

Contextualizing Gender
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Lecture – 14
Unmasking Heterosexual Assumptions in Nancy Chodorow

Good morning, dear friends and welcome to this module. In this module, we would be discussing the contribution of Nancy Chodorow. In the previous weeks, we have looked at the concept of intersectionality as well as the idea of gender blurring; but simultaneously you would find that there were parallel investigations into forces which make us a gendered human being. Whereas, intersectionality and gender blurring talked about fixed social stereotypes; there were parallel investigations into finding out what exactly forms our awareness of gender.

Since the second wave of feminism, the idea of gender has emerged as a core concept of feminist theory. As a concept, gender has been defined in relation to the idea of biological sex. Gender has been defined as a social interpretation of sex; something which is expected, something which is related with actual social differences that in our culture are associated with being either a man or a woman.

Since its inception, we find that the term gender is a contested one and there has been a great degree of theorization about how and why masculinity and femininity emerge as they do. Two of the most influential theories in this regard are Nancy Chodorow's social psychoanalytical theory, which she had propounded in 1978. Today we would be discussing in detail about this idea. The second theory is Judith Butler's performative theory of gender, which we shall take up in the next week.






In many ways, the two theories can be seen as directly opposed to each other and also, they may be treated as being representative of different perspectives of feminist thought. But at the same time there is a great degree of commonality between these two theories; particularly if we look at these theoretical interpretations within the perspective of Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

According to Bourdieu, habitus is the way society is deposited in the psyche of a person, in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think feel and act in determinate ways which then guide them through their life.

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Nancy Chodrow

- Considered to be a pioneer in the field of Feminist Psychoanalysis, Chodrow is a contemporary American sociologist and psychologist.
- Influence of psychoanalytical (Freud, Karen Horney) and feminist theorists (Beatrice Whiting and Philip Slater)
- Seven books, numerous articles, chapter contributions and commentaries in the fields of object relations and psychoanalytic feminism.
 - *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978),
 - *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* (1994),
 - *Individualizing Gender and Sexuality: Theory and Practice* (2012)



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Nancy Chodorow is considered to be a pioneer in the field of feminist psychoanalysis; she is a contemporary American sociologist and psychologist. In her initial work we find that, there were influences of psychoanalytical theories, particularly by Freud and Karen Horney, and at the same time of feminist theories, particularly Beatrice Whiting and Philip Slater. She has authored 7 books in numerous articles; she has also contributed chapters and commentaries in the fields of object relations and psychoanalytic feminism.

Today's discussion would primarily be based on an understanding of three major contributions, which have helped us in understanding how the idea of gender takes shape in an individual and how then it becomes a social custom. The first book which she had authored, which was published in 1978 with the title, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* is considered to be the most significant idea in our understanding of the idea of gender and how it is perpetuated.

It is considered to be one of the most significant 50 books in the area of sociology and it has also molded the studies in the realm of gender. We find that Chodorow has made significant contributions in the psychoanalytic understanding of gender. She had discarded mere descriptions of existing conditions. During our previous discussions, we

have seen how critics as well as authors have looked at existing gender conditions as being stable or being impacted by several other forces.



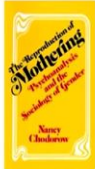
But Chodorow has discarded mere descriptions of these conditions, rather she has presented through an analytical experiment-based theorization; how gender hierarchies are produced, reproduced and also changed owing to socio, cultural and economic shifts. She has put economy along with sociological and cultural forces as far as the conditioning of gender is concerned.

Around that time, we find that, Marx's critics were also looking at the role of economic forces in the formation of our gender; but then the complete analysis of the combination of socio-cultural forces with economic forces is something which is normally associated with Chodorow's perspective. She had identified and proved the role of economic conditions in the formation of gender in individuals as well as at a social level.

It is also a point which has been made by black feminist critics and writers; but Chodorow was the first one to provide a theoretical understanding, an experiment-based understanding of this phenomena.

