

Book review on identity and agency in cultural worlds

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



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A summary of chapter eight

Chapter eight, authoring ourselves, presents ideas on Bakhtin's concepts of self-fashioning. The concepts allow an individual to verbalize alternative visions within ourselves especially in the context of our inner dialogues where we are ever forming new identities. The central organizing principle called dialogism that expresses our inner dialogues in attempts to respond to the stimuli from our natural environments. The chapter puts it that language is not only an abstract semiotic system but also an ideology and a perspective that has been lived on the world. Of importance is the sentiment that in creating meaning out of what we see, we use the words of others because in expressing ourselves, the simultaneous nature of various languages and of their assumptions and associated values rules our social life (Holland, 2003).

According to Bakhtin and Vygotsky, words, language and speech are the chief means through which we become conscious and subjective. The two scholars as presented in chapter eight hold that one's inner speech is the key intra-mental node through which social speech became an integral part of our thought and feeling. The chapter backs these arguments by adducing

the law posited by Vygotsky that all functions in the cultural development of a child appear twice. Firstly, they appear on the social level very early in the development of the child and later on in the development of the child, the functions appear on the individual level. This implies that the external speech comes before the internal speech in the development of a being. That when children first talk, there are merely reproducing the utterances and gestures that they have picked from other in their environment (Holland, 2003).

The chapter also presents the uses of educational theories advanced by Vygotsky. Through his concept of zones of proximal development, the theorist attempts to determine the amount an individual can do while receiving help and support from others within the context of learning. The concept of zones of proximal development attempt to explain why a alcoholic attending meetings of the Alcoholics Anonymous is able to share stories of his alcoholism only with the help and support of his fellow Alcoholics Anonymous members. This contrasts sharply with the ideals used in most schools that test the inherited and acquired skills using exams that are supposed to be done individually. Nonetheless, the concepts are food for thought (Holland, 2003).

Throughout chapter eight, ideas and concepts of how language and vulture are important for our development are presented. The chapter shows that language is not only a means of expression but more importantly, our perspective of the world we have lived (Holland, 2003).

A summary of chapter eleven

The chapter agrees to the existence of specialized practices and discourses that each predicates a figured world that is realized in various personal identities. The chapter adduces that the lives led by people take form among various identifications, whether figured or relational. In agreement with concepts by Vygotsky, the chapter adduces that the said social forms, practices and discourses are more than simple contexts of inner life; they are the content of our inner life. In advancing the notion of voices by Bakhtin, the chapter argues that styles of dressing, genres, dialects, the different ways we hold and move our bodies are socially inflected forms possessing both indexical and substantive value. The chapter argues that they narrate our social category, our group affiliations and our relational positions (Holland, 2003).

As the chapter is titled deals with play and liberatory worlds, it recognizes the central place that play occupies in Vygotsky's theories. The chapter holds that play happens far beyond the world that is observably set. That play occurs in a fantasy world where the players are taken beyond the immediate setting into a fantasy world where different aspects embodied by the natural world seem natural, are suspended and subject to pretense. For Vygotsky, the imaginary setting only answers questions posed about the figured world. The chapter paints a candid picture of what play is to human beings. It is the medium through which we create and master ourselves. The chapter says that through play, we are able to make our fancied selves material. We are able to live in the imaginary world, the figured world through play (Holland, 2003).

References

Holland, D. C. (2003). Identity and agency in cultural worlds. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University.