Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications
and other research outputs

Paradox in the pursuit of a critical theorization of the development of self in family relationships

Journal Item

For guidance on citations see FAQs.

Version: [not recorded]

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:
http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1177/0959354306066201

oro.open.ac.uk

Paradox in the Pursuit of a Critical Theorization of the Development of Self in Family Relationships.

Wendy Hollway
Open University

ABSTRACT. This article starts with my dissatisfaction with the post-structuralist treatment of the production of subjectivity within regulatory discourses and practices due to its neglect of psychological processes. Taking starting points from within the history set out in the previous article, it highlights the paradox for critical psychologists like myself involved in both applying a post-structuralist critique to 'psy' discourses and trying to theorize subjectivity in a way that goes beyond the dualism of individual and society, of psychology and sociology. The relational, or intersubjective, approach to self that originates in object relations psychoanalysis as it emerged in the mid-20th-century UK is central to both of these activities; object of the former and resource for the latter. I explore the paradox that this creates for critical psychology, both epistemological and ontological. In aiming to provide a psycho-social account of self in family relationships, I deploy the radical conceptualisation of intersubjectivity initiated in British object relations theory as a way of going beyond both the individualized self and the neglect of psychological processes in constructionist theorizing subjectivity.

KEY WORDS: intersubjectivity, object relations, psycho-social, self, subjectivity

Introduction: The Paradox

The historical and cultural study of diverse codes of the constitution of subjectivity, or the historical study of the formation of the individual, does not answer the question: what mechanisms and dynamics are involved in the developmental process through which the human infant, a vulnerable and dependent body, becomes a distinct self with the ability to speak its

language and the ability to participate in the complex social processes which define its world? (Benhabib, 1992, p. 217)

Benhabib's formulation is an incisive example of a criticism that has been levelled at recent post-structuralist and, more generally, constructionist theories of the constitution of subjectivity, namely that they neglect the internal psychological processes in self formation. However, it is these accounts that have tended to dominate European - and certainly British - critical psychology. Critical challenges to the individualized idea of self have been prominent in social theory and psychology for several decades, as recent debates in this journal have illustrated (Drewery, 2005;; Sampson, 2003; Shotter & Lannaman, 2002 see also McNamee & Gergen, 1999). They have enabled a new, invigorated social psychology which takes a social constructionist stance to subjectivity and self (Gergen, 2001; Sampson, 1993a; Wetherell, 1998). My formation as a social psychologist, coupled with the 'cultural turn' in British social science, has been strongly infuenced by this critical history. It has caused me to lean heavily towards a discursive account of subjectivity, until, in danger of falling off completely (i.e. **totally abandoning psychological processes in my account of individual action), I have been trying to correct my balance. In drawing strongly from the British object relations tradition in psychoanalysis, some would say that I am leaning too heavily in the other direction. Nonetheless, I now count myself among those, like Benhabib above, who regard the post-structuralist account as insufficiently cognizant of the psychological processes whereby the recursive formation

of selves within their life settings is not only mediated by complex material, discursive and relational influences but also by dynamic, intersubjective, unconscious processes.

Social constructionist challenges involved several different emphases. The critical use of discourse analysis has ranged from the Foucauldian kind to what is usually known as discursive psychology, which takes as its focus discourse itself, rather than the speaker or writer (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This kind is now influential in qualitative social psychology. Recently, Drewery (2005) took up the challenge of explaining agency in this framework by emphasizing the performative character of talk (e.g. 'persons** who are participants in the conversations that produce the meanings of their lives are in an agentic position', p. 315). Both discursive and developmental perspectives emphasize the central importance of relational dynamics in the constitution of selves, but discursive psychology finds no need for a concept of unconscious conflict, emphasizing instead how subjects are positioned, or take up positions, in dialogue with others. In this respect it is antithetical to psychoanalysis, its history being based on the radical rejection of an internal world; a rejection based on the critique of cognitive psychology and how it theorized attitudes (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

My discursive starting point in the companion article (Hollway, 2006) was rather in the history of developmental accounts of self in family relations, using Foucauldian discourse analysis. Its contestation of psychoanalysis is based on a different emphasis, namely on its scepticism

about the truth claims of any expert discourse, which are viewed with automatic suspicion because of their implication in power-knowledge-practice relations. The tendency of post-structuralist analysis is to see psychoanalytic discourse as complicit in the subjectification of persons through its discourses and practices, rather than being capable of generating valid knowledge about familial subjects. The object relations tradition on which I draw in this article has not been exempt from these critiques as they have been applied to family figures (e.g. Rose, 1990; Smart, Neale, & Wade, 2001).

Power-knowledge-practice relations are easily discerned in the material of the companion article, as I demonstrated: for example, in the way that the developmental technology of measured milestones of normal development contributed to a tyranny of the normal and the authority of the label 'abnormal'. Yes, expert discourses and practices shape subjectivity in the way that writers like Nikolas Rose meticulously argue. The lack that is crucial in my dissatisfaction with both these types of constructionist challenge to psychology is that neither adopts a developmental account of subjectivity. In contrast, I want to ask, taking Benhabib's conclusion as my starting point, how subjectivity (or 'self') is formed within primary relations, and for this I draw on the tradition of object relations psychoanalysis, even while** critiquing certain individualized notions of the self.