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- Analysed how gender hierarchies are produced, reproduced and also potentially changed owing to socio-cultural-economic shifts.
 - *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978) was voted one of the top 10 books in sociology by the journal *Contemporary Sociology* in 1999.
 - Susan Bordo has termed it as “the book that created a Copernican Revolution in gender theory”.
- The work is so influential that Chodorow revisited it after forty years in *Nancy Chodorow and The Reproduction of Mothering: Forty Years On* (2021).
 - Edited by Petra Bueskens, this book analyzes Chodorow's canonical book *The Reproduction of Mothering*, bringing together the classic and contemporary scholarship, along with an original essay from Chodorow.
 - Contributors include Balsam, Adrienne Harris, Sprengnether, Philipson, Meg Jay, Alison Stone and Petra Bueskens etc., -- in a mix of memoir, festschrift, reflection and critical analysis in Chodorowian scholarship.




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Her work, *The Reproduction of Mothering* was so influential that Chodorow had revisited it after forty years in a book which was published with the title *Nancy Chodorow and The Reproduction of Mothering: Forty Years On* in 2021. It was edited

by Petra Bueskens and had a mix of memoir, reflections, critical analysis in the field of Chodorowian scholarship.

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- In the 40 years since its publication, the *Reproduction of Mothering* has had a profound impact on scholarship across many disciplines including sociology, psychoanalysis, psychology, ethics, literary criticism and women's and gender studies.
- Challenging the traditional view that females are biologically predisposed toward nurturing infants, Chodorow has presented a reappraisal of the ways in which the psychological dynamics of the sex-gender system is systematically reproduced and subject to historical change and development.
 - Began with the discussion of how mothering is reproduced, applying feminist theories to Freudian psychoanalysis.
 - Focused on the mother-child relationship, instead of the father-son dyad.
- Chodorow's social-psychoanalytic theory argues that gender cannot be understood in isolation.



  4

In the 40 years since its publication, *The Reproduction of Mothering* has had a profound impact on scholarship across several disciplines including sociology, psychoanalysis, ethics, literary criticism and women's and gender studies. She had challenged the traditional view that females are biologically predisposed towards the nurturing of infants and the sick people of the family. Chodorow has presented a reappraisal of the ways in which the psychoanalytical dynamics of the sex/gender system is systematically reproduced and is subject to historical change and development.

She had started her discussion with an explanation of how mothering is reproduced applying feminist theories to Freudian psychoanalysis. She had also focused on the mother child relationship and had rejected the father son dyad. Chodorow psychoanalytic theory argues that, gender can never be understood in isolation. Chodorow has very aptly commented that gender should not be understood as a conscious phenomenon, which results either from linguistic or cultural or political formations.


The reproduction of gender also occurs through socially and structurally induced psychological processes. And these psychological processes are as significant as social and cultural structures. They are also relatively autonomous forms. Chodorow is best known for her work on the central role that mothers play in the rearing of the child

within certain social structures and also owing to the same certain social structures. She has said that family is the primary location for gender socialization.

She is also the critic who in a very systematic manner brought our attention towards the concept of gender conditioning. Most significantly, Chodorow has commented that the psychological dynamics of the gender system are also subject to historical changes and developments.

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- Chodorow had been influenced by Karen Horney who had challenged the Freudian ideas, considering them to be limited.
 - Arguing against the Freudian idea that the females are limited, Karen Horney had argued that women possess positive feminine qualities and self valuation.
- *The Reproduction of Mothering (1978)*: Chodorow argues that gender differences are compromised from formations of the Oedipal complex.
- Chodorow has discussed following four main ideas in her book:
 1. What personality traits are specific to women.
 2. How can the pattern of male dominance might be understood and changed.
 3. How most women think of themselves as being heterosexual.
 4. Why do women have the urge to mother.



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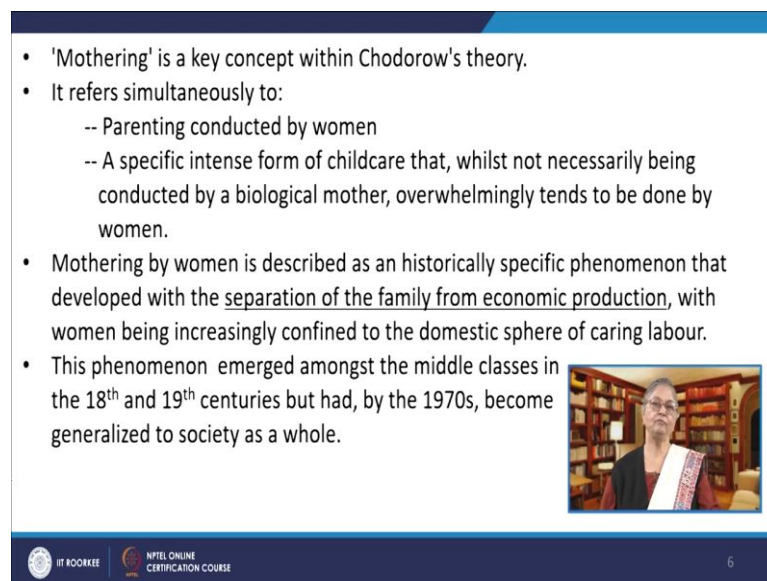
In her first work, Chodorow had been influenced by Karen Horney who had challenged the Freudian ideas, considering them to be limited as far as the representation of women is concerned. Arguing against the Freudian ideas that females are limited, Karen Horney had argued that women possess positive feminine qualities and self-evaluation. Chodorow's book *The Reproduction of Mothering* has argued that, gender differences are compromised from formations of the oedipal complex. She has discussed her ideas on the basis of four main ideas in this book.

