

# Recognising recognition: Self-other dynamics in everyday encounters and experiences

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## Abstract

At the core of what makes humans, and their behaviour, social, is the interplay between self and other. Our identities, for example, are essential to our functioning as social beings as they allow us to make sense of ourselves, and others, across different contexts. We care about how others see us and achieving congruence between how we see ourselves, how we think relevant others see us, and indeed how relevant others actually see us in turn, becomes integral for achieving a positive sense of self. Therefore, humans require recognition from relevant others. This recognition can take many different forms, from legal recognition of one's rights in society, to social recognition of one's belonging to different groups. Moreover, the absence of recognition can lead to serious repercussions and consequences, resulting, on an individual level, in a reduced mode of being and feelings of exclusion, and on a social and political level, in tensions and conflict. The current special issue takes a multidisciplinary approach to contribute to the growing debates and discussions around the importance of understanding recognition and its role in social behaviour. As the introduction to this special issue, this paper argues that the concept of recognition enables a better understanding of how identification and belonging become entangled with power struggles and

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expressions of agency. Doing so leads us to conclude that a social psychology of identity and intra/intergroup relations which does not consider power relations, as bound up in processes of recognition and its denial, fails to consider the key processes and broader impact that exclusion, subtle or explicit, has on individuals' well-being, belonging and ability to act in the world.

**KEYWORDS**

agency, identity, intergroup relations, power, recognition, social psychology

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

At the core of what makes humans, and their behaviour, social, is the interplay between self and other. Our identities, for example, are essential to our functioning as social beings as they allow us to make sense of ourselves, and others, across different contexts. We care about how others see us and achieving congruence between how we see ourselves, how we think relevant others see us, and indeed how relevant others actually see us in turn, becomes integral for achieving a positive sense of self. Therefore, humans require recognition from relevant others. This recognition can take many different forms, from legal recognition of one's rights in society, to social recognition of one's belonging to different groups. Moreover, the absence of recognition can lead to serious repercussions and consequences, resulting, on an individual level, in a reduced mode of being and feelings of exclusion, and on a social and political level, in tensions and conflict.

The current special issue takes a multidisciplinary approach to contribute to the growing debates and discussions around the importance of understanding recognition and its role in social behaviour. We begin in Section I by first giving a brief overview of the origins of recognition theory and its key proponents. The philosophical work on recognition is drawn on across the papers in the special issue, informing different disciplinary engagements with the concept and its impact on human behaviour. Then, in Section II, we highlight a social psychological approach to recognition, and what this entails. In bringing the concept of recognition to social psychology, this paper argues that we can better understand the ways in which identification and belonging become entangled with power struggles and expressions of agency thus highlighting its dialogical nature. Doing so leads us to conclude that a social psychology of identity and intra/intergroup relations which does not consider power relations, as bound up in processes of recognition and its denial, fails to consider the key processes and broader impact that exclusion, subtle or explicit, has on individuals' well-being, belonging and ability to act in the world. Finally, in Section III, we give an overview of the special issue contributions. The issue is composed of five papers from contributors working in disciplines such as heritage studies (Smith), philosophy (Ikäheimo; Richardson-Self), international relations (Shick) and education (Fleming). The contributors were all asked to frame their paper around the central question of how recognition matters for social behaviour. The contributions vary in how they approach this question, but a common theme is the emphasis on the important individual, social and political implications of recognition, or its absence.

## 2 | SECTION I: RECOGNITION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Much of what we think about the concept of recognition originates from philosophy. In particular, the work of Hegel, in both *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977[1807]) and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1991[1821]), introduces and advances a theory of recognition from which many prominent thinkers have based their work. Hegel's famous Master-Slave dialectic introduces the underlying dynamics of his theory of recognition and links it to other key concepts such as power, fear and freedom. Within the dialectic, the Master is a seemingly independent entity, with the Slave being seen as dependent on the Master. However, as Hegel argues, due to the Master's need for the presence of an 'Other' to achieve self-consciousness, the Master becomes dependent on the Slave. Despite the power asymmetries at play, recognition is conceptualised as intersubjectively formed and achieved. As Fraser (2000, p. 109) explains, Hegel's conceptualization of recognition "designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects, in which each sees the other both as its equal and also as separate from it." In doing so, Hegel emphasises the role of mutual recognition in the development of the self, and identity. To be denied recognition entails being denied one's sense of self and can be harmful to the construction of one's identity. Hegel's conceptualization of recognition is dialogical at heart, intimately linked with the development of our sense of self, while simultaneously placing power-relation at the fore of self-other dynamics.

