

RUNNING HEAD: “Browning of America”

“The Browning of America:”  
Building a new multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic paradigm

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*We would like to dedicate this article to Krishna Venkatraman and the late Carl V. Fields.*

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ABSTRACT

With the 21<sup>st</sup> century comes the “Browning of America,” which demands a new paradigm in multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic theory, research, and practice for psychology.

We review the low points in America’s long history of racial conflict and offer a high vision for psychologists to become change agents in social justice by driving multicultural cultural competency development in themselves, the field, and among other interested peoples. We now function within models of political correctness, tolerance, racial separateness, and racial isolation. To counter this trend, we offer a *culture-centered* model for multicultural competency along four levels: (a) conceptual / theoretical / intellectual, (b) multiracial dialog, (c) behavioral interaction, and (d) skill building. Our premise is that we are approaching what Malcom Gladwell termed *The Tipping Point*, when achieving multicultural competency becomes part of the American way such that all people from every ethnic group come into full participation in American society.

“The Browning of America:” Building a new multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic paradigm

During the 21st century, our country will experience the "Browning of America" (Rodriguez, 1998). By the year 2050, over half the population of the United States will be people of color (Nasser, 2004). The so-called “minorities” will be the majority in many states, cities, and regions of the country; this is the case already in four states: Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas (Guidelines, 2003). To effectively serve a multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic population, a paradigm shift in graduate training and continuing education for mental health professionals will be required. Our central question is: What are the changes in self-awareness, conceptual / theoretical models, experiential dialogue, behavioral interaction, and skill building, to which psychologists and future mental health professionals will need to be exposed? In this paper, we review several low points in America’s long history of racial conflict, and then step through to the present, where we now function within models of political correctness, tolerance, racial separateness, and racial isolation. We then leap forward to a high vision of a new *culture-centered* model (Guidelines, 2003) for achieving multicultural competency that is illustrated along four levels: (a) conceptual/theoretical/intellectual, (b) multiracial dialog, (c) behavioral interaction, and (d) skill building. Our premise is that we are approaching what Malcom Gladwell (2002) termed *the Tipping Point*, when achieving multicultural competency becomes part of the American way such that all people from every ethnic group come into full participation in American society.

#### SOCIAL INJUSTICES ENDURED BY THE BIG FOUR

America has endured a long history of genocide, slavery, internment, civil rights violations, racial hostility, violence, anti-immigration, and social injustice. In 1619, the first slaves were sold in Jamestown, Virginia, and rivers of blood and years of darkness divide that

day from this (author citation). Native Americans, who once roamed these lands freely yet fell victim to centuries of violence and genocide (Brown, 1970), now live on reservations overwhelmed by poverty, poor health care, unemployment, and alcoholism. Japanese-Americans endured internment (Randall, 2004), and other Asian Americans faced severe violence and discrimination (Tajima-Pe-a, 1988). Latinos, people of Mexican descent, once owned and ruled the southwest of America (Novas, 1994). Now California is owned and run by Euro-Americans. America now has the challenging of healing after this long, violent history. True healing in this country can only happen once social justice is restored for all people of color.

#### COOL ON THE SURFACE, HOT SIMMER BELOW

At present, it seems we are in a period of “chilling out” between racial groups. Cultural awareness training seminars are now common on student campuses and on the job. The result is our current era of political correctness, superficial tolerance, cultural and psychological separateness, and peaceful coexistence. Though racial incidences still occur with regularity covertly and overtly (Moser, 2004), it is generally no longer “cool” to be a racist publicly, use racist labels, make racist comments and jokes, or refer fondly to prior eras of segregation and slavery. This is evidenced, for example, by the public outcry that followed Senator Trent Lott’s acknowledgement to Strom Thurmond about the “good old days” (Senator Lott..., 2002). People of color may have a better quality of life now, but social activism maintains the tenuous balance.

The social mores are mutual coexistence and mutual separateness. College campuses offer ample evidence. Students go to class together, but in the student union, the Blacks will have their corner where they hang, the Latinos have theirs too, and so on with Asian and Native Americans. There are black fraternities and sororities, alongside those for white students. The stability of “peaceful coexistence” may depend on these culturally isolated social worlds.

