

Work In Progress

Diversity at the Core: Implications for Relational Theory

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Abstract

The authors suggest that by placing cultural diversity at the core of relational theory, the basic concepts, language, and applications of the theory are enlarged and reshaped. The major constructs of relational theory are examined as to their relevance to psychological growth and development in other cultures. The contributions of women of color to the development of relational theory are noted, as are the difficulties of integrating and incorporating these contributions. Finally, future directions are suggested for theory and practice in the evolution of relational theory.

There is a growing movement—similar to the movement to integrate women's perspectives into the center of psychological and developmental theories—that is demanding to place cultural diversity at the core. By that, we mean to put into the center of our discourse—from the beginning, throughout its development, and until its end—the ways in which culture, race, ethnicity, social class, etc. affect the processes that we are analyzing and our theoretical assertions, clinical interventions, and prevention programs.

This movement demands an appreciation of how we are *all* products of specific contextual and historical circumstances—even American, middle-class, heterosexual, Caucasian individuals. The basic notion is that everybody is a product of an ethnicity, a social class, a culture; thus, our world views, assumptions, interventions, and goals are all a product of our individual characteristics in transaction with the social, cultural, and historical context.

As such, relational theory is the product of a group of individuals in a particular social, cultural, and historical context. As the introduction of *Women's Growth in Connection* (Miller, 1976) asserts:

...We recognize that what we—five white middle-class well-educated women—are putting forth as a perspective of women's development is clearly limited by our own life experiences, by the nature of the work we do and the people with whom we work. Clearly we could have had a more complex, more encompassing perspective if we had begun with a broader realm of experience from which to draw. It is especially important...to incorporate the patterns of relationship that exist with those who are marginalized by the dominant culture.

Without this, there is no way that we can speak for all women (p. 7).

Recognizing the need to place diversity at the core and the particular context within which relational theory has evolved, what we want to do today is an exercise where we place diversity at the center of relational theory. As is customary of our working style, we will each attempt to do that in our own unique way. Cynthia will start by exploring how some of the major constructs of relational theory seem also very relevant to psychological growth and development in other cultures. While some need further elaboration to be more applicable, by contrast others are more problematic.

Robin will bring the *Stone Center Working Papers* written by or about women of color to the forefront of our discussions in order to hear their collective voices. What are their main issues? How come these issues remain marginal, peripheral, and not brought into the core?

Finally, Jan will explore how, if cultural diversity had been placed at the core from the very beginning, we would conceptualize some of its major constructs—what holds and what does not when we place diversity at the center.

Cynthia Garcia Coll

A major principle of relational theory is the importance of relationships for human growth and development. Unlike other developmental theories, this theory proposes that relationships' importance for developmental processes do not diminish over the life span but maintain their importance throughout. Based on women's experience, it is asserted that the importance of relationships is as great for men as it is for women, although it might be expressed differently.

In my experience as a Puerto Rican middle-class female growing up on the island in the 50s, 60s and 70s, I cannot conceive of a better model that explains my own growth and development: the impact of my mother and grandmother and their respective relationships; the impact of many members of my extended family that includes 26 cousins and nine uncles and aunts, plus my "madrina" and "padrino"; how all of these relationships were incorporated by an only child in a matriarchal family system; the impact of numerous teachers, both males and females, who took an extra interest in me and contributed to my love of knowledge and my career choice of academics;

my numerous lifetime friendships, primarily with female friends; and those therapeutic relationships that came at particular critical points in my life.

As with my own personal experience, I am convinced that this model of development does capture the experience of other cultures, ethnicities, and social classes more accurately than those that propose that the role of relationships in psychological well-being diminishes over the life span. Research conducted with these groups show how important the role of kinship, extended families, and other sources of support is to the well-being of these populations.

But what happens when we place diversity at the core? The nature of the relationships that contribute to psychological growth might shift. It is interesting to note that a lot of the examples chosen to illustrate the constructs of relational theory depict primarily relationships with women friends, husbands/partners, or therapists. The lack of examples addressing other family members is striking. This is striking because one of the main sources of strength for ethnic, racial minorities, and individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is their family and those of fictive kin. The concept of familism has been coined to capture this particular relational context, and it refers to the importance of these relationships for psychological well-being. Families, moreover, are not defined solely by the nuclear family but include mothers, fathers, husbands/partners, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, as well as in-laws and "compadres y comadres." In other words, many different family members can make significant contributions to a women's relational context.

Another major notion of relational theory is that the concept of self is seen as developing from increasing differentiation within relationships rather than moving away from relationships. This is also a major contrast with traditional notions of the self in dominant developmental theories. In these theories the goal of development is a separate, independent sense of self.

