

研究ノート

Analyzing Pete Townshend's "The Boy Who Heard Music" with the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

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ピート・タウンゼントの「音楽を聴いた少年」を「異文化感受性発達モデル」で分析する

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Abstract

Although the literary arts and popular culture do not always occupy the limelight in discussions on intercultural education, few educational stakeholders would dispute that they do hold a compelling interest for many tertiary foreign language learners. Accordingly, there is no shortage of research illustrating the robust connections between popular culture and motivational strategies for foreign language learners. Given this abundance of research on motivation, this article will instead concern itself with an intercultural analysis of the representation of both etic and emic demographic groups within the currently unpublished novel, "*The Boy Who Heard Music*" (2005- 2006), authored by a British writer, composer and musician, Pete Townshend. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity will comprise the principal theoretical construct underpinning this analysis. In short, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity is a six-stage framework for explaining the reactions of people to cultural difference. Stage one (the "denial of cultural difference" stage) is the least culturally sensitive stage, while stage six (the "integration of cultural difference" stage) is the most culturally sensitive one.

Keywords

intercultural analysis Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. The Narrative Structure of "*The Boy Who Heard Music*"
- III. Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)
- IV. Conclusion

References

I. Introduction

"*The Boy Who Heard Music*" is an unpublished novel, comprising twenty-three chapters, that was uploaded to the author's blog, one chapter at a time, in 2005 and 2006¹⁾. The novel's three protagonists- Josh, Gabriel, and Leila- are a love triangle of young adults who each represent one of the world's major monotheistic religions. They connect to the tale's narrator, an ageing rock star named Ray Highsmith, through Leila's father Damoo, who had been personal friends with the narrator. Leila is the lone Islamic member of the love triangle, and the only female. In brief, it is a story about three neighborhood kids in London, England, who become "The Glass Household," a successful mainstream pop band. "The Glass Household" begins in the year 1983 as a pop music ensemble, but they eventually move on to create and record more complex, internet-based, music.

The theoretical paradigm that will be employed to analyze the intercultural content of "*The Boy Who Heard Music*" is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, or DMIS. The DMIS was created by Milton Bennett as a framework to explain how people experience and engage with cultural difference²⁾. In other words, the DMIS was designed to explain the reactions that people have to such cultural difference. The six stages of the DMIS constitute a continuum that ranges from highly ethnocentric to highly ethnorelative³⁾. The underlying assumption of this model is that as one's perceptual organization of cultural difference becomes more complex, one's experience of culture becomes more sophisticated, and the potential for exercising competence in intercultural relations increases.

The reason why this unpublished novel has been selected for this investigation concerns the fact that this novel has never before been the subject of an intercultural analysis. As such, it is hoped that this article might, in however minor a way, serve as a potential catalyst for encouraging

other researchers to similarly examine the literary output of Pete Townshend.

It must be openly acknowledged, and candidly admitted, that the following pages contain far more direct textual quotations than would normally be considered orthodox. This is a direct result of the fact that there are, quite literally, no page numbers in any of these (unpublished) twenty-three chapters. In addition, it is also attributable to the fact that the author of this Matsumoto University journal article has clearly been influenced by the non-conformist, and iconoclastic, nature of Pete Townshend's creative writing.

Lastly, all twenty-three chapters comprising "*The Boy Who Heard Music*" can be readily accessed at the following website: <http://thelifehouseproject.weebly.com/the-boy-who-heard-music.html>

II. The Narrative Structure of "*The Boy Who Heard Music*"

The four main characters in this fictional novel are: musician Ray Highsmith (whose stage name is "Ray High"), the narrator who recounts the story in reverse chronological order, beginning in the year 2035; Gabriel Pirelli (a Christian), the boy who "could hear music"; Josh (a Jewish person), who "could hear voices"; and Leila Irani (a Muslim), a girl who "could fly." These three children become interested in Ray High and his band after watching analogue video tapes of an old concert. They form their own band called "The Glass Household," based on Ray's notes and writings. Their non-denominational and intercultural pop band becomes incredibly successful!

