Student Paper

The Cultural Self in Integral Psychology:
Narratives of Multiplicity in Multicultural Counseling and Leadership Coaching

William Harryman
Student, University of Phoenix

Looking back through the history of developmental psychology, there have been dozens of attempts to quantify and delineate various stage models of human traits and abilities. For example, Piaget (1950) examined cognitive development, Kohlberg (1981) and Gilligan (1982) examined moral development, Loevinger (1976) outlined ego development, and Jenny Wade (1996) has created a developmental model for overall consciousness that incorporates many of the other models. When each model's developmental stages are lined up side by side, the combination of cognitive skills, moral levels, ego stages, and so on, combine to form worldviews that reflect the way a person holding that worldview conceives of the world (see Forman, 2010, figure 6.1 for further examples of the specific traits forming worldviews).

Ken Wilber's Integral Psychology (2000) offers the most complete synthesis of the various developmental models, more than 200 from Western psychology and Eastern religion, and generates from them a system of worldviews ranging from the most primitive all the way to non-dual consciousness (p. 197-217). In general, the stages can be simplified to pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional (Wilber, 2000; 2007, following Gilligan, 1982). Within the respective worldviews, pre-conventional stage people tend to be egocentric, conventional stage people tend to be ethnocentric, and post-conventional stage people tend to be world-centric. As people move up the developmental ladder, their perspective moves from kinship and tribal affiliations (power drives), to race and cultural affiliations (authoritarian), to seeing self as a member of a group encompassing all living beings (egalitarian) (Beck & Cowan, 1996).

David Berreby (2005) refers to the ways that people group themselves as kinds (p. 15), suggesting that "human kinds are infinitely divisible: examine one, and you find inside it subcategories and, inside those, still more" (p. 15). Berreby presents some arguments that the "codes" that generate this type of grouping behavior are "built-in" (p. 101), elements of our biology, and there may be some truth to that position, as evidenced by some arguments coming from evolutionary psychology (Rushton, 2005; see anything by Steven Pinker). The question one might ask, then, is where the subjects of Rushton's study fall on a developmental hierarchy? Can human beings transcend this biological "us vs. them" predisposition?

On the other hand, the relatively recent cultural psychology movement (Benson, 2001) offers a more integrative understanding of why human beings chose to group themselves in various ways, from the simplest family-based groups of hunter-gathers, to the most complex worldcentric views of the Dalai Lama. Both Wilber's integral psychology and the emerging field of cultural psychology are leading edges in therapeutic

and leadership coaching theory, and within these models ideas of race, religion, gender, sexuality, and other forms of Berreby's "us vs. them" thinking are based partly in biology, partly in culture and social structures, and mostly in the intersection between these two fields – the psyche.

More importantly, however, this composite self is also located in space and time so that where and when a person lives also shapes development, and consequently, their worldview. If Plato were born today, with the same genes and parents, but was raised in rural Nebraska, it is very unlikely that he would write any of his great books. Ciarin Benson (2001) gives the best description of this bio-psycho-culturally embedded self: 'Self' functions primarily as a locative system, a means of reference and orientation in worlds of space–time (perceptual worlds) and in worlds of meaning and place–time (cultural worlds). This understanding of self as an ongoing, living process of constant auto-referred locating recognizes the centrality both of the body and of social relations. The antecedents of bodily location are well understood in evolutionary terms, whereas those of personal location among other persons are best understood culturally. (p. 4)

As therapists or as coaches, we become more effective when we fully grasp the complexity of interactions between neuroscience, genetics, culture, and social structures that creates the individual sitting with us in the therapy room, the board room, or in any other context.

To provide an example of how the idea of a culturally created value system functions, many of the Germans who killed Jews during the Nazi reign followed orders without question, while often defying Nazi edicts in other areas, suggesting a deeply held anti-Semitic racial attitude in Germany at that time (Benson, 158) rather than a forced obedience as sometimes argued by those who committed these crimes. Another example involves the Chukchee people in the far north of Russia, as observed by Vladimir Bogoraz (Bruner, 1986). In this culture, objects from outside the culture are defined as "disgusting" and produced physically obvious nausea in members of the culture. This may be one of the clearest examples of how emotions and responses are culturally created (p. 116-117).