From my own personal experience as a Puerto Rican woman, this framework captures my psychological experience better than the notion of striving to move away from relationships. I observe and am relieved by the work of the Stone Center as I strive for differentiation within intimate, family, and working relationships and observe this pattern within myself since early childhood.

This notion is also very relevant for other traditional cultures. The concept of collectivism vs. individualism as the ideal has been coined to describe differences in cultural systems that pertain to their definition of the self as oriented toward the group vs. the individual. In collective cultures, there is not a separate sense of self that is independent from the collectivity. The clan for the Hmong, the family system for the Hispanic, and the corporation for the Japanese are all systems that fulfill that collectivistic nature of self-definition.

But what happens if we place diversity at the core? The notion of increasing differentiation even within a relationship might be questionable. Again the construct of normal enmeshment has been coined to capture this process of lack of self-differentiation as a normative process in other cultures.

Finally, a major tenet of relational theory is that not all relations are created equal; mutuality is at the core of a growth-promoting relationship. How does that concept apply to more traditional cultures?

Most traditional cultures are more hierarchical, and relationships are more power-based. Does that mean that most women in the world are not leading authentic lives and that they are not being part of growth-enhancing relationships? My experience growing up in a traditional middle-class Puerto Rican culture was not of mutual relationships. My present relationships when I go back to my country are not mutual relationships. Yet I did and do experience them as growth-enhancing within a different cultural context. The question that my own experience and that of other cultures pose is whether there is only one way for optimal relational development to occur.

As a developmentalist, this is hard for me to believe. My belief is that there are multiple pathways to optimal development. Some may be easier than others; some are more facilitative of growth than others. Growth is just more optimal under some conditions than others, but not necessarily impossible.

Several other questions arise in my mind: Can we strive for, attain, and sustain mutuality within traditional cultural patterns of hierarchical relationships? Since mutuality does not necessarily imply equality, can it exist within extremely unequal relationships based on "power over"? As patriarchy and other hierarchies are maintained all over the world, I would like to think that we can come up with a conceptualization that describes the growth processes within these relationships; until then, the

experience of many women in the world who are leading healthy psychological lives will not be described.

Robin Cook-Nobles

I welcome you and feel good that you have chosen this colloquium, which indicates to me your interest in diversity as central to our work as clinicians. Typically when the colloquia focus on issues of difference, attendance shrinks dramatically. I have observed this through the years and have had strong reactions to it, mostly a feeling of frustration accompanied by anger and disappointment. Clinicians who seem to be supporters and followers of the relational theory appear to check out when the talk focuses on issues of difference. I believe they check out by not attending certain colloquia. During colloquia where issues of difference are not central, they check out by dismissing the discussion afterwards which addresses these issues.

This raises the question of how central diversity is with respect to relational theory. Is it at the core of our conceptualization of the psychological growth and development of women? Is it at the core of our clinical work, or does it continue to be marginalized there as well?

In reviewing recent work, it is clear that there has been movement in the work of the Stone Center with regard to hearing the diverse voices of women and in expanding and diversifying the work to make it more inclusive. So on the one hand, I feel that there has been tremendous progress and growth; yet on the other hand, the work still seems marginalized. In pondering over this impression, which I sometimes experience as a lump of discomfort deep within my gut, I think it is time to move to yet another level: from theory to action. A question often asked is, "How do you apply the relational theory to action, i.e., clinical work and techniques in treatment?" I now ask, "How do we apply a truly multicultural relational theory to action?"

Wonderful working papers have been written which ring true for me, a woman of color trying to work within a multicultural frame. I will highlight some of them tonight, and I invite you to read (or reread) them on your own. In so doing, I will provide some suggestions, which I will refer to as tips, to help you translate theory into action within your own work.

In a 1991 colloquium on “Some Misconceptions and Reconceptions of a Relational Approach,” Alexandra Kaplan, Ph.D., said in her presentation titled “How can a group of white, heterosexual, privileged women claim to speak of ‘women’s’ experience?”:

No one should presume to label for another what factors comprise her selfhood or into which of a range of possible categories ... she would define herself. Patriarchal culture has provided us with deceptively convenient, and therefore, all the more dangerous and oppressive, structures for categorizing groups of people (usually by social class, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual preference). This categorization, then, becomes a vehicle by which those who claim a dominant position can presume the right to determine which aspects of identities are core and by which aspects others will be known (Miller, Jordan, Kaplan, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991, p. 6).