Given that the author of "*The Boy Who Heard Music*" is Pete Townshend, a seventy-six year old British rock star, one might not initially expect a high level of intercultural competence in this unpublished novel. However, Townshend's proclivity for intercultural sensitivity is revealed

quite early on in the narrative. Chapter four, for instance, contextualizes and portrays Josh as a Jewish person with a potentially surprising amount of intercultural sensitivity:

“... *But, Josh heard voices, and to those - for his Bar Mitzvah - he added his own. His singing voice was a beautiful, plaintive soprano. While he sang, what to him were certainly not meaningless Hebrew tracts (he loved Hebrew, & eagerly studied Yiddish too), he made his complaint to God Himself ...*” (chapter 4, para. 3)

In addition, the author's unbiased and ethnorelative approach to religion is by no means limited to Judaism. Remaining in chapter four, the Islamic religion is also handled with a gratifying amount of intercultural sensitivity:

“... *Damoo's mother was a very strict Muslim. Born in Persia, long before it became Iran, she nonetheless saw herself as a North Kashmiri woman. She had been brought up in a little hill village that was predominantly Zoroastrian, generally called 'Parsi' - but Muslims were respected, as were the nutty, open-minded, Sufis and even the few Sikhs who still had the courage to try to coexist there.*” (chapter 4, para. 18)

Chapter four moves on to offer up a detailed examination of 'the Stans': Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Townshend writes that the scholarly Ayatollahs who created Iran were protected by the knowledge that few 'Stans' would challenge Persia's right to be the first to redefine and re-root Islam. According to Townshend, Persia, India, China, and all the 'Stans' (including Pakistan) comprised the most complex “*religious patchwork*” in the world. More religious movements, “*leaders, yogis, saints, Mullahs, Christ's, avatars, gurus, and elephant gods*” populated this large, mountainous region than seemed possible. In other words, chapter four treats many different religions in an impartial and objective manner, even though one suspects that the author of this chapter is himself probably an

agnostic or an atheist.

However, chapter four does contain some possible cultural stereotyping. In discussing the arranged marriage of Leila's parents, the reader learns that Leila's father, Damoo, had grown up in Acton, in a street near the house he later purchased for his family in Hillcrest Road. The reader also learns that Damoo had had an arranged marriage with an exotically lovely, intelligent, and “*to her credit,*” a pious woman. So, while it cannot be denied that many Muslims in contemporary London still engage in arranged marriages, one cannot help but wonder if Townshend has consciously, or unconsciously, fallen into the potential trap of cultural stereotyping here.

Returning, once again, to the discussion of Townshend's explicitly ethnorelative approach to religion, the very next chapter, chapter five, contains the phrase “*whatever religion, cast, or creed.*” The overt inference here is that the author is disinterested in prioritizing any one specific religious faith over another:

“... *In any case, what self-respecting (even God-fearing) musician or stage actor - of whatever religion, cast, or creed - would dare to suggest the show could not go on for some reason as zany as the requirement of worship?*” (chapter 5, para. 6)

Subsequently, chapter six proceeds to offer up further literary evidence of Pete Townshend's decidedly ethnorelative approach to religion, even when dealing with the sensitive topic of blasphemy. That is, when discussing Gabriel's and Josh's creative partnership, chapter six contains the following sentences:

“*Aunt Trilby looked sternly at them as they collapsed in laughter at their childish attempts at blasphemy... There is only one God, His name is Jahveh, His name is Jesus, His name is Allah. His name is Bruce and Bono, His name is Ikabikapoo.*” (chapter 6, para. 8)

Once again, Townshend has patently refused to prioritize any one specific religious faith over

another, even when dealing with the sensitive topic of blasphemy. In fact, this puerile endeavor to playfully refer to God with the nonsensical name *Ikapikapoo* is used by the author in the actual title of chapter six! Now, even if one were to argue that Townshend is more of an atheist than an actual ethnorelativist, it would be difficult to deny that this novel treats all religions equally—even if that egalitarianism happens to be tainted with a dollop of disdain.

Chapter eight also provides additional evidence of Pete Townshend's ethnorelative approach to religion. In discussing why Leila's father had chosen to settle down in the London neighborhood of Acton, readers again encounter an ethnorelative approach to diverse religions, although this approach is tempered with a bit of overly flippant stereotyping. Specifically, Acton is described as a town free of prejudice, with a homogenous mix of Jews and Gentiles, a place that could absorb a few Muslims. The off-the-cuff observation that Acton could absorb a few Muslims runs the risk of being perceived as an overly flippant way to refer to adherents of one of the world's major religions—even if the author's attempt to welcome such Islamic adherents to Acton is entirely benign and admirable.

