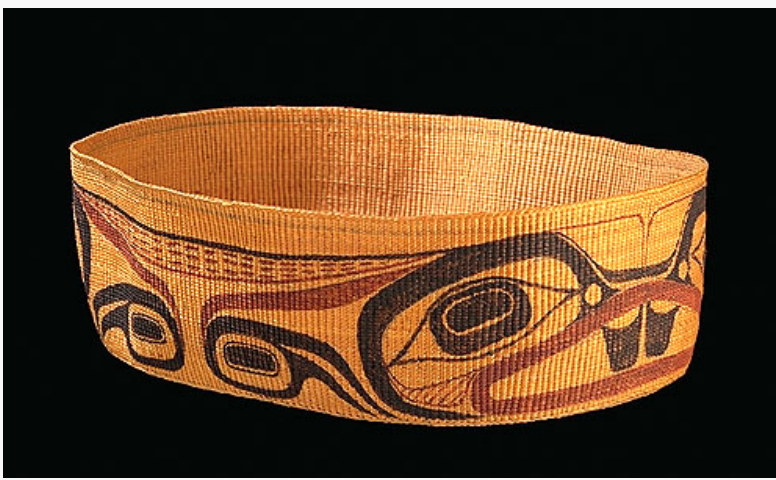


Locating diverse epistemologies in social development: An integrative pluralistic approach in the Haida Gwaii context



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Introduction

Debate continues in developmental science over concepts ranging from ‘culture’ to ‘socio-cultural differences’ to notions of ‘development’ itself. Despite data into developing human minds and closures of former conceptual and methodological gaps (Adolphs, 2015), a lack of integrative efforts and under-represented (e.g. non-cognitive centrist) perspectives poses a serious challenge to inclusive developmental study (Nsamenang, 2005). As researchers enculturate with their dominant environments (Fessler, 2010), valid and reliable developmental research requires participation and insight from diverse epistemologies, their contents (i.e. world views, ontologies, metaphysics, cosmology, axiology, praxeology), and contexts (Adams et al., 2015).

As mainstream scholastic endeavors overwhelmingly draw from and venerate (Harding, 2006) study of and by ‘Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic’ (WEIRD) nations (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), proportional representation in developmental science is paramount, particularly in view of globalizing worlds (Jensen, 2012), shifting developmental trajectories (Arnett, 2002; Greenfield, 2009), and unequal outcomes. To redress this imbalance and lack of comprehensive research, the current work illustrates an integrative approach for studying social development. The indigenous context of Haida Gwaii youths’ social and worldview development through weaving grounds the work.

Materials and methods

Semi-structured 90 minute in-person and Skype interviews and written correspondence with weavers from Haida Gwaii followed literature and praxis review. The body of material was interpreted via content analysis along the epistemological scale continuum (Fig. 1) (Mason, 2008).



Figure 2. Map of Haida Gwaii. White, A ~ SGAana Jaad. (2015). Retrieved from www.eaglesfeast.com



Figure 3. Cedar weaving. Nalaga Avis O'Brien. (2015). Retrieved from www.nalagadesigns.com

Haida Gwaii (*Xaayda gwaay*, “Islands of the Haida people”), is an archipelago on the West Coast of BC, Canada (Fig. 2). Haida society was matriarchal prior to European contact after which an estimated 90% of the population died. Nowadays, Haida practice cultural revival through reclaimed technologies and traditions like intercultural trade and weaving, playing a prime role in socio-cultural development. Weaving (Fig. 3) in particular has been cited as a socio-culturally educative (Parent, 2011), regenerative, healing force on the community, inter- and intra-personal level (Hart, 2012).

Results

Participants reported on the social ontogenesis of youth through deliberative, observational, and experiential learning opportunities structured by their ecologies, including family and community members as well as the environment or ‘natural world’. Data corresponded with socialization strategies and developmental affordances located on the epistemological scale continuum (Fig. 1). Particularly, interviewees’ epistemic commitments tended toward complex emergent hierarchies through to complex constructionist scales on the continuum. Detected themes centered around emergence, complexity, and evolving environment-social relationships.

Overall findings map onto prior indigenized, decolonized, non-hegemonic scholarship (Adams et al., 2015). Logical positivism was relatively absent in the processes and constructions of social and worldview development, whereas weaving emphasized and embodied notions of epistemological interdependence. In following, a proposed approach to studying social development in a participatory, inclusive manner involves locating subjects’ epistemic conceptualizations of the nature of their own and others’ development, and methodological consideration of domain and process-specificity. Thus, practicing ‘integrative pluralism’ (Mitchell, 2004) is apposite to emic- and etic-based developmental study (Berry, 1989).

Participants’ perspectives on development (paraphrased):

In the early years... *“it is more important to spend time outside, to develop confidence in the forest, to look through and connect, respect ... than to memorize numbers, symbols...it is a sensitive period in ecological connection”*

“I wish for my daughter to play and get her hands-in... connect, discovery, experience living environments and honor them... to learn weaving as I did by I watching my grandmother.”

On weaving:

“Weaving is a process, it takes time. One should weave at plant time – the speed at which a plant grows (O'Bryan cited by Hart).”

“It is a process of taking time to choose the tree and the root of tree, to be aware of the area, time of year and age, and to think of what the material is for. To feel what the material wants and how it may look different ways like relationships... you never visit the same spot twice, it always changes, comes into being.”

