


Review article

Exploring ethics in social education and social pedagogy from Honneth and Butler's recognition theories

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Submission date: 18 September 2021; Acceptance date: 14 February 2022; Publication date: 21 April 2022

How to cite

Corbella, L. and Úcar, X. (2022). Exploring ethics in social education and social pedagogy from Honneth and Butler's recognition theories. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 11(1): 6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2022.v11.x.006>.

Peer review

This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

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Open access

International Journal of Social Pedagogy is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

Abstract

The latest social pedagogy discourses in Spain have highlighted the increasing interest in developing the ethical dimension of its practice. Up to now, this issue has been addressed from a deontological perspective through which codes of ethics have been developed. Nowadays, a new perspective based on developing an ethical perspective focused on practice and relationships is emerging. This article reports on the results of the first stage of a larger study that aims to analyse the ethical dimension of socio-educational relationships. This stage consists of identifying the contributions of different social science authors to the construction of an ethical dimension in the socio-educational relationships. Our purpose is to develop a theoretical model of ethics in social pedagogy and social education that serves to substantiate an ethical practice. We present the contributions of Axel Honneth and Judith Butler and carry out a two-step theoretical analysis, involving an analysis of two original works by each author as well as a systematic review of the

applications of the authors' theories in the field of ethics and education. The main results provide a better understanding of how the theory of recognition, from the perspectives of both authors, is useful for the development of an ethical dimension of social pedagogy. To do so, it is necessary to analyse other related concepts, such as social freedom, invisibility, democratic ethical life, vulnerability, performativity, reflection, political resistance and responsibility, and how these are being applied in the social field. From this starting point, key socio-educational principles can be established in order to guide professional practice and socio-educational relationships.

Keywords ethics; social pedagogy; social education; socio-educational relationships; recognition theory; Axel Butler; Judith Butler

Introduction

This study focuses on the field of social pedagogy and social education in Spain. Before going into the main focus of this article, we should clarify the relationship between social education and social pedagogy in the Spanish context, and their differences with social work. In Spain, social pedagogy is understood as an interdisciplinary branch of knowledge, while social education is the profession that applies this knowledge. In other words, in the Spanish context, social pedagogy would be the theory and social education the practice (Llena, 2018). Social pedagogy professions in other European countries are social pedagogue and social worker (Úcar, 2021a); however, social work and social education are two different professions in Spain. We could say that the former mobilises the resources of the environment to offer support to people with the aim of improving their lives, while the latter generates learning processes that aim to mobilise people's own resources and capacities so that they can improve their way of being and acting in the world. Thus, in this article we use social pedagogy and social education indistinctly, referring to practitioners who apply the social pedagogy approach – as social educators – and to the actions carried out by social educators based on their learning and educational approach background as socio-educational actions.

In this context, the socio-educational practice of social educators, as with social pedagogy practitioners in other countries, is conducted within three spheres: scientific development, technical development and ethical development, which includes the set of values and ideals that guide the profession (Storø, 2013).

In Spain, as in other countries, current academic literature expresses the need to develop an ethical perspective in social education (Campillo and Sáez, 2012; Campillo, Saez and Sánchez, 2014; Caride, 2002; Román, 2013; Sánchez-Valverde, 2015; Vilar, 2013, 2014; Vilar, Riberas and Rosa, 2015). Focusing on how this has been addressed so far, three different but complementary perspectives are identified. There are philosophical discourses, professionalism discourses and those based on praxis (Corbella and Úcar, 2019). Until now, this issue has been addressed from a professional and deontological perspective through which codes of ethics have been developed. Nowadays, a new perspective based on developing an ethical standpoint focused on practice and relationships is emerging.

A previous study provides a general overview of the state of the question concerning the ethical dimension in social education in the Spanish context. This study reached a series of conclusions, including the need for theoretical development that underpins practice, connecting theory and practice and establishing concrete actions aimed at intentionally incorporating this ethical dimension into the day-to-day work of professionals (Corbella and Úcar, 2019). In order to address this practical and relational perspective, we focus on what we consider to be the core of socio-educational action: socio-educational relationships. Úcar (2021b) defines this relationship as a process framed within a socio-cultural context where educators work together with subjects for the latter to acquire the necessary learning resources to increase and improve their capacity to be, behave and act in the world with dignity.