The work of Hegel has been picked up by numerous scholars who have proposed theories of recognition and argued for its relevance for understanding both social behaviour and struggles for social justice, including Honneth (1995), Fraser (2000), Taylor (1994), Parekh (2000) and Appiah (1994) among others. A thorough and systematic review is not possible within the scope of this introduction, so we focus instead on the authors whose work is drawn on in the papers that compose this special issue. One such author is Axel Honneth. Honneth (1995) combines Hegel's theory of recognition with insights from developmental psychology to propose an ontology of recognition that places psychological processes at its centre. Drawing on the work of Winnicott (1965) and Benjamin (1988), Honneth's core argument is that recognition allows humans to achieve self-realisation, an achievement rooted in the early interaction between parent and child. Honneth introduces three levels of recognition that, in turn, correspond to three axes of self-formation: self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. It is through family, especially the parent-child dyad, that recognition of our self is first experienced. This experience leads to the development of self-confidence. In contrast, it is recognition of our legal and moral rights as individuals in relation to institutions that we foster self-respect; and lastly, it is through solidarity with others that we foster self-esteem (for a more in-depth overview of the three forms of recognition see Fleming, this issue). Honneth posits the need for recognition as that which motivates social development, and then justifies social struggles. He argues that the experience of misrecognition can cause emotional suffering, and this suffering in turn, can lead to mobilisation efforts. However, collective mobilisation (seen as a social struggle) occurs to the extent that these experiences of misrecognition are seen as typical for an entire group, and thus a cause for social concern and conflict.

Similarly, to Honneth, the work of Charles Taylor places the issue of recognition in a more politicised collective sphere, arguing that a "number of strands in contemporary politics turn on the need, sometimes the demand, for recognition," particularly by marginalised individuals and groups (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Taylor, like others (i.e., Appiah, 1994; Parekh, 2000) focuses particularly on the role of recognition in modern societies, which are becoming increasingly diverse and multi-cultural. This is an important point of connection with social psychology, which we return to later. Taylor's understanding of recognition is intimately linked with the concept of identity and the quest

for authenticity. According to Taylor, because identity is “partly shaped by recognition or its absence”, misrecognition can “be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (1994, p. 25). This denial of recognition can have consequences for one's quest for authenticity, hindering an individual's claim to uniqueness and originality as a ‘self’. By considering misrecognition to be a form of oppression, Taylor acknowledges that dynamics of recognition exist and are enacted in contexts of unequal power relations between groups (see also Renault, 2007). However, this raises the question of how those misrecognized can in turn achieve positive recognition. As Parekh (2000, p. 343) argues, Taylor “seems to think that the dominant group can be rationally persuaded to change its views of them [the misrecognized] by intellectual argument and moral appeal”. This in turn, Parekh argues, misunderstands the dynamics of recognition, which interlinks both cultural and material systems. To tackle oppression and inequality then, of which misrecognition is one form, societies must both consider the politics of recognition, and redistribution.

Similarly, Appiah (1994) cautions us to think about the implications of a politics of recognition focused on collective identities. As Appiah (1994, p. 149–150) argues, ‘the way much discussion of recognition proceeds is strangely at odds with the individualist thrust of talk of authenticity and identity. If what matters to me is my individual and authentic self, why is so much contemporary talk of identity about large categories - gender, ethnicity, nationality, “race”, sexuality – that seem so far from individual? Of course, as Taylor, and other recognition scholars highlight, the nature of the self is dialogical, a point which again links us to the value of considering recognition within a social psychological framework. However, Appiah continues, arguing that the focus on collective identities, and demanding respect ‘as a gay person’ (or ‘as a woman’) then assumes that there is a script, or a particular mode, for how to ‘be’ gay or a woman. It is at this point, Appiah argues, “that someone who takes autonomy seriously will ask whether we have not replaced one kind of tyranny with another [...] between the politics of recognition and the politics of compulsion, there is no bright line (p. 162). This raises an interesting dilemma for scholars working with the concept of recognition and the idea of the self as dialogical; how do we maintain the balance between recognition of social categories, while avoiding an assumption that social groups, or cultures, are homogenous or monological?

