

# Recognition, power, and trust: Epistemic structural account of ideological recognition

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## Funding information

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant/Award Number: 21J00128

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Recognition is one of the most elusive and ambivalent concepts in political and social thought. In recent studies of the ambivalence of recognition (Ikäheimo et al., 2021; Lepold, 2019; McQueen, 2015), recognition has the emancipatory aspect: Recognition is a necessary condition for individual freedom by forming a social basis of self-worth, and the struggle for recognition plays the significant role in political movements for emancipation. However, recognition has a dominating aspect: The demand for recognition can be exploited as an instrument for domination, reproducing existing problematic practices and identities. For example, sweatshops induce employees to voluntarily subjugate themselves to harsh working conditions by praising the employees' self-dedicated character and enhancing their self-worth.

In recent philosophical debates, Axel Honneth has developed the most systematic theory of recognition. He discusses the problem of ambivalence in offering the concept of ideological recognition (Honneth, 2007). Honneth's argument consists of two steps. In the first step, he defines ideological recognition as distinct from misrecognition. Misrecognition occurs when addressees believe their subjective self-image is not consistent with the recognition they receive. They feel misrecognized when their self-worth is inflicted. By contrast, the addressees have "good reason to accept" ideological recognition because they attain a stronger sense of self-worth through the recognition (p. 341). However, "ideological forms of recognition suffer a second-level rationality deficit" as it encourages the addressees' willing subjection to the dominant social order (p. 346). This suggests that ideological recognition, an issue of "second-level rationality," is judged independently from the addressees' subjective perspective. Ideological recognition can be defined as that accepted by the addressees from their *subjective* point of view, but unjustified from an *objective* or *theoretical* point of view.

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In the second step, Honneth proposes a substantive standard of ideological recognition, a standard of “how we can draw a distinction between justified and unjustified forms of social recognition” from an objective point of view (p. 340). According to Honneth, recognition is ideological when it maintains the addressees’ self-worth, while the evaluative promise expressed by the recognition cannot be materially instantiated. In the example above, recognizing the self-dedicated employees in the sweatshops is ideological and unjustified, for the sweatshops will not guarantee material and economic conditions for realizing the employees’ dedication to the company (not providing a minimum income level, for instance).

I argue against Honneth’s substantive standard, not the conceptual definition of ideological recognition itself. It is because his standard is not broad enough to capture the ideological recognition particularly observed in feminist studies. The issue is that some women demand recognition of their femininity. As long as the received recognition heightens their self-worth, they do not suffer misrecognition. However, desiring recognition for their femininity can subject women to a certain injustice. As the recent debates on epistemic injustice illustrate, recognizing feminine gender identity can result in exclusion from the epistemic community where people in everyday communication cooperate to pool information (Fricker, 2007). Examined from an objective point of view, women can suffer epistemic exclusion through the recognition they demanded for themselves. By Honneth’s definition, subjectively demanded recognition of femininity should be called ideological recognition as these women are willingly subjected to the dominant gender order. Nevertheless, Honneth’s standard of ideological recognition cannot be applied to the recognition of femininity because there is no lack of material means for women to realize feminine qualities. In other words, his account considers the recognition of women who voluntarily reproduce gender stereotypes as morally justified.

In this respect, Honneth’s account faces two problems: normative and descriptive. The former is that his account does not provide a substantive normative standard that can identify the unjustifiable ideological recognition above mentioned. The second problem is that he cannot objectively explain why the addressees of ideological recognition accept it as expressing positive qualities. Honneth (2007) claims that a sufficient account of ideology should uncover its “regulative power” (p. 344). If this is the case, an analysis of power that encourages the internalization of gender ideology is needed.

This article offers an alternative account of ideological recognition called an *epistemic structural account*. The epistemic structural account overcomes the normative problem of Honneth’s account by elaborating on the concept of *epistemic trust*. This concept provides the basic norm of trust that allows us to identify unjustified ideological recognition through which women suffer epistemic injustice as a result of seeking recognition of their feminine qualities. My account also overcomes the descriptive problem by providing the concept of *structural power* to analyze the issue of internalization of problematic identities. This analysis illustrates how structural power is exercised to create a situation in which it is favorable for addressees to internalize a quality as the basis of their existential self-worth.

Although there have been fruitful studies of trust in social epistemology and pragmatics (e.g., Brandom, 2019; Jones, 1996) and a recent debate on the structural dimension of power (e.g., Forst, 2015; Heyward, 2018), the concepts of epistemic trust and structural power have not been associated with recognition. I integrate the two concepts into a theory of recognition to develop an account of ideological recognition. My account claims that recognition is ideological when the following two conditions are met. First, the basic norm of epistemic trust is violated. Second, the recognition nevertheless maintains the subjective self-worth of the addressees because they accept the recognition due to the operations of structural power.

Beyond criticizing Honneth’s account, the epistemic structural account has several implications for critical theory by examining the interconnectedness between epistemic trust and structural power in recognition practices. First, my account advances the task of criticizing social pathology, a central target in critical theory, to epistemic and structural dimensions.<sup>1</sup> Second, my claim that the theory of recognition should consider structural power in epistemic practices develops the discussion of the relationship between recognition and power.<sup>2</sup> Third, I analyze domination and oppression through recognition from perspectives of feminism and critical race theory. I focus mainly on ideological recognition in the case of gender, but address the case of racial identity. Fourth, my account provides a practical

critique of the ambivalence of recognition because it plays the role not only of normative guidance for emancipation but also of a descriptive disclosure of power dynamics.

The rest of this article proceeds as follows. I first examine the two problems in Honneth's account of ideological recognition (Section 2). To overcome these problems, I then elaborate on two concepts of the epistemic structural account: epistemic trust (Section 3) and structural power (Section 4). From these arguments, I formulate the epistemic structural account of ideological recognition and discuss its theoretical and practical benefits for critical theory (Section 5).