Vilar, Riberas and Rosa (2018a) and Vilar et al. (2018b), in reports that explain the situation of ethics in social educator training in Spain, state that training should address the following issues: (a) the need to understand the theoretical-philosophical contents; (b) the development of technical elements of a

communicative and strategic nature; and finally (c) the ability to manage value conflicts. If we focus on the first need expressed by the authors, and from the perspective of social pedagogy understood in the Spanish context, a question arises: What theoretical-philosophical contributions do the different social science authors make to the construction of an ethical perspective in the field of social pedagogy?

In order to answer this question, we have initiated a study that aims to analyse the ethical dimension of socio-educational relationships as defined above.¹ This article reports on part of the work carried out in the first stage of this larger study. This stage consists of identifying the contributions of different social science authors to the construction of an ethical dimension in socio-educational relationships, in an effort to understand the theoretical-philosophical content by reading different notable theories in a social pedagogical perspective. Specifically, we present the contributions of Axel Honneth and Judith Butler to recognition theory and related concepts.² Recognition theory is a key aspect in this study, given its relevance in any socio-educational relationship. Evidence of this is found in its previous applications in the field of social pedagogy (Lausten and Frederiksen, 2016; Thrana, 2016, among others).

First, we present the methodology used to carry out the theoretical analysis. Then we introduce each author's most important concepts and ideas, as well as their applications to social and educational practices. Finally, we outline a proposal of how to incorporate these authors' contributions into socio-educational relationships.

Methodology

This article proposes a theoretical analysis of the work of Axel Honneth and Judith Butler. Their selection is based on the following criteria: (a) the authors reflect on ethics; (b) the authors develop theories committed to social change; and (c) the theories are applicable to socio-educational relationships. Moreover, complementing the contributions of Honneth and Butler allows us to offer a broad view that encompasses Aristotelian, Kantian and post-structuralist orientations in moral philosophy. Although the original study further analyses theories that complement each other and offer different perspectives, this work focuses specifically on the contributions of the presented authors.

The theoretical analysis consists of two steps: an analysis of two original works by each author and a systematic review of the applications of the authors' theories in the field of ethics and education. This second phase is relevant because it allows us to map how the authors' theories are being applied within the field of ethics and social education. This mapping serves as a reference to determine starting points from which to apply the theory of recognition and the concepts dealt with by the authors in the field of social education and social pedagogy. Inclusion criteria for the original works and the reviews are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion criteria of the authors' original works and the reviews (Source: authors).

Inclusion criteria	
Original work	Reviews
(1) The main theme of the work is directly related to the field of ethics.	(1) Only article, review or conference paper-type documents are accepted.
(2) The author presents a current and internationally recognised theory.	(2) The languages accepted are English, Spanish and Catalan.
(3) This theory has been previously applied in some field of social pedagogy/social education.	(3) It focuses the authors' theory in the field of education or ethics.
	(4) It provides a theoretical or practical application of the theory in the field of social pedagogy/social education.

The original works selected from each author are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Original works selected from each author (Source: authors).

Axel Honneth	Judith Butler
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Disrespect</i> (2011) • <i>Freedom's Right</i> (2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Giving an Account of Oneself</i> (2009) • <i>Senses of the Subject</i> (2016)

The following databases were consulted to search for reviews: WEB OF SCIENCE, SCOPUS, ERIC and DICE CSIC.³ Two boolean searches were performed for each author: Ethics AND (Honneth/Butler), and (Honneth/Butler) AND (pedagogy OR education). The concepts of social education and social pedagogy together with the other descriptors did not yield any results. The final search results can be consulted in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of works found and selected in each search (Source: authors).

Search no. 1: Ethics AND Honneth		
Database	N results	Selected
SCOPUS	40	15
WEB OF SCIENCE	42	15
ERIC	5	5
DICE CSIC (Eng/Spa)	4/11	1/4
Search no. 2: Honneth AND (pedagogy OR education)		
Database	N results	Selected
SCOPUS	51	24
WEB OF SCIENCE	52	16
ERIC	30	15
DICE CSIC (Eng/Spa)	1/1	1/1
Search no. 3: Ethics AND Butler		
Database	N results	Selected
SCOPUS	181	57
WEB OF SCIENCE	250	55
ERIC	54	12
DICE CSIC (Eng/Spa)	11/17	6/6
Search no. 4: Butler AND (pedagogy OR education)		
Database	N results	Selected
SCOPUS	301	30
WEB OF SCIENCE	345	28
ERIC	78	9
DICE CSIC (Eng/Spa)	2/2	1/1

We followed the methodological recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006) and the structure proposed by the PRISMA statement (Urrútia and Bonfill, 2010) for this analysis.

