

Ordering Differentiation: Reconfiguring Governance as Relational Politics

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Abstract

This paper makes a theoretical intervention into debates on governance from a feminist psychosocial perspective. Its key claim is that the distribution of power and emotion are intimately connected in governance. Indeed, emotions are productive of power in the sense that they constitute part of the means by which the state comes to be, they are integral to its gendered and raced orderings and are in turn part of the means by which the state enacts gendered and raced power. In the paper I outline how the ideas of intersectionality, relationality and feeling work can, when taken together and connected to understandings of experience and subjectivity, enable an analysis of the everyday practices of policy making and governance. I call these everyday practices the ‘relational politics’ of governance. I argue that it is because they enable us to keep ideas of emotion, experience and subjectivity in play that the idea of relational politics facilitates an understanding of these everyday practices as situated through, but not determined by the social relations of power. This refusal to collapse experience and power and to think instead in terms of ‘relational politics’ in between the individual and the social order is also crucial to understanding governance as an ethical practice, in the sense that it is always about the ongoing negotiations between ethics and politics. Thus, rather than mutually exclusive, politics and ethics are interdependent in governance.

Introduction

In this paper I outline what a feminist psychosocial analysis of governance can offer anti-rationalist approaches to understanding the modern state. The rise in such approaches drawing on a Foucauldian governmental frame has been an important influence on the shift to seeing the state as a process, fractured and dispersed across a range of sites such as economy, community and family, rather than singular and monolithic (Burchell, Gordon, & Miller 1991; Dean 1999, 2010; Ferguson & Gupta 2005; Miller & Rose 2008; Rose 1999). A related shift to discourse has not been

without tensions. One danger is that the messier, more contradictory human dimensions to an analysis can get lost in an analytic focus on discursive strategies, mechanisms and techniques of power, and more ironically, in a focus on discursively constructed identities. This is because of the way in which Foucauldians' explicit resistance to the a priori existence of the thought, mind or subject which engendered it (Foucault 1991) appears at the very least to downplay (if not reject entirely) the relevance of subjective experience and human relationships to an analysis of the state. This evacuation of the subject and subjectivity from view has tended to create top heavy programmatic analysis where the social can resemble a machine reforming and reconstituting everything it comes into contact with (Craib 1998). Thus, any space to explore micro-practices, potentially so attractive within Foucauldian analysis gets lost in a rush to claim the disciplinary power of history. Discursively constructed identities can appear as historical straightjackets from which there is little escape for living subjects. Ironically then, similar to the more positivistic and normative approaches they seek to critique, governmental approaches can serve to collapse, rather than illuminate the agentic complexities of governance (Hoggett 2000; Stephenson & Papadopoulos 2006).

In contrast a feminist psychosocial approach to analysing the state seeks to make space for more fully considering the human dynamics of the state; experience, agency, identity as they connect to subjectivity and emotion. But it does so in a way which retains the Foucauldian refusal to reduce them to individualised and internalised micro-practices, where individual action in the everyday context is not driven by sovereign consciousness. Instead micro-practices, action as a benefits officer, a welfare claimant or a social worker for example, are seen as *relational practices* constituted through the daily interaction between client and benefits officer within the benefit office, or the engagement between social worker and foster parents, or looked after children, or with other workers within the context of the social services child protection teams considered in Gail Lewis's work discussed in the next section of this paper. These are contextually and relationally driven in that they are enacted through human relationships. Drawing on a range of psychodynamic, feminist material semiotic and critical race theory, a feminist psychosocial approach rethinks the relational as the space *in between* the individual subject and the social order. Indeed, the strength of these perspectives is that they reject the literal

distinctions between the two.¹ In this paper I am interested in elaborating this theoretical synthesis as a means to claiming the relational as crucial to understanding the meso level of governance through which the state materialises as a formation of dynamic and shifting yet ordered set of practices. Relationality, from this perspective rethinks the terms of the micro-macro debate so apparently intransigent within scholarship on the state by refocusing our attention where the *action* is; action which brings personal histories, biographies, structural tendencies and cultural orderings into one frame. Crucially, this action is at the day to day level which is not thought out, and motivated in the rationalist sense. It occurs at the affective, emotional level. From this I am suggesting that there is a specific aspect of politics to be taken account of in our discussions of the state; the ‘relational politics’ of policy making. By relational politics I am referring to the dynamic emotional process through which social categories such as gender and ethnicity get *lived out*, resignified and resisted in the everyday policy process and the ways they act back to reconfigure that very process itself. Thus I am claiming that despite its ‘under the surface’, ‘hidden’ character, relational politics is a powerful driver for the shape of the state, the distribution of power and inequality in ‘it’ and through ‘it’.

