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## Human psyche as affected by multiculturalism an analytical study

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### Abstract

Multiculturalism, as defined as the idea that multiple cultures can co-exist within the same nation, seems on the face of it to be a rather benign idea. The concept that someone living in one culture finds a way to tolerate the cultural practises of other ethnic systems appears to lead to a more peaceful world as conflict between differing groups is set aside. Multiculturalism is an attractive and persuasive notion. It suggests a human being whose identifications and loyalties transcend the boundaries of nationalism and whose commitments are pinned to a larger vision of the global community. To be a citizen of the world, an international person, has long been an ideal toward which many strive. Unfortunately, history is also rich with examples of totalitarian societies and individuals who took it upon themselves to shape everyone else to the mold of their planetary vision. Repulsive as it was, Hitler had a vision of a world society. Less common are examples of men and women who have striven to sustain a self-process that is inclusively international in attitude and behavior. For good reason. Nation, culture, and society exert tremendous influence on each of our lives, structuring our values, engineering our view of the world, and patterning our responses to experience. Human beings cannot hold themselves apart from some form of cultural influence. No one is culture free.

Culture of a person lays indelible impact on his whole life and specially his way of thinking and reasoning or in one word it can be said that on the whole psychology of the individual. In this paper a brief attempt is made to review this concept of multiculturalism with respect to human psyche.

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism, Psyche, indelible

### Introduction

Multiculturalism means that all cultures are to be respected – with the logical corollary that so is one's own. If we must respect others, others must respect us. And if our 'culture' happens to include taking and publishing nude photographs of ourselves in temples and elsewhere, others must just grin and bear it, otherwise they are being retrograde, primitive and (worst of all) intolerant. We must be tolerant of them, we agree; but that means they must be tolerant of us. And, as it happens, they also need our tourist dollars, so they should just shut up. Who is the boss round here Human connections through communication have made possible the interchange of goods, products, and services as well as the more significant exchange of thoughts and ideas. Accompanying the growth of human communication has been the erosion of barriers that have, throughout history, geographically, linguistically, and culturally separated people. As Harold Lasswell (1972) <sup>[19]</sup> once suggested, "The technological revolution as it affects mass media has reached a limit that is subject only to innovations that would substantially modify our basic perspectives of one another and of man's place in the cosmos." It is possible that the emergence of the multicultural person is just such an innovation. This does not mean we blindly accept all aspects of a cultural system. It simply means that we take each aspect on its own merit and determine if it can be acceptable in the whole. Fortunately, most things, such as language, religious belief, celebrations, and foodstuffs, are totally acceptable, while the ones that cannot be included are usually self-evident.

Perhaps the greatest importance is found in the idea that a mono-cultural experience, where everyone has the same system, can be utterly boring at best and stagnant at worst. Diversity within the human family is just as important as it is in nature, with it being a true source of strength in times of crises. Perhaps an apt analogy is the beauty that a flower garden has. A garden with just one type of flower has no comparison to the beauty that multitudes of flora holds.

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### **Psycho cultural orientation of multiculturalism**

Culture and personality are inextricably woven together in the gestalt of each person's identity. Culture, the mass of life patterns that human beings in a given society learn from their elders and pass on to the younger generation, is imprinted in the individual as a pattern of perceptions that is accepted and expected by others in a society (Singer 1971) <sup>[28]</sup>. Cultural identity is the symbol of one's essential experience of oneself as it incorporates the worldview, value system, attitudes, and beliefs of a group with which such elements are shared. In its most manifest form, cultural identity takes the shape of names which both locate and differentiate the person. When an individual calls himself or herself an American, a Buddhist, a Democrat, a Dane, a woman, or John Jones, that person is symbolizing parts of the complex of images that are likewise recognizable by others. The deeper structure of cultural identity is a fabric of such images and perceptions embedded in the psychological posture of the individual. At the center of this matrix of images is a psychocultural fusion of biological, social, and philosophical motivations; this fusion, a synthesis of culture and personality, is the operant person.