So we as clinicians need to let go of the old stereotypes and beliefs, some of which are myths, and let those who know their own experiences tell them. We need to listen respectfully as others tell their own stories.

Stated in another way and offered as a tip, Ayvazian states, “When a person of color tells you something you have said or done is racist or reveals your inattention to White privilege, take a deep breath and begin by assuming they are correct until proven otherwise” (Ayvazian & Tatum, 1994, p. 4).

Carter Heyward and Katie Canon (1992) agree that the answer lies in the quality of the relationship and whether it is truly mutual. According to Carter:

...The problem with white liberalism is that liberal white men and women do not advocate real relation, not mutual relation, but rather a patronizing relation. White liberals “love” black people; white liberal men “love” all women (white women and women of color) as long as we’re not threatening to change the name of the power game. In my opinion, we white people have few models of mutual relation. Few people helping show the way. Even our primary, most intimate relationships and friendships have been characterized more by the attitude of “let me give you what I believe is good for you” than by the more mutual “let’s try to see what’s good for us and work together for what we see.”

The “I” then becomes “us” and “we,” which translates into a pluralistic rather than an individualistic way of thinking and being, which Jan will elaborate on later in her talk. So I now suggest to you, to us all, to try to take this suggestion. Let’s try to see what’s good for us and work together for what we see.

Mutuality, as defined by Jan Surrey, is:

...the fundamental property of healthy, growth-enhancing connections. In these connections both or all participants are engaged in creating mutual, interactional growth, learning, and empowerment. In relationships based on the search for mutuality, each participant can represent increasingly her feelings, thoughts, and perceptions in the relationship, can have an impact on the other(s) and on the relationship, and can be moved by or move with the other(s) (Miller, Jordan, Kaplan, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991, p. 10).

Eldridge, Mencher, and Slater (1993) discuss mutuality in therapy when working with lesbian clients. They state:

In psychotherapy *movement* toward mutuality is both possible and desirable, but the actual achievement of mutuality is impossible within the asymmetry of power of the therapy relationship. When we acknowledge exactly what prevents true mutuality, we facilitate the relationship’s movement toward mutuality. Only if we acknowledge the existence of the power differential, the hierarchies and the boundaries, will the client feel we understand and experience each of our positions in the therapy relationship.

This is clearly true in therapy, and it is also true in our peer, collegial, and family relationships. If someone has power over another or is perceived in that way, true mutuality becomes threatened. I believe very strongly that for colleagues or peers who hold different social status with respect to class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, physical difference, etc., these differences and the accompanying social, cultural, and political realities must be addressed if one is to establish a truly mutual cross-cultural relationship. This is more than a tip; I believe that it is a truism.

Therefore, it becomes important in cross-cultural relationships to negotiate certain choices. Tatum lists the choices as deciding whether: (1) to not talk about the experience(s) of racism; (2) to share those

experiences and take the risk of not being validated; or (3) to deny one's own perception in an attempt to avoid feeling isolated or to stay in relation with the other (Ayvazian & Tatum, 1994, p.1). The only choice which would move the relationship toward mutuality is to share the experience and, in so doing, risk not being heard and not being validated. Yet, we have to make the choice and take the risk if we are committed to attaining movement toward mutuality.

This is not an intellectual task. We use our intellect to understand, but the primary work is experiential and interpersonal. Thus, the emotional is part of the process. It cannot be avoided nor should it be. In doing this work, old feelings get stirred up, and new feelings are experienced in relation to old incidents that previously appeared insignificant or were completely unnoticed. These feelings have to be owned, acknowledged, and addressed if there is truly going to be a genuinely mutual, cross-cultural bond. Several presenters have stressed the importance of addressing and acknowledging the feelings, especially anger, which clearly is no easy task (Bernardez, 1988; Ayvazian & Tatum, 1994; Canon & Heyward, 1992; Garcia Coll, Cook-Nobles, & Surrey, 1993).

As Bernardez (1988) pointed out, being able to express anger is central to one's overall mental health. She states:

In situations that would normally arouse anger in healthy persons, a conflict originates when there is arousal of anger on the one hand and a simultaneous prohibition of its expression (or threats to that effect) on the other. This kind of situation prevents the discharge of affect and thus the maintenance of self-esteem. Being treated with disregard for her needs, ignoring what she says and expecting automatic compliance are some of the ways in which many women have been disconfirmed and ignored....In a person educated to view anger as destructive and not clearly differentiated from hostility, revenge, or violent rage, all anger comes to be distrusted and to be censored excessively. The lack of awareness prevents the exploration of this emotion to investigate its true origins. The lack of training in the expression of anger brings with it a lack of awareness of the positive results of its expression: empowerment, increased self-respect, clarity of purpose (p.8).

