened up an important field for psychoanalytic feminism by showing that relational psychoanalysis and social theory can be mutually formative.

By continuing Nancy Chodorow's attempt to integrate object-relations theory and feminism, a group of feminist psychoanalysts lead by Jessica Benjamin, Muriel Dimen, Virginia Goldner, and Adrienne Harris (the NYU Post-Doctoral Group feminists) individually and jointly developed and articulated feminist psychoanalysis closely related to relational theory (Aron, 1996, p.23). Relational psychoanalysis and feminist theorists were strongly connected institutionally and theoretically, because the NYU relational feminists were Mitchell earliest students.⁴ Although important relational thinkers such as Irwin Hoffman and Donnel Stern draw on other philosophical sources for their relational thinking (Hans-Georg Gadamer, in particular), relational theory overlaps with feminist theory in important respects.⁵ The group of feminist in relational thinkers was already influenced by self-in-relation and object relations thinkers. The feminist group at NYU Post-Doctoral Program, however, was strongly involved in elaborating Mitchel's relational methodology, as well as it was powerfully influenced by its ideas. They practice and theorize a strong form of feminist relational psychoanalysis. They are allied in their efforts with feminist psychoanalysts who developed their thinking from self-psychology and object relations (people like Lynne Layton or Donna Orange).

Relational psychoanalytic theory has incorporated some assumptions that were grounding premises for feminist theory and epistemology. Relational self has become a strong focus of feminist research, particularly in the '80s, with the ascent of difference feminism. "Difference feminism"- or cultural feminism- advocates the virtues of the difference between men and women and values the strengths commonly associated with women: relationship, care, nurturance, and emotions. Difference feminists understand patriarchal oppression as diminishing and devaluing the values associated with women's identity and attack models that

⁴ Layton, personal communication.

⁵ I owe this observation to Lynne Layton.

presuppose the self as being free, rational, genderless, ageless and classless.⁶ Relational theorists underscore the significance of relationships for women's selves. Jean Miller portrays the development of an "interacting sense of self" in girls. A woman sense of self "becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliation in relationships" (Miller, 1976, p.83). Gilligan (1982) advocated a relational self that produces connected knowledge. This relational self in difference feminism is plural rather than singular and women's voice speak from the lives of connected, situated selves, and not by applying the truth of impartial principles (for the relational self, see also Gilligan, Ward, Taylor, 1983; Ruddick, 1989). Feminist theorists of relationality fundamentally claim that analyses of women's experiences will yield richer understandings of the nature of the self than non-feminist accounts (Moody-Adams, Companion, 1998, p.257). In feminist analyses, women as primary caregivers for children, the developmental processes of women and the relationship between the mother and a developing fetus became key research topics (Moody-Adams, 1998, p.257).

Like feminist epistemologists, relational psychoanalysis heavily theorizes a relational self. Mitchell (1993, p.103) points out that a key transition happened in the postclassical views of the self. As opposed to the classical Freudian view, relational theorists conceive the unconscious as involving "a way of being, a sense of self, a person in relation to other persons" and bring the unconscious closer to the ego and the superego (Mitchell, 1993, p.104). Relational theorists often emphasize multiplicity and discontinuity, as experiences of the self are inevitably embedded in particular relational contexts. A plural, discontinuous self replaces the previous unitary personality: "our experience of the self is discontinuous, composed of different configurations, different selves with different others" (Mitchell S., 1993, p.104). Yet, the relational self is not just multiple and discontinuous, because relational theorist is interested in the creative theoretical tension between a sense of coherent, unitary self and the discontinuous, multiple self: "The most interesting feature of contemporary psychoanalytic perspectives on self is precisely the creative tension between the portrayal of the self as multiple and discontinuous and of self as integral and continuous" (Mitchell, 1993, p.115). Like psychoanalysis itself, the analytic self becomes a space where different voices and orientations are being heard: "...psychoanalysis has generated, and has been able to contain, multiple voices and multiple selves that can maintain an ongoing conversation and debate without silencing, excommunicating or dissociating any of them" (Aron, 1996, p.1).

By highlighting the deeply layered and plural structure of the self, the relational psychoanalytic self is similar to a certain extent to the relational self theorized Carol Gilligan. Feminists and relational psychoanalytic theorists emphasize relationality and dependence, as well as the multiple nature of the self. Gilligan (1988, p.11) and Mitchell (1988, p.21-22) draw on similar sources in their critique of Freud. Whereas Gilligan uses John Bowlby's attachment theory to criticize Freud's understanding of relationships, Mitchell uses Bowlby to show that babies do not have only drives but are in relations with their mothers. Bowlby, contrary to Freud, argued for a "primary object clinging," as the child experiences the need for a relation similarly to his need for food (Chodorow, 1978). Fairbairn (1952, p.38), one of

⁶ Difference feminists challenge the view that the individual is a free rational chooser and actor and argue that models in philosophy and economics work with the assumption that the subject is genderless, sexless, raceless, ageless, and classless. See Meyers, 2004: "Although represented as genderless, sexless, raceless, ageless, and classless, feminists argue that the Kantian ethical subject and Homo Economicus mask a white, healthy, youthfully middle-aged, middle class, heterosexual Man."

the founders of object-relations theory, theorized the achievement of maturity as a stage of *mature dependence*, as opposed to theories that see dependence and relationship as being detrimental to emotional development. Like Fairbairn, Gilligan (1997, p.547) faults developmental theories for articulating an ideal of autonomy that leaves out the inherent dependency on identifications and conventions that have constituted the particulars of one's childhood.

