Recognition in and of World Society
Matthew S. Weinert

Why ‘recognition’? The term resonates differently and has distinctive implications depending on its use. The first is grammatical: to recognize something is to comprehend some measure of its essential truth; recognition implies a shared context of perception. The second resonance is intimate: recognition ostensibly connects us to others through shared perspectives, experiences, affiliations and commitments. The third resonance is political: recognition of collective political voice is an affirmation of a mutuality of communal commitments, some of which might conflict with those of other collectivities. Governments recognize one another; to be a political entity without recognition by others of that status is to be excluded from entire spheres of political interaction, access and influence. Recognition is, quite literally, re-cognition – to know again, and by that knowing, to share an affinity with the person or thing thus recognized, affirming the existence of the subject through the very act of recognition. To recognize something presumes a preliminary understanding of it, so that its return will be embedded in a relationship of pre-existing knowledge and thus familiarity.

(Heath Justice 2010: 240)

Introduction

In Heath Justice’s estimation, recognition hinges on a consciousness of self and other which rises above parochialisms to affirm simultaneously a plurality of Being and a core collective existence – a public – defined not merely by the material objects we have created, but importantly by a web of understandings,
perceptions, rules, norms and principles that come to regulate, coordinate and inform the actions and behaviours of diverse people. His summary of recognition’s resonances establishes a particular claim: re-cognition is an open-ended, provisional intersubjective exchange. His implicative language captures the omnipresent potentiality of reversal, and hence the instability and limitations of the recognition schematic: there is simply too much presupposition at work.

Recognition theory, therefore, needs to begin from the contingency, not automaticity, of recognition practices. On this reading, recognition’s grammatical resonance in Heath Justice’s framework is complicated by the fact that, leaving aside the practice of sharing, it is subject to the vicissitudes of chauvinism and misunderstanding. Shared worlds as we have seen in cases such as Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and Cambodia, may easily be reframed as particularistic worlds contaminated by the presence of an unacceptable other. Ideally, recognition’s intimate resonance must confront and shoulder the burden of sometimes dramatic shifts in sociopolitical conditions that negate our multiple connections to others. Yet in each of those genocidal instances, neighbours viciously attacked neighbours with whom they shared communal bonds; suspicion and aggrievement stymie or thwart post-conflict reconstruction and social rehabilitation, which are essentially projects of re-cognition. Politically, then, recognition often assumes the form of costs or criteria; I explore such criteria with respect to inter-state practices of recognition in the next section, and with respect to interhuman practices of recognition in the fourth section of this chapter. Succinctly stated, recognition theory demands deeper engagement of the production of recognition. Vagaries of political and social life, not to mention prejudices of multiple sorts, render the recognition project provisional if not tenuous. Such is, unfortunately, the nature of life with others.

This is not to suggest that recognition theory does not explicitly (if not always fully) engage the question of how recognition is achieved. Hayden and Schick’s tracing of recognition theory in the Introduction to this volume strongly suggests that recognition requires ongoing and struggle-filled engagements over the long term. Such engagements may take multiple forms: Hegel’s ‘struggles for recognition of something of intrinsic worth’, Habermas’s discursive encounters, Taylor’s legislative, multicultural management of diversity, Honneth’s attention to the intersubjective conditions for mutual recognition, Fraser’s affirmative and transformative political strategies and Ricoeur’s focus on love in the production of recognition. This chapter picks up on that broader theme and offers a preliminary, non-exhaustive sketch of a particular set of intersubjective, interhuman practices, or what I call ‘processes of making human’. Such processes
cultivate recognition of identity and status, since the two are mutually imbricated and entwined, and hence one’s treatment and admission as fully human in the so-called human family.

In short, International Relations theory and recognition theory need to explore more systematically processes whereby recognition is inter-personally accorded. This is imperative given the long history of dehumanizing practices which have rendered various ‘types’ of people marginal, secondary or anathema to the multiple stories of ‘civilization’ peoples have constructed across time and space. Likewise, such an exploration makes increasing sense in an increasingly globalizing system whereby persons and people are becoming more central to world politics. I thus turn the assumptive ideal of universal (interhuman) recognition into a question and ask not only ‘what is recognition?’ but also ‘how is recognition produced if it is not automatically extended to the other?’ Answering such questions foregrounds the political and institutional translation of basic forms of human sociality in the constitution of world society, with profound implications for a globalizing international relations increasingly attuned to the human being and her multiple needs. In that regard, the chapter extends the argument to the International Relations theory concept of world society: constructions and forms of world society are very much contingent on who we recognize, how we do so and to what degree.

To establish recognition’s contingency in the international sphere, the next section briefly examines interstate recognition practices. More specifically, a focus on (especially regional) recognition practices reveals that far from being an inveterate, immutable, foundational ‘thing’ of international relations that in the end is associated with state prerogative and permissiveness, sovereignty acts as a fulcrum to which conditionalities and responsibilities of states – often articulated at the regional level – are attached. Conditional interstate recognition practices hence may be read as fuelling the transformation of regional international societies, if not international society as a whole, from pluralistic clusters of states hinged on minimal rules of coexistence to thicker solidarist societies wed to deeper normative commitments.