In the paper I advance this argument in three stages. First I explore how feminist intersectional analysis allows us to theorise a space for complex experience which sits at the meso level between the individual and the collective. I then explore how psychodynamic ideas of a dynamic unconscious can be used to understand this negotiation in terms of the emotional process of managing difference and complexity; connecting power, difference and emotion at the most intimate level. I then use these ideas to outline how ‘feeling work’ operates through the dynamic interdependent social and cultural struggles for differentiation, distributing feeling one way or another; thus, enacting the social order(s). Finally, I explain how this feeling work is crucial to maintaining social ordering as an ethical process which is about enacting the socially and culturally good and bad.

My aim here is not to displace or to claim ‘better’ knowledge about what governance is than more traditionally explanatory accounts. I suspect that this sort of work will always have a valuable place in tracing patterns and orders which form at a distance from everyday experience. Instead, it is to suggest that we need to make sure we are

also asking a set of different questions about governance and how these orders happen at the level of everyday practices, to explore opportunities for challenge and change at this level. This is what I think a consideration of relational politics offers.

Governing through differentiation [and complexity]

The concept of intersectionality developed out of feminist concerns to understand inequalities as multiple and overlapping. Its analytical focus is the lived complexity of these multiple inequalities (Brah & Phoenix 2004; Davis 2008; Crenshaw 1989; Grabham, Herman, Cooper, & Krishnadas 2009a; Hill Collins 2000; Staunaes 2003; Valentine 2007). It is often viewed as overcoming the apparent incompatibilities between Black feminist thought and feminist poststructural theorising by bringing together the former's concerns over interlocking structures of power and inequality and the latter's concern with subjectivities and social processes (Davis 2008; Staunaes 2003). On the one hand, it has much to offer in terms of investigating how inequalities are produced on the institutional scale, through structures, process and techniques of governance. On the other hand, intersectionality has been well used in investigations of how 'social identities are formed as the congealed effects of power's workings rather than autonomous groups or identities' (Grabham, Herman, Cooper, & Krishnadas 2009b: 3; Lewis 2007). So although some versions of intersectional theorising are critiqued for their additive tendencies, the primary aim of other versions is to *connect* structure and agency through attention to lived experience. From this latter perspective intersectionality is concerned with:

the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different *dimensions* of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands.

(Brah & Phoenix 2004: 76)

Such an intersectional approach is less about identifying the level and nature of difference or inequality engendered by compound social divisions. It is more about tracing their dynamic and competing interconnections across multiple dimensions of social life. It is the potential for intersectionality to think through complex agencies

along with structural coherence which makes it useful to analysing how governance works as an organising principle.

Gail Lewis's (2000) research on the entry of black and Asian women into the occupation of social work is an important exception to the dearth of work on governance to adopt an intersectional approach. Her aim is to capture the lived complexities of these workers' experiences in social work as a specific moment in English racial formation where racialized populations of colour are reconstituted through work from unwelcome, illegitimate 'immigrants' to excluded illegitimate 'ethnic minorities'. Using an intersectional analysis allows her to ask two key sets of questions which tend to elide other approaches to contemporary governance and the policy process. The first set of questions relate to how a 'simultaneity of discourse' as women, ethnic minorities and social worker works to produce multiple often *competing* and *contradictory* positionings within a discursive field, such as social work. For Lewis's social workers in Children's Services these contradictions worked through simultaneous positioning as women and mothers, as Black people connected to the Black community and as social workers committed to professional ideals and practices. Therefore, intersectionality provides the conceptual tools with which to begin to tackle contradiction and ambiguity in the lived experiences of governing. The second set of questions relate to how these contradictions enable resistance to the normative governmentalities of such a field.

Lewis's approach analyses how categories of race, gender and profession combine to constitute 'ethnic minorities' as a governable population and the targets of contemporary racialised governmentality. She combines analysis of macro level legislative intervention (in the form of UK Hansard record of public debates, policy documents at the national and local levels) with micro-level analysis of interviews conducted with black women social workers in the context of English Local Authority child protection contexts. Through this micro analysis of interview narratives she traces how these workers claim multiple intersecting *experiences* as a valid place from which to speak within their working contexts. Drawing on feminist theorists such as Joan Scott, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Adrienne Rich, Lewis conceptualises experience as an anchor for social, cultural, economic, political relations. It is multiple and embedded in 'webs of social and cultural relations which

are themselves organized around axes of power and which act to constitute subjectivities and identities' (Lewis 2000: 173).