If one accepts the idea that identities and values are socially constructed, the next step is to see that people exhibit different selves in different contexts. One of the important ideas to come from postmodern philosophy and psychology is that selves are relative to contexts. For example, have you noticed how you act or think differently in the office than you do with your spouse? Or maybe – and this one is painfully obvious for many people around the holidays – you feel like a child again when you visit your parents. The idea of multiplicity, of multiple selves and multiple perspectives, is essential to postmodern philosophy, and it is equally important in multicultural coaching and therapeutic work. One the areas in which multiplicity gains relevance is in dealing with ethnocentrism and other forms of prejudice.

A Multiplicity of Narratives and Narratives of Multiplicity

The newest research suggests that no child is born hating any person or anything; in fact, they are born knowing that other people are like them (Gopnik, 2009, p. 45), but they also notice differences in skin color and hair as something to be curious about, not to fear (Anti-Defamation League, 2001, para. 3). One of the first lessons about the world, one that initiates the development of a unique self, is that there is difference between the child and the care-giver, the self-other split (Siegel, 1999, p. 101-102). From that point onward, a person's perception of the world is built upon this self-other duality, which reaches its fullest expression in Martin Buber's I and Thou (1950). What becomes "other" for each person depends on that person's development (for example, kids naturally form in-group/out-group dynamics as they enter their adolescent years) and socio-cultural context. More importantly, they also are taught what is "other" by family, peers,

teachers, and the culture. When these lessons on what is other become encoded as prejudice, ethnocentrism is the perspective:

> Tendency to divide the social world into groups with which one identifies and to which one submits (in-groups) and groups of outsiders (out-groups) to which one is hostile; characterized by glorification of the in-group and defamation of the out-group. (Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology, 2004)

It's quite telling that this definition comes from an entry on authoritarianism, since the two perspectives are highly linked.

Because the self and its values are culturally constructed, and hate may be a perfectly "normal" emotion (or normalized through acceptance) within Western culture (Corcoran, 2003), what we hate is learned from our psycho-cultural context – the time, place, and people around whom we are raised. In each of the three generalized developmental realms (pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional), why people hate takes on a different narrative structure. For example, at pre-conventional stages one hates the "other" because s/he is from a different kin-group, worships different ancestors, eats different foods, and so on (as represented by the Chukchee people mentioned above). Contact with others tends to be limited for people at this stage because they live in traditionally tribal cultures or as isolated groups within a larger culture. At the conventional stages, we hate the "other" because their skin is a different color, their religion is different, they pledge allegiance to a different flag, and so on. This grouping of "kinds" is more common in larger groups, including nation-states, major religions, and racial out-groups, not to mention political parties, fans of sport teams (although this can be pre-conventional for English soccer fans), and so on. Finally, hate is less pervasive in the post-conventional stages, but early on in this developmental realm we find those who hate people who hate, or those who dislike all hierarchal developmental models because these models are seen to define or limit people (which is in itself a contradiction in that such a statement creates a hierarchy). Since so few people have a center-of-gravity (the majority of their developmental lines) in post-conventional, post-formal, or post-personal stages, there are few people who do not experience hate or prejudice in some form or another.

Looking at the post-conventional stages, we find those entering into these more relativistic stages embracing more multiplicity in their narratives of reality. It is in these stages where we first encounter multicultural sensitivity, civil rights, religious tolerance, gender parity, and other issues involving innate equality (Wilber, 2000, p. 158-173). These post-modern stages seek to be inclusive, to reduce the marginalization of the "other," and to limit the intolerance of rationality and its desire to squash the irrational or non-rational (Wilber, 2000, p.159). Multicultural sensitivity in leadership and psychotherapy also stems from this postmodern inclination toward inclusion. This inclusivity is the current ideal and ethical standard of our profession (see the ACA Code of Ethics, or ICF Code of Ethics), but not all of us are post-conventional, yet, so it's helpful to understand how racial identity is constructed,

Racial Identity in Development

William Cross (1976), Janet Helms (1984), and Derald and David Sue (2008), along with many others, have looked at the way racial identity develops. At the time Cross began presenting the formulation of his black racial identity model, much of the academic discourse on race revolved around understanding the "black militant." One of the tenets of this "riff raff" model of the black militant was that it resulted from frustration and social alienation, which may have been partly true, but why was justified frustration equated with being

"riff raff"? Even worse, it was assumed that only those who are "psychopathic personalities, chronically unemployed, or persons of the underclass" (Cross, p. 2) might want to rebel and protest the racist and prejudiced society in which they lived. Perhaps these authors thought they were objective and fair, or perhaps they were looking through the lens of their own biases and seeing a distorted image of black people. So let's look at Cross's model for a moment, since it illustrates an important perspective about why those theorists saw things as they did in that time.

