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ABSTRACT

Although counseling literature addresses within-group diversity among racial/ethnic groups in this country, seldom do studies examine the interpersonal dynamics within communities where minorities have fostered interdependence, cooperation, and acceptance of diversity among themselves. This paper presents an overview of some critical factors which contribute to within-group diversity among racial/ethnic minorities and then discusses the means through which individuals facilitate and maintain peace within these communities. Some of the critical factors assessed here include external factors, such as social attitudes, and internal factors, like racial identity, world views, and the locus of responsibility. While the media highlight the social ills in some racial/ethnic communities, group members in many more communities maintain the tradition of "transcultural caring" in which members work together to provide various means of support for the community. Active measures such as sports contests, pageants, and talent shows in conjunction with an emphasis on the ties that bind the community together iterate the three primary components of the transcultural caring model: (1) preservation of others; (2) accommodation of others; and (3) open exchange of ideas, opinions, and attitudes as an avenue toward increasing awareness of self and others. All of these components facilitate peaceful coexistence. (RJM)

The ties that bind:
Effective racial/ethnic minority communities as models of peaceful coexistence

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Introduction

Although the cross-cultural counseling literature does specifically address within group diversity existing among racial/ethnic minority groups in this country, seldom do we as professionals attend to the interpersonal dynamics within communities and other life situations wherein minority individuals have traditionally fostered interdependence, cooperation, and acceptance and accommodation of diversity among themselves. As professionals we have attempted to resolve critical issues related to the increasing diversity within this population without first examining those communities and life situations wherein minorities have maintained intimate, supportive relationships in spite of stark differences. In our search for peace, society has ignored those who are expert and have been expert in this arena long before 'attending to diversity' and 'being culturally sensitive' were the politically correct goals to attain.

The primary objectives of this paper are to present: 1) an overview of some critical factors which do contribute to within group diversity among racial ethnic minorities; and, 2) a discussion of the means through which the development of peace has been facilitated and maintained within some racial/ethnic minority communities.

Critical Factors Contributing to conflict related to within group diversity among racial ethnic minority group members

External Factors

There can be no discussion of the experience of being a racial/ethnic minority group member without briefly mentioning the impact of two very distinct predominant trends in the socio-political climate of this country. First, there is the perspective that racial minority status is synonymous with 'special needs'. Minorities are perceived as humans in need of assistance and accommodation that is beyond that which majority group members must have to survive. Though many positive outcomes have resulted from the efforts of proponents of this view, there is one critical negative outcome that is seldom addressed. Quite often those who lead fully functioning healthy lifestyles within predominantly minority communities, as well as those minorities who do well socio-economically in mainstream America (i.e. academically, professionally, etc.) in spite of the negative racial climate that continues to exist within this country, are often overlooked. Only the needs of those who do least well are highlighted and attended to. Consequently, the term "minority" becomes associated with the words 'problem' and 'deficit' which are not terms of endearment in a mainstream society that purports to value individualism and competition.

The second perspective adheres to the belief that racial minority status is synonymous with 'no needs' at all. As above, distinctions are made among minorities. Thcse racial/ethnic minorities who excel beyond levels of most individuals within this country are identified as models of what all minorities should be and can become if they would only pull themselves up from the abyss. The needs of those minorities who do least well are highlighted, but not attended to. The successes and challenges of those who are contributing, fully functioning members of society in everyday life are ignored. The challenges of those minority members who are held up as models and 'credits to their race' are also ignored for they are as all minorities should be, without needs.

Though the above perspectives do differ philosophically, there are some similarities. First, both are inclined to attend to minorities as if they were objects to be manipulated. Second, both perspectives contribute to the perception of 'minority' as a term having distinct negative connotations within a cultural context that does not value dependence or neediness in any form. Third, both ignore the successes and common challenges experienced by the majority of fully functioning, physically healthy, emotionally stable individuals who constitute most of politically underrepresented populations. Fourth, both highlight socioeconomic success and upward mobility as one of the most legitimate goals that all should strive to attain when this behavior might not be valued by all groups. Fifth, both

result in a dynamic that counters 'acceptable' minority group members against those who are not 'acceptable'. Sixth, both contribute to the racial/ethnic minorities' struggle between adhering strongly to the 'home ties' and perspective cultural roots versus assimilation into mainstream culture. In summary, both perspectives facilitate the development of a climate which fosters and reinforces internal strife among minorities.

Internal Factors

This section will be committed to presenting those within group diversity issues with which minority group members are confronted.

Racial Identity. The development of minority identity development models began with the work of Black social scientists in their efforts to discount the prevailing view that Blacks were a monolithic group (Cross, 1971; Jackson, 1975; Thomas, 1971). Though the initial model (Cross, 1971) focused solely on the development of Black American moving from a White frame of reference to a positive Black frame of reference, over the years due to the identification of some shared experiences across minorities groups (Berry, 1965; Stonequist, 1977), much work has been done to expand these models to include other racial/ethnic minority group members. As a result of these efforts (Atkinson, 1983), Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1989) have proposed a Minority Identity Development Model (MID) which defines five stages of development that politically underrepresented racial/ethnic people experience as they struggle

to understand themselves in terms of their own culture, the dominant culture, and the relationship between the two cultures: conformity, dissonance, resistance, and immersion, introspection, and integrative awareness. Table 1 presents an outline of the model and the interaction of stages with the attitudes and beliefs.

