STRUCTURING THE SILENCE: AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY BELENKY AND BLYTHE CLINCHY

DIANE HANDLIN

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Mary Field Belenky and Blythe McVicker Clinchy were the keynote speakers at Peggy McIntosh's Dodge Seminar Reunion at the Wellesley Center for Research on Women in April 1988. The reunion brought together teachers from across the country who were interested in integrating a gender perspective into the secondary school curriculum. Belenky and Clinchy, two of the authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing*,* have a special friendship. They both have vacation homes in Vermont, where they spend long hours talking and critiquing each other's work.

Women's Ways of Knowing, which was co-authored by Belenky, and Clinchy along with Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule, builds upon the previous study of Harvard students by William Perry and the work of Carol Gilligan (1982).† A total of 135 women were interviewed, the length of the interviews ranging from 2 to 5 hours. The book breaks ground in offering a new framework from which to study women's cognitive development.

Often in a conversational manner, the book shows how women's self-concepts and ways, of knowing are intertwined. Women's perspectives on knowing are grouped into five major epistemological categories: *silence*, a position in which women experience themselves as mindless, voiceless, and subject to the whims of external authority; *received knowledge*, a perspective from which women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing, knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities, but not capable of creating knowledge on their own; *subjective knowledge*, a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited; *procedural knowledge*, a position in which women are invested in learning and applying procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge that they came to think of as "separate" and "connected" modes of knowing. The mode of separate knowing occurs when the student learns to take a critical stance in the academic world. The mode of connected knowing, also a part of procedural knowledge, occurs when one empathizes with or attempts to get inside the object or person being studied (cf. Keller, 1985).‡ Users of both separate and connected

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*Belenky, M., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind.* New York: Basic Books.

†Perry, W. (1968). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston; Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

‡Keller, E. F. (1985). *Reflections on gender and science.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

procedures run the risk of leaving the self out entirely; and finally, *constructed* or *constructivist knowledge* is a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both connected and separate strategies for knowing.

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SUBJECTIVE KNOWERS
Diane Handlin (DH); Mary Belenky (MB); Blythe Clinchy (BC)

DH: You say that women in the stage of "subjective knowledge" experi-
        ence "outrage, being unanchored, feeling cloudy, feeling like a
        fraud." They experience the stage as lonely and dangerous. Is that
        because of a lack or deficit in the women in that stage or a lack in our
        culture that causes it to be unable to accommodate authenticity?

BC: As a preliminary, let me point out that we didn't use the term, "stage,"
        since we are somewhat wishy-washy on the issue of whether ours is a
        developmental sequence. We're not wishy-washy on development;
        we're interested in development and how development occurs. But
        we really didn't want to over-generalize to make claims for stages in
        the usual sense of sequential stages that would cut across all cultures
        and be universal.

DH: When reading the book it seemed to me that you were talking about
        developmental stages going from lower to higher.

BC: Well, in a sense we are. I do think we're a little weasely about it
        because it is clear that in some sense procedural knowing and
        acquiring reasonable procedures is an advance over not having
        reasonable procedures. But, it's certainly not a happiness "line"; it
        isn't that you feel better at each position. I guess perhaps you're more
        powerful in some ways, although even that's not true in other ways.

DH: If one follows Foucault, it could be said that the locus of control has
        moved from outside to inside leading to the "subjective knower."
        According to your framework, subjective knowing would be descri-
        bed as a dysfunctional stage, yet according to another framework,
        might it not be seen as a position in which healthy questioning occurs?

BC: I think we do see subjectivism as a healthy advance over received
        knowledge or silence. If you think of the women we call Inez, for

example, it's a tremendous thing when she is able to throw off the shackles of male authority, all of them: her father's or brother's or husband's, all these people who have abused her and one suspects, in the past, silenced her, certainly kept her totally dependent upon them. She has overthrown that and is now really a source of her own knowledge. She consults her own intuition. She talks about how it's one thing that's never backed away from her, never left her, so that she has a kind of friend inside that she didn't have before. She has a voice. She is not just a receiver; she is more active. But the position has real limitations. For instance, it's an absolutist position. She doesn't critically examine what her gut tells her, she just acts on it. You can get into trouble that way, as many of the subjectivist women did. They went with their intuitions and got themselves into dangerous situations. That, too, is true. But, I don't think we see it as a negative thing. I think we see the subjectivist position, like all the positions, as having both strengths and weaknesses.

MB: I think the limitation of the subjectivist position reflects the limitations of our culture — that the self is seen as so central and the truth so personal and private that you really can't communicate it. In addition, we have schools for children that are so large and impersonal. Children often grow up with little communication or dialogue. People in our society are apt to get into this subjectivist way of thinking and find no bridge out of it. I think there has been a major shift in the culture from "received" to "subjective" knowing. I think that's really what we mean when we talk about the "new narcissism."

DH: Thinking about Kohlberg's and Erikson's hierarchical models has led me, like some others, to question whether that kind of model works for women. Now you are questioning whether they are accurate for humanity as a whole. Would you say that constructivist knowing is something that children move toward instinctively or naturally?

BC: Well, I don't know if I would call pre-schoolers "constructivist," but I would agree that prior to school a lot of the pre-schoolers that we looked at did have a sense of themselves as real knowers, as people who make sense out of things for themselves. We had thought, for instance, that they might be very much "received" knowers, believing everything their parents told them. Instead, we found that they are attached to the notion that you need to find out if something is true. They don't say, "I go ask Dad;" they say, "I try it out and see," or "I look for myself." I think you could talk about school as emphasizing a different kind of knowledge than intuition, a knowledge that is from authority — and there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, I think it is a real achievement when a child can recognize that there's such a thing as expertise and that other people carry knowledge around and that she or he can go and get it from them.

MB: Yes, it's important for children to realize that you can pass ideas down.

