



Integration in intercultural ethics

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Abstract

Normative theories of the ethical stances sojourners should adopt with respect to their host cultures typically encourage sojourners to either adapt themselves to the norms of the host culture or maintain their own ethical norms while simultaneously “respecting” the norms of the host culture. This paper argues for an alternative approach which suggests that cross-cultural dialogue on ethics can lead to the creation of synergetic “third cultures” which integrate positive aspects of each of the original cultures in novel ways. The paper examines the concept of integration at three different levels: (1) the individual/psychological level; (2) the interpersonal/intercultural level; and (3) the formal level.

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1. Introduction

Normative approaches to how sojourners should interact with people from their host cultures typically suggest that individuals should either adapt themselves to the norms of their host cultures (“when in Rome do as the Romans do”) or maintain their own norms while respecting those of the host culture. Recent work which attempts to apply “third culture” theory to intercultural dialogue on ethics (Casmir, 1997; Evanoff, 2000) suggests an alternative model in which common ground between people with different ethical norms can be actively constructed through a process of intercultural dialogue in which

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existing norms are critiqued and new norms are formulated. The end goal of such a process is an integration of norms across cultures which serve to govern relationships between individuals in cross-cultural situations. The following sections consider three specific forms of integration: (1) how multiple frames of reference can be integrated into one's own thinking at the individual/psychological level; (2) how multiple frames of reference can be integrated at the interpersonal/intercultural level; and (3) how specific norms can be conceptually integrated at the formal level.

2. Integrating multiple frames of reference

2.1. *Integration and "third cultures"*

Persons who have undergone the experience of learning how other cultures perceive the world acquire an intercultural mindset (Adler, 1977; Fisher, 1988), which enables them to make judgments by the standards of more than one culture, i.e., from multiple frames of reference. The process of developing an intercultural mindset leads to a wider view both of the world and of human possibilities. By empathetically engaging ourselves with the viewpoints of other cultures we also gain a more objective view than it would be possible for us to have by merely looking at the world through the lens of our own culture.

The same process can work in the reverse, of course. People from other cultures may be able to learn from our experiences and in the process dialogue based on an empathetic cross-cultural understanding of different traditions becomes possible. A willingness to learn from other cultures does not mean the outright abandoning of one's own cultural traditions and values, although in the process of exposing ourselves to different ways of thinking we will inevitably be led to a penetrating reexamination of our own culture and values. Out of such reflection we gain a wider and more highly differentiated view of the world which can nonetheless be integrated into a wider and more comprehensive worldview.

M. Bennett's (1993) well-known developmental model of intercultural sensitivity delineates six stages individuals typically go through in the process of acquiring an integrated perspective. In the earlier "ethnocentric" stages difference is either simply not recognized (denial); difference is acknowledged but one culture is believed to be superior to another (defense); or difference is minimized by adopting a facile universalism (minimalization). In the later "ethnorelative" stages, differences are accepted in a simplistic, relativist way (acceptance); individuals become capable of adopting the frame of reference of another culture (adaptation); or individuals adopt a bicultural perspective which utilizes multiple cultural frames of reference (integration).

Each of these stages represents a more highly differentiated framework for dealing with cross-cultural differences. The tendency to think in terms of universals and absolutes typically occurs only at relatively unreflective stages. As reflection increases and the awareness of differences expands, individuals begin to think in more relativistic terms. Relativism itself is transcended, however, once individuals begin to consciously evaluate the norms and values of both their own and the other culture. It is recognized that while a variety of (possibly viable) options for thought and action are open to the individual, some must be chosen over others simply in order to get on with one's life. At the final stage, which roughly corresponds to Perry's (1999) "commitment in relativism", individuals acquire a bicultural perspective by integrating at least some of the ideas and values of the

other culture into their own way of thinking. Thus, the process of developing intercultural sensitivity has the potential to transform sojourners in significant ways.

Levels similar to Bennett's "integrated" stage have been described by other authors in the field of intercultural communication. Useem, for example, uses the term "third cultures" to refer to "...cultural patterns inherited and created, learned and shared by the members of two or more different societies who are personally involved in relating their society, or segments thereof, to each other" (Useem, 1971, p. 14; see also Useem, Useem, & Donoghue, 1963). Yoshikawa's concept of "dynamic inbetweenness" holds that a "third perspective" can be created in cross-cultural exchanges between Asians and Westerners which "...does not represent exclusively either the Eastern perspective or the Western perspective" (Yoshikawa, 1987, p. 329). Adler, citing Tillich, suggests that the formation of a multicultural personality involves creating "...a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded" (Adler, 1977, p. 26). Post-colonial cultural studies in the UK have also advanced the concept of "hybridity" (Webner & Modood, 1997). Bhabha (1994) specifically contends that it is possible for immigrants to create a "third space", in which various aspects of both the dominant and the immigrant culture are hybridized in ways which transform each.

