

# INTEGRAL DIVERSITY MATURITY

## *Toward a Postconventional Understanding of Diversity Dynamics*

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**ABSTRACT** This article outlines the authors' ongoing study of diversity, focusing particularly on the AQAL model as a linchpin in an evolving theory of "diversity maturity." Recognizing the limitations of non-integral approaches to understanding and negotiating diversity dynamics, the authors explain how an integral perspective has come to inform their postconventional understanding. The authors share their preliminary theory of the diversity maturity process in which the integral vision/theory that unites diversity, complexity, and creativity is the dynamic relationship among and between quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types. The article concludes with an agenda for further theoretical and empirical inquiry.

**KEY WORDS:** AQAL model; diversity; human development; maturity; postconventional

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Speaking at an integral Zen seminar, Diane Hamilton commented on the need for an integral approach to diversity that addresses the complexities of developmental levels. She asserted, "Diversity training, when it stays at green [altitude], is radically incomplete...it opens people, it creates new perspectives, and it creates awareness, but it's not enough to hold what actually needs to happen" (Wilber & Hamilton, 2007). Hamilton's words resonated with us, as we already were engaged in exploring the relationship of Integral Theory to the reconceptualization of diversity theory and practice, recognizing diversity as a complex, multi-dimensional field of creative and transformative potential. My (Gregory) pursuit of alternative conceptions of diversity has been longstanding, including research at the American Institute for Managing Diversity (AIMD), consulting with organizations on diversity issues, serving on doctoral faculties of non-traditional programs, and writing and speaking on a host of diversity matters. My (Raffanti) professional interest in diversity developed as an urban schoolteacher, where I reflected on both the promises and limitations of multicultural and antiracist education. Driven by an interest in educational research, we co-edited a special edition of *World Futures: The Journal of General Evolution* (2006), which launched, in earnest, a continuing collaboration in the study of diversity dynamics.<sup>1</sup>

Scholarship on diversity is wide ranging and can be found in many disciplines, including management, education, leadership, and organizational theory. While it is beyond the scope of this article to survey the literature, Mary Gentile's (1995) analysis offers an excellent overview of conventional approaches to managing diversity. Conventional perspectives of diversity dynamics, according to Gentile, have generally been framed in terms of "duality and oppositionality" (p. 1). She discovered that theory generation about diversity dynamics was limited primarily to "habitual ways of thinking about difference...[and] the tendency to oversimplify...

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to binary oppositions as opposed to more complex and multiple perceptions...” (pp. 1-2). Our summary of the conventional perspectives, as identified by Gentile, is as follows:

1. *Rights Talk*. This perspective is concerned with individual rights and preserving one’s own privileges.
2. *Self-definition through Oppositionality*. This perspective is concerned with defining one’s “identity, in opposition to, or as distinct from, others” (p. 4).
3. *Cultural Generalizations*. This perspective is concerned with “seeing people either as representative of and somewhat determined by their group identities” (p. 5) (e.g., stereotypes).
4. *Seeing for Innocence*. This perspective is concerned with seeing oneself or one’s group as innocent victims of another’s guilt (oppression, dominance).
5. *Racial Reasoning*. This perspective is associated with a “defensive, ‘closing ranks mentality,’ requiring others to prove their group ‘authenticity’ if they are to stand with me” (p. 22). The language associated with this perspective includes words like “legitimate” and “deserving.”
6. *Defensive Reasoning*. This perspective is associated with being right and discouraging feedback and questioning. The language associated with this perspective includes words like “winning vs. losing” and “rationality.”
7. *How We Know What Is Not So*. This perspective is associated with a preference for clear, dichotomous thinking when considering options.
8. *Pareto Optimality/Scarcity Thinking*. This perspective is associated with seeing things as all or nothing (e.g., “limited pie” and “scarcity” models).
9. *Masking and Overdetermined Terminology*. This perspective is associated with a concern for merit. The language associated with this perspective includes words like “meritocracy,” “equal opportunity,” “fair treatment,” and “unbiased standards.”

Gentile (1995) recognized the inherent limitations of such responses to diversity and encouraged new conceptualizations. She asserted:

[L]et us consider an alternate approach...to the consideration of and interaction with others....Let us adopt a “multiple perspective” rather than an oppositional and dualistic one—a multiple perspective that can comprehend alternate viewpoints not so as to excuse oppression but rather to clarify it, to expose the pain of one individual group without denying that of another. For ultimately, understanding and experiencing “the compelling quality of contradictory realities is the only way, short of violence, to resolve their differences. (p. 10)

The remainder of this article addresses Gentile’s challenge, as well as Hamilton’s call to examine diversity through an integral lens. The next section describes the “theoretical synergy” that exists among the diversity scholarship of R. Roosevelt Thomas and how incorporating an integral perspective has transformed our inquiry into diversity dynamics. The subsequent section shares a preliminary sketch of diversity maturity as

a developmental process that is achieved through transformative learning (Cranton, 1994, 1996; Mezirow, 1991, 1995, 1996). The article concludes with an agenda for further theoretical and empirical inquiry into the push-pull interplay among and between quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types as related to diversity.<sup>2</sup>