In the companion article, I demonstrated the considerable variation in theorizing the development of subjectivity between discourses, notably

between psychology and psychoanalysis, and between attachment and object relations discourses within psychoanalysis. I demonstrated that these variations were a product of uneven changes in epistemology, methodology, professional location and form of intervention. By pointing to these uneven developments, I wanted to mitigate a potentially rather monolithic analysis of subjectification by showing the dynamic and diverse character of 'psy' discourses. I also found some to be better than others. This claim raises the epistemological question of the reality against which their validity is evaluated. Without this, the idea that I can both retain a post-structuralist perspective on developmental psychoanalysis and use a version of it to theorize subjectivity would be untenable.

So I intend to bear this in mind as I draw on the accounts of self development in 20th-century British object relations theory in order to extract principles which, in my view, are better - sound and useful - for understanding subjectivity psycho-socially. They are 'sound' because they are inserted in a history of openness to complex, socially based evidence, informed by sophisticated ontology and epistemology, and 'useful' because they have been tested and theoretically refined through professional practice. (See next section for elaboration.)

Psycho-social is a term that has recently re-emerged in two disparate social science discourses with contested meanings. In the largely positivist tradition of health sciences, for example, it is often found hyphenated, along with biology ('bio-psycho-social'), to refer to the additive treatment of different levels of analysis in the same research framework.

The treatment is invariably atheoretical. In contrast, my usage here and elsewhere (see also Frosh, 2003; Hollway & Jefferson 2005; Jefferson, 2003) derives from a commitment to understand subjectivity and agency in a way that transcends individual-social dualism and draws on psychoanalysis for this purpose. In this perspective, we are *psycho*-social because we are products of a unique life history of anxiety- and desire-provoking life events and the manner in which they have been transformed in internal reality. We are psycho-*social* because such defensive activities affect and are affected by material conditions and discourses (systems of meaning which pre-exist any given individual), because unconscious defences are intersubjective processes (i.e. they affect and are affected by others with whom we are in communication), and because of the real events in the external, social world which are discursively, desirously and defensively appropriated. For me the hyphen should be retained if it signifies the principle that wherever you find the social, you find psychic processes in the making of it (and, of course, vice versa) (Hollway, 2004, p. 7). This approach to subjectivity requires, in my view, a life-historical, developmental account of selves, albeit formed in the process of their practical engagement with the social, material and discursive worlds. It is this that various constructionist critiques have rejected.

It is probably relevant at this point to say that the above critique closely mirrors my own intellectual trajectory. Disillusioned with the individualism of 20th-century positivist psychology, I looked to sociology

and eventually concluded that too often it mirrored psychology's own blind spots. A psycho-social approach to subjectivity is my attempt to transcend that dualism. Until recently, psychoanalysis has been hard to come by in British academic culture, and it is only because it offered an endless supply of insights into subjectivity (my own included) that I, and others, have pursued it, through its many varieties and along with its many critics. Feminism provided the permission to bring one's own experience into academic work. It has probably been my experience of motherhood that has contributed most to the position represented here, challenging my earlier idea of relationality and insisting on a developmental turn in my psycho-social theorization of subjectivity.

My question here, namely how self is formed in primary (family) relationships, is similar to the question that developmental psychoanalysts such as Winnicott were posing. This ontological question is the primary focus of this article. However, it is preceded by an epistemological one, since critical psychology has taught me to situate claims to knowledge within a nexus of power-knowledge-practice relations, as I did in the companion article. Herein lies the paradox referred to in the title of this article. How can the 'psy' disciplines claim to know anything about subjectivity if their knowledges are uniformly compromised by being a product of power relations (however multiple, productive and microscopic) that produce Truth (in Foucault's terminology) but refuse the possibility of, even the question of, specific, located truths (in critical realist terminology)?

Psychology's and psychoanalysis's epistemology have both been realist, in the sense that they assume that there are better and worse ways of understanding people and that there are criteria according to which one can judge the validity of knowledge. Twentieth-century psychology's belief in the accessibility of truth, via a scientific method, is now widely regarded as naive and has been modified, for many, by the idea that all reality is multiply socially mediated. (As I shall argue, it would be more satisfactory if these multiple mediations included intra-psychic and intersubjective, as well as discursive, mediations.) The same critique has left the idea of scientific objectivity lacking in credibility in psychology. What is harder to establish is how psychology proceeds to evaluate its knowledge claims given these critiques. It can either give up on the idea of evaluating truth claims altogether (even when reality is acknowledged in principle, as it often must be, but not included in the analysis) and take the position that they are all 'Truths', or it can find a way of evaluating truth claims in a reality that is multiply mediated. The latter is a critical realist position.

My epistemological question draws me back into what I regard as the paradox of critical psychology: to conduct this epistemological exercise I need to posit some theoretical principles concerning human subjectivity, specifically about the way people know and avoid knowing things about their surrounding reality. I draw on object relations psychoanalysis for this purpose. Yet, in using these I lay myself open to the post-structuralist argument that psychoanalytic knowledge is a product of (oppressive)

power-knowledge-practice relations and is therefore compromised. Does this mean that I should not be basing any claims upon it?