MORAL VERSUS COGNITIVE FRAMEWORKS

DH: Your framework bears some resemblances to Kohlberg's stage theory, so I was struck by your seeming to connect the moral realm so closely to the cognitive realm. Is that intentional? Are you saying that you see the development of one as necessarily connected to the development of the other?

BC: Maybe the connection is necessary, but not sufficient, or something like that.

DH: But do you mean to say that it is?

BC: In sheer quantitative terms or empirical terms, we found some kind of relationship.

MB: I think the people who feel silenced and without powers of mind tend to be profoundly socially isolated. If you can give them the tools to make connections and to overcome their isolation, you're giving them tools to develop their minds. The growth of the mind is rooted in the growth of relationships.

BC: The stream of moral development that interests me right now has to do with moral sensibility or moral imagination. This seems to me very much tied to "connected knowing" and it interests me more than the Kohlberg type of model. I think of Nel Noddings and the phrase of hers that I so love: "The other person's reality becomes a possibility for me." As you enter into these other realities and become more adept at doing that and doing it in a deeper way, you open up other possibilities of being. Now, that probably also means more compassion for Hitler. I don't know if that's a good thing or not, but I do think it makes it possible for you to get out from under the way you've always been and imagine other ways of being. I see that as moral. I see that as the way that my students are when they talk about a change in their values or a change in their moral thinking. Very often it's that they came here and found somebody that they became attached to and liked a lot. That person then revealed that she or he had a point of view absolutely antithetical to theirs. It's as if the student thinks, "If this person to whom I feel attached feels this way, then there must be something in it." So she tries to enter that person's frame of mind and wonders, "How can it be that she believes in abortion?" She enters that frame because of the attachment; she's almost compelled to enter that frame. So, I certainly do see the potential for moral development in the connected knowing women practise as procedural knowers.

PARAMETERS OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

DH: How long did the interviewers spend with the women in the study? Did you feel satisfied that the women being interviewed were not just using words but that the interviewers were really getting at the truth of their experience?

BC: Certainly it's always a question of whether you've got "the real person." Ideally you would take more time than we had. Our

interviews ran a couple of hours. In some cases we had longitudinal data. I feel much more comfortable when I have data over a period of years on a person, and using different kinds of interviews.

MB: Some interviews were spaced a year or more apart. Some were as much as 4 years apart.

BC: Also, during an interview, you'll see that a micro-development takes place. That is the very reason for having a long interview.

MB: When you're really listened to, your thinking gets drawn out. In the abortion study (Belenky, 1980)* during one of the interviews, a women said to me, "I'm telling you these things, but I never thunk them." The interview gave her the opportunity to express things she had been feeling but had never reflected on or verbalized.

BC: In itself an interview provides an occasion for growth.

MB: There is a complicated issue here. When I first grappled with this kind of data, I noticed there was a powerful correlation between stage scores assigned to a Kohlberg interview (1985)† and the number of words on the paper. Higher stage people are more articulate — they use more words and they use them in more complex ways. You would probably get a better reliability in the assignment of stage scores by just weighing the number of words rather than by using these complex scoring schemes we have developed. When I looked at the way our sample of 135 women talked, the "silent" women just didn't use as many words — they didn't have the conversation. I don't believe that language and thought are to be equated, but they are intertwined.

MODERATION

DH: Many feminist scholars say women are trapped by our culture and our language. It seemed to me that your underlying assumption was, as Aristotle says, that moderation or balance is the ideal. Did you ever feel constricted by this Western philosophical tradition from which we come? Was there something in the philosophical assumptions of those who interviewed the women and coded the data that may have contributed to a distortion of the experience of the women being studied or of their articulation of that experience? For example, in relation to procedural knowledge you say that both separate and connected knowing leave the self out. Is there an underlying assumption here that for optimum development there should be a little bit of the self in and a little bit of the self out?

BC: Yes. I don't believe in moderation or balance. Although I can see we may have said something like that but it's certainly not what I would want to say now. I wouldn't see a little bit of the self in and a little bit

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*Belenky, M. (1980). *Conflict and development: A longitudinal study of the impact of abortion decisions on adolescent and adult women.* Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
  †Colby, A., & Kohlberg, L. (1985). *Standard scoring guide.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

of the self out. My notion is that the self would be very much in in any kind of ideal type of epistemological position at the higher levels. What we meant to say was that, as procedures, separate and connected knowing both have the danger of leaving out the self. In the more evolved "constructed" knowing you use the self to understand the other, and you use every bit of the self that you can make conscious.

DH: I was struck by the subjectivist's anger and defiance, the procedural knower's tendency toward alienation, a deadening or lack of connection with the self, and the constructivist's necessity to compromise and/or give up intimacy with men. On the one hand, I hear in the book voices that believe in moderation, balance, and temperance and, on the other, I hear a disjunction between your wonderful, hopeful, empathic voices and the dissatisfaction of the women at every level.

BC: Yes, we really saw a lot of pain out there, more than I expected to see. I think that I had this sort of American "upward and onward" idea, you know, that the rural poor women might be in bad shape, but that the hot shot private accountant, alumnae, etc., would be in good shape. I think the pain experienced was just terrible, and I'm not sure that it was any worse at one position than another. As you picked up, many of those constructivist women couldn't find men who would support them and their directions.

DH: Many of them decided to make a deliberate compromise.

BC: And many of them didn't; many went without. The procedural and separate women in institutions felt alien and doubted; they were just going through the motions.

SILENCE AND RECEIVED KNOWERS

DH: Do you have any personal dissatisfactions with the book? It sounds as though one thing that you want to change is by way of developing your constructive knowledge category further.

BC: Yes, I think separate and connected knowing are in very embryonic shape there.

MB: That's probably true of the highest levels in all of these developmental theories.

BC: Yes. They're just a kind of utopian view.

DH: Could you say more about why you chose to use the metaphor of "voice"?

