Bridging the Gap: An Investigation of the Transition From Received Knowledge to Subjective Knowledge in Women's Development and in Gender-Aware Psychotherapy

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Abstract
This dissertation provides a beginning rationale for the discovery of treatments specific to individual levels of epistemological development. As with other developmental theories, epistemological development has been shown to fall into groupings, variously known as perspectives or positions ever since the concept of stage has become untenable. Several studies have illuminated the particular characteristics of each epistemological developmental position; one focuses predominately on men and the other focuses on women. This discussion emphasizes the development of women's ways of knowing. Ways of knowing is the descriptive way to indicate epistemology, and epistemology has been found to differ between women and men.

This dissertation hypothesizes the variable in this difference to be the socially limiting prescriptive nature of the feminine role. Complex, more relativistically organized understandings of reality, or epistemological perspectives, are postulated to be incommensurate with the Western feminine role, thereby proscribing women from attaining relativistic epistemological perspectives if they wish to maintain the still culturally-valued feminine role. On the grand scale, the current cultural epistemology is in the midst of a transition between paradigms, and the hypothesis of this work is that it is moving from a dualistic, waning paradigm toward the next level of complexity, an emerging cultural epistemological paradigm.

Aspects of culture and science that challenge the waning paradigm are described to provide a foundation for elucidating the paradigm which is emerging as a replacement. Women's role, with its limitations to women's ways of knowing, is seen as a fundamental part of the waning paradigm. In this dissertation, feminism is seen as the challenge that will impact these role limitations. Feminism is viewed in this dissertation's argument as an important challenge to the waning epistemological paradigm, in that it reveals the depth of investment that the Western culture has in preserving the feminine role as limiting of women's personal authority. To discover the connection between the embedded gender inequalities in Western culture and the philosophical paradigm, the Western epistemology's dualistic construction of reality is explored. The importance of understanding epistemological development for the psychotherapist is noted and operationalized in the treatment format.

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BRIDGING THE GAP: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE TRANSITION FROM RECEIVED KNOWLEDGE TO SUBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE IN WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT AND IN GENDER-AWARE PSYCHOTHERAPY

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BY
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides a beginning rationale for the discovery of treatments specific to individual levels of epistemological development. As with other developmental theories, epistemological development has been shown to fall into groupings, variously known as perspectives or positions ever since the concept of stage has become untenable. Several studies have illuminated the particular characteristics of each epistemological developmental position; one focuses predominately on men and the other focuses on women. This discussion emphasizes the development of women’s ways of knowing. Ways of knowing is the descriptive way to indicate epistemology, and epistemology has been found to differ between women and men.

This dissertation hypothesizes the variable in this difference to be the socially limiting prescriptive nature of the feminine role. Complex, more relativistically organized understandings of reality, or epistemological perspectives, are postulated to be incommensurate with the Western feminine role, thereby proscribing women from attaining relativistic epistemological perspectives if they wish to maintain the still culturally-valued feminine role. On the grand scale, the current cultural epistemology is in the midst of a transition between paradigms, and the hypothesis of this work is that it is moving from a dualistic, waning paradigm toward the next level of complexity, an emerging cultural epistemological paradigm.
Aspects of culture and science that challenge the waning paradigm are described to provide a foundation for elucidating the paradigm which is emerging as a replacement. Women’s role, with its limitations to women’s ways of knowing, is seen as a fundamental part of the waning paradigm. In this dissertation, feminism is seen as the challenge that will impact these role limitations. Feminism is viewed in this dissertation’s argument as an important challenge to the waning epistemological paradigm, in that it reveals the depth of investment that the Western culture has in preserving the feminine role as limiting of women’s personal authority. To discover the connection between the embedded gender inequalities in Western culture and the philosophical paradigm, the Western epistemology’s dualistic construction of reality is explored. The importance of understanding epistemological development for the psychotherapist is noted and operationalized in the treatment format.

KEY WORDS: Women’s development, ways of knowing, gender-aware psychotherapy
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CHAPTER 1.
THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN’S EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT:
WHY CAN’T WOMEN KNOW?

This dissertation is concerned with the way in which traditional masculine-
determined Western culture’s epistemologies have contributed to the construction and
maintenance of gender specific roles for men and women, and how these roles form the
context that enhances or impairs individuals’ personal epistemological development. The
thesis of the dissertation is based on the premise that there is an epistemological
component of the cultural role prescribed for women that impedes their personal
epistemological development. That is, for a woman to maintain a culturally sanctioned
feminine role, she is consigned to practice certain limited ways of knowing that
discourage her from developing more complex, or relativistic, epistemological
perspectives. If the female role is incommensurate with complex ways of knowing and
these more relativistic ways of knowing would give women a sense of agency, or
personal authority, then women who follow feminine role prescriptions become limited in
their sense of agency. Since agency is one step in the process of gaining power, then the
female role limits women from gaining power.

The development of complex ways of knowing is postulated to be central to the
sense of agency that women need to move beyond conventional roles. A sense of agency
was termed by Bakan (1966) as being assertive and achieving, by Schafer (1978) as
having directed action, and by postmodernists as having authority, power, and causal
force (Rosneau, 1992). In this dissertation, both the development of cultural ways of
knowing and the development of personal epistemology are important, and there are
recursions between those levels. Epistemology is defined within this dissertation as those
assumptions, beliefs, sources of authority, attributions of meaning, methods of gaining
knowledge and rules, and processes of knowing that allow humans to experience the
personally constructed artifact considered to be knowledge. Bateson and Bateson (1987),
called it “how knowing is done” (p. 20). These authors, as well as this dissertation,
considered epistemology to be an exceptionally important area of investigation, as it
forms the foundation of any perspective and it does this by determining the context of
any experience. “The determination of what should be defined as context is an
epistemological act in that it is one of punctuation, of the drawing, rather arbitrarily, of a
boundary within experience” (Bateson & Bateson, 1987, p. 31). Power accrues to the
knower by the way he or she defines and garners knowledge. The manner in which
knowledge is derived, the process of knowing rather than the content of knowing, is the
power of epistemology.

This dissertation’s philosophical inquiry begins with the assumption that the
prevalent scientific and philosophical epistemological paradigm is waning, that is,
decreasing in value to Western culture. Battista (1992) considered a paradigm to refer in
general to “the set of implicit basic assumptions which underlie [sic] models or theories”
(p. 149). An epistemological paradigm is a set of cultural assumptions and rules that
forms the foundation of ways of knowing. The prevalent epistemological paradigm is
characterized by a philosophical splitting of reality into unequal dualities, most important of which is the emphasis of objective reasoning over subjective experience. Code (1991) viewed this split as the male signifying reason versus the female signifying experience in this hierarchical and polar opposition. New ways of thinking have challenged this prevalent set of understandings, leading toward a cultural transition beginning with the construction of an emerging paradigm. During the course of this dissertation, the dualistically organized, objectively based paradigm is referred to as the waning paradigm and the ways of knowing based on newer, more complex, subjective and interactive ways of knowing is referred to as the emerging paradigm.

The shift in paradigms has implications for the understanding of transitions between types of perspectives as an individual develops personal ways of knowing. Epistemology, when the study of knowing pertains to an individual, means the perspective within which he or she knows. Each person’s perspective amounts to a personal epistemological paradigm, and the individual epistemological development has been the focus of two psychological studies (Belenky, Goldberger, Clinchy, & Tarule, 1986; Perry, 1970). Shifts between personal epistemological perspectives occur in transitional phases, which are characterized by uncertainty and confusion (Giddens, 1991).

This dissertation compared the personal to the cultural epistemological paradigm, assuming a recursive interaction between these two levels of organization. This assumption of the validity of comparing recursions comes from systems theory and refers to the idea that there are patterns within larger patterns, each of which interactively
affects the other. For example, both in overall Western cultural epistemology (Mahoney, 1991; Tarnas, 1991) and in individual personal epistemology (Belenky et al., 1986; Perry, 1970) the direction of the development in paradigms of knowledge moves from absolutistic towards relativistic perspectives. In both there is a progression of development in ways of knowing from perspectives characterized by the relationship between dichotomously absolute categories towards perspectives emphasizing interactions among multiple and relative-based viewpoints. This dissertation’s presumption is that the emerging paradigm has a more relative, multiplicitous basis of knowing, obviating such notions as the duality of mind and body as rigid and separate categories of self and leading to conceptualizations with much more complex and integrated structures. In the waning paradigm, characteristics of one side negatively determine the other—they are reciprocal dichotomies. This forms a system of absolute categories, based on the separation of things from not-things or other-than-things. This process has resulted in sets of dichotomies like mind and body, male and female, and theory and practice, in which one, by definition, does not include the other.

For instance, in the personal level of epistemology, both Perry (1970) and Belenky, et al. (1986) found a stage in personal epistemological development that was characterized by dualistic, or black and white, thinking. Belenky, et al. (1986) found that when women developed beyond this particular personal epistemological transition, they must have dealt with the current cultural transition between the waning and emerging philosophical paradigms. It postulated that the similarities in these processes of transition would both be found to be a function of new data straining the previous personal or
cultural system. Code (1991) argued that a revaluing of the more reviled other half of dichotomous polarizations would then function as new data. She called it “affirming an ideal of a distinctive alternative to the autonomy-of-reason credo” and cites the qualities of “affectivity, bodily specificity intersubjectivity, and cognitive ‘location’” as creating political danger by “its tendency to confirm masculine suspicions about the inchoate emotivism of …women” (p. 121). Here, Code assumed the waning paradigm to be characterized by an autonomy-of-reason-based credo and the emerging to be based on the dangerously newly valued affective traits.

This dissertation proceeded on the idea that paradigmatic shifts in science and culture and in personal development occurred as a result of similar processes. The notion of scientific paradigm shifts was devised by Kuhn (1970), as he noticed the importance of the systems nature of paradigms (Gleick, 1987). Paradigms have a closed set of assumptions that function to explain all the available data. This means that normal science operates within a static system, and as such is subject to patterns characteristic of systems: rules within the system, avoidance of paradox, distinct hierarchies in levels of organization, rules of interaction between subsystems, among others. Anything that cannot be explained within the normal explanatory power of the system is considered an anomaly, and anomalies strain the system by breaking rules. When anomalies pile up without explanations, crisis ensues (Berman, 1984). The shift in a paradigm towards one providing a larger, more inclusive explanation occurs with the emergence of a critical mass of new data that do not fit the previous operating patterns.
New data from science and philosophy have strained the waning cultural paradigm. In a similar way, new personal data that do not fit categories constructed by black and white thinking can strain a dualistic personal epistemological paradigm or perspective. Sampson (1989) made a parallel between systemic paradigm shifts, such as the normal science concept from Kuhn (1970), and personal paradigm shifts. Since both personhood and gender are aspects of identity, this statement could apply as well to changing conceptions of gender. “Changing conceptions of personhood…is somewhat equivalent to a Kuhnian paradigm shift: it is likely to occur only with a major shift in the shape of the underlying culture that has produced it and sustains it” (Sampson, 1989, p. 3).

One theory replaces another, not because it functions successfully as a major premise in a greater number of deductions, but because it answers some questions that the other theory does not …one theory is more satisfying than the other, because the questions it answers are considered more important, and develop the knowledge that the paradigm provides a framework for … [implying] that there is no simple universal characterization of good scientific reasoning. (Moulton, 1989, p. 8)

In this case, the cultural paradigm in crisis referred to the dualistically structured epistemology of Western zeitgeist.

For a new paradigm to emerge, the fundamental epistemological assumptions of the existing one must be unearthed, and made available to conscious understanding and potential deconstruction. Deconstruction is a word from the postmodern philosophical
tradition that is becoming important in the emerging paradigm. It means to “tear...a text apart, [and] reveal ...its contradictions and assumptions” (Rosneau, 1992). The fundamental assumptions of the new paradigm must be brought out to determine if the paradigms are inclusive enough to explain the new data. Tarnas (1991) made the point that the new data necessary to a new paradigm often were suppressed in the preceding paradigm. This has special importance to women, as their subjective experiences are suppressed by being devalued. The “Kuhnian concept of ‘paradigms’...is highly characteristic of postmodern thought...[not only in its] approach to past cultural world views and the history of changing scientific theories, but also...encourage[d] a more sympathetic attitude toward repressed or unorthodox perspectives” (p. 397). The waning paradigm is being deconstructed by analyses such as this one, in which the philosophical underpinnings are revealed.

Some feminist analyses consider the waning paradigm to be a projection by male theorists of their own characteristics onto the nature of reality, both in the content and in the process of discovery (Kaschak, 1992). In content, Code’s (1991) telling quote of John Locke, “I can speak but of what I find in myself” (p. 61), is demonstrative of men’s inability to imagine a reality that is not patterned after their own thinking. This is the essence of the term *androcentricity*, which is the organization in the “fundamental conceptional apparatus of mainstream Western philosophical thought” (Code, 1991, p. 61) around certain masculine ways of knowing. This dissertation agrees with authors (Bordo, 1986; Code, 1991; Harding & Hintikka, 1983) who considered this paradigm’s characteristics to be related to the aggregate of attributes associated with the masculine
role. In process, philosophies of the waning paradigm were derived by masculine ways of gaining knowledge. Bordo (1986) wrote an article titled and termed this the “Cartesian masculinization of thought” (p. 436). She underscored that men, like Descartes, assumed that they could draw universal theoretical conclusions from observations of their own cognitive processes.

Analyses that reveal philosophical underpinnings begin by questioning ontological assumptions. Merrill and Hintikka “contend that not even the basic ontological assumptions of Western philosophy are gender neutral. Rather, they project a demonstrably masculine ontology” (Code, 1991, p. 60). If particular epistemologies can be shown to be based on gender identified processes, then it can be argued that the previously marginalized women’s ways of knowing are to be important in the construction of the next epistemological and scientific paradigm.

The female role occurs as a function of the waning paradigm. If, as this dissertation contends, the philosophical basis of the waning paradigm rests on a binary construction of reality, in which each side is constructed of its opposite, and the primary side is a reflection of the masculine, then the secondary side would be a reflection of the feminine. This simplistic description forms the foundation for the argument that the feminine role is a functional product of dualism, not an absolute category. As other—previously thought to be absolute—categories become interpreted to be relative, in new physics as well as social, the possibility of considering reality to be a construction becomes feasible.
If gender is to be seen as a constructed relative category, in that gender as an absolute category is a function of a dualistic paradigm that lacks full explanatory power, then the etiology, description, and social function of gender become important to therapists dealing with women facing this change in perception of themselves from object to agent. In the role given to women in the dualistic epistemological structure, philosopher Alcoff noted that:

Where men’s behavior is underdetermined, free to construct its own future along the course of its rational choice, women’s nature has overdetermined her behavior, the limits of her intellectual endeavors, the inevitabilities of her emotional journey through life…she …is always construed as an essential something inevitably accessible to direct intuited appreciation by males…she is always the Object, a conglomeration of attributes to be predicted and controlled along with other natural phenomena. The place of the free-willed subject who can transcend nature’s madness is reserved exclusively for men. (Alcoff, 1989, p. 296)

In the dualistic epistemological structure, women’s role has been composed of the opposites of the constellation of valued masculine characteristics, and a central component of that role is constraint in personal authority. There is a strong body of writing about the construction of the role of woman as Other (Beauvoir, 1953; Benjamin, 1988; Butler, 1989; Dinnerstein, 1976; Laidlaw & Malmo, 1990). According to Butler:

In the case of women, cultural norms constrain us to become, to choose, that which is the very opposite of choice. In other words, we are compelled to become
the Other, the opposite of the Subject. As Other, women are not devoid of choice; rather, they are constrained to choose against their own sense of agency, and so to distort and undermine the very meaning of choice. While man is understood to be a cognitive and choosing subject, woman is culturally obligated to become a pure body, an instrument of his desire, a reflector or medium for his agency (Butler, 1989, p. 256).