Nancy Fraser's (2000) work criticises both Honneth and Taylor for overemphasising the role of selfhood, identity and authenticity, at the expense of considering broader social relations and questions of power. Fraser's (2000) work situates recognition within a theory of justice, where it is discussed as a question of status subordination, rather than identity politics. Fraser focuses less on the quest for individual autonomy and instead on how misrecognition originates from institutionalised relations that have, through the process of discursively representing identities, positioned some as inferior and others superior. In doing so, Fraser places power dynamics at the centre of struggles for recognition and emphasises the ways in which discourses, and the practices they legitimise, shape who is given recognition and who has the power to deny recognition of others. While Fraser's work brings in the important dimension of institutions in affording or withholding recognition of individuals and groups, McNay (2008) has argued that, in her attempt to move away from the subjectivist perspective on recognition, Fraser ends up with a theory that is too ‘objectivist’, limiting the space for subjective dimensions of oppression and agency. In other words, while Honneth and Taylor are seen as too narrow, and too preoccupied with the psychology of individuals, Fraser instead fails to account for this nuance in proposing a theory that is too focused on macro-level structures. It is precisely this critique of existing literature that creates a space for social psychology to contribute in significant ways to debates on recognition, as it enables us to situate the psychological within the socio-political. While recognition has been engaged with, developed and critiqued in a number of disciplines, within social psychology, this concept is rather new, but brings some interesting and important points to consider in

our understanding of human behaviour. It becomes particularly interesting in the area where our own research interests sit, that is, on identity and intra/intergroup dynamics.

### 3 | SECTION II: RECOGNITION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Existing work within social psychology (e.g., Amer, 2020; Blackwood et al., 2015; Hopkins, 2011; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Verkuyten, 2006) has begun to explicitly acknowledge the role of recognition in identity processes. Conceptualised as the extent to which one's identity is affirmed by others (drawing on Honneth's 1995 definition), this body of research often focuses specifically on when misrecognition occurs, what repercussions there are as a result for the individual's sense of self, and how misrecognition influences and limits one's actions, and belonging and participation within a given social context. Importantly, this research highlights the inherently dialogical nature of recognition (echoing the work of Honneth and others), whereby it reflects the fundamentally interactive processes between self and other and, in doing so, allows for a theoretical re-centring of the role of others within social psychological research (Amer, 2020).

Even though social psychological research that engages with recognition is still limited, its significance to the discipline, particularly in examining identities and intra/intergroup dynamics, provides an important lens through which to consider the processes that influence these psychological phenomena. Indeed, we see the relevance of recognition and illustrations of its theoretically explanatory power in research within related literature, such as that on microaggression, subtle discrimination and meta-stereotypes, which demonstrate the outcomes and experiences that can be consequential to processes of misrecognition (e.g., Sue et al., 2007), emphasizing the dialogical processes at play. What is more, perceptions of recognition and misrecognition can also be useful for understanding the construction as well as the performance of identity in everyday social interactions (e.g., Amer, 2020; Blackwood et al., 2015; Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Dobai & Hopkins, 2020; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). Thus, we are presented with an important opportunity through which we, as a discipline, can begin to develop and establish the critical role that recognition (and its denial) plays in interpersonal and intra-as well as inter-group social relations and how it can theoretically enhance much of our existing work.

Below, we engage with some of this literature, and consider the role recognition plays on the individual level through interpersonal recognition, exploring literature on intersubjectivity and perspective taking; and recognition on the social level through intergroup recognition, where we discuss research on subtle discrimination, meta-stereotypes and stigmatized identities. This is by no means an exhaustive engagement of relevant work, but instead, in using them as examples, we begin to draw out and highlight how each of these social psychological concepts and their consequences are rooted in processes of recognition. Power and agency are two key constructs which recognition allows us to engage with more directly, enabling a more rigorous and critical social psychology.