MB: That's one of the limitations of the current work, that we focused so much on voice but didn't think hard enough about the opposite end of that dialect — *silence*.

BC: We focused more on speaking.

MB: In all the studies of women, there's more about the experience of *silence* to be understood — a lot more. We only scratched the surface. So many people read the book and identify so profoundly with the "silent" women in the first chapter, even educated women who are so

unlike the women we thought we were describing in that first chapter. There's a wealth of experience of *silence* that we held a place for in that chapter and a whole range of women identify with it.

BC: It's the experience of silence that very privileged women have spoken and written to us about — even women who are out giving speeches.

DH: The "received" knowers, who were they? Not women you got through colleges?

BC: Well, most of our received knowledge women were quite young or disadvantaged. I know, however, that there are a great number of received knowers out there in the world who are upper class, well-off, well-educated women. Most of our received knowers were not like this. It would be interesting to know more about women whom we all know in our lives who are at that position of received knowing but are not disadvantaged or young.

MB: There's a very interesting graph in Perry's book. He looked at examinations given at Harvard University and coded the exam questions in terms of the frames of reference used by writers of the questions. At that elite university, it is very clear that most of these writers were predominately from the received knowledge perspective and this was the norm right up through the Second World War.

BC: And then the dominant perspective shifted to subjectivism.

MB: Isn't that interesting? It's as though the society had gone through a tremendous epistemological shift.

THE IMPACT

DH: Did you have any idea of the impact that *Women's Ways of Knowing* would have?

BC: Heavens, no!

MB: The publishers didn't either! They printed 1000 copies and then they ran out of stock immediately. Even the reprint a few months later was so small it sold out right away. There were no books available. Now the printings are ample.

DH: Everywhere I go women are reading the book and saying that it is the most important book they've read.

BC: That's what we hear, which continues to amaze us.

DH: It has stimulated new ideas, new conversations, new ways of women's looking at themselves.

MB, BC: We hope so.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RE-EXAMINING *WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING:* A RESPONSE TO HANDLIN'S INTERVIEW WITH BELENKY AND CLINCHY*

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The book, *Women's Ways of Knowing,* joins a growing corpus of research and theory pointing out the deficiencies in our endeavors to educate women. The authors (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) join the researchers, Hall and Sandler (1982), the philosopher, Jane Roland Martin (1985), and the poet, Adrienne Rich (1979), among others, in directing our attention to the gendered educational system and the ways in which it disadvantages women. They creatively draw attention to new ways to educate students within a community of "connected knowers." Nevertheless, education is criticized perennially for climbing on the popular bandwagon, before the validity of that bandwagon is established. It is, therefore, imperative that researchers follow up on the provocative ideas presented as women's ways of knowing. Validation of the observations Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, and their colleagues make is needed to ensure responsible and workable changes in the educational system.

I suspect that the authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* would agree with my call for more systematic research to test their theory. In their interview, as in the book, the authors are very generous in inviting others to join the effort to construct their theory. They write in the book,

> We recognize that (1) these five ways of knowing are not necessarily fixed, exhaustive, or universal categories, (2) that they are abstract or "pure" categories that cannot adequately capture the complexities and uniqueness of an individual woman's thought and life, (3) that similar categories [for analyzing the interviews] can be found in men's thinking, and (4) that other people might organize their observations differently. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 15)

Here the authors do not assert that their observations are any more valid than anyone else's. In the interview they say they are admittedly "wishy-washy" and "weasely" about the nature of the development that they describe. They are not sure whether individuals are "naturally" motivated to move toward constructivist knowledge or exactly how we acquire it on the developmental road. In addition, moral frameworks [at least the moral framework described by Gilligan (1982)] seem to be very similar to women's ways of knowing—both stem from a sense of

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self as connected to others. Their tentativeness regarding their claims about women's (as opposed to men's) ways of knowing, leads me to suggest a research agenda based on their exploratory interviews. They have, I judge from the description of the interview questions in the Appendix to the book, the data to conduct most of these examinations.

My first recommendation for the researchers is to determine what the relationship is between their developmental model and other, similar models. Handlin shrewdly notes that the authors seem "to connect the moral realm so closely to the cognitive realm" (p. 248) and Clinchy responds that "in empirical terms, we found some kind of relationship" between Kohlberg stage theory and their scheme (p. 248). The nature of this empirical relationship needs to be fleshed out, as does the relationship between women's ways of knowing and Gilligan's ethic of care, from which they borrow much of the language they use in describing their theory. Presumably they have the data to do this. Their interviews included questions that would allow analysis of Kohlbergian stages and Gilligan's moral orientation and sense of self. However, quantitative analysis of these data is not reported. Instead, the authors chose a qualitative methodology that they equate with the process used by lexicographers. They were looking for new meanings in the women's voices: "Just as editors are able to hear new meanings of words emerging, by following a similar procedure we heard in the women's voices meanings neither we nor others had imagined" (Belenky et al., p. 17). This search for "new meanings" led them to describe a new theory. The first questions I would ask the researchers to address are: How new are these meanings? How different from existing developmental models is theirs?

In addition to assessing the relationship between Gilligan's theory and theirs, I would ask the researchers to examine their data systematically for Perry-positions. This is important because the book suggests there are gender differences in epistemological development. However, research on the Perry (1968) model (e.g., Baxter-Magolda & Porterfield, 1985) has not found consistent evidence of gender differences, nor has research on a theory related to Perry's, the reflective judgment model. Published reflective judgment research extends back a decade (King, 1977; Kitchener, 1978; Kitchener & King, 1981) and includes over a dozen independently conducted cross-sectional and longitudinal studies examining reflective judgment levels of over 1000 subjects [see Brabeck (1984) and Kitchener & King (1990) for summaries of these studies]. It is interesting, and somewhat puzzling, that the authors do not include this research in their discussion of epistemological development of women.