Hospitalized children

In order to pursue the epistemological question, I shall take one of the historical examples described briefly in the companion article: the care of hospitalized children. I have chosen this because I am persuaded that the knowledge produced was better than what preceded it, and this requires that I explicate my criteria and epistemological justification for concluding this. A claim about better or worse knowledge does not entail an assumption of progress in knowledge generally, of the kind that has often underpinned positivist approaches to science. The claim is restricted to these cases. In other cases, new knowledges can entail new blindnesses, for example when the idea of women's needs (progressive in other respects) entails a denial that children's needs do or should impact on mothers and women primary carers (as well as fathers).

It is tautologous to point out that a new power-knowledge-practice nexus emerged in the course of changing the regime for hospitalized children to enable the continuation of their primary attachments and facilitate surrogate attachments with hospital workers. The fruitful question is how did this happen? In particular, for my present, epistemological, purposes, what contribution did evidence (of children suffering separation) make in this change and in what sense was this valid? One feature of the answer involves correcting what I see as a social (or social power) deterministic tendency in post-structuralist and discourse

theory, by using a psycho-social approach to production and change in knowledge in the 'psy' disciplines.

In the post-war British context, James Robertson and his wife Joyce pursued a successful campaign to enable parents to have more contact with their hospitalized children and to change the nursing regime in children's wards. The pre-war treatment of children in hospital can usefully be understood as an expression of power-knowledge-practice relations where the object of knowledge was construed as the individual child with physical needs that could be addressed in the medical environment of a hospital ward. This produced a Truth (using Foucault's capital) that in its turn guided practice and reinforced certain blindnesses; in this case the blindness to the young child's emotional suffering precipitated by the loss of his or her primary relationships. However, the discourse that constructed the physically ill, 'settled', individual child should not be taken as entirely shaping the behaviour of the children or positioning them wholly successfully within its confines. Their treatment was, in Foucault's terms, an instance of 'subjectification'; in other words they were subject to a regime that had definite effects on their subjectivity. At the same time, their behaviour, both during and after hospitalisation, remained a mute testimony to what was not malleable in their psychological make-up. It provided evidence of the wrongness of their treatment, and it was attention to this behaviour and its later dissemination through the powerful medium of film that helped to change paediatric practices in Britain.

James Robertson was indeed** a purveyor of a new discourse, the attachment discourse, whose emergence and trajectory I documented in the companion article. He was** conducting the fieldwork for Bowlby on a project 'to observe and describe the behaviour of young children during and after separation from the mother' (Robertson & Robertson, 1989, p. 10). From a constructionist position, we can say that this new knowledge, inserted into a nexus of power-knowledge-practice relations, produced a new truth of the child subject, psychological rather than physical; an emotional, relational one, emphasizing a child suffering a loss of attachment. This is convincing as far as it goes. It is probable that without the emergence of this new discourse, the Robertsons would not have seen what they did see in the behaviour of young hospitalized children.

Where doctors and nurses typically construed a happy ward as a quiet one where children had 'settled' after a period of temporary upset after admission, Robertson saw evidence of the phases through which children were said to move, following an attachment discourse, in response to separation from an attachment figure: 'those who had been in hospital for some months had moved from Protest and Despair into the third phase which I called Denial/Detachment (denying the wish for relationships)' (Robertson & Robertson, 1989, p. 15). The mental health consequences of a long period in this phase for long-stay especially very young children were very serious, in Robertson's view. He sought and found evidence for this through long-term follow-up of children who returned home after hospitalisation.

I am claiming that the behaviour of these children - the material of human subjectivity as expressed in that particular time and place - was better described by Robertson than by the preceding discourse, and that valid evidence was adduced to demonstrate this. If this sounds like positivist language, it is because I want to reclaim key aspects of realism, in the light of a post-structuralist critique. Of course the evidence was mediated by the new discourse, but my argument is that this does not make the reality inaccessible to an evaluation of its validity. (Likewise the fact of my own location within a multiplicity of discourses that differ from those available in 1950s Britain requires acknowledgement and analysis but does not constitute grounds for giving up the possibility of evaluating the validity of knowledge.)

The new discourse made huge gains on the old in terms of understanding the children's suffering and the effect of hospitalisation on their future problems. It also had its own blind spots, which in the companion article I have mentioned more broadly in relation to Bowlbyism. For example, in the Robertsons' case study materials (Robertson & Robertson, 1989), fathers were clearly often involved and perturbed on their children's behalf, as well as mothers. In this sense, where a new discourse can be claimed as more valid than an old one (or vice versa), this is not tantamount to claiming that research has arrived at the truth of the phenomenon under study. The key position of the mother-child dyad in the discourse forced into the background an understanding of the effect on the child of loss of the other relationships and daily activity

that constituted home and family, including in particular those with father and siblings. All these were lost when a child was hospitalized. One of the virtues of detailed case studies is that these elements can be retrieved from the data (as in the example of the Cambridge evacuees' data and Mitchell's later discovery of the importance of siblings for children's adjustment, see Hollway, 2006a), even if they are lost from the generalisations that are more firmly entrenched in the discourse.