The goal of cross-cultural relations is to undo the harm which society has created; if we are to enhance our own personal growth and empower the growth of others, it is important that we not deny the anger, but instead we need to hold it (Canon & Heyward, 1992), embrace it, and use it to help us to understand.

Ayvazian and Tatum (1994) also speak of critical junctures and common differences. An example of a critical juncture is how they met and began their relationship. It was due to a work assignment. They talk about the social segregation of our society and how it inhibits cross-cultural relationships. The work environment has become the one place to meet and develop cross-cultural friendships, and they advise us to capitalize on this rare opportunity which society affords us.

Yet it is easy to develop good collegial relationships from 9 to 5 and then leave them to continue a rather culturally segregated personal lifestyle. Because of this American norm, many of us are bicultural (or multicultural) and remain so. We switch back and forth in our ways of being without even being cognizant of it. It becomes a part of our total identity, and we learn to wear it well just like a good old comfortable shoe. Society also supports this way of being which keeps us from shifting the cultural norm and ultimately maintains the status quo. So it takes time, effort, and commitment to transcend this reality and carry those cross-cultural work relationships to a deeper, more personal level.

Other critical junctions which Ayvazian and Tatum (1994) discuss are conflicts in the relationship, such as disagreements or differences in opinion due to the differing cultural frames of reference or societal incidents to which you may have different reactions or suggested solutions, given your cultural history and context (such as the Rodney King verdict). These are bound to happen. Conflict arises in all relationships. Yet in developing a cross-cultural relationship, which is your choice (since society neither promotes nor supports such relationships), one can easily choose to avoid, ignore, or deny the conflict rather than confront it. Therefore, I believe that in order to honestly address these junctions, each person in the relationship has to believe that she will be getting something personal out of the time, energy, and risk-taking that is necessary in order to look at the truth and own one's own "stuff" (Garcia Coll, Cook-Nobles, & Surrey, 1993, p. 7) .

One has to be personally driven to do this work. In the case of women of color, it is obvious why so many pursue this work. They are destined to address the issue of oppression which is a part of their daily reality in both overt and covert ways. I also believe that white women who pursue this work are personally driven, whether consciously or unconsciously. Their motivation may have come from a childhood experience in which they witnessed something in their home or school that they knew was wrong from the innocence of a child's heart, even though the adults in their lives could not or would not acknowledge it. Perhaps it was the witnessing of an inconsistency by someone they admired, such as a parent, teacher, or minister that left a cognitive dissonant feeling that could not be resolved or ignored. Or perhaps a personal experience of feeling different from, and not belonging to, one's family or community created a deeper sense of empathy and compassion for others who are perceived as different.

In his work on Black identity development, Cross (1978) discusses these situations as significant events which create a state of discomfort for the person and initiates the transition to a new state of being or stage of identity, as Cross characterizes it. So, whatever the incident or significant experience, I believe that for all who choose to do this work it is a personal re-working of some injustice that one experienced or witnessed in a very personal way.

Yet we, as educated people, can choose the path directed towards changing the norm in small but significant ways. Ayvazian and Tatum (1994) discuss how we can choose either the margin or the center in our work. They point out that being in the center is a privilege, and for those in a more privileged status it is often important to choose the margin when trying to make an impact. However, for persons of minority status, it may be important to choose the center and not accept one's marginal status. They also discuss the commonalities between a Black and white woman, in that they are both women and thus of marginal status in comparison to their white male counterpart. Yet both as heterosexual women are in the center. Likewise, a Black woman with education, status, and money may be in the center with respect to class in comparison to other less economically privileged women. Thus, being in the margin or center is dynamic and relative, not static. Those in the center can sometimes make a conscious decision to move to

the margin, and those in the margin may choose to work towards gaining a center position or choose to claim their marginal status as they fight to be seen, heard, and/or validated.

So there are many *Working Papers* which give us a good knowledge base, although I have highlighted only a few. Knowledge is both good and necessary. However, knowledge without action is merely an intellectual task. We must begin to make the difference and act. We, each and every one of us, must move the essence of this work from its marginal status to the center.