Further on, in chapter ten, intercultural sensitivity is once again evidenced by the way in which even racial slurs, such as the derogatory Hebrew noun *shiksa*, which refers to a non-Jewish lady, are depicted in an objective, and ethnorelative, manner. It should also be noted that Josh's father cheated on his widowed mother with an American Jewish lady, not an actual *shiksa*, thereby revealing another example of Townshend's ethnorelative approach to religion:

"Trilby was a shiksa. Nothing more. Young Jewish boys always fell for one or two before they eventually succumbed and married a good Jewish girl. She raged inside at her husband for dying, leaving her to manage all this alone. And, if Hymie took up with a shiksa, what message would

that send Josh? The rage then spread. Triggers of frustration exploded in her as she felt the confusion of blame and shame - scrambled into the familiar psychoses of cuckolded widowhood - that should have been reserved for her disloyal husband, blown to pieces with his damned redheaded American mistress. (That the slut had been a Jewess made it simply beyond agony)." (chapter 10, para. 20)

Afterwards, in chapter eleven, the narrator Ray Highsmith's reveals a highly globalized, interculturally sensitive, worldview; one espousing such lofty goals as international unity and world peace: *"... I wanted to make music that would accelerate spiritual growth, to tell stories that would inspire international unity and world peace, to be nonetheless patriotic and loyal to my country and its allies, to be a visionary, a seer, a seeker."* (chapter 11, para. 1)

Chapter eleven contains yet another example of Pete Townshend's ethnorelative approach to religion: *"... The lights grew in intensity and the audience saw a shallow staircase, with perhaps ten low, deep steps that climbed from the level of the stage to a dais upstage, on which had been created an arch of blossom & flowers. On that dais, inside the arch, stood Damoo, dressed like a Mullah. Bizarrely, he held a huge bible, and hauled a purple catholic ribbon around his shoulders. He was ready, so it seemed, to conduct a marriage"* (chapter 11, para. 4) This powerful scene, in which an Islamic leader is holding the Christian holy book, is emblematic of the integration stage, stage six, of the DMIS. As will be seen below, this ultimate stage of the DMIS is characterized by the mixing of various aspects of an individual's identity into a new whole, while still remaining culturally marginal, or fluid (Bennett, 1993).

Remaining in chapter eleven for a little bit longer, Leila and her non-Islamic friend Dotty's amity crossed the cultural gap. They also enjoyed shocking racists, which would firmly place them in the upper echelons of the DMIS:

"... When either was challenged by one of their

own kind - what was there in the friendship? - she would profess passionate commitment and friendship: they were so alike deep down that they felt like sisters. They enjoyed the evident irritation such declarations generated in their inquisitors.” (chapter 11, para. 22)

In contrast, chapter twelve contains several Western cultural references, but not as many non-Western ones. Ethnocentric references, such as the Schrodinger’s cat one in this chapter, are perhaps not overly surprising, though, given the author’s British ethnicity. Similarly, in chapter seventeen the narrator, Ray High, whose life trajectory is noticeably similar to Pete Townshend’s, rhetorically asks why God asked Job to sacrifice his favorite son. Townshend refers to specific passages within the Jewish and Christian scriptures, but refrains from doing so with the holy Koran. To his credit, however, chapter twenty-one includes some formidable verse from the “great” Sufi mystic-poet Rumi.

Chapter twelve, nevertheless, soon moves on to reveal, yet again, an unabashedly intercultural worldview:

“... Little of this is new anyone who loves rock, but the three were debating in 1983. I, with little scientific evidence to back it up, came to the same conclusions twenty years before. And, thousands of years before that Greeks, Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Turks all framed their own expressions of roughly the same stuff.” (chapter 12, para. 22)

Chapter thirteen reveals the reason for Townshend’s ethnorelative approach to religion. That is, the three protagonists share only one deity, which is, apparently, the God of creative expression. In a similar vein, chapter twenty-one directly blames all of the trouble in the world, or most of it that is serious, to a jealous, monotheistic God. Although, interculturally speaking, the means are almost certainly less important than this ethnorelative, diversity-embracing, end:

“... It was our war-scarred parents who all had different Gods. Our own children would have no

