

Clinical Applications of the Stone Center Theoretical Approach To Minority Women

Clevonne W. Turner, M. S. W.

About the Author

Clevonne W. Turner, M. S. W., is a licensed, independent clinical social worker who maintains a full time private psychotherapy and consultation practice in Lexington, Massachusetts. She was formerly Assistant Clinical Director at the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies. This paper was presented in February, 1987, as part of the Stone Center Colloquium Series.

Abstract

The Stone Center theoretical approach, better known as "self-in-relation" theory, represents and validates a significant part of the minority woman's maturation process as she *adds* and *redefines*, rather than *separates* from, significant relationships. This process starts with the mother-daughter dyad and spreads to include a broader sense of staying mutually connected to family, the minority community, and the majority community at the same time as an autonomous self is evolving. This process tends to *heighten*, rather than *diminish*, her healthy sense of "self" as long as she *simultaneously maintains a strong sense of ethnic pride* internally. It is crucial that any therapist treating a minority woman be aware and respectful of this as it impacts both on the therapeutic relational alliance and on the client's life outside of the therapeutic process.

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Preface

For purposes of clarity and focus, I will highlight my work with black women only. There are far too many differences in traditions, family norms, beliefs, attitudes, styles, behaviors, and the like existing in various racial minority cultures in this country to try unfairly to lump them all together in this paper. Please note, however, that racial oppression of one sort or another and being *bi-cultural* in this country increase the possibilities for connectedness of women within a particular culture and often to other minority cultures considered different from their own. There will then be some "common threads" in applying the "self-in-relation" theory to all women of color which can be learned from working with black women. Also note that women in the same family within a particular culture vary greatly from one another in their individual traits, perceptions, personalities, and feelings, so do not anticipate a "pat formula" from this paper that clinicians can go forth and apply! The intent of this paper is to share my findings in a way that will encourage the reader to:

- 1) Become more fully aware of your own ethnicity;
- 2) Increase your capacity to care, listen, respect, mutually engage and validate in your clinical work a cultural "world view" that may be different from your own.