Because I argue that there is evidence ('unruly' evidence) in the children's behaviour of elements of subjectivity that were not wholly confined within the dominant pre-war discourse, I need to ask why the doctors and nurses of the period were blind to it. A discursive answer is that they saw through the lens of a discourse of the individual 'settled' child. This is likely to be refined by pointing to the institutional practices that supported the discourse, for example a system of job allocation that meant that nurses were not allocated to particular children. Robertson identifies both discursive and institutional factors but he goes further and provides what I would call a psycho-social explanation:

> They [doctors and nurses] had inherited a system of care that was geared to ensuring that the system functioned smoothly with the focus of attention on physical illness, and were defended against recognizing the distress and danger for mental health caused. … The fact that under-fives cried on being visited was noted as 'trouble', not as a danger sign. (Robertson & Robertson, 1989, p. 9)

What Robertson adds to a social explanation is the idea of doctors' and nurses' defences against distress and trouble. In other words, the pre-war nexus of power-knowledge-practice was not only socially but also psychologically mediated. Menzies' (1960) work on social defences against anxiety among nurses in hospital established this idea more widely and in detail.

As well as going into children's wards with a different discourse, Robertson was able to identify with the children he met there, despite the distress this caused him. He used an emotional mode of knowing that chimed with the theoretical discourse of attachment and loss he had espoused. This also influenced his choice of method. He filmed children over time in hospital because it came closest to what he called the 'actuality'. In its proximity to the children's emotions it facilitated channels of identification that were crucial in enabling viewers to see distress where before they had seen trouble, a necessary precedent to changes in practice. In Robertson's words: 'when told by the visual medium the story was powerful; it [the film *John*] pierced defences and caused much disturbance in viewers. The reactions of a few colleagues convinced us we had a bomb on our hands' (Robertson & Robertson, 1989, p. 89).

In the companion article, I pointed to methodology and the intervention setting as factors in the production and change of 'psy' discourses; factors which also influenced the divergence of various 'psy' discourses because methods not only produce different knowledges but are

more or less open to unruly evidence. Attachment theory mediated the evidence because it influenced what they noticed and then how the Robertsons filmed and edited it, but it did not create the children's distress, which was real and equally outside the control of the dominant paradigm and the attachment paradigm. A psycho-social account of how such evidence is or is not accessible to research requires taking account of psychological mediations (intrapsychic, such as denial and splitting, and intersubjective, such as projective identification, for example) as well as discursive mediations and the effects of institutional arrangements.

The take-up of this new discourse and its effect on paediatric practices depended on the modification of defences against anxiety in researchers and practitioners. According to psychoanalysis, this is achieved most effectively by symbolization, in other words by articulating experiences in language or discourse. Along with the availability of this new discourse, the resultant potential for identification was a further important factor that enabled first one researcher and then paediatric professionals to reinterpret the evidence. This evidence of children's distress exceeded the confines of the discourse and practices within which it had been packaged to avoid trouble. Thus the success of the Robertsons' intervention involved methods whose strength was in communicating the evidence in ways that influenced the defences, not just the discourses, of practitioners; in other words, it involved psychological as well as social processes, or, better still, so as to defy the binary: it involved psycho-social processes.

By taking one example of institutional change - one that reverberated through the next decade and influenced the findings of the Platt report on nursing education in 1965 - I have tried to demonstrate how a psychodynamic account of change can supplement the dominantly social account that is characteristic of post-structuralist Foucauldian discourse analysis. In summary, the Robertsons' research and intervention helped to produce a new discourse of child subjectivity but in so doing did not produce a new child subjectivity.

Intersubjectivity

Having argued for a critical realist approach to epistemology, I can now proceed to address ontology, in order to ask on what kind of subjectivity do power-knowledge-practice regimes impose themselves. Intersubjectivity is an ontological concept that has gained prominence in three traditions of psychological theorizing: phenomenology, developmental psychology and psychoanalysis. I described the approach of the second two in the companion article. (Phenomenology differs from psychoanalysis principally in its emphasis on conscious experience, in contrast to psychoanalysis's emphasis on a dynamic unconscious** which is central to the account I develop here.) I include in intersubjectivity the unconscious flowing of mental states between one person and another that constantly modifies them. In the companion article, I showed that in the UK the 20th century saw a significant shift from discourses defining the individual child to relational discourses, and the relationship between child and mother/carer was the key paradigm. However, the ways in which this can be theorized

with regard to self development are varied and, as I showed, there were differences between Bowlby's and Winnicott's approaches. For these purposes, I am interested in the way that Winnicott's account of the mother–infant relationship provided a radical means of going beyond the idea of two bounded individuals who interact. As I shall argue, his work and the wider tradition of British object relations in which it is situated enable a conceptualization of intersubjectivity that preserves both the individuality and the intersubjectivity of selves. Conflicts and dynamic tension between these remains a defining feature of adult subjectivity too.