The first idea, she has discussed it is about the personality traits which are specific to women. The second idea which she discusses is about the patterns of male dominance and how they are understood and changed and also how do they take place in our society. She has also looked at this idea about the heterosexuality with which most of the women identify themselves. And lastly, in most significantly she looks at this idea of how women have the urge to mother.

Over the passage of historical development, we know that women's mothering is one of the most common elements of the sexual division of labor. Women are considered to be solely responsible for taking care of a child and also being the primary caretaker of the child even if they are not in the biological role of a mother. Chodorow's work begins with an analysis of Freud's three essays on the theory of sexuality. Later on, she moves to considerations of Melanie Klein and Stephen Mitchell, looking at the postmodernist turn in psychoanalytic gender theory.

She has also looked at certain issues, which are considered as clinical cultural; for example, women and work, women and changing ways of motherhood, men and violence etc. One of the major findings of our work is that there are multiple ingredients and processes that create sexuality and gender in each individual. These are multiple ingredients in our personal, affective, conflictual and defensive constellations and processes that are responsible for creating the idea of gender.

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- 'Mothering' is a key concept within Chodorow's theory.
- It refers simultaneously to:
 - Parenting conducted by women
 - A specific intense form of childcare that, whilst not necessarily being conducted by a biological mother, overwhelmingly tends to be done by women.
- Mothering by women is described as an historically specific phenomenon that developed with the separation of the family from economic production, with women being increasingly confined to the domestic sphere of caring labour.
- This phenomenon emerged amongst the middle classes in the 18th and 19th centuries but had, by the 1970s, become generalized to society as a whole.

She has also written a chapter on homosexualities in this book. We find that in Chodorow's theory, mothering is a key concept and it refers simultaneously to a woman who is actually the parent of a child and also the specific intense form of child care that is taken care of by a woman who is not the biological mother. This is also the practice which is overwhelmingly followed in the societies.

Chodorow has suggested that, mothering came to be associated particularly with women when the family was separated from economic production. This separation of the family from economic production particularly for the middle classes started to take place in the 18th and 19th century and by the time she started to do research for this book in 1970s, it had become generalized in the society as a whole. With this separation of the family from economic production, we find that women came to be more and more confined within the domestic sphere of caring labour.

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- Chodorow's main argument is that this pattern of 'mothering' being done by females is responsible for the production of gendered psyches and identities in males and females
 - which then reproduces mothering as a mostly female activity
 - that in turn reproduces these gendered psyches.
- Psychoanalysis identified formation of the self as a process that runs in concert with the development of a child away from the initial condition of 'absolute dependence' on the mother.
- For Chodorow, it is the period in which the child gradually comes to understand that the mother is a separate being.




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Chodorow's main argument is that the pattern of mothering being done by females within the families and within the societies is responsible for creating gendered psyches and identities in men and women. These psyches then reproduce mothering as a mostly female activity and which in turn reproduces these gendered psyches. In a way, we can say that Chodorow's has been able to analyze the formation of the vicious circle of gendering within the psyche of an individual as well as the psyche which exists at a sociological level.

Psychoanalysis had identified formation of the self as a process that runs in connection with the development of a child away from the initial condition of being absolutely dependent on mother. For Chodorow we find that, this is a period in which the child gradually comes to understand that the mother is a separate entity.

