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CHAPTER 3

Adult Development Theory and Executive Coaching Practice

JENNIFER GARVEY BERGER

PERHAPS ONE OF the most exciting elements of coaching is that it allows one person (the coach) to specifically and individually target professional development opportunities for one other person (the client). Coaching is perhaps the most customized way possible of working to help improve the achievement and satisfaction of another person at work. Its success and worth depend on a variety of factors—most particularly, on the relationship between the coach and the client and on the ways the coach is able to ask questions, offer insights, and help the client develop new skills, perspectives, and understandings. One of our biggest challenges as coaches, then, is to keep our focus firmly on the experience of our clients—and to understand the current situations as our clients understand them, in addition to the way we understand them. It is this combination—of holding our own perspective while we hold the perspective of our clients—that makes coaching so powerful. It is also one of the things that makes coaching so challenging.

To ameliorate some of that difficulty, there are myriad theories we can draw on to help us understand other people while holding on to our own perspective. Theories of individual difference give us a way to make sense of the different meaning making of another person. Theories of personality, race, class, gender, or cultural difference (e.g., Gilligan, 1993; Heath, 1983; Jacobi, 1973; Lewis & Jacobs, 1995; Myers, 1993) are just as important to our work as a strong understanding of business

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models, systems theories, and so on (e.g., Senge, 1994). Another key factor, and perhaps the one most often overlooked, is the development of our clients.

The notion that adults grow and change over time hardly comes as a surprise. Lived experience suggests that some people are "farther along"; some have what we think of as "wisdom," or are "more mature" than others. Still, few people have more than a gut-level sense of this idea of maturity, so it can be hard or impossible to know what to do about an "immature" client. How do you help someone with a narrow perspective? Are all forms of immaturity helped by the same interventions? How can we target our interventions to the particular place of the client? Theories of adult development offer insight into these questions.

CONSTRUCTIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Early theories of adult development were most often connected to age or phase of life (e.g., early 30s as a time to settle into young family life) (e.g., Erikson, 1980; Levinson, 1978, 1996). In contrast, *constructive-developmental* theories (e.g., Basseches, 1986; Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2000; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kitchener, 1986; Perry, 1968) are centered on the particular meaning making of each individual person rather than on age or phase of life. They are *constructive* because they are concerned with the way each person creates her world by living it (rather than believing, as some theories do, that the world is outside us with some kind of objective truth to be discovered). They are *developmental* because they are concerned with the way that construction changes over time to become more complex and multifaceted. Unlike the age/phase theories, these theories do not assume that years lived and life stages completed necessarily mean anything developmental at all. There are a wide variety of constructive-developmental theories—all with overwhelming similarities in their orientation to development, and all describing quite similar trajectories. The theory with which I am most familiar—and the one upon which this chapter is primarily based—is Robert Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory of adult development.

Constructive-developmental theories tend to focus on development in particular and specific ways. They look at issues of authority, responsibility, and ability to tolerate complexity and ambiguity. The easiest way to understand them is as they relate to perspective taking and relationship to authority. As people develop, they become more and more able to understand and take into account the perspectives of others

while, at the same time, becoming more aware of their own responsibility for their emotions, life events, and so on. As people develop, the *content* of their ideas may not necessarily change (e.g., someone might retain a belief he developed in his MBA program that a good leader maintains open lines of communication with his direct reports), but the *form* of their understanding is likely to change (e.g., what "open communication" means may be revised and expanded).

Of course, every theory has its limits. Constructive-developmental theories focus on complexity and perspective taking; thus they do *not* focus on many other aspects that make humans interesting and unique—nor do they focus on group or system interactions (although there is much to be learned about groups and systems from paying attention to the meaning making of individuals). These theories don't claim that perspective taking is the most important part of an individual; they just attempt to understand (and sometimes measure) this one facet of human experience.

What does any of this have to do with coaching? Coaches are human, and it is the human tendency to assume that others see the world the way we do—at least if they see it *right*. Even coaches with sophisticated understandings about their clients' differences are unlikely to fully understand the qualitatively different developmental forms of understanding adults have and the profoundly different worlds they construct as a result. An understanding of these differences allows us to be more careful listeners, to make connections we would not otherwise have made, and to suggest interventions that can lead to clients' heightened success and development. The following section describes the rhythm of development and sketches out the four most common developmental forms of adulthood: Prince/Princess, Journeyman, CEO, and Elder.

FORMS AND TRANSFORMATION

From our earliest days, each of us has been engaged in an ongoing journey to learn and to grow. These two human forces are often connected, but they are not the same. Learning can be about acquiring a new skill or knowledge base. If I master PowerPoint in order to put together a slide show for a client, I've clearly learned something. I have new information in my head. But have I really *grown*? From a developmental perspective, real growth requires some qualitative shift, not just in knowledge, but in perspective or way of thinking. Growing is when the *form* of our understanding changes; we often call this "transformation." Learning might be about increasing our stores of knowledge in the form of our thinking that already exists (in-form-ation), but growing means

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we need to actually change the form itself (trans-form-ation). Each moment of our development, then, is a potentially temporary form of understanding that, with the right support, can change to become more expansive (more on support later). As we grow, the previous form is overtaken by the new form, leaving traces of the less mature form behind like rings in a tree trunk.

The rhythm of this movement is about increasing our ability to see more complexity in the world. When we are young, we have very simple ways of understanding the world (the earliest form of understanding mostly just makes the distinction between "Mother" and "Not-mother"). We grow to see and understand more and more fine gradations in the world, and as we do this, we begin to question assumptions we had made before (perhaps there are differences among those beings formerly considered to be "Not-mother"). Many developmental theorists (e.g., Kegan, 1982, 1994; Piaget & Inhelder, 2000) name this as the distinction between *subject* (that which you cannot yet see) and *object* (that which you can see and make decisions about). As elements of understanding move from subject to object, our worldview becomes more complex, and constructive-developmental theorists would say we have developed. This can happen when we discover a choice where we once saw only one option, when we discover multiple perspectives where we once saw only through a single lens. Each small shift from subject to object increases our scope, but enough incremental changes actually add up to qualitatively different ways of seeing the world, to transformation, the creation of different forms of understanding.