The document selection process was as follows. All the results returned in each database were evaluated for review following the previously established eligibility criteria. We then reviewed the title, keywords and summary of the total results returned in the searches carried out in each database.

For Honneth, a total of 69 documents were selected. The papers were reviewed and 26 were discarded as they were duplicated or did not meet the eligibility criteria on more careful review. The total number of studies finally included is 43 documents.

For Butler, a total of 99 documents were selected. The papers were reviewed and 38 were discarded as they were duplicated or did not meet the eligibility criteria on closer analysis. The total number of studies finally included is 61 documents.

The review procedure is associated with an inductive coding process, using ATLAS.ti v.8 software, which allows us to build the theoretical model from blocks of content and variables found.

Results

In this section we present the theoretical contributions and important concepts provided by each of the authors. The analysis of each one is structured through the following elements:

- the purpose of ethics according to their perspective
- their own definition of the theory of recognition
- the key aspects of their theories
- the materialisation proposal they make
- how they approach the question of social transformation and their notion of responsibility
- the applications they have had in the social and educational field.

The purpose of ethics for Honneth and Butler in their recognition theories

The aim of ethics in Honneth's theories is personal self-realisation (Honneth, 2011) through the concept of justice. For the author, a just society is one in which people have the necessary recognition that allows them to achieve this personal self-realisation (Hamer, 2011). For Butler, the aim is to inhabit a liveable, habitable world. Butler states that people are not responsible for the way they are, but for the shape they give to the world we live in (Butler, 2009).

Both authors use the theory of recognition to talk about ethics in the social sphere.

Honneth (2011) focuses mainly on individual relationships and expressions of recognition. For him, recognition is an act of decentring; it consists of moving away from placing the focus on oneself to giving value to the person – to recognising them. Therefore, recognition is a demonstration through gestures and expressions of the value given to the person in a framework of social interaction. Expressions of recognition in this case form the identity of the person and it is the treatment people receive that influences how they live their lives. These expressions occur through actions, interactions, attitudes and so on (Koskinen, 2018; Otero and Fernández, 2017). It should be said that Honneth (2014) admits that for this recognition to lead to an ethical experience, it must be reciprocal.

Butler (2009), in *Taking Account of Oneself*, focuses more on the reciprocity of the relationship, and on the context and frameworks of recognition. Recognition for Butler implies that, in a reciprocal and relational way, people must understand and recognise each other as unique and singular. That means that recognition is both given and received. For Butler, a difference between expressions of recognition and the actual relationship of recognition exists. From her understanding, attitudes of recognition are not sufficient without this reciprocity. Thus, she believes that the relationship with others and this recognition is an open ethical project (Rähme, 2013), and a tool for establishing ethical relationships (Ferrarese, 2011).

Key concepts of Honneth and Butler's theories

Both authors make outstanding contributions in the socio-educational field that have major ethical implications.

Honneth (2011) introduces the concepts of misrecognition and invisibilisation. Regarding the former, the different forms of misrecognition can be understood as experiences that affect a person's dignity (Morales and Vallés, 2013). With the latter, Honneth (2011) defines the process of invisibilisation as an active process in which attitudes of misrecognition towards another person are evident. Honneth, via quotes from Ralph Ellison's novels, differentiates between the physical eye and the social sense. This means that the person who makes another invisible may see that person in a physical sense but does not perceive them as a person in a social sense, that is, someone worthy of recognition. Some examples would be when people look away from somebody begging on the underground to avoid having to respond to them, or from a homeless person who is asking for help in the street. They see them with the physical eye, but looking away denies them their existence in a social sense. Honneth (2011, pp. 166–7, translated from Spanish) gives us an example too:

Examples of situations in which the dominant express their social superiority over their subordinates by pretending not to perceive them are well known in many accounts of cultural history; perhaps the best known is the fact that the nobles were allowed to undress before their servants because, in a certain sense, they did not consider them to be present. From these situations of invisibility with physical presence, the cases described by Ralph Ellison are distinguished by their particularly active character: here the protagonists, i.e. the white lords, seem to want to indicate to everyone intentionally that they are showing the black people present that they are not visible to them. The expression that the familiar language has prepared for such active forms of invisibilisation is that of 'looking through': we have the ability to show our contempt for the people present by behaving in front of them as if they were not physically present in the same space. In this sense, 'looking through' has an entirely performative aspect, because it requires gestures or modes of behaviour that make it clear that others are not only not seen accidentally, but that they are not seen intentionally.