## 2 | HONNETH'S IDEOLOGICAL RECOGNITION

In this section, I examine Honneth's account of ideological recognition and specify its problems by giving examples illustrating the ambivalence of recognition surrounding women. I criticize his account for not developing sufficiently the argument for explaining ideological recognition beyond the subjective perspective of the addressees.

Honneth describes ideological recognition in two steps. In the first step, he defines it by distinguishing between misrecognition and ideological recognition. The former is determined from a subjective point of view, and the latter from an objective or theoretical point of view.

Misrecognition implies that subjects feel that their expectations for recognition are betrayed (Honneth, 1995). In Honneth's analysis, the modern subject shapes these expectations in three forms of recognition—love, legal respect, and social esteem—whereby each subject recognizes valuable qualities, such as personal intimacy, equal rights, and economic achievement. The subject experiences misrecognition if the qualities that accord with one's self-image are not recognized by others. Moreover, misrecognition violates a precondition for freedom by psychologically damaging the subject's "positive relation-to-self" through which one can be sure of the social value of one's identity (Honneth, 1995, pp. 79, 174). Along with the three forms of recognition, the subject forms three types of positive relations-to-self: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, which are conditions for pursuing one's self-chosen life goals without psychological inhibitions and fears. Therefore, addressees of recognition judge it as acceptable or misrecognition from their subjective point of view, based on whether positive relations-to-self are acquired. When they feel misrecognized, they are motivated to a "struggle for recognition" to recover a damaged relation-to-self (Honneth, 1995, p. 138).

In contrast to misrecognition, ideological recognition is determined independently of the addressees' perspective. Honneth argues that the value-statements that ideological recognition expresses seem "positive," "credible," and "contrastive" in the eyes of the addressees (Honneth, 2007, pp. 337–339). These adjectives indicate that ideological recognition can serve the self-realization of the addressees by heightening their relations-to-self and giving them a "sense of being distinguished" (Honneth, 2007, p. 339). When a value-statement includes discriminatory or banal qualities, the addressees feel misrecognized and have no good reason to accept it.

In the second step, Honneth proposes a substantive standard of ideological recognition by focusing on the gap between "evaluative promise and its material fulfillment" (Honneth, 2007, p. 346). In ideological recognition, the symbolic premise of recognition is not accompanied by material fulfillment, such as institutional and material means to realize certain valuable qualities. He exemplifies these qualities in the entrepreneurship of workers recognized by capitalist corporations that praise entrepreneurship as a quality that all workers should have, and workers enhance their self-worth by trying to acquire it. However, not every worker can institutionally achieve it. The morally unjust nature of ideological recognition, as Honneth claims, lies not in the symbolic value-statement per se but in the way it is institutionally realized. From an objective point of view, the recognition of entrepreneurship is a privilege that only a few can realize, but advertised as if everyone has the chance to achieve it.

I argue against Honneth's substantive standard of ideological recognition because it cannot apply to the recognition of ideological gender identity. His account relies exclusively on the subjective perspective of the addressees as to the justifiability of recognition as long as its value-statements are realized. To challenge Honneth's account, Amy Allen

(2010) gives an example of a 5-year-old girl who is dependent on her parents' authority and accepts gender ideology to receive recognition from her parents (pp. 25–26). Although Allen is on the right track in highlighting the recognition of femininity in the asymmetrical relationship between parent and child, I suggest that the issue of internalizing femininity also applies to adult women who accept individualistic values. To illustrate the problem, consider the following two women. I leave aside ethnic or intersectional cases; however, I discuss in Section 5 the claim that racial identity is also relevant to ideological recognition.

Suzanne was in her early 30s and a manager at a publishing house. She never wanted to be a “traditional” woman and enjoyed individualism in the city: sexual freedom, the right to drink and have fun in clubs, and economic independence. However, she feared becoming a “spinster” as her friends and colleagues married and believed that she could not be happy unless she married. She thus sought to be recognized as “girlish” by taking more care of her appearance to find her “ideal” man. She made schoolgirl errors and delivered an incoherent speech at a book launch, but cleverly understood that her behavior gained the favor of the men around her. Fearful of the stigma of remaining single, she sought recognition of her feminine qualities, prioritizing romance over success in the workplace.

Brianna, like Suzanne, was a young woman who was economically independent and enjoyed individualism. However, unlike Suzanne, Brianna had a self-image that was not only girlish but also feminist. She was a member of a punk band that performed after work. Influenced by Riot Grrrl (*Grrrl* is the redefined word “girl” to incorporate an angry growl), her band offered a reconceptualization of gender through anger at sexism. She wore girly clothes and makeup. At the same time, she played music to rework gender stereotypes through punk rock. She was recognized by her audience as both “girlish” and “empowered,” reclaiming women's subjectivity.

The point of these cases is that Honneth's account considers the recognition of both Suzanne and Brianna as morally justified.<sup>3</sup> Their “girlish” quality—whether cast as a mainstream image or not—forms an existential basis of their identities and self-worth, so the recognition they receive by no means constitutes misrecognition in Honneth's theory. He notes that praising the qualities of femininity seems “anachronistic” and “restrictive” from the addressees' point of view (Honneth, 2007, p. 339). However, according to feminist studies, that is not the case. Furthermore, their recognition does not fit his substantive standard of ideological recognition, insofar as its morally unjust nature is determined by whether one can materially realize its evaluative promises; for women could realize “girlish” qualities if they so desired. Still, while Brianna's recognition can be justified, Suzanne's should be called ideological recognition. This is because Suzanne reproduces gender stereotypes, such as “women are more intuitive than rational” by desiring recognition of the mainstream “girlish” qualities that Brianna protested. Honneth's account, however, cannot distinguish between the two cases.