#### 3.1 | Recognition and social psychology

To begin, one area of social psychological work which demonstrates clear connections with recognition is intersubjectivity and perspective-taking (Benjamin, 1988; Crossley, 1996; Trevarthen, 1979). The idea of intersubjectivity, or the ability to take the perspective of another, captures the social nature of the mind, highlighting the uniquely human capacity for the self to consider and engage with others. As such, it illustrates the ways in which our development and existence in the world is socially

embedded, and the importance of relevant others in not only shaping these processes but also potentially constraining them. Indeed, at its starting point, the ability to share and take the perspective of another requires one to recognize others as agents with their own thoughts, feelings and experiences, but also to study the ways in which misrecognition of the mental states of others can cause serious challenges for interpersonal relations (see Heasman & Gillespie, 2018; Moore & Gillespie, 2014; Trevarthen, 1979). Consequently, recognition becomes the foundation for possibilities of intersubjectivity and perspective taking (or lack thereof).

Moreover, as Gillespie and Cornish (2010) note, intersubjectivity plays a key role in both intra and intergroup relations. Misunderstandings, conflicts and tensions between groups, can often be rooted in struggles for identity often influenced by unequal power relations and the assertion of dominance. These too, at their core, reflect the process of (mis)recognition. What we think other people think (also known as meta-perspectives or meta-representations) becomes crucial in shaping not only how we perceive ourselves in relation to others, but also more broadly how we perceive the world and act within it. Indeed, this is an important contribution of the research on intersubjectivity and perspective-taking. Thus, intersubjectivity serves as an important basis of agency in social psychology, similarly to how it has been discussed by scholars such as Axel Honneth (1995). We explore this further below in relation to the role of agency in experiences of recognition as we delve into social psychological literature on intra/intergroup relations.

Literature on intra and intergroup relations within social psychology that has connections with recognition is dominated by research on experiences of minority groups of different forms (economically, culturally, socially) across different contexts, and their treatment by relevant others, both social groups and institutions. We review some of this work below and consider the less explored function of misrecognition for those doing the recognition work. Here, much of the research focuses on experiences of being on the receiving end of processes of recognition, misrecognition and its denial. Indeed, Verkuyten (2006, p. 178) considers the role of multicultural recognition and its consequences on ingroup identification, belonging, self-esteem and the rights of ethnic minorities. He states that “Multiculturalism is about the delicate balance between recognising differences and developing communalities, between differential treatment and equality, between group identities and individual liberties”. Thus, once again, we see the relevance of recognition as the starting of much of the social psychologically explored phenomena which can explain and explore the origins of specific social consequences and experiences. Recognition fundamentally provides an explanation of the process of how we are being seen by others, which then shapes their behaviour towards us and our experiences in interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup encounters. In other words, if your belonging to a group is not accepted, acknowledged and affirmed, if you are seen as fundamentally different, this can manifest into being treated differently, not being seen as equal and your recognition and rights being taken away. Indeed, who is afforded recognition and who is not is situated within, and influenced by, power structures and asymmetries, which are reproduced both through institutional and everyday interactions (Jovchelovitch, 1997). Power is therefore an important part of the social context, and how it constrains social identity processes and claims to legitimacy to recognize, or deny, recognition to others must be acknowledged. In its simplest form, while power allows certain individuals and groups not to depend on the recognition of others for a positive sense of self and group membership, it restricts and conditions the ability of less powerful groups to do the same. Indeed, the relationship between power and recognition is embedded within our institutions, social discourses and narratives, which create hierarchies of belonging and privilege within society. It is because of this, therefore, that research engaging with struggles for recognition tends to focus on the experiences of minority groups in a given social context.



Research on micro-aggressions and more subtle expressions of discrimination provides one example of this body of research. It becomes informative in considering the various forms that misrecognition can take, and the challenge in empirically exploring them. These range from having one's thoughts, feelings and experiences denied legitimacy, to everyday interactions denying one's belonging to a group (Dobai & Hopkins, 2020; Jones et al., 2016; Sue et al., 2007). For example, one form of misrecognition could manifest in seemingly innocent questions about one's origin (i.e. "Where are you really from?") and competency in the language spoken by the majority society ("Do you speak English?"), implicitly denying one a taken-for-granted belonging to a particular group (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Although such 'micro' aggressions could be assumed to be less consequential to individuals and groups compared to more overt forms of discrimination, they have been shown to have similarly devastating consequences to wellbeing as overt forms of discrimination (e.g. Albuja et al., 2019; Seelman et al., 2017).

