

SELF PSYCHOLOGY AS A PSYCHOLOGY
OF RACE-GENDER SELFOBJECT EXPERIENCES

Kathryn A. Lyndes (klyndes@elmhurst.edu). *Elmhurst College*

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With much gratitude to the Mason Trust Fund whose grant enabled greater freedom in pursuing the initial research that led to this paper; and to the PCR Group of the AAR for the opportunity to present this research.

Abstract

This paper proposes that Heinz Kohut's self psychology has the potential to be a theory and practice responsive to race-gender oppression in both its theory and practice. In terms of theory, self psychology needs to account for how race and gender are co-constitutive within selfobject functioning and experiencing. One possible strategy for doing so is through Kohut's nascent theory of group self, which already accounts for group's historical, cultural, and social contexts. In terms of practice, self psychological practitioners need to make empathically attuned observations and interpretations of race-gender experiences. Such contextualized understandings of race-gender oppression have pastoral care implications for responding both communally and individually.

Introduction

Over twenty years ago, feminist clinicians and theorists Lang and Gardiner wrote that Heinz Kohut's self psychology could be a psychology of gender if its theories accounted for contextualized experiences of gender as a vital part of self development and maintenance. Gardiner identified the lack of elaboration of the significance of gender identity in Kohut's theory of the nuclear self. Gardiner and Lang claimed, in somewhat different ways, that the self is strained or impaired when the empathic milieu fails to identify the constraints imposed by artificial and distorting cultural values defining masculinity and femininity. Despite these shortcomings, however, both Gardiner and Lang concluded that self psychology holds great promise for feminist theory.

Similarly, black psychologists, black feminists, and womanists have critiqued psychological theories, in general, for their lack of attention to self as raced. Raced selves are located within specific historical, cultural, political and social contexts that affect unconscious processes, and as such are variously determined by at least gender, race, sexuality and class. In other words, race, sexuality, gender and class cannot be seen

in isolation of each other; they are co-constitutive in that each dimension is so dependent upon the others for meaning and existence that they are inseparable.

Their commitment to an integrated analysis of these dimensions arises in part from a deep concern to address the shortcomings of whitefeminist methodologies, which tend to fail to consider – in a sustained way – issues of race, gender, sexuality, and class.¹ In response to such critique, some whitefeminists have begun the work of naming white supremacy in their own work and of analyzing various configurations of race, gender, class and sexuality in their theoretical constructions.

This paper proposes that it is not enough to suggest that self psychology be a psychology of gender and a psychology of race. Since race and gender are not additive experiences, in order to more fully comprehend these experiences of oppression in the United States, self psychology needs to be a psychology of race-gender by accounting for the co-constitutive relationship of race and gender within its selfobject theories.²

¹ I rely on Ellen Armour's use of the term "whitefeminism" as a way to recognize that feminists have historically tended to avoid sustained critique of race and have abstracted black women's writings from their historical roots (Armour, Ellen. *Deconstruction, Feminist Theology, and the Problem of Difference*). Some of the whitefeminists cited in this paper wrote in the 1970's and 1980's before such terminology came to be used. I still choose to call them whitefeminists to acknowledge that they (and contemporary white writers) are white, and that whiteness (especially in its interconnected constructions) matters in our work.

² This primary focus on race and gender to the near exclusion of other forms of oppression including sexuality and class raises some important methodological concerns. If a point of disrupting white supremacy is to analyze the interconnections of race, class, sexuality and gender, do I not risk ongoing violence to the complexity of issues by deflating them to two? The answer to this question could very well be yes. Yet there are two reasons for attempting to talk about the interconnections utilizing a smaller subgroup. First, by taking a historical look at the use of these terms, we see that there is no consensus for analyzing them together. In the 1970s and 1980s there is a clear recognition, by black writers especially, that all categories of oppression need to be taken into account. Still, many writers including Collins, hooks, the Combahee River Collective, Conorly, and others often analyze these dynamics two or three at a time without identifying how each category is constructed in relation to the others. Each writer approaches the categories somewhat uniquely. For instance, Conorly pulls together sexuality and race, while hooks does the same with the addition of class. Without a theoretical framework in place, it seems that each writer highlights various important contextual dimensions of a particular group of categories.

The second reason this paper focuses primarily on race and gender is related to the fact that most of my sources identify the defining influence of race and gender in this country. For instance, Cone proclaims that race defines America's identity and distinguishes this country from any other, and thus, whites need to learn that our humanity is tied to others who have a long history of unjust treatment based on race (Cone, James. "The Challenge of Race," Workshop Presentation, the University of Chicago, (October 5, 2004). Additionally, Lang maintains that gender is the basis for considerable social expectations, restrictions, and requirements, and therefore theories of self need to include knowledge of gender (Lang, Joan. "Notes toward a Psychology of the Feminine Self," 51-69). However, this focus on race and gender (particularly around black-white and male-female binaries) by no means signifies that sexuality, class, nationality, ethnicity, age, and ability are not also important characteristics of group self structures. In fact, it could very well be the case that these characteristics are even more important because they are all the more hidden from our awareness and excluded in analytical processes. However, by delimiting the paper in the way I suggest (that is, by focusing on the impact of race-gender constructions on our group selves), it is my hope that this reduction will help identify some initial complexities that lead to a more in-depth approach in subsequent work.

This paper draws on the resources of black feminism, whitefeminism, and womanism to more clearly delineate how race and gender construct each other in the United States context in relation to selfobject functioning and experiencing. Theoretically, one strategy for analyzing the co-constructed nature of race and gender in selfobject relatedness is through Kohut's nascent conception of group self. One of the largely overlooked aspects of Kohut's work, Kohut's theory of group self outlines how groups can form a self with group ambitions and group ideals. It is then possible to understand the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers as centered on underlying fears and power dynamics that inform group cohesion or fragmentation.

Practically, another strategy for considering the co-constructed nature of race and gender in selfobject relatedness is by looking at people's concrete experiences of race and gender in therapy/analysis and congregational settings. How might selfobjects deny the differences between white females and white males and between white females and black females? Robert Randall, with the support of Kohut, applied group self theory to the relational styles of pastors and congregations.³ If tension between pastors and parishioners could be explained in terms of differing styles and needs of selfobject relating (for instance, a pastor with high twinship needs unintentionally frustrates a congregation with strong idealization needs), how then might these selfobject tensions be more clearly explained by considering the pastors and parishioners selfobject needs and experiences of race and gender? For instance, (how) does a minister discuss race-gender in sermons, bible studies, and theological reflection? How might prayers, creeds, icons, crucifixes, and nativity sets communicate selfobject functions? How might race-gender be twinned for those clients and parishioners with strong race-gender twinship needs, especially if the pastor or pastoral counselor is of a different race? How might any differences between caregivers and clients/parishioners be affirmed and celebrated instead of minimized and trivialized?