As Martin Luther King said 40 years ago, “When you stand at 11:00 on Sunday morning to sing ... you stand in the most segregated hour of Christian America” (King, 1956). People of African or Caribbean decent go to black churches, and Asian people go to Asian churches. Latinos gathered in their communities as well. The same is true for Jewish, Muslim, and other East Asian cultures on Friday and Saturday when they go separately to synagogues, mosques, temples, and other spiritual places. This estrangement creates a fear, uneasiness, discomfort, and xenophobia—a fear of that which is strange, a fear of strangers, and even a hatred of strangers. Many people feel more comfortable around people who look, talk, dress like them, and eat the same thing for lunch and dinner. With this separateness comes stereotypes to make up categories for what is unfamiliar (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). Common stereotypes are being lazy, oversexed, undersexed, dumb in school, or in the case of Asians, too smart busting the curve. Today, the racial equation is that we do not know each other as a people; our cross-racial dialogue is superficial and tensions simmer below the surface. We have not allowed ourselves the richness that comes from constructive engagement and mutual understanding.

The late president John Fitzgerald Kennedy said we need to begin anew, the old order is passing, and the old ways will not work in this changing world (author citation). Our concern must be about the future. This present stage of calm is floating on simmering waters. Stereotypes have a way of freezing into social reality (Steele, 1997). We must turn multicultural competency into a wave of change.

#### MOVING BEYOND: A NEW PARADIGM FOR MULTICULTURALISM

Imagine a day where a new paradigm for multiculturalism brings *every* ethnic group is in full participation in American society. Is it difficult to conjure more than a vague image? The problem is people find themselves living among other cultures with few models to demonstrate

the steps to follow toward multicultural competency and effective cross-cultural interaction. In this respect, each American has a tremendous journey ahead.

For psychologists, the bar is higher. The *Guidelines* (2003) make it clear that for psychologists, “...all transactions occur between members of two or more cultures,” referring differences in identity, culture, race, and ethnicity, even in cases where the psychologist and client appear to the eye to be more similar than different. The *Guidelines* (2003) further posit that, “...Psychologists are in a position to provide leadership as agents of prosocial change, advocacy, and social justice, thereby promoting societal understanding, affirmation, and appreciation of multiculturalism against the damaging effects of individual, institutional, and societal racism, prejudice, and all forms of oppression based on stereotyping and discrimination” (p.382). We must recognize this challenge and the associated responsibility as they serve in multiple clinical, teaching, consultant, research, and activist roles. We are role models in our professional roles and in our lives; in this way, we are leaders to all individuals we encounter.

Most psychologists have a bastion of knowledge about human behavior from the Euro-American perspective. This knowledge will soon apply to only half the population. When we work closely with clients and students, we must work within the appropriate multiethnic and culturally-centered models (Carter, 1991). These new models, which range from identity development to how DSM-IV diagnoses vary according to culture, facilitate our understanding of cultural differences. We are knowledge builders. As researchers, we must test these new models empirically and develop refined models, validated through qualitatively and quantitatively sound technique. As teachers, we must present all material in our classrooms from divergent worldviews and facilitate students’ understanding on how these worldviews shape

behavior. Finally as agents of change within and among institutions, psychologist must develop multicultural / multiracial / multiethnic approaches to organizational development.

All psychologists are responsible for integrating their knowledge of traditional psychology in multicultural terms, whether or not it was taught during their graduate experience (Guidelines..., 2003). While it is still difficult to get comprehensive training through Continuing Education, the Winter Roundtable and the Multicultural Summit are compensating forums to familiarize oneself with the multicultural literature and new directions in research. Only when there is a critical mass of psychologists well trained in multicultural competency and well on their way through their own stages of racial and ethnic identity, can we approach the *tipping point*—the day when full participation for all people is fully in view and therefore becomes an unstoppable part of the American way (Author citations).

#### The Model

Clumsy study of cultures has gone on for centuries since the first world explorers which left us with information pervaded by entrenched stereotyping and social constructions of race. Culture-centered study of ethnic / racial groups and indigenous cultures is new to this century surfacing the concepts of differing worldviews. As multicultural theory deepened, however, having a general understanding of how worldviews differ (e.g., independence versus interdependence) may not be adequate to serve people from other cultures; the generalities in worldview different were found to vary considerably for any given individual within a culture due to large within group differences (Guidelines, 2003; Stuart, 2004). For example, Asian Americans are known for more interdependent family relationships than typical for Euro-Americans, which is a between group difference. It is not unusual however for an acculturated American-born Asian student to depart significantly from his culture by valuing, for example,

the pursuit of individual career interests despite differing parental expectations (within group difference); it is also not uncommon to find a Euro-American student who takes over a family business despite his divergent personal career interests. Therefore, a model, robust enough to address the complex dimensions of individual human life within culture is needed.