## Theoretical Synergy and the Diversity Paradigm

Our experiences as teachers and practitioners of grounded theory and grounded action have led to a deep appreciation for the potential of “cumulative design” in theory generation (Glaser, 1978, p. 148), particularly as related to diversity dynamics.<sup>3</sup> During our work together, I coined the term *theoretical synergy* to mean the integration of multiple theoretical perspectives (via constant comparative analysis) “to generate higher orders of conceptualization...,” leading to more comprehensive and integral frameworks for understanding and responding to phenomena (Raffanti, 2006, p.551).<sup>4</sup>

I have argued that although diversity is a universal, naturally occurring, complex, generative phenomenon, very little has been done to expand the conceptualization and study of diversity dynamics beyond the conventional, reductionist frameworks described by Gentile (Gregory, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2006; Simmons & Gregory, 2003). I have further argued that the most comprehensive approach to date is that of Thomas (1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 1999), whose work “redefined diversity in such a way that it placed him outside of the mainstream framework, yet pointed the way to a greater understanding of the phenomenon” (Gregory, 2006, p. 544).

Thomas (1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 1999) expanded the concept of diversity beyond conventional perspectives, demonstrating its complex nature and the importance of analyzing diversity dynamics from multiple perspectives. Defining diversity as “any mixture of elements characterized by differences and similarities” (1996, p. 5), Thomas broke new ground by conceptualizing diversity as having an unlimited number of dimensions with unlimited opportunities for interaction among the dimensions. Thomas also introduced the idea that an individual’s worldview heavily contributed to the nature and outcome of the diversity dynamics in which she was involved.

Thomas introduced the concept of *diversity tension*, which is the conflict, stress, and strain resulting from various dimensions of diversity interacting with one another (1996, p. 15). He posited that anywhere one finds diversity, one also finds diversity tension and that diversity tension could result in a continuum of outcomes from more or less non-productive to more or less productive. Thomas contended that one’s worldview, and therefore her response to diversity tension, could be changed through experiential education about alternative responses. He called his framework the *diversity paradigm* (1996, p. 19). The paradigm includes the following eight options for responding to diversity tension: include/exclude; deny; assimilate; suppress; isolate; tolerate; build relationships; and foster mutual adaptation. Moreover, Thomas argued that grounding in alternative responses to varying diversity contexts could increase a person’s “diversity maturity.” Thomas (1999) stated:

Diversity maturity signifies a deep clarity about the fundamental concepts of diversity... We can acquire the conceptual clarity and learn the diversity principles through education (formal and informal) and personal reflection. Maturity comes through putting these principles into action on a daily basis. (p. 11)

Thomas' perspective, while pushing boundaries of diversity theory and practice beyond race and gender, focused on the cultural, physical, and structural dimensions of diversity, but did not attend to individual consciousness around diversity. Likewise, his theory lacked the important link between diversity maturity and developmental levels. Recognizing these limitations, and having the opportunity to work closely with Thomas at AIMD, Gregory embarked on expanding Thomas' diversity paradigm.

My work (Gregory, 1996, 2006) modified the diversity paradigm by incorporating developmental and transformative aspects of diversity dynamics into the theory. I argued that diversity is a dynamic process, fundamental to all systems. By understanding the basic psychological, social, social-psychological, and social-structural processes involved in diversity dynamics and acting in accordance with this understanding, one could achieve Thomas' goals of maximizing the potential of diversity and allow it to be managed with conscious intent. I further expanded Thomas' theory to show that the process of gaining diversity maturity involves transformative learning and has internal and external dimensions as well as individual and collective dynamics (Gregory, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2006).

The various ways individuals respond to diversity tension are unlimited (Gregory, 1996, 2006). Further, an individual's level of development and openness to transformative learning determines not only how an individual will respond to diversity tension, but also the number of options available for responding. Diversity is rarely seen as a field of potential and the primary focus on diversity dynamics has been on the adversarial and non-productive outcomes of diversity tension, with very little attention or research devoted to its creative and productive potential.

I (Raffanti, 2005, 2006) generated additional theoretical constructs that, when viewed alongside Thomas' and Gregory's scholarship, provided deeper insight into the complexities of individual and collective responses to diversity dynamics. I studied organizations characterized by pervasive change and multiple perspectives on professional practice; in other words, environments of high diversity tension. I discovered two overarching patterns of behavior—*weathering* and *thriving*. While the goal of weathering is surviving and enduring change with one's own perspectives untouched, thriving is distinguished by responses of open participation in change processes. These two behavior patterns play a prominent role in how people respond to diversity tension during processes of change. That is, I realized that the choice of weathering or thriving was based on a person's level of development and that the language and behaviors associated with responses to diversity tension are level-specific and multidimensional. Thriving is set apart from weathering in that individuals use the momentum of diversity tension to enhance their potential as well as that of the organization—an advanced developmental capacity made possible by a multi-perspectival standpoint.

## **A Postconventional Perspective of the Diversity Paradigm**

I (Gregory) summarized the state of affairs in diversity scholarship in 2006:

The focus remains on the customary, static, and isolated issues...it is clear that achieving elevation of thought and understanding about diversity requires more study and research that provides increasing clarification about its role in systems and contributes to its expansion beyond current boundaries to reveal its unrealized power and potential. (p. 543)

We came to realize that our evolution of thinking about diversity was a search for a broader, more comprehensive view of diversity—an integral understanding.

