

A Reply to Ross

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Well, I had to start somewhere...!

My Response to Ross

Sara Ross' review is a pretty fair summation of *Knowing Me, Knowing You*.

For all its lofty ambitions and grandiose aims, it is a flawed book. And the principal flaw lies more or less in its genesis.

I set out to outline a structure for what I conceive as *Integrated SocioPsychology* – the aligning and integration of all the different (and differing!) fields in the behavioural sciences. It was a culmination of some eight years' work of mapping various fields in Psychology initially to the Graves Model (popularised as *Spiral Dynamics*) and how that played out through Robert Dilts' *Neurological Levels* and influenced the process of meta-stating (as modelled by Michael Hall). Later, when I came (via my work as a part-time therapist) to deal with biologically-influenced temperament, I used Hans Eysenck's *Dimensions of Temperament* to describe those factors and found, via the work of William Moulton Marston, that they could be linked to certain of the vMEMES *Spiral Dynamics* talks about.

It was intended to be a serious scientific work, capable of standing up to the most rigorous academic scrutiny. Thus, because the social sciences are messy – one of the principal reasons for derision from the “hard science” people! – I was cautious in my presuppositions and assumptions, careful to delineate between validated theory and postulation on my part and I referenced as much as I could. (Hence, the large number of footnotes!) On that basis it was necessarily reductionistic. Spirituality was sidelined to avoid distraction from the focus on what could pass as “scientific.”

What became *Knowing Me, Knowing You* was to be a beginning of sorts, a step in the process of developing *Integrated SocioPsychology*. A process to which I hoped others would contribute. Thus, I took the decision not to trademark ‘Integrated SocioPsychology’ and gave an open invitation on www.integratedsociopsychology.net for interested parties to submit articles, case studies, etc, which would fit broadly within the concept.

From an academic work to a self-help book?

Somewhere along the way I was persuaded to frame it as a self-help book on the grounds that it would widen its commercial appeal considerably.

So large parts of the book were rewritten and a self-help frame imposed on the structure. Much more anecdotal and case study material was introduced and some tools for designing therapeutic strategies were provided.

This partial change in direction created a fundamental flaw which resulted in the elements of confusion Sara describes in her review.

The flaw lies in the dichotomy between given certainties – which I have to provide as a therapist – and the mess of uncertainties – which I have to explore in my other role as a teacher

of academic Psychology. People coming to me for counselling & therapy want “answers” – certainties which will indeed change their lives. They don’t want to know that Freud thought this, Graves concluded that, Don Beck hinted at the other, Aaron Beck wouldn’t hear of it and maybe, just maybe, the resolution might lie in the work of Kohlberg. (Oh, and by the way, Blackmore’s convinced “soul” is just a memplex but Wilber’s got a lot of structure in his circumstantial evidence for the affect of “spirit”!)

Thus, *Knowing Me, Knowing You* is fundamentally flawed in its dichotomy between offering self-help certainties and its efforts to resolve a broad-based theoretical approach centred on linking Graves-Eysenk-Dilts.

Initial reaction was mixed, to say the least. Many of the “self-helpers” who tried it found it way too scientific. While I’ve found academics (by and large!) are far too “important” to be seen offering serious consideration to a mere “self-help” book. For a while, I determined to abandon *Knowing Me, Knowing You* and demerge its dichotomy into a “real” self-help book, shorn of most of the science, and a university level text book.

That will still happen – along with a manual for therapists – but more recently I’ve found there is a niche of readership for whom *Knowing Me, Knowing You* really works. They’re high cognitive processors capable of dealing with paradox and uncertainty – arguably 2nd Tier thinkers! – but who either want to address issues in their own lives or want to understand/help others with issues in their lives.

Consequently, I’m still promoting the book and will return to it in perhaps five-six years’ time to update it. There are a number of assertions in it which are made very tentatively indeed, for fear of falling foul of the academic process. I hope that by the time I come to revise it, I’ll have the evidence to make those assertions in a much stronger manner.