Gods at all. We had one God. A God made of several parts. A glue & string God. He was made of Art & Wire ...” (chapter 12, para. 1)

Continuing with this epistemological discussion of monotheistic religion, chapter twenty-one queries what God means when he tells humans to have no other Gods but him. According to this chapter, humans are free to choose Greek Gods over Roman or Egyptian Gods, but they are, allegedly, the same monotheistic Gods. If humans select Jahveh, the Judeo-Christian God, why does he appear to be so angry at those who selected Allah; and, vice-versa. Chapter twenty-one questions, at the risk of engaging in hubris, why humans have to deal with religious detractors and dissenters, not God himself. To paraphrase, Townshend is clearly not a proponent of either Islam, or Christianity, or Judaism. But, even so, his attitude and perceptions of these three monotheistic religions is clearly positioned within the three upper stages of the DMIS.

With specific respect to Islam, chapter fifteen may be guilty of over-generalizing, or over-simplifying, the experience of Muslim people in London, England, during the 1980s. Rich young Arabs are here portrayed as being agents of conspicuous materialism and consumerism, whereas British Muslims are portrayed as being more independently minded and more grounded. Interculturalists cannot help but wish that these two demographics would have been portrayed with slightly more subtlety:

“... Being a Muslim in the mid-eighties did present difficulties; London had been the preferred leisure waterhole for hundreds of rich young Arabs and their retinues. Their open displays of wealth, their gold-badged AMG Mercedes and electric-gated compounds in the most expensive districts, belied their determination to remain aloof. Leila was different. She was British for a start, and although she spoke openly about her faith, her roots, and her family, she was obviously making many of her own rules” (chapter 15, para. 16)

A similar plea for increased intercultural subtlety occurs with the chapter sixteen reference to Buddhism: "... *You sound like you have faith. You sound like a Buddhist*" (chapter 16, para. 12). The implication here seems to be that Buddhists have strong faith in life or God, as opposed to Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Similarly, in the (post-narrative) chapter twenty-five timeline, readers learn that in 1967 Ray Highsmith had travelled to India to visit a guru named "Bollo." At the risk of appearing overly pedantic and finicky, interculturalists might well wish that Townshend had chosen a name for this spiritual leader that sounded less like a circus clown, or a cowboy's neck tie.

Lastly, given that Matsumoto University is located within Japan, it is worth mentioning that chapter eighteen contains the novel's longest reference to Japan. Fortuitously, it is one characterized by both compassion and empathy, two traits that are perfectly at home in the three ethnocentric stages of the DMIS. More specifically, chapter eighteen refers to the misgivings, and second thoughts, of American pilot Captain Robert Lewis, after his airplane dropped its atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945: "... *'My God, what have we done?' The words of Captain Robert Lewis who dropped "Little Boy" from Enola Gay and instantly killed seventy thousand people...*" (chapter 18, para. 1)

III. Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)²⁾

The DMIS is a six-stage hierarchical framework. Its first three stages are called the ethnocentric stages, while its latter three stages are known as the ethnocentric stages. Now, the first stage of ethnocentrism, which is called the denial stage, comprises the opinion that there are no real differences among different cultures. Individuals

in this stage perceive their own culture to be the only legitimate one. Awareness of different cultures cannot truly happen, because proximity to differences is avoided physically, or mentally. There are two ways by which people maintain a sense of denial: isolation, or separation.

Defence is the second stage of the DMIS²⁾. In this stage, a person's own culture is experienced as the only legitimate culture. For individuals in this stage, cultural differences are not simply viewed with mistrust, but these differences are actually considered a threat to one's own identity and self-concept. There are three means by which people can defend themselves against such differences: denigration, superiority, and reversal. Denigration takes place when individuals respond to cultural differences with a negative judgment. An example of denigration would be a value judgment in which a particular behavior, or utterance, is considered negative, solely to cheapen the inherent cultural difference. On the other hand, superiority occurs when individuals espouse a positive evaluation of their own culture without overtly denigrating any other culture. Reversal, the least common of these three forms of defense, is used to devalue one's own culture as a way of demonstrating the superiority of another culture.