Not all individuals successfully make the transition to a multicultural perspective, of course. J. Bennett (1993) distinguishes between "constructive marginality", which achieves higher levels self-differentiation and integration, and "encapsulated marginality", which results in psychological disintegration. Both the constructive and the encapsulated marginals have stepped outside of their original cultures into a cultural "void" (Durkheim's *anomie*), a place beyond conventional social practices where no norms exist. The constructive marginal sees this emptiness as space for individual creativity; in the absence of clearly defined rules opportunities arise for creating new ways of doing things. The encapsulated marginal, on the other hand, experiences this emptiness as loss and disorientation; since all standards are culturally constructed, nothing is true and nothing is worth doing. Moving beyond culturally prescribed norms means either that the individual will begin to decisively construct his or her own identity or that there will be a loss of identity, difficulty in decision making, alienation, excessive self-absorption, multiplicity, and a "never-at-home" feeling. Constructive marginals are in a good position to act as go-betweens in intercultural negotiations because they are capable not just of *understanding* the basic outlooks of two (or more) cultures but also of *integrating* perspectives which on the surface may seem "incommensurable."

2.2. *Integration vs. adaptation*

Integration is a fundamentally different concept from adaptation, which has long been a central organizing principle in the field of intercultural communication (see Ellingsworth, 1988; Kim, 1989, 1991a, 2001; Kim & Gudykunst, 1988; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 1996; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Whereas adaptation may be conceived as the process by which sojourners adapt their personal norms to the norms of the host culture, integration concerns itself both with the psychological process by which individuals begin to incorporate values from the host culture into their own system of values and with the process by which the host culture may also be influenced by the values of sojourners. Transformation should be seen not simply in terms of individuals changing themselves to

fit into their host cultures but also as the process by which host cultures transform themselves to accommodate the presence of sojourners. In same way that evolutionary biology (Levins & Lewontin, 1985) has replaced its original conception of adaptation (organisms adapt themselves to preexisting niches in the natural environments they inhabit) with a more dialectical view (organisms co-adapt with their natural environments through mutual transformations), so too can the concept of adaptation in intercultural communication be modified to show both how sojourners adjust themselves to their host cultures and how host cultures adjust themselves to the presence of sojourners in their midst. Exactly what adjustments need to be made on both sides itself becomes one of the primary concerns of intercultural dialogue on ethics. In the process of engaging in such dialogue, both sojourners and their host cultures may be transformed and a measure of integration achieved.

Berry's model of acculturation (Berry, 1992, 1997, 2004; Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; see also Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdrzálek, 2000) delineates four basic ways in which sojourners can adjust themselves to their host cultures: (1) assimilation, in which sojourners consider it valuable to maintain relationships with other groups but not to maintain their own cultural identity; (2) separation, in which sojourners consider it valuable to maintain their own cultural identity but not to maintain relationships with other groups; (3) marginalization, in which sojourners fail to maintain both their own cultural identity and relationships with other groups; and (4) integration, in which sojourners try to maintain both their own cultural identity and relationships with other groups. This model can also be applied reflexively to members of the host culture, who may correspondingly think that sojourners should either: (1) be assimilated into the host culture and not maintain their original cultural identity; (2) be separated from the host culture but allowed to maintain their own identity; (3) be marginalized from both the host culture and their own identity; or (4) be integrated into the host culture and allowed to maintain their own identity. In the integrative mode sojourners may be able to integrate values from both their original and their host cultures in original ways, while members of the host culture may also be able to integrate some of the values of sojourners into their own value systems.

Berry indicates that the integrative mode "...is associated with the least acculturative stress and the most positive psychological and sociocultural adaptations" (2004, p. 181), although he admits that integration may only be achievable in societies which are consciously multicultural. Integration aims at a "mutual accommodation" and

...requires immigrants to *adopt* the basic values of the receiving society and the receiving society to *adapt* national institutions (e.g., education, health, justice, labor) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the larger plural society" (2004, p. 177, italics in the original).

Berry sees integration as being a preferable option both for long-term sojourners and for host countries than either assimilation, separation, or marginalization. The normative implication of this conclusion is that sojourners can profitably integrate aspects of both their own culture and the host cultures in their own psychological outlooks, while host countries can profitably pursue policies which promote multiculturalism within their own societies.