Relational psychoanalytic theory shares with feminist theorists and epistemologists an interest in the conceptualization of a "situated knower." Situated knower is a central concept of feminist epistemology, if not the central concept (Anderson, 2009). Feminists started to critique the conception of knowledge that is associated with the autonomous, self-sufficient and objective knower and show that knowledge reflects a particular perspective of the knower. The dominant practices of knowledge systematically disadvantage women and other subordinated groups, and feminists strive to "reform these conceptions and practices so that they serve the interests of these groups" (Anderson, 2009). Dorothy Smith (2004, p.28) called for a re-organization of the field of sociology around the concept of situated knower: "This re-organization involves first placing the sociologist where she is actually situated, namely at the beginning of those acts by which she knows or will come to know; and second, making her direct experience of the everyday world the primary ground of her knowledge". Donna Haraway argues that "feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges" (Haraway, 1988, 581). "Situated knowledge" proposes a strong concept of objectivity, while denying the false objectivity behind the ideal of the neutrality of a detached knower: "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object" (Haraway, 1988, p.583). Partiality, connections, limited vision, unexpected openings become key words for feminist understanding.⁷

Within feminist theorizing, the idea of situated knowledge brings forth a new type of knower. Harding (2004, p.63) argues that there are four major changes that make the subject within feminist epistemology different from the subject in the traditional epistemology. First, the knower is a historical subject, which has a body and is visible. Second, there is no difference in kind between the subject and the object of knowledge. Interdependence is the relationship between the one who studies and the object of the study, as they influence each other: "Whatever kinds of social forces shape the subjects are also thereby shaping their objects of knowledge" (Harding, 2004, p.65). Third, knowledge is collective and scientific knowledge is underpinned by social knowledge that is Eurocentric, andocentric, or heterosexist. A feminist epistemologist needs to rethink tacit assumptions that are taken for granted. Fourth, the agents of knowledge/the subjects are "multiple, heterogeneous, and contradictory or incoherent, not unitary, homogenous, and coherent as they are for empiricist epistemology" (Harding, 2004, p.65). The producer of the feminist knowledge is marginal who has a bifurcated consciousness.⁸

⁷ See Haraway (1988, p.590): "The science question in feminism is about objectivity as positioned rationality. Its images are not the product of escape and transcendence of limits (the view from above) but the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions- of views from somewhere",.

⁸ See Harding (1988, p.66): "the thinker whose consciousness is bifurcated, the outsider within, the marginal person now located at the center, the person who is committed to two

Like feminist epistemologists, relational theorists understand that both analysts and patients are situated knowers. Whereas in the classical model, only the analyst articulates knowledge from an anonymous standpoint, relational theory argues that for analyst “anonymity is never an option” (Aron, 1996, p.97). The analyst is participating to the process despite an ideal of objectivity that would involve his abstinence: “The notion that the analyst’ participation can and should be ferreted out, isolated and removed is a holdover from the classical idea of neutral, purely one-person field, in which the analyst countertransference is a contaminant” (Mitchell S., 1993, p.76). The interaction between the analyst and the analysand generates knowledge. The analyst is a “complex meaning-generating subjectivity in her own right” (Mitchell, 1993, p. 78). The knower, either as analyst or analysand, transforms the therapeutic process. For instance, Bollas theorizes countertransference disclosure in which the analyst reveals more of himself or herself (the analyst, for instance is encouraged to describe to the patient how he or she arrived at a particular interpretation). Or the analyst may free associate in order to facilitate the associative process in the patient. The knowledge produced in therapy is interactive and an outcome of the participation of two individuals.

Feminist epistemology did not develop, however, without drawing on, and learning from object-relations theorists. Feminists share an emphasis on relationality and situated knowledge also because of their theoretical dialogue with relational psychoanalysis. For Haraway (1989), object-relations theory (which would represent in Mitchell’s schema the developmental-arrest model) was significant to constructing new feminist approaches that would reconstruct an idea of objectivity.⁹ Nancy Hartsock’s (1998, p.117) classical piece on feminist standpoint uses object-relations to argue that a feminist standpoint starts from the premise that gender development follows different routes for men and women and that women tend to be more relational than men. Evelyn Fox Keller (1985, p.82-84) draws extensively on object-relation theory to show that the ideal of autonomy does not have to be conceptualized as being opposed to dependency. She argues that a dichotomous conception of objectivity (where autonomy means cutting off emotions) “might be viewed as a defense against anxiety about autonomy of exactly the same kind that we find interfering with the capacity for love and creativity” (Keller 1985, p.85). She advocates dynamic objectivity, that is, knowledge that uses subjective experience in the interest of more objectivity. The scientist employs a form of attention to the object of study that is actually a form of love (Keller 1985, p.117). Keller’s reconstruction of objectivity as involving subjectivity and love, in particular, is similar to relational theorists’ aim of analytic inquiry. Like feminist epistemologists, Mitchell makes clear that the subjectivity of the analyst, his passion and love are critical in therapy: “What seems to me crucial in enabling the analyst to steer a course midway between claims to objectivity on the one hand and invisibility on the other is a love of the analytic inquiry itself and a deep appreciation of the awesome complexity of the human mind” (Mitchell, 1993, p.84). Both Mitchell and feminist epistemologists try to use subjectivity as a tool for grasping and understanding, as opposed to blindly adhering to ideal of an objectivity that excludes the personality of the researcher.

agendas that are by their nature at least partially in conflict- the liberal feminist, the socialist feminist, Sandinista feminist, Islamic feminist, or feminist scientist (...).”