Thus examined, Honneth's account has two shortcomings. First, his account cannot elucidate why it is morally unjustified to recognize Suzanne's identity but morally justified to recognize Brianna's because he does not provide normative arguments. The original question of ideological recognition is to identify recognition accepted from a subjective point of view but unjustified from an objective point of view. Honneth considers ideology in terms of the gap between value and reality. However, the objective point of view in his account involves only *the way* a value is realized, not the value itself. Ultimately, his account does not contain a normative standard to distinguish between morally justified and unjustified recognition. His theory lacks a normative argument regarding the morally unjustified nature of ideological recognition.<sup>4</sup>

Second, his concept of ideology is too narrow to understand the ambivalent situation of Suzanne descriptively. Suzanne accepted mainstream “girlish” qualities as a positive self-image, rather than rejecting them as restrictive. However, from an objective or theoretical point of view, the recognition she received may disadvantage her in

terms of epistemic trust (as discussed in the next section). A descriptive claim is necessary here, explaining why she accepted gender norms and demanded recognition for femininity even if she valued individualism. Honneth's theory of recognition lacks a descriptive argument about how Suzanne reproduced gender stereotypes while not feeling misrecognized.

So far, I have argued that Honneth's account of ideological recognition fails to explain, first, what constitutes the substantive normative standard for delineating between morally justified recognition and unjustified ideological recognition and, second, why problematic qualities are internalized as positive. In the following sections, I provide an alternative, epistemic structural account of ideological recognition that overcomes Honneth's two problems. As for the normative problem, the concept of epistemic trust contains the basic norm of trust that allows us to identify the objective injustice that Honneth's account cannot capture. Regarding the descriptive problem, I explain the internalization of problematic identities by analyzing the operations of structural power.

### 3 | THE CONCEPT OF EPISTEMIC TRUST

In this section, I elaborate on the concept of epistemic trust. Epistemic trust refers to a basic interpersonal attitude that underlies the three forms of recognition in Honneth's theory, that is, recognition as a knower who contributes to epistemic cooperation.<sup>5</sup> This concept provides the basic norm of trust, which includes a substantive standard to delineate between morally justified and unjustified recognition. The recognition in the case of Suzanne was unjustified because it violated the basic norm: She could be *mistrusted*. I discuss the basic norm of epistemic trust by applying discussions of feminist epistemology and pragmatics of trust (Brandom, 2019; Daukas, 2006) to normative arguments.

What is trust? In a general context, trust is, like recognition, a reactive attitude that involves normative expectations such that the trustee moves directly and favorably toward the trustor (Baier, 1986). Trust is also an affective attitude in that the trustor harbors moral resentment when the trustee betrays these expectations (Jones, 1996). In the epistemic context, trust is a condition of epistemic cooperation, for we have to trust someone who is better placed to know something relevant to our interests, given the limitations of our epistemic capacities.

I consider epistemic trust a basic or primitive form of recognition in which the trustor recognizes the trustee as a knower who has the epistemic status and authority to partake in relevant epistemic practices. We cannot collect and produce knowledge through communication unless we assume that a speaker is trustworthy, that is, she has a certain epistemic status and authority to influence our knowledge. The following discussions of trust overlap with Habermas's formal pragmatics. Habermas (1984) elucidates the condition of intersubjective agreement. However, my account further develops the conditions of discursive practice in terms of intersubjective recognition and normative expectations. The concept of epistemic trust involves a form of recognition that must be expressed before embarking on the acts of reaching understanding.

What, then, is the epistemic status or authority that must be recognized by others when one participates in epistemic practices? To illustrate this point, Daukas (2006) considers the presumption of trustworthiness as necessary for productive epistemic exchange. First, in assigning trustworthiness to a speaker, we must assume that the speaker is "sincere" and "competent" in the domain of the person's testimony (p. 110).<sup>6</sup> When, for example, I ask a stranger for directions, I presume that she is not lying and is familiar with the area. Second, a successful exchange of testimony requires the presumption that the speaker is neither excessively "diffident" nor "self-confident" (pp. 112–113). If I think the stranger behaved in an overly confident manner, I would not see her as trustworthy even though she is, in fact, not lying and familiar with this area. I trust her as a knower insofar as she has an accurate sense of her epistemic competence. Therefore, epistemic trust contains the basic norm that a speaker should have the *default* epistemic status of being sincere, competent, and sensible of their own competence. Unless there is reasonable ground to withhold their epistemic trust, we should recognize the speaker as having the default epistemic status.

The recognition of Suzanne, who demanded to be recognized as "girlish," is unjustified because her identity could preclude her from being recognized as having a default epistemic status. Suzanne made a schoolgirl error to gain the

favor of the men around her. However, her behavior and received recognition could disadvantage her in terms of epistemic trust. She may suffer an undue withholding of epistemic trust, such as not being delegated an important business meeting by her colleagues. Such mistreatment amounts to what Fricker (2007) calls “testimonial injustice” (p. 17). Suzanne’s epistemic trust could be unjustly undermined because women are traditionally prejudiced by stereotypes, such as being “unintelligent” or “irrational,” a stereotype that has been codified in gender norms. Due to the identity of being “girlish,” the default sincerity, competency, and self-sensibility could be unequally attributed to Suzanne from the outset.

Furthermore, the epistemic trust that conditions participation in epistemic practices is not limited to the default status, for the necessary condition of normal discursive communication involves not only the attribution of epistemic status but also the illocutionary performance of the uttered words. Thus, the basic norm of epistemic trust also regulates performative forces. In this context, Brandom (2019) considers the concept of epistemic trust as recognizing the other as a member of the epistemic “community” whose members share language and conceptual norms (p. 529). Epistemic trust means recognizing one’s authority to use a concept properly and to evaluate the correct applications of conceptual norms. By way of illustration, Suzanne, a manager, ordered a worker: “Finish printing by 12 p.m.!” The workers recognized her authority to perform a speech act of order and followed her when they took her to use the conceptual norms correctly. If she, for example, mistook noon for midnight, violating the conceptual norms about time, the workers would have withheld their epistemic trust. Epistemic trust entails the basic norm that we should recognize a speaker as a member of the epistemic community unless there is reasonable ground to withhold trust.