Research on the reflective judgment model offers a useful source of information about the claims Belenky et al. make about women's ways of knowing, for three reasons.

(1) Belenky et al. criticize Perry for developing a model based on an all male sample and suggest that if women had been included, the model would be different; the reflective judgment model was developed using both male and female subjects.

(2) Belenky et al. note the limitations of their sample size [e.g., only "two or

three" (p. 23) women viewed the world from the perspective of silence]; research on reflective judgment consistently has been conducted by trained interviewers and scored by certified raters, resulting in a large data base of comparable studies.

(3) Some of the questions in the interview section on "ways of knowing" are very similar to those asked in the Reflective Judgment Interview (RJI); thus, responses to these questions might be examined by raters certified to rate RJIs. I am suggesting, in my recommendation for re-examining the epistemological theory of women's ways of knowing, that the convergent [with reflective judgment and Perry's (1968) theory] and divergent [with Gilligan's (1982) ethic of care] validity of the epistemological theory needs to be established.

My second recommendation for research is an examination into the dichotomous categories that the *Women's Ways* authors claim are gender related. Many writers (e.g., Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Brabeck, 1989; Cancian, 1987) have called attention to the inadequacies of the American self definition that celebrates individuality and achievement as the defining attributes of personhood. Philosophers and psychologists recently have emphasized the importance of community and human relationships as the defining characteristics of personhood (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985; Blum, 1980; Noddings, 1984). The nature and implications of a changing national psyche is beyond the scope of this response. I suggest, however, that it is the historical–sociological backdrop against which Belenky et al.'s work must be viewed. Since their conclusions about women's ways of knowing are based on interviews that did not include men, their observations may be attributable to an historical artifact rather than a reflection of true gender differences. This suggests the need to follow up their subjects with a longitudinal-sequential method (Schaie & Baltes, 1975) to examine changes within and between groups (men and women and the five positions).

Furthermore, the authors imply an acceptance of the male–female dichotomy that has assigned autonomy and individuality to men, and communal and relationship concerns to women. A unifying thesis of the book is that women are alienated and "voiceless" because they are at odds with the traditional (male) model of knowing. The authors' view of this traditional male model, and its (female) counterpart is contained in the ten bimodal dimensions called "Educational dialectics" that they used to analyze their interviews. They suggest that "in women one mode often predominates whereas conventional educational practice favors the other mode" (Belenky et al., p. 16). These bipolar dimensions, for which coding categories were presumably designed, are: Process oriented–goal oriented; discovery–didacticism; rational–intuitive; discrete–related; being with others–being alone or on own; breadth–concentration; support–challenge; personal–impersonal; self-concern–responsibility and caring for others; inner–outer; listening–speaking. In order to assess whether there is a gender difference in each of these categories, we need to know more about how the writers coded the interviews, the method they used for determining which end of the dialectic a response fell at, the number of individuals they found in each category, the relationship between these categories and assign-

ment to their five positions, etc. In the absence of such information from the book, these categories suggest an agenda for research for the next decade. This is particularly important because Belenky's claims are consistent with sex stereotypes, some of which have been used to disadvantage women [e.g., the claim "she is intuitive, he is rational"—see Sherman (1978) for one of many sources that dispute this assertion].

Literatures do exist examining some of these categories. For example, research has shown men speak more; women listen more. However, the relationship between verbal behavior and epistemology (or one's moral orientation), has not been empirically established. Verbal SAT scores have not been found to account for reflective judgment levels (Brabeck, 1984; Kitchener & King, 1981; Welfel, 1982). Belenky's idea that verbal complexity contributes to higher level reasoning (their contextual knowledge) suggests another study to be conducted, using the Belenky et al. data.

A third major line of research, suggested by the book and noted in the interview published here, is the devastating effect of abuse against women. The floodgates of information on the pervasiveness of this abuse recently have been opened. Belenky et al. add to our knowledge about the ways in which abuse affects woman's psychological development. They poignantly portray the adverse effects of authorities' abusive behavior on women students' beliefs about their own abilities. They added interview questions to examine abuse after they observed how frequently it was mentioned spontaneously. While their subjects revealed a variety of ways in which authorities were abusive, they report an inordinately high rate of sexual abuse. In their subsample of 75 women, 38% of women from the schools and 65% of women from the social agencies reported they had been subjected to incest, rape, or sexual seduction by males in authority over them. Among college women, approximately one in five reported a history of incest during childhood; among women from social agencies, one of every two reported a history of incest (Belenky et al., p. 59). Given this experience with betrayal of authorities, it is no wonder that the women in their study failed to trust authority (as received knowers) or that they developed a sense of "authority–they" (they claim the men Perry interviewed were more likely to report an "authorities–we" attitude).

It is also not surprising, given the pervasive abuse from males, that women who are "received knowers" turned to their mother, sister, or female peer, to gain "the firsthand experience of others most like themselves" (ibid., p. 60). They observe that, "An important step on the route to subjective knowing is the affirmation these maternal or nurturant authorities can provide for women in transition" (ibid.). This transitional other is called the 'maternal authority,' who provides the reassurance and confirmation that "she, too, can think and know and be a woman." Belenky et al.'s interviews demonstrate that women want to be valued and affirmed. However, one does not need a theory of epistemological development to suggest that abuse damages one's self concept and leads to uncertainty and anxiety, or to suggest that, at best, one finds coping strategies to handle its psychological aftermath. Puka (1989) has rendered a reading of Gilligan's (1982) levels of development of "care as liberation" in which he

proposes that care may be a strategy for coping with sexism. Puka's "care as liberation" hypothesis suggests that in a patriarchal society the caring response may be understood not as sequential, holistic, moral development, but as skills or ideologies that assume different forms (Gilligan's levels of care). The "care as liberation" hypothesis suggests that these skills or ideologies result from sexist socialization of women into a service orientation. It is possible that a similar interpretation of women's ways of knowing might be made. The positions might be examined as defenses against the abuse—sexual, physical, and psychological—that women experience, rather than as epistemic, structural changes.