1st Tier thinking, 2nd Tier thinking and biases

One area which should be addressed in a revision would be the so-called “gay issue.” As Sara rightly points out, there is a heterosexual bias throughout *Knowing Me, Knowing You*.

Why? Well, until Sara kindly sent me a preview of her review, it simply hadn’t occurred to me! How ever much homosexuality is no longer considered abnormal by most definitions of “psychological abnormality.” with most recent surveys (e.g., Australia/Canada/USA, all 2003) indicating the number of openly-practicing gay men and lesbians to be very substantially less than the mythical Kinsey figure of 10% of the general population (i.e., between approximately 0.5% and 5%) it is still abnormal statistically. So I’ll excuse my ignorance on the grounds that its relevance didn’t occur to me.

However, for that small figure, for the probably much larger figure of people who try it and abandon it or only engage that way occasionally or are that way in their orientation but don’t come “out” openly, and for the very much larger number of people (friends, family, work colleagues, etc.) who are affected by such orientations in sexuality, it undoubtedly is highly relevant. And Sara is right that a book which purports to change the way we view ourselves and our relationships should take homosexuality into account.

Besides which it would be fascinating to map the work of Letitia Anne Peplau, Celia Kitzinger and other groundbreaking researchers into gay and lesbian relationships into the structure of motivation and relationship dynamics which *Integrated SocioPsychology* explores.

One possible “jumping-off” point for such an exploration might be p. 259 where “maleness” and “femaleness” – Jung’s *animus* and *anima* – are considered as poles on a sliding scale rather than biologically-determined absolutes.

Another of Sara’s criticisms I take to heart – but possibly not in the way she intends! – is the one of objectification of the other person(s) in a relationship as something (some things?) you do something to. She contrasts this approach with the Integral notion of co-constructing relationships.

Where 2nd Tier thinking predominates in a relationship, then con-construction – what I call *Collaboration* – should be the method of managing difference between partners. However, where 1st Tier thinking is around – particularly below GREEN in the Spiral hierarchy – then people will tend to “do” to others, to infect them (or try to!) with their memes. RED, the most obvious example, has no interest in co-construction/Collaboration. It wants simply to dominate the other(s)!

However, someone whose thinking is led by RED is unlikely to get very far with reading *Knowing Me, Knowing You!* Readers are much more likely to be led by GREEN-plus in their thinking and, therefore, more likely to favour co-creation/Collaboration in their own approach to relationships. Nevertheless, they need to identify, appreciate and have strategies for dealing with people whose approaches to relationships may be very different to their own. I believe *Knowing Me, Knowing You* provides substantial assistance with this.

Because it is written ostensibly as a self-help book for anybody and everybody with reasonable intelligence, *Knowing Me, Knowing You* does not speak as clearly or directly as it could to its natural readership of GREEN-plus thinking. This again is a result of the dichotomy in its aims and a source of the confusion Sara finds in parts of it.

In conclusion...

Knowing Me, Knowing You is a flawed book but I had to start somewhere in my efforts to develop a truly integrated approach to the behavioural sciences. I don’t know that, if I were at the starting point again with the insights I have now, I would mix self-help certainties with scientific exploration and postulation.

Having said that, I do think *Knowing Me, Knowing You*, as Sara has indicated, is a very valuable step forward in the direction of aligning and integrating the behavioural sciences. And it does work as a self-help book for 2nd Tier thinking which can handle the elements of paradox and uncertainty the book leaves hanging for further exploration.

Constructive criticism is helpful in honing and refining a work. I will certainly take forward Sara’s points (and those others offer) into the eventual update of *Knowing Me, Knowing You*.

In the meantime, I believe it’s one hell of a starting point! I hope it gives us some new key points of reference and that others will join with me in developing and expanding the framework.

My thanks to Sara for her many words of encouragement and to Jonathan Reams for the opportunity to present these views here.