The epistemic authority in the dimension of performative force is relevant because feminine gender identity can distort the performative force of women’s speech acts. As Kukla (2014) notes, even if the same words are uttered, gender differences can affect “the social uptake” of the words because social images of women can distort the audience’s perception of the speaker’s intention (p. 443). This happens particularly when a woman enters a domain typically considered men’s. Consider that Suzanne issued an order at a printing factory, where most of the workers were men, in a grammatically correct way. However, her male colleagues could be less compliant with her order. Even though she lived up to the linguistic conventions that would typically mark her speech acts as orders, her male workers perceived her as issuing “requests” instead (p. 446). As the proper response to a request being granted is gratitude and she, as a manager, was not in a position to show gratitude to her workers, she appeared rude, and her workers could become disobedient. In this sense, Suzanne’s “girlish” quality can disadvantage her by preventing the equal application of conceptual norms and distorting the performative forces of speech act.

To sum up, epistemic trust is the underlying form of recognition as a knower who has the default epistemic status of being sincere, competent, and sensible about one’s competence, as well as the default epistemic authority to use concepts and evaluate the correct application of conceptual norms. The basic norm of epistemic trust is that we must recognize each other as having such a default epistemic status and authority. This norm delineates between justified and unjustified recognition. Even though the addressees accept recognition where it is consistent with their self-image and maintains their relations-to-self, such recognition is unjustified only if it results in a violation of the basic norm of epistemic trust, that is, *mistrust*.<sup>7</sup> Those who are mistrusted as not having the default epistemic status and authority also suffer epistemic injustice, in which their testimony is not fairly heard, or they are excluded from the knowledge-producing practice. The basic norm of trust plays the role of a minimal normative standard that determines whether the accepted recognition from the subjective point of view is justified from the objective point of view.

The basic norm of epistemic trust is grounded in the fact that it is a precondition for epistemic cooperation and social freedom. Unless trusted as knowers, we cannot express and create our ideas through the use of language. Feminist movements, for example, have sought to deconstruct stereotypical identities through the redefinition and appropriation of what it means to be a woman or “queer” (Butler, 1997). The politics of “resignification” challenges hegemonic conceptual uses and attempts to create a climate in which the oppressed express their own identities as a part of free self-realization. For the success of such politics, even if subjects create a novel vocabulary that deviates from everyday language use, they must be recognized as knowers who try to apply conceptual norms creatively and produce knowledge. In this sense, being recognized as a knower conditions “positive linguistic expressive freedom”

(Brandom, 2019, p. 520). Such freedom is socially complemented because people are dependent on others' recognition of their epistemic status and authority.

This normative argument elucidates why it is morally unjustified to recognize Suzanne's identity and morally justified to recognize Brianna's. In the case of Suzanne, she was recognized as "girlish," but because of that recognition she could be mistrusted. Her recognition reproduces gender stereotypes that place women in situations that make them vulnerable to epistemic injustice. Such recognition is unjustified, as well as ideological to the extent that she accepted it in herself. By contrast, Brianna was recognized as "girlish," but also an "empowered" woman who has the autonomous subjectivity to challenge gender stereotypes. Her self-image was not compatible with the "charming" character that Suzanne desired for herself. Rather, Brianna demanded epistemic trust for participating in knowledge-producing practices for deconstructing gender stereotypes. Thus, the recognition of Brianna's identity is justified because her recognition satisfies the minimal normative standard of epistemic trust.

Moreover, my account can clearly define ideological recognition by classifying misrecognition along the subjective and objective dimensions. The unjust withholding of trust can be objectively observed in relation to epistemic status and authority. In this case, a speaker is attributed a level of credibility that does not match their sincerity, competence, and sense of competence, or a speaker's speech act does not have performative force due to their identity despite the proper applications of conceptual norms. In this sense, I call mistrust *objective misrecognition*, which occurs even when subjects do not feel misrecognized. Ideological recognition can be understood as objective misrecognition in which the addressees do not feel subjectively misrecognized.

The distinction between subjective and objective misrecognition can further clarify the two cases. Both Suzanne and Brianna could be mistrusted insofar as there remain social prejudices against women. In that instance, however, the two receive different types of misrecognition. When Suzanne was mistrusted, she was not subjectively misrecognized but might receive objective misrecognition in terms of epistemic trust. Subjectively, she may not have been aware of it as injustice because she accepted the "girlish" quality as the basis of self-worth. We should call such recognition, which is not subjectively but objectively misrecognized, ideological recognition. Unlike Suzanne, Brianna demanded recognition for her "empowered" quality; she may feel subjectively misrecognized when her rework of gender stereotypes is rejected by the mainstream. When mistrusted, she suffered both subjective and objective misrecognition in the form of epistemic trust.

Thus far, my account has attempted to delineate between justified and unjustified recognition. However, it is important to note that my account never argues that Suzanne was entirely morally wrong in desiring objectively unjustified recognition or that she was wholly responsible for being mistrusted. Instead, the epistemic structural account explains the ideological nature of the unjustified recognition Suzanne received by focusing on structural power, which can induce voluntary subordination to femininity.

## 4 | THE CONCEPT OF STRUCTURAL POWER

In this section, I propose the concept of structural power to answer the descriptive question: Why do the addressees accept recognition that is unjustified from an objective or theoretical point of view? I outline this possibility and discuss the importance of structural power for the analysis of ideological recognition, and then focus on the two operations of structural power that induce the internalization of social norms.

