

A CONCEPTUALIZATION POWER RELATIONS FOR CRITICAL CCM

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INTRODUCTION

- An approach deriving from sociology and political theories
- Essentialist vs. non-essentialist notions of culture
- Implications and future research potentials

- Note: This is mainly derived from the publications of Nathan (2010 & 2015) – mainly derived from works of Dilthey's social interactionism

PROBLEMATIC CONTEXT

- Power discrepancies, especially, **asymmetrical power relations among cultural contexts manifest on multiple levels** (organizational, societal, national and international etc.) along with **identity (critical diversity) markers** whether they are biological (gender, sexuality, age, race etc.) and/or socio-cultural (religion, language, ethnicity, nationality of origin, social status etc.).
- It is **not very clear how power is conceptualized (power discrepancies) within Critical Cross-Cultural Management Studies** (Primecz et al. 2016)

THREE BASIC SOCIAL FACTS

- **Human diversity is inevitable**
 - We differ in our identities (multiple and intersecting along with individual) and our capabilities in pursuing our complex of purposes
- **We live in an ethical plural society**
 - We differ in our convictions of good or meaningful lives
- **We are interdependent beings**
 - Interdependent not only among our generation but also intergenerational – including environment and other species to pursue our complex of purposes (Nathan, 2010)

POWER RELATIONS

- Power is a category of life in relation to 'doing and suffering' in realizing purposes, and it is a continuous process of life (Dilthey, 1962:10; quoted in Nathan 2010: 87).
- Interdependency takes many forms because there are many different modes of dependencies along the physical, emotional/psychological, intellectual and spiritual dimensions (Nathan, 2010: 87)
- Interdependency does not eliminate the relation of dependency and dominance within social and other organizations (Dilthey, 1988; see Nathan, 2010: 87)
- An important mode of interdependency is recognition for intersubjective relations within cross-cultural interactions and this can become a power relation

VULNERABILITIES

- The basic social facts lead to:
 - Power holders vs. powerless members in **asymmetrical power relations**
 - **Dominance and dependence relation**
 - **Lack of recognition or non-recognition or even mis-recognition** of individuals in their specificities (include collective intersecting identities)

Reference: Nathan 2010

ASYMMETRICAL POWER RELATIONS

- Asymmetrical social power relations lead to **vulnerabilities of oppression and stereotyping**:
 - Experience of social oppression (subjective) but can become **objectified within the social world through institutions, constitutions and reinforcement of the power holders' (majority's) social norms** (Nathan, 2010:90)

CRITICAL IDENTITY MARKERS AND OPPRESSION

- In cross-cultural encounters, people who may be considered based on critical diversity (identity) markers as ‘different, inferior, or not normal’ according to the norms of the powerholders (majority) may find their social presence and interaction is ignored, marginalized, or denied and their social status for full social participation thereby reduced (see Nathan, 2010:90)
- Critical identity (diversity) markers stem from: racial, nationality based or ethnic, social construction of new markers based on the survival context imposed upon the power holders (majority) and sociobiological traits (Nathan, 2010:91)
- One’s ‘mode of being’ can become a ‘mode of oppression’ (Modood, 2005: 106, 159)

ESSENTIALISM VS. NON-ESSENTIALISM

Essentialist paradigm	Non-essentialist paradigm
rooted in human nature	rooted in human conditions
static	dynamic (with continuity and change)
homogeneous	heterogeneous
holistic	internally riven
deterministic	changeable
bounded	blurred boundaries

Source: Nathan, 2015

PROBLEM WITH ESSENTIALIST NOTIONS OF CULTURE

- Cultural models with essentialist characteristics such as Hofstede's model of culture **tend to reproduce those asymmetrical power relations and reinforce those stereotypic (stigmatized) distinctions of otherness** (Nathan, 2015).

NON-ESSENTIALIST NOTIONS OF CULTURE

- **Meanings are derived and given by the participants** through interaction with the institutions within intersecting cultural systems – language, religion, culinary, entertainment etc. (see Nathan, 2015)
- **Cultural systems have complementarities and contradictions (these can also be normatively contesting)**
- **Diversity is a norm** not an exception
- **Identities are multiple and intersecting** and **meanings of the identities can change over time and space**
- **Agency of individuals is not suppressed** and individuals can make a difference within the systems

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

- Asymmetrical power relations are context specific – **the context is a intersecting cultural systems and interacting institutions**
- **Agents can make choice and change** not determined by essentialist notions of culture; **meanings are derived and given by the agents who participate**
- **Meanings and identities may change over time** and therefore it is also important to **understand the dynamic nature of these attributes** and **resist reifying meanings of those identities and ossify individuals** in their singular notion of identities – **can lead to change of power relations**
- Power imbalances based on ‘prejudices’ may be overcome by **shaping preferences through ‘soft power’** (Nye, 2004)
- **Redesigning structure and organizations norms can change meanings** and thereby **mitigate asymmetrical power relations**

KEY REFERENCES

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- Primecz, H., Mahadevan, J. and Romani, L. (2016) Editorial. Why is cross-cultural management scholarship blind to power relations? Investigating ethnicity, language, gender and religion in power-laden contexts. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 16(2), 127-136.