Ken Wilber’s (1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b) AQAL model not only provides an effective framework in which new conceptualizations of diversity may emerge, but it also easily accommodates the concepts of diversity tension and diversity maturity. Conventional perspectives of diversity have been limited, primarily, to the interactive dynamics between types (e.g., race and gender), with minimal recognition or consideration of the other AQAL elements. A postconventional perspective, on the other hand, integrates the theoretical constructs of diversity tension and diversity maturity with all of the AQAL elements. In other words, while there is some articulation of the relationship of the dynamics in one quadrant to those in another, conventional diversity theorists and practitioners tend to “specialize” in one of three quadrants:

1. Upper Right (UR)—physiological diversity focused on differences in physical or biological characteristics. Examples of UR approaches are affirmative action, which places “bodies” in organizations and develops rules of how not to treat those bodies (i.e., discriminatorily), and many existing models of diversity training.
2. Lower Left (LL)—cultural diversity focused on differences in the values and characteristics of groups. Examples of LL approaches are multicultural education (i.e., developing multiculturalism through education that values and engenders pluralism) and assimilation/melting pot approaches (at a lower level of development).
3. Lower Right (LR)—structural diversity focused on inequalities in socio-structural institutions. Examples of LR approaches are structural inequality interventions, which endeavor to change social systems and institutions through laws, regulations, or procedures.

The AQAL integrated diversity model recognizes that diversity dynamics are much more intricate than mere issues of difference between individuals or groups and are generated as a result of the complex process of integration and differentiation in which similarities, in addition to differences, play a key role (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Gregory, 1996). It also takes into consideration the entire AQAL matrix, including the UL quadrant, and the other AQAL elements (levels, lines, states, and types). An integral diversity model avoids the “quadrant absolutism” that limits conventional approaches (Wilber, personal communication, April 14, 2009). In the integrated, postconventional diversity paradigm, diversity can be conceptualized as the multidimensional and dynamic interaction between quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types. In this paradigm, the four quadrants represent a co-enacted field of probability waves and potentiality/creativity out of which multiple, complex events emerge in each quadrant and interact with each other within and between quadrants. According to Wilber (2002a), “The full story is that the actual *ground* of arising...is the **AQAL matrix altogether** [emphasis in original]” (p. 17). Diversity tension, then, is the push-pull of these events as they interact with each other, moment by moment, within and between quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types.<sup>5</sup> As Wilber (2002a) explained:

As each new holon emerges, it emerges into an *already-existing* worldspace—that is it emerges in an AQAL space that already has various sorts of waves, streams, states,

systems, and so on, each with its own inheritance...Each newly-emergent holon therefore must prove itself capable of existing or surviving in that already-existing worldspace—it must mesh with the already-existing AQAL matrix. It is therefore subjected to various selection pressures (or validity claims) representing the *types of fit* to which it must adapt in order to survive. Of course it will not only or merely mesh; it will also bring its own moment of creative novelty that goes beyond all meshing altogether; but if it does not mesh to some degree, it will be simply wiped out by existing selection pressures and never get a chance to express or pass on its creativity. (p. 34)

## **Diversity Maturity, Transformative Learning, and Integral Theory**

Becoming diversity mature involves transformative learning (Gregory, 1996, 2006). That is, diversity maturity requires learning that produces a substantial shift in perspective so that problems or situations are re-envisioned and addressed with creativity and innovation. Diversity maturity occurs through a process that “effect[s] change in an individual’s frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 1). This process is equivalent to the developmental shift from conventional, oppositional, and dualistic perspectives to postconventional, integral perspectives. The process moves through a cycle of disorientation/breakdown, deep reflection, re-orientation, integration, and, finally, transformation:

...[T]his process involves a number of stages in which individuals (1) break down preconceived conceptualizations of diversity (rewiring), (2) gain congruence between old and new perspectives of diversity (clarifying), (3) gain mastery in applying new conceptualizations of diversity (mastering) and, finally (4) generate creative, transformative, and “noticeable” (Kleiner et al., 2000, p. 6) outcomes of diversity tension (transcending). (Gregory, 2006, pp. 546-547)

The diversity maturity process leads to a new conceptualization of diversity as unlimited creative possibility. Rewiring is the first stage and is characterized as follows:

Individuals become accustomed to thinking about diversity “beyond race and gender” (Thomas, 1991) and “beyond winning and losing” (Gregory, 1999). They come to understand that diversity is everywhere and in every context and that its dimensions of expression are unlimited and have unlimited combinations. (Gregory, 2006, p. 546)

An illustration of the rewiring stage was a case involving a community in a college town where snow skiing presented a variety of life-altering problems for some members. The diversity dimensions at issue were not related to immutable human characteristics, but rather to whether or not individuals skied (Gregory, 1999). Because skiing served a significant socialization role in the small college town, those who did not ski faced marginalization in a manner akin to discrimination based on race or gender, even though the community, which was 99% Caucasian, did not see itself as diverse. After being introduced to the diversity paradigm, they recognized that the significant diversity factor in the community was that of skiers vs. non-skiers and understood the severity of consequences for not being a skier (e.g., an inability to achieve university tenure). The

impact of this rewiring was that they came to look at all of their dynamics in terms of the diversity paradigm that, in one particular situation, enabled the resolution of a serious issue with a dysfunctional faculty member. This example embodies the shifts that can happen in stage one, where people learn “to make productive use of interrelationships of varied dimensions and expressions of diversity to enhance problem-solving capabilities...and...to make linkages between competing standpoints...to adjust frames of meaning so that new information can be integrated, and new frameworks for interaction created” (Gregory, 2006, p. 546).