Focusing on group self needs in public settings such as the church may mean that responses to race-gender oppression be both individual and communal in nature. Self psychological theories need to incorporate contextualized understanding of race-gender oppression, while any pastoral practice is a call to respond both communally and individually to needs often seen as individual in more traditional settings.

Feminist Critique of Self Psychology

Perhaps the first whitefeminist critique of self psychology to appear was Joan Lang's 1984 article, "Notes toward a Psychology of the Feminine Self." In this article, Lang appreciates Kohut's views of narcissism as well as many of his other contributions. However, she critiques him for ignoring the significance of gender on the developing self: "For at least as long as society ascribes decisive importance to an individual's gender and makes gender the basis for significant social demands, expectations, life-

³ Randall, Robert J. *Pastor and Parish: The Psychological Core of Ecclesiological Conflicts*.

option limitations, and sanctions, then awareness of one's gender will occupy a central place in one's sense of self."⁴

Lang lists four ways in which Kohut neglects the role of socially constructed gender in the formation of the self. First, she claims that Kohut fails to elaborate on the significance of gender identity in his understanding of a nuclear self. Her second assertion is that he does not delineate the processes by which this gendered self is consolidated within the selfobject milieu. A third claim is that Kohut neglects to ask if this process of consolidation is different when a self develops male or female. And fourth, she states that Kohut's writings reflect a polarized bias, specifically that women and mothers provide the mirroring selfobject function while men and fathers are to be idealized.

Lang asks what can be learned by applying the concepts of self psychology to the processes of consolidation of the gendered self in general and of the "feminine" self in particular. For instance, do children experience gender-specific differences in the kinds of selfobject relationships they encounter? Do men and women provide differing selfobject functions based on their gender? How might any gender differences affect the nuclear self, including its structures, constituent poles and psychic life?

Lang attempts to answer these questions by addressing the issues of the formation of a 'feminine' self-structure,⁵ and she proposes that a psyche reflects "the internalization and structuralization of self-experiences that are in significant ways culturally and gender-specifically determined."⁶ In other words, a child's capacities are mirrored or not depending on how these capacities fit categories which the selfobject consciously or unconsciously considers appropriate to the child's gender. As such, the child's actual capacities may not be responded to⁷ and *both* poles of the emerging gendered selves of young girls are strained or badly impaired when the empathic milieu repeatedly fails to identify the constraints imposed by cultural myths and gender stereotypes that define masculinity and femininity. For example, when a female is not sufficiently mirrored to develop a healthy assertive self (a trait seen as 'masculine'), she learns to disavow this original potential part of her self in order to stay connected with others and to maintain selfobject functions.⁸ Lang concludes that such a compromise between being true to oneself or staying connected with selfobjects leaves many of her female clients with a strained, distorted and impaired self⁹ and with a "primary fear...

4 Lang, "Notes toward a Psychology of the Feminine Self," 51. For an application of Lang's work, see Shanahan, Margaret, "Treating the Female Self: The Contribution of Ernest Wolf's Psychoanalytic Self Psychology," 147-62.

5 Lang leaves the relevant exploration of the details of the developmental psychology of the self in males, gays, lesbians and androgynous psyches to others with the clinical data and personal experience. *Ibid.*, 54.

6 *Ibid.*, 58-9.

7 *Ibid.*, 60.

8 *Ibid.*, 62 and 66. Younger female students in my classes seem to see themselves, in general, as assertive yet point to other gendered expectations such as nurturing. So perhaps what gets mirrored is highly contextualized within any given culture and time period.

9 *Ibid.*, 68.

of disintegration or total devaluation of the self.”¹⁰ Symptomatically, they may feel vaguely restless, confused or nervous, or more specifically, they may feel anger, depression, depletion and envy.¹¹

Lang’s point is that a primary fear of disintegration occurs in both men and women, but that the specifics vary in gender-specific ways.¹² Therefore, Lang proposes, parents need to provide both mirroring and idealizing functions such that the unique emerging selves of boys and girls are freely responded to without the constraints imposed by artificial and distorting cultural myths that define femininity and masculinity.

The next publication to explore a relationship between self psychology and feminism is Judith Kegan Gardiner’s 1987 article “Self Psychology as Feminist Theory.” Gardiner attempts to demonstrate which aspects of self psychology are congruent with whitefeminist psychological theories. Despite the often nonsexist language used by self psychologists (for example, a ‘nurturing parent’ or a ‘child’s caretaker’),¹³ Gardiner identifies western society’s expectations that the mother has the primary role in an infant’s life, thereby gendering selfobject functions. Indeed, Kohut does not consider gender a significant variable in mediating between individual psychology and our (western) cultural condition.¹⁴ He assumes that a defective self structure (as identified by a characterological sense of boredom, apathy, or arrogance) was due to an unempathic *mother* who failed to mirror appropriately the child’s successes and failed to help the child achieve a cohesive self (as identified by a characterological sense of vitality, humor, empathy, and an acceptance of limits and mortality).¹⁵

While Gardiner is critical of Kohut’s gendered view of selfobject functioning, she still identifies three ways in which self psychology is congruent with whitefeminist values. First, it stresses the pre-oedipal period over the Oedipus complex.¹⁶ Like the ground-breaking work of Chodorow, many whitefeminist practitioners stress the mother’s role as crucial to personality formation in the first few years of a child’s life, not because of a biological imperative that a mother is nurturing but because of the social

10 Lang, “Notes toward a Psychology of the Feminine Self,” 59 and 61.

11 For example, see “Dr. X’s symptoms, *ibid.*, 57. Carol Gilligan also describes the self-doubt and difficulty in finding voice that many women experience when their private assessment of their experience is at odds with the public assessment (Gilligan, Carol. “Woman’s Place in Man’s Life Cycle,” 206).

12 *Ibid.*, 61.

13 While self psychologists may use gender neutral terminology, Gardiner points out that Kohut uses the generic ‘Man’ unselfconsciously (“Self Psychology as Feminist Theory,” 761).

14 *Ibid.*, 761-62.

15 A defective self is different from a fragmenting self that is characterized, in general, by anxiety, depression, or panic.

16 Orthodox Freudian psychoanalysis focuses on the Oedipal period, that is, on the psychosexual stage in which the child, age 3 to 6 years, attempts to overcome the unconscious incestuous desires for the parent of the opposite sex. The Oedipus complex involves the mother as love object for the son while the Electra complex involves the father as the love object for the daughter. In this framework, the parents’ responses to the child during this time influences the child’s emerging sexuality and sexual attitudes. (For an explanation of the Oedipus complex, see Freud, Sigmund, *The Ego and the Id*, 21-23.) Self psychological analysis focuses instead on the first few years of a child’s developmental life.

fact of mother-dominated child rearing.¹⁷ Further, self psychologists claim that men and women both can empathically mirror and twin a child, and likewise in treatment, a therapist of any gender may treat a client effectively.