For Lewis's interviewees this multiple experience was produced through their contradictory positioning across numerous axes of differentiation and power, as black and Asian, women, social work professionals. As Black and Asian people they had experiences of racist oppression within the broader society; as women they had experiences of sexist oppression within the wider society, but also within the Black community as mothers, wives and daughters; they had professional experiences as social workers within social work, with commitments to enforcing professional practices 'in the interests of the child'. It is these multiple and complex experiences that inform their perspective as workers within the contexts of controversial professional debates around 'same race' adoption within child protection. For many of Lewis's participants these commitments created dilemmas between commitments, for example where a decision to maintain the placement of a Black or mixed race child already brought up within a particular white familial context conflicted with broader Black community commitment to the logic of 'same race' adoptive placement designed to protect Black children from life in a racist society by placing them within Black families. For these workers positive experiences of Black community, along with the realistic appraisal of the generational and gendered problems within those communities, as well as broader understandings of a racist and sexist society *together* bring specific tools to the social work encounter with which to negotiate the complexities of enacting professional commitments to the needs of the child. This is at the same time as producing costs for the worker as a Black professional sometimes apparently positioned against community commitments which may be more obviously enacted through the practice of same race adoption. Thus, it is this *particular positioning* as 'black woman social worker' which provides an intuitive 'connective tissue' (Lewis 2000: 197) binding these workers to various differently positioned others; black men, white women and other black women workers, but also to their variously positioned clients.

For Lewis this multiple intersecting experience provides a position from which to resist the over-determining aspects of racialised governmentality. These black and Asian women workers' multiple intersecting identifications disrupt unitary notions of

subjectivity. On the one hand they are positioned as simultaneously *ambiguously dominant* within the discursive field of social work and the racialised gendered state and in particular in their relations to clients, largely black and white women. On the other hand they are *organizationally subordinate* as Black women workers within their units (Lewis 2000: 201). So whilst the category of social worker forms the basis of these workers' inclusion in governance practices and the racialised governmentality of clients, other workers and themselves, its lived articulation with the categories of race and gender enables them to act back against established institutional formations to resist racialised governmentality. This acting back is present in the ways these Black women professionals resisted the automatic relocation of a range of looked after children into normative two parent 'family formations'; refusing to accept the idealisation of heteronormative family forms because of their experiences of growing up within communities which valued broader extended family forms as much as the normative ideal. Thus, the refusal of normative practices around looked after children happened *at the same time* as resisting Black professional discourses around same race adoption demonstrates lived complexities. Therefore, what it means to be a black woman social worker is not decided prior to its articulation in raced, gendered and professional discourses. It gets lived out through their *shifting* multiple configurations in professional practices. These 'complex acts of becoming', as Lewis sees them, can constitute a form of resistance in that their ongoing re/configurations in relation to other categories of worker, including other black women, black men, white women or clients, means that these workers are not straightforwardly or ever once and for all recruited in support of a particular forms of racialised governmentality. Though their resistances are in the vein of cautious, modest, post-heroic politics (Larner 2006), they nevertheless serve to destabilise the Manichean, 'either or' Black white oppositions of contemporary racial formations which, despite all their claims to 'superdiversity' and multicultural complexity (Vertovec 2007), continue to idealise whiteness over Blackness.

This difference between workers ambiguous dominance at the categorical level as Black women with Black and white (often women) service users and their less obviously ambiguous subordination at the organisational level as workers is important. This is because it enables Lewis to avoid one of the most common drawbacks in intersectional analysis which can tend to flatten social relations and

organisational dynamics (Cooper 2009) so that categorically subordinate subject positionings are automatically imagined to lead to organisational disempowerment. Instead she works with an analytical distinction between discursive positioning and *lived organisational relations*. Her emphasis on gendered, raced and professional experience as the intuitive connective tissue for governance does not mean other structural and cultural dimensions of social life are ignored. Instead, they are analysed as lived within a particular [organisational] setting. The experiential and intuitive dimension is interposed between the individual actor's self perception and the material and cultural categories through which they recognise themselves socially; as part of a group. It is therefore crucial to maintaining the distinction between these ontological and categorical dimensions, holding them together in a loose rather than determined relationship.

Relationality

Fiona Williams (Williams 2000) creates a similar interposition to Lewis in her three way ontological-relational-categorical distinction. Developing Williams' work, I first used this three part distinction to understand the ways in which the discursive construction of subject positions are resisted/reproduced/resignified (Hunter 2003: 327-329). Ontological identity signifies the process of creating coherence from personal experience; its analytical focus is individual uniqueness. Categorical identity refers to the collective level of subject formation, identification of oneself (or others) as belonging to a same social category, or subject position, as a woman for example. Both are different to subjectivity which spans unconscious interiority as well as conscious experience. It is this unconscious-conscious space of relational 'betweenness' (Bondi 2005) that I am interested in capturing when I think about the relational.