Here are some tips which I hope you will find useful as you take the journey:

- Read or reread several of the *Working Papers* that we have highlighted tonight and lift from them phrases or quotes that have particular meaning for you. Take the quotes and place them in various locations, such as by your desk at work or in a special place in your home. Use them as reminders of the work and of your goals or as a source of inspiration during times when you feel worn, ragged, and tired. Or, give them to others who may need a focus or a lift in spirit.
- Join a group or make a commitment with another person who also is interested in growing and learning to focus on the personal. I truly believe that unless this work is personal, you are not really doing it. Participation must be voluntary, and persons in the group or relationship must be able to accept each person as an equal and willing to make a commitment to strive towards mutuality within the relationship(s). There will also need to be rules and boundaries around the relationship or group, and confidentiality is a must in order for trust and safety to be established.
- If another person or a group is not yet available, start a multicultural journal and begin to have regular dialogues with yourself regarding things you read, hear, or observe. Record your impressions, reactions, and thoughts as well as steps you plan to take and goals you hope to accomplish.
- Take the risk and *just do it*. When there is a chance to diversify your staff, for example, do it. There are always many reasons which get in the way of doing the right thing. Ask yourself what standards you are trying to maintain. As mental health

professionals, we cannot continue to fool ourselves into believing that we can work with all kinds of clients without working beside all kinds of colleagues.

- Keep in mind that when a person in the margin tells you something that you have said or done that reveals your inattention to your privileged (center) status, take a deep breath and begin by assuming they are correct until proven otherwise.
- And last, keep in mind that by attending this colloquium, staying attuned to the dialogue, and choosing not to check out, you have already begun the process of moving this work from margin to center.

Janet Surrey

Let me begin by naming my own complicated set of connections to our task tonight. I am here as part of the original Stone Center theory group which has been meeting since 1978. In the light of Jean Baker Miller's *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, (1976), our work began to deconstruct traditional theory and practice and then to reconstruct developmental theory as a foundation for clinical work. It is significant that we were five white, privileged, heterosexual women, and to some extent our clients fell into this category. The aspect of difference that permeated our work and the closely related work of Carol Gilligan (1982) and her colleagues was that of gender: that women's reality had been subsumed, silenced, and pathologized by theory builders and clinicians who did not see the relevance of *their* gender in the concepts, formulations, and descriptions of healthy development they espoused. I now see this early work as part of the postmodernist paradigm unfolding over the past few decades.

I am here also as part of this panel and have worked closely with Cynthia, Robin, and others—including the original theory group—to explore ways this early work might have been limited by not representing at the core of the model the experience of other women: lesbians, women of color, and women who are less privileged in terms of ethnicity, social class, and sexuality.

I feel some discomfort and tension at the challenge to my early work. I also feel excitement and pleasure in the vitality and creative enlargement of the theory taking place through these ongoing colloquia and the

work of Stone Center groups such as the women in prison project, the lesbian theory group, and the multicultural process and theory groups growing out of the multicultural program at the Stone Center. This work is actively confronting, stretching, and growing the theory by representing the voices of more women of different experiences and cultures.

At the same time, I am aware that acknowledging and listening to these voices may still not move the theory as far as it needs to go. Two years ago at the Stone Center-Cambridge Hospital/Harvard Women's Conference "Learning from Women," Cynthia, Robin, Carter Heyward, and I were part of a multicultural panel which called for white feminist theorists and clinicians to proactively name our own ethnic, social, and racial location as shaping the discourse; to examine the implication of this for all our theoretical and clinical work; to pay attention to who is benefiting from not doing so; and to bring enormous care to any use of the pronoun "we" in discussing women's experience. Following the presentation I had a terrible sense of disconnection, which I now understand to be the consequence of marginalization and compartmentalization. Much of the rest of the conference went on without any direct reference to this. My colleagues here and members of the lesbian theory group have helped me to understand this as a central and chronic experience for them in relation to us white heterosexual feminists who often do not see how our privilege as the dominant group keeps awareness of culture, race, class, or sexuality out of the center of the clinical discourse. I began to see through this experience the burden they feel in being the ones who need to keep on introducing and reintroducing these issues. In theoretical terms, as Miller and Stiver (1994) would say, I learned something about my own strategies as a white privileged women for staying out of connection and its consequence for others.

The complexity of this double identity for me continues. I am marginalized as a woman when I try to bring and keep gender in the center of the clinical discourse in gender-blind professional contexts. (I recall a well-known psychoanalyst commenting at the end of a two-day conference with the Stone Center, "I still don't see what gender has to do with it.") Yet I am also part of a privileged group that marginalizes and silences other women. In many professional conferences, I feel marginalized when I try to acknowledge culture and privilege as they impact the practice of therapy.