But, my core contribution to the literature pertains to the work done in sections three and four: applying recognition theory to the rather ambiguous if oft referenced conception of world society, which is described variously as world community, cosmopolitan polity or humanity/humankind. Section three begins by treating the literature’s acknowledgement of world society. Spatial considerations demand that I limit my focus. Instead of surveying the broad range of world society literature from John Burton’s cobweb model
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(1972) of world politics to the Stanford School (see Meyer et al. 1997), and more recent cosmopolitan, post-Westphalian iterations of a world polity, I treat only the world society concept as evolved in English School of International Relations scholarship. Unfortunately, I argue, the promise of the world society concept as a political force in the construction of (a) shared world(s) remains unfulfilled, mostly because the literature neglects how interhuman practices of recognition and, crucially, misrecognition, continually reconfigure world society. Put differently, following the footsteps of Judith Shklar (1982), I ‘put cruelty first’.

Remedying this core deficiency in world society theory prompts me to examine in section four the production of recognition in world society. Accounts of world society must move beyond generic frames of ‘humanity’ and acknowledge that the (unfortunate and at times violent) deployment of difference often jettisons our biological sameness upon which a conception of humanity, and concomitantly, world society, is presumably founded. Even if on a cosmopolitan view we remain wed to the idea that all *Homo sapiens* do in fact comprise world society, then our accountings need to grapple with the fact that different types of human beings invariably occupy dissimilar positions. In this section, I propose four processes which aid in the production of recognition: resistance against forms of oppression, marginalization and dehumanization; reflection on the status and worth of others; the reproduction of prevailing behavioural norms; and the taking of responsibility for self and/or others. Given the salience of these processes with respect to the constitution of subjects of world society, I describe them in the concluding section as primary institutions of world society. How we recognize and understand world society, I maintain, is very much contingent on how we recognize its component parts.

**The conditionality of recognition in ‘the international’**

In English School theory, an international society of states is said to exist ‘when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions’ (Bull 1995: 13). One category of evidence for such a society of states concerns conditional practices of interstate recognition. While the practice of extending recognition to entities claiming sovereign status remains the province of political and diplomatic decision-making, international law provides two
frameworks to guide state decision-making. The declaratory theory maintains that an entity becomes sovereign when it has fulfilled the requisite conditions stipulated in the 1933 *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States* (permanent population, territory, defined borders and a government capable of engaging in relations with other states). Alternatively, the constitutive theory maintains that an entity becomes sovereign when others recognize it as such (see Carter et al. 2007: 448). Neither framework – each a kind of ideal type – is wholly determinative in practice. Contrary to the declaratory theory, entities such as Taiwan may satisfy the *Montevideo Convention* criteria but are denied recognition as sovereign (even if they possess special status in international society). Contrary to the constitutive theory, entities such as Kosovo may declare independence and be recognized by many (even dominant) states but are denied sovereignty. In both cases, arguably, United Nations membership – which neither aforementioned state yet possesses – functions as the authoritative barometer of full recognition and hence inclusion in the international society of states.

Clearly, great powers matter. To that end, Milena Sterio has proposed a ‘great power theory’ of self-determination to explain why East Timor and South Sudan became sovereign, but Chechnya, South Ossetia and Abkhazia (to which we add Taiwan and Kosovo) have not. Mining cases for continuities in practice, she identifies four necessary conditions for the international community to assess the validity of self-determinative claims to sovereign statehood: systematic oppression, a weak central government, administration by an international actor and broad great power support (2013: 57). This kind of argument contemporizes a strand of research that has focused on the non-automaticity of recognition practices hinged on satisfying distinct criteria. Historically, the most (in)famous of these practices appeared as the nineteenth-century standard of civilization by which European states could demarcate the boundaries between a civilized self from an uncivilized, even barbaric, non-European, non-Christian other (Gong 1984). Applied to non-European entities, ‘civilization’ was code for a set of benchmarks including ‘protection of basic rights of . . . citizens, standards of honesty and efficiency in administration, capacity to adhere to rules of international law and to enter into diplomatic relations, and avoidance of slavery and other odious practices similar to those which European states expected of each other’ (Gong 1984: viii, 15). If subjects met and adhered to them – Gong charts how particular countries navigated, managed and inculcated the standard, sometimes successfully (Japan and Siam) and sometimes not (the Ottoman Empire and China) – they theoretically could be granted full recognition and hence admission into the European society of states.² In this regard, the standard
functioned as a regulatory or governance norm that structured ‘decision-making and policies at all levels’ (True 2011: 76–7).

The standard of civilization was not mere mimicry, however; its replication demanded the internalization of European norms and institutional procedures such that it functioned also as an embodied norm, meaning one ‘internalized in bodily practices [that] constitutes the subject and his or her recognition by others’ (True 2011: 76). Hedley Bull considered the brandishing of such norms as ‘equal rights of states to sovereignty, of peoples to self-determination, and of persons of different race to individual rights’ (Gong 1984: ix) by Africans and Asians as marking the apogee of ‘barbarian’ socialization and their recognition as fully human. Yet, the standard was likewise applicable to European selves as it ‘represented a code of expected “civilized” behavior’ embodying both ‘humanitarian sentiments and codes of noblesse oblige’ (Gong 1984: 6). We can read the standard, through regulatory and embodied frames, as a regime of recognition (of a particular sort); as such, the standard illustrates what Greta Snyder in this volume calls the integrative and performative functions of recognition, even if we are at pains to define the standard of civilization as ‘democratic’ in any substantive sense. On one level, the standard sought to integrate outsiders to cohere with a core international society of European states based on certain fundamental preconditions. On another, the effectuation of the standard, both by insiders and outsiders, substantiated the notion of an operative international will and enforced certain beliefs of what constituted a legitimate political community.