One possible reason for the power of subtle discrimination lies in the very nature of recognition: the element of ambiguity involved in making assumptions about how others see us (i.e. Attributional ambiguity; Crocker et al., 1991). According to Attribution Ambiguity Theory, the complexities in detecting and responding to subtle discrimination means it may be more costly, both emotionally and cognitively, than when we experience overt discrimination (Noh et al., 2007). As a result of this, individuals will seek to pay more attention to other cues that will allow them to make sense of the ambiguity itself.

Elcheroth et al. (2011) argue, in contexts of intergroup relations permeated by ambiguity, "what people guess about their mutual mental states, ironically, becomes much more real in its consequences than what each of them 'really' thinks and feels." (p. 752). This has been explored to some extent within research on meta-perceptions and meta-stereotypes (Frey & Tropp, 2006; Galinsky et al., 2006; Lammers, Gordjin & Otten, 2008; Owuamalam & Zagefka, 2011; Vorauer, Main & O'Connell, 1998). This body of work explores the role of what people think others think of them or their ingroup, how they are recognised or misrecognised, on self-esteem, social identification and intergroup attitudes. Meta-stereotypes therefore become crucial in shaping how one interprets, experiences and behaves in relation to the perceptions of others, and the implications these perceptions have for one's sense of positive group membership. As such, in these contexts, the perspectives we attribute to others can become powerful guiding tools for sense-making in context, yet they can also lead to a further sense of stigmatisation (Howarth, 2002; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2011). Returning to the relationship between power and recognition to consider this, as Jovchelovitch (1997, p. 9) argues, power "needs to be recognized in order to be actualized, and some groups simply lack enough recognition when proposing their social representations and ways of life". But while literature tends to focus on the experiences and consequences for identity, sense of belonging and well-being, less has been said about the potential functional role of processes of misrecognition for those 'doing' the recognizing.

According to postcolonial writing on recognition, misrecognition serves the function of reproducing superiority, and can be used by dominant ingroups on minoritized outgroups (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017; Coulthard, 2014). Dominant groups rely on the subjugation of others to maintain their position of power. It allows them to act and speak from a desired identity position without being questioned or challenged on one's belonging. In other words, power allows for their view of themselves to be legitimised and taken-for-granted across social contexts in general. Power therefore can afford recognition and can enable the ability to recognize others in ways that serve one's worldview. As such, processes of misrecognition and denial therefore function as an expression of power (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017). However, being on the receiving end of misrecognition and denial of one's self in various forms can act as a catalyst, mobilising individuals, groups and states to engage in acts of resistance. It is this that we now turn to as we reflect upon agentic strategies taken on in attempts to

challenge and transcend power structures as well as push back against the confining parameters for one's recognition being defined by (often more powerful) others (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017; Coulthard, 2014).

By conceptualising recognition as a dialogical process, we highlight that reciprocity, or mutuality, is a necessary condition of appropriate recognition, where we must recognize (and be recognized) as subjects capable of giving recognition. This is why the relationship between recognition, power and agency requires social psychological attention. By agency, we focus on how recognition is actualized symbolically and performatively, and as such serves two functions: firstly, to control how we are recognized in a given context and considers the interplay of power asymmetries, and secondly, to strategically assert our claims for recognition in instances where it is, or is anticipated to be, denied. Judith Butler's work on the performativity of gender identities illustrates this point, as she argues that gender is "a stylized repetition of acts" (1990, p. 140) with identity becoming "a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (1990, p. 192). Other work such as that of Blackwood et al. (2015) and Hopkins and Greenwood (2013) is also relevant. This work illuminates the performative ways in which we demand recognition, or act as a result of anticipated misrecognition. Thus, agency is an expression and enactment of what is normative, as well as a way of exercising resistance against the norm, particularly among those who have been excluded or marginalised. Below, we discuss agency as resistance, considering strategies of 'micro-resistance' to account for some of the complex and subtle ways in which individuals cope with, and challenge, experiences of misrecognition.

Agency-as-resistance is particularly noticeable in research on "passing" – a well-documented strategy that group-members may draw upon not least when individuals who hold multiple identities which might not be socially recognized as compatible (e.g., Alexander, 2004; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Schlossberg, 2001). It refers to hiding the devalued identity and instead aiming at being categorised as a member of a more valued social category within a particular context. Related to this is the idea of 'over- and underperforming identities' dependent on context; such a strategy is more explicit, often stemming from the use of symbolic markers to make identities more or less visible (Amer, 2020; Lukate, 2022). A key dimension of this strategy, however, is how power intersects with one's ability to pass, whereby its use and indeed the subsequent recognition of an intended identity is heavily dependent on the available possibilities of over and under-performance.