We felt tonight it was important to reiterate and acknowledge the tremendous contributions to relational theory already in existence and to take a further step to imagine diversity at the core. The questions I would like to raise here are: How might the relational model have evolved differently had the earliest work been done by a group more representative of the diversity and complexity of women's experience? What directions does this suggest now for further work on theory and practice? The notions that theory and knowledge evolve out of voices in dialogue and that theoretical work is always work in progress have always been central to our work at the Stone Center.

The particular relevance of this question about diversity at the core was emphasized to me when Maureen Walker (1995) raised the following questions in our Multicultural Theory Group. You might imagine these yourself:

1. When you hear the phrase "women" or "group of women," what visual image is evoked for you? Is the group all white? Or is it racially, culturally, socially, sexually, physically, or generationally diverse?
2. Now think of what personal group experience(s) shaped that vision. What are they, and who was part of that group?

To me, this exercise further spoke to the importance of the close-at-hand "we" (emerging through personal dialogue) in shaping our sense of the larger "We."

Reflections on the theory

Early work on the relational model examined from women's experience: 1) the nature of self as always constituted and created through relational processes; and 2) the qualities of connection (in terms of mutuality, authenticity, engagement, and empathy) as the basis of health/healing/growth and empowerment. This radical critique of self, individualism, and autonomy at the center of development opens the field to the study of the centrality and quality of connections and disconnections from the most immediate to the larger cultural context.

What if the original theory group had been more diverse, and what are the directions these reflections suggest for future theoretical work?

1. I think the notion of *different* cultural and subcultural contexts would have been more at the

center, with further exploration of all relationships as cross-cultural and, at some level as constituted, shaped and held in place by the larger interlocking societal structures which define relationships in this culture: racism, classism, heterosexism, sexism, colonialism, etc. As Cynthia Garcia Coll (1993) has emphasized, every individual cross-cultural relationship is culturally and socially embedded and impacted by the history of the relationship between the groups. It is also impacted by the current state of relations reflected and created by media, politics, and social events. For example, all race and gender relations are historically constituted as well as being *reflected* and impacted by events taking place in the culture, such as the Anita Hill hearings or by the O. J. Simpson trial. The complex interplay of all these relational structures might have been made more focal with greater attention to the inherent complexity of power relations. The representation of this complexity for white women would then have included the meanings of subordination and violation in relation to white men as well as the oppression of other women and men as a function of privilege, access to power and resources, and social distance. Implications of this for every therapy relationship would be more articulated.

2. I think we might be more sensitive to the perspective of women whose cultural experience has not been so individualistic and who have felt the complexity of being deeply connected to family and culture at the same time as they recognize their oppression as women. We need to listen to women whose complex and conflicting loyalties to family, race, culture, or community impacts their relationships with white privileged women.
3. As Yvonne Jenkins (1995) has noted in her work on diversity training at the Stone Center, the particular forms and manifestations of growth-fostering relationships may vary across different groups and cultures and may point to different pathways of development to be explored. These different manifestations must be explored as part of every therapy dyad, as they may lead to serious disconnection.
4. I think our conceptualization of health and healing might focus less centrally on the power of connection in dyads or small groups (based on traditional clinical models) but also on studying

healthy growth in connection to the larger community, race, or culture. For example, Cleovonne Turner's (1987) and Beverly Tatum's (1993) work on African American women and Maureen Walker's (1995) discussion reframing racial identity development in the context of relational connections to one's larger community are relevant. I think this would move us to locate the energy or power of healing/empowerment beyond the dyad and therefore to become more aware of political and spiritual connections as central to development and health.

5. I think a more diverse theory group would have more sharply named the *capacity for healthy resistance* as a key aspect of psychological strength—that is, the capacity to resist destructive, pathologizing, or shaming messages from the dominant culture. We would particularly examine the “resistance fostering” aspect of relationships and communities. This is closely related to Carol Gilligan's work on the power of mutually authentic mother-daughter (or woman-girl) relationships and communities in promoting healthy resistance for adolescent girls.
6. I think we would have been more aware of the need for inclusive and less culture-bound language that speaks to women of different experiences, e.g., the interplay of Spanish phrases such as “companero” that would represent the voices of diversity in writing the theory and suggest cultural nuances in the form and flavor of relationships.
7. I think we would have been extremely careful in the use of the word “we” to speak of women's experiences, maintaining vigilance and awareness of who is or is not being represented in any statement and who is speaking and who is not. This becomes very unwieldy and awkward at times but is necessary. I still find myself going back to the generic “women” when I should be more cautious or questioning if this is accurate.

All of these ideas are part of relational theory now, but I feel that we need to go further to make the important shifts in emphasis and enlargement of concepts and practices that I believe will lead to a more radical understanding of the meaning of the work.