Related to different types of human relations and their forms of misrecognition, and from Hegel's communicative theory, Honneth also introduces his definition of the three spheres of recognition. Basically, Honneth explains that the three spheres of recognition (love, respect and solidarity) occur in three different types of relationships within society. In each sphere there can be different forms of misrecognition that can have specific consequences for the person. In view of this, we can identify what social educators can do in each of the spheres and what expressions can be used to make a person feel recognised. This information is explained in Table 4.

Table 4. Materialisation of Honneth's spheres of recognition (Source: based on Altmeyer, 2018; Andersen, 2015; Bainbridge, 2015; Deranty and Renault, 2007; Dotolo, Lindhorst, Kemp and Engelberg, 2018; Fascioli, 2012; Fernández and Vasco, 2012; Gil, 2014; Gonçalves and García, 2016; Hamer, 2011; Hanhela, 2012, 2014; Honneth, 2011, 2014; Huttunen and Heikkinen, 2004; Pilapil, 2013; Stojanov, 2010).

Sphere	Love	Respect	Solidarity
Arena	Emotional affection and close relationships.	Legal recognition and equal relationships.	Social appreciation and cooperative relationships in a community of shared values.
Forms of misrecognition	Mistreatment, abuse, denigration, emotional denial, threat to mental integrity, deprivation of control over other's body.	Exclusion, violation and deprivation of rights.	Belittling individual achievements and opinions, marginalisation and insults because of the lifestyles of individuals or collectives, stigmatisation.
Consequences in the person	Not being able to form a positive self-image, which leads to insecurity.	An inability to see oneself as a subject of rights, leading to invisibility.	Not finding one's place in society, leading to stigmatisation.
What social professionals can focus on to work with people	Emphasise attention to the person's needs, which helps to develop self-confidence.	Pay attention to equality, which promotes the development of self-respect.	Recognise the value of difference, which allows for the development of self-esteem.
Expressions of recognition	Giving emotional support, attention, promoting caring relationships, giving emotional approval, encouragement, etc.	Granting rights and responsibilities, applying the law, listening to people's voices and needs in the public sphere, etc.	Acknowledging individuals' contributions to society, creating an atmosphere of approval, encouraging participation, seeking the common good, applauding diverse abilities, etc.

Honneth states that these spheres are useful, first, for analysing people's social conditions and, second, to promote struggles for recognition when a person experiences some form of misrecognition or invisibilisation: two strategies that could be useful for social educators to foster an ethical experience in socio-educational relationships.

Finally, the last idea we take from Honneth (2014) is that relationships of recognition also involve establishing relationships of freedom. For the author, these relationships are only possible through three types of freedom that are defined in his book *Freedom's Right: negative freedom*, which is understood as the absence of external resistances that impedes the movement or action of the subject; *positive or reflexive freedom*, which refers to making decisions of one's own free will and not under external influences; and the most interesting, *social freedom*, which appears when society offers the institutions, resources and recognition necessary to perform the rest of the freedoms. Sometimes, social educators can or have to restrict negative or reflexive freedom, but in any case, they need to promote the three types of freedom to the extent that it is possible. Besides, they are part of the social machinery of the society that is responsible for granting social freedom, jointly with policy makers, public and private organisations and so on, so they must embrace this commitment as a shared responsibility.

In relation to Butler's work, she uses the theory of recognition, but with an emphasis on the context and what surrounds the relationships of recognition. For Butler (2009), there are pre-constructed frameworks through which we see the world. Cover (2014), addressing Butler's theory, states that these social, cultural and linguistic frameworks set norms that shape the way we understand the world. It makes certain people more recognisable within these frameworks than others. In the end, they are power relationships that shape how we share ourselves. They also mark the limits of recognition – not only in the way people act, but also how individuals are understood in the context of these frameworks (Mèlich, 2014). And this means that those who are outside these frameworks are considered invisible. Social educators can address this by working with people to make them visible, to fight against prejudices and to try to broaden these pre-constructed frameworks in society.