The Kleinian idea of subjectivity was succinctly summed up by Joan Riviere**(1959): 'we are members one of another' (p. 359). To capture this idea I refer to intersubjectivity, as opposed to relationality, because it unsettles the assumption of two (or more) distinct individuals who can then conduct a relationship and introduces the idea of a person whose internal world is made up of parts of all the people who have affected him or her. Money-Kyrle put it well when he said 'there is a continual unconscious wandering of other personalities into ourselves. … Every person, then, is many persons; a multitude made into one' (quoted in Brown, 1966, pp. 146–147). It is worth noting that this view is complemented by William James's philosophical and more social view of the self at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. He regarded people as having multiple selves: 'a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind' (James, 1890/1981, cited in Danziger, 1997, p. 148).

The fortunes of Winnicott's intersubjective account of self development have been mixed in the intervening decades. From being embedded within health and social care practices in the 1950s and 1960s, developmental psychoanalytic perspectives lost ground with a shift in British social sciences from a focus on the individual to social conditions. Feminism, arriving on the scene in the 1970s, largely shared these sociological preferences. However, when sociological theories of social change seemed to have failed to transform gender relations, psychoanalysis experienced a renewal. More broadly it was used in reconceptualizing subjectivity following the critique of a Kantian, Enlightenment individual based on assumptions of autonomy, rationality and intentionality. The psychoanalytic tenet that action was governed as much by unconscious dynamics as by conscious intention decentred the rational unitary subject (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984). The huge influence in British academic feminism of Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) demonstrated a central concern with the impact of mothering on the production of her children's gendered subjectivity. From then on the relational nature of subjectivity was firmly on the feminist and critical psychology agenda in the UK.

Psychoanalysis's key shift from a drive-based to a relational paradigm ('object relations theory' in the British case, which is what I am largely drawing on) is usually attributed to Melanie Klein. For her the significant unconscious dynamics, those that were formative of the psyche, were intersubjective: that is, they operated between people. The early

psychological state of the infant is, according to Klein (1952/1988), the result of splitting, where bad and good experiences are split off from each other. One of the split elements - the bad, for example - can then be projected, can in fantasy be located in another person, in order to protect the self from such threatening experiences.

At a time before the infant can experience any self boundaries, these are provided by the mother: 'until the child has collected memory material, there is no room for the mother's disappearance' (Winnicott, 1949/1975, p. 267). Bion (1967) saw this in terms of the container (mother) and contained (infant). Projective identification for him is a form of unconscious communication which enables the receptive mother to experience the feelings of her baby, transform them by using her mind, and through her body and emotional state communicate these modified, hopefully detoxified, feelings back to the infant, who can feel them to be bearable. The infant in this way borrows the mother's mind, which only gradually becomes internalized to the point where it is the baby's own resource. These are some of the developmental principles of object relations theory, and they have implications for adult subjectivity too.

Object relations theory takes as its central premise the idea of an internal world. In object relations theory, the internal world is 'a world of phantasy, made up of the self and other internal objects - persons, things, ideas and values that matter to us' (Fakhry Davids, 2002, p. 67). This world of inner phantasy relationships 'provides a template for our interactions with the outside world [and] is itself shaped by these' (p. 67).

In this world real external objects are blended with projections, which is 'a momentous psychic achievement as it allows aspects of mental life unacceptable to the self to exist in objects that are contained within the mind' (p. 67). It also ensures creativity and enables agentic subjectivity to be accounted for in a way that is not dependent on an assumption of rational, intentional, unitary subjectivity (Hollway & Jefferson, 2005).

What these accounts of intersubjectivity have in common is a notion of a dynamic unconscious: 'the way in which our mind transforms new relations into old ones (transference); others into parts of ourselves (introjection); and parts of ourselves into others (projection)' (Alford, 2002, p. 3), and it is this that distinguishes them from relational theories which revert to an idea of relationship between conscious, intentional bounded individuals (see Hollway in press, ch. 2)

The idea of an internal world has been rejected by the vast majority of social scientists following the discursive turn, a turn premised on the disavowal of anything irreducibly psychic about subjectivity. The new sociology of childhood, which emerged in the UK close to the end of the 20th century, is a case in point. Its hostility to the idea of an internal world combined with two other features. The first was a political commitment to children's rights. The second was a rejection of the idea of development. Although based on a legitimate critique of developmentalism (i.e. of viewing development as fixed, staged and normative), this was over-generalized to reject the idea that some things do happen before others in child development (see Hollway, 2006, for the discussion of a

move from stage to phase). What emerges in the new sociology of childhood is an idea of an autonomous, rational subject which is applied as uncritically to children as it has been to adults (Christensen & James, 2000; Smart, Neale, & Wade, 2001). It is as if, as part of the politics of treating children more like adults, recent sociology of childhood has forgotten the politics of critiquing the Enlightenment adult subject.

Nonetheless, the new sociology of childhood made it possible to hear the stories children have to tell, for example about their families after divorce (Smart et al., 2001), in which they could position themselves as responsible agents in their families. Smart et al. contrast this with the 'psychologization** of childhood' (p. 24), referring dismissively to the developments that I have referred to as the growth of the relational mother-child paradigm. They hold the paradigm responsible for what they call 'harmism', the tendency to see only harm in the breaking up of families (p. 37).