Finally, I would like to propose adding two concepts to the theory, language, and practice of

relational theory and therapy which I feel would have evolved from a more diverse or multicultural theory base. First, I would like to expand the basic notion of self-in-relation to include self-in-diversity. Second, I would like to expand the concept of mutuality to embrace cross-cultural mutuality.

Self-in-diversity

By self-in-diversity, I am describing a relational way of being which moves away from a static-boundaried sense of self and concern with identify and self-interest to a more fluid, open, and responsive way of being, growing through and toward connection with a concern for authenticity and mutuality. This notion of self-in-diversity would emphasize the capacity to work with difference in relationship without the filter of self reference that is seeing the other as “different from me” which still places “me” at the center. This describes movement towards the subjective, experienced reality of the other within their social or cultural framework, based on what Kaplan (1991) has called “informed empathy.” Such a model of self-in-diversity emphasizes:

1. the capacity to see oneself and others as individuals within a larger cultural and social frame of reference. This means holding some awareness of one's own and the other's ethnicity, culture, class, race, gender, etc. and the privileges which may be present as an ongoing part of who one is in any and every context.
2. the capacity to “decenter”—that is, to accept and be open to seeing the embeddedness of one's own perceptions, assumptions, and judgments and to work away from seeing others through one's own lenses or categories. This is a profound shift from “self-centered” to a “relationally centered” way of being, which moves out of ethnocentrism and ultimately even anthropocentrism as well, as we begin to include biodiversity and relationships with other living beings as important sources of diversity in relationship.
3. Such a notion of self-in-diversity or diversity as a relational process includes recognition that the capacity to see and know oneself is inextricably relational. In the process, affirmation and validation are part of growth but critical reflection is also. This is particularly true for more dominant groups who are often *more* clearly seen by those with less power and privilege.

4. This notion of self-in-diversity is basic to any *psychology of difference* and to the process of learning to live and grow in relationship, from the most basic personal to the larger global/ecological level. Mutual relationship is built through respectful engagement with difference.

An example of the complexity of this process was evidenced in a very powerful moment in a gender dialogue (which I see as cross-cultural work) that Stephen Bergman and I were facilitating. In a very poignant moment one of the men said to the women, "If you see me as a white male, you don't see me." (He was angrily resisting stereotype and objectification and felt his individual essence as a person was being lost.)

One woman replied, "If you don't see yourself as a white male, you won't see yourself; and if you don't see yourself, you can never see me as a woman, and we can never make a real connection." (She felt that his resistance to seeing himself in the context of his cultural location interfered with their making an authentic relationship).

With this, they began to struggle together with this paradox of authentic connection, which works through and not around personal, cultural, and historical power differentials to create a new "we" emerging out of the struggle for mutual relationship.

Cross-cultural mutuality

This concept of self-in-diversity or diversity as a process is built on the relational process which I will call cross-cultural mutuality. In the Stone Center perspective, mutuality refers to a creative process of active engagement, authenticity, empathy, relational responsibility, and commitment to stay connected through conflict. Jordan (1985) has described this process of growth in connection: "Growth occurs because as I stretch to match or understand your experience, something new is acknowledged or grows in me."

One of the interpretations of the Stone Center model has been, I think, a misreading of the concepts of mutuality as something easily obtainable, kind of sugary-sweet, or warm and fuzzy. If the theory grew out of a more culturally/socially diverse group of women, where cross-cultural mutuality were part of the ongoing group process, I think the issues of difference would be more salient. The enormous challenge these differences present in relationships would be more evident.

The concept of cross-cultural mutuality as a model suggests the necessity of holding every relationship, including therapy, in this larger perspective. The implications for clinical training are enormous. In addition to becoming clinically competent and sensitive in addressing mental health needs of different groups, therapists need opportunities for experiential learning in this process of cross-cultural mutuality. A cross-cultural theory group would focus awareness and attention to the transformation of power relations inherent in this model.

Stephen Bergman and I (1992) have described what we called the "double standard" on the road to mutuality in our work on creating mutuality across gender difference. The more dominant group has particular work to do in raising consciousness of and changing power strategies that may be out of awareness or conscious intention. Tatum and Ayvazian (1994) have written that the center must move to the margin for the margin to come to center. I think of Katie Cannon asking Carter Heyward, "Can you hold my anger?" In this she implied: without disappearing, without collapsing in fear, shame, or guilt, without trying to move on too quickly to focus back on you? The nuances of these power shifts must be deeply experienced to be understood.