According to constructive-developmental theorists, there is a recognizable pattern of those forms of understanding. These forms generally fall into identifiable, qualitatively different ways of making sense of the world in adulthood (as well as many identifiable in-between places where a person will have parts of one form and parts of another).[1] In the descriptions that follow, I offer metaphorical names for these different forms of understanding. These names are meant to be evocative, to give you an initial sense of what characterizes these different forms of understanding. They are not meant in any way to suggest that the metaphorical name offered is representative of actual people who might hold the position named (see Table 3.1 for a comparison of relationship to authority and perspective-taking across all the forms of understanding).

[1]Kegan (1982, 1994) and Belenky et al. (1997) parse adulthood into four large meaning-making worlds; Fisher, Rooke, and Torbert (2000) offer seven, and Perry (1968) suggests nine. I follow Kegan's distinctions because they make the most logical sense to me.

Table 3.1
Comparison of Orientation to Authority and Perspective Taking across the Adult Forms of Understanding

Form	Perspective Taking	Authority
Prince/ Princess	The only perspective the Prince understands is his own. All others are mysterious.	Authority is found in rules and regulations. When two external authorities disagree, it is frustrating but not internally problematic.
Journeyman	The Journeyman can take—and become embedded in—the perspectives of other people, theories, and so on. When he sees the world, he sees it through these other perspectives, judging right and wrong, good and bad, from the perspectives of others.	Authority is in an internalized value/principle/role that comes from outside himself. When those important values, principles, or roles conflict (as when his religion disagrees with an important value from his partner), he feels an internal tearing, as though parts of himself were pitted against one another.
CEO	The CEO can take multiple perspectives while maintaining his own. He can understand the views and opinions of others and often uses those views or opinions to strengthen his own argument or set of principles.	Authority is found in the self. The self-authored system determines the individual's rules and regulations for himself. When others disagree, this can be inconvenient or unpleasant, but is not internally wrenching.
Elder	The Elder sees and understands the perspectives of others and uses those perspectives to continuously transform his own system, becoming more expansive and more inclusive. He does not use the perspectives of others to fine-tune his own argument or principles like the CEO does; rather, he puts the entire system at risk for change with each interaction with others.	Authority is fluid and shared, and is not located in any particular person or job. Rather, authority comes from the combination of the situation and the people in the situation. A new situation (or different players) may shift where authority is located.

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Prince/Princess Form

This form of understanding in adults is marked by the combination of a sense of self-centeredness and a focus on what *I* want (much like our visions of spoiled imperial youth). More common in teenagers and young adults, the Prince/Princess form is nonetheless sometimes seen in adults in their 40s, 50s, and beyond. Princes/Princesses cannot yet take the perspective of others, so the thinking and feeling of those around them is generally mysterious. Authority lies outside them, and is marked by both the formal authority of a title and also power over them in some way. Because of this, they appreciate (and obey) rules because of the direct consequences of the rules; they are unlikely to be motivated by mysteriously abstract factors like loyalty or a commitment to the relationship.

It is often easy for us to imagine a child or teenager having this form of understanding (and in fact that's where you'll find most Princes/Princesses), but harder to picture an adult. As a quick example, let's look at Michelle.[2] Michelle was a supervisor for a clothing manufacturing company. She had dropped out of school when she was 16 to work on this shop floor herself, and now, at 41, was managing 20 shop floor workers. Married with three children, Michelle thought she was doing pretty well in the world—she had worked up through the ranks, her people listened to her and did what she said, she rarely got in trouble with the higher-ups, and she was making an excellent salary. Understanding the world through the Princess form, Michelle knew that her job was to follow the rules and keep her people in line. As long as she didn't rock the boat, the higher-ups would leave her alone and she could make her own way with her people. She had an understanding with those who worked under her; they knew that this was a world of give-and-take, of you-scratch-my-back-and-I'll-scratch-yours. She knew that she could cut her people some slack and that they'd return the favor, but she also knew that she needed to use her power to keep folks in line. She was enormously frustrated with the managers who asked her to do something outside her job responsibility "for the sake of the team." She felt great about this company and had worked there her whole life, but her job was her job—she knew it well, and if they wanted something done outside the parameters of the job, they'd better pay her outside the parameters of her job. Michelle had the most possible supervisees in a line position, and she knew that if she was going to get promoted, it would be off the shop floor and into a cube somewhere. Without direct connection to the people who were making the products, Michelle figured she'd be unhappy. She didn't know what the higher-ups did, and she didn't much care as long as they stayed out of her way. Michelle was happy staying right where she was.

[2]All case studies in this section are compilations of people I have worked with as a researcher, coach, or consultant. No case is drawn from a single example, and thus all names, identifying features, etc., are obscured.

In short, the Prince/Princess form of understanding has important strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth that a developmentally aware coach can see.

KEY STRENGTHS When a straightforward job is important, a Princess is in her element. She is great when there are clear images of right and wrong, good and bad that can be reinforced through external rules and rewards. Princesses see a direct connection between external rewards and external results—for this leader, linking salary to productivity is likely to be a key incentive.

KEY BLIND SPOTS The Princess is unable to take on the perspectives of other people or be influenced by abstractions. She does not have an orientation to her own inner psychological world—or anyone else's—and so isn't able to understand the subtleties of human interaction. In fact, she can rarely see subtleties at all, and she lives in a world with only two choices for every decision—us and them, right and wrong, what I want and what everyone else wants. Her clarity about such things as right and wrong tends to be oriented around her own well-being (because she cannot yet take the perspectives of others or be oriented to abstract ideas and therefore isn't influenced by these things). Because of this, the Princess is likely to follow the rules of the organization to the extent that following such rules is in her own best interests. She is unlikely to follow rules or regulations because of abstract concepts such as loyalty or duty because she is not personally influenced by such abstractions.

AREAS OF GROWTH The central issue for growth in the move from Princess to Journeyman, the next form of understanding, is for Michelle to learn to understand—and internalize—the perspectives of others. This happens gradually as, for example, she first realizes that she has the best interests of the organization at heart because she and the organization rely on one another (in a kind of a tit-for-tat way) and then that she feels a kind of loyalty to the organization that goes beyond her own best interests (when, for example, she supports reduction in pay or benefits that makes the organization more sound but at the same time reduces her own salary).