⁹ “Some versions of psychoanalysis were of aid in this approach, especially anglophone object relations theory, which maybe did more for US socialist feminism for a time than anything from the pen of Marx and Engels, much less Althusser or any of the late pretenders to sonship treating the subject of ideology and science” (p.579).

However, psychoanalytic relational theorists such as Mitchell and Lewis ignore the larger systematic conditions of oppression that minority people face. By investigating historical circumstances, as well as by looking at psychological accounts, feminists show that relationality develops within traditional social roles where women have been oppressed. Feminists argue that social conventions are part of patriarchy and social norms are deeply informed by practices that do not lead to women's emancipation (Moody-Adams, 1998, p.258). Relational feminist theorists are part of the effort to transform the public life by appealing to insights that come from what was traditionally called the "private realm" (Moody-Adams, 1998, p.262). The point in focusing on the private sphere is not to argue that the distinction between private and public is meaningless. To the contrary, some feminists show that the distinction needs to be reconceptualized so as to include voices and insights previously ignored (Young, 1986, 396). For feminists, radical politics means making public issues out of many practices that were considered trivial or private such as the meaning of pronouns, domestic violence, the practice of men opening doors for women, the sexual assault on women and children, the sexual division of housework (Young, 1986, p.397). Relational theorists such as Mitchell and Aron do not address in their theory the relations of power within society that constitute the background onto which psychoanalysis works. Social relations of domination are largely ignored and the focus within analysis is on relationship between analyst and analysand.

In conclusion, notwithstanding the commonalities between feminist theory and relational psychoanalysis, feminists have a stronger focus on social critique than relational psychoanalysts such as Mitchell and Aron. Various feminist relational thinkers (Layton, Dimen, Benjamin) take into account power relations, yet the main thrust of male relational theory sidesteps questions that presuppose power differentials. For feminists, gender discrimination is key to understanding social relations, whereas oppression at best is peripheral to the male relational theorists. I focus on Chodorow's theoretical evolution from *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) to *The Power of Feelings* (1999) and I identify in her thinking an important departure from social theory. My claim is that class, gender and race need to be better incorporated within feminist psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic critical theory needs to recuperate generalizations regarding structural forms of inequality.

Social theory within relationality

The Reproduction of Mothering is written in the classical grand theory tradition from sociology and it became a foundational piece for feminist theory. Chodorow's main thesis is that the contemporary mothering occurs through "social structurally induced psychological processes" (1978, p.7). Women as mothers produce daughters with mothering capacities, whereas women as mothers produce sons whose nurturant capacities and needs have been systematically curtailed and repressed. Unlike Parsons and the Frankfurt school theorists who were concerned with the way family and women socialize men into capitalist society, Chodorow insists on the women's development. The blind spot in previous theories was the ignorance of women's experiences. Although she criticizes previous theories for gender blindness, she follows Frankfurt school theorists and Talcott Parsons in her methodological approach by developing a psychoanalytic sociology of social reproduction. Her account shows that women grow up to have both "generalized relational capacities and needs" and that women and men participate within a system where women will remain in the domestic sphere (p.39).

Chodorow's contention is that psychoanalytic theory explains the structural processes of gender inequality (Chodorow, 1979, p.40). Like Mitchell and other relational theorists, she

differentiates between two main approaches to understanding mental life. On the one hand, Freud, Klein and ego psychologists stress the importance of drives and the innate factors. For Freud, sexuality is expressed by innate libidinal drives that seek gratification and tension. Klein retains the importance of drives in the form of an emphasis on aggressive urges and fantasies. Ego-psychology assumes that libidinal stages unfold and the ego needs to adapt capacities and apparatuses. Within a drive model, social object-relations are important, but they are “determined by developmental libidinal level” (p.46). On the other hand, culturalists (Fromm, Horney) and object-relations theorists looked at social and cultural processes that influence individual development. The culturalists are faulted by their strict determinism and object-relations theory provides an alternative psychodynamic account of personality that incorporates drives and object-relations. Chodorow sees an important strength of object-relations school in their argument against of a strict determinism, as “Balint, Fairbairn and Guntrip (...) argue against the view that biological requisites of the leading erotogenic zone (oral, anal, phallic, genital) determine the form of the child’s object-relations” (p.47). The other strength is that they see individual drives as part of the object-seeking activity, as people “manipulate and transform drives in the course of attaining and retaining relationships (p.48). In short, the strength of object- relations theory is that parenting is not primarily located in the ego adaptation, but in the development of relational capacities and intrapsychic structure .