A second aspect of self psychology that is congruent with whitefeminist thought is the separation of value acquisition from an Oedipal superego based on castration anxiety.¹⁸ In other words, Freud states that people form goals and values from the punitive superego.¹⁹ That is, the child interjects parental prohibitions through the superego. Freudian analysts claim that a boy's castration fears cause him to repress his desire for his mother and identify not only with his father but also with his father's 'laws,' hence helping the boy resolve the Oedipus complex and to develop a superego. Since girls are already 'castrated,' their fear is less pronounced, and they do not, in Freud's opinion, internalize nor develop a sense of justice and ethics, as do men. Self psychologists, on the other hand, separate a child's formation of mental structures that govern values and ideals from castration fears, which are linked by sex differences. They "...do not insist that the phallus is the privileged 'signifier' of cultural participation."²⁰ In self psychology, female anatomy is not symbolically inferior to that of male genitalia, nor does anatomy assume a gendered-destiny, and any desire for children in women is not compensatory for a lack of a penis.²¹

A third commonality between whitefeminist thought and self psychology is that of empathy. Instead of an emphasis on rational insight, Kohut stresses the significance of empathy as a central observational tool both in effective parental involvement and in the therapeutic process with the result that empathy is a developmental goal of mature narcissism. Gilligan writes that one of the most pressing research agenda items on adult development is the need to include women's own experiences and voices.²² Empathy is one observational tool that allows for women's voices to be interpreted on their own terms.

Despite the shortcomings of self psychology, however, both Gardiner and Lang conclude that self psychology holds great promise for feminist theory in two ways. First, in terms of theory, self psychology needs to account for gender in personality formation.

17 Chodorow, Nancy, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, 1978.

18 The superego is a Freudian term representing a structure of the psyche that consists of codes of behavior informed by societal and parental values and ideals. Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 18f and 43f.

19 Ibid., 27.

20 Gardiner, "Self Psychology as Feminist Theory," 768.

21 Gardiner primarily addresses the issue of gender in the formation of self and self structures. Both she and Kohut are open to the possibility of multiple experiences of sexuality as indicative of a cohesive self. To that end, Gardiner is concerned that female gender identity gets affirmed regardless of whether a woman is heterosexual or homosexual. So she detaches the development of self-esteem from the development of sexual desire. Interestingly, Teicholz, too, concludes that Kohut seems to anticipate later developments in gender theory and to foreshadow the late twentieth century embrace of diverse sexualities (Teicholz, Judith Guss. *Kohut, Loewald and the Postmoderns: A Comparative Study of Self and Relationship*, p. 240).

22 Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 1-4.

Second, in terms of practice, clinicians need to utilize Kohut's fundamental concept of empathy to better understand clients' experiences of gender.

Black, Black Feminist, Womanist and Whitefeminist Critique of Psychology in General

Although Kohut has not been critiqued directly for his lack of attention to race and gender together, psychological and psychoanalytic theories in general have been. Many black scholars and practitioners, perhaps beginning with Francis Sumner, Kenneth Clark, Mamie Clark, William Cross, and Reginald Jones,²³ identify how dominant psychological and psychoanalytic theories have not factored in race, gender and class in theories and practices, thereby negating African American and other ethnic group experiences.²⁴ For instance, psychodynamic theories reflect a negative and devaluing conceptualization of feminine and racial traits.²⁵ Watkins Ali writes that traditional psychology serves to impose the negative projections of white dominant culture on the psychology of African Americans as a racial and cultural group seen as inferior.²⁶ She writes: "On the whole, African Americans have not been able to overcome the effects of systemic racism. Today the majority of African Americans live under conditions of genocidal poverty."²⁷ The severity of racist experiences affect both personality development and identity formation such that many African Americans may introject the distorted images of themselves as inferior to whites, negate their own culture, and experience self-loathing.²⁸ "Clearly, racial oppression and discrimination result in feelings of rage, depression, self-alienation, low self-esteem, shame, desperation, hopelessness, and victimization. These are deeply felt psychical experiences for many African Americans."²⁹ Kohut identifies these symptoms as signs of a fragmenting self that require empathic selfobject relating in order to gain a sense of vitality and purpose.

Another way that psychological theory has been critiqued is its approach to practice. In seeking to standardize practice, psychodynamic approaches neglect to identify how rules of practice (such as the '50-minute' hour, confidentiality, the 'individual' session, and, I would add, boundaries) are indeed culturally rooted.³⁰ Anyone not fitting the theories and rules of practice, typically women of diverse ethnic identities who may

23 Belgrave & Allison, *African American Psychology; From Africa to America*, 20.

24 Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 66. See also White, Joseph, "Toward a Black Psychology," 5-12; Hayes, William, "Radical Black Behaviorism," 37-47; Guthrie, Robert, "The Psychology of Black Americans: An Historical Perspective," 13-22; Comas-Díaz and Greene, eds., "Overview: Gender and Ethnicity in the Healing Process," in *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, 185.

25 Chin, Jean Lau, "Psychodynamic Approaches," 199-200.

26 Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 66-7.

27 Ibid., 25.

28 Ibid., 67.

29 Ibid., 94.

30 Chin, "Psychodynamic Approaches," 198; Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 66.

bring differing expectations to the therapeutic process, are seen as deviations from standard practice.³¹

In addition to this general critique of psychology and psychoanalysis, womanists and black feminists especially, along with a few whitefeminists, explore the impact of *the interconnections* of racism, sexism, heterosexism on psyches and identity. The ways in which societies structure these dimensions result in the experience of multiple oppressions. The experiences of multiple oppressions, in turn, affect how we see ourselves, particularly in relation to others. "Race, gender, class, and sexual orientation are examples of variables that profoundly affect women's lives."³² It is not enough to consider race and gender as distinct variables informing group self experience. The challenge is to think race and gender together. What does it mean to think race and gender together?