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- The child understands it through the development of physiological perceptive capabilities and also through an increased experience of the mother's absence.
- This process ultimately contributes to the development of the child's ego boundaries.
- Ego boundaries can be defined as “a sense of personal psychological division from the rest of the world” that configures how people perceive external objects in relation to themselves.
- It is here that the gender of those doing the mothering becomes salient to the production of gendered psyches.
- Mother’s bonding with children of different genders.



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The child understands that the mother is not a separate entity, because of its experiences of the increased absence of a mother and also because of the development of physiological perceptive capabilities. This process ultimately results in the development of the child’s ego boundaries. Ego boundaries are defined as “a sense of personal psychological division from the rest of the world” which configures how people perceive external objects in relation to themselves.

It is at this point that the gender of those who do the mothering becomes important to the production of the gendered psyches in an infant. If mostly it is being done by mother, we find that it becomes associated more and more with being a female activity. Chodorow’s has also commented that the bonding of a mother with children of different genders is also different. Chodorow’s comments that mothers as women tend to identify more with their daughters than with their sons, as they find that they share the same anatomical sex with their daughters.


Mothers are also close to their infant sons; but they view the male child as being different from them as far as anatomical sex is concerned and the child does not share with them the same sex. And therefore, mothers often do not have the same sense of oneness for their infant son, which they experience with their daughters.

Mothers share a narcissistic bond with their children irrespective of the gender and they see that the child is either an extension of their personalities or a double of their

personalities. And it is from this perception of being an extension or a double that the child's original total dependence begins to originate. This bond is a stronger and far more lasting with daughters than with sons.

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- Chodorow argues that mothers, as women, tend to identify with daughters much more than sons on the basis of their shared anatomical sex.
 - Mothers have a narcissistic bond with children – they see a child either as an extension or a double – which originates from a child's original 'total dependence'
 - This bond is stronger and far longer lasting with daughters than with sons.
- This differential perception of children then leads to mothers experiencing and treating their female children differently to their male ones.
- Chodorow is very careful to emphasise that this occurs as a socio-historically relative occurrence within a context where sex and gender differences are emphasised and seen as oppositional. It is not a universal account.
- Chodorow does not suggest that there is any quantitative difference in the amount of parental care given to male and female children.
- But there are subtle qualitative differences in the manner of this care.



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Chodorow has highlighted this point that there is a differential perception of children according to gender, which leads mothers to experience and treat their female children differently from their male children. Chodorow's is also careful to emphasize that this differentiation occurs as a socio historically relative occurrence within a context, where sex and gender differences are emphasized and are also seen as oppositional.

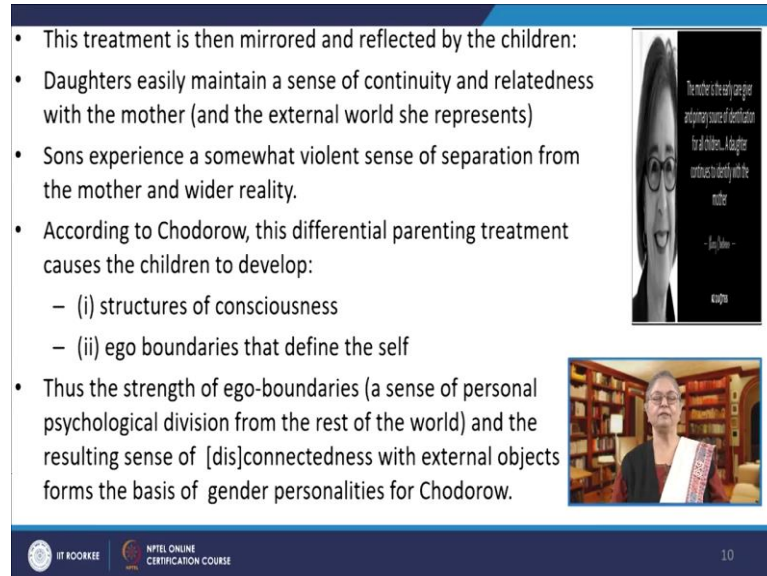
It is no way a universal account, but is still it is responsible for creating a gendered psyche. Chodorow also does not suggest that there is any quantitative difference in the amount of parental care given to male and female children. It is the same quantitative care which is given to a child of any gender; but there are subtle qualitative differences in the manner this care is given.