Other conditions have appeared on the historical horizon. The monarchical principle of the nineteenth century developed under the auspices of the European concert system and justified by the need to maintain international peace and order allocated recognition of (European) states based on rule by a member of a legitimate royal family. Newly independent countries (e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece and, later, Norway) were enjoined to adopt a princely leader from a European royal family before formal legal recognition was bestowed. Failure to adhere to the principle led to Concert-authorized interventions, political or military in nature, in Prussia, Naples and Piedmont, Spain, Bologna and Parma, Rome, Hungary and Denmark (see Weinert 2007: 128–35).

More contemporarily, the UN Charter stipulates general requirements for membership: that states be peace-loving and are able and willing to fulfil all of the obligations outlined in the document. The UN Security Council (UNSC) has layered onto these general criteria categorizations which strongly imply a hierarchical and highly contingent regime of interstate recognition. At bottom
are pariah states straddled with sanctions, occupied by intervening international forces, or both (e.g. apartheid South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, North Korea, Libya, Iraq, Iran), the sovereign prerogatives of which have been stripped away or significantly curtailed. Failing states with substantial UN peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations (e.g. Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo) occupy a lower-middle tier, while countries administered by the United Nations (e.g. Cambodia, Namibia, East Timor, Kosovo) occupy a tier above that. At the apex of the recognition pyramid reside, of course, not only the five permanent members of the UNSC, but also states elected to the two-year rotating non-permanent seats which require additional contributions to support the Council’s work. Practices hinge recognition on responsibilities to self (e.g. adequate regard for human rights; legitimate modes of governance institutions and processes; rule of law) and responsibility to others (e.g. fulfilment of international obligations, especially ones related to security and participation in the global economy). Finally, in the late twentieth century, recognition of new and successor states emerging out of disintegrating multi-ethnic empires and republics (e.g. the USSR, Yugoslavia) was linked to their immediate and unconditional accession to international human rights and non-proliferation conventions.

Practices in regional organizations constitute a species of the genus of recognition. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Organization of American States and the African Union, among others, specify conditions of membership related to economic, monetary and technical development; policy, institutional and internal governance reform; and the enactment (in varying degrees) of normative commitments to democracy, security and human rights. Both NATO and the EU even outline steps towards accession to membership (European Commission 2014). The five-country East African Community (EAC) has declined the membership application of the Republic of Sudan for failure to meet the admissions criteria as stipulated in Article 3 of the EAC Treaty which demands that members adhere to ‘universally acceptable principles of good governance, democracy, the rule of law, and observance of human rights and social justice’ (EAC 2014).³ Multiple regional and sub-regional organizations have imposed sanctions on, suspended or expelled members which have violated community standards. Military interventions by regional and sub-regional organizations into member states likewise may be viewed through regional optics of recognition/membership criteria. Criteria of recognition, membership conditions and disciplinary actions underscore the extent to which a logic of legitimacy has infused intra-regional interstate relations and moved them beyond procedural acknowledgement
of autonomous, sovereign status (international regional relations as pluralist societies based on rules of coexistence) in ways that suggest the transformation of regional interstate societies into thicker, solidarist communities based on common values and principles.

Additional developments at the regional level are of probative value. Logics of competiveness and legitimacy informed the 2002 creation of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM 2014) by which thirty-three countries voluntarily agreed to subject themselves to periodic evaluation ‘to encourage conformity’ with respect to ‘political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards’ and socio-economic development objectives in conjunction with the New Partnership for Africa’s Development ‘to reduce the risk profile of doing business in Africa’ (NEPAD 2014). Recognizing limited local resources and the constraints of a global economy, the Southern African Development Community’s Common Agenda outlines key regional principles and values, and a series of policies and strategies to achieve its integrative objectives to meet regional demands and be competitive in the global economy (SADC 2012). The highly anticipated release of the Pacific Plan Review by the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in December 2013 outlines a framework designed to propel the region towards greater integration. Noting that ‘the region is vulnerable and… remains significantly dependent on the economies and goodwill of others’, the report urges member states to substantively reflect upon their readiness for deeper integration, the possibilities and challenges of ‘sharing sovereignty’, and acknowledging that ‘regional priorities that may not equate to national priorities’ (PIF 2013: 3).

While delving deeper into these issues is beyond the scope of this paper, several observations bear highlighting. First, recognition as an intersubjective, interstate practice is often conditional. Second, membership conditions in regional and sub-regional organizations (as a type of criteria of recognition) suggest a transformation of some regional groupings of states into thicker solidarist societies that stretch beyond mere rules of coexistence – even if criteria are inconsistently applied and enforced. As such, third, practices of recognition and retribution reproduce and strengthen the normative foundations of interstate societies by promoting coherence with respect to human rights, democracy, economic governance, the rule of law and the like which, fourth, through greater cohesion among members, may likely fuel more extensive forms of integration and collaboration. This, fifth, acts to reconstitute actors’ identities and interests by further embedding them in social networks, and hence linking them to collective expectations and commitments.
From international to world society: Extending conditional recognition practices

While the international society of states has developed institutionalized practices of recognition across time and space to regulate not only membership per se, but membership in good standing (see Chayes and Chayes 1995), the same may not entirely be said of world society. Certainly, the world society concept has attracted considerable attention in academic accounts of our globalizing age as it is identified, paired or treated in conjunction with communication, cosmopolitanism, crime, culture, democracy, the economy, education, empire, the environment, global civil society, global governance, health, human rights, integration, international institutions, law, migration, non-governmental organizations, regionalism, religion, security communities, technology and transnational social movements. More theoretically inclined works assay world society in the International Relations terms of system, structure and process, and the Sociological ones of society and community. The sheer diversity of subjects associated with and tethered to it suggests that it has become something of a trope to capture a web of relations between diverse actors distinct from and operating outside the formal rubric of state governance and held together by some conception of common interests and values. On that reading, the systems or transactional view of world society, defined in terms of communication networks and the interaction capacity of systems (e.g. Luhmann 1982), are wed to the social view, defined in the (cosmopolitan) normative terms of shared values, rules and institutions (e.g. Vincent 1986).

