



EFPA-Symposium: “Translating Transformation into Teaching – a Handbook on (Inter)Cultural Psychology”

Thematic stream 7 Supporting developing psychologists

We live in increasingly diverse societies, yet (inter-) cultural psychology is not (yet) anchored in psychology curricula. Whilst the demographic makeup of many societies is changing, many curricula are not adapted for diverse student populations and their future clients and colleagues. How can we as psychology teachers build (inter-)cultural understanding in students and future colleagues?

The proposed Handbook equips educators to teach experiential-oriented and incorporate reflections on WEIRD (and culturally) biased norms in theory and practice through an unique mechanism. In three parts, we provide theoretical foundations, experiential-oriented bridges for teaching, and examples of applied practice. We will demonstrate the mechanism by linking a case-study example via experiential learning to a theoretical framework.

Building on Kurt Lewin`s field theory, we explain meaning-making processes – how human beings make sense of their environments, how “the other” is construed, and how we place ourselves within this world. We can reflect on these concepts and processes (Abstract 3), yet how this feels, the affective component is the focus of the practice part. Building on the notion that culture is embodied, didactic experiential-oriented exercises are offered, allowing the linking between theoretical concepts and practice. Abstract concepts are translated into concrete exercises that promote self-reflection and allow for experiential learning as well as linking to practical examples (Abstract 2). The cultural lens is then extended to the applied field. What are the guidelines for assessment for persons outside the WEIRD boundaries? By providing a case study examples (Abstract 1), we show the importance of the cultural lens and demonstrate how critical cultural competencies contribute to culturally informed, aware, and thus effective psychological practice.

Intended audience (Academic, Practitioner, Both): both

Keywords (3 maximum): EFPA, (Inter)Cultural Psychology, Handbook

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Discussant

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Introduction – Maria Koushiou (Cyprus)
Presentation 1 – Iva Žegura (Croatia)
Presentation 2 – Ulrike de Ponte (Germany)
Presentation 3 – Elke Murdock (Luxembourg)
Discussant – Eleni Karayianni (Cyprus)

Introduction

Title: “Mission & Vision of the Board Cultural and Ethnic Diversity”

Maria Koushiou

This introduction will provide some background information to the Handbook on (Inter)Cultural Psychology to enhance psychology colleagues who already lecture Psychology in bachelor's degree programmes. It will give an overview of the work of the EFPA-Board on Cultural and Ethnic Diversity and present the mission and vision of the Board, embedding (inter)cultural psychology as a stand-alone subject in the bachelor's degree programmes in psychology throughout Europe. At the core of the presentation the current curriculum components arching 5 semesters will be presented and the structure and mechanism idea of this new handbook is developed.

During the six years, curriculum components arching five semesters were developed by looking at best practice examples. Knowing that at the current stage, there is hardly space in the curricula of European study programmes of psychology, the B CED wants to paint a vision of what European psychologists might gain and can contribute to society by embedding the topic of (inter)cultural psychology already for all bachelor students, and not only as a master specification. The idea of translating this into a handbook for psychology colleagues to teach this enhancing development is at the center of the Board's work currently.

Presentation 1

Title: “Mechanism Part 1 | Trauma informed psychological practice with LGBTIQ+ people”

Iva Žegura

This presentation will give a case study as a practical example which can be seen as the first part to the mechanism of the Handbook.

Trauma is a pervasive problem that may originate from different relations and thus is called relational trauma (RT). Trauma results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being. Research has shown that the risk for RT is particularly elevated within certain populations such as people who identified as black, Hispanic, or multiracial; people with less than a high-school education; people with low-income or who were unemployed or unable to work; and people who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse.