"White is what woman is" as Hammonds puts it³³ and what Schneider and McClintock refer to as the co-constitutive nature of race and gender.³⁴ Not only do black and white gain meaning only in relation to one another, but also race and gender are co-constructed: In a U.S. context, white female has meaning only in opposition to black female, while both white female and black female are less valued than white male. Schneider refers to gendered whiteness as "...deep-level investments in sexualized and even eroticized assumptions of dominance and submission, authority and passivity that make reconstruction of whiteness a deconstruction of gender and vice versa."³⁵ Gendered whiteness is whiteness masquerading as masculinity understood as "strength, voice, leadership, vision, direction, and authority."³⁶ By gendering whiteness, the white race is gendered male based on dominance.³⁷

Elizabeth Bounds points to the need to (and difficulty in) naming such paired assumptions. To illustrate, an understanding of what it means to be black or white includes clear class distinctions. To be black often means to be poor, and to be white often signifies to be, at the very least, middle-class.³⁸ In other words, race does not "trump" class in this example, but race and class are paired; when we avoid identifying the pair, both racism and classism are more entrenched systems of oppression. So racist-sexist practices have to do, at least in part, with how identity gets configured around power and access to power, or what Bounds refers to as "boundary markers," which are particular identities with a relational constructive process shaped by history

31 Chin, "Psychodynamic Approaches," 197.

32 Comas-Díaz and Greene, eds., *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, xv.

33 Hammonds, Evelyn, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality," 136.

34 Hammonds, Evelyn, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality," 136; Schneider, Laurel, "What Race Is Your Sex?" 142f; McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather*, 61-62 and 94.

35 Schneider, "What Race Is Your Sex?" 159.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 154.

38 Bounds, Elizabeth, "Gaps and Flashpoints: Untangling Race and Class," 128.

and context.³⁹ This notion of identity is also emphasized by hooks. When asked whether black women should be involved in the whitefeminist movement, she asks, "Were we black or women first?"⁴⁰ This question helps to delineate a central conflict in identity that black women may face when race and gender are not identified as co-constructed.

Gregory Conerly, too, recognizes a central conflict experienced by many African American lesbians, bisexuals, and gays in "dealing with two identities that are often at odds with each other."⁴¹ Many people faced with such conflicting identities ask, "are you black first or are you queer?"⁴² And the answer to this question varies from person to person based on how one's social, sexual and political lives get organized.

Relatedly, Laurel Schneider's article *What Race is Your Sex?* explores this complexity. Not only does race structure one's experience and embodiment of gender, but also gender structures one's experience and embodiment of race.⁴³ In other words, race is not a separate identity from gender, rather race is constructed through and by gender, and vice versa.⁴⁴ These categories are not about "natural difference," but that taken together, they "co-constitute a corporate merging of meanings located in human and divine hierarchies that solidify the power and make resilient the supremacy of white people..."⁴⁵

Delores Williams' concept of white racial narcissism and Patricia Hill Collins' use of colorism are two particularly helpful ways of illustrating this multiplicity and complexity of oppression. Although different from Kohut's view of narcissism, Williams's conceptualization of white racial narcissism is a method, in my view, of devaluation of both race and gender combined. Basing her work on that of Winthrop Jordan, Williams traces the cultural roots of the United States' pathological fascination with whiteness - which she refers to as white racial narcissism - from colonial through contemporary practices.⁴⁶ In terms of devaluing race in the United States historical context, white racial narcissism is a force that degrades black and elevates white to the point of using the white group's power and authority to persecute others who are not of that skin

³⁹ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁰ hooks, bell, *Teaching to Transgress*, 122.

⁴¹ Conerly, Gregory, "Are You Black First or Are You Queer?" 7.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Schneider, "What Race is Your Sex?"142.

⁴⁴ See also McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 94.

⁴⁵ Schneider, "What Race is Your Sex?"144.

⁴⁶ In terms of the historical roots of anti-black attitudes, Williams also refers to the work of Cornel West, George M. Fredrickson, Joseph R. Washington, and others (Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*). Other writers also trace the roots of racist practices to colonialism including Thandeka, *Learning to Be White*, 42; Memmi, Albert, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*; hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*., 122-3; Schneider traces it back further still to Thomas Aquinas and others. "What Race is Your Sex?" 147-9.

Williams leaves unanswered where the devaluation of black came from. Where did white hatred of black come? How is it that black became the symbol of hate? Is this something psychoanalysis can answer? Were the centuries of plunder between England and other countries, which left many penniless or bereft of loved ones, narcissistic blows that left deficient a national self?

color.⁴⁷ Narcissism in this context is pathological because of its inflated concern with white color, power, and control and has a profound impact on both African American survival as well as on white domination.⁴⁸ So Williams' use of narcissism is more like Freud's than Kohut's, based as it is on the pathological side of self love (rather than on its transformative potential) that can lead to an internalized negative disposition toward black in such a way as to feel intellectually and morally inferior.⁴⁹

I think this pathological fascination with whiteness includes intricate conceptions and valuations of white maleness and white femaleness. Williams writes that the national consciousness towards color is manifested in an image of "white acceptable female."⁵⁰ White acceptable female is the privileging of white female as the standard of beauty that includes *skin color and gender* as represented in white female physical features such as hair type. This seems related to Collins' conception of colorism (the meanings attached to color). White acceptable female, seen in opposition to black women, is an exclusive model of white female humanity because it does not take into account the full humanity of all women.⁵¹ Collins' thesis is that black women in the United States are portrayed as the other, and that this objectification – through stereotyped images – provide an ideological justification for race, gender and class oppression.⁵² She outlines several controlling images of black women (e.g. mammy, matriarch, welfare mother, breeder woman, black lady, jezebel)⁵³ as well as how these images – as systems of racial meaning (or perhaps more to the point, race-gender meaning) – get internalized. "Dealing with prevailing standards of beauty – particularly skin color, facial features, and hair texture – is one specific example of how controlling images derogate African-American women."⁵⁴

Collins identifies the oppositional relationship of black and white when she writes, "Linked in symbiotic relationship, White and Black gain meaning only in relation to one another." Colorism is linked to both sexism and racism, meaning that race gets constructed with gender in such ways as to further degrade African American women and to elevate white women.⁵⁵ For instance, Collins notes that even though white women are also objectified by how they look, white skin and straight hair elevates white female over black female.

⁴⁷ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 88. Jordan, Winthrop, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States*, 1974.