In stage two (clarifying), an individual confronts the cognitive dissonance created by new conceptions of diversity in stage one. This stage is uncomfortable, as many people decry that an expansion of diversity inquiry beyond race, gender, and such other classifications dilutes or undermines issues of equity and social justice. In other words:

The expanded view is seen as an oppositional force, one whose aim is to detract attention from the “real issues” (Ouellette, 1995; Gregory, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2004). In stage two, a perceptual shift is made such that competing frameworks (including those about the nature and purpose of diversity) are recognized as variations of the same basic dynamics. When this shift occurs, the old and new perspectives of diversity are no longer incompatible. (Gregory, 2006, p. 546)

In stage three (mastering), individuals gain further diversity maturity by applying new understandings gained in the first two stages. They come to more fully appreciate diversity as creative potential (Gregory, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2004). The following passage is worth quoting in its entirety, as it is a powerful illustration of this stage and shows how diversity maturity can lead to creative outcomes:

[A] view of diversity as a dynamic systems phenomenon can contribute to creativity and innovation in organizational systems. A recent example concerns the experiences of an individual in the hair care industry in the United States. This is an industry that is heavily segregated by ethnicity and gender. There are salons and shops, as well as products and resources, which cater to specific ethnicities based on the assumption that hair texture is racially determined. In the case of gender, the assumption is that there are different requirements for treating male versus female hair. The individual mentioned here, early in her career, came to an understanding that diversity is complex and multidimensional. This insight prompted her to set aside the traditional assumptions about race and gender in regard to hair care. She discovered that hair has no ethnicity or gender and that, in fact, all textures of hair can be found across race and gender. She pointed out that she has even seen five or six different kinds of hair in one family. This discovery led her to the understanding that hair has to be treated based on its own unique characteristics and that hair does not care what the ethnicity or gender is of the person whose head it is on. Equipped with this awareness, she learned to treat the various textures of hair independent of race and gender. This enabled her to become more creative and to apply techniques (that had been traditionally confined by ethnicity or gender) across clients based on the structural components of the hair. She had found this to be the relevant factor in hair care, unlike others who have assumed that ethnicity is what matters. Eventually,

she became so well known and in demand because of her ability to work on clients of any ethnicity or gender that her clients travel from all over the world for her services. Additionally, others in the industry have lost revenue to her because of their inability to serve diverse clientele. This individual is currently applying her knowledge to the training of others and to revolutionizing the industry. (Gregory, 2006, p. 547)

In summary, individuals in stage three show they have achieved mastery of diversity (exemplified by the hair care expert) that they can apply in different contexts to maximize its potential. The leveraging power of an expanded view of diversity “opens the door to seeing the ordinary in non-ordinary ways.” Individuals come to view diversity from a whole systems perspective, recognizing its multidimensionality and interconnectivity.

In the final stage (transcending), diversity mature individuals:

...can be distinguished as [those] whose goals are to thrive by [consciously and] systematically using...[their] learning to progress beyond mere adaptation....Their aim is to develop...higher level constructive or generative mental functions....reflected in strategies and structures....purposefully being developed to facilitate and coordinate [maximizing diversity] in rapidly changing and conflicting circumstances...(Dodgson, 1993, pp. 380, 383). (Gregory, 2006, p. 547)

The transcending stage sees individuals consistently respond to diversity tension through engaging in transformative learning:

In this case, individuals view stress on the individual or system (diversity tension) as an opportunity that is an “essential condition of learning” and understand that the resolution of the tension is “contained in the dynamic interaction between dimensions of [diversity]...which raises the probability of survival in changing environments (Dodgson, 1993, pp. 380, 383). (Gregory, 2006, p. 547)

A very poignant and powerful example of the capacity gained at stage four can be found in the book, *Dance of Change* (Senge et al., 1999). The story is about an African-American male who was the manager of a service department at a major multinational corporation. The department had low status in the organizational hierarchy—members of the department were considered less valuable to the company than other departments such as sales and marketing. Fellow employees, including senior managers, jokingly coined a name for the department that made reference, in a derogatory manner, to its status. When several change initiatives were introduced in the organization, the unit’s problems worsened. Investment and resources were diverted to other, higher status units. People began to pick up signals that associating with the unit could be disastrous to one’s career. Initially, the manager’s perspective of the situation was conventional and focused on his ethnicity as the source of the unit’s problems. From all appearances, it seemed to him that the culture and structure of the company were organized in such a way as to discriminate against him as an African-American.