As in this example, there is a danger of emphasizing unconscious intersubjectivity in the constitution of subjectivity at the expense of understanding the achievement of individuation and autonomy. Psychoanalysis makes the distinction between secondary process, the conscious, more intentional level of thought guiding action, where people's experience is of a distinct and bounded self and others, and primary process, characterized by unconscious intersubjectivity, which is experientially prior and never thoroughly superseded by consciousness, continuing to exert a defining influence on subjectivity, actions and

relations. Winnicott, and psychoanalysis more generally, sees separation and the ability to differentiate between one's own wishes and those emanating from outside as being crucial in the gradual achievement of self. Babies struggle to achieve unit status, and total independence is not the outcome of development. Winnicott (1968) understands children as proceeding from 'absolute dependence, rapidly changing to relative dependence, and always travelling towards (but never reaching) independence' (p. 90). His fine-grained descriptions of the development of false self structures in babies responding to their mother's (or other carer's) sensitivity to their spontaneous gestures is an outstanding example of such an approach (Winnicott, 1965). The result of failure to separate and differentiate can be adults who 'are unable to take in that the other person does not want what we want, do what we say' (Benjamin, 1998, p. 86).

Beyond Early Object Relations

As object relations theory gained and lost ground during the second half of the 20th century, its take-up beyond clinical practice, notably by feminist theory, led to an emphasis on the two-person relationship at the expense of other configurations. Beyond this dyadic emphasis, I want to pick out three more recent trends that take forward the understanding of self in primary relationships: the first involves ways of conceptualizing the dynamic relationship between individuality and intersubjectivity; the second goes beyond dyadic relations by focusing on triangular space; and

the third reintroduces sibling relationships into the dynamics of self formation.

Thomas Ogden (1994/1999) says that in his concept of the 'analytic third', he is indebted to Winnicott's famous claim that 'there is no such thing as a baby (apart from maternal provision)' (p. 462). Typical of many conceptual developments in psychoanalysis, his empirical examples are derived from his psychoanalytic practice. The 'analytic third' captures the radical nature of intersubjective dynamics: 'the dialectical movement of subjectivity and intersubjectivity', an interaction of two people at a psychic level. The third is 'a creation of the first two who are also created by it' (p. 462). Fred Alford (2002), likewise inspired by Winnicott, conceptualizes the importance of the primary relationship to another in terms of transitional space, one of Winnicott's most creative and influential concepts: 'the maternal is best conceptualized as that transitional space Winnicott writes about, neither self nor other, not because they are confused, but because no one has to ask' (p. 133).

From such developments, I have derived a view of subjectivity as a never-ending dynamic tension between individuality and intersubjectivity (Hollway, in press). In any encounter, real or in fantasy, this dynamic tension is re-engaged. As a result, the subjectivity that emerges is not identical to the subjectivity that entered. This description is not confined to children's development, but applies to changes and continuity throughout life.

My second example of useful theoretical development in object relations theory is one that supplements the dyadic emphasis of Winnicottian theory. From within object relations psychoanalysis has come an emphasis on three-person intersubjectivity. Ron Britton (1998) sums up the argument for the importance of triangular relations in self development as follows:

> If the link between the parents perceived in love and hate can be tolerated in the child's mind, it provides the child with a prototype of an object relationship of a third kind in which he or she is witness and not a participant. [From this vantage point] we can also envisage ourselves being observed … a capacity for entertaining another point of view while retaining our own. (pp. 41-42)

This is a very different experience of oneself in social relations to that of being in the dyad, where one is a direct participant; one's self always in the front line. The dynamic that Britton calls triangulation has drawn psychoanalytic attention back to the role of fathers in child development, not in terms of the child-father dyad but rather in this triangle which emphasizes the importance of the relation between mother and father (or, more generally, two parental figures). This approach has several important contributions to make to an improved perspective on policy. For example, the stress on absent fathers (Youell, 2002) is refined so that it is not simply fathers' physical absence that may be a problem for children's (particularly boys') identity but the 'internal father' that exists in the mother's mind which is bound to affect the child. Likewise the 'internal

father' in the child's mind may be sustaining or not in the absence of the actual father (depending on a life history of both real and fantasied meanings that have gone to make up this image). The theorization of this third figure in children's development also affords scope for thinking about alternative family forms where the other adult carer in the child's family may not be the biological father, or a man.

Bollas (1993), for example, takes the position that 'Rather than emphasize the person of the mother or the father as objects to be internalized, I prefer to speak of them as bearing orders: sets of functions which engage and process the infant' (p. 37). He goes on to differentiate between these orders and the people who embody them:

> By placing certain attributes under the name of the father (for example interpretation) or mother (for example reverie), I am not saying that the father is incapable of reverie or that the mother is not [*sic*] without her own form of interpretation. ... It is important to bear in mind that these orders are not descriptions of how all mothers and fathers behave, but of processes associated with and usually conducted by the mother or the father, who assume differing forms of significance for the developing infant. (p. 37)