Due to the asymmetry in reproduction, the child is strongly affected by unconscious structures and processes. A child “comes to channel libido and aggression in patterned ways” not only because of his or her family, but also largely from its relational experiences and its interactions with the caretakers (p.50). One’s individual history is patterned according to the family structure and prevalent psychological modes of society. Unconscious patterns explain the formation of inequality within families, and family is the main social structure that grounds social relation within society. Chodorow’s point strongly shows that family is the primary element of gender discrimination: “the family –decomposed into gender and generational relations and hierarchy, into political structures and emotional arenas, and, in my case, into parenting arrangements- is a primary constituent of the male dominant social organization of gender and, as such, is as fundamental a constituent feature of society as a whole- of “social structure”- as is the economy or the political organization” (Chodorow, 1981, 502). The main innovation within her structuralist approach is that family’s interactions and the relationships among the members of the family are primarily explained as unconscious processes. This particular type of explanation is at odds with mainstream sociology that privileges intentional actions.

Chodorow believes that psychoanalytic theory is confirmed by clinical cases, and that the theory is useful and persuasive when it keeps close to clinical material (Chodorow,1979, p.53). Following Fairbairn and Winnicott, Chodorow emphasizes the child’s total dependence on the mother in the first years of their relationship: “When individual women –mothers- provide parenting, total dependence is on the mother. It is aspects of the relationship to her that are internalized defensively; it is her care that must be consistent and reliable; it is her absence that produces anxiety” (Chodorow,1979, p.60-61). The child develops a narcissistic orientation that is translated in omnipotence, which stems from “the sense of the mother’s continual presence and hence power in relation to the world for the child” (Chodorow,1979, p.62). This attitude that has been described as being “naïve egoism” is a consequence of the infant’s lack of reality sense and perception of mother as separate. The form of love that the child experience is “totalistic and characterized by naïve egoism,” because the infants’ ultimate aim is to be loved and satisfied, and not to give anything in return (Chodorow,1979, p. 65). The self develops as the child learns how to become less dependent on the mother. The child starts to recognize the mother as being separate with separate activities and interests.

Anxiety triggers the development of ego capacities, which can deal with, and help to ward off anxiety (Chodorow, 1979, p. 69). Children internalize objects of affection and experiences that are negatively felt are split-off from the self. Yet, the attachment to the mother, as primary care giver, is fundamental: it is the prototype for later attachments and the growing ability to take her interests into account is essential. To a great extent, Chodorow thinks that the attachment to the mother is the most important aspect of relational development (Chodorow, 1979, p. 72).

Mothering, however, is not only a relationship between mother and child. Chodorow points out that “mothering” is informed by mother’s relationship with her husband, her experience of financial dependence, her expectations of marital inequality and gender roles (86). Larger processes of inequality structure the relationship between women and men in their families. The mother becomes representative of a system where she socializes the child to asymmetrical relationships (Chodorow, 1979, p. 86). Chodorow’s central thesis is that because of the mothering done by women girls come to define themselves more in relationship with others, whereas boys tend to see themselves as separate and independent. Both girls and boys tend to look at mother as the primary object of affection: “a boy’s relation to his mother soon becomes focused on competitive issues of possession and phallic-sexual oppositeness (or complementarity) to her.” While the boy sees his father as a rival, a girl remains attached to a mother figure, and “she experiences a continuation of the two-person relationship of infancy (Chodorow, 1979, p. 96). Because the mother is the primary object of attachment, the father becomes an object of conflict and ambivalence for the girl.

Chodorow’s conclusions are formulated as general trends in development of men and women. First, there is a general implication about the complexity of emotional attachments. Women seem to have a more clear differentiation between emotional and erotic attachments, and the structure of their relationship to their mothers is consequential in that regard.¹⁰ Second, because the father is an additional component to her relationship with her mother, “the feminine inner world is more complex than the masculine world,” (Chodorow, 1979, p. 193). The child develops a special relationship with his or her mother. The internalized experience of the self in the mother-child relationship remains “seductive and frightening.” By contrast, a child has differentiated herself from the father and has never been “totally dependent on him” (Chodorow, 1979, p. 194). The contrast between the experience towards fathers and mothers is highlighted by the wish to primal unity, which is experienced towards their mothers.¹¹

When men are less or not at all involved in child rearing, daughters idealize the fathers. Fathers serve a double role as they break the omnipotence of their mothers in their relation with the daughters and remain remote and emotionally distant from their daughter. The daughters - and the women they are going to become- are willing to deny their father’s limitations (and those of her lover and husband) as long they feel loved: “The relationship, then, because of the father’s distance and importance to her, occurs largely as fantasy and idealization, and lacks the grounded reality which a boy’s relation to his mother has” (Chodorow, 1979, p. 195). As such, father-daughter relationships, based on distance and

¹⁰ “Most women emerge from their Oedipus complex oriented to their father and men as primarily *erotic* objects, but it is clear that men tend to remain *emotionally* secondary, or at most emotionally equal, compared with the primacy and exclusivity of an oedipal boy’s emotional tie to his mother and women” (Chodorow, 1979, p. 193).