Structural power refers to the power of social structures—sets of social norms, rules, and laws—to situate a person in particular social roles and positions by constituting patterned actions and social meanings. Wartenberg (1992) discusses structural power in comparison to agential power. Agential power refers to the capacity of a powerful agent to intervene in the conduct of the powerless agent. For example, a high school teacher might exercise power over her students by threatening to lower their grades if they do not work harder. In contrast, the teacher's agential power over students is "constituted" by social structures because the teacher–student relationship in the education system allows her to put pressure on her students by means of a grade (p. 82). Social structures have a higher order power to

condition the teacher's agential power by constituting the social role of the teacher and the social meanings of grades. Such social meanings are not only determined by the education system in high school alone but also by other institutions, such as firms that affirm the authority of the teacher's grading by rejecting applications from students with lower grades. Accordingly, the teacher's agential power over her students is constituted and reproduced by complex coordination among the "peripheral social agents" external to the mentioned agents (p. 90).

Recognition is also conditioned by structural power because social structures assign people with certain traits to specific social positions and establish social expectations that someone in a certain social position will behave in ways relevant to that position (Heyward, 2018). Social norms play a major role when recognition is routinized as social practice. For instance, a teacher expects students to work hard and shows disappointment in the case of betrayal. She may recognize students' achievements by referring to the implicit norms of diligence in the classroom. Likewise, other agents, such as firms, recognize a student's valuable traits in a job interview based on the student's grades or the capacity for teamwork. Social norms condition a patterned perception of evaluative qualities, from which subjects learn how to respond to valuable qualities that matter in a relevant social practice. In this way, social norms situate people in advantageous or disadvantageous social positions and establish social expectations through recognition.

The importance of considering structural power is made clear by examining the agent-centered concept of power that Honneth implicitly premises. He views power exclusively as the agential power of social groups to "control these means of symbolic force" and impose a particular cultural interpretation on other groups (Honneth, 1991, p. 303; 1995, p. 127). For him, power is the ability of powerful agents to impose an identity on powerless actors by controlling cultural resources, leading to their misrecognition. With this agent-centered concept, he discusses power relations only from the subjective point of view of the two agents. Honneth's agent-centered concept reflects recent investigations of power, which is represented in Steven Lukes's definition: "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests" (Lukes, 2005, p. 30). This concept supposes that Subject A has the intention to dominate B in ways that restrict B's freedom or influence B's interests. Lukes assumes that power is exclusively possessed by agents and is reluctant to think that social structures themselves have power; otherwise, the theory of power cannot identify powerful agents and "fix responsibility for consequences held to flow from the action, or inaction, of certain specifiable agents" (Lukes, 2005, p. 58).

Nonetheless, the agent-centered concept does not help much in answering our question about ideological recognition. Consider the case of Suzanne. She internalized gender stereotypes even though her peers might not have intentionally aimed to impose them. Rather, Suzanne desired to be recognized as "girlish" in acquiring her relations-to-self. Her desire was not necessarily influenced by her colleagues and powerful group alone, but rather by social norms about gender. In these cases, it is too narrow to consider her recognition only in terms of relationships between agents. To analyze the voluntary subordination to gender norms, we should take an objective point of view that examines social structures.

However, structural power by definition unavoidably involves any act of recognition because recognition is always practiced within a social structure. If so, how can we understand the internalization of problematic identities, as in the case of Suzanne? To illustrate this point, I concentrate on the *adaptive* and *constructing* operations of structural power. These operations explain the way ideological recognition is accepted from the addressees' subjective point of view.

#### 4.1 | The adaptive operation

In the adaptive operation, I presume, social structures distribute rewards and sanctions, which influence our preference formations and conceptions of the good. Oppressive social norms and practices can be internalized and reproduced without undermining one's self-worth because the costs of deviation are so high that the reflection of one's identity and life goals becomes consciously or unconsciously adaptive to the norms.

The issue of self-subordination has been examined in well-known studies of adaptive preferences that scrutinize the psychological mechanism of internalization. Adaptive preferences result from attempts to reduce the cognitive



dissonance between what one wants and one's feasible options by downgrading one's infeasible desire and adapting one's preferences to realistic, less costly options (Elster, 1983). In the context of recognition and gender, adaptive preference is formed through social expectations because "[p]eople's access to social status, their ideas about what they should become, and their access to material benefits often depend on how well they meet social expectations" (Khader, 2014, p. 230). Women internalize feminine qualities to maintain the psychological coherence between their self-image and social expectations. Placing a positive value on such qualities is the easiest path to avoid cognitive dissonance.

Structural power accounts for the psychological problem of adaptive preference from an objective perspective. In my example, Suzanne conformed to gender norms because she saw "spinster" as a sanction that impedes her happiness and marriage as a reward that enhances one's social evaluation. Moreover, acquiring the cultural capital needed to succeed in gaining the favor of men goes hand in hand with gaining economic benefits for women. Her formation of self-images is affected by social norms that determine social expectations that women should behave in ways relevant to their traits. By distributing rewards and costs, the adaptive operation of structural power encourages Suzanne to internalize social norms and fulfill social expectations. She had more interest in not losing her positive practical relations-to-self than in changing the structure itself.

## 4.2 | The constructing operation

With the constructing operation, I mean that social structures construct our patterned perception of identity as if it were objective and naturally given, so much so that subjects are constrained from perceiving that social structures can be reformed by human reason.

I address this operation because social structures do more than distribute rewards and costs. As Haslanger (2012) notes, social structures consist of the interdependence between social meanings (which she calls cultural *schemas*) and material resources. Social meanings refer to intersubjective patterns of perception and thoughts about social phenomena; material resources indicate physical reality, comprising the instantiations or embodiments of social meanings. The intertwining of these two elements helps to maintain social structures through "looping effects": Social meanings give us a framework of interpretation about things that in turn conditions our responses to them, thereby justifying the objectivity of their meanings (pp. 415, 466). Although Haslanger does not formulate her conception of power, her account of social structures constitutes the constructing forces that make it difficult to change dominant and hegemonic social norms. Ideological gender identity, constructed as a result of looping effects, give people tools for reasoning in the first place.