At its worst adaptation means that sojourners simply resign themselves to acting in accordance with the norms of their host culture, a strategy which may appeal to some

precisely because it avoids open confrontation. Missing from this “when-in-Rome-do-as-the-Romans-do” account of adaptation, however, is the possibility that at least some of the norms the sojourner starts out with, may, upon reflection, prove to be more desirable than the norms of the culture they are expected to adapt themselves to. There is no reason to assume that sojourners should simply assimilate by giving up their own cultural values and conforming to the values of their host culture. The converse is also true, of course. There is no reason to assume that sojourners should simply be accepted “as they are” into the host culture. Rather, cross-cultural contact allows sojourners and members of the host culture to actively negotiate the norms which will govern relationships between them.

Such considerations raise the possibility of both sides engaging in constructive criticism of the values and norms of both cultures. It is often claimed that such criticism should not be engaged in because it shows a lack of “respect” for the other culture. This may be true of uninformed or vituperative criticism and of attempts to forcefully impose one culture’s set of values on another. The goal of constructive criticism, however, is to discover strengths and weaknesses in each of the respective positions and then to see if it may be possible either to reconcile positive aspects of each into a new conceptual framework or to imagine entirely new sets of norms that can be applied to interactions between people from the respective cultures.

Integration, then, is not simply a matter of sojourners adapting themselves to the norms of the host culture, but rather a process of co-adaptation in which the sojourner and host culture mutually adapt themselves to each other. Casmir describes the creation of ethical norms to govern such situations as “third culture building” in which “...human beings from more widely differing cultural backgrounds...achieve their adaptation-tasks *together*” (1997, p. 100; emphasis in the original). Many cross-cultural encounters are by their very nature anomic. There may be no precedents for the participants to follow and no mutually agreed-upon customs or norms to give guidance to action. Since the norms to govern the relationship between the participants may not yet exist, these norms must be created through the dialogue process itself. It is evident, however, that many of the norms one culture or the other takes as valid will simply have no credibility with people from the other culture. Moreover, when commonalities of the “least-common-denominator” variety are found, they are frequently unsuitable for the more complex situations the participants find themselves in. Such problems are not insurmountable, but they are indeed problems which virtually anyone who engages in extended cross-cultural dialogue on ethics will be obliged to face. The attempt to create new norms to govern new cross-cultural situations often involves considerable frustration, but also offers the possibility of a mutual learning process for both sojourners and members of the host culture.

While culture shock can be a debilitating experience for some, for others it can involve a dynamic and creative process of transformation. Furnham, 1988; see also Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) suggests that although many researchers in the field of intercultural communication have focused on the negative aspects of cultural adjustment, there may also be positive aspects. Adler has proposed thinking of culture shock as

...a profound learning experience that leads to a high degree of self-awareness and personal growth. Rather than being only a disease for which adaptation is the cure, culture shock is likewise at the very heart of the cross-cultural learning experience. It is an experience in self-understanding and change (Adler, 1987, p. 29).

Kim and Ruben propose a model for “intercultural transformation”, defined as a process of internal change in which the “...individuals’ cognitive, affective, and behavioral patterns are viewed to develop beyond their original culturally conditioned psychological parameters” (Kim & Ruben, 1988, p. 299). The transformation follows a “stress-adaptation-growth” pattern. In monocultural situations individuals exist in a state of homeostasis in which their socialized view of reality remains unchallenged. Cross-cultural encounters introduce a perturbation into the system which may stimulate various adaptive strategies as a response. In the process of working out these strategies the individuals experience internal growth. Such growth, it should be noted, can occur both in sojourners and in members of their host cultures.

In Piagetian (Piaget, 1982) terms, cross-cultural encounters present fresh perspectives which cannot simply be assimilated into existing schemas (i.e., frames of reference), but rather must be accommodated through the construction of larger, more highly differentiated and integrated schemas. The ability to employ a variety of different conceptual schemes undoubtedly gives a wider understanding of any given phenomenon, without, however, exhausting it. By comparing these various frames of reference and subjecting them to critical examination, we may be able to dialectically integrate aspects of each of them into even more highly differentiated conceptual schemes. Integration is neither a process of taking over the ideas and values of another culture whole nor of simply setting two cultures side by side and syncretizing them. Rather, it represents the stage at which individuals are able to fully transcend their own cultures and internalize perspectives gained from a different culture. The process involves a critique of one’s own original cultural values and norms. With increased intercultural experience and reflection some of these values and norms may be deemed worth retaining while others are discarded.

The process also involves, however, a critique of the adopted culture’s values and norms. One need not adopt the other culture “whole”; rather there can also be a measure of selectivity in which some values are deemed worthy of emulation while others are not. In this process our existing cognitive and moral schemas begin to break down and to be reconfigured on a wider scale. While elements of our previous way of thinking may be purged, new ideas and values may also be accommodated. The new schema is not simply a pastiche of incongruous ideas and values drawn from a variety of cultural sources (as postmodernists might think) but rather a fairly integrated and “synergetic” whole (cf. Hampden-Turner, 1970). Further development is possible if the process is repeated, that is, if greater differentiation is initiated and new forms of integration are sought out.

