

Foundations for Global Interactions: The Theoretical Underpinnings of Understanding Others

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Abstract : In a course on International Psychology, 8 theoretical perspectives (Critical Psychology, Liberation Psychology, Post-Modernism, Social Constructivism, Social Identity Theory, Social Reduction Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory) are used as a framework for getting students to understand the concept of and need for Globalization. One of critical psychology's main criticisms of conventional psychology is that it fails to consider or deliberately ignores the way power differences between social classes and groups can impact the mental and physical well-being of individuals or groups of people. Liberation psychology, also known as liberation social psychology or psicología social de la liberación, is an approach to psychological science that aims to understand the psychology of oppressed and impoverished communities by addressing the oppressive sociopolitical structure in which they exist. Postmodernism is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts to explain reality. It stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it, but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality. Lev Vygotsky argued that all cognitive functions originate in, and must therefore be explained as products of social interactions and that learning was not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners. Social Identity Theory discusses the implications of social identity for human interactions with and assumptions about other people. Social Identification Theory suggests people: (1) categorize—people find it helpful (humans might be perceived as having a need) to place people and objects into categories, (2) identify—people align themselves with groups and gain identity and self-esteem from it, and (3) compare—people compare self to others. Social reductionism argues that all behavior and experiences can be explained simply by the affect of groups on the individual. Symbolic interaction theory focuses attention on the way that people interact through symbols: words, gestures, rules, and roles. Meaning evolves from human their interactions in their environment and with people. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or culture. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. This presentation will discuss how these theoretical perspectives are incorporated into a course on International Psychology, a course on the Politics of Hate, and a course on the Psychology of Prejudice, Discrimination and Hate to promote student thinking in a more 'global' manner.

Keywords : globalization, international psychology, society and culture, teaching interculturality

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