Yet, world society eludes, perhaps because of its use as a conceptual midden. Should it be defined primarily in ontological terms (e.g. natural and juridical non-state actors), or epistemological ones (e.g. cognitive dispositions towards cosmopolitanism, humanitarianism, regionalism, or civilizationalism)? Does it entail an explicit normative commitment to human rights and democracy? Is it a functional term pertaining to global communication, economic, environmental, legal and technological systems that organize actors, regulate their behaviours and engender particular sets of relations? Is it, alternatively, a process term focused on migrations of people, information and sundry objects across borders? Does one particular angle possess greater explanatory power than others to capture a diverse set of phenomenon in theoretically relevant ways? Or, reflective of the complexity of human societies, must we consider all formulations at the expense of parsimony and precision? So indistinct is the world society concept, despite its prevalent usage, that Barry Buzan, a prominent theorist of international
relations, characterized some views of it as marked by incredulity: it ‘doesn’t exist in any substantive form, and therefore its moral priority is unattached to any practical capability to deliver much world order’ (2004: 36). If by practical capability we mean material instruments and resources to effectuate the will(s) of actors, then the point, as compared to an international society of states, may be defensible even if communications technology, among other structural and material factors, challenges the view.6

Despite such criticism, Buzan aimed to revitalize and provide traction to the world society concept by disaggregating it into two broad domains: transnational and interhuman societies. Transnational societies encompass the panoply of non-state, rule and norm-governed clubs, firms, lobbies, associations and coalitions that increasingly act across borders. Interhuman societies refer to ‘social structures based on interactions amongst individual human beings … mainly manifested as large-scale patterns of shared identity’ (Buzan 2004: xvii). They range from the basic family unit/clan as the primordial, minimum form of interhuman society; ‘“imagined communities” such as nations, religions and various kinds of functional networks’ which constitute middle range interhuman societies; and maximal ones defined in terms of ‘universally shared identities which could vary from the minimum recognition by all humans of each other as like-units … to the advent of a world civilization linking all humankind together in a complex web of shared values and elaborated identities’ (Buzan 2004: 135). Yet, since most of these ‘globalisms tend to be separate rather than coordinated’ (Buzan 2004: 210), they raise the spectre that world society may be less cohesive and solidarist, and more pluralist and perhaps more dissonant than originally thought (see Williams 2005).

Buzan’s interhuman reformulation, translated most basically as ‘individual-to-individual interaction’ (2004: 120), attempts to respond to contemporary (globalizing) transformations in ways that draw upon strengths of International Relations theory and to push theoretical thinking to consider seriously and systematically ‘sub-global international social structures and the way in which they interact with the global level’ (Buzan 2004: 270). Yet, Buzan does not wrestle with the dynamics of interpersonal interaction; his concerns were structural since, in his view, world society ‘implies something … beyond the state towards more cosmopolitan images of how humankind is, or should be, organized’ (Buzan 2004: 1). But, organization has a predicate: identity (which implicates recognition practices). Thus, even in its current, anthropocentric/cosmopolitan/interhuman conceptual incarnation, world society, defined as equable with ‘all parts of the human community’ (Bull 1995: 269; see also Buzan 1993: 337),

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which James Mayall (2000: 14) replicates with the ‘view that humanity is one’, remains conceptually and agentically delimited.

On the one hand, the systems view by definition excludes those lacking access to presumably global systems or relegates people who perform ancillary roles in the global economy – e.g. female garment workers in Bangladesh, unskilled labour, indigenous and rural peoples – to the dispensable margins. Further, the inclusivity implied by the system view is undermined or negated if we accept that structural arrangements engender different interests, values and understandings based on agents’ positioning within them – some of which do not accord with, or even explicitly contravene and oppose hegemonic preferences which tend to play predominant roles in the constitution of the ‘world’ of world society. Think of imperial, hierarchic models of world society built and substantiated on standards of civilization and racialisms; varieties of capitalism constructed upon a deeply stratified international division of labour; or civilizational models that partition the globe based on broad, generalizable cultural attributes.7

On the other hand, the social view of world society by definition tends to exclude those who do not share or advance the normative commitments which are usually defined in Western/Northern and liberal terms. Further, the ontological and normative homogeneity implied by the social view modulates or even forecloses consideration of substantive variation in understandings of (presumably shared) normative and value commitments. Those who reject prevailing value commitments, or who proffer distinct and divergent interpretations of them, may face exclusion from organizations and processes associated with world society; such exclusion refutes the assumptive ideal of universal, interhuman recognition. Consequently, ‘the complex determination of maldistribution, misframing and misrecognition’, as Patrick Hayden (2012: 588) has argued with respect to the human right to health, prevents effective realization of people’s recognition.

Thus, how humankind is or should be organized depends on primordial logics concerning identity and recognition. Consequently, our theoretical constructs need to consider both the aggregative and dissociative functions of identity and the allocation of recognition. Practices of misrecognition, exclusion and marginalization render certain ‘types’ of human beings as superfluous to humanity and illustrate that far from being an inclusive realm based on universality of membership, world society, like the international society of states, is highly stratified, infused as it were with competing understandings and experiences of class, ethnicity, gender, race and sundry
other identifiers that have substantively shaped sociopolitical institutions and the systems within which they operate.

