

Book Reviews

Becoming Intercultural: an integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation

YOUNG YUN KIM, 2001

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Young Yun Kim's book, *Becoming Intercultural*, provides an overview of intercultural adaptation from a communicative perspective as it stands at the millennium. Kim's main purpose is the explication of her "integrative theory" of intercultural communication and adaptation: integrative in the sense that she seeks to transcend solely psychological, sociocultural or pedagogical explanations of adaptation strategies and outcomes by providing an overarching communicative model.

In "Part I: The Background", Kim addresses the breadth of intercultural experiences followed by a series of analytical dichotomies, including macro versus micro perspectives of adaptation, theories of adaptation as "learning/growth" versus "problem", and assimilationist versus pluralist theorizations, which her "integrative theory" hopes to transcend. In Part II, "The Theory" (Chapters 3–5), Kim articulates her communicative theory in three facets: communicative/social competence; functional fitness and psychological health; and cultural/ethnic identity, each understood in terms of intercultural "success". Part III represents the theoretical bulk of Kim's book. Specifically, she addresses psychological issues in Chapters 6 and 9 ("Personal Communication" and "Predisposition", respectively), and sociocultural issues in Chapters 7, 8, and 10 ("Social Communication", "Environment", and "Intercultural Transformation"). Lastly, in Part IV, "The Theory and the Reality", Kim draws her theory back into the everyday world by tapping less into the process of becoming intercultural and more into the potential that multiculturalism holds for individuals.

The book reads well and contains both a bibliography with more than 875 references as well as an index. However, Kim subscribes to an "open systems" approach (p. 31) that seems to differ little from outdated functional approaches used in the social sciences during much of the last century. In this vein, Kim should, but does not, adequately address the fact that, as a consequence of studying the central role of communication in intercultural relations, one must also consider how variables such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality are expressed both in interaction and via popular cultural artifacts, such as the print and visual media (Denzin, 1992; Kellner, 1995). Such considerations are crucial for understanding the embodied interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds in concrete situations (see Jenkins, 1996). Specifically, such variables are bound up in issues of power, of which there is no explicit discussion. Internationals do not necessarily have the ability to define for themselves the situation in which they act (Goffman, 1963). It is not clear, for example, how communicative competence allows minority individuals to simply "fit in" to a host culture given asymmetrical power relationships that problematize their everyday lives. While there are sections of the text that attend to, for example, race and cognition, these are discussed only in so far as they support her communicative theory. Kim's attempt at a "transcendent" theory could thus be reduced to a utopianist theory that privileges communication over other sociological and psychological theorizations. Alternative theories are not so much transcended as much as they are at times ignored or marginalized.

Pointing out such shortcomings is not meant to detract too much from the effort Kim has put forth. Communicative theories provide important insights into the lives of individuals and groups (Carey, 1989) and should contain

important sociological, pedagogical and political components in order to portray more vividly the processes of intercultural communication and adaptation.

References

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Black Justice? Race, criminal justice and identity

NADIA JOANNE BRITTON, 2000

London: Trentham Books, 112 pp.

Britton's book is a study of a small black voluntary organization, which is referred to as "the project". The project's main aim was to provide various kinds of practical help to black people subjected to racial discrimination in British society. "The project" did not only provide judicial advice and help, but also tried to, through an operation called "Help On Arrest Scheme", to help blacks who had been taken into custody by the police. The voluntary organization made an agreement with the police authorities of the city where the project was located to go to any local police station upon the request of an arrested black person in order to offer practical help and assistance. Although blacks are a major group subjected to discrimination in British society, the project did not provide its services only to blacks, but also to other ethnic minorities. Accordingly, it attracted volunteers from diverse ethnic groups. This, according to Britton, provided an ideal site to explore the three major themes of the book, namely race, criminal justice and identity. The reader must keep in mind that the term black is used for all ethnic minorities in this book and not only for blacks.

In Chapter 1, the author provides a description of "the project", the research questions and definitions of the central terms, such as race, criminal justice and identity, used in the book. In Chapter 2 the origin of, as well as the need for, "the project" is discussed. Blacks have been a major group discriminated against in British society, and have been unable to exercise their full citizenship rights. Relationships between the police and blacks are infected as a result of police discrimination and the mistreatment of blacks. Furthermore, the discussions on voluntary organizations' ethnic characteristics and independency are discussed. The project volunteers agreed that black voluntary organizations are necessary to promote justice for blacks. The black volunteers believe that the lack of a "black perspective" is the main reason behind the failure of predominantly white statutory organizations in meeting the needs and interests of the black population. However, the author doubts the independence of the voluntary organizations, since they are dependent on support from statutory organizations at a time when the growth of the voluntary sector has been actively encouraged by a government keen to reduce the role of the welfare state. Chapter 3 provides a discussion on volunteers' motivation for their participation in voluntary black organizations, in particular "the project" being studied. It is argued that the formation of a volunteer culture in any voluntary organization is desirable because it encourages commitment to organizational aims, objectives and solidarity among participants. A project in which volunteers from different ethnic groups participate also challenges the imagined homogeneity among "the blacks", i.e. "non-whites".

In Chapter 4, the problematic relations between the police and black people, in particular "young men", are discussed. The problem of racism within the police force is discussed within the British context. Though well documented, police officers do not see such accusations as a fair and correct picture of themselves, especially as presented in the mass media. Whereas the police do not even acknowledge that race and ethnicity can be a factor in their job, volunteers' concerns about police/black relations motivated them to volunteer. They strongly believe that black people cannot depend on predominantly white institu-