After working with us, he made the transformative shift to a stage four, postconventional perspective (teal altitude). This became evident in his approach to resolving the issues confronting his unit. He first adjusted



his perception that race (type) was the only dimension involved in the situation. He then set about to determine where there were others in similar situations within the company and where there might be others in the more highly regarded units within the organization with whom he might form alliances. Rather than taking an opportunistic or dualistic approach by competing with others for scarce resources, commiserating with others about the situation, or developing strategies to “fight the powers that be,” he chose to pull together every possible perspective he could find to look at the problem. To this end, he succeeded in creating ways to integrate diverse perspectives and apply them to the problems facing the company as a whole. He convinced his co-workers to pool resources and ideas leading to the development of a low cost, innovative solution that solved the problems, saved the company 40 million dollars, and elevated the manager’s status within the company as well as the status of his unit and his new network of colleagues.

The diversity maturity process, as described above, is compatible with Wilber’s explanation of “integral transformation” (2000b, pp. 33-36). Wilber identified the “catalytic factors” necessary to the process of assisting people in making vertical leaps to higher levels of consciousness: cultural readiness (associated with LL quadrant); appropriate social institutions and techno-economic base (LR quadrant); and organic capability (UR quadrant). This leaves the UL quadrant. Wilber noted that interior factors can facilitate personal transformation, provided that the other three dimensions are satisfied. According to Wilber, interior readiness is conditional upon the following components (Gregory’s related diversity maturity stages are in brackets):

1. *Dissonance*. The individual is pulled by both the new and old wave; movement to the new wave requires a profound dissatisfaction and willingness to let go. [Stage 1: rewiring]
2. *Insight*. This requires affirmation, volition, and an intention to change that is facilitated by introspection, conversation, therapy, meditation, or living. [Stage 2: clarifying]
3. *Fulfillment*. The individual has fulfilled the tasks of a stage or wave and must be ready and open to move on (and avoid developmental arrest). [Stage 3: mastering]
4. *Opening*. If the other factors fall into place, an opening to the next wave becomes possible. [Stage 4: transcending]<sup>6</sup>

Here, it is critical to consider Wilber’s (2002a) notion of the co-arising faculty of the AQAL matrix as it applies to the case of the service manager. While it was not apparent, initially, that the LL or LR quadrants were ready to support the manager’s shift in perspective, at the moment of the manager’s interior readiness, the components of the AQAL matrix co-arose and brought forth a “moment of creative novelty” (pp. 17, 34) that might have otherwise never been realized.

## Levels of Development and the Diversity Maturity Process

The process of diversity maturity includes a progression through the levels of development as described by Wilber (2000a). Don Beck and Graham Linscott (1991) have theorized that the center of gravity for most individuals in the United States falls somewhere between red and teal altitude, therefore, these levels will be the focus of this discussion. Wilber (2000b) has noted that America and Europe have centers of gravity at orange altitude, but also possess significant pockets of green and amber. Keeping in mind that the case has already

been made for diversity as a complex, multidimensional, AQAL phenomenon, the example of the service manager, as given above, can be used to consider how an individual, at each level, might have perceived the problem and responded to the same set of circumstances.

For all the levels from red to green altitude, the manager would have been focused on race (type) as the primary dimension fueling the issues facing his unit. At teal he was able to consider how race contributed to the multidimensional, multifaceted context of the AQAL matrix. At red, the manager would have likely seen himself being attacked because of his race and in a fight for his personal survival with the need to succeed in beating out his competition no matter the cost. At amber, he would have likely been focused on racial injustices within the company and would have been interested in gaining assistance to correct those injustices, believing that his was a noble cause. At orange, the manager would have likely felt responsible for acting on his own behalf and with his own merit to alleviate racial injustices and garner all of the knowledge and resources available within his unit to tackle the problem. At green, the manager likely would have strongly questioned the cultural and structural inequalities in the system and would have made demands for changes in these dimensions to alleviate the injustice so that his unit would have equal status within the company. It was, however, the teal ability to see and harness the multiple dimensions of the situation as well as the multiple perspectives available, from red to teal, to create the opportunity that led to innovation that changed the course of the organization.

## **Integral Diversity Maturity**

We theorize that, as in the case of the service manager, an integral diversity–mature individual will possess the capacity to see beyond standard, conventional categorizations and conceptualizations. Alain Gauthier and Marilyn Fowler (2008) studied the characteristics of postconventional leaders and discovered that “the transition from the conventional to the postconventional stage is truly a paradigm shift. Not until individuals reach the post-conventional stages are they able to see the systems and processes within which they have been operating” (p. 17). The characteristics of such leaders are consistent with those of an integral diversity–mature person. The integral diversity–mature individual will recognize diversity as “an unlimited and creative field of potential,” the realization of which “turns our focus to the whole, allows us to see and make productive use of the interrelationships of its parts and ultimately enhances our problem-solving capabilities” (Gregory, 2006, p. 549). Such insight requires that one possess a postconventional, second-tier center of gravity. According to Don Beck and Chris Cowan (1996), second-tier thinking is holarchical, multileveled, and multidimensional. Susanne Cook-Greuter (2004) illustrated this point beautifully:

The metaphor of climbing a mountain can serve as an illustration of what it means to gain an increasingly higher vantage point. At each turn of the path up the mountain I can see more of the territory I have already traversed. I can see the multiple turns and reversals in the path. I can see further into and across the valley. The closer I get to the summit, the easier it becomes to see behind to the shadow side and uncover formerly hidden aspects of the territory. Finally at the top, I can see beyond my particular mountain to other ranges and further horizons. The more I can see, the wiser, more timely, more systematic and informed my actions and decisions are likely to be because more of the relevant information, connections and dynamic relationships become visible. (p. 3)