So, both male and female children have a narcissistic bond with their mother, whereas female children are viewed as an extension of their mother's personality; because of the same anatomical sex, male children receive an additional love as being an external object for being the sexual others also. Therefore, Chodorow has commented that daughters have a sense of continuity in the world and in their relationships with other people;

whereas sons have a sense of violent separation from mother, which also impacts their perception of relationships with others.

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- This treatment is then mirrored and reflected by the children:
- Daughters easily maintain a sense of continuity and relatedness with the mother (and the external world she represents)
- Sons experience a somewhat violent sense of separation from the mother and wider reality.
- According to Chodorow, this differential parenting treatment causes the children to develop:
 - (i) structures of consciousness
 - (ii) ego boundaries that define the self
- Thus the strength of ego-boundaries (a sense of personal psychological division from the rest of the world) and the resulting sense of [dis]connectedness with external objects forms the basis of gender personalities for Chodorow.




The differential treatment according to Chodorow is mirrored in the personalities of the children also. As I have commented earlier, daughters easily maintain a sense of continuity and relatedness in the later relationships in their life. Whereas, because sons have experienced a violent sense of separation from the mother in wider reality; they are more impacted by the gender norms which they see around them. The differential parenting treatment causes the children to develop. Firstly, the structures of consciousness and secondly, ego boundaries that define the self.

There is a strength of ego boundaries, that is a sense of personal psychological division from the rest of the world and the resulting sense of disconnectedness with external objects forms the basis of gender personalities as far as Chodorow theorization is concerned.

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- Female children: The sense of self is established upon identification with others -
- in a gradual and largely unconscious manner they learn behaviour from engagements with the mother and other female models through the relationships of similarity between them.
- Male children: By contrast, male children define themselves as separate from others.
- Still as they are being largely cared for by females, they do not learn how to act from relations with other men but from identification with cultural ideals of masculinity.
- Difference in strength of ego boundaries and relations with one's primary caregiver are significant.
- It structures the ways in which one acquires and engages with a socio-cultural gender identity.



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Amongst the female children, the sense of self is established upon identification with others. It takes place in a gradual manner in an unconscious manner from the behavior they learn from engagements with the mother and also other female models through the relationship of similarity between them. Whereas, by contrast a male child learns to define himself as being separate from others, that is women who are taking care of him.

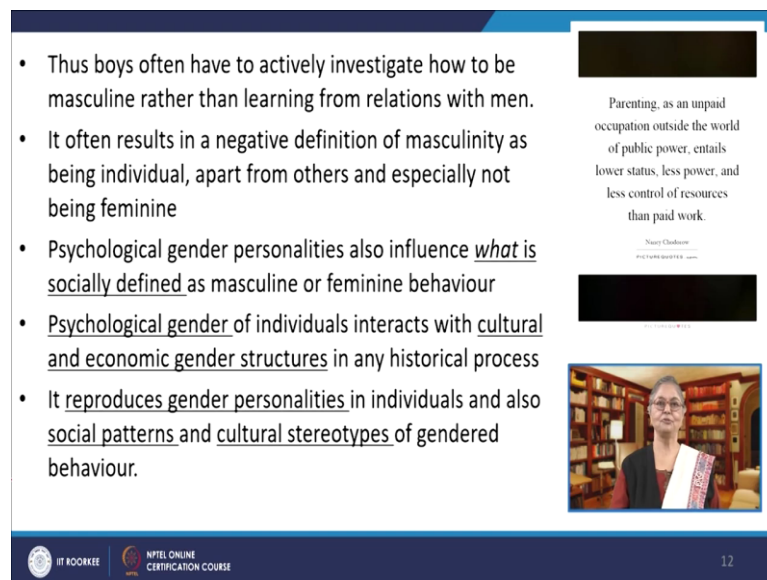
Still as they are being largely cared for by females only, they do not learn how to act from relations with other men, but from identification with cultural ideals of masculinity. Difference in strength of ego boundaries and relations with one's primary caregiver are also significant. As it structures the ways, in which one acquires and engages with a socio-cultural gender identity.

We often cite cultural stereotypes of gender as being more or less permanent in a culture. But how and when do they begin, what is the basis of the formation of these cultural stereotypes of gender? Chodorow has answered this critical question through analytical research. As boys often have to actively investigate how to be masculine rather than learning from relations with men, as only girls have this advantage if the mothering is done primarily by females.