Gender identity and norms are constructed as natural and given in the normal processes of everyday life. For instance, the cultural schema of the two categories of sex is embodied in fashion. Our judgments in daily practices of interaction and recognition rely on such material reality as common ground. The ideal female image seems self-evident in practices of fashion in which bodily images of femininity are represented by clothing and the institutionalized modeling industry. In reiterating social practices, social meanings about gender are taken as if they were objective truth, reinforcing social norms and identities. In addition, feminist philosophy has pointed out how gender stereotypes have so permeated into the practices of social sciences that these stereotypes were represented as objective. For example, Collins (2000) claims that Black women's stereotypical images, such as "jezebel" have been structurally entrenched in part because they affected AIDS research and health policies (p. 85). These entwinements between stereotypes and institutional reality reinforce social expectations of those with certain traits and permit others to recognize stereotypical identities.

The adaptive and constructing operations of structural power illustrate why feminine qualities are accepted as positive by the addressees. Suzanne internalized dominant gender norms and stereotypes because adapting to them was the easiest path to avoid the penalty of deviation from social expectations (the adaptive operation) because she saw the social norms of femininity as an objective reality in their social and material world (the constructing operation). In this situation, structural power works so that internalizing social norms is a favorable condition for forming a person's self-worth.

## 5 | THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATION OF EPISTEMIC STRUCTURAL ACCOUNT

I have expounded the concepts of epistemic trust and structural power that are components of my account. By examining the interconnectedness between epistemic trust and structural power, I propose my substantive standard of ideological recognition briefly and discuss its theoretical and practical benefits in expanding the scope of domination and critique.

If we rest on the concepts of epistemic trust and structural power that I have discussed in the previous sections, recognition is ideological when the following two conditions are met. First, the basic norm of epistemic trust is violated. Second, recognition nevertheless maintains the subjective self-worth of the addressees because they accept recognition due to the operations of structural power. Ideological recognition is unjustified because the addressees are mistrusted as knowers in such a way that their recognized identities distort others' judgment of their epistemic status and authority. Subjectively, the addressees feel suitably recognized and their desire for recognition is satisfied because the operations of structural power create a situation where they positively accept ideological recognition. However, objectively, they are misrecognized in a basic form of recognition, regardless of whether they are clearly aware of the injustice.

The structural epistemic account overcomes the normative and descriptive problems of Honneth's account. For the first problem, Honneth does not actually provide a normative argument to identify ideological recognition. The concept of epistemic trust provides the basic norm of trust and identifies objectively unjustified recognition as mistrust. Regarding the second problem, Honneth cannot descriptively explain why the addressees of ideological recognition accept their identities as having positive qualities. I explain the problem of internalizing problematic identities by analyzing the operations of structural power. Honneth assumes that the internalization of gender norms has been an anachronistic topic. This is partly true, given the impact of feminist philosophy on social movements. However, my account attempts to address the persistent injustices in the structural and epistemic dimensions, which cannot be grasped by a subjective sense of misrecognition or an interpersonal analysis of power relations.

Beyond criticizing Honneth's account, the epistemic structural account has theoretical and practical benefits for critical theory by examining the complementary relationship between epistemic mistrust and the internalization of problematic identities. I will argue that my account not only advances the analysis of social pathology (5.1) and power dynamics in recognition (5.2) but can be utilized to discuss racial identities (5.3) and the task of practical critique (5.4).

### 5.1 | Ideological recognition as epistemic social pathology

The epistemic structural account explores the ideological nature of recognition in terms of social pathology. Social pathology means disorders or blockages of the critical practices undertaken by laypersons (Celikates, 2018; Geuss, 1981; Habermas, 1987; Honneth, 2009; Zurn, 2011). Critical theorists theorize critical practices, such as the practical discourse (Habermas) or the struggle for recognition (Honneth). In these practices, laypersons criticize injustices and try to change the unjust social norms or social institutions. At the same time, critical theorists analyze social pathologies: When laypersons are unable to comprehend the injustices that they suffer or are unable to join in these critical practices, one can call such situations social pathology.

The concepts of epistemic trust and structural power advance the theorizing of social pathology related to the female condition in particular. The operations of structural power maintain gender stereotypes as social expectations through the practices of recognition and assign women to unequal epistemic status. In my examples, Suzanne had the desire to be "girlish"; it is natural for her to adapt herself to social norms that determine the social evaluation of women. However, feminine gender identity is associated with negative stereotypes, such as "insufficiently rational" that undermine epistemic trust. Due to the recognition of "girlish" qualities, Suzanne could be excluded from critical practices. Her situation, therefore, implies a social pathology in the epistemic dimension.

This epistemic social pathology is reinforced in a negative feedback loop; it makes the operations of structural power increasingly opaque and prevents a woman from challenging the negative stereotypes, so that her exclusion from epistemic cooperation is aggravated. This feedback loop involves what Fricker (2007) calls “hermeneutic injustice” (p 149). Those who have been unjustly mistrusted face obstacles in accessing opportunities to partake in the public sphere and create hermeneutic resources for perceiving injustice as injustice. In this instance, the oppressed find an even greater difficulty in challenging negative stereotypes.

The addressees of ideological recognition might feel morally injured when they are mistrusted. However, it is much more difficult for them to properly articulate their sense of being injured as an injustice. To avoid cognitive dissonance, they might think the mistreatments came from their failure or were a natural consequence. In this sense, ideological recognition inflicts harm upon the addressees’ opportunity for an emancipatory movement of the struggle for recognition that aims to transform the existing practices of recognition.<sup>8</sup> Epistemic social pathology explains the pernicious nature of ideological recognition in that it reproduces epistemic injustice without resistance by exploiting the addressees’ desire for recognition. Insofar as the addressees accept ideological recognition, the injustice of mistrust is inconspicuous to them by obstructing the availability of hermeneutic resources to articulate the injustice.