Minimization is the final ethnocentric stage of the DMIS²⁾. Minimization is characterized by attempts to over-generalize similarities between the emic group (the "*ingroup*") and the etic group (the "*outgroup*"). That is, cultural differences are downplayed, or considered unimportant. Minimization can assume two forms, both with somewhat verbose names: *physical universalism* and *transcendent universalism*. The former perceives all cultural differences as being mere biological deviations. In contrast, transcendent universalism views all humans as the product of one transcendent and universal being. For people in this stage, differences are not viewed as threatening. Minimization also comprises the belief

that there are universal truths which impact upon all mortals. However, the caveat here is that these values may well originate in one's own *ingroup culture*.

The fourth stage, which is the very first stage of the three ethnorelative stages, is called acceptance⁴⁾. It is profoundly different from the three preceding stages in that it acknowledges that cultural differences do exist, that they are important, and that they should be respected (Bennett, 1993). There are two forms of acceptance: respect for behavioral differences, including an acceptance of verbal and nonverbal behavior; plus, respect for differences in values, including an acceptance of the diverse points of view that inform many behavioral variations. Acceptance is premised on an awareness of, and respect for, diversity in sundry worldviews⁴⁾. To paraphrase, individuals at this stage of the paradigm understand that to respect cultural differences requires an ability to buy into an *outgroup worldview*.

According to Bennett, adaptation is the second ethnorelative stage⁵⁾. It is also the fifth of the six stages. It is typified by an effort to use an individual's knowledge about cultural differences to improve relationships with people who are culturally different. To this end, individuals do not merely adopt a different set of cultural beliefs and behaviors to the exclusion of their own beliefs, values, and behaviors. Instead, such individuals strive to integrate both the *ingroup* as well as the *outgroup* cultural beliefs and behaviors. Adaptation is frequently based on a kind of empathy, in which people are able to experience events differently from others in their own, *ingroup culture*. Adaptation can also entail an internalization of two cultural reference points, which is known as pluralism. In pluralism, individuals experience events in an original way, one based on the mixing of two cultural patterns. Such individuals may use skills or behaviors from either cultural framework, depending on which one would be most helpful in

any given situation.

Integration is the third ethnorelative stage⁵⁾. It is also the sixth stage, and it is characterized by the mixing of various aspects of an individual's identity into a new whole, while still remaining culturally marginal, or fluid. Consequently, people in this stage have the ability to communicate effectively with many cultural groups. In other words, individuals in the integration stage can easily alter their behavior to adapt to various cultural landscapes⁴⁾. Such adaptive behavior means that it can sometimes prove difficult to empirically measure this final stage of the DMIS.

IV. Conclusion

As the preceding pages have revealed, "*The Boy Who Heard Music*" generally treats cultural difference, and intercultural issues, in an ethnorelative manner. As such, this unpublished novel could, without too much difficulty, be positioned within the three ethnorelative stages of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, or DMIS.

In chapter four, for example, the author's unbiased and ethnorelative approach to religion is evidenced in interculturally-sensitive discussions about both Judaism and Islam. Similarly, in chapter five, Townshend has patently refused to prioritize any one monotheistic religious faith over another, even when dealing with the sensitive topic of blasphemy. Subsequently, in chapter ten, the narrator Ray Highsmith reveals a globalized, interculturally sensitive, worldview: one espousing the lofty goals of international unity and world peace.

This same chapter, chapter ten, arguably contained one of the most viscerally potent scenes in the entire narrative: the one in which an Islamic Mullah was holding the holiest book in Christendom, and wearing the garments of a Catholic priest. This is a mental image congruent with the integration stage of the DMIS. Later on

in chapter ten, the reader learns that Leila and her Anglo-Saxon friend Dotty were two friends who enjoyed shocking people who were further down the continuum of both the DMIS and intercultural sensitivity.

Finally, it must be fully acknowledged that the preceding discussion has made no attempt to compare or contrast this literary incarnation of "*The Boy Who Heard Music*" with its live stage production. Consequently, such a comparative analysis would, one eagerly imagines, constitute a fitting investigation for a future research project. More precisely, a live theatrical production of "*The Boy Who Heard Music*" debuted July 13th, 2007, as part of Vassar College's "Powerhouse Summer Theater" workshop series. It was presented as a staged concert reading with minimal dialogue. The cast of actors included John Hickok as Ray High; Jon Patrick Walker as Josh; Matt McGrath as Gabriel; and, Bree Sharp as Leila.

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