The writers of *Women's Ways of Knowing* make a great many rich and insightful observations about the processes of developing knowledge, finding a voice to express what one knows, and gaining the self-concept that allows one to express what one knows. I hope that their creative insights will now be followed by the disciplined research necessary to validate their ideas, a hefty agenda for the decades ahead.

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DEVELOPMENTAL AND CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN *WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING*: A RESPONSE TO HANDLIN'S INTERVIEW WITH BELENKY AND CLINCHY*

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After reading the interview by Diane Handlin with Mary Belenky and Blythe Clinchy, two of the authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), I was inspired to reread the volume and to consider its effect on my clinical work with adolescent girls and their mothers. The second exposure reminded me that the work of Belenky et al. is an impressive attempt to delineate various ways in which women know, understand, and learn about their world. It also reminded me of the struggle, made explicit in their interview with Handlin, between the concepts of developmental stages and epistemological positions. There are fairly clear reasons why they would feel "wishy-washy on the issue of whether ours is a developmental sequence" (p. 246) and "a little weasely about it because it is clear that in some sense procedural knowing and acquiring reasonable procedures is an advance over not having reasonable procedures" (p. 246). Below, I will suggest ways in which developmental sequences and epistemological positions might be reconciled. In addition, I will describe the impact of this thinking on my clinical work, using a particular case to illustrate my approach.

SEQUENCE OR POSITIONS?

The concept of developmental sequences owes its lineage in the modern era to the works of such theorists as Erikson (1963), Freud (1975/1905), Kohlberg (1969), and Piaget (1932). All share the concept that stages of development must occur in a given sequence, and that the negotiation of each stage depends upon at least the occurrence, if not the resolution, of previous ones. Melanie Klein (1975/1952) moved away from this idea to some extent in her use of the term "position," by which she meant to describe "groupings of anxieties and defences [which] although arising first during the earliest stages [of development] are not restricted to them but occur and recur during the first years of childhood and under certain circumstances in later life" (Klein, 1975/1952, p. 93).

Although the use of the term "position" by Klein clearly assumes a developmental sequence, the possibility is raised that contextual factors present later in life can influence the stance an individual takes in relation to his or her current interpersonal environment. Erikson (1982) also modified his theory

later in life, stating that "epigenesis . . . by no means signifies a mere succession" (p. 28), and that "each part [of an epigenetic stage] . . . exists . . . in some form before 'its' decisive and critical time normally arrives" and "as each part comes to its full ascendance and finds some lasting solution during its stage . . . it will also be expected to develop further . . . under the dominance of subsequent ascendancies . . . and most of all, to take its place in the integration of the whole ensemble" (p. 29). In other words, although stages are sequential, the crucial experience in each stage exists in embryonic form before its own "critical period" and becomes part of the fabric of later integration of personality.

I believe the need of Belenky et al. to "weasel" and be "wishy-washy" is a result of the complexity of human development, and the possibility that it occurs in less linear ways than classical stage theories would suggest. There are two relevant implications of this way of thinking: First of all, it is possible that "stages" predate themselves and become part of the fabric of later "stages," as Erikson suggests, such that, for example, a women who functions in large part from a perspective of "received knowledge" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 35ff.) might also contain the seeds of a "subjectivist" position (p. 52ff.), while retaining certain components of "silence" (p. 23ff.), as well.

Second, it is possible that there is an interpersonal component to this way of understanding the epistemological positions of women, in that the context in which a given women finds herself may influence the position she manifests. For example, she may appear more like a "separate knower" (Belenky et al., p. 103ff.) in her work as an attorney, as a "connected knower" (p. 122ff.) in relation to her teenage daughter, and a "subjective knower" (p. 52ff.) in relation to her father. This is certainly suggested by Belenky and her colleagues, particularly in their, descriptions of the struggles of "procedural knowers" (p. 87ff.) in trying to integrate the rational and emotional aspects of their experience. For example, a women called Naomi is described as exercising her analytic skills only on academic tasks, and not in her personal life. She felt "it was appropriate to be objective and unbiased in academic life, but in personal life it 'would be like being a robot, having no feelings' " (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 125).

These conceptualizations — understanding the epistemological positions in interpersonal context and seeing development as more complex than a single linear path — may perhaps help make sense of the experiential richness so eloquently expressed through the lives of women described in *Women's Ways of Knowing*. Further, I have found that these concepts have assisted me in incorporating some of the perspectives outlined by Belenky, Clinchy, and their colleagues in my psychotherapeutic work with adolescent girls and their mothers. In the balance of this paper, I will describe a case in which their epistemological positions, and contextual and developmental interplay, were salient aspects of my clinical work.

THE CASE OF THE CHAMELEON

When I met her, Jessica was a bright and articulate 14-year-old, and had done well in school and at home until approximately 6 months before, when she

suddenly began "hanging out" with a new-found friend, staying out late, and not telling her mother where she was or where she was going before she left home. Her mother was at a loss as to what to do or as to why this was happening, although she suspected that Jessica's new friend had involved her in drug use (which turned out not to be the case). The specific precipitant for seeking treatment was that Jessica had ingested a large quantity of assorted pills during a verbal and physical fight with her mother about her behavior. She had taken the pills while her mother was in the next room, and then yelled, "See what you're doing to me?!" Her mother then took Jessica to a nearby hospital emergency room, from which they were referred to me for psychotherapeutic intervention.

When I first met her, Jessica was a girl in search of a self. Her mother described her as a "chameleon," to which she readily agreed. She wore her hair a different way at every session, and her level of engagement in treatment ran the range from fully active and interested to sullen and silent. She and her mother both agreed that this was not atypical of how she had been behaving in recent months. Despite this, neither one could point to reasons why this might be so, and Jessica was unable to articulate her concerns and feelings in general.