Cross's model begins with the pre-encounter stage, where black people consciously or unconsciously devalue their own racial heritage while creating value through identifying with white values and ways. This stage represents a sense of self-hate, low self-esteem, and possibly even reduced mental health. Next is the encounter stage, which Sue and Sue (2008) explain very succinctly:

> In the encounter stage, a two-step process begins to occur. First, the individual encounters a profound crisis or event that challenges his or her previous mode of thinking and behaving; second, the Black person begins to reinterpret the world, resulting in a shift in worldviews. Cross points out how the slaying of Martin Luther King, Jr. was such a significant experience for many African Americans. (2008, p. 237)

As the person becomes aware of their sense of having been "brain-washed" or betrayed, there is guilt and anger. With the immersion/emersion stage, the person withdraws from the dominant culture (white culture) and immerses him or herself in black culture, history, and African-American traditions. While pride and self-esteem are beginning to grow, they remain largely external. In the second half of this stage, emersion, there is a greater degree of internalized pride and value, replacing the earlier feelings of guilt and anger. The final step (Cross revised his model in 1991, dropping the original 5th stage), the internalization stage, allows for a more open relationship with other races, a bi-cultural or multi-cultural perspective that is more free and less fearful or angry.

Looking at Cross's model provides a framework for understanding the theoretical foundation upon which all subsequent models of racial identity have been built. There have been Asian racial identity models, Latino/Hispanic American identity development models, and several white racial identity models, including those by Helms (1984) and Rita Hardiman (1982). What all of these models have in common is that nothing changes without the "encounter," the exposure to that which is different from us. The same is true in gender theory, religious development, and any other developmental line that allows for an "us versus them" perspective. Until we begin to see that the "other" is more like us than dislike us, we remain prejudiced and ethnocentric in our perspectives.

The research of Tokar and Swanson (1991) confirmed Helms's assessment that higher stages of racial identity development are correlated with higher levels of personal adjustment and self actualization. This is likely also true for the other developmental lines, for example James Fowler's Stages of Faith (1995) in the religious line, or Loevinger's ego development (1976), or in my own model of masculinity development (2010), which is built on several of the models mentioned here.
Looking at the white identity issue is essential because coaches and therapists are predominantly white, yet how many of us have considered this rather obvious part of our identity as yet another cultural lens through which we see the world? Moreover, unless we have done work with this lens, we are also seeing our clients through a perspective of which we may not even be aware. This is another piece of the shadow work we all need to be doing, no matter what our racial heritage.

Becoming a Multicultural Coach or Therapist

Not all of us have reached the post-conventional stages of development, so how do we develop this sensitivity and inclusiveness as coaches or therapists?

Shadow work is a process through which we can discover, work with, and reduce our unconscious prejudices (Inaba, 2006; Richo, 1999). One version of this is the 3-2-1 shadow process developed by Ken Wilber and his staff at the Integral Institute and presented in the Integral Life Practice book (2008, p. 41-66). The model is based in Jungian shadow work, but takes it a step further by including a 1st person, 2nd person, and 3rd person perspective for each shadow issue.

Because our own feelings of prejudice are likely repressed or exiled, we will want to begin with the 3rd person perspective, talking to or about an "it," for example, homophobia. As we can begin to understand the feelings from this distance, we can then begin talking to the homophobia, expressing our feelings toward it and about it. When this becomes easier and more comfortable, we can then talk from the homophobia, expressing our perception of its needs and fears. In this way, we truly get to know our repressed energies around any given shadow material. It's a very effective approach, as an introduction to shadow work.

Over time, we will want to do deeper work – the 3-2-1 model is highly intellectual and is only a partial, in the moment solution. Deeper work includes exploring the emotional beliefs beneath the cognitions, including the somatic level, which generally requires a body-centered approach such as somatic experiencing (Levine, 1997), Jungian work (Richo, 1999), or other similar models.