So, in the context of boys, we find that media and cultural production become very important for them. It often also results in a negative definition of masculinity as being individual apart from others and especially not being feminine; it becomes important to

the boys that they are not seen as girls when they are young. At the same time Chodorow has cautioned us that such socio historical processes take place only in those contexts, where the gender differences are continuously emphasized within the family systems and they are seen as oppositional neither friendly nor complementary.

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- Thus boys often have to actively investigate how to be masculine rather than learning from relations with men.
- It often results in a negative definition of masculinity as being individual, apart from others and especially not being feminine
- Psychological gender personalities also influence what is socially defined as masculine or feminine behaviour
- Psychological gender of individuals interacts with cultural and economic gender structures in any historical process
- It reproduces gender personalities in individuals and also social patterns and cultural stereotypes of gendered behaviour.

Parenting, as an unpaid occupation outside the world of public power, entails lower status, less power, and less control of resources than paid work.


Shari Chodorow
PICTURES BY SHARI CHODOROW

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So, Chodorow has been able to point out how different gender socialization takes place for boys and girls on the basis of the mothering, which is normally done by women only. So, the psychological gender personalities also influence what is socially defined as masculine or a feminine behavior. Psychological gender of individuals interacts with cultural and economic gender structures in any given historical process. It reproduces gender personalities in individuals and also it creates social patterns as well as cultural stereotypes of gendered behavior at a larger level.

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- The most important sociological dimension of Chodorow's theory lies in her theoretical intervention of identification of bases of gender conditioning.
- The most obvious element of contemporary gender norms that can be derived from this is the notion that women are more concerned with emotional matters and ascribe greater importance to relationships, whether friendly, romantic or familial, than men.
- It follows deductively that men, who define themselves through separation from others (female caretaker figures), would be less engaged with interpersonal relations than women.
- Chodorow argues that this can help to account for the gendered division of labour between men and women.
 - It was more starkly divided between public production and private reproduction at the time of writing (1978), but is still highly significant today.



The slide features a portrait of Nancy Chodorow, a woman with glasses and a white shawl, standing in front of a bookshelf. The slide also includes logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, and the number 13 in the bottom right corner.


The most significant sociological dimension of Chodorow's theory, which has impacted gender studies also lies in this theoretical intervention of identification of bases of gender conditioning. The most obvious element of contemporary gender norms can be derived from this notion that women are more concerned with emotional matters and ascribe greater importance to relationship whether friendly, romantic or familial in comparison to men.

Deductively it also follows that men define themselves through separation from others, particularly female caretaker figures. Therefore, they are considered to be less engaged with interpersonal relations in comparison to women. Chodorow argues that this can help to account for the gender division of labour between men and women. Later on, critics have also pointed out that this gender division of labor was dominantly found when Chodorow was preparing for her book and the book itself was published in 1978.

Even though it might have changed and in certain social segments it might have been mitigated, but still, we find that it is highly significant in today's world.

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- Through these processes women become psychologically disposed towards interpersonal relationships, they are far more likely to engage in 'mothering' than men.
- It reproduces the psychic division between male and female personalities and thus the structures of gender and gendered parenting are shaped in a stable and self-perpetuating cycle.
- "The...division of labour in which women mother and are more involved in interpersonal, affective relationships than men produces in daughters and sons a division of psychological capacities which leads them to reproduce this sexual and familial division of labour" (Chodorow, 1978,7).
- Hence the term 'mothering', used to refer to the intense level of care for the child, becomes defined by its association with the activities of a female parent – leading to gender stereotypes.



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So, through these psychological processes, we find that women become more and more disposed towards interpersonal relationships and therefore, it is also expected that they would be engaging themselves more and more in the roles of mothering in comparison to men. It also reproduces the psychic division between the male and female personalities and thus the structures of gender and gendered parenting are shaped in a stable and self-perpetuating cycle.

So, we find that because the psychological processes are being cemented in the infancy of individual child. So, these processes also have a far-reaching impact in shaping ones thinking. To quote Chodorow I begin, “the division of labour in which women mother and are more involved in interpersonal, affective relationships than men produces in daughters and sons a division of psychological capacities which leads them to reproduce this sexual and familial division of labor” unquote.

Hence the term ‘mothering’, which is used to refer to the intense level of care for the child, becomes defined by its association with the activities of a female parent only leading to gender stereotypes within social organizations. Chodorow also tells us with the help of this finding, how the patterns of thought also become gendered. Masculine and feminine personalities predispose differently.


