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Using A Semiotic Metatheory for Theory Understanding, Appraisal, and Use: An Illustrative Social Work Translation of the Affect Control Theory of Emotions

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Abstract

Charles Sanders Peirce's creed, "Do Not Block Inquiry," and his triadic model of the signs serve as the base for a semiotic metatheory of science and scientific theory. Semioticians characterize science as a universe of diverse sign systems, and scientists as members of different language communities. This paper introduces this approach. Affect control theorists ponder and investigate how actors, identities, actions, objects, emotions, and social settings are interrelated during interaction. Semiotic tools and principles guide the translation of the Affect Control Theory (ACT) of emotion. ACT is summarized and appraised for its value in increasing our understanding of human behavior in the social environment, its suitability to social work, and its applicability. ACT technical words are translated into simpler language, ACT displays into words, and ACT's interactionist language is translated into the language of ecosystems theory. Suggestions for strengthening ACT and for promoting semiotic translation are included.

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