Cultural identity, in the sense that it is a functioning aspect of individual personality, is a fundamental symbol of a person's existence. It is in reference to the individual that the concept is used in this paper. In psychoanalytic literature, most notably in the writing of Erik Erikson (1959) <sup>[16]</sup>, identity is an elemental form of psychic organization which develops in successive psychosexual phases throughout life. Erikson, who focused the greater portion of his analytic studies on identity conflicts, recognized the anchoring of the ego in a larger cultural context. Identity, he suggested, takes a variety of forms in the individual. "At one time," he wrote, "it will appear to refer to a conscious sense of individual identity: at another to an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character: at a third, as a criterion for the silent doings of ego synthesis: and, finally, as a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity." The analytic perspective, as voiced by Erikson, is only one of a variety of definitions. Almost always, however, the concept of identity is meant to imply a coherent sense of self that depends on a stability of values and a sense of wholeness and integration. Cultural identity is a fabric of such images and perceptions embedded in the psychological posture of the individual. At the center of this matrix of images is a psychocultural fusion of biological, social, and philosophical motivations; this fusion, a synthesis of culture and personality, is the operant person.

### **Multiculturalism in work place**

As today's world becomes increasingly global in its outlook and as the marketplace becomes increasingly global in nature, multiculturalism in the workplace most likely will grow. Although the transition to a multicultural workplace could result in issues related acclimation for workers and their employers, multiculturalism at work provides many advantages that can help a company prosper. As today's world becomes increasingly global in its outlook and as the marketplace becomes increasingly global in nature, multiculturalism in the workplace most likely will grow. Although the transition to a multicultural workplace could result in issues related acclimation for workers and their employers, multiculturalism at work provides many advantages that can help a company prosper. Multiculturalism in the workplace can create a sense of cultural awareness among workers. Employees who are exposed to others' ideas

and points of view will learn to think outside the box when faced with a problem. Once a worker has been exposed to beliefs of someone whose ideas seem foreign to him, he can begin to reflect on the narrowness of his world view and how it adversely affects his ability to think and solve problems. In an article posted on The Multicultural Advantage website, Josh Greenberg, president of Alpha Measure Inc. in Boulder, Colorado, notes that multiculturalism allows workers to all contribute based on their own cultural background, experience and other qualifications. When a variety of viewpoints are thrown into the problem-solving mix, new and innovative solutions can be reached.

### **Emergence of a New Psychologically Adjusted Cultural Being**

The various conceptions of an "international," "transcultural," "multicultural," or "intercultural" individual have each been used with varying degrees of explanatory or descriptive utility. Essentially, they all attempt to define someone whose horizons extend significantly beyond his or her own culture. An "internationalist," for example, has been defined as a person who trusts other nations, is willing to cooperate with other countries, perceives international agencies as potential deterrents to war, and who considers international tensions reducible by mediation (Lutzker 1960) <sup>[20]</sup>. Others have studied the international orientation of groups by measuring their attitudes towards international issues, i.e., the role of the U.N., economic versus military aid, international alliances, etc. (Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954) <sup>[9]</sup>. And at least several attempts have been made to measure the world-mindedness of individuals by exploring the degree to which persons have a broad international frame of reference rather than specific knowledge or interest in some narrower aspect of global affairs (Sampson and Smith 1957, Garrison 1961, Paul 1966) <sup>[27, 17]</sup>.

Whatever the terminology, the definitions and metaphors allude to a person whose essential identity is inclusive of different life patterns and who has psychologically and socially come to grips with a multiplicity of realities. We can call this new type of person multicultural because he or she embodies a core process of self-verification that is grounded in both the universality of the human condition and the diversity of cultural forms. We are speaking, then, of a social-psychological style of self-process that differs from others. The multicultural person is intellectually and emotionally committed to the basic unity of all human beings while at the same time recognizing, legitimizing, accepting, and appreciating the differences that exist between people of different cultures. This new kind of person cannot be defined by the languages he or she speaks, the number of countries he or she has visited, nor by the number of personal international contacts that have been made. Nor is he or she defined by profession, place of residence, or cognitive sophistication. Instead, the multicultural person is recognized by a configuration of outlooks and world-view, by how the universe as a dynamically moving process is incorporated, by the way the interconnectedness of life is reflected in thought and action, and by the way this woman or man remains open to the imminence of experience.

The flexibility of the multicultural personality allows great variation in adaptability and adjustment. Adjustment and adaptation, however, must always be dependent on some constant, on something stable and unchanging in the fabric of life. We can attribute to the multicultural person three

fundamental postulates that are incorporated and reflected in thinking and behavior. Such postulates are fundamental to success in cross-cultural adaptation.

1. Every culture is an intertwined system of values and attitudes, beliefs and norms that give meaning and significance to both individual and collective identity.
2. All cultural systems are equally valid as variations on the human experience.
3. Every culture provides the individual with some sense of identity, some regulation of behavior, and some sense of personal place in the scheme of things.