Girls are able to identify with femininity as embodied in particular women who had nurtured them. Men tend to identify with a universal conception of masculinity; if not universal, then something which is culturally hegemonic.

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- We can also read from Chodorow's theory a gendering of patterns of thought.
 - Masculine and feminine personalities predispose girls to identify with femininity as embodied in *particular* women; whereas men tend to identify with a *universal* (or at least culturally hegemonic) conception of masculinity.
- Unconscious processes of identification also structure one's faculties of conscious thought and encourage us towards pre-cut grooves. They predispose:
 - Females towards particularistic and contextual thought processes
 - Males towards universalistic and generalized thought processes.
- Chodorow thus deconstructs historical privileging of 'pure reason'.

A concern with parenting...must direct attention beyond behavior. This is because parenting is not simply a set of behaviors, but participation in an interpersonal, diffuse, affective relationship. Parenting is an eminently psychological role in a way that many other roles and activities are not.

Nancy Chodorow




Through the gendering of our patterns of thought, the unconscious processes of identification also structure our faculties of conscious thought and encourage us towards pre-cut grooves of behavior. Females are directed towards particularistic and contextual thought processes and men are encouraged towards universal and generalized thought processes. Thus, we can say that Chodorow is able to deconstruct historical privileging of pure reason being associated as a masculine faculty.

Chodorow has discussed male and female thought propensities in detail and very carefully. However, we find that the theory is only intragender, it has overlooked the issue of race absolutely. Still, we find that it has been able to deconstruct the historical privileging of pure reason and universalizing theories as the institutionalization of male patterns of thought. It should not be considered that her theoretical point of view is a derogation of women's capabilities to engage in thoughts and debates in any way.

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- In the book, *Individualizing Gender and Sexuality: Theory and Practice* (2012), she explores issues of gender and sexuality through the discussion of critical social issues, such as the “glass ceiling” phenomena for women (capping their career trajectories through institutionalised sexism), terrorism, homosexuality, and the concept of time in relation to the “non-reproduction of mothering” or leaving it “too late” to have children (2012, p. 103).
- Chodorow brings together psychoanalytic and sociological analyses to ponder the questions of gender and sexuality.
- She builds a convincing argument that gender requires as much pluralist theoretical understanding as the “clinical individual” herself.
- Brought together, these components *animate* one’s sexuality and gender identity.



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In her later research also, particularly the book which has come out in 2012; *Individualizing Gender and Sexuality: Theory and Practice*, she has explored issues of gender and sexuality through the discussion of critical social issue. Taking up glass ceiling which obstructs women from progressing beyond a certain level in their professions, terrorism, homosexuality and the concept of time in relation to the non reproduction of mothering or leaving it too late to have children.

Chodorow has brought together psychoanalytic and sociological analysis to ponder over the questions of gender and sexuality. She has also been able to convince the readers that gender requires as much pluralist theoretical understanding as the clinical individual herself. Brought together, these components animate one’s sexuality and gender identity.

Chodorow has suggested that, if we try to answer questions on gender in a deterministic theoretical binary of either/or it will not work; it will not work at an individual level and it will also not work at an academic or a sociological level. As there are no universal truths, there is no singular theory, there is no absolute gender divide also; there is no single concept of femininity or masculinity.

She simply says that there are many and all of us construct our own particularized personal fantasies between gender and object choices. In a very recent interview, Nancy Chodorow has been able to emphasize on these points once again.

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- Nancy Chodorow, presenting her new book "The Psychoanalytic Ear and the Sociological Eye: Toward an American Independent Tradition" (Routledge, 2020)
- Emphasizes the importance of social and real life experiences in theories.
- Recorded as webinar on May 4, 2021.
- The discussion was moderated by Dan Jacobs, MD, Director of BPSI Library.

Source: BPSI Library, Meet the Author with Nancy Chodorow, PhD, on May 4, 2021 on Vimeo

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In this video, Nancy Chodorow is presenting her new book, which is published by Routledge in 2020 only. The title of the book is *The Psychoanalytic Ear and the Sociological Eye: Toward an American Independent Tradition*. She has emphasized the importance of social and real-life experiences in theories. What happened in to Freud's interests in the social, I mean I think we are talking here to analysts.