As background for a discussion of the context of women’s development in the current masculinist epistemological paradigm, this chapter presents a discussion of the relationship among gender, role, and power. The discussion rests on two central points. The first one is that culturally gender-specific norms are an embedded and an intrinsic part of the hegemonic masculinist tradition. Kaschak (1992) posited the existence of engendered lives, meaning that the concept of gender has deep philosophical and sociopolitical roots, and as such is an intrinsic part of the whole epistemological understanding of reality. She wrote, “masculinist epistemology in a patriarchal society may seem to define epistemology itself…promoting masculine needs and desires, making all others invisible” (p. 11).

For instance, Unger (1989), an important feminist social psychologist, described the “components of the female gender pattern—immaturity, decreased autonomy, decreased dominance, and so on—are maladaptive for any individual in our society, regardless of his or her biological sex” (p. 145). In a similar fashion, Chickering (1981) described the socialization of women as counter-development, a phenomenon characterized by remaining:
In the conformist stage of character development, conscious preoccupation, and cognitive style, and in the dependent stage of interpersonal style. The moral development of girls has tended to be arrested at the “be-good-so-people-will-love-you” stage. Women have been socialized to be defensive and immature—that is, to be passive and dependent, to have a limited behavioral repertoire and shallow interests, and to habitually assume a subordinate position. (Safilios-Rothschild, 1979, p. 261)

Loevinger (1976) constructed a stage theory of ego development, which she originally derived from studying women. The stage she called conforming is the closest to this conception of the stereotype of Western cultural role for women.

Brownmiller (1984) wrote of a number of areas of behavior in which women are limited by the feminine role: voice, body, hair, clothes, skin, movement, emotion, and ambition. She stated:

Femininity…is a romantic sentiment, a nostalgic tradition of imposed limitations…for one works at femininity by accepting restrictions, by limiting one’s sights, by choosing an indirect route, by scattering concentration and not giving one’s all as a man would to his own….It does not require a great leap of imagination…to understand the feminine principle as a grand collection of compromises….If she has difficulty in satisfying femininity’s demands, if its illusions go against her grain, or if she is criticized for her shortcomings and imperfections, the more she will see femininity as a desperate strategy of
appeasement, a strategy she may not have the wish or the courage to abandon, for failure looms in either direction. (p. 2)

Here role is considered to be an aspect of identity, a sense of social continuity. A number of writers note the limiting confines of the feminine role for Western (especially white, middle-class) women. For instance, Lerman (1986) considered the “conflict between basic human strivings and prohibitions of a cultural milieu as basis for theory of feminine psychology” (p. 191). Kaschak (1992) pointed out that women, to function in this culture, may have to forget or repress the magnitude if the patriarchal misogynistic context in which they exist.

Generally, the feminine role can be seen as Western women’s socially acceptable identity, or the behavioral regulations specific to the female gender. Gender is not only learned (Chadorow, 1978), but also is continuously created and maintained both interactionally and contextually. Unger (1990) wrote:

Gender is created by social processes. When social demands are strong enough, people will behave in sex-characteristic ways whether or not they possess the sex-typed traits supposedly directing their behavior….The social demands imposed by gender are so strong that they continue to constrain behavior even when people are alone….According to this view, on-going social interactions are key for constructing gendered behavior. (p. 116)

Unger (1990) also wrote of the contextual aspect of gender: “Recent work in feminist psychology suggests that what we think of as gender is a complex mixture of traits, roles, and behavioral preferences influenced by situational demands” (p. 104).
One of the complex functions of the feminine role is to uphold the sociopolitical base of the epistemological paradigm by advocating passivity and deference to men. “Women are not supposed to be authoritative. By reputation we are not even supposed to be able to present a set of facts in a rational, cogent manner….A female opinion strongly expressed is often considered emotional or bitchy” (Brownmiller, 1984, p. 88).

The role prescribed to males has agency as one of its primary constituents; however, the female role lacks this characteristic and consequently lacks power. One way of speaking about power in an operational sense is to attribute it to an individual who has a sense of agency. Agency is a term from Bakan (1966), who discriminated agency from community, linking the former with the masculine and the latter with the feminine form of thinking. Agency indicates action, authority, directionality, and power. As Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987) emphasized:

Women who grow up and are socialized in a patriarchal culture are forced to exclude authority from their self-concepts. They must retrieve it from experiences in the masculine world of culture and then converts these experiences to confidence in themselves. (p. 9)

These authors further have the concern that women who lack a sense of agency or personal authority too often compensate through identification with males. “Troubling as it is, when females identify with their own gender, they part from a sense of personal authority….Implicitly and explicitly, male norms have become our social standards for health, mental health, leadership, relationships, and personal autonomy” (Young-Eisendrath & Wiedemann, 1987, p. 1).
Central to this dissertation’s argument is the notion that a woman’s epistemological development is constrained by her role limitations in the domain of personal agency, the sense of authority to know what she knows. If the feminine role does not include a sense of agency, then it stands to reason that women are culturally constrained from attaining more complex perspectives in construction of personal knowledge. Women who lack a sense of agency, or sense of personal authority, will have difficulty in progressing in epistemological development. More developed, less authority-based epistemological functioning is important for the culture as well as for individual women. As long as women’s roles are designed on the externally derived authority-based model, the culture remains epistemologically limited as well.

Power is germane to the question of feminine role limitations of epistemological development, in that the access to knowledge is one of the important ways power is allocated in this culture. Feminists assume that the constitutive characteristics of a culturally sanctioned feminine role will “inevitably favor the interests of particular social groups” (Weedon, 1987, p. 77). The feminist philosopher Weedon explained “to maintain current levels of patriarchal power it is necessary to discredit or marginalize ways of giving meaning to experience which redefines hegemonic gender norms” (1987, p. 79). Radical feminists endorsed the postmodern position that epistemologists set agendas and form justificatory strategies. Deconstructionalists, including “Foucault, Rorty, and other critics have pointed out epistemologies that end up rationalizing the legitimacy of the beliefs of the powerful” (Harding, 1990, p. 87). Postmodernists view the analysis of power as a metanarrative, which means any attempt to explain phenomena from a
privileged viewpoint. In other words, analyzing itself is a part of having power, since power is associated with the gaining and use of knowledge. Metanarratives, such as the assumption of developmental differences between genders, are often used to justify maintaining power imbalances in gender relations.

Garry and Pearsall (1989) wrote of feminist philosophers’ response to limitations in women’s lack of agency, and their injunction is apt for psychologists as well: “We want to redefine the methods and subject matter of philosophy in ways that value women’s experiences and enable women to move from the position of object to positions of subject, of knower and of agent” (p. xii).

The importance of Western culture’s epistemology to the determination of gender is the focus of the next chapter. Subsequent chapters will describe how this confining epistemology is being challenged and expanded and the importance of the investigation of gender to this change. The etiology of gender as learned or gender as essential difference will be covered in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will examine one specific study of difference to show ways in which differences could be useful to assist the cultural paradigmatic shift and how that the interpretation essential difference is not commensurate with the new cultural epistemological paradigm.

The ability of women and the therapists who assist them to progress through developmental phases is negatively affected by the resistance in the culture to changing gendered norms. Cultural resistance to changing gendered roles will be argued as follows: The dualistic structure of the waning paradigm leads to an oppositionally aspected construct of identity. Gender is the central structure imbedded within the waning
epistemology. The culture has been organized around male epistemology and has been dedicated to the continuation of the paradigm. The waning epistemological paradigm is constructed by and mirrors male ways of apprehending reality, and for both genders, the gender-specific norms are central to individuals’ identity. If there is a shift occurring in the dominant paradigm and that paradigm affects the gender base of identity, given that humans are expectably anxious when their identity is challenged, then prodigious resistance to change in the paradigm built on dualistic constructs such as gender can be expected. As roles change, the change in the cultural paradigm may bring up anxiety, which clients may respond to by engaging in psychotherapy. On the personal level, when a paradigm is in transition, new data are available and personal epistemological perspectives may be challenged. For example, if women find gender to be constructed rather than biologically determined, these data will affect them differently depending on what level of epistemological development they have attained.
CHAPTER 2.
THE WANING CULTURAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL PARADigm:
WHERE HAS KNOWLEDGE COME FROM?

In order to determine how women can deconstruct the epistemologically limiting aspects of their role, this chapter examines the structure of the waning paradigm. An additional concern to be investigated is that the fields of psychology and psychotherapy continue to maintain many assumptions from that paradigm. The waning paradigm is based primarily on philosophical underpinnings; hence, the focus on its epistemology. Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1990) wrote of the relationship between philosophy and psychology in their preface to Making a Difference: Psychology and the Construction of Gender: “Psychology has sought to separate from its forebear [sic.] philosophy, by identifying itself with natural science. We reexamine this identification in the light of contemporary challenges” (xi). In a similar vein, Mahoney’s (1991) inclusive volume on the history of cognitive constructivism, Human Change Processes, made the point that science is a descendent of philosophy. He noted, however, that many scientific disciplines “exhibited an intentional distancing and disdain for their conceptual parent” (p. 23).

The Dualistic Nature of the Waning Paradigm

This chapter discusses the view of science as an empirical, rational, logical, objective, and dualistically structured way of ordering the universe, noted in the last
chapter to be associated with the construct, masculinity. Philosophy, on the other hand, is not tied to empirical notions, and thus is open to the charge of subjectivity, which has been associated with the feminine. The thesis is that psychotherapy has arisen from and is still affected by a masculinist gendered philosophical paradigm, generally based on Cartesian assumptions of the Enlightenment era. “Psychologists should be...aware...that their discipline evolved out of eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophy,” and that Zusne (1987) found Descartes to be the second most frequently cited philosopher in history of psychology literature since 1950 (Mahoney, 1991, p. 24).

The Cartesian (named for Descartes) paradigm’s emphasis on rationality, knowing through reasoning, forms the cornerstone of the whole current zeitgeist. Assumptions within this paradigm refer to the primacy of rationality and the view that the fundamental structure of reality is binary. Rationalism is the tradition that “argues that knowing is fundamentally based in reason, which is epitomized in mathematics and logic” (Mahoney, 1991, p. 30). The notion that reality is conceived as a relationship between an endless number of dualistically conceived abstractions began with Greek philosophy and came to its height in the epistemological tradition, modernism. There are many descriptions of this evolution available to the reader, most of which emphasize philosophies of Descartes, the Enlightenment era, positivists, and empiricists (Gergen, 1991, Mahoney, 1991; Tarnas, 1991).

The rationalist paradigm that has evolved over the last 400 years emphasizes a cognitive and language-based side of the split as the foundation of its dualistic ontology.
The primary characteristics and major incumbent constitutive factors of this waning epistemological paradigm include:

First, that the construction of knowledge occurs through language and thought. Western culture is considered by the postmodern tradition to be logocentric (Derrida, 1978), which indicates that thought and language are one and are privileged or primary. That is, language and thought and their representations, words, are separate from experience and its representations, both symbol and sign, and that this separation results in a gap between them. The gap between knower and known leads humans to need transitional objects to manage the sense of discontinuity (Berman, 1989; Giddens, 1991).

Second, the observer and the observed, subject and object, viewer and viewed, agent and recipient are differentiated from one another and reified into fundamental categories. In epistemology, the most well known example of splitting is of agent/knower/seer from object/known/seen. This division by agency/passivity is the fundamental constitutive aspect of the masculine/feminine dichotomy.

Third, the autonomy of the knower, which Western culture now calls individual self, is distinct from the known, which forms the object, knowledge. Sampson (1985) wrote:

The peculiar feature of the Western view is its search for an autonomous, fully integrated entity in itself, defined by its separateness and distinctiveness from other people and the rest of nature. Gilligan’s (1977) work suggests that this may be more a male-oriented than a universal idea even in the West. (p. 1204)
That the observer is a separate entity from what is observed is the essence of the dualistic ontological position.

This notion that the value-free observer can neutrally investigate a separate environment forms the foundation of empirical science. It looks for the unidirectional causality in any interaction. When observed data are considered to be the source of authoritative knowledge, its opposites—other than epistemological systems—are let out, devalued, or suppressed. On the other hand, when epistemologies are organized around higher levels of complexity, they include the ability to handle varieties of viewpoints. Including a number of perspectives renders an epistemological system relativistic, pluralistic, and multiplicitous. These ways allow alternative ways of gaining knowledge, such as subjective, intuitive, and somatic knowledge (Kaschak, 1992). Additionally, they may have different bases of value, such as relationally-based and constructionist-based knowledge systems. The style may encompass process, narrative, and textural ways of knowing.

Fourth, the waning paradigm has a hierarchy within each duality, in which the passive side becomes mystified and subsequently dominated. The valued, masculine-identified half becomes the dominating side and the devalued, suppressed side is associated with the feminine. The notion of reality as a construction of opposites, each allowed existence only when the other does not, gives rise to a suppressive, or domination-based epistemology (French, 1985).

Fifth, there is a collapse between the categories human and man. Simone de Beauvoir (1953) sounded the early warning, which subsequent feminists have responded
to, that the universal is often equated with the masculine. This assumption has kept discoveries about gender differences minimized. The few major studies (Belenky, et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982) that focused on the distinct ways women differ developmentally from men are widely cited, even though their data are not quantitative, but narratively obtained.

Sixth, its epistemological base considers the emphasis of the process of knowing to be cognition and its rules of operation, rational and exclusionary: that is, either/or logic. The Enlightenment philosophy, whether expressed in physics or psychology, rested on a deterministic binary paradigm, which operated on the assumption that there was one causally driven effect, and that effect obviates its antithesis. The ontological ramifications of this assumption include exclusionary or either/or manner construction of reality. Things exist because their opposite has been disproved (Moulton, 1989). This way of thinking disallowed equally valuable alternative interpretations whenever there were any paradoxes of logic.

Seventh, the analytic summative approach is one in which “the organism was considered to be an aggregate of separate elements…with the structure of a machine” (Blauberg, Sadovsky, & Yudin, 1977, p. 44). “This involves supposing that the phenomena of the natural world are fixed in determinate relations with each other, that these relations can be known and formulated in a consistent and unified way” (Longino, 1989, p. 209). In this view, reality is there for the discovering, and its rules live independently of the observer. This leaves out the effect that the investigator, viewer, or participant in dialogue has on the object; without the notion of recursive interaction,
explanations rely on linear causality. This system of thought influenced therapeutic
treatment exclusively until the impact of systems theory in the field of family therapy.

The seven essential characteristics of the waning paradigm just described have
been formed into theoretical organization in the following schools of thought. Bordo
(1990) described these schools of thought in a way that puts emphasis on how humans
understand reality. She considered these to be six categories of ways humans have come
to know as a result of their immersion in the waning paradigm.

Metaphysical realism is a school of thought characterized by the independence of
the objective structure of reality from human understandings and perspectives. This is the
opposite of interactive interpretations of reality, such as the Heisenberg uncertainty
principle.

Objectivism, when applied epistemologically with metaphysical realism, holds
that “the structure or nature of reality in principle is accessible to human understanding or
knowledge” (Bordo, 1990, p. 3). This idea highlights that knowledge is a separate,
independent, and gainable quantity. Another of the waning paradigms’ schools of thought
is epistemological individualism. In this view, the autonomy of the knower is primary.
“Humans approach the task of gaining knowledge of the world as solitary individuals,
rather than as socially constituted members of historically changing groups” (1990, p.3).
In the rationalist bias viewpoint, “the principle human faculty for attaining knowledge of
reality is reason (rationalism), sometimes working in conjunction with the sensed
[empiricism]” (1990, p. 3).
Universalism is the idea that the faculties of reason and sensation are potentially the same for all human beings, regardless of their culture or class, race, or sex. Differences in the situations of human beings, rather than being recognized as providing alternative perspectives on reality, are seen as conquerable impediments to a neutral, purportedly objective view of things.