At this point we might begin to speak of a seventh stage, beyond M. Bennett’s original six, namely, a “generative” stage in which entirely new forms of culture are creatively produced. The generative stage would transcend both Bennett’s ethnocentric and ethnorelative stages. The goal is not simply to say which of the existing cultural pies is best (ethnocentrism) nor to simply say that each of the pies is equally delicious on its own terms (ethnorelativism), but to make a different and better pie. The generative stage provides for the possibility of both personal and social transformation. Not all of the new options we are able to generate will be of equal value (some may be flops, others unworkable), but there is nonetheless a need for ongoing experimentation.

3. Integration across cultures

3.1. *Integration and value pluralism*

Since it cannot be assumed that individuals from different cultures will automatically arrive at a shared perspective on the basis of existing similarities and since, in any event, existing norms may be entirely inadequate to address challenges presented by newly emergent problems, there is thus the need to *construct* new norms across cultural lines that are able to effectively deal with shared problems. A constructivist approach to cross-cultural dialogue on ethics (cf. Evanoff, 1999, 2004) sees increased contact between people from various cultures as creating an opportunity for entirely new forms of social interaction to emerge. Cross-cultural dialogue can work towards the effective integration of ideas that on the surface appear incommensurable and, moreover, towards the generation of entirely new concepts and norms appropriate to newly emergent problems.

Cross-cultural dialogue on ethics is possible precisely because ethical principles, as with all other forms of culture, are humanly produced and culturally transmitted. Ethical dialogue does not founder simply because ethical principles are neither innate nor written into the metaphysical scheme of things. If ethical norms are cultural creations, then they can also be revised in response both to newly emergent problems and to new perspectives gained through cross-cultural contact. Cross-cultural encounters create an entirely new context in which the norms that will govern interactions between the participants do not yet exist and hence must be created. Given the anomic nature of cross-cultural interactions, there is very little, if anything, that can be assumed about the particular beliefs and values the participants will initially bring with them to the dialogue process.

Nonetheless, it is doubtful that there are ever any cross-cultural encounters in which the participants share absolutely nothing in common; the participants in cross-cultural dialogue can and should make good use of whatever preexisting common ground they can draw on. In fact, the types of conflicts one finds between moral conceptions of the good *between* societies are probably no greater than the types of conflicts one finds between moral conceptions of the good *within* pluralistic societies. In some cases there may even be more agreement across cultures among certain groups than within cultures. Secularists in the West and in Islamic countries, for example, may have more in common with each other than they do with fundamentalists in their respective cultures.

Within any given culture there can be a variety of competing value systems. We should not look at cultures as maintaining a completely monolithic system of values which all members accept or are expected to accept. Even at the individual level consistency is rarely the case; a plurality of values and a plurality of ways of thinking about values are empirical facts (cf. Kekes, 1993, p. 11). The same individual can hold to a variety of values, some of which may conflict with each other; working out a measure of consistency (coherence, reflective equilibrium) is one of the goals of ethical reflection at the individual level.

How values are ranked may depend, in part, on the various roles the individual assumes in society. Certain types of behavior are expected from individuals who occupy certain roles; in different roles other types of behavior will be expected. How an individual deals with others in business relationships may be governed by a different set of norms from how one deals with family members. Another factor which can influence the values an individual holds are the various groups one belongs to. The relationship between the individual and the group is often reciprocal. Individuals bring certain values with them to

the group which may transform the overall values of the group. At the same time, however, the group exercises a measure of influence over the values the individual holds.

Singer (1987, p. 24) argues that each individual is in a sense always “culturally unique” because there is never complete agreement with regard to the value-rankings of the various individuals which make up any group. Members of a given group rarely accept all the values of the group and even the values they do accept may be ranked differently. To the degree that an individual shares the values of a given group the individual will tend to identify with that group; if the difference between the values held by the individual and those held by the group are too disparate, the individual will cease to identify with that group.

Further compounding the problem, as Singer points out, is the fact that at any given time an individual may, and in fact usually does, belong to a number of different groups, each with a different value structure. While some values may overlap, others may not. Since, in most cases it is unlikely that two individuals will belong to exactly the same groups, it is unlikely that they will ever share exactly the same values. Even if they do belong to exactly the same groups and share the same basic set of values, they may rank these values differently. The conclusion that we reach at the purely empirical level is that the value systems of two individuals will rarely, if ever, converge.