**Practices of recognition in world society**

Accounts of world society must therefore move beyond generic frames of ‘humanity’ and acknowledge that the deployment of difference often jettisons our biological sameness upon which a conception of humanity, and concomitantly, world society, is presumably founded. Even if on a cosmopolitan view we remain wed to the idea that all *Homo sapiens* comprise world society, our accountings still need to grapple with the fact that different types of human beings invariably occupy dissimilar positions. Colour, ethnicity, gender, ideology, intelligence, nationality, occupation, physical capabilities, political affiliation, race, religion, sexuality and wealth, among other signifiers, have been used to justify colonization, discrimination, disenfranchisement, enslavement, ethnic cleansing, the forced removal of children from their families, genocide, homophobia, human trafficking, imperialism, internment, lynching, miscegenation prohibitions, misogyny, pogroms, purges, racism, segregation, sexism, sexual violence, sterilization, torture and wars of extermination. Misrecognition hinges on perception of difference, no matter how ephemeral or immutable, self-ascribed or other-imposed, which reveals an ambiguity or tension that animates if not defines our social existence: ‘we are always both the self we imagine and the body others see’ (Marso 2012: 167). Yet practices of misrecognition do not perforce dispute world society’s existence; rather, they eschew singular articulations of world society while positing plural, particularistic world societies. In this view, Nazi, Bolshevik and imperial forms parallel cosmopolitan conceptions: they merely represent alternative, if exclusive, circumscribed and ethically objectionable visions of how humanity should be organized.

But exclusive visions of world society expose the irregularities and conditionalities of interhuman recognition. We therefore must ask, if recognition is not automatically bestowed, how is it produced? This, in my estimation, is the central question we should probe since answers to it implicate how membership and belonging (namely, to humanity itself) are negotiated, along what fault lines, and with which operating logics; what forms of world society interhuman interaction generates; in what specific ways discourses of humanity, humanitarianism and ethical obligations to others are translated...
into practice; and how, finally, world society/societies come to be constituted. Theoretically, I label practices of recognition in the aggregate as constituting a primary institution of world society by which I mean a ‘durable and recognized pattern of shared practices rooted in values commonly held’ that in the end ‘play a constitutive role in relation to both the pieces/players and the rules of the game’ (Buzan 2004: 181). Thinking in such terms might help scholars and practitioners view (mis)recognition more critically and construct more systematic methods for remedying the various injustices of misrecognition, maldistribution and misframing that plague interhuman relations.

Drawing upon my work on humanization or ‘making human’ (Weinert 2015), I outline four processes that aid in the production of recognition: resistance against forms of oppression, marginalization and dehumanization; reflection on the status and worth of others; the reproduction of prevailing behavioural norms; and the taking of responsibility for self and/or others.

**Resistance**

For some, recognition of their full human status (e.g. Tutsis in an ethnically charged Rwanda, Bosniaks in Serb-dominated territory, non-white Europeans in an imperial order) or a core identity component of the self (e.g. being a woman in an androcentric world, or non-heterosexual in a heterosexual one) proves to be a struggle ‘in connection with something of specific intrinsic worth’ (Hegel 1967: §351), which Drucilla Cornell (1995: 78) reframes as struggles ‘against the appropriation of the Other into any system of meaning that would deny her difference and singularity’. For Cornell, resistance exposes and opposes practices and institutions hinged on blindness to exploitation or founded upon violence against others. As a psychological exercise of ‘consciousness raising’, resistance demands that we question inherited, ostensibly naturalized and settled concepts, and work to ‘loosen’ their meanings by wrestling with convention, ‘expand[ing] our sensibility, and re-imagin[ing] our form[s] of life’ (Cornell 1995: 76). Volker Heins’s chapter in this volume picks up the theme: identity is not something to be erased or eschewed as it may serve as a potential counterweight to the marginalizing, dehumanizing effects of power operating at all levels.

As a practice or performance, resistance assumes at least three forms. First, it may appear as confrontation, whether as physical protest (e.g. the suffragette marches or the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City which launched the ‘gay rights’ movement) or as legal action (e.g. the push for marriage equality in courts). Resistance manifests the misrecognized’s self-conscious break with
the oppressive practices of the past, and a daring mentality which situates self-meaning and self-valuation – matters more fully explored in Robbie Shilliam’s chapter – at the centre of the activist enterprise. Even if resistance does not initially produce recognition, it at least exposes the transgressive, transformative abilities and determinations of (marginalized, misrecognized) human beings as sociopolitical forces intent on remedying conditions of injustice.

Second, resistance may be understood as a self-affirmational performance that actualizes potentialities of existence: think of Rosa Parks’ now iconic seating which unleashed a civil rights movement, or LGBT Pride Day parades that exhibit and celebrate a right to Be, or the 2013 ‘drive-ins’ in Saudi Arabia in which women, legally prohibited from driving automobiles, flouted the injunction (Hubbard 2013).

Third, resistance may be construed as an alterior narrative posited against a dominating (silencing) discourse: ‘we humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human’ (Arendt 1968: 25). As then-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2011) noted in a speech on gay rights as human rights, ‘progress starts with honest discussion’ between all persons on all sides of the issue. The point is not to force changes in belief – no one, Clinton mused, ‘has ever abandoned a belief because he was forced to do so’ – but to foster an understanding that ‘universal human rights include freedom of expression and freedom of belief, even if our words or beliefs denigrate the humanity of others’, and to inculcate knowledge that ‘while we are each free to believe whatever we choose, we cannot do whatever we choose’ (Clinton 2011). However, as some feminist theorists have observed, this perspective of resistance depends on a ‘speakability’ that often is absent in traumatic instances such as torture and rape. The ‘unspeakable’ demands, then, that we likewise recognize the silencing, recognition-erasing effects of certain actions and be willing to account for the impossibility of dialogue. How we are willing to account, though, varies. We may be compelled to re-present the claims of the silenced and advocate, as Fiona Robinson advises, in non-paternalistic fashion on their behalf; we may be forced as human beings to push back at governments – even powerful ones – that continue to maim and torture in the name of some parochial interest.