With these experiences, when people fall outside of these frameworks of recognition, ethical violence emerges (Butler, 2016). Butler draws on the work of Adorno to explain the concept of ethical violence. This concept refers to the existence of a collective ethos, our frameworks. When this ethos is no longer shared by society as a whole, it can only be imposed by violent means. Violence is inflicted on people who do not share it precisely by appealing to its collective character. These norms, according to Butler (2009), become anachronistic, resisting change. What is proclaimed universal does not coincide with people's individuality, and people are denied their rights precisely in order to claim the universality of the norms. It is not that universality is violent per se, but it can be used violently when it is indifferent to particularity. Here universal norms become violent. Butler stresses at this point the need for universality to be sensitive to particularity, and to be reformulated to provide concrete responses to singular situations (Butler, 2009).

According to Butler, different forms of ethical violence can occur. For instance, a first form of ethical violence, as has been explained before, occurs when the frameworks of recognition are no longer shared by society as a whole, they can only be imposed by violent means. A second form occurs through revenge and punishment. For Butler, through punishment, the subject is abandoned, denied their agency. An example in the social field would be when social educators, social workers or other professionals who are working with aggressors try to punish them instead of supporting them. Finally, a third form of ethical violence takes place through what Butler defines with the concept of despair. This desperation can occur for two reasons: because the person wants others to accept them as they are and for the frameworks of recognition to be expanded, or when the person adapts to the established frameworks but is desperate to be themselves. If the environment imposes an atmosphere of violence, it impedes the other's ability to take agency. Thus, pressure from others is ethical violence. We can take heed of Butler's words to see how, through social education and social pedagogy, we can prevent this ethical violence in the relationships that social educators have with the people they support, and to work with people to promote ethical relationships among them.

Finally, Butler (2016) incorporates the idea of the *performativity* of context. She explains that our identity is shaped by these frames of recognition given to us by society. The experiences we have and the frameworks in which we move shape us as individuals. This means that *performativity* gives us labels, to which we respond. These labels are associated with specific norms, practices and ways of acting. Labelling people presupposes an aprioristic way of being (Mèlich, 2014). Language and corporeality are an expression of these frameworks and also a tool through which they are imposed and changed (Butler,

2009, 2016). Language not only describes realities, but also creates them since, depending on how it is exercised, it will positively or negatively affect those before us (Jergus, 2018; Pulecio, 2011). Social educators need to be aware that they can affect people's identity through their relationships and, as a result, should think about how they influence people's experience in order to be ethical. They must also be aware of how a person's context shapes them and what actions can help change those labels to make people visible and create ethical experiences.

What do Honneth and Butler propose to put into practice actions and relationships of recognition?

Honneth (2014) speaks of a democratic ethical life, defined as that network of routines and obligations in which moral attitudes are embedded, no longer in the form of an orientation towards principles, but in the form of social practices. To this end, conflicts need to be addressed through dialogue and reflection, considering the particularities of the individual, and where practices of recognition are formally institutionalised.

Butler (2009) proposes giving an account of oneself: presenting ourselves in relation to other people and questioning our own truths about who we are, what we say and what we do.

She incorporates three issues: first, the need to consider people's opacity, that is, we cannot know everything about ourselves and others, and therefore we cannot ask for a totally coherent and transparent account. How many social educators have asked people to explain or justify themselves, to give an account of themselves, without the consideration of respecting their opacity? Second, the need to reflect on who we are and how we act towards people, which implies having time to reflect and plan before acting. And finally, third, she includes the concept of transference. For Butler, transference is 'the re-creation of a primary relationality within the analytic space, potentially generating a new or modified relationship' (Butler, 2009, p. 74). This refers to the fact that when we enter into a relationship with people, we are not only offering our truth, but we influence how that relationship and experience is constructed and modified. This process gives social educators and social pedagogues tremendous power because by the very act of relating to the people they support, they influence them and through this transference they can potentially build an ethical relationship and change their experience in the world.