At times, I met with Jessica alone, and at other times with her mother. I began to see that she was often more animated and engaged in treatment when she was with me alone, although it became clear after a few meetings that she was adept at hiding from view her true feelings about things. When confronted about this, she admitted that this was the way she handled things so that she would not feel hurt; she stated that she had learned long ago that she was hypersensitive and was not willing to let people in so that they could cause her pain.

In joint sessions with her mother, Jessica was alternatively silent, overly compliant, and combative. It was this fluctuation that first appeared reminiscent to me of the positions described by Belenky et al. There seemed to be present qualities of the "silent," "received knowledge," and "subjectivist" positions. In addition, Jessica's stance was intricately intertwined with the behavior of her mother, to whom she was exquisitely attuned.

Jessica was more "silent" — literally inarticulate — when asked direct questions under conditions where her mother was most openly angry with her. This was particularly true when a session with me followed closely on the heels of one of Jessica's late night disappearances. Belenky et al. (1986) describe the families of silent women as using words as weapons (p. 24); they "use violence . . . as the primary means for getting what they need and want from each other. Failing that . . . they withdraw or 'exit' " (p. 159). At these moments, then, it was as if Jessica were a silent woman. Despite a general level of functioning far more sophisticated and adaptive than that ascribed to the families of silent women, there were times when Jessica's mother became physically violent and verbally abusive with her.

Jessica's second posture in therapy sessions, being overly compliant, was reminiscent of the perspective of a "received knower" — women who are portrayed as learning by listening, as having little confidence in their own ability to speak, as stilling "their own voices in order to hear the voices of others" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 37). At these times, although Jessica's compliance was

tinged with sarcasm and resignation, she accepted the words of her mother as truth.

The third posture taken by Jessica was more rebellious, and then she was quite vocal about her disagreements with her mother. She was insistent that her point of view had merit and was intent on showing the flaws in her mother's position. Here was the voice of the subjectivist, with the sense that her view was correct because it felt right according to her "infallible gut" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 56). Jessica was most likely to behave in this way when she felt her mother had unjustly accused her of something, or when her mother had behaved in a reprehensible way herself. According to the moral modes described by Gilligan, Brown, and Rogers (1989), Jessica was responding to her perception of "bad care" or "bad justice" in her mother; that is, her mother had either betrayed Jessica's sense of care and nurturance, disrupting the feeling of mutual connectedness, or had behaved in a way that was not acceptable according to their shared understanding of right and wrong.

Belenky et al. (1986) remind the reader that this struggle to shift "from external authority . . . to the authority within us" (p. 54) has been seen classically as a central task of adolescence (see, for example, Blos, 1979), although they did not see it as tied to any particular chronological age. This gives credence to the idea that the epistemological positions outlined in *Women's Ways of Knowing* can occur and recur at various times and under various interpersonal conditions.

However, it is also the case that an experience of what I have termed elsewhere "perceived moral failure" (Zimmerman, 1991) is a frequent occurrence between adolescent girls and their mothers, and that it is often a precursor to a suicide attempt on the part of the daughter. By the term "perceived moral failure," I mean an experience in which the girl feels either the disconnection of "bad care" or the unfairness of "bad justice" (or both) in relation to her mother (or other person important in her life). In Jessica's case, her suicide attempt occurred when she had come home late after a particularly harrowing experience, wanting to talk with her mother and to feel nurtured by her. Her mother's angry reaction, and the subsequent fight in which they engaged, made Jessica feel betrayed, misunderstood, and disconnected, leading to her ingestion of pills. Knowing this vulnerability in Jessica, I felt pressure in my work with her and her mother to help them negotiate the waters of Jessica's subjectivism effectively.

Actually, I saw Jessica's ability to speak from her subjective voice as an encouraging sign in treatment. This was grounded in my belief, fostered by the work of Belenky, Clinchy, and their colleagues, that "it is through speaking and listening that we develop our capacities to talk and to think things through" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 167). Jessica's ability to express her own perspective was heartening.

In reviewing my approach to treatment with Jessica and her mother in terms of developmental and contextual issues, I find that the effectiveness of the treatment has hinged on a sensitivity to the different positions Jessica felt compelled to take under different circumstances, and my responses to her various presentations of herself. From the perspective of silence, the approach

was to "listen and refrain from speaking," understanding "the value of drawing out the human voice" (ibid., p. 189), so that she could develop her capacity to think about and talk about her own experience.

From the perspective of received knowledge, I assisted Jessica's mother in articulating what she was feeling, but to help soften it and lend a more empathic perspective to it in Jessica's presence. In so doing, I discovered that Jessica's mother's own mother was clearly the kind of parent who would foster a received knowledge position in her daughter, as her communications were invariably "one-way" talk. That is, she would say what was on her mind without trying to understand her daughter's mind, expecting her daughter to absorb her (the mother's) ideas without encouraging her to think things through for herself (cf., Belenky et al., 1986, p. 165).

There was a danger that Jessica's mother would perpetuate this approach to mother–daughter communication with Jessica. The therapeutic intervention that helped her be more empathic with Jessica was to help them both see how alike they were in their experience of the position of received knowledge, establishing a three-generational continuity in their family. This led to a warm connection between Jessica and her mother, and an expression by both of them of the frustration of having a family matriarch who was so little adept at listening and understanding.

Finally, in response to the times when Jessica took a subjectivist perspective in relation to her mother, I encouraged both of them to articulate their experience of the events that had given rise to Jessica's feelings, to "really listen" and "really talk" with each other (cf., Belenky et al., 1986, p. 144ff.). This was done to help them begin on the path toward "the creation of a relationship of equality, collegiality, and intimacy" that is considered a central achievement of "those who come to understand that all knowledge is constructed" (ibid., p. 165).