Worldview is an essential line of development for integral diversity maturity. Integral diversity–mature individuals will have second-tier, multiple vantage points, giving them the capacity to perceive, as we saw in the case of the service manager, nuances of diversity and diversity tension that would otherwise not be possible. Wilber’s (2000a) depiction of the initial second-tier wave (teal) includes characteristics that are relevant to an integral theory of diversity maturity. Significantly, the teal level is “integrative,” such that “[d]ifferences and pluralities can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows” (p. 52). The teal perspective sees life as a “kaleidoscope” of systems, forms, and natural hierarchies. Further, teal “governance facilitates the emergence of entities through the levels of increasing complexity” (p. 52).

Those at teal altitude experience each of the quadrants through vision-logic. Thus, an integral diversity–mature individual will see the LR as dynamic patterns of relationships and complex social systems. He will also view the UR in terms of systems science as applied to consciousness as an emergent process. The integral diversity–mature person’s vision-logic will appreciate in the LL the “vast role of cultural contexts and backgrounds, a grasp of the role of mutual understanding, [and] an intense focus on discourse...” (Wilber, 2000a, p. 260). In the UL quadrant, the integral diversity–mature individual must be able to turn vision-logic toward his own consciousness (and not only to holons external to one’s proximate self) and therefore develop along spiritual, moral, and emotional lines.

Worldview intertwines with the cognitive line of development and is relevant to understanding and achieving integral diversity maturity. Wilber (2002a) asserted:

As consciousness further develops and deepens, these concrete categories and operations begin to become more generalized, more abstract...and thus more universal. Formal operational consciousness can therefore begin to support a postconventional orientation to the world, escaping in many ways the ethnocentric/sociocentric world of concrete (and mythic membership) thought. (p. 26)

The worldcentric perspective is also connected with the moral stream of development. The moral line not only includes moral judgment and caring, but also moral “span”; in other words, *who* is deemed morally worthy of such judgment and care. The movement from ethnocentric to worldcentric casts a wider net of moral span. That is, “you will treat as yourself those *with whom you identify*....If you identify with all human beings, you will strive to treat all people fairly and compassionately” (Wilber, 2000a, p. 116).

According to Robert Fuller (2003, 2006), *rankism*, the widespread abuse of rank caused by the misappropriation of power, is responsible for the humiliation and indignity experienced by millions throughout the world. The worldcentric perspective of an integral diversity–mature individual incorporates Fuller’s concept of *dignitarianism*, or dignity as a “universal human right” (2003, p. 22). He asserted:

Each of us has an innate sense that we have the same inherent worth as anyone else, regardless of our particular characteristics or our status. Every religion teaches us so. We experience this as a birthright, an immutable cosmic fact that cannot be undone by any person, circumstance, institution, or government. (2003, p. 22)

At teal altitude, knowledge and competence trump power, rank, status, or group membership. As we saw in the case of the service manager, he and the people within his unit had been ranked at the bottom of the organization and were perceived to be powerless. Had his center of gravity been anywhere from red to orange altitude, he most likely would have experienced the power and status differential in such a way that would have generated a response to the diversity tension within the organization that would have been defensive, oppositional, protectionist, and aimed at righting injustices without trying to change the organizational hierarchy. Had his center of gravity been at green altitude, he would have most likely responded to the diversity tension by challenging the hierarchies within the organization and attempted to eliminate rank and dismantle the hierarchies altogether. However, the service manager's center of gravity included a moral span that encompassed the whole organization and allowed him to see the value of every individual and every perspective. In this way, his actions mediated the power dynamics and restored dignity to the people in his unit.

In addition to developmental lines, Wilber (2002b, 2002c) described three principles that we contend are essential for diversity maturity—*non-exclusion*, *enactment*, and *enfoldment*.<sup>7</sup> *Non-exclusion* requires that the diversity-mature person understand that “everybody is right” (2002c, p. 2). No particular diversity model or practice, including the diversity paradigm, can be privileged at the exclusion of others. This view comports with Thomas', who pointed out on numerous occasions that the various forms in which diversity tension responses have occurred all fit under the same umbrella. They are all important for deeper, fuller understandings of diversity and applications of those understandings. “[E]xperiences brought forth by one paradigm cannot legitimately be used to criticize, negate or exclude the experiences brought forth by other paradigms” (Wilber, 2002c, p. 2). On the other hand, the integral diversity-mature individual will not fall prey to the green altitude's pluralistic belief that all perspectives are of completely equal value; some indeed are better than others. Yet integral diversity-mature people can hold multiple perspectives within any context and will not engage in reductionism and exclusion for the sake of simplification or control.

The second principle, *enactment*, requires an understanding that no diversity model or practice, including the diversity paradigm, has the “correct view” (Wilber, 2002c, p. 2). Every experience is an AQAL event that arises, or is enacted by, the experience itself and those experiencing it as well as the paradigm within which it is being experienced. In our view, this speaks to the dynamic nature of diversity and diversity tension and the need for innovation and creativity as components of higher level or second-tier responses to diversity tension. Given that the nature of diversity tension includes dynamic and constant flux, static, narrowly conceived responses are less resourceful and more inhibiting to “optimal and sustainable” outcomes of diversity tension (Simmons & Gregory, 2003, p. 50).