The authors' approaches to social transformation and their sense of responsibility

These two ways of materialising their proposals in society and relationships – through institutionalisation for Honneth and through the relationship for Butler – converge in the fact that it is necessary to reflect on our practices and to question the pre-established frameworks.

In this sense, both authors set the focus on social transformation. We return to Honneth's struggles for recognition. Such struggles are the response to social conflicts that seek to break with experiences of misrecognition and injustice (Altmeyer, 2018; Gil Martínez, 2015). Butler proposes the exercise of political resistance. She defines it as subversive strategies that challenge the rules and expose their social and hegemonic formation (Applebaum, 2004). Social educators not only have to support people in their struggles, but they also have the responsibility to promote these struggles for recognition and to wield political resistance in order to change the inequalities in our societies. Both attitudes of social transformation do not happen on their own – agency is required. Applebaum (2004) states that traditional definitions of agency refer to the capacity for choice and self-determination. Agency, for Butler, is the capacity to account for ourselves, for our performative identity and to vary the discourses that have been repeated to us. Also, agency is the capacity to immerse oneself in power dynamics and discourse as well as the capacity to resist and change them (Gottschall, 2002). All of this means that social educators need to support people to gain their agency, first by promoting capacities; second, by encouraging people to reflect and question where their values and ideals come from; and third, by supporting them to understand discourses and dynamics of society and daring to question them.

Finally, these ideas from the authors lead to responsibility. Honneth (2014) points out that we must make ourselves responsible through the institutionalisation of practices, where each agent takes their role in promoting a democratic culture and a defence of a horizon of shared values orientated towards the common good. Butler approaches it from the concept of vulnerability and dependence. For her, the fact of being in relationships with people makes us responsible, since we each have to respond to

the other. With this idea, responsibility in social education comes not only from the actions we take, but from the mere fact of establishing relationships. This breaks with the ideal of the autonomous and individual subject. Moreover, she claims that people are vulnerable, that is, susceptible to being harmed, and interdependent, in that we need social relations as we are constructed through them. It is for this reason that, for her, taking responsibility means becoming aware of the consequences of the way we are and the way we act in our relationships with other people. And being responsible means being able to give a response, and for this ethical response to be situated and attentive (Beausoleil, 2017). Taking Butler's idea of responsibility, social educators should take people's vulnerability into consideration, think about the consequences that their transference and their actions can have and be aware of the very fact of thinking that people deserve an ethical response.

Applications in the social and educational field

Before moving on to the general conclusions and a personal interpretation of how to apply and understand these theoretical contributions, we should mention the applications that these theories have had in the social field. Honneth (2011) himself states that social professions play an important role in maintaining social recognition.

The theories presented in this article have been widely used in the social and educational field by different authors. This fact demonstrates their applicability and the relevance of putting them into practice in the fields of intervention of social pedagogy and social education, such as childhood and family work (Díaz and González, 2015; Štirn, 2015; Waterhouse and McGhee, 2015), disability and attention to diversity and inclusion (Fernández and Vasco, 2012; Garrett, 2010; Moon, 2017; Otero and Fernández, 2017; Reeve, 2012; Zembylas, 2019), the education system (Dadvand and Cuervo, 2019; Forrest, Keener and Harkins, 2010; Gowlett, 2012; Stojanov, 2016), inequalities and social justice (Dotolo et al., 2018; Juul, 2012; Youdell, 2006; Zembylas, 2015), leisure and sport (Andersen, 2015), adult education (Sandberg, 2016), community work (Fascioli, 2012; Huttunen and Heikkinen, 2004; Tuama, 2016), feminism, gender and sexuality (Cover, 2014; Gowlett, 2012; Jergus, 2018; Szörényi, 2014), interculturalism, migration and refugees (Cover, 2013; Gregoriou, 2013), homelessness (Cefai, 2015), among others.

Instead of describing how theory has been applied in each field specifically, we offer an overview of some of the considerations for practice that emerge from each author's application of the theories.