⁴⁸ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 9.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵¹ Collins, Patricia Hill, *Black Feminist Thought*.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, see 75f.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

White men and white women as well as black men and black women adhere to such standards of beauty. Many women who do not fit the white-woman view of humanity bleach their skin, change their hair, and have surgery on their noses and eyes to look more like the white acceptable female. Such acts of race-gender – acts that attempt to get people to physically resemble the white acceptable female norm – can be interpreted in Kohut's schema as attempts made by groups to get mirrored, twinned, and idealized as beautiful and as acceptable by the larger society. In this context, Collins says, African American women live with the pain of never being able to live up to such prevailing standards of beauty.⁵⁶

Kohut's Group Self

Kohut's Interest in Group Selves

Whitefeminists make a case that gender is a formative aspect of self; Black scholars, black feminists and womanists make a case that race is a formative aspect of self. Therefore, self theory needs to account for experiences of gender and race in relation to its historical, cultural and social contexts. Indeed, Kohut's clinical interest extends beyond the individual to include history, culture and society. Although he does not incorporate these interests into his theory of individual self formation, they do lead him to formulate a very tentative theory of group self.⁵⁷ His hope was that psychoanalysis could play a role in explaining history and thus increasing "man's [sic] mastery over his historical destiny."⁵⁸

Due to an emphasis on history, culture and society, Kohut's view of group self could be a useful tool for analyzing the significance of constructions such as race-gender on the development and maintenance of self. Kohut did not theorize about group self in this way. However, since I argue that Kohut's group self can be enhanced by the contributions of womanists, black feminists and whitefeminists, I propose a definition of group self that begins to account for the co-construction of race and gender.

Kohut's early writings demonstrate his ongoing fascination with how history, culture and society play speculative roles in a developing group self. He is interested in how both primary and transformed narcissism play primary motivational roles in group psychology and can take part in the constructive and destructive capacities of groups:⁵⁹ transformed narcissism can reach national levels in the creative expression of the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 89-90.

⁵⁷ Kohut did not extensively outline his theory of group self although his book of collected essays *Self Psychology and the Humanities* draws together much of his thought on group self. Indeed Kohut saw his writings on "psychohistory" as fragmentary (Strozier, "Preface," in *Self Psychology and the Humanities: Reflections on a New Psychoanalytic Approach*, xi). See especially Strozier's interview with Kohut about group self (Kohut, Heinz, "The Psychoanalyst and the Historian," in *Self Psychology and the Humanities: Reflections on a New Psychoanalytic Approach*, 215-23).

⁵⁸ Kohut, "Creativeness, Charisma, Group Psychology: Reflections on the Self-Analysis of Freud," 206.

⁵⁹ Kohut, "On Leadership," 51-52.

arts;⁶⁰ untransformed narcissism can reach large-scale levels in the form of paranoid dysfunctional relationships between some leaders and their followers.⁶¹ For example, Kohut was interested in the effect Hitler had on many German people.⁶² He suggested that Hitler suffered enormous narcissistic injuries as a child, and his attempts to transform his narcissistic tensions in art failed.⁶³ After a time, Hitler emerged from his state of despair with the grandiose fantasy that Jews had invaded the body of Germany and had to be eradicated.⁶⁴

In his essay "On Leadership," Kohut explores the possible reasons why many Germans were willing to follow Hitler, and he points to the extreme narcissistic crisis faced by Germany after World War I.⁶⁵ Their own narcissistic injuries (as evidenced by raw shame, a sense of worthlessness, and a readiness for rage) opened many Germans to the psychological message Hitler offered and to merge with his paranoid certainty as a safeguard against their own seemingly imminent fragmentation.⁶⁶

Kohut was moved by those who resisted Hitler, even unto death, and he analyzed this phenomenon from a self psychological perspective. He identified several Nazi resistors who displayed the capacities for empathy and humor. These traits, along with their firmness of purpose and willingness to face death (rather than lose sight of their ideals), reveal individuals with firm nuclear selves. Such traits are not only hallmarks of transformed narcissism but also, for Kohut, are profound acts of courage;⁶⁷ the consistency of the structure of the ego enables a person to remain true to his/her goals and ideals despite intimidation.⁶⁸

The paranoid leader, on the other hand, even though suffering from an otherwise crippling narcissistic personality disorder, compensates with a heightened grasp of the unconscious and preconscious state of tension, wishes and fears of the group. This capacity enables the leader to intensely identify with the group.⁶⁹ Such a bonding between leader and followers can occur only when there is a complete affinity culturally and psychologically between the group fantasies and its chosen messianic or charismatic leader. When the affinity changes, so does the relationship between the leader and

⁶⁰ Kohut, "Self Psychology and the Sciences of Man [sic]," 83-84 and 88f. See also Kohut, "On the Continuity of the Self and Cultural Selfobjects," 239.

⁶¹ Kohut, "On Leadership," 54.

⁶² Kohut, "On Courage," 5-50. See also the following essays by Kohut in *Self Psychology and the Humanities: Reflections on a New Psychoanalytic Approach*: "On Leadership," 51-72; "Self Psychology and the Sciences of Man [sic]," 73-94; "Thoughts of Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage," 124-60.

⁶³ Kohut, "On Leadership," 54.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

⁶⁵ Strozier, "Introduction," xxviii.

⁶⁶ Kohut, "On Leadership," 57. See also Strozier, "Introduction," xxix.

⁶⁷ Kohut, "On Courage," 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁹ Kohut, "On Leadership," 56.

followers. Hitler, for example, expressed contempt for the people of Germany when they lost the ambitions he held.⁷⁰

Kohut's essays reflect a fascination with leaders, genius, creativity and courage, and he speculates however briefly on the possible roles culture and society play in the formation of group selves. His formulation of leadership (based on the psychological relationship between leader and followers) leads Kohut into a theory of group behavior.⁷¹ I think it possible to discern at least three intriguing tentative proposals throughout Kohut's writings on a theory of group self. First, significant selfobject relationships exist between leaders and followers. Second, narcissism plays an important role in these relationships, and third, there is a link between historical context and the rise of specific leaders. In short, Kohut thinks it a useful project to explore how groups of people feel deprived of idealizable and mirroring selfobjects.⁷²

Don Browning writes that all psychologies have an implicit principle of obligation and deep metaphors of meaning in their conceptual system.⁷³ The problem arises not when psychologies have underlying conceptions, but when they transcend the role they are equipped to play as a science and become a functional religion and system of practical moral thinking. The task, as I understand Browning's work, is to distinguish between what is scientific and what is moral and quasi-religious in Kohut's theory of group self. The purpose of doing so is to avoid being unwittingly controlled by these implicit underpinnings.

To be fair, Kohut recognizes some of the limits of psychoanalysis. For example, he believes that one of the difficulties of a psychoanalytic explanation of historical events is the complexity of the interplay of various groups in producing social or historical action, and that perhaps because of this complexity, such a project requires other contributions in addition to psychoanalysis.⁷⁴ Psychoanalysis is also limited in its applicability to individuals who understand the environment in which they live *solely* as an extension of their own narcissistic universe. In those situations, it is not likely that depth psychology can influence such persons. On the other hand, psychoanalysis and history can make contributions by increasing our own psychological grasp of personalities and by answering two questions: 1) "How do the characteristic psychological features of the messianic or charismatic person dovetail with the widespread yearning for archaic omnipotent figures, and 2) what are the specific historical circumstances that tend to increase this yearning?"⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁷¹ Strozier, "Introduction," xxv.