There has been constant reference to the necessity of both academic and experiential learning in many of our colloquium papers, suggesting that white, privileged, heterosexual women have our own personal work to do in keeping the process of cross-cultural mutuality moving forward in theory and practice. What I believe is most exciting about our work here at the Stone Center is the attempt to take responsibility together, using our own cross-cultural relationships as part of the ongoing work. I think of Carter Heyward and Katie Cannon; Stephen Bergman and myself; Beverly Tatum and Andrea Ayvazian; Robin Cook-Nobles, Cynthia Garcia Coll, and myself; and the members of the Lesbian Theory Group who have all contributed enormously to this enterprise. The work of the new Stone Center multicultural process and theory groups suggest that the theory is still evolving and growing in connection.

I hope the language and clinical applications of relational theory continue to evolve even further as a representation of more and more voices in dialogue. I am appreciative of the support of the Stone Center in this mission of working together to learn about the

power of our connections and disconnections in the struggle to grow into the larger “we.”

Discussion Summary

After each colloquium presentation a discussion is held. Selected portions are summarized here. At this session, Maureen Walker, Sung Lim Shin, and Irene Stiver joined Drs. Garcia Coll, Cook-Nobles, and Surrey in leading the discussion.

Question: It seems to me that respect is the basis of mutuality, but society doesn’t encourage people to respect each other. So we have quite a struggle just to get to ground level. How are we going to get there? Any hints?

Garcia Coll: It is interesting that you bring up respect. For Hispanics, this is a major aspect in defining relationships, especially toward parents and authority. The basic construct of this society is toward individual rights. The liberal notion of giving a “voice” to everyone has a cost. “Respect” is not something we respect. So the question is how do we come back to the middle, where rights and respect can be valued?

Walker: It’s not only a consequence of this individualistic society but also the outcome of our highly stratified society. The political reality is that it’s not difference that makes a difference but stratification, which then gets internalized as to who is more deserving of respect. For people in a more powerful position to respect and listen to others in less powerful positions is difficult. It’s hard to get people to examine where their self-interest lies.

Shin: What individualism implies is that you and I are equal. This allows stratification and power differentials to remain unrecognized. When you don’t recognize reality, you are denying the other’s experience.

Question: We’ve been talking tonight about a different collective, pluralistic self. Maybe we’re talking about different cultural selves based on this stratification. We respond differently according to the context we are in.

Surrey: I agree. It’s similar to holding a “double identity” as a white woman. In one context you are marginalized; in another you are the marginalizer. It seems to me that we can use these experiences to increase our ability to connect across our differences.

Cook-Nobles: I’m the same person, but certain contexts give more permission to be oneself. For

example, at Wellesley College a certain way of being is promoted; at home, another way; and in the South, another. The way I am is dependent on the context, the choices I make, and how much conflict I choose to deal with.

Garcia Coll: Katherine Cooper, a researcher at University of California, Santa Cruz, works on adolescent development from the perspective of “multiple selves, multiple worlds.” She is studying how young people navigate different contexts (e.g., church, school, friends, etc.) and how they integrate these multiple selves.

Stiver: We all move in difference contexts. When we move from one where we can represent ourselves to another where we cannot because of hierarchical structures, it can be confusing. Learning to make choices about where it may be worse to speak or not to expect to be heard is important. It’s a part of the organization of self: how to move from one context to another.

Question: You’re talking about the movement from center to margin as necessary. Is it reasonable to expect this? Historically it hasn’t happened. Human beings don’t stay where they’re uncomfortable.

Garcia Coll: That’s a good question. You’re asking if this is idealistic or if it can be done? For the first time in history in this culture it’s demanded that we do this on a daily basis. That’s never happened before. My optimism comes from working with children. If, from an early age, relating across cultural diversity is the norm, preschool children can learn to do it. It has to happen early. With adults, multicultural training must be ongoing, sustained, and experiential. We need opportunities to stay with and work through old patterns.

Surrey: My optimism comes from experiencing and observing the tremendous relief and release that accompany breaking through our separation and disconnection in relationships based on gender, culture, race, etc. I think the underlying yearning for connection is very powerful even if we also tend to move away from situations generating confusion, anger, hurt, fear, and shame as we confront our disconnection.

Comment: We have to tolerate discomfort, especially we white folks. The alternative is unthinkable, so we have to learn to stretch and put ourselves in uncomfortable positions.

Comment: People tend to get uncomfortable when faced with others more marginalized than they

are. We need to become uncomfortable or make others uncomfortable with so-called “safe” or “comfortable” settings, for example, all-white school systems. This is the work the more privileged need to take on.

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