Through the course of treatment, I also began to understand the meaning of Jessica's alliance with the friend with whom she had been "hanging out" as a reflection of the developmental progression in which she was embroiled. Jessica had been a "good girl," a compliant received knower, according to her own and her mother's accounts, before she met this friend, whom I shall call Maria. Suddenly, when she began spending time with Maria, she began to listen to the worldview Maria espoused. Jessica described herself as being so influenced by Maria for a while that she would do anything Maria said, and trusted Maria to protect her when they were out on the street. Here again, she was a received knower, taking her understanding of the world from the voice of another who was in authority over her.

In a sense, Maria was a personification of Jessica's transition from received to subjective knowledge. This became clear when, during the course of treatment, Jessica stopped spending time with Maria as abruptly as she had taken up with her. This followed upon a night when Maria had taken her into a very dangerous inner-city neighborhood and would not agree to share a cab home when Jessica wanted to leave. Jessica felt deeply betrayed by Maria, and also found access to her own voice in her insistence that she go home. After that point, Jessica was much clearer about what was right and what was wrong for

her, and although there were a few more instances of staying out late and not telling her mother where she was, she was explicit about the feeling that she had to "get her life together" and understand in what direction she wanted to go. She seemed to adopt more fully a subjectivist position, having used her relationship with Maria as a bridge in her epistemological development.

Further, it was at that time that Jessica realized the pain she was causing her mother, and began to be more responsive to her mother's feelings and concerns. She stopped going out late, she stayed at home and did her homework, and so on. She also began to focus on finding a better, more responsible group of peers with whom to spend her time. This suggests that her move away from Maria may have also signalled the intimations of nascent procedural knowledge, in that she began to grapple with the issues of her connectedness with her mother in a more empathic way, and began to approach her life more analytically.

It is to be hoped that, in the process of being helped to articulate and reflect upon her own experience, Jessica will begin to feel less like a chameleon, less in need of being a "moving target," and more able to find and express the "still small voice" within her (ibid., p. 54). Put another way, the approach I have taken with her and her mother in treatment is intended to foster her ability to move toward an integration of the rational and the emotional, toward the quality of ownership and expression of her self that is identified by Belenky, Clinchy, and their colleagues as the position of constructed knowledge.

CONCLUSION

In this response to the Handlin interview with Belenky and Clinchy, I have tried to suggest ways in which the ideas of a developmental sequence and epistemological positions might be reconciled in the work of Belenky et al. (1986). Through the use of case material, I have described how one adolescent's behavior can be understood as combining the manifestations of at least three epistemological positions, and I have shown how these can be understood in developmental and interpersonal context. Further, I have delineated briefly the ways in which psychotherapy can be used to enhance a girl's development of voice and self-understanding.

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COHERENCE AND VARIATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF: A RESPONSE TO HANDLIN'S INTERVIEW WITH BELENKY AND CLINCHY*

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In *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, and Tarule (1986) cast a wide net in attempting to understand the development of self and mind in a diverse sample of young women. They found a remarkable coherence in how women talk about themselves, a coherence captured by the idea of a "voice": an individual's conceptualization of when, why, to whom, and about what she can talk and be heard. Gilligan (1982) and Gilligan, Ward, and Taylor (1988) also used the concept of "voice" in discussing women's development, but did so primarily in reference to women's conceptions of morality. Belenky et al. have broadened this concept by identifying an epistemological core in women's "voices" which reflects their understanding of how and by whom truth is known.

Belenky et al. examined women's epistemologies by identifying their assumptions of whether (a) truth is produced constructively, through the use of procedures, or not at all and (b) whether truth can be known by everyone or exclusively by self, authorities, or experts. They found that women could be categorized as holding one of five different epistemologies and suggested that women develop from an externalized and absolutist epistemology to an internalized and constructivist one. In the interview Belenky and Clinchy indicate that, although there may be a developmental progression through the different epistemologies, they make no claim that the sequence is universal (p. 246). Indeed, based on a comparison of their data with those of Perry (1968), they argue that the sequence, mechanisms, and stages of epistemological development are quite different for men and women.

Belenky et al.'s focus on stages of epistemological reasoning is the basis for the coherence they heard in women's "voices." Belenky et al. claim that the ways in which identity and morality questions are formed and finally resolved depend on the ways in which the self, others, and the world are known. In our research we have focused on these authors' claim that there is coherence in the development of identity and epistemology. By examining the coherence of identity and epistemological development, we believe that we have come to a better framework for understanding what has been reported as difference due to gender.

DOMAIN-SPECIFICITY IN EPISTEMOLOGY AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: A PILOT STUDY

We began our investigation of the coherence of epistemological development and identity by assessing whether change in these traditionally separate areas of development proceeds through similar processes, as the relevant theories seem to imply. Identity development involves reflecting upon and restructuring one's previous identifications through a process of exploring and making commitment to adult social roles (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966; Matteson, 1977). Epistemological development involves construction of a consistent "way of knowing" through a process of critically evaluating intuitive concepts of truth and reality (Belenky et al., 1986; Broughton, 1978; Kitchener & King, 1981; Kuhn & Leadbeater, 1988; Perry, 1968).* In both areas, the incentive and the ability to reflect upon one's implicit assumptions seems to be a central developmental process.

In our initial investigation, we used traditional measures of both identity and epistemological development to correlate subjects' consistency in epistemological reasoning with their processes of exploration and commitment in identity development. This prediction was based on the assumption that self-reflection is a central mechanism in exploring, forming, and making commitment to a consistent epistemology and identity. Identity development was assessed by interviewing students and evaluating their exploration of and commitment to adult roles in the domains of occupation, religion, politics, and marriage (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966, 1980). Evidence concerning consistency in epistemological reasoning was gathered through subjects' responses to a version of Kuhn & Leadbeater's (1988) "Livia" task. In Kuhn and Leadbeater's version of the task, subjects are asked whether the two alternative accounts of a fictional war between North and South Livia can both be true and to justify their responses. In our version, subjects were asked additionally whether one account must be true, whether both accounts can be false, and whether there could be reconciliation between the accounts. These additional questions enabled us to examine the consistency in subjects' responses: whether there was reliability in a subject's asserting or denying the existence of knowable truths regarding the Livian war.