⁷² Kohut, "Idealization and Cultural Selfobjects," 228.

⁷³ Browning, Don, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies: A Critical Conversation in the Theology of Culture*, 8-10.

⁷⁴ Kohut, "On Leadership," 53. Kohut, "The Psychoanalyst and the Historian," 220.

⁷⁵ Kohut, "Creativeness, Charisma, Group Psychology," 204.

Also, Kohut is fully aware of the extreme heterogeneity and complexity in groups.⁷⁶ He thinks it is a hazardous project to find a common psychological thread in a nation such as the United States with such divergent class, ethnic, political, social and economic interests. Kohut says that there is not one single self as the central agency of the psyche. Instead, since self is an *abstraction* derived from clinical experience (namely the self as potentially observable content of the mind), there are multiple and even contradictory selves within each group, each self with various degrees of stability and importance. These insights lead me to conclude, as does Strozier, that Kohut does not offer his interpretations as dogmatic assertions.⁷⁷

Despite Kohut's awareness of some of the limits of psychoanalysis, it is important, in light of the work of Browning, to view Kohut's psychoanalytic view of narcissism in the formation and cohesion of groups as one contribution among many in the explanation of group processes. Further, psychoanalysis needs to be continually involved in this type of self-reflective process of its strengths and limitations so that it can gear its tasks accordingly, hopefully without overstepping its ethical boundaries. Two ways to engage this self-reflective process are 1) to be accountable to race-gender oppression within the theory and 2) to appropriately interpret race-gender experiences of the pastoral care provider, parishioners and clients.

Kohut's Theory of Group Selves

A group self, for Kohut, is a certain psychological configuration.⁷⁸ The psychology of the group self is analogous to the psychology of the individual self, with the same primary narcissism that has a developmental capacity to be transformed.⁷⁹ Group self is distinct from group identity, the former representing a "structure" (or unconscious pattern) within the collective experience of the group whereas the latter represents an individual's preconscious and conscious awareness of belonging to a group.⁸⁰ Group self is about the unconscious formation and maintenance of a "structure" experienced at a group level, what Strozier refers to as "...that aspect of common psychological experience of individual people in a group."⁸¹ Identity is about a sense of a group representing one's character or personality.⁸²

⁷⁶ Strozier, "Introduction," xxix.

⁷⁷ Especially in reference to Hitler and Germany (ibid., xxx).

⁷⁸ Kohut, "Creativeness, Charisma, Group Psychology," 206-07.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ See footnote 10 in Kohut, "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism," 110, and see footnote 21 in Kohut, "Creativeness, Charisma, Group Psychology," 206-07.

⁸¹ Strozier, "Introduction," xxix.

⁸² I could not get a sense of whether Kohut sees group self and group identity as totally unrelated. Twinship is a selfobject need that when met provides a sense of belonging and of being like another. Perhaps the distinction between group self and group identity is that the experience of twinship can build needed "self structure" (metaphorically speaking) within a group self while group identity is about a more or less conscious awareness of the external group and one's position within the group. The members of my writer's group (Laurel Schneider, Sharon Ellis Davis, and Julianne Buenting) put it this way, that group

For Kohut, the psychic life of a group self is similar to that of an individual with the same tendency to demonstrate regressive transformations in the narcissistic realm.⁸³ Group and individual selves are also similar in their need for a sense of continuity.⁸⁴ Another similarity between individual and group selves is how selfobjects function for the individual and for the group. Leaders and group members provide the three selfobject functions for the individuals in the group and for the group as a whole.

Moreover, early on, Kohut links his theory of narcissism with his theory of group behavior. Narcissism, he thinks, plays a motivational role in group psychology.⁸⁵ However, Kohut thinks that we have not pushed the exploration of the infantile roots of narcissism.⁸⁶ “The detailed scrutiny of the influence of the infantile narcissistic fantasy may well become as important for the understanding of group psychopathology as is the examination of the infantile object-directed fantasy in the psychopathology of the individual.”⁸⁷ Primary narcissism for Kohut is a potential present at the time of birth that refers not to the social field but to the psychological state of the infant.⁸⁸ “It comprehends the assertion that the baby originally experiences the mother [sic] and her ministrations not as a you and its actions but within a view of the world in which the I-you differentiation has not yet been established.”⁸⁹

This process can happen at group levels as well as for individuals. Group ordering and integration, for Kohut, take place within the three selfobject transferences of idealizing, mirroring, and twinship.⁹⁰ In terms of the grandiose pole, the unconscious fantasies of the group’s grandiose self is expressed in two primary ways: 1) through the transference upon the image of the leader, and 2) via identification of group members with each other,⁹¹ both of which can play a crucial role in the group’s cohesion.

When leaders empathically provide the three selfobject functions to groups, the formation and cohesion of the group will be healthy.⁹² Humor is just one indicator of a cohesive group while arrogance indicates the opposite: “Genuine humor can be achieved only when primitive forms of grandiosity have been relinquished – whether the

identity is about the nominal experience of naming oneself as part of a group (and, I would add, of being able to name the group depending on how power dynamics within the group associated with dimensions of class, etc., get navigated by a group).

⁸³ Kohut, “Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage,” 160.

⁸⁴ Kohut, “On the Continuity of the Self and Cultural Selfobjects,” 235-36.

⁸⁵ Kohut, *The Search for the Self*, vol. 2, 530. See also Kohut, “Creativeness, Charisma, Group Psychology,” 208.

⁸⁶ Kohut, *The Search for the Self*, vol. 1, 392.

⁸⁷ Ornstein quoting Kohut in “Introduction,” *The Search for the Self*, vol. 1, 47.

⁸⁸ Kohut, *The Search for the Self*, vol. 1, 179-80. Kohut, “Forms and Transformations of Narcissism,” 99.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Kohut, “Self Psychology and the Sciences of Man [sic],” 82-83.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Kohut, “Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage,” 159.

grandiosity had previously been bound to the subject's grandiose self or had been focused on an idealized (aggrandized) selfobject."⁹³

In contrast, "a paranoid's coldly arrogant superiority and the hostile certainty of his own conviction about the powerful persecutor's inimical intentions are the very antithesis of a healthy humorous attitude toward the realistic limitations of oneself and of those one admires."⁹⁴ Such a leader is depended on not for shared values but to express the group's ambitions and to extol its greatness and power; these groups are held together by their shared lack of differentiation and subject-bound grandiosity.⁹⁵

Towards Redefining Group Self Theory

The concept of group self, in my opinion, represents three of the most useful aspects of Kohut's self theory: 1) group self theory takes seriously the historical, cultural and social contexts in which groups develop; 2) group self dynamics are understood in terms of the group's subjective experiences of selfobject relating with other group members and with leaders; and 3) empathy and introspection are the tools used to better understand a group self's subjective experiences in relation to their various contexts. Thus group self theory, though it fails to identify how race and gender are inextricably linked, is in a position to consider such contextualized experiences that inform group formation, development and maintenance.