At the normative level, it seems equally futile to look for a single set of values which could compel agreement on all points. First, such agreement would effectively create a monolithic social system in which all individuality was destroyed. Second, in destroying individuality all bases for criticizing the system would also be destroyed. Without criticism, innovation is also impossible and without innovation it is impossible for our ethical systems to keep pace with changing external circumstances.

3.2. *Constructivism vs. essentialism*

Essentialism can be defined as the view that there are certain “essential” values which are shared by all members of a culture or by all humans by virtue of being human. The idea that there is a “common core” of cultural values shared by everyone within a given culture, however, is as fragile as the argument that there is a “common core” of values shared between cultures. For any given cultural value, no matter how widely held, there will almost always be dissent. Nonetheless, certain values may come to be widely shared by the people of a given society and can therefore be regarded as dominant. Dominant values are those which achieve a relatively high degree of intersubjective agreement in a given culture, but they can nonetheless shift as old values are challenged and new values arise.

Variation in values both within and between cultures can be empirically registered by adopting a statistical rather than an essentialist approach to cultural values. Hofstede (1984, p. 31; see also Bennett, 1998, p. 7) has demonstrated how empirical comparisons can be made between the values held by different cultures by plotting the relative distributions of a given value in two or more societies. The distributions typically form a bell curve for each of the societies with the dominant value represented at the peak of the curve and marginal values represented at the bottoms of the slopes. Cross-cultural comparisons can be made both by comparing modal values (represented by the peaks) and by comparing extreme values (areas where there is no overlap between the two cultures). There is nearly always some overlap, however, in the values held by particular individuals in different cultures.

This approach has the advantage of going beyond an impressionistic (and essentialist) study of “national characters.” The implication for cross-cultural dialogue on ethics is that there are likely to be intracultural differences with respect to *any* given value. “Dominant” values cannot be reified into cultural absolutes but are rather subject to statistical variation. For example, while individualism may be a dominant value in the US and collectivism a dominant value in Japan, some Americans may be more oriented towards collectivism while some Japanese may be more oriented towards individualism (cf. Hofstede, 1984; Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994; Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995; Triandis, 1995). Moreover, the distributions are subject to change over time. Japanese society could become more oriented towards individualistic values (which in fact is the direction Japan seems to be heading in) or America could become more oriented towards collectivist values (which Western communitarians would urge us towards). Cultures, as much as evolving species (see Mayr, 1994), are better described not in essentialist terms (“collectivism is a Japanese value”) but rather in constructivist terms (“a high percentage of Japanese presently hold collectivist values”). Constructivism embraces the existentialist slogan “existence precedes essence.” If a group of people begin to act in a way that is entirely different from how they have acted in the past, they simply redefine their culture. What is “typical” is simply a statistical average at a given point in time. Values and ethical norms are not fixed but can change as the values of the individuals in a given culture shift.

Simply recognizing that values can be as variable within cultures as they are between cultures opens up considerable possibilities for cross-cultural dialogue because it no longer becomes necessary for individuals to be “cheerleaders” for the particular set of values which happen to be dominant in their own cultures. Values can be defended not because they are “a part of our culture”, but because they are worth defending; if they are not worth defending they should be changed. Values become reified not only when they are taken as being an unchangeable part of “human nature”, but also when they are taken as being an unchangeable part of one’s culture. The result is a form of false consciousness which can be neither empirically grounded nor philosophically justified. Reified values cannot be empirically grounded because of the fact of intracultural variability; there is no one value or set of values which is completely shared by every member of a given society. Reified values cannot be philosophically justified because individuals are always in a position to question the dominant values of their culture. From a constructivist perspective, dialogue can *only* proceed by looking at the merits of the arguments which are used to support various positions; they can *never* be justified on the grounds that a given idea or value is an “essential” (i.e., uncontestable, non-negotiable) aspect of a given culture.

4. Integration at the formal level

4.1. Integrative agreements

The purpose of cross-cultural dialogue, in the view developed above, is not to arrive at “universal” ways of thinking or behaving but rather to arrive at a measure of agreement that enables people to successfully interact with each other across cultural boundaries and to solve problems of mutual concern. Cross-cultural dialogue recognizes that all ways of thinking and behaving are contingent, none are absolute, and therefore alternative ways of

thinking and behaving are always available. If the practices of a given culture are called into question, such practices can only be justified if persuasive reasons can be given for why a given set of alternatives has been chosen to the exclusion of others. The argument that “cultural differences must be respected” is not in itself a justification. Cross-cultural dialogue must go beyond simply “respecting cultural differences” by engaging in the potentially subversive act of asking cultures to justify why they do things the way they do.

