

a convergence between this form of maternal thinking and military thinking in that both develop a concept of acceptable death.

Eva Kittay (1999) takes up the issue not of mothers' radically different circumstances but of children's, pointing out that Ruddick's concept of maternal thinking presupposes an "intact" child. When a child is severely disabled, the work of preservation persists for the child's entire life. The work of fostering development requires imagining not eventual independence but development of *this* child's capabilities. This may mean, for example, enhancing the child's capacity for joy. The work of training requires negotiating the child's social acceptance. This may mean both normalizing the child and accepting what is normal for *this* child. It may also mean challenging institutionalized discrimination so that others may accept the child as he or she is. In theorizing maternal thinking in this way, Kittay seeks concepts of equality and justice that include the fact of dependency in our society and that respect the work of caring for dependents. In her recent work, Ruddick commends this revision of the concept of maternal thinking.

— Susan E. Chase

See also Collins, Patricia Hill; Feminist Epistemology; Feminist Ethics; Ruddick, Sara

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MATRIX OF DOMINATION

First introduced by the sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, the matrix of domination is a concept that draws attention to the inherent complexity of privilege as it operates in social systems and shapes people's lives. The basic idea is that various forms of privilege—such as those based on race, gender, class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation—do not exist independently of one another in the social world or people's experience of themselves. Instead, various forms

of privilege are related to one another in ways that make it difficult, if not impossible, to understand one without paying attention to its connection to the others.

In the simplest sense, in our lives as individuals, there is no social situation in which people perceive and treat us in terms of a single characteristic such as being white or female or gay. For example, people are unlikely to experience me as simply a man or a white person but instead will form complex impressions based on a larger set of characteristics. Even if their attention is drawn to some particular aspect of my social identity—such as my gender—they will nonetheless experience me as a man of a certain race and class and sexual orientation, not as some kind of "generic" man who is at that moment neutral or invisible in relation to other characteristics related to privilege.

The complexity of social identity in relation to privilege makes it likely that people will belong to both privileged and subordinate categories at the same time. Some people—such as middle-class, straight, white Anglo men—may belong only to privileged groups, while others—such as lower-class lesbian women of color—may belong only to subordinate groups. But most people—such as working-class white men or professional women of color—will fall somewhere in between, making for complex and sometimes confusing lives. Working-class white men, for example, may be acutely aware of their subordinate position in the class system but oblivious to their access to male privilege and white privilege. Not only that, but their acute awareness of class disadvantage may make them bristle at the idea that they have access to any form of privilege.

This combination of defensiveness and blindness to privilege is a frequent source of conflict and division as subordinate groups try to organize against their own oppression. The women's movement, for example, continues to struggle with the perception among women of color that their interests are routinely subordinated to those of white women, especially white women of the upper middle and upper classes.

The matrix of domination also points to the complexity of privilege on the level of social systems, where various forms of privilege intersect in complex and powerful ways. Many people believe, for example, that the origins of racism and white privilege are primarily a matter of race itself—going back as far as human awareness of racial differences—and are rooted in an inherent human tendency to fear those unlike themselves. The history of racism, however, shows that the origins of white privilege and whiteness as a social identity are fairly recent and cannot be separated from the development of capitalism and the social class system among whites in the United States during the nineteenth century. At the core of white privilege and racism was the institution of slavery, driven primarily by the desire among whites for rapid economic growth and by the development of technology such as the cotton gin that made the massive enslavement of Africans a lucrative enterprise.

properties such as language. The implication is that those theorists who focus on the macrolevel should incorporate more of a focus on aggregation, and those who focus on the microlevel should include more contextual factors.

Randall Collins is another social theorist to take on the task of integrating micro- and macrolevel phenomenon, although he grants heavy priority to the microlevel. In fact, Collins's major essay on the topic was titled "On the Microfoundations of Macrosociology," and he himself calls his effort a "radical microsociology" (1981a, 1981b). Collins believes that all macrolevel phenomena can be understood as combinations of microlevel phenomena. His focus is on interaction, chains of interaction, and the "marketplace" where such interaction takes place. This theory is similar, at least in one sense, to Coleman's in that it is limited by only trying to explain how the micro affects the macro.

Although the distinction between micro and macro is generally thought of in terms of American sociology (see Ritzer and Goodman 2004), at least one European theorist, Norbert Elias, has attempted to solve this dilemma as well. Elias (1978, 1986) was a German theorist (who did most of his work in England and the Netherlands) who did most of his major work during the 1930s. His major contribution to the question of micro-macro integration came in his concept of the figuration. The concept of a figuration was developed to ease the differences between the concept of the "individual" and "society." Figurations are processes (Elias preferred the term *process sociology* to refer to his work) that involve the interweaving of individuals. They are neither more than, nor less than, these interrelationships, but instead they are those interrelationships. They are not planned and occur at every level of society. Elias does not deal with either individuals or society as autonomous entities but instead with "the relationship between people perceived as individuals and people perceived as societies" (1986:23). He views individuals as open and interdependent and believes that the reasons they come together to form specific figurations should be the key question in sociology.

Overall, there have been a number of attempts to integrate the micro- and macrolevels of theory and the work of their representative theorists since the early 1980s (although some did seek to answer this question even prior to that). Harkening back to similar efforts made by some of sociology's most prominent figures, recent theorists have sought to show how both levels merit attention but that the greatest level of focus should be on the ways in which they interact with one another.

— Michael Ryan

See also Agency-Structure Integration; Alexander, Jeffrey; Coleman, James; Collins, Randall; Elias, Norbert; Metatheory; Ritzer, George

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MILLS, C. WRIGHT

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), the prolific and controversial American sociologist, is best known for his work on the structure and distribution of power in the United States and his critique of theory and method in mainstream sociology. Between 1940 and 1962, he authored or edited twelve books, published nearly 200 articles, commentaries, and reviews, and was working on several major projects when he died of a heart attack at age 45.

Mills was born in Waco, Texas, to a doting mother and a father who was a rising insurance salesman. Mills describes himself as a shy and introverted youngster who admired his father's intelligence and integrity. He was sent to Texas