Because Kohut locates the concept and experience of group self in historical, cultural and social contexts, group self theory could be a valuable way to understand the roles that race-gender experiences play on collective psychological development. Watkins Ali writes, as do others, that race is a part of a collective self-awareness and communal experience.⁹⁶ When a racial group is seen as inferior, as historically blacks have been by whites in the United States, negative self-concepts and self-denigrating behavior can result.⁹⁷ Please note, however, that there are conflicting reports about the effects of racism on self-esteem. Adelbert Jenkins concludes that although the experiences of blacks in this country do take a heavy toll on psychological adjustment, many blacks instill high levels of self-esteem and self-concepts in their children that help them live in a racist country.⁹⁸

Still, Lee Butler refers to a crisis of identity in African American identity formation: "The forces of racism, color-consciousness, sexism, genderism, and American religiosity have manipulated the formative experiences for persons of African descent. Manipulation by such forces has perverted self-esteem, challenged social stability, and

⁹³ Kohut, "On Courage," 16.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 16-17.

⁹⁵ Kohut, "On Leadership," 57.

⁹⁶ Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 25, 66, 68.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Jenkins, Adelbert, *Psychology and African Americans: A Humanistic Approach*, 2 and 27.

threatened existential security.”⁹⁹ To counter the negative views of blacks, African American psychologists and psychoanalysts are constructing black psychologies based on positive group concepts of racial identity.¹⁰⁰

While these theorists highlight the importance of race and gender, there are a few theorists who explore race and gender as co-constitutive. Those who outline race-gender dynamics do so, in part, to highlight the tenacity of white supremacy when these categories are seen as additive. Kohut’s theory of group self needs to understand not only group self experiences in terms of dynamics of race and gender (such as a race group self and a gender group self – or more specifically a male group self and a white group self), but also how race and gender co-construct each other in group self encounters (such as a race-gender group self – or more specifically a white male group self and a white female group self).

Many womanists and black feminists point to the role of self-naming and self-defining in any recovery and healing processes. hooks, for instance, writes about the power of developing awareness of those forces which exploit and oppress and of reclaiming a denied history.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Collins writes that the constructed knowledge of self emerges not from an elite group who controls the definitions of others but from a struggle to replace controlling images with self-defined knowledge, often knowledge that is essential to black women’s survival.¹⁰² She and hooks both define self not in terms of increased autonomy but within the context of family and community, realizing one’s accountability to others because of a sense of a “larger self” of black people.¹⁰³

Any theorizing on group self by pastoral care providers not only needs to hear and understand the subjective experiences of those who have suffered marginalization but also needs to find a way to empower groups to be involved in self-definitional processes. “It does mean that the primary responsibility for defining one’s own reality lies with the people who live that reality, who actually have those experiences.”¹⁰⁴

Group self, as one of many theories, can help understand some of the psychological dimensions of a pathological valuation of, for example, white maleness and white femaleness along with underlying fears, wishes, impulses and hopes, not in a way to

⁹⁹ Butler, Lee, *Liberating Our Dignity, Saving Our Souls*, vii.

¹⁰⁰ For examples, see Jenkins, *Psychology and African Americans: A Humanistic Approach*; Nobles, Wade, “African American Philosophy: Foundations of Black Psychology.” Please note that other psychologists and psychoanalysts of diverse ethnic identities are doing similar work in constructing psychologies that address the unique contextual experiences of other ethnic groups. For example, see the diverse essays in Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverly Greene, eds., *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, 1994.

¹⁰¹ hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist Thinking Black*, 30.

¹⁰² Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 47 and 100.

¹⁰³ Citing Sonia Sanchez (*ibid.*, 113).

¹⁰⁴ Collins, “Defining Black Feminist Thought,” in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997), 253.

excuse the values and corresponding actions, but to understand them with the aim of gaining greater control over them.

When the theory of group self comprehends polarities of difference it could possibly complicate the range of group self experience to encompass other than white against black and male against female.¹⁰⁵ Multiple experiences of race and gender can potentially be validated and understood so that group self theory may perhaps contribute to breaking the white-black and male-female dualisms that undergird sexist and racist domination. By this I suggest that race has, for example, a gendered dynamic and gender has a racial dynamic.

The color white, for example, is imbued with archaic – and therefore highly unrealistic – perceptions of omnipotence and strength, which genders it male. Whiteness, like maleness, symbolically reflects a collective sense of ‘greatness.’ Therefore, when male whiteness is mirrored, idealized and twinned to an excessive degree, it can be interpreted as Kohut and Wolf’s “overstimulated self.” An overstimulated self results when the grandiose-exhibitionistic pole has been exposed to unempathic *overstimulation* and, as such, the person or group can obtain no healthy glow of enjoyment.¹⁰⁶ With Williams’ white racial narcissism, understood as overvaluation of white maleness, it seems possible that an overstimulated group self becomes ever more entrenched in white male supremacy as a way to superficially recover a sense of lost vitality – to attempt to feel useful and valuable in opposition to groups seen as inferior based on gendered skin color. Further, those who subscribe to the belief in the supremacy of male whiteness get the added ‘benefits’ of being archaically mirrored and twinned by like believers – for being ‘special’ as white or male and for being a member of a group perceived as elite (twinship).

It seems possible that such feelings of aggrandizement based on male whiteness increases when coupled with a patriarchal privileging of heterosexuality and wealth; constructed notions of whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality and wealth – and their complex interactions - become selfobject functions. One is mirrored, idealized, and twinned even more if one is male (understood as heterosexual, white and wealthy – or if one is white (understood as heterosexual, male and wealthy). Any such feelings of greatness and specialness based on an overvaluation of whiteness with other categories, I suggest, are tentative, faltering, and superficial because they are founded on an archaic structure that avoids mirroring, idealizing and twinning the qualities of a group that can potentially be transformed into creativity, wisdom, humor, empathy and an acceptance of finitude. Without empathy, wisdom and humor, especially, relationships of care suffer and a fear of others exists.