Where this option is not available or possible, strategies can be more subtle. Examples of this from the literature include minority group members refusing to 'play along' in social interactions demarcated by stereotypes and assumptions which perpetuate their marginalisation, and instead challenge others (often more dominant others) to explicitly acknowledge these negative connotations (e.g., Amer, 2020; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Khanna & Johnson, 2010). In doing so, they rupture the norms and can attempt to assert and demand their recognition as a result. Here, the use of humour is an interesting example (Adler-Nissen & Tsinovoi, 2019; Dobai & Hopkins, 2020). Humour can be used by those experiencing misrecognition to subvert or reverse unequal power relations within an interaction. It involves a playful performance of roles and identities in the given situation in a way that parodies and challenges the underlying power dynamics of the interaction. Asserting one's identity in this way is therefore an attempt at challenging power dynamics and influencing one's recognition. These examples of acts of agency further bring to light how self-other dynamics shape both responses to, and experiences of, (mis)recognition. Indeed, misrecognition is not something that simply 'happens to us' but can be resisted and challenged. In this way, recognition equips us with the theoretical and procedural tools to be able to emphasise this dialogicality. While these acts of agency do not guarantee changing self-other relations, they become important for creating opportunities and possibilities for both political and social change.



## 4 | SECTION III: OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL ISSUE

The present special issue is composed of five papers that, in various ways, address the central question of how recognition matters for social behaviour. Taken together the papers make clear the inherent complexity in grappling with recognition as a process that plays out both in introspective and interpersonal situations, but also on larger scales, between groups, ideologies and in interactions with institutionalised practices.

The first paper, by Ted Fleming, considers the role of recognition in contexts of learning, considering how learning, as a process, is both social and individual. Fleming brings together Mezirow's theory of transformative learning with Honneth's theory of recognition to argue for a reconceptualization of learning as transformative experiences. The paper articulates how Honneth's articulation of three spheres of recognition which in turn build self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, can be utilised to better understand the dialogical and social nature of learning. As Fleming argues, a key component of transformative learning is the ability to engage in critical reflection, yet this becomes difficult without mutual recognition between the parties involved. As such, Fleming shows the ways in which experiences, both individual and social, are brought into dialogue with learning, and can at times also limit the ability of learning to be transformative.

Hekki Ikäheimo's paper takes us in a different direction, offering a discussion that attempts to reconcile divergent understandings of the role of recognition in ethical and political dilemmas. Namely, Ikäheimo's paper offers a thorough and thoughtful discussion of how being recognized as human is argued so differently by Judith Butler and Kate Manne and how these can be unified. On the one hand, Judith Butler argues that to be recognizable, one must first count as human. On the other hand, Kate Manne argues against what she calls 'humanism', that recognizing someone as human does not necessarily create a favourable disposition towards an other, but can instead be the root behind ill-treatment of them. To reconcile the two, Ikäheimo presents an articulation of recognition as personification, emphasising the importance of recognition *as person* rather than human. Ikäheimo discusses what differentiates recognition as human and as person, drawing on examples from both authors' work to illustrate how this recognitive framework enables the seeming contradictions between both to be overcome. In discussing recognition as a person, Ikäheimo echoes some of the existing work on social psychology on dehumanisation, illustrating how social harms towards others are to some extent driven by an inability to recognize them as 'fellow' human beings.

Kate Schick's paper discusses criticisms of recognition theories and proposes a vulnerable conception of recognition to enable the dyadic nature of recognition to feature more prominently within our understanding of recognition processes. Specifically, Schick discusses how much of existing theorization and articulation of recognition, while articulating its dialogical, or dyadic, nature, tends to focus on the other more than the self. In contrast, Schick's conception of a vulnerable recognition emphasises the need to 'come to know the *self* as part of the journey toward recognition' and in doing so, addressing the role of privilege and power in recognition processes. Her paper challenges the idea that recognition entails the powerless needing recognition from the powerful, and instead emphasises that recognition is a process we all must participate in – including and perhaps *especially* those in higher power positions. She goes on to articulate what such self-recognition and coming to know oneself means - including in terms of its vulnerability in that *we* must recognise our participation in and perpetuation of existing inequalities. In articulating this, Schick also echoes some of Appiah's (1994) argument about refusing recognition and how this disrupts the presumption that recognition is always sought from others, where we depend on their approval for a sense of belonging.