Resistance as a constitutive, (re)productive and (re)generative practice of world society suggests certain avenues for research. Do certain types of resistance yield more desirable and sustainable outcomes than others? Are transnational linkages between groups determinative in the production of those outcomes? Do forms of resistance, in aiming for the prohibition, prevention
and halting of harm, represent a moral minimum on which world society ought to be predicated? Yet, to what effect do normative advances connected to successful instances of resistance and which generate reactionary measures (e.g. anti-homosexual rights laws and violence; social pressures on women to remain in the home; rejection of claims of indigenous peoples for greater autonomy or participation in governance; particularistic interpretations of human rights; African denunciations of international criminal prosecutorial actions directed primarily against Africans) undermine these advances? How do the dissonances and fractures undermine or hinder world society? How might actors effectively respond?

Reflection

Recognition may result from an extended process of reflection. Broadly defined, reflection on ‘our most basic notions of what it means to be human’ aims to disclose and clarify the ‘historical narratives’ which relate to and are constitutive of ‘identity and human self-knowledge, collectively and individually’ (Smith 2007: 243). The point of the exercise is, in Iris Marion Young’s critical, emancipatory formulation, to project ‘normative possibilities unrealized but felt in a particular given society’ (1990: 6). Inwardly manifested as introspection, reflection takes the self as its subject: to realize one’s potential, to seek self-meaning and value, to tackle and overcome the obstacles hindering one’s development. Outwardly directed with others as its subject, reflection re-presents the world and others in thought – the danger of which is always that ‘the other is met not as the other, but merely as part of the monological self’ (Buber 1965a: 206). Reflection thus should never be an endpoint but only a beginning for engagement with and in the world.

To put a finer point on it: reflection, even as an introspective exercise, is not mere solipsism. The language we use, whether in dialogue with others or in thinking, ‘is part of an activity or a form of life’ (Wittgenstein quoted in Onuf 1989: 44) that reproduces the myriad of social structures and conventions from which language emerges. Since reflection foregrounds the historical narratives that have shaped our understandings of and practices in the world, it forces us to ‘“see” the world differently’ (Cornell 1995: 78–9). For instance, how we respond to rape depends on how we ‘see’ women and men: if we define rape as something that happens to women, then we miss sexual violence enacted upon men (see Carpenter 2005) such as happened in the Omarska concentration camp during the Bosnia – Serbia War. If we construe the sexual exploits of men during conflict as instances of male release, we miss rape as a weapon of war. In this
view, our moral identity, conceptions of ethical behaviour and ways in which we care for others are ‘not secured in advance, but develop subject to a process of self-reflection’ (Beiner 1997: 20).

Reflection as a constitutive, (re)productive and (re)generative practice of world society suggests certain avenues for research. Might we identify emerging sociopolitical understandings of moral minimums that might eventually be translated into what Andrew Linklater (2011) has called cosmopolitan harm conventions? How might global governance institutions stimulate deeper forms of reflection on the plight of the mis- and non-recognized, and generate methods to mitigate or remedy such injustices? In what ways might our liberal educational institutions and methods be reformed to focus less on ‘more respect’ or ‘more recognition’, as Kate Schick insists, and more on subjective self-analysis to encourage more sustained critical reflection of our role in the adoption of norms that dehumanize and marginalize, or our (direct or indirect) complicity in socio-economic structures that oppress? In what specific ways might mis- or non-recognized persons arrive at enhanced self-knowledge and value through deeper reflection on their own lived conditions – whether gendered, racialized or economized? Moreover, as Tarik Kochi has eloquently argued in his chapter, how might we use such conditions as the platform from which to question, and foment challenges to, the forms of inequality that stymie human development?

Reproduction or replication of norms

The term ‘norm’ is usually coupled with terms such as shared, moral and good (Klotz 1995: 14). However, like Klotz, I hesitate to do so because the relational contexts within which norms operate, not to mention their (potentially unethical) origins or deployment, may neuter those more agreeable qualifiers. Feminist, critical and poststructural theories draw attention to the fact that norms may be imposed on others (see True 2011: 77); norms and their undergirding belief structures which signal what actors deem is right to do (Crawford 2002: 86–98) may confront the otherized as objective barriers to their humanization. Further, even in instances in which norms are emancipatory in constitution and intent, particular meanings and applications of them may clash with local understandings, blind societies to other existing forms of exploitation and violence or spawn new ones such forms (True 2011: 75–8).

Still, norms perform central roles in humanization and recognition. First, norms may be crafted in direct response to the second-class status and/or
the suffering of others, such as abolitionist (e.g. Crawford 2002: 159–200) or anti-apartheid (e.g. Klotz 1995) norms, notwithstanding any oppressive effects they may inadvertently produce. Second, norms may stem from disgust or disapproval of difference, and hence attach conditions to the emancipation, humanization and recognition of the other such as the nineteenth-century ‘standard of “civilization”’. Norms of this sort aim to reproduce the social structures and normative beliefs equated with legitimate or appropriate modes of being. Finally, norms and normative beliefs may also humanize, emancipate and recognize the otherized through their use in ways that subvert or alter official or prevailing understandings of difference.