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TARGETED COACHING INTERVENTIONS[3] A coach can be a wonderful help to a Princess, supporting her to grasp the central idea that other people have perspectives of their own—different from hers, but ultimately comprehensible. Developmental activities include asking the Princess to have informal conversations with colleagues she finds mysterious and then reporting to the coach the colleague's perspective. Having the Princess notice—and record—her growing understanding of the perspectives, theories, and ideas of other people will support her on her journey toward becoming a Journeyman. Questions like "How do you think he sees his actions?" or "How do you think that seemingly-stupid decision makes sense to her?" will anchor her perspective taking in the concrete, observable actions that are comfortable for Princesses.

CENTRAL COACHING PITFALL Buy-in may be especially hard with these clients, and they are likely to need prodding with some concrete consequences directly tied to their changed performance. Another issue is the coach's own potential frustration with the client—Prince/Princesses can seem self-centered and shortsighted, and since their perspectives are not at all psychological, these clients can seem to have little or no curiosity about others. Knowing this is a developmental place that every person travels through—instead of a character trait that is more permanent—will help the coach develop appropriate goals and interventions.

Journeyman Form

The metaphorical step from Prince or Princess is not to King or Queen, but to Journeyman. In the Journeyman form of understanding, the formerly imperial Prince or Princess begins to see other perspectives and understand authority in a new way. No longer trapped inside their own perspectives, Journeymen now internalize the perspectives of others. It is at this stage that they can begin to become devoted to something larger than themselves and become loyal to—and embedded in—some larger system/theory/relationship. This larger system, however, is not the Journeyman's to make decisions about. Rather, like an apprentice working with a particular master craftsperson, the job is to become as much like the master craftsperson as possible, to see with his eyes, to carve with his hands; the hands of the Journeyman become *the same* as the hands of the master. And so it is with development. As the Princess grows to take a new Journeyman perspective, she now sees through that

[3]Each of these targeted coaching interventions I offer is designed to help a coach support a client to develop. Development for its own sake is not a good coaching goal, however. Development for a particular end (e.g., for improved job performance in a job that is too complex for the client's current form of understanding) is the reason to pursue these activities.

new perspective, becoming fused with it. It is as if she has left the solitary confinement of her own mind and welcomed new members into her perspective and decision-making process. Like a young executive looking for guidance beyond herself, she has created an internal board of directors to help her see the world and make decisions. This metaphorical board may be made up of important theories, relationships, or ideas. However, the Journeyman is not the chairperson of this internal board, leaving room for disagreements or power struggles among board members.

This image is familiar to us when we think about teenagers who can seem to rely on friends—or, more largely, on popular culture—for their opinions about everything. Research done with constructive-developmental theories, however, shows that this form of understanding is far more typical in adults than anyone might assume. In fact, studies done using the Subject-Object Interview (SOI) (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988), the measure of Robert Kegan's theory of development, show that 13 percent of the population studied is in the Prince/Princess form of understanding (or on the way to the Journeyman form), 46 percent is at the Journeyman form or on the way to the CEO form, and 41 percent is fully at the CEO form or on the way to the Elder form (0 percent of the population is fully at the Elder form) (Kegan, 1994).[4] As you see from these figures, it is likely that many executives and managers understand the world through the Journeyman form of understanding. (It is also likely that many executive coaches also see the world from this form of understanding; more on this later.)

What does the Journeyman form of understanding look like? Take Timothy as an example. Timothy had worked his way through the ranks of the pharmaceutical company and was now a vice president with five unit managers reporting to him. As a new vice president, he had faltered at first, and morale—and productivity—had briefly plummeted. The executive vice president (EVP) had stepped in, taken Timothy and the other VPs on a management retreat that offered a clear and coherent company theory of leadership, and given him access to the company's best coaches and consultants to support his enacting of that theory. That intervention had turned things around for Timothy—he was a smart man and a fast learner. Now there was a serious sense of "our way" in Timothy's division, and his loyalty to the EVP knew no bounds; Timothy's highest compliment was for someone to say that he and the EVP

[4]In the group of studies Kegan reports, the age range (of those studies that report age) is from 19 to 55, with most studies focused on participants 25 or older. The population as a whole is also quite highly educated, with many holding graduate degrees.

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were "of the same mind." As long as Timothy could rely on the guidelines they had come up with together, he handled his job and his people with a consistency and kindness that won him accolades and respect. As the pharmaceutical business began to change—with increased pressure from global markets that did things quite differently—Timothy felt at sea. He doggedly pursued his former strategy—even when faced with data that showed that it wasn't working—because he felt that it was "the company way." With his Journeyman form of understanding, he could not create a new way from the new information.

The Journeyman, which is perhaps the most common form of understanding of adulthood, is vital for coaches to understand.

KEY STRENGTHS The Journeyman's strength is his ability to take on others' expectations for good performance. He can be reflective about the issues involved and perhaps name and value the perspectives of others. He is loyal to the idea, group, or organization with whom he identifies—so loyal that he subordinates his own interests to the interests of that group.

KEY BLIND SPOTS The Journeyman lacks the ability to untangle divergent perspectives or resolve conflicting viewpoints; he cannot mediate between the perspectives of important others. Similarly, a Journeyman cannot yet mediate between his own internal competing identifications, so that when his role as good father conflicts with his role as good employee, he is likely to feel stuck and unable to find an appropriate course of action.

AREAS OF GROWTH In the move from Journeyman to CEO, this person will benefit from opportunities to move away from external theories or rules and to reflect on overarching principles and values that can help him resolve the conflicting perspectives of others. He can grow to see that no one theory, group, or organization is infallible, and he can develop a more personal and nuanced set of beliefs and loyalties.