This emphasis on the self in processes of recognition is echoed in the paper by Louise Richardson-Self, who discusses self-recognition in the context of gender, exploring her own journey

into 'being cisgender'. Richardson-Self's paper situates recognition theory within the debate about gender identity, taking the perspective of the privileged majority and considering their active role in re-cognitive processes. She roots her perspective in feminist materialism, outlining how her understanding, or 'becoming' of herself has changed over time. In outlining her personal journey of re-cognizing her self as cisgender, Richardson-Self discusses the difficulties of overcoming privilege and ignorance, while also re-positioning oneself in a world shared by others. Through this paper, she exemplifies the dyadic nature of recognition by expanding on the role of the self and highlighting how recognition not only entails learning about difference but developing "a different affective relation to difference itself". While gender identity continues to be a contentious topic, both within academia and beyond, Richardson-Self's paper uses this debate to articulate how recognition, between self and other, within society, requires active participation of all parties.

Lastly, the final paper in the special issue, by Laurajane Smith, considered recognition within a more historical context, considering the role of heritage sites and museums as a source of power in struggles over recognition and redistribution. Smith draws on extensive research conducted across Australia, England and the USA, to illustrate how people mobilise heritage and history to represent a group's identity and sense of belonging. She argues that doing so can sometimes exclude, and misrecognize, the more critical aspects of history. In discussing how individuals from different social groups (dominant and marginalised) engage with heritage sites, she outlines different types of engagements, or performances, by visitors. The most common performance was 'reinforcement', where visits reinforced, confirmed or affirmed what they already knew about history. In many cases, these performances actively misrecognized alternative histories and the role of politically marginalised communities within them. Smith also recounts examples of emotional ambiguity and empathy, rare occasions when visitors attended sites that represented a history they did not see themselves as sharing. On these occasions, participants acknowledged the legitimacy of alternatives, and reflected on their implications for society. Smith's paper highlights the importance of institutions and their authority in shaping what we considered to be an explicitly recognized version of history. Her paper also brings an important dimension of recognition to the table, namely the role of emotions. Specifically, she considers both the positive emotional reactions that people have when they feel affirmed through heritage sites, but also the potentially negative, or ambiguous emotionality that arises when faced with alternative versions of history. Emotional reactions to experiences of recognition and misrecognition, and how we learn to constructively engage with negative emotions, can prove crucial for garnering support for progressive resolutions to struggles over recognition and redistribution.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

The aim of this special issue is to address how recognition matters for social behaviour. The contributions to this issue, including our own, illustrate the value of acknowledging and engaging with recognition as a concept by articulating how recognition informs our conceptualisation of the world, and the people within it. A key contribution of the papers in this issue is that they all illustrate how recognition is both individual and social, and as a theoretical and empirical concept it interlinks with concerns about power, legitimacy, agency. Firstly, all papers bring out the dialogical (and dialectic) nature of cognitive processes; struggles for recognition by one group inevitably require the involvement of an other. Similarly, changes in our social and political environments might require us to re-cognise our selves, and our roles in society.

In bringing these complexities to the fore, the contributions emphasise that struggles for recognition are continuous and ongoing, tangled up with power dynamics that shape what is perceived

to be legitimate, or acceptable. When individuals, groups or experiences are in turn not represented within the 'legitimate' this can spark moments of resistance. However, for moments of resistance to be successful, they need to change both self and other as well as the broader context within which individuals exist. This entails not only changing perspectives, but also changing how these perspectives become legitimised and institutionalised in practices. The implications for social psychology are at the same time novel and old. Recognition, as a concept, reminds us of the inherently social nature of our psychology. This is not a new idea, but it is an idea that we have, to some extent, failed to capture adequately in empirical work. By bringing together a diverse set of disciplinary contributions from fields where recognition has featured more prominently, we hope that this will spark discussions within social psychology as to how to bring recognition into our discipline more rigorously, and the potential power it has for advancing research on identity, intergroup relations and struggles for equality and inclusion.

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**How to cite this article:** Amer, A., & Obradovic, S. (2022). Recognising recognition: Self-other dynamics in everyday encounters and experiences. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12356>