If you I have a couple of chapters, I have a chapter on civilization and its discontents and a chapter called the question of the Weltanschauung thoughts for the times on war and death and why war and this allergy to the social in psychoanalysis is quite modern. I do not quite, I can describe it and I can. So, in this book I notice civilization and its discontents groups psychology and its analysis of the ego.

But in this chapter on the question of the Weltanschauung of Freud's, he talks about World War 1 in articles he talks about Marxism, bolshevism, the Bolshevik experiment; he debates with Einstein about the inevitability of war, he writes about World War 1 and what happened to it and also it is not just that Freud was interested in the social. If you think back to the cases of Freud's that you cannot, I mean I say in the book that you could teach; you could teach an entire course on 19th century femininity from the studies on hysteria.

You cannot read a case of Freud's without noticing about society and culture, you know think of the women (Refer Time: 32:06) and running her you know estates Anna O; the

first paragraph of Anna O is it is a description of a 19th century restricted bourgeois girl. The rat man's nanny, his military service, the wolf man's natal home we picture the trees and the wolf and the his parents you know and he's lived sleeping in the bedroom.

Dora's family, little Han's all of Freud's cases assume that it is not a separate matter and what is happened I think and this is what I try and talk about is that, as we came to focus more intently on you know the moment by moment, one session, two sessions, what is going on in the analyst's mind, what is going on in the transference counter transference, this larger world has gotten lost. And now we do find that every institute is trying to figure out how to reclaim it, how to understand what is going on in our society, to understand the psychodynamics of it.

But that the psychodynamics are intertwined with these social phenomena and political phenomena I mean. Chodorow's theories have also immensely impacted the literary studies. As we know literature is normally silent about mothers; it has been male dominated and if women writers wanted to publish, they often had to take pen names. The roles of the mothers are also presented according to the masculine fantasies and they have often been portrayed in a negative light or in a binary of being good mothers and bad mothers.

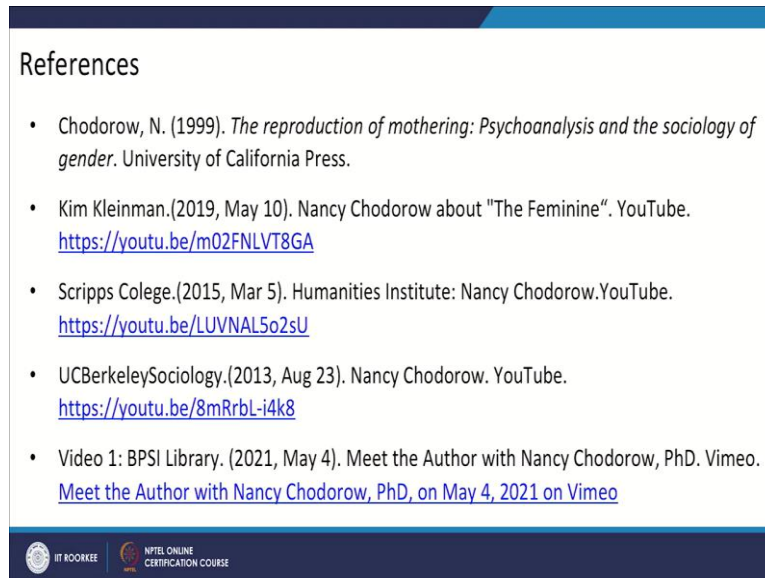
We can take the examples of certain novels Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina. In these novels, we find that female protagonists that were considered to be bad mothers in family life stories were usually punished often by death. At the very least they were also socially shunned and relegated to poverty and obscurity. Even today we find that mothers in the family life stories of literature or different types of media are judged according to contemporary social criteria.

Nancy Chodorow has written about the extent to which women's personal identities are formed as a response to the social construct of motherhood. She is important for theory and also for creative writing, whether we approach it as a writer or as a reader. Chodorow has also remarked that heterosexuality is a compromise formation; it is a sexual orientation which has been made primary in the western culture since the 19th century.

Culturally encouraged fairy tales, myths, movies and books constitute sexual fantasies through language, which are later on individually appropriated to invent and solidify

personal myths. Thus, notions of sexual attraction and what constitutes attractiveness in a person are constructed historically and cross culturally. Her idea that sexuality among males is impacted by cultural products is further taken up by Teresa De Lauretis, who talks about technology of gender. We would be discussing Teresa De Lauretis in the next component. Thank You.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:56)



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