The third principle, *enfoldment*, requires a full understanding of the relationship between diversity tension and development and the necessity to include the “essentials” (Wilber, 2002c, p. 2) of other diversity models and practices while adding new ones, which the diversity paradigm has always done and continues to do. An integral diversity-mature person will always be in discovery mode, never afraid of new discoveries and constantly seeking to expand, enhance, and strengthen knowledge and practice in the field. This person thrives in contexts of diversity tension.

A fourth principle (which has been clearly established in Integral Theory as an important competency for individuals but has not been as fully articulated as it relates to groups) is recognizing the need for shadow work

on the part of individuals and collectives. In an interview with Bill Harris of Centerpointe Research Institute, Diane Hamilton said the following:

[I]t's one thing to...try to metabolize the hurt and fear that I experience as myself, but then when I am also experiencing that of my family or that of my culture, it becomes really very challenging and so I have been doing some work with groups to look into...egoic suffering and then to look at ethnocentric suffering and then to keep moving up the scale so that we can identify in a larger and larger way so that we're not pulled into those kind of collective battles that...plague our planet. (Harris & Hamilton, 2008)

Hamilton is among a very few practitioners working in this way. We argue that these collective shadows are related to Wilber's (2002a) concept of *Kosmic grooves* and are collective patterns, developed over time that have been displaced by individuals and groups and that must be faced and reintegrated in order to support movement to the next developmental level. It appears that most diversity work does not integrate collective shadow work into its models.

## Implications for Theory and Practice

An integral theory of diversity maturity, once realized, will have at least three major implications. First, the theory will contribute to the literature on Integral Theory and practice. Second, the theory will contribute to a more comprehensive and integral theory of diversity dynamics. Third, an integral theory of diversity maturity will provide a “theoretical foothold” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 245) for praxis by applying AQAL-inspired ideas to specific diversity dynamics contexts. We are particularly cognizant that an integral approach will lead to improvements and perhaps the transformation of “diversity training.”

Diversity tutorials and trainings have become standard fare in today's organizations. Although many of these efforts incorporate a higher degree of understanding than previously seen, most existing models do not integrate concepts equivalent to diversity tension and diversity maturity. As a result, they have been unable to fully address the complexity and multidimensionality of diversity dynamics. Nor do they embrace a developmental standpoint. Operating predominantly from the pluralistic and relativistic green altitude, conventional diversity practitioners consider a developmental/holarchical perspective to be taboo. Thus, most diversity training seeks to have the participants experience the same outcome because of a lack of understanding of the developmental aspect. As Cook-Greuter (2004) explained, this is doomed to fail:

People's stage of development influences what they notice or can become aware of, and therefore, what they can describe, articulate, influence, and change. A person who has reached a later stage can understand earlier world-views, but a person at an earlier stage cannot understand the later ones. (p. 6)

Research by Zachary Stein (2008) appears to support this premise. According to Stein, “The implicit hypothesis...is that understandings of core [integral] theory set the pace for the progress of understandings in applied contexts” (p. 14). Diversity training conducted by second-tier, integral diversity–mature individuals would recognize that each participant, in a context where diversity tension is present, is at a different level

of awareness/development. They would understand not only “the necessary role that all of the various [altitudes] play” (Wilber, 2000a, p. 51), but also the complexity within and across quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types within the altitudes. This understanding could then be applied to diversity training, given that those conducting the training had achieved a sufficient level of integral diversity maturity.

An integral theory of diversity maturity, of course, has sociocultural and political implications beyond organizational diversity training. The work of Beck and Cowan in South Africa served as a powerful example of how vision-logic could be applied to diversity dynamics (Wilber, 2000a). Beck and Cowan’s developmental approach to social tension (i.e., diversity tension) was to shift focus away from race and class and view the diversity mixture in terms of type of worldview from which individuals and collectives were operating. Wilber felt this approach had the potential to eliminate “skin color from the game and [focus] on some of the truly underlying factors (developmental values and worldviews) that generate social tensions” (p. 42).

Herein lies the integral challenge. Integral diversity maturity operates within the AQAL matrix in the same way as all other events, and achieving and maintaining an integral perspective of diversity dynamics is a challenging and ongoing process. Additionally, as discussed above, shadow plays a role for individuals and collectives in diversity dynamics. For example, shadow could affect the degree of development along a particular line, which could in turn affect the degree of diversity maturity possible in a given context.