## 5.2 | Power dynamics

In my account, the addressees of ideological recognition accept unjustified recognition. Nevertheless, I never argue that they were solely responsible for their mistrust. One reason is that their acceptance of ideological recognition stems from the operations of structural power. However, we cannot also say that privileged groups have not committed any wrong when the addressees of ideological recognition suffer mistrust and epistemic injustice. To problematize the attitudes on the part of privileged groups, my account is utilized to analyze the interrelation of structural power and agential power.

As I noted earlier, structural power constitutes agential power to restrict another’s interests intentionally. If that is the case, ideological recognition and epistemic exclusion stem partly from the exercise of the agential power of privileged groups. The privileged can coerce gender norms by sanctioning women who enter “our” domain. The privileged mainstream attempts to maintain patriarchal social norms by imposing sanctions as a form of misogyny upon those who deviate from these norms (Manne, 2017). Women are placed in the ambivalent situation of either internalizing gender stereotypes and losing epistemic trust instead of gaining recognition, as Suzanne did, or facing the risk of backlash by rejecting gender stereotypes, as Brianna did.

Critical analysis of ideological recognition must take into account power dynamics. On the one hand, structural power operates to induce women to accept existing gender norms to keep them unchallenged. On the other hand, the privileged have the agential power to deny recognition to women who do not conform to gender stereotypes, taking advantage of circumstances under which women internalize gender norms. The agential power of the privileged is tolerated by the social structure that empowers them to control cultural resources because prejudicial stereotypes prevent women from participating in knowledge-producing practices. In this context, Medina (2013) claims that prejudicial stereotypes persist in part because the privileged have the power to ignore the situations or perspectives of the oppressed. The ambivalent situations of the oppressed who are induced to internalize social norms and face epistemic social pathology are not within the sight of the privileged. Thus, the epistemic structural account understands ideological recognition and power dynamics within the triadic relationship between social structures, privileged groups, and the oppressed.<sup>9</sup>

## 5.3 | Ideological recognition in the case of racial stereotypes

I have so far focused only on cases of ideological recognition in relation to gender issues. However, my account can also be applied to the recognition of racial identity. For example, African American studies (e.g., Anderson, 2010; Shelby,

2016) have focused on the situation of African American youths living primarily in urban areas in the United States. Against the backdrop of a history of racism, they have developed a sense of self-worth as subversive and rebellious against the dominant mainstream. They become “bad” and “tough” to maintain their pride and gain recognition from friends or peers. As long as they live in the Black community, the recognition of their “bad” quality is of existential importance even for those who are not “street youth” and wish to succeed financially.

The epistemic structural account views as ideological recognition the recognition of African Americans who seek to have a “bad” quality to maintain their self-worth. At the beginning of the fifth section, I identify the two conditions that constitute the substantive standard of ideological recognition. These conditions can be applied to the case of African American youths.

First, they want to be recognized as “bad”; however, such quality is included in prejudicial racial stereotypes of being “intellectually inferior to whites” (Fricker, 2007, p. 23). Because of the identity of being “bad,” African Americans are vulnerable to an unfair degradation of their default epistemic status and authority. For example, teachers who see their “bad” character may stop teaching them enthusiastically. If discredit spreads between teachers and students, students may not sustain their studies.<sup>10</sup> This can be a serious barrier to learning for African Americans, excluding them from epistemic practices. Therefore, their recognition of “bad” quality is unjustified in terms of the basic norm of epistemic trust.

Second, African Americans may internalize their “bad” identity within the operations of structural power. In the adaptive operation, they conformed to racial stereotypes because being “bad” is a prerequisite to being accepted in their community, and someone who tries to settle into the mainstream may be seen as an enemy. In the constructing operation, the boundary between the mainstream and the Black community seems to be set by the spatial boundaries of racial segregation. Alternatively, the cultural schema of race is embodied in “hip” jackets and gold jewelry that represent the masculinity of young African American men (Anderson, 1994). In such circumstances, structural power may operate in such a way that the internalization of stereotypical identity is the favorable condition for shaping their practical relations-to-self.

The epistemic structural account may understand the recognition of African Americans as ideological when they, first, suffer unjust degradations of epistemic trust and when they, second, accept their “bad” identity due to the operations of structural power. In my account, the situation of African Americans is also understood in terms of social pathology. They may face the hurdle of challenging negative racial stereotypes because exclusion from the epistemic community persists as a result of the internalization of racial stereotypes.<sup>11</sup>

## 5.4 | The ambivalence of recognition and the task of practical critique

A further benefit of my account is that it can be applied to critique the ambivalence of recognition, whereby recognition has both emancipatory and dominating aspects. The epistemic structural account advances the task of practical critique in those two aspects.

On the emancipatory aspect, my account prescribes the right direction for emancipation. Epistemic trust constitutes a precondition for practical discourse and the struggle for recognition because speakers must be trusted as having the default epistemic status and authority for their claims to be heard. Based on the basic norm of trust, social critics diagnose the condition of critical practices undertaken by laypersons. Such analysis adopts the mode of immanent critique (Stahl, 2013), which appeals to the immanent contradiction between the practice-based norm and its insufficient embodiment in reality. In this diagnostic role, social critics uncover the violation of the norm that constitutes critical practices.

On the dominating aspects, my account inquires into ideological recognition and social pathology by adopting the mode of disclosing critique (Honneth, 2000). This critique makes explicit to the oppressed how power dynamics inconspicuously reproduce domination. In this mode, power analysis proceeds as a kind of consciousness-raising. One can, of course, individually experience mistrust and resist the withdrawal of epistemic trust. Members of subordinate groups may—even in ideological practices of recognition—have a negative preference or “whine” that does

not rise to the level of moral resentment (Haslanger, 2021, p. 49). However, especially when gender or racial stereotypes result in epistemic exclusion, it becomes necessary to articulate injustice *collectively* and initiate a struggle for recognition. Along with subordinate groups, social critics engage, therefore, in collective consciousness-raising that discloses power dynamics in the social formation of knowledge and identities. To fill hermeneutic lacunae and create counter-publics, such activity exposes a situation where subjects accept ideological recognition and are excluded from the epistemic community.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

In this article, I have argued that recognition theory must consider the ambivalence of recognition because a desire for recognition is sometimes exploited as an instrument for reproducing domination. The central question in this article is how to identify ideological recognition, recognition that is acceptable from the addressees' subjective point of view but morally unjustified from the objective or theoretical point of view.