Foundationalism is a way for individuals to obtain knowledge from a reality assumed to be objective. It uses inference from premises thought to be undeniable to get systematic, structured results. Foundationalists assume “genuine or reliable knowledge is built from simple components that are thought of as epistemologically certain or indubitable” (Bordo, 1990, p. 3).

All of these ways of organizing the process of coming to know have in common a conception of reality that is objective and independent of the observer. The differences lie in the way in which observers or knowledge seekers organize their relationship to this object(ive) knowledge source. In this way the seekers search for knowledge that they can receive. In the construction of reality of this tradition, “a single basic structure of binary thinking under[lies] all human mental functioning and behavior despite its manifest diversity” (MacCormack & Strathern, 1980, p. 2). The binary thinking is the source of the idea that reality is a separate object, as in a commodity that can be acted upon, sorted out, known about logically, named accurately, and given and received. This way of thinking is reductionist, atomistic, and relies on the assumption that the taxonomy of the physical sciences is appropriate for the social sciences (Heckman, 1990).
The taxonomy of the physical sciences is based on specific scientific methodology, considering methodology to be the operationalizing of an epistemology. Gergen, whose article on feminist methodology (1988) is now a classic in women’s studies courses, outlined the challenges that feminist theory presents to the rationalist-enlightenment paradigm in social sciences. This amounts to a rejection of five major traditional empiricist methodological principles, which are listed as follows:

The independence of science and subject [the researcher only takes into consideration those things about the subject which apply to the scientific study];

The decontextualization of the subject matter from the field in which it is embedded, physically and historically [scientist has complete regulation over subject matter];

Value-neutral theory and practice [views are never shared between scientist and subject in order to keep the results objective];

The independence of ‘facts’ from the scientist; and

The superiority of the scientist over other people. (Gergen, 1988, p. 94)

These methodological assumptions from the waning empiricist paradigm have been central to psychology ever since it identified itself firmly as a science. Taxonomies are ways of categorizing, an epistemologically organizing function, and as such are vulnerable to challenges that they are judgmentally divisive, promote hierarchical thinking and obscure interactive processes. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (1994) is an excellent example of an empiricist taxonomic exercise, as it is based on assumptions that categories of pathology exist and can be discriminated from healthy behavior by
objective observation. The limits of a language-based epistemology can be seen in attempts to describe psychiatric issues. If treated like states, static and reified, the process of change within them is left out of the description. This is an example of the limitations of the linguistic-based epistemology of the waning paradigm. “Western grammars separate entities and processes as if the distinction were absolute, [but]…objects are also events…[and] the world is made up of processes as much as entities” (Kegan, 1982, p. 8). Language, formed as it is by discriminating what is being identified from what is not, is a poor vehicle for describing processes, which occur over time and without distinct structural delineations.

Epistemology, or the way in which one knows, is a linguistic, as well as a cultural, phenomenon. Language is one of the determining operations that create dualistic conceptions of reality, dualistic ways of thinking and meaning-making. Culture and its language determine how reality is perceived and knowledge is a function of this perception. Only questions that have been posed can be answered, and the posing can only be conducted within a predetermined framework of assumptions. This sets up a tautological inquiry that comprises the frame of knowledge.

Critiques of the waning paradigm must somehow occur from outside the paradigmatic framework and must challenge basic assumptions of the structure of the paradigm. Challenging the language is primary in a logocentric paradigm, and both feminists and postmodernists focus on how language creates the hegemony of the waning paradigm. Longino (1989) identified the syntactic component of the positivist paradigm:
The belief that the job is to discover fixed relations of some sort, and that the application of observation, experiment, and reason leads ineluctably to unifiable, if not unified, knowledge of an independent reality, is still with us. It is evidenced most clearly in two features of scientific rhetoric: the use of the passive voice as in “it is concluded that…” or “it has been discovered that…” and the attribution of agency to the data, as in “the data suggest…. ” Such language has been criticized for the abdication of responsibility it indicates. Even more, the scientific inquirer, and we with her, become passive observers, victims of the truth. The idea of a value-free science is integral to this view of scientific inquiry. And if we reject that idea we can also reject our roles as passive onlookers, helpless to affect the course of knowledge. (Longino, 1989. p. 209)

Feminism is a theory of social criticism, which “initiated the cultural work of exposing and articulating the gendered nature of history, culture, and society” (Bordo, 1990, p.137). However, “feminist inquiry in other disciplines…has yet to be extended to conventional psychology” (Morawski, 1990, p. 150).

In summation, the first section of this chapter showed how the waning paradigm has dominated ways of knowing in Western culture and that one of the most important ramifications is the reification of gender. The strength of this paradigm’s influence on Western culture was accomplished in a discussion of the matrix of epistemology formed by the logocentricity, dualism of philosophy, and binary construction of reality. This dissertation shows how deeply epistemology impacts the construction of gender.
Changing the Paradigm

The waning paradigm has had challenges in the form of alternative ways of thinking, interpretations, and conceptualizations of the nature of reality. The third chapter will discuss the magnitude of the challenges, focusing on how their contents have threatened the paradigm structure. This section will review the process by which paradigms come to shift, noting the common characteristics among various paradigms as they move towards and through transitions. This is pertinent to the cultural shift, in that the current transition affects how women, the feminine role and gender in general, are regarded. It is pertinent to transitions among personal perspectives in ways of knowing, in that psychotherapists can assist women in understanding data that challenge their epistemological perspective, as well as help them see the need to recognize the reactions that attend transitions among perspectives.

In the second part of this section, methods of organizing the questioning of paradigms will be presented. One way of questioning the waning paradigm is through analyzing the systems that generate the paradigm itself. Feminist analysis accomplishes this by analyzing the male influence on the context of women’s lives. This analysis occurs in reaction to the marginalization, or lack of inclusion, of the data of women’s experiences as valuable sources of knowledge.

Epistemological considerations are discovered by answering certain questions. The context of any knowledge determines part of the knowing. Epistemological understanding can be enhanced by asking questions regarding the source of the knowledge and the point of view. Knowing the agenda and vested interest of that source
can pierce an epistemological structure. There is a paradox within gender aware/feminist
time that is colloquially described as questioning whether or not the master’s house can
be dismantled using the master’s tools. It is an extension of Derrida’s postmodern
paradox: to undo the linguistic and logical tradition with tools of logic and language from
that tradition (Sampson, 1989). Harding (1989) expanded on this idea, and suggested that
fields of study that challenge the waning paradigm automatically and paradoxically throw
themselves back into the structures they wish to critique. She stated:

Theorizing itself is suspiciously patriarchal, for it assumes separations between
the knower and the known, subject and object, and the possibility of some
powerful transcendental, Archimedean standpoint from which nature and social
life fall into what we think is their proper perspective…what we perceive as
patriarchal association between knowledge and power. (1989, p. 17)

From a feminist and a critical theorist standpoint, these challenging questions can
be utilized by clients in which any construct operates: First, asking what is the system
within which understanding occurs and what are that system’s rules; second, asking what
is the sociopolitical context of that discourse; third, asking where the language came from
and whom does it empower; and fourth, asking from what vantage point does the author
construct his or her knowledge or how is the embedded viewpoint engendered.

The following are ways of knowing that have been left out of the Cartesian
epistemologies and are represented or implied in feminist psychotherapy: “‘What are the
populations of interest?’ ‘Where are the important theoretical invariances to be found?’
There are many answers generated from applying these three questions of epistemological inquiry to the relationship between feminism and psychotherapy. The following discussion is sectionalized according to question.

*What are the Populations of Interest?*

A stronger focus of the incorporation of women and their experience into the population when answering questions about human psychological functioning is argued for. As psychological theorists have purported to encompass the study of mental and emotional aspects of all humans, they open themselves to the salvos of criticisms of leaving out at least half of the humans and of unwillingly coming from distinctly androcentric points of view. As with almost all areas of study, the field of psychology has been largely constructed by men, and consequently, as Harding and Hintikka (1983) pointed out, the psychology of the individual functionality has become the psychology of the male subject. Among many other writers, Benjamin (1988) noted that “feminist criticism in many disciplines has demonstrated that the concept of the individual is really the concept of the male subject” (p. 184).

The field of women’s studies arose, in part, out of this sort of lack of inclusion of the experience of women from traditional definitions of knowledge or from comprehensive accounts of human experience. Feminist criticism of the 1970s focused awareness on “traditional therapeutic approaches [that] reproduced the power differential between men and women, with mostly men setting themselves up as experts who diagnosed and treated mostly women patients and clients” (Kaschak, 1992, p. 3).
Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkratz, & Vogel (1970) showed that women cannot be seen to be as healthy as men are by mental health professionals.

There were high hopes for feminism to affect psychotherapy after the heyday of feminist political action and excitement of the Seventies. Sturdivant (1980), chronicling feminist therapy up until 1980, said “the women’s movement of the last decade has made a profound and lasting impact on the practice of psychotherapy, and called for a reexamination of the basic assumptions as values of psychotherapy with regard to women” (p. 3).

However, by the 1990s, these reexaminations revealed that many therapies had a multitude of built-in masculine biases, most prominent among which was a standard of mental health for women that differed from that for men; it largely involved helping women adjust to the prescribed feminine role. The definition of psychopathology in women was based on deviation from the prescribed into the territory of the proscribed; that is, mental health in women was measured by their adherence to traditional gender role behavior. (Kaschak, 1992, p. 3)

Feminists have had a constellation of criticisms against the outcomes of these facts. These include:

That women were infrequently studied; that theories were constructed from a male-as-normative viewpoint and that women’s behavior was explained as a deviation from the male standard; that the male stereotype of women was considered an accurate portrayal of women’s behavior; that women who fulfilled the dictates of the gender stereotype were viewed as healthy and happy; that
differences in the behaviors of women and men were attributed to differences in anatomy and physiology; and that the social context which often shapes behavior was ignored in the case of women. (Kahn & Jean, 1983, p. 18)

What are the Important Invariances to be Found?

This dissertation’s response to the second of Tesser’s epistemological analysis questions focuses on challenges to the invariance of biologically determined gender-related characteristics. Data on women’s experience have been under-incorporated into most psychological theories. This is the result of an avoidance of focusing on the gendered context. If it is indeed true that an epistemological paradigm shift is in process, one of the most salient sets of data that has been left out of the current paradigm is the understanding of the etiology of gender differences and gender relationships. “Gender theorists Dinnerstein (1976), Chodorow (1978), [and] Gilligan (1982)…radically altered the male-normative terms of discussion about reality and experience; they forced recognition of the difference gender makes” (Bordo, 1990, p. 137). It is the contention of feminists that the construction gender is an essential and previously undiscriminated or overlooked constitutive aspect of the zeitgeist. When important data are systematically excerpted from assumptions constituting the dominant paradigm in a field, the paradigm is strained with paradoxes and suppression. This has been the case in psychology.

Gender, when it is assumed “to be, or to be symbolic of, an important ontological difference” (Whitbeck, 1989, p. 51) becomes reified. The stance that gender is socially constructed implies that it is interactively learned, maintained by the context of its social importance, and that it is not invariant. Maintenance of any aspect of identity that is
construed to be biologically-based and therefore immutable is less stressful than if it were to be seen as socially constructed and therefore potentially involved in the process of becoming. Beauvoir’s existential philosophy focused on the second of these ways of understanding gender in suggesting that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Butler, 1989, p. 249). Beauvoir in The Second Sex emphasized this: “One becomes one’s gender; one does it within a network of gender rules and relations” (Butler, 1989, p. 249). *Becomes* is used as a transitive verb, emphasizing the process of becoming, and highlighting the constructed aspect of gender.

Bordo (1990) noted that “the unity of the ‘gendered human,’ however, often proved to be as much a fiction as the unity of the abstract, universal ‘man’” (p. 139). She proposed a more comprehensive viewpoint that gender forms only one axis of a complex, heterogeneous construction, constantly interpenetrating, in historically specific ways, with multiple other axes of identity” (p. 139). Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1988 & 1990) provide comprehensive discussions of deconstructive aspects of gender, and the French school of feminism has done an exhaustive inquiry into the ramifications of deconstructed gender (Nye, 1989).

*What Constitutes Good Data for Validating Knowledge?*

Tesser’s third question invites considering an expansion of the possible sources of data from purely observed, rationally analyzed sources to more subjective, constructivist and phenomenological bases of knowing. This echoes the discussion in the introduction of this dissertation of the shift from ways of knowing that are received from rationally derived data to other ways that are more subjectively derived.
CHAPTER 3.

THE EMERGING CULTURAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL PARADIGM:

WHERE DOES NEW KNOWLEDGE COME FROM?

The waning modernist paradigm has been presented with some major theoretical challenges, all of which put the favored status of a binary construction of reality at risk. Ever since Neumann’s (1949) *The Origin and History of Consciousness*, cultural theorists have been postulating a cultural shift from the present long cultural masculine oriented epoch characterized by an emphasis on cognition, logic, and hierarchical organization towards one that would be marked by the incorporation of a more feminine orientation, characterized by cooperative partnership social relations. For example, Salk (1973) used a sigmoid curve model from biology to describe this allegedly imminent epoch shift, describing the currently waning epoch as manifesting certain *ego* related values, such as intellect, reason, objectivity, morality, differentness, competition, and power. The emerging epoch essentially counters the ego values with *being* values, which he characterized as intuition, feeling, cooperation, subjectivity, and differentiation. If culture is, indeed, in the process of transition between paradigms, the antecedents, pressures, and new information resulting in an epistemological change of state need to be examined.

The characteristics found to be associated with the emerging paradigm will be compared with both the notion of the feminine and the epistemological perspective of subjective knowing. That is, if the waning paradigm is masculine-based, is there any
more information to be gained by considering the emerging paradigm to be feminine in attributes? If so, is this an artifact of the disavowed becoming viewed as newly important to provide balance for its previous suppression?

The waning paradigm has been challenged by certain critically important theories of the 20th century, and has led to the advent of new epistemological assumptions. These include the interrelationship between heretofore distinct dichotomous concepts like matter and energy; a new valuing of the subjective from postmodern feminists; notions of context as an important constituent of knowledge; and relational based theories of human development. Western epistemologies are being transformed in the wake of new understandings of the structure of the universe by theories in quantum physics and chaos theory. Models built on information theory, such as general systems theory, now allow for more complex modeling of human interaction and development than the strictly literal causal. Subjective and context-based methods of apprehending reality were discounted in previous epistemological structures in the same way that feminine modes of thinking and deciding were considered inferior. In philosophy, postmodern deconstructionalist analysis has pinpointed linguistic and conceptualization as the structure most primarily culpable in maintaining limiting and embedded assumptions.

These challenging theories offer new viewpoints, tools that seem destined to dismantle the prevalent epistemological paradigm. Flax (1990) opened her essay on postmodernism and gender relations in feminist theory by acknowledging the aforementioned cultural shift and recognizing that alternative epistemologies are in the offering:
It seems increasingly probable that Western culture is in the middle of a fundamental transformation: A “shape of life” is growing old. In retrospect, this transformation may be as radical (but as gradual) as the shift from a medieval to a modern society. Accordingly, this moment in the history of the West is pervaded by profound yet little comprehended change, un-certainty, and ambivalence. (p. 39)

Flax highlighted the degree of impact this shift will have, and the potential for ensuing insecurity and resistance. She enjoined the reader to discriminate among new theories that may be more or less appropriate to the new paradigm.