¹¹ “Oedipal love for the mother, then, contains both a threat to the selfhood and a promise of primal unity which love for the father never does,” (Chodorow, 1979, p. 194).

idealization, is contrasted with the relationship between mothers and daughters, which becomes rather a struggle for separation and differentiation.

In short, girls develop differently than boys and that affects the structure of their love relationships. The girl would have more flexible boundaries. Because oedipal love for her father is not so threatening, “she grows up more concerned with both internalized and external object-relationships, while men tend to repress their oedipal needs for love and relationships,” (p.196). However, in boys’ case, “they tend to defend themselves against the threat posed by love,” but repression does not solve their need. Chodorow’s conclusion is that the training in masculinity is also training in not knowing how to have primary emotional attachments to men: “Their training for masculinity and repression of affective relational needs, and their primarily nonemotional and impersonal relationships in the public world make deep primary relationships with other men hard to come by” (p.196). Because of different object internalization, women have not repressed affective needs. Yet, because of social organization of parenting, men operate on two levels in women’s internal and external world: “On one level, they are emotionally secondary and not exclusively loved- are not primary love objects like mothers. On another, they are idealized and experienced as needed, but are unable either to express their own emotional needs or respond to those of women” (p.197).

Chodorow is a firm advocate of rethinking the self as a self-in-relation. Her advocacy of shared parenting, and therefore of having fathers in close relationships with their children, follows her premise that selves need to be seen as selves in relationships. However, there are dangers in advocating relationality in abstract. Chodorow makes it clear there is danger in a too great involvement of a mother in raising sons. Although the focus of her argument is on the relation between mother and daughters, she points toward a social mechanism that make sons dependent on unhealthy structural patterns. The close, exclusive pre-oedipal relationship with his mother develops a dependency in sons that “creates a foundation for dependency in others” (Chodorow, 1979, p.187). Thus, if a mother pushes her son to become more independent, the son carries a powerful dependence with him, “creating in him both a general need to please and conform outside of the relationship with the mother herself” (Chodorow, 1979, p.187). A generalized sense of not having goals that are internal, and that their mothers create goals for them, make men prone to serve not their own desires but those of complex organizations. Within this psychosocial theory, men try to re-enact their pattern of dependence in their family, a dependence that comes from wanting to form a unique attachment, the attachment to the mother. They lack the inner self-direction that would allow them not to bend to rules of organization (Chodorow, 1979, p.188).

Chodorow’s develops a powerful critique of relationality and dependence, where strong dependence presupposes the lack of an inner sense of fulfillment.¹² What kinds of relationships are healthier for men? Men seek relationships with women for narcissistic-phallic reassurance rather than for mutual affirmation and love. The quest of winning the mother stems from their unrealized longing for fusion. This particular independence is an oblique way of reasserting a pattern of unconscious dependence: “they relinquish their mother as an object of dependent attachment and deny their dependence on her, but, because she was so uniquely important, they retain her as an oedipally motivated object to win in fantasy- they retain an unconscious sense that there is one finally satisfying prize to be won” (Chodorow, 1979, p.188). Chodorow’s concern about the patterns of dependence mirrors Slater’s analysis

¹² My point here challenges Spelman’s interpretation of Chodorow, to whom Chodorow’s theory is a full defense of relationality without caveats (see Elisabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman*).

of the relationship between mother and son in the Greek family. Slater argued that the Greek mother, “imprisoned and isolated by her indifferent and largely absent husband, some of the mother’s sexual longing was turned upon her son” (Chodorow, 1979, p.31). As a result, the Greek mother lived vicariously through her son: “ (...) though she might be confined and restricted, her son, an extension of herself, was free and mobile, and she could live her life through him” (Chodorow, 1979, p.31).

The search for rejecting dependency in order to act it out at the unconscious level can be broken, in Chodorow’s view, if men have a “larger number of pleasurable experiences in early infancy” Chodorow, 1979, p.188). In this scenario, they would expect gratification from immediate relationships, maintain commitments to more people, and are less likely to deny themselves now on the behalf of the future. The notion of a good worker would be transformed so that work would not be defined in individualistic, non-cooperative, outcome-oriented ways. Drawing on the work of Frankfurt theorists, Chodorow argues that the lack of fathers in their son’s life leads to a special idealization: sons develop a self without inner direction and remain both fearful of and attracted to external authority. The larger social implication of this thesis is that the family structure produces in men malleability, lack of internal standard, and more importantly, a search for manipulation. The pseudo-independent organization man, being cut off from his inner real desires, “continue to enforce the sexual division of spheres as a defense against the powerlessness in the labor market” (Chodorow, 1979, p.190). The family creates the condition for larger conditions of inequality.

Relationality without social theory?