Our discussion thus far has centered on integration at the psychological and social levels. We turn now to a consideration of integration at the formal level between ideas and plans for action which, on the surface, appear initially to be contradictory. A dialectical approach to intercultural dialogue refuses, in ethnocentric fashion, to take any existing culture as a final model. Rather it subjects all existing cultural traditions to reflective criticism, recognizing both that no one culture has a monopoly on good ideas and that no culture is immune to legitimate criticism. By setting two or more cultural traditions in juxtaposition with each other and engaging in dialogue, new ideas can emerge which will be different from the ideas already present within either one of them.

Traditional approaches to dialogue emphasize finding pre-existing “common ground” between the disputants and a willingness on the part of the disputants to accept compromise on points which cannot be agreed upon. An alternative possibility, however, is to work towards what Pruitt calls “integrative agreements”, defined as “...those that reconcile (i.e., integrate) the parties’ interests and hence yield high joint benefit” (Pruitt, 1994, p. 487). Integrative agreements rely on a fundamentally dialectical approach which takes neither the initial conditions of the dispute nor the initial positions of the negotiators as fixed. The basic idea can be illustrated with an example offered by Pruitt: two sisters who were quarreling over an orange finally decided to compromise by splitting the orange in half. The first sister used the pulp from her half to make juice and threw away the rind; the second sister used the rind from her half to make cake and threw away the pulp. An integrative agreement would have given all the pulp to the first sister and all the rind to the second.

It is clear that integrative agreements may not be able to solve all types of conflicts—cases in which both the first and second sisters want to make orange juice, for example—and at times compromise may be the best that can be hoped for. Nonetheless, integrative agreements are especially interesting from a constructivist perspective because they involve reconstruing the problem (instead of simply taking the original positions as they are, they give a more highly differentiated account of the possibilities) as well as dialectical integration (instead of seeing the two positions as “incommensurable”, they look for ways in which certain aspects of the original positions can be dropped and others combined). The sort of creative brainstorming found in integrative agreements involves moving beyond making rational decisions within a narrow conceptual framework towards making decisions that take other conceptual frameworks into account and critically synthesize them into a larger framework. Rationality of this latter sort involves going beyond one’s present understanding of a situation and seeking out a more objective and holistic view. It involves, that is, a wider understanding of both the situation itself and the perception of that situation held by the person one is engaging in dialogue with.

In the dialectical view, if all schemas are partial, then they cannot be judged on the basis of whether or not they are “true” in an apodeictic sense, but rather must be assessed on the basis of their comprehensiveness. Schemas that account for more of our experience and organize that experience in more coherent fashion are preferable to those which leave

significant data out of account and are incoherently organized or conflict with other schemas we also think are worth adhering to. Taylor (1993) contends that it is possible on the basis of practical reason alone to evaluate the adequacy of competing moral claims even when common ground is lacking (as in cross-cultural disputes). He offers three argument forms which do not appeal to foundational criteria. Position *B* is superior to position *A* if: (1) *B* accounts for more facts than *A* and thus represents a gain in understanding; (2) *A* cannot account for why there was a need for *B* to arise as an alternative; or (3) *B* reduces errors by pointing out contradictions, clearing up confusions, or drawing attention to significant considerations which *A* neglected. Cast in constructivist terms, *B* can be said to be superior to *A* if the schemas it employs are more highly differentiated and integrated.

A similar process in which lower-order schemas are replaced by higher-order schemas can be employed in reaching integrative agreements. Whereas the original perception of a problem may be fairly narrow in scope and simplistic in its analysis, the new perception is both more comprehensive and more complex. While it is not necessary to assimilate everything that one's dialogue partner believes into this higher-order schema, it may nonetheless be possible to assimilate those features which can be positively evaluated. The partner as well is capable of moving from lower-level to higher-level schemas and a more highly differentiated understanding of the situation. The perspective which emerges is in essence an entirely new one, which critically incorporates elements of each of the original perspectives but also transcends them. Suedfeld and Tetlock (1977) refer to the end result as a state of "integrative complexity." Integrative complexity involves a more highly differentiated conception of the problem at hand and a more highly integrated view of how the problem can best be solved.

4.2. *Models of cross-cultural criticism*

An integrative approach to cross-cultural dialogue can be analyzed in terms of four distinct types of criticism. The first is a purely *ethnocentric* form of criticism which is based primarily on cultural stereotypes and simply pits one culture against another to see which is "superior." For example, Asians and Westerners debating collectivism vs. individualism might cast the debate in a purely bivalent form of logic: either collectivism is right and individualism is wrong, or vice versa. At the ethnocentric stage Asians might contend that collectivism is superior to Western individualism, while Westerners might contend that individualism is superior to Asian collectivism.