TARGETED COACHING INTERVENTIONS The Journeyman needs support to separate his own voice from the voices of important other people or theories. This can take the form of a journal—or even the careful ear of a coach to point out the voice as the coach hears it. Training on very careful, reflective listening (e.g., Jentz & Wofford, 2004; Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2002; Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999), too, can help a Journeyman who has already started this journey (but will be very difficult for those not already on the path toward the CEO form). The Journeyman also needs reassurance that this separation is not an end to those important beliefs and relationships, but rather a deepening. For psychologically

oriented clients, a little information about adult development can help smooth their paths; they can see that others have traveled this path before without ruining their personal lives or allegiances. For others, the coach can offer evidence that this new voice is not a failing of loyalty or relationship, but rather a new way to be in relationship with others.

POTENTIAL COACHING PITFALL Depending on the coach, there are two central coaching dangers for the Journeyman's coach. Both concern the Journeyman's potential to become embedded in the coach's perspective. For some coaches, this will feel gratifying—look how helpful I'm being! For others, this will feel discouraging—can't my client think for himself *at all*? In either case, the coach's job is to keep the client's developmental journey in mind and to remember that becoming the authority *on behalf* of the Journeyman's own developing self-authority is the coach's place.

CEO Form

In a modern, global world, the Journeyman is likely to begin, eventually, to bump up against conflicting ideas and perspectives of which his form of understanding can not make sense. When this happens, he needs to find some mediating force to help him decide among the different—and reasonable—options. To continue an earlier metaphor, as his board of directors begins to disagree (or not keep up with the times), he needs some way to break the tie or add new information. He needs, in short, a chairman of the board to mediate among the different ideas, relationships, and theories that formed his internal board. When he himself becomes the chairman of the board, he has developed a new form of understanding.

This CEO form of understanding looks most familiar to us as what adults are *supposed* to look like. CEOs are those (at, of course, any level of an organization) who own their own work, make their own decisions, and mediate among different perspectives with relative ease. While Journeymen embedded in a particularly robust surround might look as though they own their own work (as Timothy likely did earlier), that tendency comes from the circular direction of someone else telling them to own their own work. CEOs, by contrast, do not need (and generally do not particularly welcome) people to tell them what to do or how to do it. They are likely to have opinions about things they know well, and are likely to form opinions about things they don't know well. CEOs may be frustrated by Journeyman employees (Why are they always asking for permission for everything?) and enraged by or discouraged about Journeyman bosses. Since Journeymen are more common in the population than CEOs, there is likely to be an ample store of these frustrations.

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Samantha, who saw the world through her CEO form of understanding, was a middle manager in a small financial services company. She was hired by a manager she thought was wonderful, and he and Samantha had been very collaborative together. They didn't always agree—as she often said, she saw things her way and he saw things his way—but they always worked through their differences in ways that arrived at the best outcomes. After a company reorganization, though, Samantha found herself with a manager whom she found overly rule-bound. Instead of encouraging her to have different opinions and work through the differences together as she had done in her previous position, Samantha's new manager, a Journeyman, wanted them to think alike from the very beginning and seemed frustrated if her opinion was different from his. He seemed to think that if she were thinking about things in the right way (which equaled his way) then she would come to the same conclusions he had.

Samantha's employees mostly valued her enormously; they thought she had a coherent vision for the group and that she could keep track of the day-to-day details it took to implement that vision. Part of that vision was about letting her employees have lots of control over their own work—as long as they were contributing to the overall shared mission of the division. Some of her employees, though, seemed at sea when Samantha asked them to think of her as a resource and not as a boss. "But you *are* our boss!" they told her. "How can we be sure we're on the right track if you won't tell us how you want us to do things?" Samantha tried to reassure them by explaining that she trusted them to find their own particular path toward the end goal they all shared, but they continued to want her input in ways that felt too dependent to her. With her needy (Journeyman) employees and her controlling (Journeyman) boss, Samantha, once a star performer, became less and less effective and began searching for a new position.

While CEOs have the form of understanding most stereotypically associated with adults, there is still much to be learned from developmental theory about their strengths and weaknesses—and about how to help them grow.

KEY STRENGTHS CEOs are likely to have a clear sense of personal mission that can be extended to the organizational realm—a vision that takes into account various stakeholders without becoming overly influenced by any one voice. Similarly, they have the ability to hold on to many different perspectives and make an informed decision that takes competing perspectives into account but is driven by their own sense of mission or values.

KEY BLIND SPOTS CEOs can have an attachment to their own mission that can become inflexible. They may also have trouble dealing with the most complex situations, such as cross-cultural or cross-functional leadership, or any tasks that require them to examine their own system of values or principles and call them into question.

AREAS OF GROWTH CEOs benefit from seeing the way their own personal theories and practices of leadership are limited and from expanding their images to include other—even competing—theories and practices.

TARGETED COACHING INTERVENTIONS In the move from CEO to Elder, the CEO needs the opportunity to bump up against especially complex situations. A coach can help the CEO see new perspectives, but perhaps more helpful is to encourage the CEO to take on job assignments that offer the chance to understand and interact with very different paradigms. Helping CEOs increase their curiosity about other systems of understanding may also help them challenge their own system—not with the hope of *refining* the system, but with the hope of *transcending* it. *Note:* Because most organizational work does not demand the Elder form of understanding, a coach will have to be certain that developmental goals are where the client wants to invest his or her energy.

POTENTIAL COACHING PITFALLS To support a CEO to grow to be an Elder is complex and difficult work, and may make a special developmental demand on the coach. If this sophisticated client outstrips the coach, the coach has to be willing (and able) to work with a client whose understanding of the world feels unfamiliar and (sometimes overly) complex. Often instead of urging additional complexity (which might be extremely difficult if the client has a more complex form of understanding than the coach), a coach can "mirror the complexity" of the client (Fitzgerald, 2000). This takes sophisticated thinking and high-level skills on the part of the coach.

Elder Form

As we have seen earlier, when a Journeyman questions the infallibility of her external guides, she begins to develop the internal guide that is the hallmark of the CEO form of understanding. Similarly, when the CEO begins to question the infallibility of his internally driven self-authoring system, he begins to take steps toward becoming an Elder. This move toward Elder has never been seen before midlife, and it is seen rarely even then. Still, because the world today may make demands on leaders for capacities even beyond the CEO form, the Elder form is an important one to begin to understand.