Psychoanalytic perspectives have been viewed with suspicion by some poststructuralists. However, I along with a growing number of psychosocial theorists (Clarke 2003a; Gomez 1996; Frosh 1987; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine 1998; Hollway & Jefferson 1996) would argue that drawing on psychoanalytic object relations theories (Klein 1986 [1935], 1986 [1952]; Winnicott 1975 [1958]) can actually help us to think about experience as 'dispersed, continuous and exceeding representation', as 'exceeding discourse' (Stephenson & Papadopoulos

2006: 22). From this set of ideas I want to emphasise the importance of the unconscious as a means of *organising the lived relations of difference and complexity in daily interactions*. Donald Winnicott thinks of the relational unconscious as a third or ‘transitional space’ (Winnicott 2005 [1971]) between the self and the world of difference and complexity. It is neither wholly internal nor wholly external, but exists in between, only in and through relationships (whether these be material social or cultural). Premised on the view that all objects external to the self present the promise of connection and the threat of difference, this unconscious is the ongoing and dynamic inter and intrasubjective process which enables meaningful negotiation between the myriad of promising good and threatening bad objects which populate the external world of daily interaction. The coexistence of good and bad within the self (and within the Other) creates internal ambivalence. This is sometimes turbulent, experienced as emotional crisis which manifests in the polarisation of good and bad in perception. More often however, this dynamic goes unnoticed as good and bad are integrated; worked out in everyday practices. Thus, the transition which occurs through this unconscious dynamic is from the disordered internal experience of multiplicity, to the *appearance* of simplified less complex and ambiguous externalised practices and knowledges which form the basis of our agency. The psychoanalytic claim that unconscious phantasy structures all experience of reality, penetrating and giving meaning to ‘actual events’ in the external world and *visa versa*, means that anxiety and the emotions, love, hate, envy for example are considered to form a central (if unrecognised and not straightforwardly articulated) element of everyday social interaction. From this perspective, the very ability to bring things into thought, to symbolise and imagine, is predicated on the ability to feel; feeling and cognition are *interdependent*.ⁱⁱ On the other hand however, this idea of the unconscious also means that some of our own behaviours and motivations as well as those of others will be ‘beyond reason’, apparently having a ‘life of their own’ (Roseneil 2006). This is the paradoxical nature of reality. Our feelings are indispensable for understanding, but simultaneously constitute its limits. Therefore, there is not now and never can be in the future, an all knowing rational subject.

Following these psychoanalytic observations the notion of relational identity refers to unconscious subjectivity as constituted through close relationships with others (for example as a mother, friend, colleague) and through which we gain a *particular sense*

of belonging. In this way it brings the biographical, social, situational and structural into the same frame. It represents the point at which contradictions between being positioned categorically in one way, perhaps subordinately as a woman, and feeling ontologically empowered as a unique individual successful in her own working and personal contexts are negotiated, so the point at which the cognitive, known, understood structural relations and the associated more obscure *emotional* resistances are negotiated. Motivation and agency are theorised through the complex interplay between these structural tendencies and biographical factors. This notion of relational identity (Hunter 2003: 338-339) therefore, shifts the analytic focus away from the recognition of sameness and difference considered in categorical and ontological formations to *connection* and *differentiation* as the principles of social relationships. Exploring relational identities involves examining the ways in which actors construct relationships and erect boundaries ‘within’ and between themselves and a variety of others. It focuses on internal and external conflicts ‘within’ and between actors over time, and how patterns or ruptures in these inform decision making and less strategic social action.ⁱⁱⁱ

In this paper I am suggesting that this notion of the relational can be applied more broadly to shift our analytic focus in governance, away from identifying sets of coherent figures and practices and categories driving change and stability, to tracing the *intersections*; the dynamic constitutive connections, the relations of interdependence between entities in governance networks including the links, ruptures and disjunctures between actual and imagined practices and individual, or collective subjects (see also Pedwell 2008). It also places the experiential dimension as core to the interactive, distribution and allocation of social power in governance. But this relational perspective extends the experiential in two ways: first, in explicitly dynamic terms, as a form of intersectional and interactive, co-produced doing (Staunaes 2003). Experience is a multiple interactive achievement, not an a priori state. Second, it goes ‘beyond’ the view that either mutual recognition or functional efficiency is the means to connect governance networks. Instead, a relational perspective suggests that experience constitutes a ‘normative cognitive framework’ that empowers actors and gives direction to their joint and separate actions (Torfing, in Carver, Torfing, Mottier, & Hajer 2002: 56). Following my claims about relationality, this normative cognitive framework is as much about less well

articulated feeling as it is about knowledge, it is not static, but built up over time and through the close relations by which we learn about ‘proper’, ‘appropriate’ ways to engage with one another as practitioners, users, friends etc. Thus, it is rooted in unconscious practice as much as considered action (Gould 2009).