In this chapter, speculations regarding the potential aspects of the form of the emerging paradigm will be entertained. Factors contributing to the new paradigm will be discussed with a focus on feminist epistemology. As with any argument about the current era of transition between epistemological paradigms, this takes into account the modernist, or waning paradigm, influences and the postmodern, or the taking apart of existing explanations, challenges to them.

The epistemological challenges to Cartesian epistemology are postulated in this dissertation to include both relativistic and rational new understandings of reality. The shift is away from knowledge that is perceived from a distance to be rooted in observed reality and knowledge that is a function of cognitively derived epistemology, which includes the limitation that is linguistically and dualistically constructed.

The relational new understanding relies on more internal, connected, somatic, and subjective ways of knowing, that includes non-language-based contextual, somatic
epistemologies (Wilber, 1985). Kuhn wrote in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,

“Michael Polanyi has brilliantly developed a very similar theme, arguing that much of the
scientist’s success depends upon ‘tacit knowledge,’ i.e., upon knowledge that is acquired
through practice and that cannot be articulated explicitly” (1970, p. 23). The notion that
knowledge is a reified entity that can be discovered is being fully challenged. If
knowledge cannot be discovered as an external phenomenon, independent of the
observer, then it is not an entity to be given and received. This is of great importance to
the structure of the sociopolitical role assigned to women. This role’s function has
depended on woman as passive receiver and not active creator of knowledge. If the whole
cultural, scientific, and philosophical zeitgeist is moving toward an incorporation of the
context of the observer as a base of knowing (Berger & Luckman, 1976), then women
become potentially more viable as knowledge producers.

Kaschak (1992) began her first chapter emphasizing the relatedness aspect of the
challenging theories:

Many of the systems for understanding ourselves and our worlds are currently
balanced precariously on the edge of a paradigm shift [that] involves
acknowledging the interconnectedness and reciprocal influence of the observer
and the observed, mind and nature, and the impossibility of objectivity or control
of all variables deemed irrelevant in an experiment. (p. 9)

Kaschak included feminist thought as a crucial part of this intellectual revolution. She
also cited the Heisenberg uncertainty principle and sciences of complexity as important in
promoting the shift.
Relativistic is a term that refers to a decentering, the postmodern way of indicating absence of any overriding truth (Rossneau, 1992), of the authority of knowledge. Although it is a term that can be applied to thinking in both the waning and the emerging paradigms, in the emerging paradigm:

It functions to destroy any essentialist claims regarding “human nature” by demonstrating the historical origins and contingency of all such notions…. [It] denies that there is really anything “deep inside” us that is not a product of the practice and discourses in which we literally and figuratively find our “selves.” (Flax, 1990, p. 206)

The relativistic aspects of some of these theories can be seen in the social sciences beginning with phenomenology, proceeded through field theory and structuralism to constructivistic notions to the multiplicity and plurality of postmodernism. Some of these were spawned as a result of aspects of scientific leaps in understanding such as quantum theory, along with Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle challenging the relationship between observer and observed, special theory of relativity, and chaos theory (Gleick, 1987). As Tarnas wrote:

Continuing advances in anthropology, sociology, history, and linguistics have underscored the relativity of human knowledge…. Especially penetrating in recent years has been the analysis of gender as a crucial factor in determining, and limiting, what counts as truth. (1991, p. 397)

Relatedness is another of the common themes in the new theoretical frameworks, as it was devalued in the separatistic, autonomous, dichotomous thinking of the waning
paradigm. The relatedness aspect in psychological theories began with Freud’s postulation of the internal order, which opened the door to relationship theories based on object relations. Another relatedness theory came from Mead’s (1934) notion of putting oneself in the other’s place, out of which grew the emphasis on empathetic relatedness. Later relatedness ideas came from the systems theory ideas of focusing on the relationship-between. This implied that process was as important a feature of knowledge as was content. This relational way of organizing reality emphasized the contextual and process understandings of system interactions that are part of information and general systems theory.

The decentering of the logocentric nature of the waning paradigm follows a number of linguistic ideas, for example, Pierce’s semiotics, the theory that thinking occurs in signs, not symbols (Tarnas, 1991), and Chomsky’s deep structures, the theory that ability to learn linguistic rules prefigures actual language acquisition. Challenges to the independence of viewer and object, knower and known appear in certain psychotherapeutic and psychological theories, ranging from intersubjective psychoanalysis (Stolorow, 1992), new feminist self-in-relation theories (Jordan, 1986), to phenomenological psychologies such as constructivism (Gergen, 1991; Sampson, 1989).

Sampson (1989) assembled a list of six discernible challenges that will form the outline for the discussion of analysis and treatment throughout the dissertation. These challenges provide new systems of thought with new assumptions. He included: (a) cross-cultural challenge; (b) feminist challenge; (c) social constructionism; (d) systems theory; (e) critical theory; and (f) deconstructionism.
These theories put pressure on the prevailing paradigm by presenting new sources of data that were incommensurate with the waning epistemological presumptions. Each of these challenges will be discussed in the following section, but out of Sampson’s (1989) order. Feminist challenges will be considered last, as they will be emphasized.

**Cross Cultural**

The cross cultural challenge will be discussed with the emphasis on developmental aspects. Cross cultural epistemological perspectives engender relativistic thinking; each culture is a context that any behavior makes a particular sense within. When cultural systems cross, there is a developmental process leading to increased understanding and assimilation. Developmental theories in the new paradigm have moved from structural formats, which are characteristic of the waning paradigm, to process-based constructs, which are characteristic of the emerging paradigm (Mahoney, 1991). “One of the most important developments in development has been the conceptual shift from stages and structures to systems and processes. To appreciate that shift, one must realize that science did not recognize process dynamics until the twentieth century” (p. 147). Downing and Roush (1984), who provided a description of the development that women go through in becoming feminists, is another. These authors created a developmental model for training cross cultural awareness, emphasizing the process of awareness that supports the development.

An emphasis on developmental process is commensurate with the essentials of the new paradigm as it moves away from hierarchical judgmental diagnoses, recognizing differing points of view and contexts as equally valid for the subjective location.
(Sampson, 1989). Developmental thinking is important for psychotherapists to prevent stigmatizing clients with a label. Labels are distinctly dichotomizing into ill and healthy mutually exclusive categories. Carlsen saw labels as impeding the working-through of the developmental processes that have been interrupted (Carlsen, 1988).

**Social Constructionism**

Social constructionism “has amplified the earlier ideas of Mead (1934), arguing that selves, persons, psychological traits and so forth, including the very idea of individual psychological constructions, not naturally occurring objects.” This tradition came originally from “Kant’s recognition of the human mind’s subjective ordering of reality, and…the relative and unrooted nature of human knowledge” (Tarnas, 1991, p. 418). This backbone of the emerging paradigm allows for the epistemological position is not granted to individuals, but rather where ontological primacy is granted to relations (Sampson, 1988). The major points of this viewpoint lie in relativistic and relational emphasis of the ordering of understanding.

**Systems Theory**

The 1980s saw a great rise of interest in epistemological discourses, especially within family therapy. Family therapy conceived of the family as an open system, subject to the same rules as general systems. Fexias (1990) described how well systems theory fits with constructionism in psychotherapy. They both rely on the basic epistemology of meaning as a function of a distinction having been drawn; a differentiation between the name and the event named, which confronts the problem of labeling; the use of the client’s language; and the reframing of the concept of resistance. Systems theory has
affected the paradigmatic structure of Western culture in one especially important way. It removed the emphasis in any event from the named content and put it on the process.

**Critical Theory**

The most important feature of this influence from the Frankfurt School of philosophy is that of sociopolitical context as an interpretation in any event. The questions of motivation behind science, whose purposes are served, and how does this influence the research have their roots in this challenge. This contextual way of questioning is useful to any epistemological inquiry.

**Postmodernism**

Poststructuralist analysis is one way to think beyond the existing paradigm by breaking out of linguistically determinants of thinking, including an examination of others’ and one’s own epistemologies. In this way, thinking-based logocentric knowledge becomes dethroned. Postmodern deconstructionism is a tool useful for social, literary, and philosophical criticism. It is an epistemological enterprise. Heckman (1990) wrote, “The postmodern position reveals the futility of the attempt to define an essential female nature or to replace the masculinist epistemology with a feminist epistemology. [Postmodernism] reject[s] …the subject/object dichotomy, and define[s] …all knowledge as interpretive” (p. 8).

**Deconstructionism**

“A relatively recent perspective developed within poststructuralist literary criticism and linguistic analysis has challenged all notions that involve the primacy of the …author” (Sampson, 1989, p. 2). This system of thought is a method of finding that
which has been left out of the discourse, calling it marginalized, to reveal how certain events become given privilege or centrality, while others are decentered or silenced. This has been useful to postmodern feminists, who find this deconstruction of meaning useful to illuminate women’s experience that is underrepresented and undervalued by society. Other very useful concepts from deconstructionism include a new set of linguistic concepts that are outside the waning paradigm’s linguistic assumptions. The purpose is a deconstruction of a word, text, or event is not to reform it, but to illuminate its constitutive constructions.

One of the most erudite feminist thinkers, Flax (1990) was especially interested in any constructs that will assist in the shift away from Enlightenment era based philosophical ideas and assumptions about the nature of humans. She noted:

I think there are currently three kinds of thinking that best present and represent our own time apprehended in thought: psychoanalysis, feminist theory, and postmodern philosophy. These ways of thinking reflect and are partially constituted by Enlightenment beliefs still prevalent in Western [especially American] culture. At the same time, they offer ideas and insights that are only possible because of the breakdown of Enlightenment…how to understand and [re]constitute the self, gender, knowledge, social relations, and culture without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being. (p. 39)
**Feminism**

Feminism is social criticism essentially concerned with gender relations across fields. It implies that correction is needed. It arose in a specific context—the way women have been regarded and treated. Feminists are concerned with the impact of the social context on the formation of the identity of women, culminating in a change in the way women are viewed and treated. The views about and behavior of society towards women are a manifestation of the zeitgeist specific to the era. This zeitgeist changes when philosophy, science, religion, psychology, and economics conspire to produce different environmental forces. Feminists view those ideas as critically instrumental in the maintenance of the lesser social status of women in general. For feminists’ ideas to be implemented, a scientific/philosophical paradigm shift is necessary.

Feminism, in its support of legitimizing epistemological processes eschewed by the rationalist paradigm, is considered in this dissertation to provide one of the important sources of data that has contributed to the pressure for a cultural paradigm shift. An epistemological analysis of the etiology of gender yields the obvious observation, that certain values, processes, and attributes of all humans have been relegated to the feminine gendered category. In general, that which has been eschewed by the valued paradigm has been considered generic to the feminine ontogeny. The function this accomplishes has to do with projecting ways of being and ways of knowing that are devalued by the arbiters of the dominant cultural paradigmatic values. “Because values and emotions had been defined as variable and idiosyncratic, positivism stipulated that trustworthy knowledge could be established only by methods that neutralized the values and emotions of
individual scientists” (Jaggar, 1989, p. 146). This phenomenon of dividing human capacities into gendered groups cements the gap between the experience of those in the valued compared to those in the devalued. The results of positive or negative evaluations of each side of any duality are that whole areas of human experience are associated with the devalued status of the feminine: passive, receptive, viewed, acted upon, listener, decider by emotional reasoning, and signifier of the body. The idea of valuing the Other, the feminine, the shadow in Jungian terms, the aspect of humans that have been seen as not fitting into the valued masculine paradigm, is highlighted by gender aware theorists.

When masculine ways of knowing, such as observing in order cognitively to understand external objects, were assumed to be primary, feminine ways of knowing, such as intuition and emotional response, were marginalized, or given minor importance. Additionally, within the Western philosophical tradition, emotions even have been considered as potentially or actually subversive of knowledge (Jaggar, 1989). An emerging paradigm would have a different set of such bases. Epistemological bases of an emerging paradigm would be expected to utilize aspects of several important ways of knowing in a manner that decreases the primacy of rationalism and increases the incorporation of understanding reality as interconnected, the value of recovering fragments and shadow aspects of the personality and the importance of understanding the ramifications of sociopolitical events like domination. Reconceptionalizations of the patriarchal version of social, historical, and psychological life have introduced some strikingly different views of personhood (Chodorow, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Lykes, 1985).
This chapter demonstrated the way in which the evolution of feminist analysis, or gender awareness, is an equally important one of these major challenges to the rationalist-binary based model. First:

The major feature of a feminist standpoint is its engaged [sic] position. We are familiar with a scientific approach or a liberal epistemology that perceives the correct standpoint to be the neutral, disinterested observer. This stands in stark contrast to a feminist standpoint which is explicitly and unashamedly engaged. (Hartsock, 1983, p. 285).

Women, or feminists (depending on the theorist), are seen in this literature to be in an epistemically privileged position in terms of addressing central issues that affect them.

As one editorial put it, “we are our own subject matter as, and because, women or Woman is our subject matter; we live and think and write within the gender constructs about which we think and on which we work” (Signs, 1987, p. 620). For example, a personal understanding of oppression is thought to be more perceptive than an expert view (Porter, 1991).

Second, to counter the reification of observed data so fiercely maintained in the service of transitional object preservation, gender aware theorists look for other ways of knowing, alternative epistemologies, that are more subjective, constructivistic, and inclusive (Harding, 1990). They may be not as bound to language, and therefore attend more to the process of the construction of a concept, imagining the concept as being in the making rather than made (Flowers, 1992).
Third, knowledge, data, and facts are ways of knowing that imply exclusionary information. These ways of knowing are authoritatively constructed, and exist based on disproving, discrediting, dominating, or repressing challenges to their existence. They are based on binary thinking and give rise to hierarchy. They also are rooted in semantics. The existence of a work, including its conceptual substructure, dominates the opposite of it (Nye, 1990).
CHAPTER 4.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE SUBJECTIVE:

HOW WOMEN GROW IN KNOWING

In her book, *What Can She Know?*, Code (1991) asked if the gender of the knower important. This chapter investigates her question and suggests that knowing is a developmental process and that differences may be found to be associated with specific genders. The following discussion presents the studies that describe sequences in personal epistemological development. The thesis that there are differences between the masculine and the feminine gender specific roles that account for differences in the sequences of developmental positions for the two genders will be expanded in depth in the next chapter.

The investigation of women’s phases of epistemological development is important for the following reasons: First, to further the development of a larger system of ways of knowing that will value and support women’s personal epistemological development; and second, to dignify and give credence to differentiated patterns of development of ways of knowing by gender and in so doing, allow an expanded modeling of growth for women to be available for psychotherapeutic use.

Additionally, this investigation of the relationship between women’s gendered role and their epistemological development, or epistogenesis, is important to clients and practitioners for both political and individual reasons. First, as feminist therapists
maintain, the context of women’s experience in this culture must be considered in order to prevent the pathologizing of normal behavior (Broverman et al., 1970). Developmental phase and gender both are contexts that impact the interpretations of behavior. A developmental interpretation of behavior can amend some of the ways the characterological diagnostic paradigm can be used pejoratively. Carlsen (1988) made this point:

Once a person is out of phase with the age-appropriate stage of reorganization and integration, his or her needs are often seen as illegitimate and the odds against the deviant multiply. That is an important idea for the developmental therapist, for it is all too easy to stigmatize our clients with a label rather than to name and allow that necessary working-through of the developmental processes which have been interrupted. (p. 45)

The two studies of personal epistemological development compared in this chapter are Belenky et al. (1986), and Perry (1970). Both studies postulated developmental positions in the attainment of epistemological complexity, but with gender-related differences. Belenky, et al. (1986) found that women’s development differs from the stages that Perry postulated in his study of men in the positions that they go through in attaining a sense of agency, authority, or voice.