Elders are tuned in to all the various constituencies around them. They see multiple layers of every issue and can understand multiple perspectives. Unlike those making meaning from the CEO form of understanding, an Elder is likely to be less ideological, less easy to pin down about a particular opinion or idea. This is because the Elder is more oriented to the *process* of leadership than to any single product or outcome. This can make things disconcerting for her direct reports, and, as we see in the following example, can even make things disconcerting for the leader herself as she grows in this direction.

José, an EVP at an oil company, was widely respected because of his intelligence, his ability to manage people effectively, and his clear vision about what he wanted the world to be like. Through the years, he had felt that vision becoming clearer and had worked to find staff members who could share and add to that vision. A few years ago, though, José had begun to notice what seemed to him to be his own inability to believe in his single-minded goals any longer. He found that instead of advocating strongly for a single position, he began to see the validity in all the positions around the table. And it wasn't just that his convictions were weakening; instead, it was as though the distinctions between his goals and other people's goals had dissolved; even when their goals were quite different, he had a harder and harder time knowing which one he believed in most strongly. He found himself questioning his assumptions about the way the world worked, noticing what assumptions others were making, and understanding the ways those assumptions shaped their ideas about right and wrong. As he noticed these connections, he began reshaping his own assumptions to make them more inclusive.

As he developed, people began to be drawn to him in different ways. Instead of having only his division employees come to him to be told what to do, people all over the organization seemed to be coming to him for guidance or help in other ways—to get his perspective on an issue, to have him help them see where others were coming from. José really liked the new ways he and his colleagues were interacting, and he found himself less tied to organizational structures and opinions than ever before. He was also finding that he was less troubled by the daily irritations that used to bother him. Now when he felt irritated, he looked to himself to see where the problem lay, and he found that he was becoming more and more interested in the various reactions—even negative ones—that he found himself having. Even his negative reactions seemed a sign of his interest and vitality, and he began to appreciate his quick angry response (because he still had the temper that had troubled him throughout his career) as a key that there was some important assumption or value that was being challenged.

Still, with all that was good in his position and all the increased interaction with colleagues throughout the organization, José was finding himself more lonely than he had felt before. While he was able to offer help to colleagues throughout the organization, he found that there were few people in whom he could really confide, and while he constantly tried to unearth and question his own assumptions and the assumptions of others, there wasn't anyone who helped him do that work. A bigger issue, though, was that José was noticing a major change in the boundaries around the persona he'd bring to work and the different persona that he thought of as his home self. He was feeling like those boundaries—which he once fought hard to create and maintain—were detrimental to his work in some way. Somehow it felt as though he was bringing only part of himself to his job, and that meant that he couldn't really be with his work in the way that he'd most like to. He felt as if his whole sense of the work world more generally was shifting and he was not quite sure what was going to take the place of his old images. Now, when José was at the top of his career, he couldn't find a place for himself anywhere. Although this was distressing, sometimes it felt very exciting. José found it amazingly liberating to be able to escape from the world he used to know and to forge his own path to a new place.

If Albert Einstein was right when he claimed, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them," the need for Elders in organizations is clear. As the world becomes increasingly complex, the complexity of the Elder is going to be pivotal inside organizations. Given the tiny percentage of the population who has even begun to enter into the Elder stage, it is unlikely that any organization will have many people at this form of understanding. This is a particular problem because as the world gets increasingly complex, supporting leaders who can manage the complexity and ambiguity around them will be increasingly important; organizations need these leaders more than ever. From this perspective, the good news is that the aging of the baby boomer population and the longer productive work lives people are having now mean that perhaps our chances of supporting Elders are becoming more and more likely.

We are likely to coach far fewer people with the Elder form of understanding than any other, but keeping an eye on the possible trajectory of all clients may help them see how far it is possible for them to develop. And the opportunity to be good company for an Elder (especially for those of us who do not see the world through that form of understanding ourselves) requires an intentional look at their strengths and their needed support.

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KEY STRENGTHS The Elder's strength is her ability to see connections everywhere. She is able to look at an issue from multiple sides and see the ways that the different perspectives overlap.

KEY BLIND SPOTS Because we do not yet know of a form of understanding beyond the Elder's, it is hard to know what her particular developmental blind spots might be. What is clear, however, is that because this order of mind is so rare, Elders have few peers who make meaning in similar ways. It also may be difficult for those who see the world through other forms of understanding to fully understand the perspective of the Elder, so her ideas may feel overwhelming, confusing, or just wrong (as, for example, someone making meaning at the dichotomous Prince/Princess form may resist a CEO's explanation that there aren't really clear right and wrong answers).

AREAS OF GROWTH One of Robert Kegan's (1994) names for those with this order of mind is "self-transformational." Those at this level are constantly working to grow, to question their own assumptions, to understand and cope with greater and greater amounts of complexity. Because of this, the world is a constant source of growth for the Elder.

TARGETED COACHING INTERVENTIONS Because most organizations are likely peopled with leaders who are mostly Journeymen and CEOs, Elders often outgrow their organizational roles (because development rarely goes hand in hand with a promotion). As they become Elders, they find that their organizational roles require them to act in ways that seem more and more narrow, and their colleagues do not understand this difference. This may lead to their leaving organizations and finding new outlets for their complexity. A superb and sophisticated executive coach—especially one who understands development—can offer an Elder a place to be known in the fullness of her complexity and can help smooth what can be a challenging transition from the certainty of a CEO to the openness of the Elder. For those in the transition toward the Elder form of understanding, reading about developmental trajectories can be enormously useful. Emerging Elders can gain a context and a new perspective on themselves and see some models of what a fuller Elder form of understanding looks like—models that are mostly missing from popular culture. Often, simply knowing that a coach can support their paradoxical thinking (or at least hang in with it) can help the Elder feel better understood.

POTENTIAL COACHING PITFALLS The Elder becomes very good at ratcheting down her complexity and showing only pieces of her understanding; that is often a coping mechanism for dealing with other perspectives

(generally, she does not do this in a condescending way). If a coach seems unable to grasp (or at least be present to) her sophisticated understanding, the Elder will simply not offer it, which makes the coaching enterprise much less useful.