If more coaches and therapists did their own shadow work and sought out higher and wider levels of awareness in their own inner work, our clients would be better served. However, this is not often the case in our profession. When it is, as Fuertes, Bartolomeo & Matthew Nichols (2001) point out in relation to teaching multicultural competencies, agencies and individuals perform better in the cultural realm. But we must also do the deep work to become aware of and able to hold our own interior narratives of prejudice, discomfort, or bias as objects of awareness – we need to see them as objects, not see through them as perspectives. Until we do that work for ourselves, no amount of cognitive behavior intervention/skills development will makes us truly comfortable and open to multiplicity in our clients.

As we do become more aware of our own inner biases, we tend to move away from biased language and become more comfortable with a multiplicity view of culture and how people are shaped by their own unique genetics, cultural experience, social status and the ways these forces have shaped their lives. Tokar and Swanson (1991) found that self-actualizing tendencies in white college students were "negatively related to less developmentally advanced White racial identity attitudes and positively related to more developmentally advanced attitudes" (p. 296), which points to the power of working on our own self-growth as a factor in reducing unconscious and conscious prejudice – an element of shadow work few of us have embraced.

The less we are confined by our unexamined perspectives and the more we are able to see the bio-psycho-cultural context in which we exist and in which our clients exist, the more compassionate and empathic we become as coaches and therapists. We are not "bounded" beings, to use Kenneth Gergen's term (2000, p. 15), confined to the boundary of skin encasing our flesh and bones, we are interpersonally constructed and socially embedded beings. In moving from an intense focus on our individuality toward recognizing our interconnection, we begin the shift into a world-centric perspective, into relational being. This passage is from Gergen's more recent book, Relational Being (2009):

This vision, relational being, seeks to recognize a world that is not within persons but within their relationships, and that ultimately erases the traditional boundaries of separation. There is nothing that requires us to understand our world in terms of independent units; we are free to mint new and more promising understandings. As the conception of relational being is grasped, so are new forms of action invited, new forms of life made intelligible, and a more promising view of our global future made apparent. No, this does not mean abandoning the past; the traditional view of the bounded individual need not be eliminated. But once we can see it as a construction of our own making—one option among many—we may also understand that the boundary around the self is also a prison. (p. 5)

This is such a different perspective than many of us have grown up with or been exposed to in our education. Yet it is exactly the perspective we need. Many psychological studies are beginning to see our Western version of the isolated self as a part of our cultural dysfunction, suggesting that we are interpersonal beings who need deeply felt interpersonal connections for our mental health, but even for our physical health – many studies have shown that lonely isolated people die young than those with strong social networks.

As Benson (2001) would point out in his book on cultural psychology, echoing the work of Robert Kegan in The Evolving Self (1982), doing the work of becoming self-aware in our cultural context is both difficult and, to many people, somewhat frightening (which is where we serve a valuable role). However, it is only through becoming "self-authors" that we gain some measure of freedom from the cultural constructs in which most people definExamining your life and creating its narrative structure is the path to owning it, to making it yours in contrast to the unexamined life which simply unfolds but cannot be said to be chosen. It ensures that your life feels continuously and constantly yours. The stance of cultural psychology is very much a product of modernity. It conflicts with certain theocratic or totalitarian accounts of human life where obedience to a dominant authority rather than individual choice is the regulating ideal for important decision-making. (p. 224)

This experience is equivalent to Kegan's self-authoring stage, where the individual begins to generate their own sense of self from the variety of options available (p. 100-103). It is at this stage that our interpersonal connections and embeddedness can become objects of our awareness rather than our subjective experience. Only then can we choose that which is healthy for us, that which is emotionally freeing and satisfying, rather than simply accepting the context in which we have been raised.

However . . . we must do the work that we are asking our clients to do. We must be able to model self-authorship, not simply speak about it. We must make our cultural self an object of our own awareness, with all its lenses and perspectives exposed, if we are to model an integral and integrated self to our clients. We cannot ask them to do what we have not done ourselves.

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About the Author

William Harryman is a writer/editor, fitness trainer, and personal coach living in Tucson, AZ. He holds a masters degree in humanities and is currently completing a second masters degree in counseling psychology. He blogs at Integral Options Cafe and The Masculine Heart. He can be reached at billharryman@gmail.com

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