The new multicultural / multiracial / multiethnic paradigm model, designed to enhance multicultural competency in *both* Euro-American and minority psychologists, has four levels: (a) conceptual/theoretical/intellectual, (b) multiracial dialog, (c) behavioral interaction, and (d) skill building. By engaging in the activities at every level of this model, psychologists can both progress themselves and lead others in the journey toward multicultural competency.

#### *Conceptual/Theoretical/Intellectual*

The conceptual level has three primary objectives: (a) Develop a general intellectual understanding or familiarity with major sociocultural features for non-White cultures in America, in terms of their history, cultural depth and variety, and psychological theories of identity development; and (b) Understand the psychological identity theories for white and non-white racial identity development and the inherent emotional upheaval inherent in the process.

#### Major social-cultural features

This level is where one reaches out intellectually to another group by exploring what is important to them psychologically, spiritually, and phenomenologically. Such understanding begins through reading books (see Ross, 2002; Author citation), going to lectures, auditing ethnic studies courses, reading ethnic studies journals, watching movies/documentary films (see Video library, 2004), and so forth. As a personal anecdote, I (first author) was in Missouri meeting with a group of eight Euro-American teachers who met regularly to expand their cultural knowledge. First off, before the meeting could get started, I was told to adjust my pronunciation patterns.

“When you are in Missouri, you say “mi-ZUR-ah,” they emphasized. Once I added this to my multicultural competency repertoire, we good get started, and they shared their personal competency development strategy. Apparently, every month they read four books on black Americans, whether short stories, biographies, or fiction. Twice a month they had discussion meetings. These Euro-American women were trying to constructively engage another culture from an intellectual perspective. The Study Circles Resource Center ([www.studycircles.org](http://www.studycircles.org)) provides excellent resources, including stimulus videos such as *Skin Deep* and *The Way Home*, and guidance on how to start your own group study forum for education, growth, and dialogue.

For psychologists, we further recommend that one explore popular, classic, folk, and ethnic music through anthologies, courses, and ethnic journals. Pay particular attention to indigenous folk healing styles, such as curandero, “laying on of the hands,” “speaking in tongues,” and Santeria, which is an Afro-Cuban treatment of the spirit that is part of the Yoruba (African) derived religious tradition, drawing on the spiritual forces of ancient Africa (Author citation). Finally through the ethnic storytelling and music, listen for how culture is handed down through generations (see *The Negro Spirituals—a journal on gospel music*). When on your exploratory journey, pay close attention to experiences with oppression, whether victim or perpetrator, and listen for emotions, attitudes, and values around the use of power in relationship, family, and in larger community. Look for the strengths that have allowed people to rise up and out from under oppression, and conceptualize from what residual distress they are resolving. Through these activities, psychologists will develop both empathy for and an understanding and enjoyment of other racial / ethnic cultures and worldviews. If pop culture interests you, try reading magazines such as *Ebony*, *Yolk*, *Candela*, and *Native Peoples*.

## Psychological Identity Theories for White and Non-White Racial Identity Development

Theory and empirical research on multicultural identity development and its relationship to psychological health and adjustment has been growing since the 1970s. For psychologists to depart from monocultural perspectives in psychology, they must venture into the multicultural psychology literature. As a challenge, we suggest that all psychologists start formal coursework, conference education, and/or self-study through journal literature, textbooks (see Guidelines..., 2003; Author citation) and/or videos (see [www.emicrotraining.com](http://www.emicrotraining.com)) on development models for: (a) general ethnic identity development, (b) Euro-Americans and the four major racial groups, and (c) bicultural and multiracial identity. Such study will lead to an understanding of differing worldviews and individual differences. Multicultural identity development is related to better psychological health, though the process can be tumultuous emotionally, and often involve cycling through the stages many times over a lifetime (Guidelines..., 2003).