Honneth's answer, as I pointed out, fails to offer a substantive normative standard for identifying the recognition of ideological gender identity, thereby ignoring the injustice that the addressees suffer even if they are recognized as consistent with their self-image. His account also fails to descriptively address the structural dimension of power that forces the internalization of gender norms and stereotypes.

The epistemic structural account that I have offered discusses, first, the normative argument of delineating between justified and unjustified recognition by proposing the concept of epistemic trust. It is the underlying form of recognition and includes the basic norm of epistemic trust that allows us to identify objectively unjustified recognition as mistrust. Second, my account described how the addressees accept a problematic identity by proposing the concept of structural power. Structural power can create a situation where it is favorable for the addressees to internalize problematic social norms and identities to maintain their self-worth. From these arguments, I have claimed that recognition is ideological when the following conditions are met. First, the basic norm of epistemic trust is violated. Second, recognition maintains the subjective self-worth of the addressees because they accept the recognition due to the operations of structural power.

Further, I have argued that the epistemic structural account has theoretical and practical benefits for analyzing domination and advancing the task of critique. By examining the interconnectedness between epistemic trust and structural power, my account develops not only the critical analysis of social pathology, but also analyzes the power dynamics in recognition by inquiring into the triadic relationship between social structures, the privileged, and the oppressed. I also tried to show that my account can be applied to analyze the ideological recognition of African American youths and can be used in practical critiques for overcoming epistemic injustice. Such critical tasks, of course, require further theoretical and empirical studies.<sup>12</sup> However, developing an analysis of ideological recognition can advance critical theory for emancipation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Ken Oshitani, Dai Oba, Shu Ishida, Takeshi Miyai, Shinichi Tabata and the audiences who participated in 7th Sciences Po Graduate Conference in Political Theory (2019). I am particularly grateful to Axel Honneth and two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments and feedback.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Recent studies point to a fruitful relationship between epistemic injustice and recognition theory (Congdon, 2017; Giladi, 2018; Medina 2018). I approach this discussion from the perspective of ideological recognition.

- <sup>2</sup>The relationship between recognition and power has been a central topic in recognition theory (Allen, 2010; McNay, 2008; Owen, 2010; Van den Brink & Owen, 2007). I develop this topic by elaborating on the concept of structural power.
- <sup>3</sup>The case of Suzanne is based on Angela McRobbie's post-feminist media study (McRobbie, 2009). She cites the film *Bridget Jones's Diary* and analyzes Bridget's behavior as a post-feminist problem, demanding the recognition of femininity. Regarding the case of Brianna, Piepmeier (2009) points to the influence of punk music like Riot Grrrl and girl zines to the third-wave feminist movements.
- <sup>4</sup>Honneth could reply that he can distinguish between morally just and unjust recognition according to the criterion of "moral progress." He argues that the morally justified recognition is progressive because it promotes a process of "individualization" and "inclusion" (Honneth, 2003, p. 184f). However, many commentators criticize his teleological concept of progress as not morally freestanding and needing further justification (Zurn, 2015).
- <sup>5</sup>In portraying the underlying form of recognition as a knower, my account extends the three forms of recognition outlined by Honneth's recognition theory. Honneth (2008) also tries to conceptualize the "elementary" or "antecedent" recognition in affective sympathy and expressive gestures (pp. 37, 45). In contrast to my account, Congdon (2018) analyzes the concept of knower in line with Honneth's three forms of recognition and claims that each type of recognition has epistemic dimensions.
- <sup>6</sup>The conditions of trustworthiness only pertain to truth claims in Habermas's four validity claims—comprehensibility, sincerity, truth, and rightness (Habermas, 1984, p. 310)—because trust in exchange of testimony is relevant in the practice of pooling information (Fricker, 2007, p. 32). Thus, more precisely, trust is a component of truth claims.
- <sup>7</sup>Honneth might claim that epistemic mistrust amounts to disrespect in the form of equal recognition. His theory, however, explicates equal recognition only in the dimension of law and rights in which subjects recognize each other as having equal citizenship. The norm of epistemic trust can, in turn, identify the micro-level distortions of epistemic authority that cannot be expressed by legal disrespect because the norm regulates a more fundamental respect as an autonomous knower that is a precondition for every discursive practice.
- <sup>8</sup>My account can analyze the recognition of entrepreneurs as exemplified by Honneth in a new light. This recognition implies a social stereotype that workers are responsible for individual success and failure, which precludes their participation in the epistemic community where they can collectively scrutinize the operations of structural power that prompt them to accept neoliberal ideology. On the relationship between economic ideology described by Honneth and epistemic injustice, see Elling (2021).
- <sup>9</sup>I will not be able to provide a detailed discussion of the responsibilities for unjustified recognition of the privileged and the oppressed concerning social structure. In the studies of structural injustice, the debate over responsibility for perpetuating injustice is a major topic; see Young (2011).
- <sup>10</sup>Haslanger (2014) analyzes how racial stereotypes foster discredit between Black students and White teachers in the United States.
- <sup>11</sup>I do not have space here to refer to empirical studies, but the disadvantages of ideological recognition would be more complicated in the intersectional cases. On a theoretical account of intersecting power relations, see Collins and Bilge (2020).
- <sup>12</sup>An important issue for a more comprehensive analysis of power dynamics concerns Bourdieu's (2001) habitus theory, which discusses the structural process of the internalization of social norms and identities.

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**How to cite this article:** Narita, H. (2024). Recognition, power, and trust: Epistemic structural account of ideological recognition. *Constellations*, 31, 428–443. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12708>

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