Feeling work

It is through its connection between feeling and judgements, that object relations is suggestive of the broader *psychosocial* connections between politics and the emotions; how fantasy fuels politics and politics fuels fantasy. Feelings and especially our anxieties about who we are, frame our judgements of value and our investments in ideas such as equality, or a social category such as race or a set of ideas and practices, such as an institution like the NHS. Thus, this ‘feeling work’ (Gunaratnam and Lewis 2001) is relational, the means by which the individual and the social are connected (Harding & Pribram 2002: 424). Following Sara Ahmed (2004: 44-47), one way of conceptualising this feeling work in more dynamic terms is as an affective economy where emotion works as a form of capital in the Marxist sense, gathering value as a function of its circulation. Affect is understood as the means by which this circulation occurs. Therefore, affect, such as hate, does not reside in an object or a sign such as race or the NHS, but is produced as *an effect* of the circulation between objects and signs and objects, ideas of whiteness and certain bodies. Signs like the idea of whiteness for example, increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become. Affect produces more affect. Thus, supportive attachment to the sign of the NHS for example, we might say love, is an effect of its movement across objects, professions such as nurses, doctors, physiotherapists, users (as mother, child, grandparent for example), politicians, civil servants, pharmaceutical companies etc. Attachments intensify through love’s circulation, generating their own proximities whereby this range of subjects are brought into relationship through their attachment to the symbol of the NHS. Thus, the various attachments to an idea generate it as an object, creating its topography. In this way then the emotions are productive of social relations as well as produced through them. Therefore, the emotions do not inhabit anybody or any one thing, ‘the subject’ is just one nodal point in the economy, rather than an origin or destination. This means that emotions are not cut off from the body, but nor are they

reducible to it. They constitute a connective medium between bodies (see also Bondi 2005: 442).

As a connective medium the emotions do the work of alignment, and orientation, they create proximities and distances between subjects (Fortier 2008). They circulate between bodies, but also get stuck to certain bodies, the 'angry Black man', the 'caring white woman'. As such, they are integral to creating hierarchies of power. They *bind* people within a social order, but at the same time because they also *move* people, they expose the fragility of these orders, highlighting their shifting, dynamic nature. If we look at the emotions in this way then feeling work can be viewed as ongoing, continuous *co-ordinating, cohering, ordering* activity. Therefore, as well as feelings circulating within governance networks, they are *constitutive* of those very networks. It is the erasure of this feeling work as part of the processes of governing which means that feelings become fetishes - as though they reside within an object, rather than connecting multiple objects through governance practices. This is not to say, that feelings are not taken on and taken in by subjects in imperceptible ways. But, it is to recognise that any internalisation is only possible *because* of its enactment through material-social relations.

Melanie Klein's work on defense mechanisms lends itself to exploring these dynamics of internalisation/externalisation through the sort of more radical historicization of feeling developed in other feminist cultural approaches like Ahmed's work (Flax 2004; Hoggett 2000; Mama 1995; Menzies Lyth 1960; Rustin 1991). The basic concepts of splitting, projection and introjection refer to the unconscious mechanisms through which boundaries are constructed between self and other in order to resist the disintegration threatened by external social difference and multiplicity. These concepts can be used as *heuristic devices* to understand the ongoing process of differentiation and connection through which ideas of difference and sameness are constructed. Klein's view of separation and difference experienced as a form of violent attack, means that individual prejudices, social exclusion and institutional discriminations can be understood as 'rational' responses to the threats posed by difference. It also highlights the dangers of idealisation and overinvestment as potentially producing the annihilation of the other and/or the self as manifest in the reification of difference. Returning to the example of racial formation introduced

earlier through Lewis's work, we can see how such splitting processes characterise the 'repressive tolerance' underpinning the Manichean construction of white self and Black other so characteristic of current English multiculturalism, whereby the dominant white self by turns excludes, annihilates (projection) or manically over identifies with (introjection) the racialised other (Cheng 2000; Clarke 2003b; Rustin 1991).