In our small pilot sample of 16 male and female junior and senior Vassar students, we found no relationship between subjects' overall level of identity and their overall level of epistemological development. However, we did find that epistemologically inconsistent subjects ($N = 7$) demonstrated less exploration in the identity domains than did epistemologically consistent subjects. The relation between epistemological consistency and identity exploration suggests that reflecting upon one's implicit assumptions seems to underlie both developmen-

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*While there are a number of studies focusing on epistemological reasoning, there is no agreement on stages of its development. For example, in Kuhn and Leadbeater's (1988) scoring scheme there is no stage that is the conceptual equivalent to Belenky et al.'s stage of "Procedural Knowledge"; and Broughton's (1978) scoring scheme differs from Belenky et al.'s in the assumption that a constructive epistemology is the telos or the highest epistemological stage. This problem muddies the water for identifying gender differences and must be resolved in further research.

tal processes. However, in listening to the subjects, we realized that reflection may not have had a generalized effect. As is often true of college-age subjects, identity development was not uniform across the domains of religion, occupation, marriage, and politics (Waterman, 1985).

These observations suggest that development of identity and epistemology may be to at least some degree domain-specific. That is, while reflection may underlie both identity and epistemological development, developmental change will occur only in particular spheres of individual interest at a time, and not generally across all spheres at the same time. We note that Belenky et al.'s study was designed so that much of the identity, epistemology, and morality interview focused on the domains of occupation and marriage. Thus, perhaps the coherence Belenky et al. heard in women's voices is due to the fact that the interviews focused on specified domains that subjects had already spent time reflecting upon due to the importance of these areas in their lives.

In our present research, we are examining the issue of domain specificity, that is whether the relationship between identity exploration and epistemological consistency varies by domain. In exploring a particular identity domain, epistemological criteria for evaluating the exploration must be supposed. For example, in considering one's fulfillment of the role of spouse, one has to decide whether or not one true answer exists, and if so, whether it can be known by everyone or exclusively by self, authorities, or experts. We are proposing that a bidirectional relation exists in the development of identity and epistemological consistency that is at least to some extent domain-specific: When epistemological assumptions are worked out regarding a domain, it is easier to explore options, and when one is exploring one's identity with respect to a domain, it is easier to achieve epistemological consistency.

In this research, Vassar students were interviewed regarding their identity using a modification of Marcia's (1966) procedure. Then an epistemological interview was conducted in which students identified the two domains from the set (occupation, religion, politics, marriage) that are most important to them. Subjects were then asked about experts in each of these domains; who they are, what makes them experts, and what advice experts might give them. The case was posed in which two experts in a particular domain gave conflicting advice. Subjects were asked whether one expert must be correct and the other wrong, whether both experts can be right, whether both experts can be wrong, and whether there could be reconciliation between the experts. These four questions were repeated under the condition that the subject and an expert conflict. By varying both the domain and the source of conflict (expert–expert, expert–self), we expected to see variation in subject's epistemological stage and consistency.

While quantitative and qualitative analyses are in progress, we present the responses of one subject by way of example. Subject #113 responded with a subjective epistemology in the domain of occupation, a domain in which subject #113 is "identity achieved." He responded to the four questions saying that he is uncomfortable with ideas of right and wrong, and that each expert is saying something right for them, from their own perspective. Occupation is a domain that is quite important to the subject, and he has achieved relatively high and

consistent levels of thinking and identity in this area.

This consistency, however, is not present in the domain of politics, a domain which is less important to the subject, and one in which the subject is "identity foreclosed" — suggesting that little exploration of political roles has occurred. Responding to the question, "Does one expert have to be right and the other wrong?", subject #113 again began from a subjective epistemology, answering "No" and stating that each person has a different truth because of their different worldviews. In response to the question, "Could both experts be wrong?," he answered "Yes," which is not consistent with a subjectivist position. Asked to support this answer, he said that, "I can say to one political expert that your framework is wrong; it won't work because people don't think in that way; they wouldn't act in such a way as to support that model." While subject #113 is responding with his personal truth, it is no longer based on a subjective epistemology because right and wrong answers are assumed to exist. The subjective viewpoint deteriorates in response to the question, "Could both experts be right?" Subject #113 responded, "Not really, because one person's model would be more workable than another's." This response is inconsistent with a subjective epistemology, because now an underlying truth can be exposed. But the standard of truth to this subject ("workability") is vague and shows little forethought. The foreclosed identity status and epistemological inconsistency suggest little reflection by this subject on the domain of politics.

Domain-specificity, as exemplified in this subject's identity and epistemological development, is likely to be related to the importance of the domains in a person's life. The importance of a domain, leading a person to reflection upon it, may be due to internal factors (conscious or unconscious) or to external cultural, historical, or situational factors (as in choosing a major during a recession, or living in a country undergoing political upheaval). The notion of domain-specificity in identity and epistemological development provides a basis for understanding gender differences. No doubt men and women in our culture have different internal identifications and external pressures on them and so construct many aspects of their lives differently. However, in contrast to Belenky et al.'s and Gilligan's supposition that males and females develop through unique sequences, with a different telos and mechanism, we propose that gender is a contextual factor that influences the nature and domain of reflection. One developmental mechanism, that of reflection, and one developmental sequence is at work for both sexes. The assumption of domain-specificity in development allows for a single developmental mechanism and sequence to account for both coherence and variation in the development of self.

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