### *Multiracial Dialog*

President Bill Clinton formally initiated dialogues about race (One America ..., 1998). Whether concurrently or sequentially to the conceptual / theoretical / intellectual level, we challenge psychologists to reach toward other cultural groups through experiential dialogue. The Winter Roundtable and the Multicultural Summit offer these opportunities as might your local community. The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (<http://www.thataway.org/>) provides excellent books, manuals, and videos on how to stimulate productive racial dialogue. By engaging with dialogue groups, one may encounter five critical junctures: (a) racial self awareness, (b) perceptual gap, (c) externalization of blame, (d) introspection, and (e) empathy.

Racial self-awareness

Though people of color are more likely to be socialized some degree of racial self-awareness, multicultural identity theory emphasizes that people of all races are vulnerable to de-emphasizing their group membership to avoid distressing emotions in the early stage of their racial identity development (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991; Guidelines ..., 2003). To this end, *all* psychologists at whatever their stage are encouraged to cycle back to consider:

- (a) Characterizations of ethnic background with questions such as: *Who am I racially, ethnically, culturally? How did I come to be what I am? When did I first realize I was part of an ethnic group? How did I learn my ethnic heritage? What ethnic messages did I receive from my family about my ethnic group versus other ethnic groups? How were people in my childhood neighborhood ethnically or racially perceived? To what extent was I influenced by these beliefs? In what way have my beliefs changed? What influenced me to change?*
- (b) Advantages and disadvantages of being a member of your ethnic group,
- (c) Critical racial incidents when you experienced the power of race and skin color,
- (d) Life experiences when you experienced discrimination due to race, ethnicity, gender, etc.

#### Perceptual gap

There are perceptual gaps at the individual identity level. Consider how much the response to the question, *Who am I?*, differs from the response to the questions, *How do others perceive me? What does society say that I am?* The perceptual gap is most marked for people of color living under Euro-American stereotyping and bias (Steele, 1997). There is an equally disparate gap between how individuals from different groups see the world and interpret events. The OJ Simpson case was illustrative of the perceptual gap in evaluating televised broadcast of the courtroom events. The majority of Euro-Americans felt that OJ Simpson was guilty, and the same majority of black Americans felt that he was not (Questions on race..., 1997). How could

two sets of Americans watch the same courtroom proceedings and come to such different conclusions? We live in different perceptual worlds. The movie, *Crown Heights*, portrays a similar story of how black and Jewish residents of New York City perceived a racial incident, and the process by which two community leaders resolved perceptual differences.

Externalization of Blame.

What are the ways in which we ascribe responsibility for the racial divide in America? An African American may refer back to the first slaves sold in 1619; in turn, a Euro-American might fire back, “Slavery is over. You people don’t work hard enough.” This is the Blame Game. All individuals have a responsibility here. On one hand, as painful as it can be, white psychologists must venture into how Euro-Americans have impeded social justice, over and above slavery, through harmful legal action such as the one drop rule, segregation, and more controversially, the repeal of affirmative action (Rodriguez, 1998; Guidelines..., 2003). On the other hand, non-Euro-Americans may want to remember that when a white individual dares to look back at the destruction of Euro-American tyranny, the ensuing cognitive/emotional response can be overwhelming to themselves and to others (see McLaren, 1998; Tuckwell, 2002).

Introspection

At this juncture, we challenge psychologists to introspect from two perspectives. The first is to look within and begin to understand how you have contributed to racial problems in America, by commission or by omission. Questions to stimulate your thinking are: In what ways am I more critical of Euro-Americans or of people of color? Are there racial stereotypes that I have not yet addressed? How have my thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes changed over the years toward people for different ethnic and racial groups? What else would I like to change? Am I harboring regrets about past behavior toward Euro-Americans or people of color?

The second is to look toward the future with a self-challenge: How am I going to turn my regrets into more positive action in the present? What am I going to do to work toward a solution?