Klein's later work (Klein 1997 [1952]) on the concept of projective identification not only explains how illusion fuels discrimination, but how illusion *produces* discrimination as a form of external 'reality'. It provides a way of thinking about how the introjection of the good and projection of the bad persists into our everyday lives as a form of *intersubjective communication* where we rid unpalatable parts of the self 'into', rather than *onto* the other (Clarke 2001; Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody 2001). Frantz Fanon's (1986) work provides one such powerful analysis of how this operates in relation to racism, where minoritised subjects are forced to see and *experience* themselves through a dominant white gaze, and thus introject feelings of hatred towards blackness and the black body, a process he refers to as the *epidermalization* of inferiority. In this way psychoanalytic thinking provides a 'powerful vocabulary for addressing that component of racial identification that is imaginatively supported' (Cheng 2000: 28), but also taken into the body and practically experienced. Thus, overall object relations is not useful for diagnosis, nor universal analysis of psychological or familial development, nor even only for the way its later incarnations view meaning as multiply contested. Rather, it is useful for the way that it can elucidate 'private' desires as [materially] *enmeshed* in social relations, constituted through and constitutive of them (see also Flax 1990).

Lynne Layton (Layton 2008: 66-68) claims that social processes such as gendering, racialisation with their constructions of 'proper' masculinities, femininities, whiteness and blackness, are at the very heart of subjectivity and subjective trauma, not accidental additions. This is because our interrelations and dependencies are, from the very start, *lived through* the normative hierarchical cultural discourses of classism, racism, sexism and heterosexism that structure recognition through the idealization of certain subject positions. This idealisation is achieved by splitting off human capacities such as vulnerability, assertion, connection and dependence, associating

culturally desirable attributes with the dominant and these more devalued capacities with the subordinate. This is what Anne Cheng means when she insists that the 'politics of race has always spoken in the language of psychology' (Cheng 2000: 28). For Layton this means that the subject is defined through the unceasing conflict between processes maintaining the splits and those resisting them. 'Normative unconscious processes' refer to the pull for subjects to repeat those affective/behaviour/cognition patterns that uphold the very social norms that cause psychic distress in the first place. 'Repetition compulsions' are the place where struggles between these coercive normative unconscious processes and counter-normative unconscious processes are enacted.

This sort of approach means that emotions such as the notion of anger for example, are experienced through the dynamics of social difference. It helps elaborate Ahmed's observations about the stickiness of the emotions already constituted through normative unconscious processes. Taking the example of anger: 'the angriness of oppressed groups could easily be read as 'too emotional' – and in the case of feminism typically feminine' precisely because these groups are already constructed as the locus for emotionality (Holmes 2004: 223-224). Thus, the meaning and legitimacy of anger gets read through gendered constructions, reinforcing gendered hierarchies where women's emotionality constitutes a sign of weakness. Anger binds people within an already established gendered order.

On the other hand, women's anger can also subvert gendered patterns of domination to enact new relations. Following Audre Lorde (1984), Yasmin Gunaratnam and Gail Lewis (2001) explore how expressions of anger can propel action for change. Both white and black women experience anger because of racialised oppressions, but these experiences are different because of their respective positioning, indeed processes of racialisation and gendering can produce anger and division between black and white women. But this anger between black and white women can also become 'an emotion of ownership, responsibility and transformation rather than one of denial and expulsion' (Gunaratnam and Lewis 2001: 15). Rather than bad feeling being emptied unprocessed from white to Black woman and visa versa creating crushing paralysis in the face of the guilt and pain produced through racism, white women's ownership of their own anger at racism and what it does to themselves and others can enable them

to discriminate between black anger and black hatred. The expression of anger within the context of a relationship can constitute a ‘corrective surgery’ for violating histories of racialisation and racism (Hunter 2010). There are of course dangers here of false empathising between white and black subjects which I discuss in this 2010 paper. Crucially, whether anger brings about subversive shifts in power relations depends on the ways in which it gets taken up. Thus, feeling work is not an individual act, but an act of intersubjective achievement, which is lived through and reconstructs the intersection between multiple dynamics of difference.

Ethically enacting multiplicity

In this paper I am claiming that understanding feeling work is crucial to fulfilling the promise of a broader performative turn in the social sciences as a turn which can maintain rather than collapse the necessary hiatus between ethics and politics. It views the performative frame *as* ethical, refusing to forget the ethical dimensions to the processes of social ordering. This is because it is feeling work which goes on ‘in between’ the worlds of ethics and politics, connecting, but simultaneously holding them apart. This may appear to fly in the face of much critical social and political analysis which looks to close the gap between ethics and politics analysing the sureties of categorical group politics as preventing the recognition of complex ethics of experience. However, inspired by object relations, critical feminist and psychoanalytic approaches to the emotions and affect outlined above I am claiming that this hiatus is not necessarily a problem to be overcome, but a matter of existence which means that there will always be a tension between subject-object, individual-group, agency-structure; a tension which cannot be negotiated away. Following this line of argument I want to suggest that it is this feeling work, the struggles to negotiate between individual and group which constitute the ethical ‘moment’ in governance.

