



Encountering the Knowledge of Others: Perspective-taking and Recognition

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Recognising others



Social practices – tendency to construct the ‘other’ in relatively negative terms



Everyday life, media, institutions – unintentional and intentional



Jovchelovitch: trajectory of our relations to...

e.g. deviants, ‘the mad’, remote peoples (e.g. colonisation)

Historically this is often negative



Social representations, attitudes and practises often exclude the perspective of the other – devalues and rejects the knowledge of the other



Politics – formalised rejection of knowledge of the other

- But – relationships developed with other people is the basis for selfhood

‘Without others there is no human life properly so called and it is in our relationship to significant others that we find both the ontological and social resources to become what we are’

(Jovchelovitch, 2007, p.127)

- Knowledge – a construct that requires others
- Communication and cooperation presupposes recognising the other and seeing their psychological, social and historical ‘truth’
- Highlights the complex nature of communication between people

*[*ontological – related to a state of being; what is the nature of existence?]*



- Different knowledge systems – and the knowledge systems they enable – meet and communicate in public spheres
- For example, how do multinational companies establish practices across different cultures/life worlds?
- Involves meeting points between knowledge of self and knowledge of others
- Involves competing representations, practices and views of the world – and highlights dominant representations held about the other
- Dual issue: communication with, and representation of, the other

- Modern times – linked to opportunity to meet and communicate with other knowledge systems
- Knowledge systems are no longer constrained by location - intensifies encounters between knowledge systems and demands that we confront our own
- Thompson, (1995): we meet with 'the other' in a range of circumstances
- Different interpretations of events causes disequilibrium
- How do knowledges change as they move through contexts?
- How we assess and value different knowledge systems in social life?
- How changes in the public sphere of communities relate to the transformation of knowledge?



Jovchelovitch

A knowledge encounter =

‘the meeting between two or more representational systems, expressing different subjective, intersubjective and objective worlds’ (2007, p.129)

— **Perspective-taking**

— **Recognition**

- Both grounded on societal contexts
- Both infused by the dominant social representations and practices of a society or community
- How compatible are knowledges?
Determined by social representations



Difference and Communication

- Our natural tendency to classify and identify determines that we will segregate and exclude others (e.g. Needham, Habermas, Foucault)
- Self-other communication is necessary to the **construction of the self**
- Jovchelovitch: 'phantasmagoric variegation of forms and movements gradually make sense' – forms gradually stabilise and movements become recognised action
- Jovchelovitch: we are competent at engaging with unfamiliar knowledge because we've all done it as children – creating order out of chaos
- This is necessary
- But **how** do we do it?

Perspective taking and recognition

Recognition - crucial to the realisation of selves and social realities

Involves both recognising the other *and* being recognised by them (perspectives)

Recognition - recognising the different positions in which people are located and from which they view and speak

Perspectives increase as we interact more and more with our community and other communities – we decentre

Decentring allows the self to become an object, not just subject (Mead's 'I' and 'Me')



Perspective taking

- Emotional element of perspective-taking?
- Winnicott - identity formation is a task of both self and other
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- Both Mead and Winnicott acknowledged the importance of perspective-taking and recognition
- Benjamin - the psychology of domination - through our own understanding and presentation of our 'self'
- Mead, Winnicott and Benjamin consider the development of the child in theory theorising about self-other

The hierarchical representation of knowledge

Perspective-taking and recognition allow for both dialogical and non-dialogical outcomes

Perspective-taking and recognition processes of...

- distancing from a self-centred viewpoint
- discovering diversity and living with plurality

Diversity and plurality provides the self with identity

Perspective-taking and mutual recognition promotes dialogue

Non-dialogical encounters inability to recognise the validity of diversity

Social representations and recognition

- Social representations shape the valuation and legitimacy of knowledge systems
- Self and other are socially situated and historically situated agents – meeting in public spheres as constructed beings
- What are the representations in specific contexts that shape the possibilities of how we recognise each other as carriers of legitimate knowledge?
- Recognition of other knowledges is constrained by our existing knowledges
- Our representation of 'knowledge' is key
- Scientific and non-scientific world – hierarchical structure of knowledge

‘Western self-interpretation’ makes critique complex

Hierarchical knowledges (e.g. Banuri, 1990; Alcoff and Mendieta, 2000)

Dominant Western representation of ‘knowledge’ - based upon ‘logic’ and ‘reason’

Recognition of the value of our own knowledge system allows us to prioritise above those of other cultures

We forget that our knowledge systems have also emerged through the localised processes

Hierarchical representation of knowledge is underpinned by resources and power – often resulting in dominance over others

Reading

Jovchelovitch, S. (2007). *Knowledge in Context: Representations, Community and Culture*. London: Routledge.

Chapter 5: Encountering the knowledge of others.