The second form of criticism is *intracultural* criticism, in which individuals engage in a reflective critique of their own cultural norms and traditions in an effort to identify both their positive and negative aspects. At the stage of intracultural criticism it may be agreed that Asian collectivism can be broken down into both a positive side ("cooperation") and a negative side ("conformity") and that Western individualism similarly has a positive side ("self-reliance") and a negative side ("self-indulgence"). We thus arrive at a more highly differentiated understanding of what is usually referred to as collectivism and individualism. At this stage a more dialectical form of reasoning is employed which takes the statements "collectivism is good" or "individualism is bad" as being true in some respects but false in others.

The third form of criticism is *intercultural* criticism in which what are regarded as the positive features of one culture are compared with the negative features of the other

culture. At this stage it may be concluded that the value of “cooperation” is indeed superior to the value of “self-indulgence”, while the value of “self-reliance” is superior to the value of “conformity.”

The fourth form of criticism is *integrative* criticism in which an effort is made to create an entirely new framework, or schema, which integrates positive aspects of both traditions, while discarding their negative aspects. At the integrative stage the Western value of “self-reliance”, regarded at the previous stage as superior to Asian “conformity”, might be combined with the Asian value of “cooperation”, regarded at the previous stage as superior to Western “self-indulgence.”

The four modes are diagrammatically summarized in Fig. 1.

Whereas the original opposition between Asian collectivism and American individualism was cast in dichotomous terms (i.e., the two perspectives are “incommensurable”), a constructivist approach shows how the two concepts can be effectively integrated at the formal level. It should be noted that the account given here describes merely the dialectical logic that underlies constructive dialogue and not the process by which initial evaluative judgements are arrived at (i.e., what is to be regarded as “positive” and “negative”). Arguments must still be presented to show why “self-reliance” and “cooperation” are superior to “self-indulgence” and “conformity”, for example. The merit of this approach, however, lies in the fact that it shifts the debate away from a debate about “incommensurable” cultural differences to a debate about the viability of particular values which can, in principle, be adopted by any culture.

Collectivism (Asia) vs. Individualism (the West)	
I. Ethnocentric criticism	
ASIA	THE WEST
(+) Collectivism is good	(+) Individualism is good
II. Intracultural criticism	
ASIA	THE WEST
(+) Cooperation is good	(+) Self-reliance is good
(-) Conformity is bad	(-) Self-indulgence is bad
III. Cross-cultural criticism	
ASIA	THE WEST
(+) Cooperation is better than self-indulgence	(+) Self-reliance is better than conformity
IV. Integrative criticism	
ASIA	THE WEST
(+) Cooperation and self-reliance are good	
(-) Conformity and self-indulgence are bad	

Fig. 1. Models of cross-cultural criticism.

Integrative criticism involves a dialectical reconciliation of concepts that, in their initial formulation, may appear as polarities. Hampden-Turner refers to integration of this sort as “synergy”, which he defines as “...the optimal integration of that which was formerly differentiated” (1970, p. 190). “Synergy” can be used to refer to any sort of integration which simultaneously allows for high degrees of differentiation to be maintained. Hampden-Turner offers as examples a list of polar concepts drawn from personality theory, which includes (among others) dependency vs. autonomy, extraversion vs. introversion, and tender-minded vs. tough-minded. More recent work by [Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars \(2000\)](#) develops and applies a theory of value reconciliation in which such seemingly conflicting values as universalism–particularism, individualism–communitarianism, specificity–diffuseness, achieved–ascribed status, inner direction–outer direction, and sequential and synchronous time can be reconciled in business and other settings.

[Kim \(1991b\)](#) similarly thinks that cross-cultural differences between the West and the East can be seen in complementary rather than in contradictory terms. The emphasis on rationality in the West, for example, complements rather than contradicts the emphasis on intuition in East Asian cultures. Moreover, it would be wrong to simply stereotype the West as “rational” and the East as “intuitive”—the West has developed intuitive modes of thinking just as the East has developed rational modes of thinking, even though neither of these modes have historically been dominant parts of their respective cultures. The goal of an integrative approach is to find ways of combining seemingly opposite cultural tendencies into a wider framework which, in the end, will hopefully help to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and also offer a fuller and more holistic view of human possibilities.

[MacIntyre \(1988\)](#) further argues that while no existing tradition presents us with a universal conception of ethics, dialogue between various traditions can enlarge our views of how ethics (and many other areas of human experience) can be conceived. MacIntyre outlines three stages which traditions pass through in the process of developing a wider perspective:

...a first in which the relevant beliefs, texts, and authorities have not yet been put in question; a second in which inadequacies of various types have been identified, but not yet remedied; and a third in which response to those inadequacies has resulted in a set of reformulations, reevaluations, and new formulations and evaluations designed to remedy inadequacies and overcome limitations (1988, p. 355).