On cultural continuation and communication:

“It is a complex understanding: not either/or. It is how one comes to understand through dialogue with one's surrounds, community members, and not dialectic. It is constantly changing and all things at once.” When we first came into the universities, *“they didn't know what to make of us...because of what we were saying”* (Gardner, 2015) *and how we were saying it.*

It is important to... “develop a deep connection to the ancestors’ land, to develop a relationship with the place and continuity of time with curiosity and details. it is a privilege to take care of and hang on to places.” These stories are passed on through families and clans and shared through generations.

“Art is not only aesthetic but functional and political. Like the carving and weavings, they hold visual language and stories. It is purposefully communicated and not only decorative. Listening and observing continue those energies. Words hold great weight (in the world) and are of great value... they are not to be spoken from reactance.”

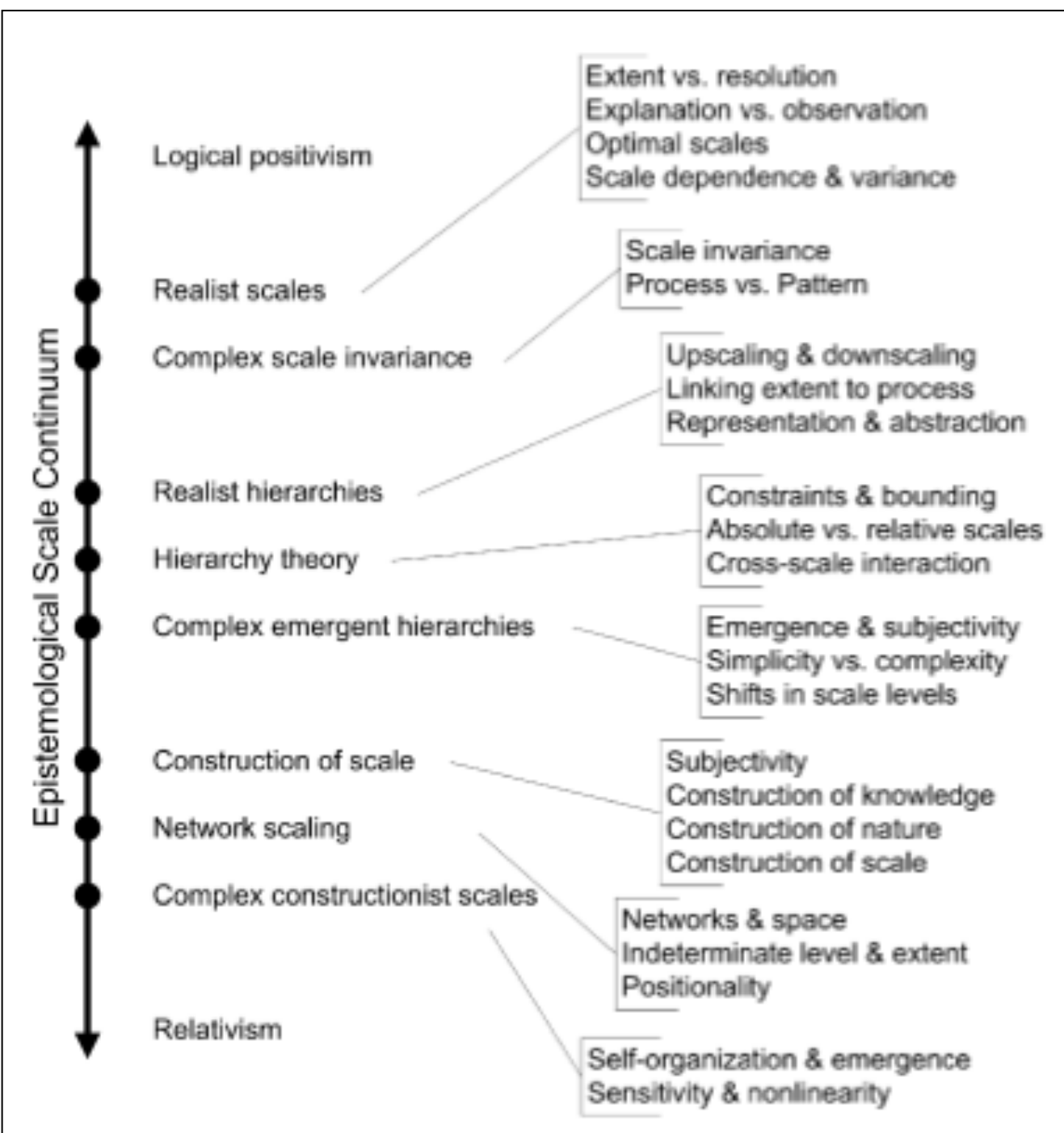


Figure 1. Epistemological Scale Continuum (Mason, 2008)

Conclusions

The study adopted an integrative pluralistic approach to social development that addresses the continuum of epistemologies. In situating the plurality of processes involved in ontogenesis (Nsamenang, 2011), this method serves as a tool toward truly inclusive developmental science. It enables consideration of neglected, depreciated perspectives alongside over-represented views while examining core interactive elements of social neuroscience models (Cappacio & Cappacio, 2013).

Increasing appreciation of somatic psychology and extended cognition (Damasio, 1999; Sutton, 2010), neurophenomenological accounts (Thompson & Varela, 2002), and the transdisciplinary sciences where the social encounters the biological and

physical (e.g. feminist and new materialisms (Washick et al., 2015) as well as socio-biological anthropology, complement and inform developmental models focusing upon brain mediation and participation in social intra-actions (Barad, 2007). Globalization influences and their impact upon the human-environment relationship (Brady & Phemister, 2012) further signal the need for developmentalists to study ecological multi-leveled influences (Greenfield, 2009) for accurate depictions among global populations.

Future inquests could pick-up on the illustrative case of Haida Gwaii socio-emotional and worldview development through weaving highlighting the proposed approach.

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