### Empathy

When a psychologist begins to understand the worldview within which other people live, the door opens to begin to comprehend another person’s emotional experience. The degree to which Euro-Americans can comprehend the human devastation of oppression and their consequential privilege (MacIntosh, 1991) may relate to the degree of loss and disillusionment they are likely to experience (Queener, Smith, Woodworth, and Stokes, 2004). People, caught by surprise by the intensity of their emotional experience, will predictably respond either in defensive anger and retrenchment, or “guilt by association” and rejection of their own race (Drew, 1997; Huber, 1996). Techniques for healing at this critical point of resistance are just emerging (Queener, et al, 2004). Anecdotal evidence as illustrated in the movies, *Color of Fear* or *Crown Heights*. Empirical research (Drew, 1997; Helms, Malone, Henze, Satiani, Perry, & Warren, 2003; Huber, 1996) has suggested that good mentorship, education, and/or counseling from other progressive Euro-Americans and people of color can transform this resistance into a productive one for later growth. When you find you are having difficulty with empathy toward another’s experience, especially during cross-racial dialogue, cycle back through these above junctures, searching for what steps you need to take to open to another’s experience. At this juncture, true possibilities open to engage in relationship with others, despite the racial divide.

### Behavioral Interaction

The behavioral interaction involves interaction with ethnically and racially different people in their own environments. People of color do this every day as they emerge from their community to go to work or school. Euro-Americans, however, must force themselves out of

their comfort zone to seek out experience with people ethnically and racially different. What are ways to do this? Attend a “get down” Baptist Church in a low income area, spend time on a Native American reservation, visit a Latino community festival, and/or arrange service learning in Asian communities through volunteering. While you are there, try to get a feel for the rhythms, social talk, speech patterns, gestures, interpersonal styles, interpersonal warmth, psychological strengths of culturally different people. Look for how people vary in their appearance and style of communication in this supposedly uniform cultural gathering.

Especially at black church gatherings, look for how openly people express powerful emotions like joy, sorrow, and affection. Listen to the themes in the music; watch the audience engage and show respecto, simpatico, and personalismo. Observe the emotional / psychological connectedness within the congregation, which can be like an extended family, where non-relatives as brothers, sisters, elders, mothers, and fathers. At Latino events, observe the power of the familia and the roles of comadres, copadres, tios, tias, mijas, elders, and curanderos.

As you accept this challenge, the ensuing experiences can be disorderly, lack sequence, cause some chaos and confusion personally and in relationship to others—this is all part of the process. Expect to make some culture missteps and watch for clues on how to compensate for them. This will happen if you are out of your comfort zone. Sometimes it is only through mistakes made over a non-linear process, can we learn the nuance of customs, communications styles, and body language of diverse peoples. The big pay off for taking the risk to put yourself in new situations is the rewarding of meaningful cross-cultural connections.

### *Skill Building*

This stage is where psychologists will roll up their sleeves to develop specific multicultural competencies for their service to others, whether patients, clients, students, or large

communities. Culturally-centered clinical training can be instrumental in this growth, whether you will ultimately work with clients or not. This is the level where you will explore when is it to add to your person-centered skills of unconditional regard with cultural-centered skills in cultural responsiveness. Consider the person-centered therapy as a pre-requisite for learning how to vary your clinical, public, or pedagogical style depending on the culture of whom you are serving. Is it appropriate to maintain eye contact or look away when talking, face each other when talking or stand side-by-side, self-disclose or keep a clinical distance, speak in clinical terms or those more familiar, reflect feeling or cognition? These are a few of the behavioral decisions that are addressed in multicultural microskills training based on the work of Allen Ivey, Daryl Wing Sue, Thomas Parham, Paul Pederson, among many other pioneers. Multicultural microskills are practiced in role-play and improved through audio and videotaped client sessions. At this behavioral level, we recommend that you count on being uncomfortable, stumbling, feeling inadequacy and frustration, and trying again. Mastery in multicultural microskills comes after years of theoretical study, self-monitored practice, self-initiated learning, observation of experts, and supervisory critique. There is just no way around it; mastery takes commitment and effort.

### CONCLUSION

Many Euro-Americans have asked us about how they might participate effectively in the multiculturalism movement with their indelible whiteness. Participation for Euro-Americans is complex with *at least* two dimensions: (a) embarking on one’s own journey of recognizing “whiteness” as a racial group and experientially progressing through white racial identity development, from the *contact* stage all the way through to *autonomy* (Helms, 1990); and (b) influencing multicultural recognition, awareness, competency, and social justice within one’s own white culture. Both dimensions take courage and commitment. Whether Euro-American or a

person of color, remember you are on a personal journey to become the New Community Professional (Author citation) whose ripple effect is likely to change the world.

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