In the case of Honneth, we can see how his description of actions and recognition relationships contribute to people's development and well-being. As Díaz and González (2015) explain when talking about intervention with children, recognition actions are useful to teach them that they are worthy of care, truth and participation, and this leads children to replicate the same practices in other social spheres. Another example is provided by Fleming (2016), who states that educational experiences are transformative, as working on people's abilities, their confidence and respect can increase spheres of recognition. Other authors discuss the creation of positive affective bonds among people, both in their family and social sphere (Otero and Fernández, 2017; Stojanov, 2016) and in their relationships with professionals (Garrett, 2010; Malany, 2018; Reeve, 2012). From another perspective, their description of spheres of recognition and types of freedom have also been used as tools to analyse and evaluate the social and educational situation and relationships of the people that professionals support (Andersen, 2015; Dotolo et al., 2018; Fernández and Vasco, 2012; Henning, 2016; Rähme, 2013; Reeve, 2012; Sandberg, 2016).

In Butler's case, several authors apply the concept of vulnerability to promote practices of love and good treatment with the aim of creating experiences where people can inhabit a liveable world (Forrest et al., 2010; Fotaki, 2016; Jergus, 2018; Karhu, 2016; Mèlich, 2014; Säfström, 2018; Schramm, 2009; Tinning, 2018; Zembylas, 2015, 2018). For instance, Forrest et al. (2010) understand education as an encounter where educator and learner are vulnerable. Fotaki (2016) proposes that public policies should recognise vulnerability and relationality. Also Tinning (2018) and Mèlich (2014) propose the same at the relational level. Säfström (2018) introduces the possibility of making life more liveable through the pursuit of educational change, while Schramm (2009) and Zembylas (2015, 2018) call for the practice of an ethic of non-violence. On the other hand, there is also a call for professionals to take responsibility for the socio-educational encounter (Tinning, 2018; Waterhouse and McGhee, 2015) by practising responsiveness (Beausoleil, 2017; Moon, 2011; Schuhmann, 2016). Finally, in relation to Butler's contributions, some authors have analysed the frames of recognition and performativity of projects,

institutions and practices and how this implies the need to remove labels and deconstruct ourselves as professionals (Cover, 2013; Cross, 2019; Dadvand and Cuervo, 2019; Gil, 2014; Gowlett, 2012; Gregoriou, 2013; Jon, 2020; Kukar, 2016; Nagington, 2016; Pérez, 2010, 2017; Szörényi, 2014; Teague, 2018; Vick and Martínez, 2011; Youdell, 2006; Zembylas, 2015, 2018).

There are three areas where both authors' theories have been used to inform some of their practical applications:

1. the promotion of individual and community empowerment and agency
2. reflection on one's own practice either at individual or team level, to take into account the consequences and impact of one's own actions
3. as foundations for promoting practices and movements for social and political change, social justice, individual and collective responsibility, and the institutionalisation of practices of recognition.

First, the promotion of individual and community empowerment and agency. Regarding empowerment, Hanhela (2012, 2014) sees the work of the three spheres of recognition as enabling self-development or so-called *Bildung*. Meanwhile, Tuama (2016) advocates promoting the social network, social capital and social skills. Regarding agency, Davies (2006), working with children in schools, explains that broadening the recognition frameworks promotes holistic interventions focused on the person's agency. Nagington (2016), Pié (2009), Pulecio (2011), Ruitenber (2015) and Varpio, Aschenbrenner and Bates (2017) place the focus on the professional and the need to stop excluding bodies and practices, and being aware of discourse and language to promote this agency and ethical relationship.

Second, reflection on one's own practice either at individual or team level, to take into account the consequences and impact of one's own actions, which for Butler would be to account for oneself (Brinkmann, 2010; Davies, 2006; Houston, 2009; Huttunen and Heikkinen, 2004; Štirn, 2015; Waterhouse and McGhee, 2015; Zink, 2010), the skills practitioners need to develop (Koskinen, 2018) and adopting a questioning, critical and reflexive attitude to break with pre-established frameworks (Applebaum, 2004; Cover, 2013; Davies, 2011; Phillips and Bellinger, 2011; Tyler, 2019).