In between the Forms

It can take years—even decades—to move fully from one form of understanding to the next. Most of this time is spent in between the forms of understanding, relying sometimes on one form, sometimes on the next. For example, Journeymen who begin to grow into CEOs will find themselves torn, at times, between what their guiding theory/relationship/culture might indicate and what their new emerging self-authored self believes. An executive coach who is knowledgeable about developmental paths can recognize these in-between places and help provide the support and challenge a client needs in order to grow to the next form of understanding.

USING DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES IN EXECUTIVE COACHING

Using developmental theories in coaching seems to me as important as using any other theory of individual difference—and with the same cautions. As with our use of any theory of difference, we have to avoid caricature, oversimplification, or even over-reliance on any one theory (or family of theories) as we think about the complexity of another human being. William Perry, one of the earliest constructive-developmental theorists, urged people to remember, "The first characteristic of any theory is that it is wrong in any particular case."

Also, like other theories of individual difference, developmental theories help us understand ourselves better—which is key if we are to get out of the way during the coaching process and not project ourselves onto our clients. We have to remember, though, not to impose the theory on the client, either; theories are useful lenses only if we can take them off—they become blinders if we are fused with them and cannot gain distance from them.

There are two major differences between developmental theories and other theories of individual difference. The first major difference between a theory about development and a theory about personality or gender is that development is hard to see initially, and even once you have a handle on it, it moves and changes; personality and gender (and other pieces of individual difference) tend to be easier to identify in the beginning, and, once identified, are likely to be more constant. The second major

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difference is that inherent in a developmental perspective is the sense that there is a higher place—and we tend to have a belief that if higher is better (more complex, more able to take perspectives), lower is less good. These two differences are both important in and of themselves, and also point to some particular ethical issues that are central to working with adult development theories.

DEVELOPMENT IS INVISIBLE—AND IT CHANGES

A coach who comes from an initial meeting with a client is likely to know many things about the client. Race, gender—even things like Myers-Briggs personality type—are all potential handholds for the coach's understanding of the client. Developmental level is unlikely to be as easy to uncover. It might take several conversations—or the use of a specific developmental assessment (discussed shortly) in order to determine with any accuracy the developmental form of understanding of a client. Once you've discovered this form, however, you can target your coaching interventions, questions, suggestions, and so on more specifically to the meaning making of your client's form of understanding. As you offer these specific interventions, you're likely to discover that your client's frame of understanding may grow or shift, that you may find him or her trying out new places that are farther along, or, during particularly stressful times, falling back on less-sophisticated forms of understanding. Development is about motion, and while understanding developmental theories will help you understand the motion, they don't prevent occasional dizziness when faced with unexpected starts and stops.

HIGHER IS BETTER

Perhaps the most serious criticism of developmental theories is that they are necessarily judgmental and that they privilege some things over others. This concern is important because it is true. Developmental theories are hierarchical, and they do have the internal belief that as you move along your developmental path, you have *more* of some things than you had before (and, necessarily, more of some things than others who are not yet as far as you). Developmental theories do also privilege some things; constructive-developmental theories privilege ability to take multiple perspectives and see many shades of gray. Both of these serious critiques are accurate.

I believe that while these are true, they are not inherently problematic. We all have judgments inside us about our clients (and our partners and our families and ourselves). Developmental theories don't create such judgments, they shape them and offer a framework for making good decisions about them. The difference between "I'm frustrated with my client because he can't ever make up his mind for himself" and "I'm frustrated about what to do with my client because he hasn't yet developed the capacity to make up his mind for himself" is enormous. While both sentences point to the same issue, the second sentence—aided by a developmental perspective—points to a time in the future when the client may be able to do that which he cannot yet do and also hints at some practical ideas to support him before he gets there. Similarly, we all make decisions about more and less (we may have clients who are "really smart" or "incredibly high on emotional intelligence" or "really in need of people skills"). Development is just another way of categorizing our judgments so that we can test them and decide whether they're worth holding on to—and worth helping our client work on.

ETHICS

What both these issues point to, however, is another layer of ethical awareness. Developmental theories are tools, and like any tool, they can be used to help or used to cudgel. Because developmental theories are difficult to understand, it is necessary that the coach gets a good background in the theory before making use of them—especially before using any assessments. Because developmental theories can look relatively simple (i.e., higher = better), coaches have to be very careful about what they do with such information. Badly interpreted or explained developmental data leads to a shallow understanding that can potentially be used against a client (or by a client against someone else). Finally, because developmental theories point to areas of strength and areas of weakness, they offer coaches some useful ways for bringing clients to vulnerable places; on the edge of their form of understanding, clients are likely to feel uncomfortable and sometimes even afraid (see Berger, 2004, for more). Coaches have to be sure to use these theories *on behalf of the journey the client wants to take* and not on behalf of the quest for development for the sake of development. In many cases, a situation can be resolved and the client can move forward toward greater success without changing his or her form of understanding at all. In other cases, the situation will never be resolved until the client has a more sophisticated form of understanding. It's vital for coaches to know the difference between these different coaching scenarios.

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ASSESSMENT

As useful as they are, developmental theories are not particularly user-friendly. Constructive-developmental theory is challenging to learn about and also difficult to measure. My argument in this chapter is that simply understanding developmental trajectories leaves coaches far better equipped to understand the diverse needs of their clients; actually going as far as measuring clients' particular developmental space is less necessary. If you decide to go the extra step and attempt to measure the current development of your client, a variety of developmental measures are available—none of which is perfect (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 1992; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Lahey et al., 1988; Loevinger & Wessler, 1970; Perry, 1968; Torbert & Cook-Greuter, 2005). The measure I prefer above the others I have used and/or studied is the Subject-Object Interview (SOI) (Lahey et al., 1988), the measure of development that follows Robert Kegan's theory of adult development. This is a 60-to-90-minute semi-clinical interview that explores the meaning making of the interviewee. It was developed by Kegan and his colleagues at Harvard, and has been shown to be a valid and reliable instrument in a very wide variety of settings, populations, and ages. It involves searching not for *what* someone believes about the world, but for *how* someone believes about the world. For example, it does not matter to the instrument whether a client's beliefs about participative leadership are favorable or unfavorable. What does matter is how those beliefs were formed, what is most important about those beliefs, and what is most at risk about failing to live out those beliefs.