(Insert Table 1.)

World Views. A world view is how an individual perceives his/her relationship to the world (nature, institutions, other people, etc.) (D.W. Sue, 1977, 1978). For those members having racial/ethnic minority status, a strong determinant of how they perceive the world is related to the extent to which they are assigned a subordinate position in the general society (Sue & Sue, 1990) as well as how they choose to respond to this assignation. Although there are several widely accepted constructs purporting to assist in the conceptualization of world view (i.e. Value-Orientation Model, Belief in a Just World, etc.), Sue's (1985) Cultural Identity Quadrants presents a model that was developed in order to assist in understanding the individuals perceptions of how they uniquely fit as a minority member in terms of two dimensions: locus of control and locus of responsibility within the majority culture.

The concept of "locus of control" was first formulated by J. Rotter (1966) to assist social scientists in understanding the underlying traits that influence individuals' behaviors as they interact in the world. "Internal control" refers to

people's beliefs that reinforcements are contingent on their own action and that people can shape their own fate. "External control" refers to people's beliefs that reinforcing events occur independently of their action and that the future is determined more by chance and luck (Sue and Sue, 1990).

The concept of "locus of responsibility" was first formulated from attribution theory (Jones, 1972) as a measure of the degree of responsibility or blame placed on the individual or system. Those adhering to an "internal responsibility" orientation tend to: (a) emphasize the understanding of individual motivations, values, feelings, and goals; (b) believe that success or failure is attributable to the individuals' skills or personal inadequacies; and, (c) believe that there is a strong relationship among ability, effort, and success in society. Those adhering to an "external responsibility" orientation view the sociocultural environment as more potent than the individual. Social, economic, and political forces are perceived as most powerful; success or failure is generally dependent on the socioeconomic system and not necessarily on personal attributes.

A transactional analysis of Sue's (1985) model incorporating both dimension is presented in Table 2.

(Insert Table 2 here.)

Physical Characteristics. Those members of society who are typically identified as racial/ethnic minorities have a wide range of physical characteristics, speech patterns,

mannerisms, and interpersonal styles. Although this group as a collective is often spoken of as 'persons of color', they represent a wide range of hues, in addition to differences in stature, hair texture, etc. Within the context of each unique group's cultural norms and within that of the majority culture, the experiences of any given individual could differ significantly as a result of physical features and interpersonal styles. Although this is true for majority members to some degree, only in an extreme case of 'difference' in physical appearance or interpersonal style is the status of within group membership questioned and the potential of a negative valence attached. For example, some African American and Hispanic individuals have reported observations that indicate status differences based upon skin color and hair texture in both minority and majority settings. It seems that physical features can influence not only how one is treated by other minorities, but can also influence the response of majority group members as well.

In addition to the complexity existing within the distinct variations mentioned above, racial/ethnic minorities also struggle with the same points of within group diversity as majority group members (i.e. social class, religion, value orientation, sexual preference, etc.). Though the literature above does address the impact of these unique characteristics upon the counseling process, little in the cross-cultural literature actually addresses the impact of these differences

upon relationships among racial/ethnic minorities. How racial/ethnic members have accommodated these differences within their communities is seldom discussed. For in spite of pressures within and without fostering conflict and dissonance, racial/ethnic minorities have historically maintained intimate, supportive, interpersonal, working alliances among themselves in both predominantly majority and predominantly minority settings. A closer examination of these dynamics could serve as a key to understanding what we as members of the world community might consider in our search for peace.

The minority community

While the media consistently highlights the social ills that do exist in and are destroying too many of the racial/ethnic minority communities across the country, group members in many more communities maintain the tradition of continuing to work collaboratively to provide material, educational, spiritual, and emotional support for community members. Young adult community members who have left home are returning to the comfort and safety of these communities that contributed positively to their personal identify and which they would like to do the same for their children. Older adults who have reached retirement age are returning to these communities to not only contribute to the service found within, but also to experience the comfort and respect that is offered to the elders. Positive adjustments have been made even though community diversity is often heightened. Returnees, more often than not, have

experienced and been influenced by long periods of time being educated, living, and/or working in predominantly majority settings. These influences are being accommodated as well. Many minority communities have historically been able to accomplish and are still accomplishing that with which mainstream America continues to struggle, the search for peace. The following section addresses some general principles that I believe contribute directly to this long standing success story.

Transcultural Caring: Sensitively responding to diversity

Though 'transcultural caring' is a concept related to both health and mental health professions (Leininger, 1978,1981), this author believes that the term best reflects the principles that have been exhibited in many past and present functional minority communities. A modified definition of transcultural caring is the deliberate and creative use of self- and other knowledge and skills to assist others and self in attaining well being and survival in diverse and changing contexts. It implies self knowledge and acceptance; the willingness to accept feedback; and, a persisting expressed value of others whose difference is not detrimental to the process of peace. The following are some of the peace-fostering principles that have been observed in these communities.