What is uniquely new about this emerging human being is a psychocultural style of self-process that transcends the structured image a given culture may impress upon the individual in his or her youth. The navigating image at the core of the multicultural personality is premised on an assumption of many cultural realities. The multicultural person, therefore, is not simply the one who is sensitive to many different cultures. Rather, this person is always in the process of becoming a part of and apart from a given cultural context. He or she is a formative being, resilient, changing, and evolutionary. There is no permanent cultural "character" but neither is he or she free from the influences of culture. In the shifts and movements of his or her identity process, the multicultural person is continually recreating the symbol of self.

The indefinite boundaries and the constantly realigning relationships that are generated by the psychobiological, psychosocial, and psychophilosophical motivations make possible sophisticated and complex responses on the part of the individual to cultural and subcultural systems. Moreover, this psychocultural flexibility necessitates sequential changes in identity. Intentionally or accidentally, multicultural persons undergo shifts in their total psychocultural posture; their religion, personality, behavior, occupation, nationality, outlook, political persuasion, and values may, in part or completely, reformulate in the face of new experience. "It is becoming increasingly possible," wrote Michael Novak (1970) <sup>[25]</sup>, "for men to live through several profound conversions, calling forth in themselves significantly different personalities...." The relationship of multicultural persons to cultural systems is fragile and tenuous. "A man's cultural and social milieu," says Novak, "conditions his personality, values, and actions; yet the same man is able, within limits, to choose the milieus whose conditioning will affect him."

Abraham Maslow (1962) <sup>[21]</sup> suggested, human drives form a hierarchy in which the most prepotent motivations will monopolize consciousness and will tend, of themselves, to organize the various capacities and capabilities of the organism. In the sequence of development, the needs of infancy and childhood revolve primarily around physiological and biological necessities, i.e., nourishment by food, water, and warmth. Correspondingly, psychosocial needs are most profound in adolescence and young adulthood when the people engage in establishing themselves through "un-becoming" something different from before while yet mindful of the grounding in his or her primary cultural reality. Murdock (1955) <sup>[23]</sup> suggested in "Universals of Culture," some form of cosmology, ethics, mythology, supernatural propitiation, religious rituals, and soul concept appears in every culture known to history or ethnography. How an individual raises these questions and searches for ultimate answers is a function of the psychophilosophical patterning of

cultural identity. Ultimately it is the task of every individual to relate to his or her god, to deal with the supernatural, and to incorporate for himself or herself the mystery of life. The ways in which individuals do this, the relationships and connections that are formed, are a function of the psychophilosophical component of cultural identity

The flexibility of the multicultural personality allows great variation in adaptability and adjustment. Adjustment and adaptation, however, must always be dependent on some constant, on something stable and unchanging in the fabric of life. We can attribute to the multicultural person three fundamental postulates that are incorporated and reflected in thinking and behavior. Such postulates are fundamental to success in cross-cultural adaptation.

1. Every culture or system has its own internal coherence, integrity, and logic. Every culture is an intertwined system of values and attitudes, beliefs and norms that give meaning and significance to both individual and collective identity.
2. No one culture is inherently better or worse than another. All cultural systems are equally valid as variations on the human experience.
3. All persons are, to some extent, culturally bound. Every culture provides the individual with some sense of identity, some regulation of behavior, and some sense of personal place in the scheme of things.

The multicultural person embodies these propositions and lives them on a daily basis and not just in cross-cultural situations. They are fundamentally a part of his or her interior image of the world and self.

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### **The Importance of Teaching Multiculturalism**

An emphasis of multicultural activities across the curriculum can help improve positive socialization behaviors among children. The impact of culture on learning and behavior is natural and should be recognized through inclusion of appropriate activities and knowledge of a child's cultural background (Kendall, 1983). Supported by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, these systems begin with what is closest to the child and has the most impact, and expands outward to include the global environment and time (Bronfenbrenner, 1974) <sup>[6]</sup>.

A sound multicultural education model manifests an acceptance of a respect for all cultures in our pluralistic society. It fosters positive self-regard in one's own culture and positive attitudes toward the culture of others. While exploring similarities and differences among cultures, it develops an understanding and appreciation of one's own cultural heritage as well as that of other cultures. It fosters the ability to function harmoniously and productively in a multicultural society.