This final component of my argument turns on the important distinction between multiplicity and pluralism that is implied, but not explicitly drawn out in the theories of emotion and affect considered above. Whilst pluralism has many ways of conceptualising subjective multiplicity, it continues to imply that only one object can ever exist at once. In perspectivalism for example there are numerous ‘mutually exclusive perspectives, discrete, existing side by side, in a transparent space, whilst in

the centre the object of the many gazes and glances remains singular, intangible untouched' (Mol 1999: 76/ emphasis in original). Constructionism's historical contingency, works on the premise that numerous alternative realities may have been possible, but now they are gone. In contrast, from the perspective of multiplicity it is *objects* as well as subjects which are multiple.

From this point of view subjects and objects are not things in themselves, but more fluid, temporary effects of multiple relations, more like a network of relations. *All things* (including for example social structures, people, ideas, body parts, books, door handles), only exist in terms of their attachments, which means that *all* realities, whether they are material or social, are *performed* simultaneously and in continuous process, *through* their multiple relations. The more attachments things have, the more and the better they exist (Latour 2005). Thus, they come into being together through multiple network relations. Annemarie Mol thinks of this process of network creation as 'enactment', a process of attuning to, interacting with and shaping objects/structures, bringing them into being, through varied and various practices (Mol 2002: xii) which include, but are not confined to language.

From this network perspective, all networks exist within other networks. This means that it may be better to think in terms of subject-objects as whilst any one object is inevitably at the margin of one or more networks, they will also be central to another(s). Subject-objects are always *partially* but multiply *connected* (Haraway 1991; John Law 2004; Strathern 1991). Because of this, actor's identities are partly defined through their relationship to one network whilst forged in or even forging another (Singleton 1996). We can see this in Lewis's work above with Black women social workers; marginal to professional networks, but central to users experiences of the social services network. Following this line of argument as to the multiple, but partial connectedness of subjects, the decision-making subject so valued in liberal democratic politics is not sovereign, it is in 'fact':

rendered singular – turned into a specific location [for decision]. But at the same time it is distributed across time and space into future bodies, future conversations, and into past points of choice or procedure. There is, as it were, continual slippage between presence and absence [...]. The subject is both centred and decentred. And the possibility of a centered, informed, consenting

subject *depends* upon this slippage. It is constituted and made possible by virtue of the fact that decisions have been or will be taken elsewhere, and that these are inserted within, or produce different logics.

(Dugdale 1999: 130)

Thus, the view of politics as a practical, performative activity which brings things (including the decision making subject) into being through the various practices by which relations are made is dependent on seeing the world as multiple. Decisions, then are distributed through participants within networks, they are practical collective enactments.

However, as I argued above, the emotions as theorised in object relations draw our attention to ‘internal’ unconscious multiplicity, ‘externalised’ in a more unified simplified and cognitively known form. From this perspective the emotions enable us to conceive of multiplicity which appears representationally as objective singularity. My argument is that it is on this basis that we can understand the emotions as enabling the simplifications *apparently* required for political decision making in contexts of multiplicity. Thus, they constitute an essential component of the process of enactment. The feeling work I describe above is the work which brings the illusion of a continuous, singular reality into being; it is what drives the congealing and solidifying of experience. But, bringing these two lines of argument together (the feminist material semiotic and the psychodynamic) means that we can understand this ordering as not only cognitive, but as ethical too; a process of creating ‘good’ and ‘bad’ orders.

Concluding notes on making politics multiple

This logic of multiplicity also implies that it is ‘outcomes’ as well as the inputs which are multiple. The partial, but multiply connected nature of subject-objects means that politics is actually about the negotiation of multiple interconnected options, it is actually about the continuous *oscillation* between singularity and multiplicity (Dugdale 1999). It is this process of oscillation between emotional multiplicity and cognitive simplification/singularity, between ethics and politics, which I analyse in terms of relational politics.

Politics then is *ontological* (Mol 1999; Mol 2002) see also (Cussins 1996) in the sense that it is not about the sort of singular completed and closed decisions imagined in more mainstream policy making literature, but it continually creates difference and different conditions of possibility. Decisions constitute *multiple* actions, a form of practice which brings about difference in the world. The point is not that the moment of action dissolves the multiplicity that produces it as the notion of decision implies; it only *hides* it, producing the illusion of singularity required in decisions conceived of in either/or terms.