Once the inadequacies have been recognized a tradition finds itself in an “epistemological crisis” (1988, p. 362), which can only be overcome by formulating new theoretical frameworks which meet three requirements: (1) they must be able to satisfactorily solve the recognized inadequacies in a way that (2) explains why the tradition was previously unable to deal with them and (3) preserves a fundamental continuity with that tradition.

There are obvious similarities here both with Taylor’s account of practical reason and with Piaget’s concept of accommodation: when anomalous experiences or data cannot be assimilated into existing schemas, the schemas themselves must be enlarged to accommodate them. While MacIntyre confines himself to a consideration of how a particular tradition can enlarge itself through a process of “imaginative conceptual innovation” (1988, p. 362), our contention is that in situations where two or more cultures are engaged in creative dialogue with one another, entirely new “traditions” may emerge in which competing views are able to dialectically converge. While there will undoubtedly be

some continuity with the original traditions, the extent to which such continuity must be “fundamental” in McIntyre’s sense is not clear. From a constructivist view “fundamental” cannot be understood in an essentialist sense (a view which McIntyre’s Aristotelianism might tend towards) to mean the preservation of some “core” aspects of a given culture, but rather must be taken in an evolutionary sense to refer to the need for a measure of continuity rather than purely disruptive, irrational, and perhaps maladaptive change. In this view, then, the issue is not so much maintaining continuity with past traditions, as MacIntyre holds, but rather having the ability to let go of one tradition and to actively participate in the creation of an entirely new one. The “new tradition” may not maintain continuity with any one tradition but perhaps with several.

It is clear that the results of the dialectical process we have been describing cannot be taken as “universal”, but are rather the product of specific cross-cultural interactions arising out of a need to reach a measure of convergence on the norms that will govern the relations between particular cultures and enable them to effectively work together on common problems. Such convergence is not rendered possible on the basis of some absolute point of view which transcends the existing traditions, but rather emerges out of the dialogue itself. Thus, the dialogue may begin with particular concepts and particular forms of rationality, but in the process of exchange those concepts and forms of rationality can themselves be transformed. In other words, an entirely new point of view is possible, one that is forged out of material already present within the contending traditions, yet designed to produce a measure of agreement between them.

The result would not be a universal account of human experience, but it would be a wider and more adequate account than that obtained previously within any of the original traditions. We do not achieve a more holistic perspective by attempting to step outside of all cultures and positing a set of ahistorical principles valid for all cultures but rather by comparing and integrating a variety of different particular perspectives into a more comprehensive framework. The only way to arrive at a truly “universal” conception would be to attempt to integrate all possible cultural perspectives into a single comprehensive system. Such a move, however, is probably *impossible* on purely logistic grounds, *unnecessary* because we do not need a framework for “everything” but simply a framework for being able to resolve particular problems faced by particular groups of people, and *undesirable* because such a high level of convergence would act as a restraint on the ability of new, creative, divergent forms of thinking to emerge.

5. Conclusion

While it is doubtful that the integrative method proposed here can be applied to *all* cross-cultural differences with respect to values and norms, there are undoubtedly a large number of areas in which it could be successfully employed, not only at the interpersonal level of communication, but also at the intergroup and international levels. Empirical research reveals a wide variety of values and norms held by different cultures with respect to such areas of human interaction as friendship, marriage, education, business, politics, and so forth, indicating that the relativity of values and norms across cultures can be registered as a simple empirical fact. However, cultural relativity (the empirical observation that cultures have different norms and values) is not the same as cultural relativism (the normative judgement that such differences must simply be accepted). There is a need, therefore, to supplement descriptive, empirical approaches to the study of cross-

cultural interactions with a normative consideration of how differences in cultural values and norms can be actively negotiated across cultures.

While this paper has endeavored to offer a cross-disciplinary approach to intercultural ethics by combining both theoretical work in the field of intercultural communication and normative philosophical analysis, undoubtedly there is a need for further research into how an integrative approach to intercultural ethics might illuminate specific ethical problems which arise in the “real world”, both as encountered experientially and as revealed in empirical studies. The process of integration offers an alternative to perspectives on ethics based on either adaptation or respect. The concept of integration is primarily normative, however, rather than empirical. That is, it presents a method for resolving cross-cultural conflicts which can be consciously adopted by the participants in intercultural dialogue. While there may in fact be norms held by different cultures which are truly incommensurable, and therefore not susceptible to integration, it is nonetheless possible that new norms can be created in cross-cultural encounters which integrate values from the respective cultures and enable the participants to deal more effectively with problems of mutual concern.

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