The principles of multicultural education promote close working relationships among the school, home, and community in order to provide consistent expectations and mutual support. The use of positive role models from the community is an integral and valuable component for promoting multicultural education in the schools. It is important to note the diversity of cultures, ethnic

backgrounds, and races of children in schools (McCracken, J.B., 1993)<sup>[7]</sup>.

With the support of research, theorists and experience, the inclusion of multiculturalism within classrooms just makes perfect sense! Think of it...providing young children with endless opportunities and exposure to beautiful traditions, music and rhythms, instruments, celebrations, books, people, homes, art; and that is just to name a few!

### Conclusions and Summary

This paper does not suggest that the multicultural person is now the predominant character style of our time. Nor is it meant to suggest that multicultural persons, by virtue of their uninhibited way of relating to other cultures, are in any way "better" than those who are mono-or bicultural. Rather, this paper argues that multicultural persons are not simply individuals who are sensitive to other cultures or knowledgeable about international affairs, but instead can be defined by a psychocultural pattern of identity that differs radically from the relatively stable forms of self-process found in the usual cultural identity pattern. This paper argues that both cultural and multicultural identity processes can be conceptualized by the constellation of biological, social, and philosophical motivations involved and by the relative degrees of rigidity maintained in personal boundaries and that such conceptualization lays the basis for comparative research.

Two final points might be noted about the multicultural personality. First, the multicultural person embodies attributes and characteristics that prepare him or her to serve as a facilitator and catalyst for contacts between cultures. The variations and flexibility of this identity style allows that person to relate to a variety of contexts and environments without being totally encapsulated by or totally alienated from any given culture. As Stephen Bochner (1973)<sup>[3]</sup> suggests, a major problem in attempting to avert the loss of cultures in Asia and the Pacific "is the lack of sufficient people who can act as links between diverse cultural systems." These "mediating" individuals incorporate the essential characteristics of the multicultural person. "Genuine multicultural individuals are very rare," he writes, "which is unfortunate because it is these people who are uniquely equipped to mediate the cultures of the world." The multicultural person, then, embodies a pattern of self-process that potentially allows him or her to help others negotiate the cultural realities of a different system. With a self-process that is adaptational, the multicultural individual is in a unique position to understand, facilitate, and research the psychocultural dynamics of other systems.

Second, multiculturalism is an increasingly significant psychological and cultural phenomenon, enough so as to merit further conceptualization and research. It is neither easy nor necessarily useful to reconcile the approaches of psychology and anthropology; nor is there any guarantee that interdisciplinary approaches bring us closer to an intelligent understanding of human beings as exist in relation to their culture. Yet, the multicultural person may prove to be a significant enough problem in understanding the process of culture learning (and culture unlearning) to force an integrated approach to studies of the individual and the group. "Psychologists," write Brislin, Lonner, and Thorndike (1973)<sup>[5]</sup>, "have the goal of incorporating the behavior of many cultures into one theory (etic approach), but they must also understand the behavior within each culture (emic approach)." Empirical research based on strategies that can accurately

observe, measure, and test behavior and that incorporate the "emic versus etic" distinction will be a natural next step. Such studies may very well be a springboard into the more fundamental dynamics of cross-cultural relationships.

We live in a transitional period of history, a time that of necessity demands parallel forms of psychocultural self-process. That a true international community of nations is coming into existence is still a debatable issue, but that individuals with a self-consciousness that is larger than the mental territory of their culture are emerging is no longer arguable. The psychocultural pattern of identity that is called for to allow such self-consciousness, adaptability, and variation opens such individuals to both benefits and pathologies. The interlinking of cultures and persons in the twentieth century is not always a pleasant process; modernization and economic development have taken heavy psychological tolls in both developed and Third-World countries. The changes brought on in our time have invoked revitalized needs for the preservation of collective, cultural identities. Yet, along with the disorientation and alienation which have characterized much of this century comes a new possibility in the way humans conceive of their individual identities and the identity of the human species. No one has better stated this possibility than Harold Taylor (1969)<sup>[30]</sup>, himself an excellent example of the multicultural person:

"There is a new kind of man in the world, and there are more of that kind than is commonly recognized. He is a national citizen with international intuitions, conscious of the age that is past and aware of the one now in being, aware of the radical difference between the two, willing to accept the lack of precedents, willing to work on the problems of the future as a labor of love, unrewarded by governments, academies, prizes, and position. He forms part of an invisible world community of poets, writers, dancers, scientists, teachers, lawyers, scholars, philosophers, students, citizens who see the world whole and feel at one with all its parts."

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