If the goal of *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) was to show that women mother under a socially structured system of inequality, *The Power of the Feelings* (1999) focuses on the subjectivities and their diversities. Chodorow’s theory analyzes the creation of personal meaning in the clinical encounter (1999,p. 1). Chodorow’s new theory looks at people’s struggle to give meaning to their lives, when meanings are “an inextricable mixture of the sociocultural and historically contextualized on the one hand and the personally psychodynamic and psycho-biographically contextualized on the other” (1999, p.2). If *The Reproduction of Mothering* argued against purely biological and socio-cultural explanations to mothering, the main claim that Chodorow refutes in *The Power of the Feelings* is that the meaning is purely socio-cultural. Her theory challenges the thesis that “gender and gendered subjectivity are exclusively historical, cultural, or political concepts and processes” (1999, p.126). To a certain extent, Chodorow’s second theory follows her first book in calling for analyzing both individual processes of development and structural features of societies. However, I argue that her interest in individual gender prevails over structural analysis and that social theory practically disappears from Chodorow’s theory of meaning. Chodorow sees her latest work as a shift of the pendulum, because she focuses on the inner world of patients. I argue that Chodorow’s theory does not incorporate awareness about class, race or non-heterosexual gender, nor takes into account psychoanalytic changes such as the role of the analyst in therapy.

The focus in Chodorow’s second theory is on the individual construction of gender. More pointedly, gender is individualized to the extent that social norms are auxiliary to the individual creation of meaning. Culture influences gender construction, but the agency of individuals is considered fundamental. She challenges feminist understanding of meanings, because she believes that norms are imposed as cultural categories rather than “created in contingent, individual ways” (p.70). Cultural thinking becomes a hegemonic feminist viewpoint that takes over individual meaning. Contrary to Lacanian psychoanalysis that sees

gender only as a symbolic category, she emphasizes the individual component of gender. She puts the point more strongly when she argues that the individual construction of gender extends “beyond and run counter to cultural and linguistics categories” (p.72). In Chodorow’s argument, gender is not simply internalized, but becomes a complex process of negotiation, adaptation and transformation of social meanings of gender.

In her methodology, Chodorow intends to work with both clinical cases and generalizations. She argues that the tension between the method (clinical cases) and theory (generalizations) can be overcome by recognizing both individual clinical uniqueness and the usefulness of general claims. However, if generalization is theoretically possible, universalization has to be met with skepticism: “Both in the psychoanalytic and in the cultural approach, we hold in abeyance any universal claim about the content of what is thought or felt: the content of that subjectivity or process cannot be universalized” (p.77). Her claim is that the emphasis on individual experience challenges a mainstream paradigm that sees gender as primarily social and cultural. Clinical examples are pointing to a new meaning of gender as being constructed individually. Chodorow sees the need for a theoretical response to psychoanalytic theories about gender identity such as Lacanians (Mitchell and Rose), anti-Lacanians (Irigary), mainstream (Chasseguet - Smirgel, McDougall), classical psychoanalysts, self-in relation theorists, theorists of women’s ways of knowing (Belenky and others), and theorists of women’s voices of morality (Gilligan) because all have universalistic assumptions. She criticizes self-in relation theorists for assuming that women share an essence and that goes against clinical examples where some women do not define themselves through connection or relation (p.98). Individual experience should become the starting point, because “gender, like selfhood, must be unique to each individual” (p.94).

Categories such as objective and subjective gender clarify the distinction between statistically relevant features of one’s gender and the subjective, constructed characteristics of individuals. Thus, objective gender “refers to observed differences in features of psychic or mental life or aspects of personality, character, or behavior that tend to differentiate or characterize the sexes, for example, statistical differences in prevalent diagnoses or character traits” (p.103). Subjective gender refers to “personal constructions of masculinity and femininity elements consciously or unconsciously linked to the sense of self as gendered” (p.104). Whereas objective gender encompasses “claims about women's self-in-relation, greater ease with dependency or intimacy, weaker superego, or ego fusion and empathy in the service of mothering, in contrast to men's,” subjective gender includes “fantasies about one's gender, sexual fantasies consciously or unconsciously connected with sense of gender as it relates to body image, core gender identity, or gender identifications” (p.104).

The concept of a pattern constitutes a useful bridge between observed and subjective gender, generalization and clinical case. The investigator needs to hold a variety of patterns of development and psychology in the back of his or her mind: “we keep all sorts of potentially contradictory theories and generalization (not just those about gender and sexuality) in mind, recognizing them as patterns as we come across them in particular moment” (p.107). The existence of patterns allows the analyst to draw on contradictory or mutual exclusive theories, so as to enlarge the capacity to grasp human diversity (p.108). However, I argue that on a closer investigation the emphasis on individual cases ignores the generalizations and patterns developed within *The Reproduction of Mothering*. There is no longer “a more complex object relations world” within women than within men. Relationality disappears as being more important in women’s development than in men’s development. Idealization of mothers and fathers is no longer explained as outcome of the reproduction of mothering. While

generalizations are declared significant, they do not do any work in Chodorow's argument. Previous generalizations such as women tend to feel more comfortable with intimacy and dependence than men; little boys are more physically aggressive than little girls; women tend toward hysteria; and men toward obsessiveness lack any impact on her clinical observations.

Chodorow recognizes the value of social inequality and discusses the idealization of masculinity. She thinks that "often, but not always" the male-female contrasts are based on male dominance, privilege or superiority (p.88). She stresses that prevalent psychological intertwining of sexuality, gender, inequality, and power, all saturated with introjective and projective meanings, "show why psychoanalysts need to take both a clinical and cultural stance" (p.88). Yet, the social dimension of gender seems to be rather a caveat to the central discussion around the individual creation of gender. She argues that psychoanalysis uses universalization and similarity to collapse individuality and difference, but doesn't flesh out how individuality and generalization are psychoanalytically compatible. She argues that there is a gap between clinical cases or what analysts "experience and observe transferenceally, clinically and empirically," and what most theoretical and developmental accounts claim about "the psychology of women and the role of gender in the transference" (p.93), but she doesn't show how the gap can be reduced or eliminated.