Minority stress theory explains how structural, interpersonal, and individual forms of stigma give rise to proximal stress experiences that in turn elevate health risk for sexual and gender minorities. These stigma-related stressors experienced by sexual and gender minorities across these levels compound general life stressors to additively confer risk for stress-related health outcomes. Interpersonal discrimination and victimization are closely associated with proximal minority stressors, including internalized homonegativity and sensitivity to status-based rejection, which are in turn associated with poor mental health and health-risk behaviours. Anxious expectations of rejection might be particularly pronounced among LGBTIQ+ people, with one study finding that two-thirds of transgender men report having experienced mistreatment in healthcare settings at some point in their lives and nearly half reported having avoided healthcare services in the past year.

Case example: A Croatian psychologist started to work as a counsellor after graduation in NGO aiming to social inclusivity shortly after he moved to small city in eastern part of Germany. The psychologist never received any training on LGBTIQ+ affirmative psychological practice nor trauma informed practice. His first client is 19 years old Syrian migrant (sociology student, religious, family with a strong Islamic tradition) that questions her sexual orientation and gender identity. What would be culturally competent and trauma informed interventions?

Presentation 2

Title: “Mechanism Part 2 | The experience-oriented exercise as a bridge of understanding between theory and practice”

Ulrike de Ponte

This part will present the bridge in the mechanism of the handbook. We will show through an exercise how the example from the practice given in presentation 1 becomes tangible through an experience in order to then embed this in the theory in presentation 3.

Experiential learning builds on Dewey's idea of learning through and for experience (1938). From this perspective, we as psychologists will understand that not only learning but also development is required here. That comes with the consequence that teaching (inter)cultural psychology needs to provide teaching environments where this can happen.

We often become aware that culture is at play when we experience difference. Something went differently than expected. This is often accompanied by confusion, surprise or an unpleasant feeling. Why is that?

Culture is inscribed in our bodies and is normally not subject to conscious-obligatory, which means that we normally act relatively automatically in encounters. When someone (who has been enculturated in another culture, for example) suddenly acts differently than we are used to, we are given the chance to internally compare and reflect on our own behavior and that of others. We can use this mechanism in teaching to build cultural understanding.

This approach focusses on differences, not on communalities, and comes therefore with an often in the western world taken access. This will be discussed in the handbook, but not here in the symposium.

This means that the teaching of (inter)cultural psychology must provide teaching environments in which development by AHA experiences is encouraged and can take place. We present an exercise that makes an example from the practice of a psychologist tangible through an experience in order to then embed this in the theory: The exercise links an example from a group outside the norm (set by whom?) with theoretical considerations on how our socialized way of gaining meaning simultaneously limits our perception.

Presentation 3

Title: “Mechanism Part 3 | Theoretical embedding”

Elke Murdock

Cross-cultural competence has been described as the cornerstone of diversity, globalization, multinational activities, and international relations (Chen & Gabrenya, 2021). Cultural intelligence (CQ) is supposed to enable individuals to see beyond their own cultural lens and is referred to as an interconnected knowledge system guided by cultural metacognition. Measures of CQ usually include motivational, behavioural and (meta-) cognitive dimensions. Earley and Peterson (2004) comment on the limited capacity for transferring a concept from an example case to a novel situation unless there is a specific discussion of the metacognitive strategies.

We are addressing this need for discussion by providing theoretical embedding. We lay the theoretical foundations reflecting the complex realities of people living in an increasingly interconnected world. We explain the psychological processes that guide our thinking, feelings, and behaviour, building on Kurt Lewin`s field theory. We explain meaning making processes – how human beings make sense of their environments. We focus on theories of how “the self” and “the other” are construed and how we place ourselves within this world.

Yet these processes of how we are anchored or the points of reference we use are often not consciously experienced. Furthermore, our own strategies for meaning making are rooted in our personal sphere of reference. Yet applying the cultural lens requires us to take on a different perspective, questioning what is familiar – thinking difference, letting go of what we know, which may be experienced as a loss of control. Applying the cultural lens is a challenging task as it requires constant questioning of what we know. Therefore, the theoretical embedding must be linked to the practice part, facilitating the experience of questioning what we know. An example of linking case a study example to theory applying the cultural lens will be provided.