Perry schematized the structure of development as a move from simple to complex, from absolute to relative, from received to constructed (Perry, 1970). Perry considered his work to show the developmental pattern consisting “of an orderly progress in which more complex forms are created by the differentiation and reintegrations of
earlier simple forms” (p. 44). To show how a person develops from an absolute to a relative way of thinking, he conducted longitudinal studies on primarily white male college students and outlined five developmental positions that emerged in the process of knowing.

Position one entailed the student’s belief in dichotomous ways of thinking, or seeing only in black and white. Students perceive knowledge as something absolute, possessed by teachers to be given to students. With exposure to differences of opinion outside such a dualistic structure, questioning of duality ensues. In position two, students begin to collect factual information and correct answers from authority figures, looking for the Absolute. As a precursor to position three, students begin to feel they are responsible for searching out answers themselves, and within position three, students are able to use information to begin comparing and contrasting facts in their search for absolute truth. Parvin (1987) wrote that students have a belief in right answers, although they may be able to tolerate some ambiguity and complexity while waiting to discovery the truth. Furthermore, Parvin stated that ties between an authority’s expert role and truth begin to loosen when students can accept that some answers are still unknown.

In position four, there is a questioning of absolute truth, accompanied by confusion and frustration at how to value different truths. Any opinion is right, and nobody holds authority enough to be a fair judge. Position five, or contextual relativism, is the level at which students acknowledge complexity and become more comfortable with relativity, realizing that they must face a lifetime full of relativistic decisions and begin to deal with that reality.
Perry (1970) researched the intellectual development in male students. His studies, conducted predominantly with males from a non-normative elite college population, were used widely but uncritically by psychologists and educators until feminists in psychology began to decry the generalizing of male-based data to female populations. Meyer termed this the “pars pro toto” phenomenon (cited in Gergen, 1988, p. 110), and Belenky, et al. (1986) emphasized the point that “nowhere is the pattern of using male experience to define the human experience seen more clearly than in models of intellectual development” (p. 7). Explorations into gender specific developmental differences for adults arose out of feminists’ demands that descriptions of women’s development not be extrapolated from studies of men’s development. While feminists provide arguments that question the existence of essential developmental differences between genders, they also highlight the need to honor these differences.

While feminine epistemology is written about extensively in other fields, for example Code (1991) in philosophy, in psychology Belenky et al.’s (1986) findings exemplify a developmental schema based on a reasoning that uses the context of gender to account for developmental differences. In asserting that there is a different developmental path for women in the epistemological domain, these authors hypothesized that for women to have a sense of their own authority or voice, they need to develop a way of knowing that does not rely on epistemologies developed for and about men.

Belenky et al.’s (1986) study hypothesized five positions of development that women go through as they become able to deal with more complexly ordered
information. While Belenky et al. did not ascribe stage status to their descriptions of differing epistemological perspectives, they did note that there was a qualitative difference between the perspectives. New non-stage theory thinking was described by Mahoney (1991): “The simplified prototype of development [would have] transient ‘deconstructions’ or episodes of relative disorganization preceding [and perhaps affording] salutary ‘leaps’ toward greater complexity and differentiation” (p. 153). Giddens (1991) spoke of development as alternations of periods of security and of anxiety, of structure and lack of structure.

The positions are described by these authors as follows, beginning with the position of silence, characterized by limitations in capacities for representational thought. Women in this position have associations with language that it is used to separate and diminish people. They found these women to use “no words that suggested an awareness for mental acts, consciousness, or introspection” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 25), which the authors found to be associated with inability to characterize a self.

In the second developmental position, that of received knowledge, or listening to the voices of others, it was found that women know and learn by listening. They listen actively, categorizing what they hear into concrete and dualistic, right/wrong, good/bad, true/false dichotomies in which one of the categories is the valued one. They believe in an Absolute Truth and that such a truth comes from others, especially authorities. This is a more complex state than the previous position because it involves language, whereas silent women learned by actions. Women in the received knowledge position are not aware that authorities disagree with one another, unless one is clearly wrong. “If
something is partly wrong, it is worthless” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 41). The nature of the self in this position is termed by these authors as “selfless” (Belenky, et al., p. 48).

Position three, *subjective knowing*, is characterized by the woman’s reliance on her “infallible gut instead of listening to external authorities” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 53). This perspective does not find a direct parallel of Perry’s (1970) positions. Women in the subjective position rely on intuition, inner ways of knowing, to become their own authorities.

Since the nature of thought and the ways of knowing associated with subjectivism have much in common with myths and stereotypes …[that are] intuitive and personalized, we must consider what the adaptive utility and drawbacks of subjective knowing are for women living in our society and times….In a world that emphasizes rationalism and scientific thought, there are bound to be personal and social costs of a subjectivist epistemology…[especially] working in the public domain. (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 55)

The fourth position, *procedural knowledge*, balances the subjective with a newfound interest in objective knowledge:

Now [women] argue that intuitions may deceive, that gut reactions can be irresponsible…that some truths are truer than others; that they can know things they have never seen or touched; that truth can be shared; and that expertise can be respected. (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 93)

In the fifth position, *constructed knowledge*, the understanding of the relativity of truth with its attendant personal responsibility occurs to the women. They know
knowledge to be constructed and they realize their part in its construction. They become interested in translating moral commitments into action.

The most salient difference between these authors’ schemas, perhaps as a function of researching 15 years apart, is the position following the one characterized by received knowledge. Received knowledge rests on the ascription of knowledge to external authority. Belenky, et al. (1986) found that for women, the attainment of the sense of the right to the subjective voice is a necessary step in the progression towards mature critical reasoning and the eventual understanding of interdependent relativity. The positions to be focused on in this chapter are position two, received knowledge and position three, subjective knowledge. This choice is determined by the assessment that this transition most closely mirrors the transition women must navigate in breaking free from masculine based, or derived role identification into personally created identities.

Position two has much in common with the waning rationalist epistemological system and this parallel has relevance to women’s ability to challenge each. The importance lies in the degree to which women are expected to accept uncritically these cultural epistemological assumptions. One of the central ideas in feminism is the belief that women are acculturated to accept masculine-normed ways of thinking. The transition between position two, that of received knowledge, and position three in Belenky’s (1986) work is especially important from a feminist perspective.

The process by which feminists have come to be able to challenge masculinist epistemologies can be hypothesized to parallel the process by which any individual woman progresses from a position in which she uncritically receives knowledge to a
position in which she can begin to find ways of accessing knowledge from her individual capacities. Women are expected to receive knowledge, not to process, critique, or create it. The importance of this lies in the degree to which women are expected to accept uncritically these cultural epistemological assumptions. For women to gain the ability to critique the waning paradigm and masculinist ways of thinking, they must move away from the system of wholesale acceptance of knowledge imparted by a genderedly inequitable culture. Thus, the development of those capacities represented by position three can be seen to be critical for women’s development of self, and for her awareness of how she has been affected by the context of gendered inequality.

The remainder of the chapter looks at the importance of these findings in the following ways: The parallels between the stages of development for women and the cultural epistemological development are recursive. That is, the process of women’s epistemological development has been affected in a limiting way by the content, the beliefs and assumptions, of the culture’s epistemology, and women continue to participate in the limitations by practicing feminine role-based behavior. The transition in personal epistemological development from a dualistic-based received knowledge position to a subjectively-based multiplicity position is parallel to the cultural transition from positivistic dualistic epistemologies to relativistic postmodern epistemologies. In each, people must develop a sense of validity for their subjective knowing in order to tolerate the construction of a sense of reality in a relative framework. To go beyond dualistic conceptions of human behaviors requires the ability to organize complexities without becoming tangled in the paradoxes engendered by violations of normal logic.
Regarding their topic of female authority, Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann organized their inquiry around the question, “How does a woman claim the validity of her own truth, beauty, and goodness as originating in her own experience?” (1987, p. 8). Such a claim of validity is one way of describing the authenticating of one’s personal paradigm. In position three, the subjective voice phase, women begin to include the self as an equal claimant in the production of knowledge. The attainment of position three challenges the prescribed women’s role in that information such as body reactions, intuitions, and relational contexts are factored into the epistemology of the women in that stage. This transition is a necessary step in the development of relativistic thinking, thinking that will be critically important in the emerging paradigm.

In the investigation of these positions, the manner in which movement occurs from one stage to another is of especial importance to psychotherapists. The understanding of the composition of the transition phase is the foundation for the creation of therapeutic formats encouraging therapeutic movement through transitions. One transition is used as a detailed example of what it takes to move through epistemological developmental transitions. Finan (1992) devised a more detailed description of the processes involved in the transitions between positions in the Belenky, et al. (1986) model. While Finan’s (1992) depiction is operationalized for the education process for women, it can be easily extrapolated to inform psychotherapists working with women’s development. Finan (1992) described the transition between positions two and three as characterized by women noticing those times when to rely on received knowledge
become a hindrance. This transition may come when the woman not only understands the source but also can post questions that the source does not satisfactorily answer.

The dialogue is proposed to be as the central aspect to women’s growth in epistemological understanding: That is, the intersubjective mode of discourse forms the basis for women’s attainment of the sense of self that allows for validating personal, subjective knowing. The emphasis on the dialogic process is a challenge to the modernist tradition that knowledge occurs from observation of an external phenomenon, whereas in dialogic engagement, meaning is mutually created in interaction. In the dialogic process a private space is created (Benjamin, 1988). Dialogue has a political and social force that “works to uncover the impersonality that pervades all of social life, the public speech that is cut off from the private” (Bauer & McKinstry, 1991, p. 2). Belenky, et al. (1986) highlighted the dialogue aspect of the development of epistemological perspectives in noting the way in which daughters were spoken with in their family of origin.

Belenky et al.’s (1986) work falls within the essentialist discourse in feminist schools of thought about the etiology of gender:

Many feminist proponents of the [essentialist] approach have come close to judging the female relational style as psychologically superior or more functional for the needs of the human race as a whole than the more rational style they attribute to men in general. (Kaschak, 1992, p. 27)

For example, Dinnerstein (1976) and Miller (1976) reviewed the unfairness of gender arrangements and concluded that equal roles would be the antidote. Gilligan (1982), Belenky, et al. (1986), and Chodorow (1978) saw women’s ways of doing things
as better and saw the antidote to be culture’s adoption of these feminine attributes. This idea leads to the solution proposed by essentialists: That valorizing nature, the body, intuition, etc. will bring them out of the disavowed, less known way of knowing and balance the cultural way of apprehending reality. Thus, the capacity to attain position has important implications for the cultural paradigm shift.

As Kaschak’s (1992), Flax’s (1990), and Benjamin’s (1988) theories appeared, it became apparent that the paradigm was a whole circular system. Therefore, an epistemological stance outside that system cannot be created by the normal means. There needs to be a system level change in the form of a paradigm change, including language, philosophical assumptions, different operating systems, ways of construing the nature of reality and the gaining of knowledge. Postmodernists Flax (1990), Rosneau (1992), and Heckman (1990) called for the need for more deconstructive attacks. Like the postmodern paradox of dismantling the master’s house with his tools, one cannot use received observed knowledge bases to find new epistemologies, but must use subjective ones. For women to gain the ability to critique these ways of thinking, they must move away from the system of wholesale acceptance of knowledge imparted by a genderedly inequitable culture. Thus the development of those capacities represented by position three can be seen to be critical for women’s development of self, and for her awareness of how she has been affected by the context of gendered inequality. Subjectivity is so critically important because it—in common with the emerging paradigm—challenges external reality as the base of authority.
CHAPTER 5.

LIMITATIONS OF WOMEN’S EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT:
WHAT CAN WOMEN KNOW?

There is a remarkable correspondence between the constraints women encounter in their move towards the subjective position in personal knowing and in aspects of the women’s traditional role in Western culture. This tradition involves the idea that traditional women’s role embodies the structure of the received knowledge position. The impact of this parallel on women’s development makes it important to articulate the etiology of the parameters of that role. The investigation of personal epistemological development must be explored concurrently with a corresponding investigation of the cultural foundations of those assumptions of gender that inform and locate the parameters of women’s experience (Deaux, 1976). This is important because individual characteristics can no longer be studied as if they exist outside of the context of either their development or their ongoing social reinforcement.

The thesis of this chapter is that gender is created by social practice, a social constructivist notion, and that the epistemological limitations of the feminine role are maintained by continuing the support of these practices. Social learning explanations of gender, which dominated much of the last two decades, largely have been superseded by constructivist-oriented theories, which are interactional rather than one-way directed learning. This shift was exemplified by the well-known social psychologist Unger (1989)
posing this question to herself: “Does a belief that gender is largely a product of social construction mean that I am no longer a behaviorist? Yes…” (p. 18).

For purposes of this dissertation, gender is considered to be a construct that reifies differences that are interactively developed within a cultural context that supports such dualisms. Unger (1989) presented the social construction of gender view:

Maleness and femaleness are viewed largely as social constructs…confirmed by [the]…differential distribution of females and males into different social roles and statures and maintained by intrapsychic needs for self-consistency and the need to behave in a socially desirable manner. (p. 19)

Social learning theorists give the socially desirable manner motivation the primary importance, whereas constructivists view the need for self-consistency as the central motivation in the maintenance of an identity component like gender. Constructivists like Greenwald (1980), Giddens (1991), and Sampson (1985) viewed identity as a meaning-making organization of information maintained by the individual to preserve a sense of a consistent self. Gender, as an identity, functions as such a sense of self-preserving organization.

Gender occurs by one’s social practice of one’s sense of identification with a gender. Kaschak (1992) considered gender to be an active practice, which could be expressed by the word gendering: “Gender is achieved; it would probably be more accurately expressed as a verb than a noun. It is something that one does repeatedly” (p. 43). Gender as a practice is an idea that fits postmodern ideas. From a feminist vantage, gender:
Starts with no given biological or psychological features and…[argues] that habits and practices are crucial in the construction of meaning….Gender is not a point to start from in the sense of being a given thing but is, instead, a posit or construct, formalizable in a nonarbitrary way through a matrix of habits, practices, and discourses. (Alcoff, 1989, p. 321)

This echoes Beauvoir’s statement (1953), “one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman” (p. 249). Butler (1989) elaborated this concept calling it actively choosing and sustaining a “reified concept of womanhood” (p. 255).

Defining gender entails delineating the construct, gender, from the feminine, from sex role and from the biologically sexed categories, male and female. The feminine is considered in this dissertation to be a philosophical abstraction, a grouping of characteristics formed as the negative reciprocal side of the masculine. When characteristics aggregated into the feminine category become considered to be absolutely related to females, the feminine can function as a belief system. The concept of sex role has been diminishing in use, since, as Sherif pointed out, it mixes ideas about the biological components of sex with the sociological concepts of role (1982). The feminine role is considered to be reflexively generated from cultural cues occurring in all interpersonal and media transactions. “Women and men have been assigned discrete, non-overlapping roles…[and] characteristics thought appropriate for the performance of these discrete roles have been idealized as masculinity and femininity” (Travis, 1988, p. 3).
The reification of the construct of gender is seen as more absolute when biological sex differences are seen as determining gender differences. Biological determinism is the theory that equates gender with biological sex, whereas social learning theories consider gender to be a cultural construction. Biological differences are no longer seen as distinctly polarized (Money & Erdhardt, 1972), but occurring along a spectrum. “Although there is ample evidence that gender-related physical characteristics are continuous, not dichotomous, attributes, they are …culturally and morally divided into only two categories” (Kaschak, 1992, p. 39). This leads to a culturally determined explanation of gender: “Based on their research with babies whose gender was reassigned postnatally due to structural abnormalities after birth” (Young-Eisendrath & Weidmann, 1987, p. 13). In this view, the categories masculine and feminine become constructs of behaviors, and behavior is not absolutely or specifically tied to either gender.