Although gestured at in *The Power of the Feelings*, social theory does not do any work in the description of Chodorow's cases. Her claim that she is interested in both the objective and the subjective gender is not put to work within the content of her theory of meaning. In *The Reproduction of Mothering*, the family creates the conditions for social injustice and is influenced by larger social patterns. Men replicate patterns of strong dependence and often lack self-generated goals. Women have a more complex inner world of objects and often are better at distinguishing between emotional and sexual relations. Women tend to struggle with separation from their mothers and idealize their fathers. Men tend to desire a primary fusion with their wives and partners, so as to recreate the relationship with their mothers. These are some of the generalizations that were firmly establishing Chodorow's as a powerful social thinker. However, in her second theory, class, race and non-heterosexual sexualities are disregarded.

A topic that Chodorow is strongly interested in theorizing is culture. Her theory pays attention to cultural norms and Chodorow's aims at "integrating consideration in psychoanalytic theory and clinical understanding of the constitutive role of culture in the psyche" (9). Yet, her understanding of culture has at times reifying overtones and her charge that feminist theories exclude a focus on individual neglects diversity within feminism. Cultures become reified because in Chodorow's interpretation her analysands' responses to shame are contextualized only as outcomes of classic patriarchies. How does she describe cultural shame? She investigates individual cases when women show a powerful feeling of shame about mother, self and gender. Different individuals feel shame about either "inadequate female body compared with her mother," or the mother's "inability to hold down a job" (121). From those individual cases, Chodorow generalizes to a woman's "prevalent animation of gender."¹³ She backs up her thesis with anthropological research that shows a phenomenon such as "weeping for the mother" in classic patriarchies, which are father-dominant kinship systems where models of female subservience are predominant. In Chodorow's analysis, "weeping for the

¹³ "A woman's prevalent animation of gender may be characterized by guilt for leaving home, for being professionally successful, for surviving mother and father, or for having harmed them" (121).

mother” is a particular intense form of guilt. N – one of Chodorow’s analysands - feels sad and helpless that she can’t help her mother trapped in a patriarchal dynamic (122). This feeling of sadness and guilt interferes with N’s freedom.

Chodorow discusses patients that live in the US, but she refers to classic patriarchy as characterizing societies in North Africa, China, India or to Mediterranean and Latino cultures (p.121, 122). When she discusses her women patients, they all have the “weeping for the mother” symptom. There is this tension between the examples that she draws on from her US patients, and the location of cultural oppression. Because Chodorow talks about gender oppression in other cultures, it looks like the location of the family inequality and patriarchy is not the US. Her critique aims at forms of classic patriarchy, which one finds into other cultures. Social criticism is about other “cultures” and not about “our” society.

How does Chodorow’s articulates her awareness of class and gender case’ analysis? We saw that in Chodorow’s view, cultural or social patterns help create different object worlds and different self-formed boundaries in men and women. She claims that those patterns are individualized and “projectively and introjectively animated in individual, particularized ways” (p.113). Chodorow’ examples about different experiences of women in analysis, for instance, point out the variety and complexity of their problems: “In a single woman patient, one day her own breasts, the next day her mother’s, are a topic of rage or hope. The following week, pregnancy is on her mind. Two months later, she is preoccupied with thoughts and feelings about her vagina. Next, she dreams about her brother’s penis” (p.118).

However, the explanation moves from patterns to difference and particular response. There is no indication of how relationality or idealizations of parents affect the individualized sense of gender. One of her patients, K, is analyzed as having an intense shame around her genitalia that takes over a male-female anatomical difference. K is disgusted at her mother’s large genitalia, in comparison with her little-girl body. There is no indication about how the patient developed that feeling of shame within family and larger social structures that looks at “big” as unwomanly. Nor about how a particular feeling of shame is related to K’s class status or race. Another patient, J, is analyzed as having powerful anger towards her analyst. J’s notion of gender, for Chodorow, indicates how gender is different things at different times. J’s gender “concerns the fantasy of male anger and interpersonal aggression,” at one time. At another time, it presupposes “comparative strength and the ability to defend oneself” (p.81). “The objective gender” doesn’t play any role in analysis, and anger is thoroughly individualized. Chodorow’s analysis seems to ignore relational tools such as counter-transference and self-disclosure.

Would be a violation of the practice of a psychoanalyst to develop analysis of social conditions and/or of her reactions to the patients’ story? Would be a violation of Chodorow’s methodology to look at class as being critical for understanding her patients? Elisabeth Spelman has criticized the tendency in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, and more largely, within feminist theory, to see gender as “a variable of human identity *independent* of other variables such as race and class.” The flaws in Chodorow’s first theory are imported into her second theory of meaning. Spelman notices that mothering in *The Reproduction of Mothering* is informed by the mother’s relation to her husband, her economic dependence on him, and her experience of male dominance. Yet, she asks, “do families have no racial or class or ethnic identity?” (p.85). Moreover, “if children are said to be prepared to participate in a sexually unequal society, why aren’t they also said to be prepared to participate in a society where there are racial, class, and other forms of inequality?” (p.86). She notices that Chodorow’s explanation does not engage with the sexism or classism or racism of women.