I prefer the SOI because it is very client-friendly (people generally enjoy being interviewed), it deepens the relationship, and it offers a great deal of information to the coach about what is currently at the front of a client's experience—and what is on the cutting edge.

The limitations of the SOI are all practical. It is very difficult to administer (and requires a huge amount of practice, study, and support), and it is time-consuming (and therefore expensive) as it is a 60-to-90-minute interview that then needs to be transcribed and scored. That said, I have found that the work of becoming a trained and reliable scorer of the SOI has profoundly changed the way I listen and the store of good questions I might ask—more than any other single thing I have learned about coaching, people, and so on. For that reason, it has seemed well worth the investment of my time. It may be that learning any developmental measure fully would offer some of these benefits, but the particular ways of listening, asking questions, and moving someone to the edge of his understanding that the SOI requires makes this a rich and valuable resource.

CASE STUDIES

The use of developmental theories does not begin with answers but with questions. While there are some conclusions we can often draw about clients, it is more my experience that developmental theories help me question my own assumptions rather than cause me to make more of them. In this section, I use the two common case studies to show how developmental theories can lead to new questions—and also how our conclusions can lead to targeted interventions. This means that any application of developmental theory is likely to involve first asking a variety of careful questions before making any assumptions; one of the great gifts of developmental theories is that they show us how often our assumptions are misplaced.

For example, Bonita has difficulty with conflict, a difficulty any coach would want to help her overcome. Developmental theory, unlike many other theories, does not first ask, *Why does she have this difficulty?* and *What can we do about it?* Instead, developmental theory first asks, *What does conflict mean to Bonita? and How does conflict have meaning to Bonita?* First a developmentalist can determine what we might reasonably assume about Bonita's development by virtue of the information we have thus far. It seems unlikely that she makes sense in the Princess form of understanding; there is too much about her that is focused on understanding the perspectives of others. Similarly, it seems unlikely that Bonita is an Elder. One definitional element of the Elder form of understanding is that they do not see conflict as negative; to the contrary, conflict is life-affirming and helpful for an Elder.

This means that, given the minimal information we have about Bonita, we could begin by testing an early assumption that she is making meaning either from a Journeyman form of understanding or from a CEO form. Finding out which is more likely is pivotal to the kind of support she needs in order to be more skilled at conflict management (see Table 3.2 for a summary of these differences).

It might be that Bonita holds her conflict as a Journeyman. For a Journeyman, conflict can be wrenching, because conflict can tear at her own sense of herself. Because Journeymen do not yet have a self-authored system, their understanding is made up by the theories, ideas, opinions of important others. If an important other believes that Bonita is incompetent, or if two important others disagree, Bonita is likely to feel torn about her own competence, or about what to do next. Similarly, if she is a Journeyman, Bonita is likely to be embedded, to a certain degree, in her surroundings. If conflict is generally regarded as unpleasant in her work culture (as it is in many places), Bonita may feel the need to protect her team from the conflict as much as possible (even when, from a larger perspective, that is not a good idea).

If Bonita currently has a Journeyman form of understanding, a coach has several concurrent jobs: to convince her that good leaders engage in productive conflict (thus, if she wants to embody the role of good leader, she will have to do this, too); to provide some format Bonita can use to protect herself from becoming too embedded in the conflict itself; and also to give her the skills to handle the conflict well.

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Table 3.2
Summary of Developmentally Appropriate Coaching Interventions for Bonita

	Journeyman	CEO
Conflict avoidance is about	• The tearing inside Bonita herself that comes from having conflict outside her. • Images she has of other important leaders who seem not to engage in conflict themselves.	• An aversion to conflict because it's unpleasant. • A part of Bonita's self-authored system that suggests that conflict is always negative or problematic. • A blindness to conflict more generally such that she doesn't even know it is around her.
Biggest hurdle to overcome	• The sense that she might be torn apart by the conflict—that it might hurt the foundation of who she is.	• Whatever belief is operating that means that avoiding conflict is logical.
Possible coaching strategies	• Offering her evidence from authorities in whom she trusts (maybe you, her coach) that shows that conflict can be productive. • Helping her acquire new skills around handling conflict well.	• Persuading her that conflict is sometimes a help in a situation. • Having her track this in her own situation. • Helping her acquire new skills around handling conflict well.

It might be, on the other hand, that Bonita sees her world through a CEO form of understanding. In that case, she may have decided that conflict is divisive or uninteresting, and/or she may not have skills to deal with it effectively. A coach can help Bonita uncover examples from her own experience where conflict assisted in a positive outcome, and can help her remember times when not addressing conflict was more problematic for a leader. A coach can also support Bonita to learn more about theories of conflict (thus helping her tweak her self-authored system). If Bonita is on her way to the Elder form, a coach can help her uncover some of the paradoxes of conflict (i.e., that it feels disruptive to relationships but can actually deepen them).

No matter what her form of understanding, Bonita is likely to also need some new skills around dealing with conflict because someone who avoids conflict is unlikely to become good at facing it simply because she has changed her mind about its benefit.

Notice that in neither of these cases was the coaching focused on helping Bonita *develop*; rather, the interventions were designed to meet Bonita at her current form of understanding. A developmental perspective can be helpful even if development (i.e., transformation to a more complex form of understanding) is not a goal. In fact, one of the benefits of a developmental theory is that it is easier to ascertain whether development is necessary to meet the current coaching goals. If Bonita can achieve success in her position without changing her form of understanding, that would be a wonderful outcome. Indeed, since developmental growth is always associated with some losses (because to acquire a new perspective necessarily means giving up an old one), helping a client make developmental gains is only one of a variety of possible positive outcomes.

Sometimes, however, development is a goal. For example, while the case study does not provide enough information to be certain, Bob's story is quite consistent with a CEO frame of understanding.[5] A developmentally-oriented coach would first check this assumption about Bob, testing for the possible Journeyman frame of understanding and the far less possible (given what we know about Bob's lack of interest in other perspectives) Elder form of understanding.[6] The key markers for his CEO form would be to find out whether his clear and enduring vision is of Bob's own creation (as a self-authoring CEO would be) or is a vision he has adopted and internalized from some external source (as a Journeyman).