The reproduction of norms as a constitutive, (re)productive and (re)generative practice of world society suggests certain avenues for research. In what ways have specific norms been deployed to perpetuate injustices of misrecognition, maldistribution and misframing? How have certain norms, despite their emancipatory intent, come to be interpreted in narrow ways that reinforce particular chauvinisms? How might norms be reappropriated to fulfil the integrative and performative functions identified by Greta Snyder? Certain lessons may be drawn from, say, a deeper study of Navi Pillay’s advocacy for the United Nations’ Free & Equal Campaign, who shifted the rhetorical grounds on which she has championed rights for LGBT persons. Her first statement (2010) on the issue focused entirely on legalistic issues stemming from systematic discrimination and violence. But, as many states have resisted the importation of LGBT concerns under a human rights rubric, she came to frequently refer to the ‘humanity’ of LGBT peoples and their experiences by underscoring the presence of same-sex relationships across time and space, appealing to basic human experiences of love and difference, and referencing changing attitudes as integral to the human condition. Similarly, proponents of marriage equality (re)appropriate concepts, practices and norms of love, care, commitment and family from a heteronormatively restrictive framework; such are the normative values of being human, not monopolistic possessions of certain categories of persons.

Responsibility

Adherence to normative strictures constitutes an act of self-responsibility, which might be perceived as a condition on which recognition it hinged. Self-responsibility entails obligations to care for one’s interior life (e.g. the emotional, intellectual, psychological and spiritual dimensions of our lives) and body; to explore the potentialities of Being constrained by the presence and capacity
of others to do the same; and to accept the consequences of one’s actions and decisions.

Self-responsibility might also be read as an act of resistance. William Paul Simmons argued the point with respect to human rights law and the marginalized other: one of the three ‘modalities’ he identifies for reconstructing human rights to more fully respond to the needs of the marginalized and oppressed involves the self-ascription of identity and self-assertion of rights (2011: 129). For too long, he maintained, human rights law ‘often disregarded’ and even ‘silenced’ the voices of the disempowered, marginalized and suffering as human rights theorizing has usually emanated from abstract universalisms, not ‘from the voices of the Marginalized Other’ (Simmons 2011: 3). Many feminist, critical and poststructural theorists anticipated the argument. Balakrishnan Rajagopal (2003: 12), for instance, noted that ‘the idea of human rights has proved to be blind to the tremendous variety that human-rights struggles take in the form of social movement resistance in the Third World’, especially with respect to gender, development and democracy.

In Simmons’ view (2011: 129), the reconstruction of human rights also requires the exercise of responsibility and care for others: ‘patient listening to the voice of the Other’, and working in solidarity ‘with the Other to build the life-project that the Other is unable to complete because the Other is outside the system’ which share with an ethics of care explored fully in this volume by Fiona Robinson (see also Robinson 2011; Tronto 1993). If listening counters the patronizing tendencies some have charted in human rights discourse and practice, then working in solidarity builds coalitions between diverse people.

Yet responsibility is Janus-faced. Following Foucault, Iver Neumann and Ole Sending (2010: 115) read the exercise of self- and other-directed forms of responsibility in terms of a sociopolitical transformation in which power no longer simply appears as an external force that compels an individual to do or refrain from doing something, but rather operates through individuals as self-regulation. In their view, individuals morph from being objects of regulation to subjects with rights (Neumann and Sending 2010: 120). The freedom of rights-bearing individuals, put differently, is maintained within social limits so long as individuals act responsibly, that is, in accordance with social rules and norms. On the one hand, the shift empowers. On the other, it implies that failure to exercise rights responsibly or to manage one’s life in accordance with prevailing norms invites surveillance and policing. Cognizant of this duality, Foucault (1986: 51–3) framed responsibility not as ‘an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice… a recognized hierarchy [giving] the most advanced members the task of tutoring the
others. Responsibility is ‘the attention one devotes to the care that others should take of themselves, [which] appears then as the intensification of social relations’.

Care and power are on that view mutually implicative and constituting not only of societies but of selves. An ethics of care construes the self as relational – that is, not as a priori given, but as a product of ongoing relations with others (see Robinson 2011: 4). This ‘relational ontology’ acknowledges that interdependence and dependence, and hence hierarchy (no matter how ephemeral or embedded), responsibility and power are pervasive features in human life; consequently, ‘the practices of care through which we fulfil our responsibilities to particular others’ must feature in our political analyses and not be relegated to the private realm. As Robinson (2011: 5) has persuasively argued ‘relations of care and intimacy are of great political significance in that their form and nature are determined by relations of power that play out in a variety of contexts – from the household to the global political economy’.

**Recognition as a primary institution of world society**

Even if world society may be defined in the material terms of systems, structures, networks and in the ontological ones of actors, it ‘hangs together’ in significant degree because of an intersubjective web of assumptions, understandings, meanings, values, norms, principles and rules that permit us to speak of a common world and lend it ontological and determinative reality. But, these intersubjective elements do not automatically bind it as a unitary whole. Rather, this world as a space in-between human beings relates and separates them, which in turn pivots on practices of recognition and the processes that, in turn, help constitute recognition.