Any feelings of grandiosity based on values of white maleness are given meaning, as Collins says, in opposition to blackness and femaleness. Collins and hooks, especially, describe the resulting hierarchical nature of relationships based on a complex interaction of traits perceived as fulfilling a standard of beauty based on say, lighter skin

¹⁰⁵ Conversation with Laurel Schneider and Sharon Ellis Davis, The Chicago Theological Seminary, March 23, 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Kohut and Wolf, “The Disorders of the Self and Their Treatment,” 419.

color, straighter hair, certain facial features, and the like. A group self can feel a greater sense of self-worth, albeit fragmented in Kohut's framework, depending on the qualities one has and how they are mirrored, twinned or idealized in popular culture and society. In contrast to feeling special and powerful, a group self may feel fragmented and depleted when constructed notions of femaleness, poverty, and blackness, for instance, are not mirrored, idealized or given opportunities to form twinship relationships.

Pastoral Care Implications

I propose that an informed group self theory has implications for pastoral care. A group self theory enhanced by race-gender analysis does not necessarily describe a new theological anthropology, but rather, it can provide an additional tool for thinking about relationality within a particular psychological framework.

Kohut says that there are five traits of transformed narcissism: the capacities for empathy, creativity, humor, wisdom and an acceptance of limits. The development of these traits is blocked by racist-sexist practices, which means that individuals and groups are unable to meet their potentials. I want to consider a theological anthropology as rooted in helping individuals and communities 1) heal from sexist-racist experiences, and 2) meet their unique capacities. How might a theological anthropology of potential emerge as a result of attending to an informed group self? I offer the following as preliminary suggestions for further consideration.

I suggest that pastoral care is restorative ministry responsive to individual and collective needs within complex systemic structures. In order to be responsive, pastoral care providers need to affirm and/or help people identify their contextual experiences without shame and defensiveness. To do so, we can pay attention to how group self experiences may function for individuals and parishioners particularly around power dynamics. There are several ways that pastoral care can be responsive to issues of race-gender: 1) by considering the subjective race-gender experiences of individuals and groups (for instance, how has someone interpreted their race-gender and made theological sense of their race-gender relationships with God and with others? For instance, do people feel connected or abandoned by God in their interpretations of their own race-gender identities?); 2) by exploring the historical, cultural and social contexts in which these dimensions take shape (for example, what messages were they told by their families, communities, religious leaders about their race-gender?); and 3) by utilizing the tools of empathy and introspection to understand such experiences and contexts.

In terms of the first response, pastoral care can take seriously the subjective experiences of people who are oppressed in a number of ways. Practitioners can help individuals and groups name their very real experiences of selfobject deprivation and longing that result from marginalization (when previously unknown or unconscious), sort through individual responses to contextual dynamics of domination, and explore the consequences of the internalization of racism and sexism. Pastoral care can help individuals and groups identify their pain at not having their race-gender selves

empathically mirrored, idealized and twinned¹⁰⁷ and can provide corrective experiences of mirroring, idealizing and twinning race selves and gender selves. To that end, people can know that they are respected for who they are. For instance, some white churches have only one or a few African American members. What are the experiences of race in such congregations? How do attitudes and practices of race and gender together *function* for the congregation in terms of solidifying power over others? How has black been excluded and how might black now be mirrored, idealized and twinned in such a congregation? Relatedly, what if a pastoral care provider is white and his/her client is black? Self psychology theory informs us that this client's group self needs might require a black counselor for corrective twinship experiences. Referral to another therapist would then be appropriate.

Related to such a healing experience of twinship, there are situations in which selfobject functioning is based on selecting positive aspects of race, gender and sexuality that provide corrective communal experiences. For instance, celebrations of Black Pride and Gay Pride are ways of providing previously denied narcissistic experiences in creative ways. Exclusionary practices can also be healing. Support groups for people of the same gender or sexual orientation help people know that they are not alone in their experience (twinship).

By hearing and affirming the subjective experiences of those who have suffered marginalization and violence, pastoral care providers may also help individuals and groups be involved in self-definitional processes. Self psychology can play a role in honoring and respecting the other in pastoral care.¹⁰⁸ As one contribution among many possible contributions, group self theory provides a way of looking at our experiences of relatedness with each other, especially if pastoral care providers are willing to constantly reflect on and adapt the theory to the specific contextual dynamics of each group and individual. It also provides a method, when informed by Delores Williams and others, for helping groups and individuals within groups to meet their potentials. When we are empathically responded to, we are empowered to make choices from our own unique set of values and goals.

A second possible pastoral response is that clinicians and pastors can continue to educate the broader society about the prevalence of racist and sexist practices along with the effects such practices have on individual and group selves. For instance, pastoral care can contribute to an understanding of why white racial narcissism came into existence and how it is sustained through its historical, cultural and social roots. What deficiencies in group self object experiences, rooted in our contemporary context, is sustaining white racial narcissism? How might deficiencies be symbolized in our

¹⁰⁷ Let me make it clear that whites have had their race selves mirrored, idealized and twinned, but as stated above, such selfobject experiences have *overvalued* white maleness and white femaleness. Males and females, too, have had specific aspects of their race gender selves mirrored, idealized and twinned such as the "white acceptable female." But again, I agree with whitefeminists that these selfobject experiences tend to privilege specific characteristics perceived as 'masculine' (such as assertiveness or even aggression or a lighter skin color) and other characteristics as 'feminine' (such as a capacity for nurturing or a lighter skin color), which may limit men or women of diverse races from developing other potentials.

¹⁰⁸ Conversation with Robert Moore, The Chicago Theological Seminary, May 16, 2001.

selection of cultural selfobjects? What evidence do we see of our complicity in our churches?

An empathic introspective stance could be a third response/tool of many for helping white congregations understand its own racism and sexism, not to excuse its own over-valuation of whiteness and maleness nor its behaviors associated with such valuation, but to understand race and gender in terms of narcissism and power, enough to begin to make shifts in thinking and behaving. One of the ideal qualities of psychoanalysis is its capacity to bring fears, wishes, desires, impulses and fantasies to consciousness. One of self psychology's ideal capacities is *the way* such impulses are brought to the surface – via empathy and introspection by deeply understanding unique contexts of experience. One of the strengths of pastoral care is its capacity to create diverse rituals to express and enact those same wishes, fears, longings and aspirations. An empathic pastoral approach helps a person or group to work through pain associated with self-knowledge, to accept limitations with less shame, not as a way to excuse behavior nor to avoid accountability but to learn to see options and make healthier decisions.

I agree with Kohut that human individuality and fulfillment is possible only through a certain kind of human community that provides affirmation, reinforcement and support, and with womanists and black feminists about the need to respond communally. And yet these relational experiences help build and maintain an internal psychological structure as well. The community and individual are not separable. Nor can we separate our internal structures from our external processes. So-called individual responses are also needed such that we work with the individual within a community-oriented framework including groups, families, and the broader society – a host of group selves, if you will – that empathically serve the group as a whole along with the individuals within the various groups.

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