This multiple nature of reality means that the good, such as equality, is also inevitably multiple, always open and contestable (Mol 2002: 177). This in turn means that the aims, objectives and practices of politics also shift *away from* consensus to co-operation, coalition, connection, maintaining difference. Donna Haraway (Haraway 1997: 268) likens this sort of politics to a game of ‘cat’s cradle’ because it is about making patterns and knots, rather than amassing allies and feats of strength. In this game one person can build up a larger repertoire of string figures on a single pair of hands, but the figures can be passed back and forth between several players, all adding new moves, building ever more complex patterns. As such cat’s cradle is the product of collective work of interdependent subjects, with no one move repeatable and no one person able to make patterns alone. The goal is not to win, but to create new, more interesting, more adequate patterns, which can contain what will always be contested aims.

This cat’s cradle politics should not be confused with politics thought of only as a technical matter of reaching a benignly negotiated compromise between different interests. Nor as endlessly contingent, ‘anything goes’. Relations and practices are always more or less power saturated. But the cat’s cradle relies on a more open-ended and contestable view of power which whilst ordered, and often apparently strongly or hegemonically so, can be broken precisely because such *orderings* are always temporary. Domination, according to John Law is often *not* a system effect, the consequence of a single coherent order, quite the contrary.

It is a result of non-coherence. Of elements of structuring, ordering, that only partially hang together. Of relations of subordination that are relatively invulnerable precisely because

they are not tightly connected. Invulnerable because when one is undone the others are not pulled down with it’.

(Law 2008: 641)

Thus, the continually enacted nature of ‘reality’ does not mean that there is no durability to social relations. Susan Leigh Star (1991) uses the example of the use of red as the colour which denotes ‘stop’ for traffic lights as a choice which whilst arbitrary in the first instance, has become such a widespread convention, with such a range of investments and links to other infrastructures and symbol systems that it is functionally, almost irreversible. Systems of social categorisation can be viewed in a similar way, as arbitrary, but supported by such vast and varied discursive-material systems of practices and meanings, that they endure despite their arbitrary nature. ‘Power is about whose metaphor brings worlds together and what holds them there’ (Star 1991: 52).

This process of simplification, this enactment of difference, constitutes the ethical moment which characterises the impossible move from the ethical to the political. The argument I am making here relies on the view that there is *a necessary and unavoidable hiatus* between ethics and politics which means that not all forms of agency constitute politics and resistance. My use of the term relational politics is precisely not to collapse this, to recognise a particular aspect of politics which is to do with subjectivity, identification and recognition. It highlights what is political about intersubjective, emotional dynamics. Therefore the gap between ethics and politics is the place of political re-examination. Keeping this space in play in our understandings of governance is crucial to resisting the tribal, us and them of traditional liberal politics.

What I am interested in highlighting is the emotional dimension to this process of enactment, thinking of it relationally in the sense that I have been advocating so far in this paper, understanding how the emotions block certain practices and enable others; in short how they enable different versions of reality to be performed. The emotions are what hold together multiple identifications in one way or another, into an identity. So the emotions make politics possible, because they enable the simplification of

multiplicity, but they do not attempt to collapse one into the other as in consensus, they enable coalition.

It is in the relational space where politics must remain as multiple as possible, precisely in order not to collapse notions of the 'good' prematurely. Refusing to reduce this hiatus ensures politics is not reducible to a rational moral calculus, but that it is understood as enacted through power and value laden material, discursive, psychic relations, which enact in their turn multiple partially connected and interdependent goods.

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ⁱ As I argue later in the paper this does not prevent *analytic* distinction.

ⁱⁱ As I go on to explore below this leads me down a very different route to post Lacanian theorising on the unconscious as *the* sole source for radical agency. In what follows I am interested in elaborating the emotions as one form of a range of more or less strategic, intentional, conscious agencies. Here I am viewing emotion as part of a continuum where affect and feeling constitute the more amorphous, unruly and beyond consciousness (Ngai 2005). This sort of view has more sympathy with critics like McNay (Husso & Hirvonen 2009) who positions her approach as a relational phenomenology.

ⁱⁱⁱ The issue of whether it is helpful to talk in terms of an internal/external world is a vexed one even in psychosocial studies (Simon Clarke, Hoggett, & Thompson, 2006) (Gill, 2008). My use of inverted commas when referring to 'inner' states is intended to flag up the difficulty in language of radically challenging the internal/external dualism. These should not be taken to mean that I am suggesting that ideas do not get internalised, in the sense that we make them our own, mixing them up with feelings about other things, most obvious in the process of dreaming. In fact this very process points to the way in which feelings about things are never entirely our own. As I explore below, my point about thinking relationally is precisely about recognising the space in which things *get positioned* as *either* internal or external, as owned by *either* individuals or society. Neither of which is entirely the case.