“Beginning in the 1970s, there has been a renewed interest in establishing that sex differences in behavior and capacities originate in biology [or in ‘nature’], and reports of such hypotheses and related research are widely publicized” (Lott, 1987, p. 15). A number of experiments have been used to justify gender inequalities by attempting to prove that individual differences are correlated to biological distinctions. Travis (1988) wrote, “psychological research on the nature and extent of sex differences is, for example, in spatial perception, verbal memory, and mathematical reasoning, has been critiqued by feminist scientists as biased and sexist from initial inception to final interpretation” (p. 4). To challenge this trend, Hyde (1990) did a statistical meta-analysis on studies purporting to show cognitive differences between men and women using the
methodology of traditional science to show that sex differences in certain
cognitive abilities are so small they are meaningless, yet researchers continue to
try not only to document sex differences but to explain them. Thus some rather
elaborate theories have been devised to explain a phenomenon that is nonexistent.
(p. 207)

Lott (1987) summarized biological differences with two conclusions: Similarities
are greater than differences, and biological plasticity of infants is the key to differences.
Gender, if it is shown to be non-biologically determined, becomes more appropriately
located as a cultural construction. Lott (1987) stated:

Because these behaviors are, in very large part, unrelated to the reliable biological
distinctions between the sexes, we use the word “gender” to identify the learned
definitions of women and men. While “female” and “male” refer to sexual
distinctions across all animal species, the terms “woman” and “man” are specific
to humans and denote gender—that is, learned social behavior. (p. 6)

Lott’s (1990) later article emphasized the overlap in gender characteristics. While
Lott is a social learning theorist, in the following statement she echoed feminist
constructivists who emphasized the context of meaning-making by locating “the social
context and the human capacity for learning [as the] critical influence [in] behaviors
identified as masculine and feminine…[and considering] a major variable that
distinguishes the adult lives of most women and men [to be] power” (xii).
French psychiatrist Fanon (1963) began the power-related situational understanding of mental disorders as he described similarities of psychological decompensation by indigenous populations in politically colonized countries. Similarly, Unger (1989) has reviewed a number of social behaviors, such as conformity, influence strategies, and nonverbal acts, which illustrate this point. Unger (1989) notes that power differences control gender differences. The main thrust is that anyone, female or male, in low status, low prestige positions, and having limited resources, is likely to adopt certain coping styles to avoid negative sanctions and gain access to rewards. (Travis, 1988, p. 19)

Chesler (1972) applied this idea to women in her book *Women and Madness.* Although the idea that mental disorders and their diagnostic categories can be interpreted to be a result of social situations has been growing, women’s situation in society has not been included as a traumatizing context. Nevertheless, women are regularly diagnosed differently from men. Kaschak (1992) used not only the well-known Broverman et al. (1970) study to make the point that women are viewed as less mentally healthy by diagnosticians, but also includes the therapists’ interpretation of masochism in psychoanalysis as well as the schizophrenic mother theme from family therapy to highlight the pathologizing of women. This pathologizing is a function of the devalued status of women that is part of the epistemology of the waning paradigm. This devaluing is an expression of the hierarchy between the dualism, masculine and feminine.

The dichotomous epistemology of the waning paradigm engenders dualistic thinking. This is a process that intrinsically forms two categories, and generally includes
devaluing or dominating the passive side. This absolutist way of thinking leads to the
idea that each gender has a set of static characteristics. The conceptualizing of woman as
the other than the identified-with referent is a central philosophical and linguistic
component of the epistemology of gender. This dualistic scheme has a referent, such as
the self, that is considered to be the central viewpoint and another, such as object, that is
not identified with. Thus the referent is defined as not-other and vice versa.

Laidlaw and Malmo (1990) “came to recognize that traditional psychoanalysis
begins from an androcentric position by assuming that a woman embodies all that a man
does not. Since male characteristics are the ones that are valued, women are, by
definition, inferior” (p.1). In this schema, feminine ways of knowing become viewed as a
devalued opposite of the masculine, as in the discourse between the rational and the
intuitive. The female gendered role is postulated to be comprised of these devalued,
disowned, or disidentified-with-human capacities in Western cultural value systems.

The female gender role promotes women’s identification with the object, not the
agent, with the listener, not the speaker, with the viewed, not the viewer, with the
receivers of knowledge, not the creators, with the sensors of interactions, not the analysts,
the impassioned, not the reasoner (Porter, 1991) and with the processors of events, not
the determiners. The characteristic of passive/receptive as the basis of the feminine can
be shown to be central to impediments in epistemological development. The passive
receiver of knowledge is an epistemological perspective analogous to the feminine role.
This comparison is necessary in order to support the argument that women are affected
by the cultural expectation that they receive knowledge rather than create it.
Current psychoanalytical theorists Benjamin (1988) and Kaschak (1992) have theories emphasizing that an important characteristic of the feminine includes that it must be viewed to be Other. In this way of thinking, for women to create themselves as beings with gender, they must see themselves as viewed. This entails identifying with the viewer, the agent of desire (Benjamin, 1988). The viewer constructs, while the viewed receives the construction. Benjamin (1988) considered the feminine to mean having the source of desire within, as in being desirable. This is one way in which women are passive receivers; what they receive is a viewing that works to construct their selves in the viewer’s eyes. Thus, in these theories of the construction of gender, women are expected to identify with the culture that is viewing them.

From both Laidlaw and Malmo’s (1990) and Kaschak’s (1992) viewpoints, women become split into observer and observed. Women, as a result, experience themselves as split, one of the important foundations of the fragmentation of self that women experience and which is very important in psychotherapeutic treatment of women. “Many women are aware of feeling divided and acting on different levels, although they may not understand the origin of their conflicts or pattern of their behaviors as the psychological splitting becomes manifest” (Laidlaw & Malmo, 1990, p. 290). One result of this splitting is that the basic component of women’s role becomes being the viewed object, leaving women passive, without a sense of agency or voice.

The construction of women’s gender and role is an interactive process, between women and the culture. It occurs in a reflexive manner, as women are aware, as in watching being watched, of being in a process producing the gender-based identity.
Psychoanalytic feminist Benjamin (1988) described the manner in which role is being continuously created as the woman introjecting the viewer’s point of view into herself to become her own identity. The masculine-determined organization of the idea of a woman informs the viewer, and this is what the woman accepts. Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987) saw women as constructing their role identity as a reflection of male power, a somewhat different way of looking at the interactive aspect of role construction. Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987) considered the traditional women’s role not to be associated with authority-based activities such as decision-making and power over material resources. Instead, women gain a sense of personal authority by forming relationships with men based on reflecting them. They wrote:

Our model for female development is essentially a conflict model. We assume that a woman’s identity is a conflicted self-system of competing roles, attitudes, and self-assessments. Inherent in her gender identity is a double bind conflict about female authority. (p. 10)

To determine what the impeding aspects of the female roles are, the notions behind feminine gender-based identity will be described. These are based on the notion of the feminine as the Other, whose constitutive aspects are opposite of those manifesting personal agency, authority, or a valued expression of opinion or point of view. In this way, women’s epistemology is defined by men.

The most important epistemological connection is between the feminine role and the received knowledge position of the Belenky et al. (1986) epistemological development schema. Ways of knowing compatible with the feminine role are
hypothesized to be characterized by the receiving of authority-based knowledge. In this simple dualistic system, there is the promulgator of knowledge and the receiver. Since there is only one active viewpoint in this system, this amounts to a cultural proscription against the receiver developing more intellectually complex understandings of reality (Meyer, 1988). Brownmiller wrote:

Boys grow up assuming they have valuable information to impart. By tradition girls were instructed by their mothers and advised by their teen magazines that the most important appreciated quality in a young lady is her ability to listen, to play dumb on dates and to act impressed in male company. (1984, p. 91)

Code (1991) argued:

Whereas, the realization of that outcome [the attainment of relativistic knowing] has been promoted as the most natural …outcome of the personal development of privileged white men, it has been less accessible to women, whom it has commonly constituted as “Other.” (p. 257)

Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987) used the concept of authority as one of the two (the other being empathy) major aspects of women’s development to be affected by the context of gender. Development of authority occurs with recognition by others on one’s ideas and since males assume that their ideas will be recognized, it is associated with the male role. These authors see males as socialized for wielding authority, while female socialization emphasizes an “identity relationship” with men (p. 1). They cited studies such as Broverman, et al. (1970) showing that “ideals for adult female behavior include more dependence and less competence than those for a ‘healthy adult, sex
This revealing finding clearly shows how women are locked into a double bind in terms of their gender: If they behave as healthy adults, they are considered unwomanly, but if they behave like ideal women, “they will be considered childlike or inferior” (1970, p. 2). Portions of cultural role that correspond to the classical notions of the feminine find expression in an undeveloped way for women in dependency and silence, in epistemological passivity and receptivity, in the helplessness of the dominated, who, if they were to have independent thinking, would challenge the power structure.

There is an important cultural component of the linkage between received knowledge and the feminine role. Gender is maintained by a variety of entrenched and powerful motivations. As it has been shown in this dissertation, gender is held in place by the hegemony of masculine-based epistemology and metanarratives. Gender functions to promote the continuance of the power structure that comes out of the existing epistemological framework, and to maintain it be the strength of philosophical and economic arguments.

A number of philosophical theorists consider gender to function in a way that binds nature, the unsettling forces aligned with the feminine in the dualistic system. The role aspect of feminine gender leads both to its containment and to suppression. There is a function of genderedness in society: to contain the wild, the body, nature, the non-rational (Jaggar, 1989; Nye, 1989). The devaluing of these philosophical models by the dominant paradigm functions to shame users of these models, thus impeding women from growing by the use of more subjective epistemologies.
The manner in which this gender role is kept in place in practice has several components: Shunning of women who challenge the epistemologically maintained power structure; shaming the women who behave differently than the dictates of their role; and denying the importance of the maintenance of the power structure by the women’s half of the system. Giddens (1991) described the size of the anxiety engendered when a major component of the paradigm that has been providing the safety of a known way of knowing is challenged.

Buss (1993) pointed to a major value assumption in Eriksen’s (1968) work—namely, that “psychological growth and health is possible only to the extent that the individual is not out of step with society” (p. 328). This demands an unduly benign view of society, denying that the social reality may be psychologically and/or physically repressive, alienating, or constricting. Under such conditions, argued Buss, the valid and healthy response may be shame and doubt rather than autonomy, guilt rather than initiative, identity diffusion rather than identity, and so on.

Feminists were among those who opened the door to seeing gender as constructed. A major feminist tenet is that only within the context of constructed gender can the ramifications and limitations of the feminine role be understood. Only within this context can therapists help clients see that some limitations exist in social roles, held in place by emotions and thoughts. In the feminist analysis from social learning point of view: Social learning theorists view the context as the prime determinate of behavior and see this assumption as forming the context for changing society as a method of changing damaging, limiting behavioral prescriptions for women. Both of these positions have
limitations and strengths. Differences, when identified between men and women, can be used to support the development of the differentiated aspects, or to suppress them and to justify the suppression by reference to innate differences.

Feminists analyze the way women are represented and considered within the fading rationalist paradigm. To do this, they assay epistemological foundations and assumptions underlying the female role and representations. Male and female genders are becoming considered by some feminists to be aspects of the Cartesian dualism that is in the process of being deconstructed. As such, female gender is no longer considered immutable, but constructed both in early development (Chodorow, 1978) and constantly through continual social reinforcement (Kaschak, 1992).

Feminist analysis has subverted the prevalent notions of the nature of reality by its deconstruction of gender as a fundamental category distinct from biological sex (Fast, 1984) and by its exposure of gender bias in the epistemological organization of science and culture (Harding, 1990). Their premise was that epistemology as practiced in Western culture is masculine-based, which refers to the idea that many aspects of culture that are assumed to be neutral are, in fact, artifacts of gender delineation. To bring this embedded assumption to the foreground of awareness, feminists focus on the metaphorical associations of the masculine and the feminine and their relative cultural value.

Feminists take into account the sociopolitical, linguistic, and epistemological context for differences rather than just the content of the differences, as theorists in non-feminist-oriented psychology of women fields do. Emphasis here is placed on feminist
theorists and their thinking because they focus on the importance of the context of women’s lives and experience, leading to contextual thinking. Including information about the context of a woman’s situation increases the level of complexity of the data at disposal, bringing challenges that press for the paradigm to shift. Fast (1984) noted that:

As Kuhn (1970) has persuasively argued, when, in any field, a growing consensus develops that an established theory can no longer accommodate accepted observations and perspectives, a multitude of theories and part-theories will be proposed. Out of these a new framework will gradually emerge, which achieves general acceptance. (p. 3)

The feminine as a construct can be deconstructed, in the postmodern sense of discovering the constituent parts and critiquing the components from a sociopolitical stance (Heckman, 1990). Deconstruction of the categories feminine or gender in philosophy or social contexts leads to the possibility of deconstructing the limiting aspects of the gender-based role in any woman’s life. This allows for the potential for women to realize that their epistemological development is constrained by their socialized role, and in so deconstructing this connection allow themselves to become knowers in their own right. Psychotherapists will benefit from the knowledge of how gender comes about and why the roles are resistant to change.

Psychotherapy that is responsive to an understanding of the constructed nature of gender, the depth of epistemological embeddedness in the culture of the notion of the feminine, and the social function performed by that role generally is considered feminist. Because feminism has such an uneven and controversial reputation (Faludi, 1992),
feminist psychotherapy can be difficult to describe. The next chapter will endeavor to address this problem.
CHAPTER 6.
THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE FOR PSYCHOTHERAPISTS
ASSISTING WOMEN IN EPISTOGENESIS: KNOWING WOMEN IN THERAPY

The thesis of this dissertation’s argument is that women are prone to experience those limitations that are integral to the feminine role as impediments to the development of epistemological relativity and complexity. Psychotherapists deal with women’s perspectives in knowing whenever they offer any psychological treatment. The relationship between therapist and client automatically has an epistemological component; the client is always organizing information obtained from herself and from the therapist within her personal paradigm of how knowledge occurs. At any time, she is considering the source of authority of the information to be somewhere on the spectrum from amorphously out there in the case of Belenky et al.’s (1986) initial perspective in epistemological development, to taking personal responsibility for constructing knowledge herself, the final perspective in that schema.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify those necessary psychotherapeutic characteristics and situations most likely to assist women clients in attaining developmental movement in their epistemological organization. In the previous chapters, women have been hypothesized to have developmental differences from men that indicate the possibility that different corrective psychotherapeutic treatment is more appropriate for them. This chapter offers a bridge between theory and practice by
applying the findings about gendered developmental differences to a discussion of suggested psychotherapeutic techniques that would be commensurate with supporting women in moving through transitions in epistemological development.

Psychotherapy with women, to be relevant, must be informed by the context of women’s cultural role and sociopolitical situation. The emerging paradigm challenges the basis for the gender-based parameters of women’s role, and feminist therapy is the locus of action for this challenge. Thus, an auxiliary question to be investigated here concerns the degree to which views arising from feminism affect both theory and practice in psychotherapy. This chapter supports the point of view that the influence of feminism as a social movement and analysis of human interactional systems is central to the evolution of theory and practice in psychotherapy. This view is important because if the therapist does not realize the impact of the impeding cultural paradigm on the feminine role, the therapist may unwillingly speak and listen to the client from within the waning, constraining context, thereby participating in the maintenance of the limitations of that traditional role. Given that feminist ideas become found to be critically important for psychotherapy, how are they to be brought into practice?

