



Reflexivity

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What is it?

Reflexivity involves a reflection process that always transcends personal introspection and takes into account a strong social component, understanding behavior in context. Reflexive moments combine scientific elements and critical consciousness as necessary steps to promoting meaningful social change. The ultimate goal of reflexivity, then, is not simply to reflect on practice, but to *transform* it - most often, for the benefit of one's community and its members. Reflexivity imbues any scientific endeavor with a solid ethical dimension as one must always keep track of the Other as an essential partner and agent of change.

Who uses the concept?

While the notion of reflexivity stems from sociology, other fields have also adopted this idea as guiding framework for their work. Fields such as political science, education, literacy, language studies, and even economics have used this idea to fuel research studies. Qualitative inquiry as a field has also drawn inspiration from the idea of reflexivity to discuss the uses and goals of qualitative studies. Discussions of aesthetic values and ethics in research are two topics where reflexivity has played an important role. Within communication, reflexivity has been discussed most often in connection with social construction theory.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

The idea that reflexivity is not just an internal monologue or introspection provides plenty of spaces for intercultural dialogue. Its social nature

implies that, without dialogue and the intent to improve the quality of life conditions of individuals and communities, there can be no reflexivity. Reflexivity always invites (and needs) dialogue to promote strong social change.

What work remains?

While the idea of reflexivity has a scientific foundation, one cannot forget that agency and change, not science for its own sake, is the ultimate goal of any reflexivity process. As more fields embrace this idea, we must make sure that scholars always keep in mind its dialogic and transformative nature. Without the elements of consciousness and agency behind science, reflexivity might be nothing but just a fancy form of personal reflection.

Resources

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- Steier, F. (Ed.). (1991). *Research and reflexivity*. London, UK: Sage.