And third, the theories of Honneth and Butler have also served as foundations for promoting practices and movements for social and political change, social justice, individual and collective responsibility and the institutionalisation of practices of recognition. By way of example, in the case of Honneth, Bainbridge (2015) explains how, through learning values in recognition relationships, a certain institutional culture is formed that promotes social change. Pérez (2010) and Deranty and Renault (2007) focus on the causes of social conflicts and struggles for recognition to seek institutional engagement and political action. Juul (2012) uses the legal sphere of recognition to talk about people's rights and, in turn, Fascioli (2012) reflects on the creation of educational institutions that implement a democratic ethos that focuses not only on legal recognition, but also on attitudes of solidarity, mutual esteem, emotional capacity, understanding and mutual valuing. In Butler's case, some authors use her concept of political resistance to achieve social transformation and the creation of transgressive experiences on a pedagogical level (Harris and Lemon, 2012; Pié, 2009; Powell and Gilbert, 2007; Pyscher, 2017; Vick and Martínez, 2011). For instance, Harris and Lemon (2012) argue for the need to incorporate embodied resistance practices involving transgression to create a new pedagogical imaginary that shapes the context. And to go further, Powell and Gilbert (2007) explain that this resistance occurs through relationships rather than procedures.

Conclusions

From the analysis of the theories of Honneth and Butler and their applications in the social and educational field, we propose a series of theoretical but practice-oriented guidelines for socio-educational relationships.

First of all, these theories contribute to the values that can underpin practice. Social educators can try to put into practice values such as responsibility, reciprocity, inclusion, care, compassion, solidarity, self-realisation and liveable life, reviewing these values and considering the common good. However, simply identifying with these values is not enough. Social educators should be encouraged to exercise critical reflection so that they can identify the values they practice and generate processes of reflection and action that allow them to apply these in their daily practice.

Second, both theories provide ideas about what issues must be tackled and what skills or virtues professionals must develop in order to perform their intervention. A certain level of social commitment is necessary to promote struggles for recognition and the subversive practices that Honneth and Butler refer to. In contrast, it is also necessary to promote the capacity for self-criticism, to reflect on one's own practices, to know oneself and to account for oneself and one's practices and, above all, to facilitate spaces for resolving these ethical conflicts.

These theories can also be applied to the way social educators see the person as such when they approach them and the perceptions and conceptions they have of them. They lead social educators to understand the person as someone with agency, responsible for their actions; to see them as emotionally vulnerable, interdependent and opaque individuals.

There are also certain elements that professionals must consider in relation to the intervention scenario. The first is the institutionalisation and formalisation of recognition practices, that is, organisations formally recognising practices that promote recognition in the three spheres, as well as the creation of scenarios that acknowledge the performativity of the context and the frameworks of recognition in order to expand them and build positive relationships.

The theories analysed may also shed light on direct actions social educators can take with people. They can analyse the educational situation through the spheres of recognition, they can identify and address forms of misrecognition and, at the level of their interventions and as far as possible, ensure positive, negative and social freedom.

And finally, recognition theories can also be considered when interacting with people in relationships. Social educators can attempt to create this space of mutual reciprocal relationship through expressions of recognition, through our language and our bodies, to create transactions that favour ethical relationships.

The considerations expressed here are a small contribution to developing a theoretical model of ethics in social pedagogy and social education that serves to substantiate an ethical practice. Although these principles are intervention-orientated, they only guide social educators towards what they can work on. Nevertheless, there is a lack of knowledge about how to implement this, and this must be decided by social education/social pedagogy professionals. Therefore, further research is necessary to gather professionals' perceptions of how to implement an ethical perspective in the socio-educational relationship.

Notes

¹The study corresponds to a doctoral project that aims to analyse the ethical dimension of socio-educational relationships. It consists of three phases: (1) a theoretical analysis of different authors who develop theories related to ethics (Martha Nussbaum, Amartya Sen, Axel Honneth, John Dewey, Carol Gilligan and Judith Butler); (2) a content analysis of the considerations of social educators gathered through focus groups; and (3) an analysis of the perceptions of social educators about how they understand and build an ethical relationship.

²This work has been presented as an oral communication at the International Conference of Social Pedagogy – Social Pedagogy and Social Education: Hope in Dystopia.

³These databases are the most widely used in Spain. Although the systematic review is helpful to obtain a general overview of the state of the art, we recognise its limitations when it comes to identifying authors who have spoken on the subject selected and who are not found in the consulted databases.

Funding

Study funded by the University Teacher Training Programme of the Ministry of Universities of the Government of Spain.

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

The authors declare that research ethics approval for this article was provided by the Ethics Committee on Animal and Human Experimentation of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, with the reference number CEEAH 5246.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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