Critique from within psychoanalysis of the dominant 20th-century paradigm does not stop there but furnishes my third example. Recently, Juliet Mitchell (2001, 2003) has argued that psychoanalytic theory has been blind to the importance of sibling relationships in self development,

and that if internalized social relationships are the major elements of the psyche (Mitchell, 2003, p. 1), then sibling relationships deserve a central place in thinking about subjectivity. She is writing against the psychoanalytic perspective in which 'the Oedipus complex and preOedipal mother-infant relationship are presented as the only nexuses that link the internal world of unconscious thought processes and affects with the external social world' (p. 190). Evidence for the importance of sibling relationships on subjectivity exists; Mitchell excavates some from the clinical psychoanalytic literature but it was not considered theoretically significant and in psychoanalysis it is usually reinterpreted on to the vertical axis of parental relationships, following the orthodox Freudian emphasis that is encapsulated in the idea of the Oedipus complex. One rather crucial effect of this has been that analysts routinely miss the importance of sibling transferences in their own clinical work, as probably happened in their own training, so that they reproduce the sibling blind spot. This has effects on the body of theory that is continually being refined and revised through clinical experience. Mitchell is seeking not to displace the importance of mothers and fathers, but rather to modify how we understand their influence through including the trauma and developmental challenges that are precipitated by having siblings and the meaning of this in the context of the child's relationship with her or his mother (fathers get little attention in Mitchell's account).

Mitchell's central argument is that babies and children are traumatized when a sibling is born. This trauma (on top of separation

from the mother) is profound, a threat of annihilation of identity, because who am I when I am no longer the baby? The child's experience of the trauma of sibling displacement means that violence is always latent and can be re-enacted in wider sibling-substitute relationships, if not with actual siblings. Hate coexists with love. Love derives from the fact that 'baby' is expected to be a replica of oneself and therefore loved narcissistically. Sex and violence are expressions of these wishes, when acted out. Just as the parent-child relationship is, according to psychoanalysis, an unconscious template for the enactment of all vertical relationships, so sibling relationships are the template for all lateral relationships.

Each of these three areas provides an example of what I consider to lead to improvements in the psychoanalytic theorizing of subjectivity through insights into unconscious intersubjective dynamics.

Conclusions

This article has raised questions about the relationship of two different discursive accounts of the construction of subjectivity to a developmental psychoanalytic account of self. How is it possible to reconcile these? The first, the dialogic or discursive psychology tradition of theorizing subjectivity, has in common with object relations psychoanalysis its emphasis on relationality (or what I prefer to call intersubjectivity). Drewery's work (2005, p. 313) exemplifies this view of subjectivity as a product of discursive interaction. Specifically, the process involves 'position calls': 'a position call invites the person being spoken to into a

particular subject position, which the respondent may or may not take up' (Drewery, 2005, p. 316).** Like Ogden, Drewery takes the view that such everyday encounters change the subjectivities of those involved. Although she refers to her approach as a 'thorough-going constructionism' (p. 321) and she makes no mention of an internal world, nonetheless, within any interaction, there is an individuality engaged in dynamic tension: 'individuals are both the site and the subject of a discursive struggle for identity … formed in relationship with others, mostly (but not entirely) through language' (p. 319). Ogden's concept of the third (above) enables him to see communication (talk and conversation, but also non-verbal forms, unconscious communication and reading) as a process of 'doing battle with one's static self identity through the recognition of a subjectivity (a human I-ness) that is other to oneself' (Ogden, 1994/1999, p. 3). Such formulations, while coming from very different traditions, are not in conflict with each other, although their use of different ontologies results in different emphases.

The post-structuralist account of the production of subjectivity in 'psy' discourses provided my second example of a discourse analytic, constructionist approach. In the light of this critique, the use of object relations accounts posed a paradox about the epistemological status of this knowledge. While agreeing that, as discourses, these will continue to 'infuse and shape the personal investments of individuals' (Rose 1990:129), I have espoused a critical realist epistemology to evaluate what is a better and worse account of self development in family relationships

and on the basis of this been selective in developing ways of viewing

unconscious intersubjectivity as part of a psycho-social theorization, not

only of self development but also of adult subjectivity. I have not only

emphasized the utility and radical potential of object relations approaches,

but also shown their dynamism and provisionality. This was exemplified

in recent theoretical developments away from a focus on the child-mother

dyad. Likewise, my brief psycho-social account does not need to claim

truth status; it is historically situated and thus provisional.

References

Alford, F. (2002). *Levinas, the Frankfurt School and psychoanalysis.*

Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Benhabib, S. (1992). Feminism and the question of postmodernism. In

Situating the self. (pp203-241) New York: Routledge.

Benjamin, L.J. (1998). *Shadow of the other: Intersubjectivity and gender in*

psychoanalysis. New York/London: Routledge.

Bion, W. (1967). Attacks on linking. In *Second thoughts* (pp.

93–109). London: Maresfield.

Bollas, C. (1993). *Being a character: Psychoanalysis and self experience.*

London: Routledge.

Britton, R. (1998). *Belief and imagination.* London: Routledge.

Brown, N.O. (1966). *Love's body.* New York: Vintage.

Chodorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering.* London: University of

California Press.

Christensen, P., & James, A. (Eds.). (2000) *Research with children: Perspectives and practices*. London: Falmer.