The psychotherapeutic treatment for women proposed in this dissertation is based on four conceptual components. First, the findings of Belenky, et al. (1986) emphasized the different ways women in each of the epistemological positions were spoken and listened to in their families of origin. Knowing this, therapists must learn to recognize the positions, and to realize that treatment of clients in each of these various perspectives will entail a different type of corrective therapeutic interaction. The therapist must be able to
speak and listen in a way compatible with the current epistemological perspective of the client in order to enter her meaning-making system to join with her and be in full communication.

The emphasis of the dialogic process is a challenge to the modernist tradition that knowledge occurs from observation of an external phenomenon, whereas in dialogic engagement, meaning is mutually created in interaction. In the dialogic process, a private space is created (Benjamin, 1988). Dialogue has a political and social force; feminists Bauer and McKinstry (1991) emphasized what this means from a feminist perspective when they wrote, “the contexts of silence and speech determine gendered relations” (p. 3).

Second, as in any therapy, with women there are indicators of readiness to change, and therapists must be able correctly to assess readiness and to understand the factors prompting change and developmental transitions. Therapists need to factor in to this the extent to which role constraints affect readiness or resistance to change.

Third, the new epistemological challenges can be operationalized into different treatment modalities, commensurate with and manifesting the challenging new epistemologies of the emerging paradigm. This idea is important to the therapist working with women because therapies that have not been analyzed from a feminist perspective and have arisen from assumptions prevalent in the waning paradigm are subject to maintaining implicit gender inequities and constraints of the traditional woman’s role.

Fourth, women need treatment formats that include an awareness of the cultural context of their gender and role. This chapter asserts that feminist psychotherapy is
important in the treatment of women in that the feminist theory challenges the power of
cultural role prescription that form part of the resistance to maintenance of
psychotherapeutic gains.

*Epistemological Considerations in Treating Women*

The practical ramifications of the inquiry into how epistemological developmental
transitions can be supported by psychotherapists in their women clients are covered in
this section. In view of the idea that women develop differently from men and need a
different focus in psychotherapeutic treatment, it is important for the therapist to have an
understanding of women’s epistemological positions. This knowledge clarifies how
narrative material that any client brings to therapy is related to her predominant meaning-
making perspective.

In the treatment interactions, it is also important that the therapist understand that
the therapeutic dialogue and process will be an epistemological interface between two
knowledge perspectives, her own and the client’s. Epistemological perspectives are not
only intrapsychic; they are also epistemologically interactive and occur in an emotionally
intersubjective field.

However, since the patient’s experience of the relationship is co-determined by
the psychological organizations of both participants in the analytic dialogue, the
domain of psychoanalytic investigation must encompass the entire *intersubjective
field*, created by the interplay between the differently organized subjective worlds
of patient and analyst. (Stolorow, 1992, p. 160)
Thus, treatment itself is a set of speaking and listening that organizes information within the relationship system that is co-created by the participants. This notion is central to the constructivist position that the making of meaning between people is an ongoing creation, what Garfinkle (1967) described as the understanding of an interaction varying with the unfolding of the encounter.

Belenky, et al. (1986) found a particularly interesting relationship between the epistemological position of each of the participants and the way in which she was listened and spoken to in her family of origin. Each position was characterized by a differing degree of responsibility or authorship of knowledge between the parent and daughter in interactions. This childhood pattern determined the primary epistemological perspective of the adult woman, although this could be ameliorated in later adult development.

Psychoanalytic object relations-oriented theorist Stollerow (1992) devised the notion of intersubjectivity to describe the reflexive nature of the childhood development of “psychic structure formation” (p. 161) and wrote of how it pertains to early interactive training: “Recurring patterns of intersubjective transaction within the developmental system result in the establishment of invariant principles that unconsciously organize the child’s subsequent experiences” (p. 162). The choice by the therapist of the appropriate degree of intersubjectivity in the psychotherapeutic dialogue is proposed to be the central feature of developmentally corrective psychotherapy.

_Speaking and Listening Epistemologically_

Belenky, et al. (1986) used the phrase, “Responding to her in her own terms, …the authorities…used language that she could understand” regarding a woman who
was moving from the silent to the received way of knowing position (p. 36). These authors described particular speaking and listening characteristics of women in each of these epistemological perspectives. Since epistemology can be located in the making of meaning that appears in language, psychotherapists must know and be able to incorporate the dialogical and intersubjectively relational level of interaction appropriate to the epistemological position represented by the woman client’s developmental level of attainment. The following refers to speaking and listening within a particular therapeutic relationship.

In the first position, that of silent knower, the use of words was considered dangerous, so the communication in those families was through action. The quality of family interaction was chaotic and unpredictable, abusive and neglectful. The corrective prescription for epistemological development was typically a symbol system such as music, art, sports, or school activities. To gain a voice at all was the primary objective and learning to turn actions into words was the means. These prescriptions can be turned into treatment modalities by therapists working with women in this epistemological position. Discussing the actions of therapy, rules, timing of sessions, and so forth in a safe way will be developmentally ameliorative and teach that words are not always a part of violence and danger.

The second position, received knowledge, was characterized by families who “accepted the inherent inequality built into the parent-child relationship as a permanent condition…[and] the marriages…of their parents conformed to the sex-role stereotypes the culture upheld” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 165). These families were described as
hierarchical, with the father typically doing most of the speaking and the mother most of the listening. Thus the one-way conversation between the genders was modeled for the children and out in action towards them. The parents told the children things, expected them to learn them, but in no way strove to understand what the daughters thought. Belenky, et al. (1986) noted two particular results of daughters growing up with this pattern of speaking and listening. First, these daughters did not rebel, in adolescence or later. Secondly, these authors viewed “the fact that women are expected to curtail their voice may account for the greater prevalence of clinical depression and learned helplessness among women than among men” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 167).

These authors were in accord with the thesis of this dissertation that the speaking and listening associated with the epistemological perspective of received knowledge promotes the limitations on knowing of the female role on Western culture. They further wrote of the conventional feminine voice as paralleling the “continued injunction against articulating needs, feelings, and experiences [which] constrain the development of hearts and minds, because it is through speaking and listening that we develop our capacities to talk and to think things through” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 167). To support a woman in her move from this position to the next involves valuing data that strain the system. This includes not only questions that authorities cannot answer, but also learning to recognize emotions and bodily sensations as sources of knowledge.

The speaking and listening associated with position three, subjective knowing, had to do with the subjectivists expressing their feelings. In the family system associated with this position, rebellion was the normative style. Daughters no longer believed their
parents’ words, and found the way to express themselves through emotions. This pattern is a developmental advance on the “numbness and muteness inherent in the previous positions” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 169). If therapists find themselves treating subjectivists, the data that will strain the position’s paradigm are including the balancing factor of reason that is characteristic of the next position.

In position four, the speaking and listening in the family of origin included the parent’s posing of questions, listening with suspended judgment, and understanding the daughter’s point of view. Daughters saw mothers as having reason and emotion and expressing both. They frequently preferred to model themselves on their mother rather than their father, as fathers in this system were seen as overly rationalistic in style of discourse.

In position five, constructed knowledge, women are aware of the difference between didactic talk in which participants imparting information to one another and dialogic talking in which speaking and listening are naturally interactive. This forms a useful model for therapists to aim toward with clients who have more highly developed epistemological capacities. The latter:

Requires careful listening; it implies a mutually shared agreement that together you are creating the optimum setting so that half-baked or emergent ideas can grow…[it] reaches deep into the experience…draws on the analytical abilities of each…[and] includes discourse and exploration, talking and listening, questions, argument, speculation and sharing. (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 144).
These authors called women in this epistemological position constructivists and describe the way they were communicated with by their mothers “characterized by great intimacy, equality, and collegiality” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 185).

Therapy that takes into consideration these epistemological positions and the family discourse that sponsored them will have the characteristic of tailoring the therapeutic discourse to the perspective of the client. First the therapist must join by utilizing some of the similarities from the family system to connect epistemologically, and then use the knowledge of what kind of new data will strain the paradigm to inform the kind of treatment chosen. The steps are to assess readiness, to assess what components are needed to move to the next position, to choose therapeutic modalities that fit those components, and to plan a treatment that continues support of the client through the transition, with its attendant uncertainty, anxiety, and chaos.

Readiness and the Shift between Epistemological Perspectives

The focus in this section is the illumination of the ways psychotherapists can assist women clients move from the dualistic thinking characteristic of the received knowledge position to the subjective knowing position in Belenky, et al.’s (1986) developmental schema. As with any incipient transition, the transition between position two and position three has certain signs that presage readiness. The first sign is that the paradigmatic organization of knowing in the sense used by Kuhn (1970), by Perry (1970), by Greenwald (1980), and by Sampson (1989), has been challenged in a way that cannot be explained from within the system. New data, new ways of thinking or gathering data, new language, new events, new interpretations of what events are
constituted of are all examples of challenges. In women’s personal epistemology, Finan (1992) found that questions that women asked that authorities did not have satisfactory answers for, or that authorities obviously differed about, challenged the women who had relied on received knowledge. Examples of new data include the consciousness raising, or awareness of the sociopolitical context of women, which is the outcome of a feminist analysis. With this feminist point of view, women discover the way in which the received epistemological perspective promulgates the role-based limitations in knowing for women. They see that the perspective of received knowledge is antithetical to the notion that women can know through individual experience, a central feminist precept. Thus, the paradigm, received knowledge, is strained to its shifting point.

Second, the therapist must access where the client currently is in her process of change. Prochaska and DiClemente (1989) constructed a model of eclectic therapy that addressed the readiness-to-change aspect of developmentally oriented psychotherapy. “Intentional change is not an all-or-none phenomenon but a gradual movement through specific stages of change” (p. 101). The stages are pre-contemplation, contemplation, action, and maintenance. These authors’ way of describing the stages of readiness to change has application for epistemological perspective transitions in women’s psychotherapy. The value of paying attention to this system is that the therapist can be more attuned to the client’s process. The stages of change include that the client:

Must become aware of the problem, make some admission or take ownership of the problem, confront defenses and habit aspects of the problem that make it
difficult to control, and begin to see some of the negative aspects of the problem in order to move to the next stage. (p. 103)

Choosing Treatments to Match Client’s Epistemological Perspective

Belenky, et al. (1986) described four transitions among the five positions in their schema. For any of these transitions a feminist analysis is possible. For example, the position of silent knowing manifests some qualities of the very traditional feminine role. That women should not know much at all is referenced in the homily barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. In this particular transition, received knowledge is a new epistemological paradigm brought into being by the new data contained in the notion that knowledge is power, and women are entitled to some power. Another example would be the transition from subjective knowing, position three, to procedural knowing, in which subjective knowing becomes ameliorated with reason. A feminist interpretation of this transition would note that subjective knowing manifests the part of the feminine role that women do not make logical sense; they only act emotionally and intuitively. The new personal epistemological paradigm brought into being, procedural knowledge, is a response to the feminist understanding that women are as capable of reason and logic as are men.

In the transition from received knowledge to subjective, the woman moves from passive recipient to active acquirer of knowledge. The first source of knowledge available in this transit is one’s own experience. To become a subjective knower women must validate their own internal narrative of experience (Unger, 1990). The relationship between a woman’s valuing her personal narrative and developing her subjective
epistemological position is based on the idea that the construction of the sense of self is a personal narrative, a social constructivist theory, combined with the idea that the self occurs in an interaction between the self and another, an extension of Stern’s (1985) psychoanalytic idea of the interpersonally constructed world of the infant.

In Belenky, et al.’s (1986) schema, position three involved being able to use subjective epistemologies. To use a subjective epistemology one would need to develop certain abilities: The first ability needed in developing towards the capacity for using relative epistemologies would be to tolerate the realization that gender-based identity is constructed, and to be able to take responsibility for its ongoing construction. Responsibility entails being able to tolerate the anxiety attendant to the knowledge that truth is relative, and that reality is constructed (Giddens, 1991). Second, the valuing of process over content is commensurate with the emerging paradigm. Sampson (1985) wrote, “according to nonequilibrium theory, personhood does not derive its order from being a thoroughly integrated, singular thing but rather from its being a continuously evolving process whose evolviness rather than its thinghood is its very essence” (p. 1206).

Operationalizing this emphasis on process in language, Schafer (1978) worked to transform the emphasis away from reifications of constructs by relanguaging into processes-of-action language. **Becoming** is a process verb, compared with *is*, which implies stasis, or trait. Vernacular constructions are beginning to reflect this: “How’re you doing? What’s happening?” are replacing “How are you?” The focus on process language in psychotherapy shifts the emphasis away from observer/object-of-observation
constructions that are the foundation of devalued gender relations toward a co-created process in social interaction, a foundational aspect of the emerging paradigm.

For culture to realize the limitations of understanding imposed by logocentricity, the next cultural epistemological paradigm must have larger context of knowing. Emotion and intuition have been suggested as a foundation but found limited as being too subjective (Code, 1991; Jaggar, 1989). If language, syntax, exclusionary logic, and the dualistic construction of reality imposed by the gestalt nature of words and their reciprocals become decentered, then what other ways of knowing are available? If semanticist Chomsky (1957) was correct about the primacy of deep structures of language, then logic precedes language (Cook, 1988), and understanding can be prior to the confines of representational thought. Chomsky’s notion about the ability of infants to understand the rules of syntax before they understand the language itself implies the possibility that understanding can be non-logocentric and can occur prior to dualities. If the waning paradigm eschewed the body in deference to the cognitive side of the mind/body duality, then reclaiming the body as an information processor, as an epistemological organizer, would be an aspect of the emerging paradigm.

The third phases of Belenky, et al.’s (1986) schema described the importance of the stage in which a woman comes to believe her own gut feelings. The valuing of somatic-based knowledge is a hallmark of the subjective knowing epistemological position. The valuing rather than the repudiation of somatically derived understanding is one of the components of the development of the subjective position in Women’s Ways of Knowing (1986). This way of knowing is outside of linguistic-based logic and cannot be
swayed by linguistic interpretations, thereby anchoring reality in the body. When the primacy of cognitive knowledge has supremacy over other forms of knowing, the body as a way of knowing becomes consigned to the realm of Other, which is less known, unconscious, suspect, irrational. One becomes able to use the body as information, which, while it is subjective, is incontrovertible. The incorporation of the devalued feminine side would include valuing the use of bodily responses and experiences, including emotion, as another way of apprehending reality (Jaggar, 1989). If somatically derived knowledge were to be given equal validity with cognitively derived knowledge, power relationships would become more lateral, a feminist goal. It is this shift that demonstrates one parallel between the cultural shift and a personal shift of epistemology.

*Challenges to the Waning Paradigm Manifested in Psychotherapeutic Treatment for Women*

This section is written with the intention of adding to the link between abstract understanding of the current cultural epistemological transition and models of practice that incorporate the emerging paradigmatic epistemologies. If psychotherapy is to participate in the paradigmatic shift, it must answer the question of what specific differences and practices in therapy need to emerge that will be commensurate with postmodernism, feminism, and other non-hierarchical models. The comparison is between treatments based on dualistic, objectively derived processes of knowledge construction and those based on multiplistic, subjectively derived processes of knowledge construction. It is hypothesized that the new cultural paradigm can utilized by psychotherapists to create expanded ways of enhancing adult development, both because
the gendered effect will be accounted for and because aspects of the postmodern paradigm may allow for epistemologically different practice, treatments, and techniques. The purpose of this comparison is to provide practical assistance to psychotherapists treating clients for whom these transitions between personal epistemological positions are relevant to their growth.

The following discussion will cover the list of treatment issues that arise from those challenges to the waning paradigm specified by Sampson (1989) in the order in which they were discussed in Chapters III and IV.

