

BETWEEN LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING:

What do we bring to the gap?

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FROM LISTENING TO UNDERSTANDING

Where are its foundational roots?

Where are we metaphorically (epistemologically) standing when we enter into listening?

Do we have an implicit model of the roots of human sociability?

THE ROOTS OF HUMAN SOCIABILITY

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- 1. We are essentially empathetic!**
- 2. We are essentially egocentric – but can transcend this through external guidance.**
- 3. WE ARE SOCIAL BEINGS – but the dynamics of individual identity maintenance render us communicatively biased.**

THE ROOTS OF HUMAN SOCIABILITY

OUR stance on this issue is the basis for a *system of reference* (Wittgenstein) that gives us a distinct perspective on moving toward understanding.

It is the basis for *epistemic relativism* (Martin Kusch)

A PEDAGOGY FOR UNDERSTANDING IN MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETIES

**Acquiring competences for
transcultural understanding.**

Social skills training?

**Who defines what behaviours
are *normal*?**

A PEDAGOGY FOR UNDERSTANDING IN MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETIES

Cultural communicative competence requires the individual to learn to understand the cultural values, behavioural patterns, and rules for interaction in *specific* cultures.

See Kim (1992)

Gerrish, Husband and Mackenzie (1996)

A PEDAGOGY FOR UNDERSTANDING IN MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETIES

The concept of intercultural communicative competence suggests that there may be *generic* communicative skills which at least prepare us to be optimally flexible and adept at meeting the challenge of intercultural interactions: *regardless of the specific cultures* involved in the exchange.

This would involve acquiring flexibility in:

Cognition
Affect
Behaviour

UNDERSTANDING UNDERSTANDING

What is it WE put in the gap between listening and understanding?

Understanding as praxis; or understanding as commodity?

UNDERSTANDING UNDERSTANDING

Could it be that a right to be understood always lives as a hostage to the possibility of their being a moralistic fashion for ‘understanding’?

Could it become fashionable to display your ‘*understanding*’: a new form of social cache’ in the cultural capital stakes!

UNDERSTANDING UNDERSTANDING

“ Today , white Australia needs Aboriginal Australia to keep alive the dream that there exist, somewhere not impossibly far away , forms of lived experience that retain the magical holism shattered by modernity.”

Brown (2003 p67) *Who owns Native Culture?*

Understanding as narcissism!

WHAT IS UNDERSTANDING FOR?

Understanding is a process and as such it is a catalyst that actively, even dangerously, interacts and changes whatever it comes into contact with.

MY CURRENT RESEARCH: EXERCISES IN UNDERSTANDING?

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

A study of the implementation of two central government policies in the local state: social cohesion and 'The Prevention of Violent Extremism' (PVE).

It includes a deconstruction of the discourse of social cohesion; and an account of its ideological functions.

Ditto PVE

It includes interviews with high level local authority officers and elected members.

It includes interviews with those who are engaged at the operational level in implementing these programmes.

It includes looking at the contradictions between these programmes:

AND It includes looking at the moral and emotional cost to staff implementing these programmes.

MY CURRENT RESEARCH: EXERCISES IN UNDERSTANDING?

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

What assumptions am I bringing to the gap between listening and understanding:

1. a generic humanistic egalitarianism – I believe in fundamental equality
2. a commitment to plural multiculturalism
3. a belief that the nation state is conceived around a notion of exclusion: and racism is likely to be fundamentally present in the construction of us and them.
4. a belief that social psychology demonstrates that *homo sapiens* has a capacity for in-group preference.
5. a belief that the British politics of multiculturalism is going backwards
6. A belief that I can 'do' qualitative interviews.

MY CURRENT RESEARCH: EXERCISES IN UNDERSTANDING?

Minority ethnic media:

An on-going programme of activity that builds on my past work, but which has taken a turn toward engaging with the problematics of being both a professional journalist, and sustaining an active political sense of your ethnic identity.

I have a wide ranging concern with the dubious impact of professionalism on individuals sustaining an active personal moral sense. I have applied this to health care, journalism, policing and academic life.

I have argued that 'professionalism' sets limits on personal morality.

Questions for myself:

**I am white, male and now 'professional' -
How dare I!**