Danziger, K (1997) 'The historical formation of selves'. Chapter 6 in R.D.Ashmore and L.Jussim (eds) <u>Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues.</u> (pp137-159) New York and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Drewery, W. (2005). Why we should watch what we say: Position calls, everyday speech and the production of relational subjectivity. *Theory & Psychology*, *15*, 305-324.

Fakhry Davids, M. (2002). Fathers in the internal world: From boy to man to father. In J. Trowell & A. Atchegoyen (Eds.), *The Importance of fathers: A psychoanalytic reevaluation* (pp. 67-92). Hove, East Sussex/New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Frosh, S. (2003). Psychosocial studies and psychology: Is a critical approach emerging? *Human Relations*, *56*, 1545-1567.

Gergen, K.J. (2001). Construction in contention: Toward consequential resolutions. *Theory & Psychology*, *11*, 419-432.

Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdine, V. (1984). *Changing the subject*. London: Methuen.

Hollway, W. (2004) Editorial. Special issue on Psycho-social Research. *International Journal of Critical Psychology*, *10*, 5-12.

Hollway, W. (2006). Family figures in 20th-century British 'psy' discourses. *Theory & Psychology*, *16*, 443-464.

Hollway, W. (in press).** *The capacity to care: Gender and ethical subjectivity*. London: Routledge.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2005). Panic and perjury: A psycho-social exploration of agency. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *44*, 147-163.

James, W. (1981). *Principles of psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1981.)

Jefferson, T. (2003). For a psychosocial criminology. In K. Carrington & R. Hogg (Eds.), *Critical criminology: Issues, debates, challenges* (pp. 145-167). Cullompton: Willan.

Klein, M. (1988). Some theoretical conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant. In *Envy and gratitude and other works 1946–1963* (pp. 61-93). London: Virago. (Original essay published 1952.)

McNamee, S., & Gergen, K.J. (1999). *Relational responsibility*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Menzies, I. (1960). A case study in the functioning of social systems as a defence against anxiety. *Human Relations, 13*, 95-121.

Mitchell, J. (2001). *Mad men and Medusas*: *Reclaiming hysteria and the effects of sibling relationships on the human condition*. London: Penguin.

Mitchell, J. (2003). *Siblings: Sex and violence*. Cambridge: Polity.

Ogden, T. (1999). 'The analytic third'. In S. Mitchell & L. Aron (Eds.),

　　Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition.(pp459-492)

　　Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press. (Original essay published 1994.)**

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology.*

　　London: Sage.

Riviere, J. (1959). The unconscious phantasy of an inner world reflected in

　　examples from literature. In M. KleinP.Heimann & R.E.Money-

　　Kyrle (Eds.), *New directions in psychoanalysis* (pp. 358-359).

　　London: Tavistock Publications.

Robertson, J., & Robertson, J. (1989). *Separation and the very young.*

　　London: Free Association Books.

Rose, N. (1990). *Governing the soul: The shaping of the private self.*

　　London: Routledge.

Sampson, E.E. (1993a). *Celebrating the other: A dialogic account of human*

　　nature. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Sampson, E.E. (2003). Unconditional kindness to strangers: Human

　　sociality and the foundation for an ethical psychology. *Theory &*

　　Psychology, 13, 147-175.

Shotter, J., & Lannaman, J.W. (2002). The situation of social

　　constructionism: Its 'imprisonment' within the ritual of theory-

　　criticism-and-debate. *Theory & Psychology, 12,* 577-609.

Smart, C., Neale, B., & Wade, A. (2001). *The changing experience of*

　　childhood. Cambridge: Polity.

Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretive repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse & Society*, *9*, 387-412.

Winnicott, D.W. (1965). *The family and individual development.* London:Tavistock.

Winnicott, D.W. (1968). *Babies and their mothers*. London: Free Association Books.

Winnicott, D.W. (1975). Mind and its relation to psyche-soma. In *Through paediatrics to psychoanalysis.* London: Hogarth. (Original essay published 1949.)

Youell, B. (2002). Missing fathers: Hope and disappointment. In T. Trowell & A. Atchegoyen (Eds.), *The importance of fathers: A psychoanalytic reevaluation* (pp. 147-160). Hove, East Sussex/ New York: Brunner-Routledge.

WENDY HOLLWAY is Professor of Psychology at the Open University, UK. She has researched and published on questions to do with subjectivity, gender, sexuality, mothering, qualitative methods, psychoanalysis and history of work psychology.. Her books include: *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (Routledge, 1984/1998, with Julian Henriques, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn and Valerie Walkerdine); *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology: Gender, Meaning and Science* (Sage, 1989); *Mothering and Ambivalence* (Routledge, 1997, coedited with Brid Featherstone); and *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: Free Association, Narrative and the Interview Method* (Sage, 2000, with Tony Jefferson). She is particularly interested in developing qualitative methodology and empirical methods appropriate to a

theorization of psycho-social subjectivity. Currently she has a funded project on the transition to a mothering identity (with Ann Phoenix). Her latest book will be published with Routledge in 2006: *The Capacity to Care: Gender and Ethical Subjectivity*. ADDRESS: Dr Wendy Hollway, Professor of Psychology, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, UK. [email: w.hollway@open.ac.uk]

end …6201