To illustrate this point, in a recent blog, Beck (2008) discussed the difficulty of sustaining an integral perspective when responding to social tension in countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe. According to Beck, a contributing factor is the “Western-driven scenarios by well meaning ‘consultants’...” (p. 12). The greatest concentration of the population in these countries is developmentally at magenta and red altitude, although the dominator/oppressor hierarchies have largely been at amber altitude (Beck & Linscott, 1991). Attempts to deconstruct the dominator/oppressor hierarchies and apply pluralistic/green altitude solutions to social tension have ignored Beck’s warnings about the importance of allowing the population at magenta to develop amber hierarchies of their own, an essential developmental step (Wilber, 2000b). Without this step, a gap is created between magenta/red and green altitudes that, without amber, cannot be traversed:

As Beck and Cowan (and virtually all developmental researchers) constantly stress, the blue meme (by whatever name) [amber altitude] is an absolutely crucial, unavoidable, necessary building block of the higher stages (including green), and yet green does virtually everything in its power to destroy blue wherever it finds it. (Wilber, 2000b, p. 123)

We suggest that an equally contributing factor may be the failure to recognize, process, and reintegrate collective shadows. Domination, oppression and exploitation, as the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, have plagued African countries for centuries. As a result, it is probable that deep “Kosmic grooves” related to fear and learned helplessness have become entrenched across Africa as well as across the African Diaspora as a whole. Ignoring these collective shadows allows them to surface unexpectedly, intensifying situations of social/diversity tension. Acknowledgment and resolution of these shadows, within the context of the AQAL matrix, may be an answer to the question of integral sustainability in conditions of severe and intense social/diversity tension. We suggest that such resolution could best be achieved from an integrally informed diversity-mature perspective:

[A] worldcentric Civilization is not a uniform, imperialistic, homogenized mush, but a rich tapestry of unity-in-diversity, with as much emphasis on the diversity as on the unity....[A]n ‘all-quadrant, all-level, all-lines’ approach is one of the best methods available for charting that extraordinary unfolding from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric, in all its perilous ups and downs, thus making more friendly the waters leading to the promised land...” (Wilber, 2002b, pp. 126-127)

## Conclusion

We have proposed a number of significant foundations for an integral theory of diversity maturity. Much work remains to be done. In addition to seeking theoretical synergy with extant and emerging studies on human development (e.g., the work of Stein [2008]), creativity, and transformative learning, we plan to conduct an empirical and historical inquiry into the developmental experiences of individuals identified as integral diversity mature or on the path to integral diversity maturity, again, possibly employing the model outlined by Stein. For example, in a forthcoming study we analyzed autobiographical and biographical works to develop an understanding of the development of what we believe to be integral diversity maturity in individuals like Nelson Mandela and Malcom X. Guiding questions include: What are the dynamics (push-pull) between quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types that impact the diversity maturity process? What are the characteristics of an integral diversity–mature person and how do those elements relate to one another? What forms of integral practice can aid in developing second-tier diversity responses and assist in both vertical and horizontal development along different streams? And what are the leadership and leadership development implications of diversity maturity? Such an inquiry is essential for the further evolution of consciousness around issues of diversity.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This discussion of diversity dynamics does not refer only to what most people call *cultural diversity*, which, in our opinion, incorporates only one dimension of an integral approach. The present application of the AQAL model and an integral perspective indicates our intent to use an approach that incorporates and integrates all quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types. We assume that most readers of this article are familiar with Integral Theory and the work of Ken Wilber. Thus, the article employs, without definition or elaboration, the standard language and terminology of Integral Theory.

<sup>2</sup> This analytical concept was inspired by Regalado-Rodriguez’s (2001) study, “Tug-o-warring toward change: The push-pull dynamics with organizational change efforts.”

<sup>3</sup> Grounded theory is a research methodology developed by in the mid 1960s (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Its purpose is to generate theory directly from empirical data through the use of the constant comparative method. Grounded action, developed by Odis Simmons and Toni Gregory (2003), is the application and extension of grounded theory for the purpose of addressing the complexity and multi-dimensionality of organizational and social problems and issues. It extends grounded theory beyond its original purpose of generating theory that is grounded in data by providing a means of developing actions that are also grounded.

<sup>4</sup> Our approach to theory building is consistent with Wilber’s method of developing orienting generalizations. In his foreword to *The Eye of the Spirit* (2001), Crittenden described Wilber’s method as follows: “In working with any field, Wilber simply backs up to a level of generalization at which the various conflicting approaches actually agree with one another, what Wilber calls an ‘orienting generalization’ or ‘sturdy conclusion.’ In every case he assembles a series of

sturdy and reliable, not to say irrefutable, orienting generalizations. This is exactly Wilber's first step in his integrative method—a type of phenomenology of all human knowledge conducted at the level of orienting generalizations. *In other words, assemble all of the truths that each field believes it has to offer humanity. For the moment, simply assume they are indeed true.* Wilber then arranges these truths into chains or networks of interlocking conclusions [emphasis in original]" (p. xiii).

<sup>5</sup> The Institute of Heartmath (Childre & Cryer, 2004) has done extensive research on the use of UR technology to produce shifts in UL states with corresponding effects on organizational/group dynamics, including performance.

<sup>6</sup> Our transcending stage includes Wilber's opening, but differs in that to transcend one takes creative, innovative *action*. In Wilber's case, it appears that this is still a readying stage for later action. Throughout this article, our reference to stages should not be confused with "phases," as we are suggesting a relationship between an individual's level of development and the degree of integral diversity maturity. The more advanced the shift in development (e.g., from tier 1 to tier 2), the greater the degree of integral diversity maturity and the higher the level of development of the individual in regard to understanding diversity from a postconventional standpoint.

<sup>7</sup> Although we have addressed only the worldview, cognitive, and moral streams of development in this article, we expect our future research into diversity maturity to discover the significance of other lines such as creativity, openness, and socio-emotional capacity.

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