Spelman rightly notices that “any theory that posits sexism as the foundation of other forms of oppression thereby makes it highly unlikely that women will be seen as significant contributors to those other forms of oppression” (p.93). She makes clear that she does not imply that women have the same role in sexism, racism or classism that men have. More importantly, the methodological danger is that by obscuring the contribution of women to patriarchy leads to a psychoanalytic determinism that excludes agency. In Spelman’s tongue in cheek formulation, a woman may react this way: “How handy: I couldn’t possibly be a racist or a classist, since my psyche just did not develop that way?” (p.94).

A few authors that struggle with the neglect of social theory in psychoanalysis (Neil Altman, Lynne Layton) show how Chodorow’s approach can be improved. They argue that psychoanalysts need to look both at their emotional reactions in therapy and at the social context of treatment in order to understand their patients. I use two vignettes to flesh out their claims. An extremely rich patient, Mr. A is in therapy with Neil Altman. For the psychoanalyst who thinks like a social analyst, the analysand’s class position and the analyst’s reactions are useful for thinking about class. Altman notices that his patient worries about his clothes and office furnishing and feels inadequate as an ornamental object. He interprets Mr. A’s neglect by his parents as being expressed through A’s relationship with an accountant (76). Class is involved in the mediated relationship that the psychoanalyst has with Mr. A, because Mr. A treats him like a lower class person. Mr. A’s parents treated him as he was an inferior person. For Altman, class becomes crucial in analyzing patients. His question is: “How can one pretend to be analyzing the transference or countertransference if these issues are not considered, engaged, and understood as meaningful aspects of the experience between patient and analyst?” (p.77). Altman’s raises important questions about the participation of the therapist in upholding traditional class norms and suggest that only a deep investigation of how class affects both the therapist and the client leads to a better therapeutic process. Unlike Chodorow, he is very aware that his class position and the relationship that he establishes with his patient is key to understanding his patient.

Lynne Layton is a powerful critical psychoanalyst who uses sophisticated tools to understand the role of gender and class in therapy. In one of her vignettes, she discusses one of her cases where she unconsciously imposes heteronormative standards to a lesbian analysand. When the patient reports elaborate fantasies that involve her, Layton responds by saying that she did not have to worry about touching her in the wrong way, because they are not going to become sexual. She later realized that she sustained a straight-gay split, upheld oppressive social and gender norms, and shut down the sexuality of her patient, as well as hers. With her client, Layton feared the arousal of her own homosexual desires. Both Altman and Layton show that gender and social norms are an inherent part of therapy and that understanding the relationship between them goes beyond a focus on an individual dimension of gender. Both show that psychoanalysts’ responses and the social underpinnings of therapy need better theorizing to account for the processes that engage with sexism, heteronormativity and classism. Both are very aware that their work is part of a process where traditional class and gender norms are part of the interaction. Unlike Chodorow, whom ignores the influence of class and gender on her own professional attitude, Altman and Layton’s work clearly shows that the work of understanding social oppression starts with the analysts themselves.

Although Chodorow sees herself as object-relations thinker who is influenced by relational psychoanalysis, she is reluctant to disclose her counter-transference. Like a classical oriented therapist, Chodorow does not analyze her own reactions. She does not analyze that her reactions are part of a relational matrix. Her interpretations show that analytical meanings

arise from her patients' life rather than from a process where the analyst and analysand are partners in thought. She claims that intersubjectivity is important, but at the same time she worries that a two-person or relational psychology, and implicitly, an analysis of counter-transference, would flatten and oversimplify inner life. She strongly places herself within a one-person psychology, where the central role is played in the intra-psychic rather than in inter-subjective life. Her lack of concern with her own reactions is translated into a lack of concern with social theory. If she had been more concerned with a dialogical therapeutic process, then her analysands would not only react to "classic patriarchies," but also to oppressive norms that are part of the therapeutic setting. She would be engaged with oppression in the "here and now" rather than displacing it to other countries or "cultural pockets" within US. If she would worry about the construction of social meaning in inter-personal dynamic, then she would be more aware about the impact of social oppression on people's lives.

Chodorow's lack of attention to class, race and gender is not an exception within psychoanalysis. Feminists tried to make the case that any analysis of social conditions has to take into account the plurality of forms of social oppression. As Layton and Altman show in their examples, analysis can only learn and progress from incorporating different social concerns. The retreat from generalizations has as a downside an exclusive focus on individual processes of understanding. I claim that the larger social patterns that Chodorow investigated within her first theory need to be incorporated in a theory that takes at face value gendered responses to dependency and processes of separation from mothers. A critical psychoanalytic theory would carefully incorporate different social elements that would be examined in therapy. Not only psychologists would gain from such a theory, but also feminist thinkers. Feminists would deepen their insights related to oppression by having the larger discipline of psychoanalysis as a resource to practices of healing and understanding.

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