**Cross-Cultural Challenge**

Cross-cultural psychological issues have expanded the context of psychotherapeutic treatment by pressing for the understanding of relative values. For psychotherapy to be value-free, psychotherapies had to be appropriate to clients’ values from different cultures. Developmental theory is a feature that is commensurate with the emerging paradigm in that it emphasizes behavior as a process rather than a manifestation of static traits. Developmental thinking is a challenge to the waning paradigm in that it argues against the pathologizing of earlier developmental stages. It does this by interpreting these stages as the result of situations that have political contexts, seeing each stage as a valuable adaptation to the historical occurrence. Interpreting the developmental epistemological positions in a similar manner expands the context of psychotherapy.

**Systems Theory**

Mahoney (1991), Sugarman (1986), Sampson (1985), and Greenwald (1980), all emphasized that development has order and chaos as reciprocal features in the
developmental process. The shift between these two modes can be seen as linear over time, each reacting to the previous one and represented as a sine wave depiction (Hampden-Turner, 1981) or as a system shift, expanded and elaborated by the incorporation of new data. Contextual levels are formed by paradigms in which information is organized. This contextual shift in women’s epistemological development is represented by a movement or shift from one developmental position to the next. Paradigmatic shifts are related to a general systems theory notion that codes are a second order of information, that is, information about information commonly called context. Any data that press a paradigm toward a shift are on this information-about-information contextual level. In this way, each subsequent paradigmatic level incorporates the earlier one/s and its/their contexts. Each developmental level in epistemological development includes a more complex set of information to be organized. The relevance of this to feminist psychotherapeutic treatment is that feminist analysis provides a sociopolitical context that enlarges and informs the original information.

Postmodernism and Constructivism

This challenge to the waning paradigm deconstructs the unitary aspect of the concept of self. “Bakhtin’s model of the self [is] as an intersection of conflicting voices” (Bauer & McKinstry, 1991, p. 6). The decentralization of the concept of identity is an idea that appears in both constructivist and postmodern traditions. Sampson wrote:

Developments in nonequilibrium theory in physics, deconstructionism in literary criticism, and decentralized, anarchic notions of governance introduce a different
understanding of the means whereby order and coherence exist and thus open the possibility for a revised ideal of personhood. (1985, p. 1204)

In a postmodern view of personality as a pastiche, fragments of identity, albeit dissociated, can stand alone. The appreciation of pastiche and collage allows for acceptance of sub-identities and personality fragments as well as different personality approaches to different situations. Thus, individuals have a multiplicity of identities, and a synthesis of identities toward a sense of unity is not sought. Mead (1934) was an early proponent of this position. In this view, different fragments of personalities are appropriate to different situations (Curtis, 1991). Hermans, Kempen, and van Loon (1992) are Dutch constructivists who theorized that when the “Self is conceived of as a dialogic narrator…[it] result[s] in a multiplicity of dialogically interacting selves” (p. 23).

Laidlaw and Malmo’s feminist rendition of Ego-State Specific Therapy posited that different parts of the self develop at different rates, according to the context in which that personality fragment or domain was related to. Comparing different developmental domains, Heath (1968) found that compensatory development must occur in task areas if there is excessive development in one task area, because resistance develops until compensatory development can occur. This indicates that uneven development among different aspects of human functioning can be clinically observed (Parvin, 1990). De Laurentis (1986) viewed the multiplicitous self as another aspect of postmodern subjectivity, noted “the concept of a multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory identity, a subject that is not divided in but rather at odds with, language” (p. 9).
Feminism would not exist were it not for its mandate to critique fields of study and areas of women’s lives. To accomplish this critique, the gender aware analyst deconstructs the semantics of psychological constructs and challenges conventional epistemologies of ongoing psychotherapies. Psychology, steeped as it is in the Cartesian epistemology, is a compelling target for such criticism. While the feminist influence has been felt on the scholarship of a number of fields during the last 20 years, psychology has been less impacted than many (Kaschak, 1992). She noted that, “Our [feminist] perspectives remained absent from the models and practices of psychotherapy” (p. 1). Similarly, Morawski (1990) wrote “in the face of the tremendous personal and intellectual challenges of feminism, the psychological perspective on and analysis of gender have remained unchanged, as have the foundational metatheory and epistemology” (p. 50). This gap has persisted into the present, even though the investigative side of the filed of psychology and its practice, psychotherapy, centrally affect and are affected by the cultural zeitgeist.

Brown and Brodsky (1992) wrote of feminist psychotherapy that even currently, certain core principles are held in common and will inform treatment whether it is cognitive-behavioral or psychodynamic. These principles included:

1. Valuing of the diverse and complex experiences of women from all racial, class, religions, age, and sexual orientation groups…;
2. An attention to power dynamics in the therapy relationship, with the goal of developing egalitarian
relationships and structures…; (3) A theory of human behavior that attends equally to intrapsychic and social/contextual variables…behavior must be understood within the broader social context and that the impact of external realities on internal and nonconscious process must be factored into our interpretation of behaviors…special attention paid to the meaning and place of assigned gender roles in the individual’s social environment and the impact of gender on self-identity…; (4) A reliance in the empirical date base arising from feminist scholarship on the psychology of women and gender…; (5) Valuing a balance of both healthy autonomy and relational competence for all adults, rather than regarding these traits as inevitably gender-based and avoiding biological reductionist models of human behavior, particularly gendered behaviors…; and (6) Seeing the goals of therapy as including both intrapsychic change and a changed perspective on the social/cultural realities that affect clients’ lives whatever the specifics of the context. (Brown & Brodsky, 1992, p. 51).
CHAPTER 7.

CONCLUDING REMARKS TO PSYCHOTHERAPISTS AND TO WOMEN CLIENTS: UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF KNOWING WOMEN’S WAYS OF KNOWING

As inhabitants of the 21st century, humans, especially those in the Western cultures, must come to terms with the personal ramifications of the enormous shift in understanding of reality that the twentieth century engendered. Each person would be left to his or her own subjective ordering of the complexities of the world if the environment is construed to be a construction organized by one’s own experience; there then becomes no assurance that there is any one view that has any surety of precedence or authority over another. Tarnas (1991) compellingly wrote of the emotional responses frequently found in the modern lifestyle, likening the situation to aspects of the Batesonian double bind:

It should not be surprising what kinds of response the modern psyche has made …as it attempts to escape the double bind’s inherent contradictions. Either inner or outer realities tend to be distorted: inner feelings are repressed and denied, as in apathy and psychic numbing, or they are inflated in compensation, as in narcissism and egocentrism; or the outer world is slavishly submitted to as the only reality, or it is aggressively objectified and exploited…compulsive economic consumption, absorption in the mass media, fashion, faddism, cults, ideologies,
nationalistic fervor, alcoholism, drug addiction. When avoidance mechanisms cannot be sustained, there is anxiety, paranoia, chronic hostility, a feeling of helpless victimization, a tendency to suspect all meanings, an impulse toward self-negation, a sense of purposelessness and absurdity, a feeling of irresolvable inner contradiction, a fragmenting of consciousness. (Tarnas, 1991, p. 421)

While epistemology—the way one knows—is especially significant for academicians during this cultural paradigmatic transition, individuals are also strongly affected by a culture’s epistemology. Particularly as the complexities of media, technology, and cross-cultural interaction saturate the self (Gergen, 1991), the way in which one knows becomes increasingly germane to an individual’s ability to create meaning and make decisions from those meanings. It is no wonder that women facing a similar transition between a known and stabilizing way of ordering knowledge, one that has the core of identity, her gender, validating it as the appropriate epistemology, may experience anxiety and difficulty becoming comfortable believing in her own subjective epistemological perspective.

As with the process of change at every level, culture has impetus for change and resistance to that change. This dissertation will discuss a number of these aspects in order to search for parallels in personal epistemological change. For psychotherapists, these concepts are the well-known stock and trade in the process of individual change. However, in this era of dramatically rapid cultural change, awareness of the interface between cultural and individual development becomes increasingly important.
This dissertation assumes that women have specific needs in psychotherapy that can be addressed by the psychotherapists who understand the epistemological constraints of the waning paradigm and embrace the appropriate tenets of the emerging paradigm. This is especially important for women clients of psychotherapy. Any potential for psychotherapeutic growth is affected by the constructs available within psychotherapeutic theories utilized in their treatment.

As the epistemological underpinnings of Western philosophy and science, including psychology, undergo the current radical shift, psychotherapy practitioners must be aware of their own personal and theoretical epistemological stances in order to justify and integrate their choices in treatment. The psychotherapist may also face anxiety as treatment modalities with which she or he may have been familiar are seen as limited, and new modalities are a product of unfamiliar epistemological bases. Both in the welter of possible treatment choices and the need to redesign treatment based on more complex understanding of contexts and relative knowledge challenges individual practitioners to manage their own paradigmatic transition.

Each practitioner has his or her own personal epistemological base or way of knowing that informs his or her treatment decisions. Psychotherapists must be able to analyze their own epistemological perspectives and then act in a manner commensurate with the resulting awareness. Lacking that awareness, they may support an agenda implicit in a sexist or otherwise limiting metanarrative. This viewpoint supports the notion that there is no value-free, and therefore no power-free, science (Keller, 1989), or by extension, psychotherapy.
One outcome of this dissertation has been an argument and a practical format for assisting psychotherapists in understanding their own and their client’s development of epistemological frameworks. In this chapter, the following specific assessment questions are provided for psychotherapists to utilize in understanding their own epistemological development. Questions that the practitioner may ask of him or herself include: Which epistemological developmental position seems most similar to my knowledge-gathering for my decision-making process? With clients, in which developmental position do I feel most affinity and proficiency working? What epistemological developmental position would I assess to be indicative of each of my parents’ ways of knowing, and how was I spoken to and listened to from those frameworks? How does my therapeutic dialogic style, or my speaking and listening to clients, reflect my personal historical epistemology? Am I aware of any sub-personalities or fragments that may be operating at any different moment with clients? Each psychotherapist can learn to use these questions.

The epistemological basis of this dissertation is modern. It assumes a progression of understanding from abstract principles about epistemology, development, transitions, gender construction, etc., to supportive argument and data based on some research with conclusions drawn logically. The thesis that women are proscribed from moving away from their sanctioned gender-based role toward more complex relativistic epistemological stances assumes some modernistic ideas. Some of these are: That development is a positive value to be sought or that it has a forward direction; that masculine epistemological frameworks are judged as limiting, which is a dichotomizing assessment; that limits are to be eschewed, a judgment postmodernists might not make;
and that male and female constructs are valid categories, among many others. Even the thesis that women are proscribed from moving away from their sanctioned gender-based role toward more complex relativistic epistemological stances assumes some modernistic ideas.

The conclusions are translated into practical suggestions for therapists to use in treatment. This means that there is a paradox between style and content of this dissertation. The style is modern, while the content valorizes the postmodern. Postmodern style would have included more subjective rendering of the topic, in such ways as a narrative discourse of the writer’s experience in researching and studying the material, incorporating her present context and personal history. The field of psychology does not at this time foster this deconstructive style, but Hoshmand and Polkinghorne (1992) have opened the discussion of how postmodernism can impact practical aspects of this field. It would not necessarily be linear, hierarchical, not logocentrically bound, but might include, for example, collage, comics, or video representations. An example of the narrative mixed with the didactic format is Williams’ *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991), which stylistically demonstrates some postmodern feminist tenets.

Gergen (1988) was an important proponent of feminist methodology in the social sciences, and her comments about scientists, subjects, and facts can be equally applicable to psychotherapists, clients, and techniques: “Feminist-inspired [psychotherapy] would endeavor to recognize that [psychotherapists, clients] and [techniques] are all interconnected, involved in reciprocal influences, and subject to interpretation and linguistic constraints…[as well as] value-laden…value orientations” (p. 94). Sturdivant
(1980), who wrote from the early feminist psychotherapist model, proposed that psychotherapists assume that their philosophies of treatment do not arise from value-free theorizing or experiments: “Theories and techniques of psychotherapy are created by one’s beliefs. Not vice versa….Rather, one holds beliefs, consciously or unconsciously, about the nature of human beings and subsequently develops or chooses theories and techniques congruent with these beliefs” (p. 8), and the choosing itself in informed by one’s epistemological perspective.

Deconstructionism of gender assumptions in theories of psychology still needs to be done. The embedded assumptions regarding specific theoretical content within non-feminist-influenced psychotherapy need further examination. Examples are: The primacy of the autonomous ego as a developmental goal; the implicit assumption that women are similar but with deficiencies to men, especially with regard to the Oedipal resolution; the notion that psychotherapy has mostly to do with the personal internal change, not the political external change; and that the adjustment to the social norm equals mental health, especially if this norm is male inspired. Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1989) wrote:

Rather than debating which of these representations [social learning or essentialistic] is “true,” we shift to the metaperspective provided by postmodernism…entertain[ing]…more fruitful questions…including the political and social functions that the…difference and no difference positions serve. This perspective opens the way to alternative representations of gender that would raise new questions or recast old ones for psychologists. (p. 24)
Psychological problems, areas of personal development, and the solutions presented by psychotherapists are all affected by the epistemological foundation created by the assumptions and constructs implicit in any therapy.

All except the least sophisticated of psychotherapists will have realized that the object of their inquiry is altered by their observations...[and] the complexity of the relationship between therapist and patient is such that anyone might justify doubt whether objective observation of the patient is possible on these grounds alone. The view that the psychotherapist is a wholly detached observer and the patient is a piece of mechanism which is unaffected by his scrutiny cannot be sustained. (Storr, 1960, p. 7)

This chapter has tied together all the themes and hypotheses covered by the dissertation. It argues for the support of the thesis that women’s roles in Western culture discourage the epistemological development of women, especially discouraging the transition between relying on received knowledge and becoming able to utilize subjective knowledge. To the extent that the cultural paradigm resists subjectivity-based epistemologies, women will not experience support in taking the developmental step toward epistemological maturity that is based on subjective knowing. Basic to this idea is that women’s developmental movement into the subjective position is frequently incommensurate with the traditional Western woman’s role, even to the point that women’s role can put constraints on asking the question of whether or not they have the right to personal subjectivity. From this theoretical viewpoint, women are seen as having to choose to develop according to their internal direction or remain limited through
identification with the dominant paradigm. If women have been proscribed from
developing through their subjective phase, and if this phase is parallel to the emerging
cultural paradigm in any essential ways, then it is important to psychotherapists to
elucidate the psychotherapeutic principles and techniques enhancing this developmental
movement. Treatment considerations were provided to help psychotherapists organize the
plethora of techniques and assess some of the epistemological considerations resulting
from new ways of thinking, especially about gender.

The nature of gender and its manifestation in society’s roles would be expected to
be different, if indeed the emerging paradigm were not founded on dualities. Without the
emphasis on humans as primarily cognitive beings, other ways of apprehending reality,
such as intuition, can be considered valuable and be developed by everyone. Women will
no longer have to represent the Other, the eschewed, the shadow. It shows how
psychotherapists have a mandate to understand this social artifact and to amend their
therapeutic procedures to help compensate for ways women are affected by it.

The question posed in this dissertation of whether psychology has responded
adequately to the gender ramifications of the paradigm shift can be illuminated by the
following comments made by psychologists who responded to a 1987 APA survey on
psychology’s future:

More and more able women are entering a graduate training. This should lead to a
more feminist orientation in the field and to a more humanistic profession. This
could also mean a larger concern for social issues and ethics.
[Comment on the preceding] Will the increasing proportion of women in psychology result in a more humanistic profession? Heaven forbid! If we select women as graduate students who are highly intelligent and give them good training that is highly empirical and quantitative, the tragedy can be prevented. We already have enough men whose grasp of psychology is limited and who depend for their “insights” on inspection of their navels. (Boneau, 1992, p. 1593)
REFERENCES