For the purposes of this chapter, though, let us assume that the coach has asked those questions and has discovered, indeed, that Bob is making meaning at the CEO form of understanding. With a client at this form, the coach's own authority is likely not to get her very far; neither is a glowing recommendation from someone Bob knows well. Instead, she needs to show her competence. In this case, it may be particularly difficult to get Bob on board; a developmentally-oriented coach will have to explain to Bob that his stated coaching goals may well require some of the "soft side" work he initially has excluded if he is to succeed in the ways he most desires. While a coach can begin with Bob's stated goals and

[5]Bob's case is a little too close to the stereotype for a CEO, so I want to remind readers that the CEO form outlined here can be quite affiliative (as Bonita's is, if she is at the CEO form of understanding) and inclusive, and that those at the CEO form can have excellent relational and interpersonal skills.

[6]Bob's case does not rule out a potential Prince form of understanding; however, it would be highly unlikely to see the Prince form of understanding at Bob's age and Bob's level in the organization. It would be wise to check occasionally to see how concrete and material Bob's motivations really are.

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wishes, she will have to help him understand that it is important for him to have a more complex set of goals. From a developmental perspective, a coach will see that (1) Bob's current, CEO form of understanding may not be enough to keep up with the complexities in this boundary-spanning post-merger world, and (2) Bob is systematically hampering his own development by pushing his vision to the exclusion of all other perspectives.

For Bob to really thrive in this new cross-cultural work, he needs to loosen his hold on his own vision and begin to understand the perspectives, cultures, and ideas of others, not just to hold them up against his own thinking, but to really understand them as important and powerful—if different—perspectives/cultures. To do this Bob needs to grow toward the Elder form of understanding. A sophisticated coach may begin this process by simply looking for times when Bob's current system is not complex enough to help him meet his challenges—and pointing that out to Bob. Similarly, a coach can look for times when Bob admires the thinking or perspective of someone else, and help him think about how to use that other perspective to escape his own.

It may be that introducing a developmental framework might eventually be an appropriate—and compelling—piece of information for a coach to share with Bob; it might help him understand that his goals are aligned with some development work on his part in a variety of ways, and that development is not simply a help on the "soft side" for which he seems to have little patience. It might be helpful to actually use a developmental measure with Bob so that he can understand his own growth trajectory and begin to outline the ways an Elder might be more suited to the central work of managing cross-culturally and also leaving a legacy behind. Any of these might become the "disorienting dilemma" that many theorists think is the key to helping someone see a new perspective (e.g., Mezirow, 2000, p. 22).

Once Bob has begun to see his own development as a goal, there are a variety of exercises he can do in order to begin to transcend his CEO form of understanding. The first is simply about listening well. Learning to listen well (and really begin to understand fully the perspective of another person *as that person understands it*) is a developmental activity for people at almost any form of understanding. Bob needs the company of a coach to understand that different perspectives can have their own wisdom and that there are often pieces of truth in opposite points. At the same time, to help Bob develop requires that he begin to understand the fallibility of his own internal system. Providing 360-degree feedback may help begin that understanding. An equally important piece of data will be Bob's own search for ways his vision is partial. If he can begin to note (perhaps in a journal or by the use of any other record-keeping device) any way that his vision is not absolutely perfect, he may begin to understand the key Elder perspective that any vision, no matter how excellent and thoughtful, is necessarily partial. As Bob loosens his hold on his own vision, he may become more confused and less clear-headed; again, this is where the company of a developmentally knowledgeable coach is pivotal. Developmental theories make a rough map of paths taken by others, and even if Bob's journey is quite different, the journeys of others can inform his journey and help him have patience for those times when the path is difficult.

USING ADULT DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

I do not want to close this chapter without some recognition that developmental theories—while useful in our work with others—are also very helpful in our work on/with ourselves. Whenever I teach or consult about developmental theory, even if the focus is on helping others, questions inevitably arise about what this means for the coach as he walks his own developmental path. It is unlikely that there are many coaches who make meaning from the Prince/Princess form of understanding; coaching requires a perspective-taking ability and an orientation to the complexities of the inner life and the individual in relationships that is invisible to the Prince/Princess. It is quite likely, however, that there are many coaches who are Journeymen and CEOs (and far fewer who are Elders). Learning about your own development—and witnessing and supporting the development of your clients—is in itself a developmental activity. While developmental theories can be humbling (because it would be lovely—but unlikely—to think of ourselves at the pinnacle), they are also very hopeful. As you intentionally map your own developmental path, you can contribute to creation and growth of developmental theories generally. And as we pay attention to our own development and the development of our clients, we may all find what Bertrand Russell promises: "The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper."

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CHAPTER 4

Cognitive Coaching

JEFFREY E. AUERBACH

AS A COACH, I'm a thought partner. As a thought partner, I help my clients think with more depth, greater clarity, and less distortion—a cognitive process. Coaching is largely a cognitive method. Cognitive coaching tools, like the ones described in this chapter, are the foundations of many coaches' toolboxes.

However, there is more to coaching than a set of methods—cognitive methods or any other. Coaching without the humanistic side of a caring, trustworthy coach won't get off the ground. A coach who neglects the emotional side of the client completely will be shutting out a critical element. Students of emotional intelligence know that feelings are to be attended to as potential sources of useful information. Emotional self-awareness is a foundation for success in life (Stein & Book, 2000). Even the coach who uses largely cognitive approaches must incorporate emotional knowledge. As this chapter emphasizes, emotions are linked to cognition.

My own style of coaching is holistic, values-based, action coaching (Auerbach, 2001) emphasizing the whole person, moving toward their most important goals, congruent with their vital values. I use many tools from many fields—but for the purpose of this chapter I focus on cognitive coaching tools that stem from the emerging cognitive coaching theory. As my research of over one hundred organizations that utilize coaching shows, not only has coaching had an incredible increase in utilization over the last five years, but coaches who are well trained, experienced, and who can employ a variety of coaching tools, are the most sought after practitioners in this emerging field (Auerbach, 2005a; Auerbach

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