Given conditions of globalization – ‘the massive movement of peoples, the intensification of contacts and interconnections between societies, and the multiple dislocations of established ways of thinking and of doing [which] have intensified’ and deterritorialized identity politics (Hurrell 2007: 294) – the importation into International Relations of serious consideration of individual-to-individual interaction is increasingly warranted. Yet, any analytical traction or insights we gain by considering interhuman interaction as salient to the study of international relations are compromised by its inherent unpredictability and spontaneity. As such, this ‘sphere of “between” [or]… the real place and bearer of what happens between humans [which] has received no specific attention because… it does not exhibit a smooth continuity, but is ever and
again re-constituted in accordance with [human beings’] meetings with one another’ (Buber 1965a: 203). To counter the possibility that research energies are not wasted on ephemeral interactions, we necessarily look for regularities. In that vein, Buzan preferred to recast world society in structural-organizational terms and thus viewed it through the transnational prism of associations, and the interhuman optic of large-scale patterns of shared identity. Yet might we find something more rudimentary in interhuman interaction that will help us understand the intersubjective foundations of world society?

I have proposed an examination of recognition as an outcome of a non-exhaustive set of distinct processes. Studying those processes has broad implications for IR theory and practice. Witness debates regarding responsibility to others under threat of annihilation as grounded by the ‘responsibility to protect’ doctrine. Modes of interhuman recognition and awareness of moral universalisms filter through diplomatic discourse, interstate political rhetoric and non-state actor campaigns. Debates within international organizations evidence reflection in ways that discount the value of state borders and parochialisms when human well-being and human development are persistently at stake. Transnational social movements no matter their objectives document a human yearning to resist a politics of exclusion and the injustices of misrecognition. The articulation of human rights as applied to specific groups long denied them – e.g. indigenous peoples, children, women and, quite recently, LGBT persons – exhibits a universalizing tendency towards reflection on the lived experiences of specific peoples, and recognition of personhood, despite ideological arguments to the contrary. Responsibilities towards the global poor and the environment, even if weak and amorphous, manifest trends towards recognition through responsibility and care.

Because of their sociopolitical ramifications, I argue that practices of recognition function as a first-order practice or, in International Relations theoretical terms, a primary institution. Viewing world society through the prism of recognition theory offers significant opportunities for the concept to be further developed and clarified. In short, practices of interhuman recognition, as a way of cutting into the world society concept, invite more sustained and systematic attention to the ways such processes, as constructive machinations, might inculcate greater coherence to emancipatory projects and solidarities between mis- and non-recognized peoples; generate forms of institutionalization that permit greater human engagement in world politics; encourage the interrogation and potential reform of existing institutions and organizational behaviours, processes and programmes in ways that will effectively address and
alleviate the plight of dehumanized, marginalized others; and lend world society
substance and practical capabilities it has otherwise been deemed to be lacking.  

Notes

1 I use the capitalized version of International Relations to refer to the academic
discipline, and the lower-case to refer to the subject of study.

2 Edward Keene (2002: 123) looks in the reverse direction and maintains that Gong
tells only half the story as he omits from consideration 'the entry of some civilized
states – notably Germany, Russia and Japan – into the uncivilized world'.

3 Membership applications from South Sudan and Somalia are currently pending.

4 Cf. the preamble of the constitutive treaty of the Economic Community of West
African States (ECOWAS 1993) contains a provision that its sixteen member states
are 'convinced that the integration of the Member States into a viable regional
Community may demand the partial and gradual pooling of national sovereignties
to the Community within the context of a collective political will'.

5 Buzan looks beyond human rights and the normative concerns usually associated
with world society towards structural regularities as produced by the world
capitalist economy and subglobal/regional integrations that shape identities,
interests and roles. Patterson (2005) appends to that list the environment. The
contribution by Emilian Kavalski and Magdalena Zolkos to this volume provides a
robust critique of the conventional anthropocentric account of recognition, which
is centered on a binary reciprocal relationship between the recognizer and the
recognized. If international relations is to confront and understand meaningfully
environmental challenges, they argue, we must develop a more inclusive,
encompassing conception of recognition.

6 Hedley Bull (1995: 269–70) reflected on 'one important and novel factor affecting
transnational relations today' and opined that 'the development of global
communications' creates 'an unprecedented degree of mutual awareness among
different parts of the human community . . . [though] this has not by any means led
to a situation of "perfect" mutual awareness of all societies by one another'.

7 Put differently, we need to think not in terms of world society, but in terms of world
societies. See Buzan (1993: 337) and Williams (2005).

8 On 26 July 2013, the United Nations’ Office of the High Commissioner for
Human Rights launched its Free & Equal public information campaign in Cape
Town, South Africa. The campaign aims 'to raise awareness about violence and
discrimination against … LGBT people . . . and focus on the need for both legal
reforms and public education to counter homophobia and transphobia' (Penn
2013). The official website is www.unfe.org/ [accessed 15 December 2014].
9 I owe this point to a private conversation with Vivienne Matthies-Boon.
10 This is Andrew Linklater’s position and the subject of much of his research for over a decade (see 2011).
11 For example, while same-sex marriage in South Africa has effectuated constitutional provisions of equality, enhanced visibility of lesbians has contributed to the horror of corrective rape.
12 Self-ascription of identity is limited by the inherent ambiguity of Being that troubled Simone de Beauvoir: ‘we are always both the self we imagine and the body others see’ (Marso 2012: 167). Monica Mookherjee’s chapter uses Beauvoir’s ethics of ambiguity to counter Nancy Fraser’s objectivist framing of misrecognition as status which overlooks the lived experiences of suffering and finds in Beauvoir a basis on which to construct cosmopolitan solidarity with the mis- or non-recognized.
13 See Reilly (2007) for a feminist critique of human rights universalisms as masking certain biases.
14 Martin Buber writes that humans exist ‘anthropologically not in [their] isolation, but in the completeness of the relation between’ each other (1965b: 84).
15 See Teitel (2011) for a humanitarian international law perspective, and Neumann (2011) for an English School one.