Redefining peace to accommodate the experience of struggle and conflict. In the English language peace is defined by Webster as: a condition that exists when groups or individuals are not fighting or struggling for power; a state of calm.

This 'state' definition appears to foster the notion that peace is temporary, idyllic, apt to disappear at any moment. Peace is now often the aftermath of battle or war. A state that is attained only after one party has been subjugated, assimilated, or alienated and another has been declared the victor.

On the other hand, peace as a process implies that it can be a continual state that accepts the normal occurrence of disagreements and struggles (internal and external) as critical means to understanding self and others and clarifying points of diversity. Doing so, normalizes the concept of 'peace' and daily disagreements and conflicts become perceived as learning experiences to be valued. Peace could now be defined as the process of engaging in activity that fosters the maintenance of working relationships that benefits involved parties by heightening self- and other-awareness and engaging respectfully in the movement toward common goals.

Fostering passive competition to the same degree as active competition. Opportunities for active competition in the form of sports, pageants, talent contests, etc. are often very prevalent in the these communities. Opportunities are available for the 'best' in many areas to be identified, acknowledged, and validated as bringing outside recognition and value to the group. However, there are also many opportunities for passive competition wherein everyone participates and does their best receiving validation for participation and contribution. 'Their' best is good enough and differences in performance level and

quality of contribution are expected and accepted without public judgment (i.e. bake sales, fashion shows, religious affiliated holiday speeches, etc.). Individual differences and strengths and weaknesses are accepted as normal. Both passive and active competition activities are also perceived as being essential in the process of maintaining a sense of fellowship.

Maintaining the 'we're all in the same boat' attitude. Minorities were and are often segregated in specific areas of rural and urban settings. Members of functioning communities tend to work together to acknowledge unique differences, yet maintain a primary focus on similarities that tie one to another. Validation and acceptance of points of distinction are acknowledged, but are not essential to maintaining peace. An individual can disagree, not understand, and not accept or value another's unique behavior set or characteristic and yet simultaneously continue to behave respectfully and maintain an effective working alliance and supportive relationship with that individual. This attitude appears to subject members to the exposure to others' reactions and opinions, however, the expression of the reaction is typically short-lived and replaced by a focus on more important life issues.

This attitude is also reflected in the tendency toward forgiveness (the act of excusing a personal violation; to pardon). Conflicts do arise and feelings are sometimes bruised by the direct sharing of feedback. Members at times also experience the disappointment and anger resulting from unmet

expectations. However, community members tend to not only ask for forgiveness, but to extend it as well. Members appear to be committed to maintaining the process of peacefulness and interaction instead of allowing temporary states of 'conflict' and physical and/or emotional separation to prevail. When necessary, uninvolved parties also support this healing process by encouraging contact and reaffilitation. Although 'who was right and who was wrong' is one aspect to be addressed, the priority is that individuals reconnect with a renewed understanding of themselves and others. (The author believes that the process of peace is diminished by members' attempting to **force** others to fit into an image of how they 'ought' to be. Peace is reduced to a state when there is an emphasis on 'who is right and who is wrong' and reuniting is secondary.)

Assuming an "individual responsibility" mindset once aware of a personal struggle, challenge or need of another. This appears a useful means of immediate intervention or attention to community members. Visitation, food, board, words of comfort, advice and guidance, and money, are commonly shared when a need is recognized. Most individuals assume the responsibility to give what they can, and all that is given is acceptable and appreciated. For most members there tends to be a focus on 'what is' and what can and/or will I do about it, and not what ought to be. A sense of responsibility extends beyond the nuclear family and biological ties. Family is community.

The identification of well-defined behaviors that are

considered to be esteemed vs. taboo within the context of the community. Social status and class position are not associated with economic status, but the adherence to behavior sets that have been identified as 'respectable'. Therefore, someone who may be considered 'poor' according to external standards (i.e. annual income), may in fact have high social standing within the community due to the avoidance of taboo behaviors and consistent adherence to 'respectable' behaviors. On the other hand, someone who may have a higher income, may in fact have the lowest social status due to consistent adherence to taboo behaviors.

Because social status is behavior-based and the rules for attainment are a critical part of the training and socialization of all children, it is also perceived as being the result of choice. Each individual community member is perceived as choosing class position. Some examples of 'respectable' behaviors or characteristics are: expressed respect for all elders; consistent giving and sharing of materials within and without biological family boundaries; cleanliness and neat appearance; honesty; positive participation in community activities; consistent giving and sharing of guidance and counsel toward the development of respectability and well-being of others (particularly youths); law-abiding; having a skill, avocation, or vocation; spiritual; etc. Examples of taboo behaviors are: inattention to offspring; engaging in illegal activities; poor personal hygiene; public use of

profanity; sexual promiscuity; dishonesty; disrespect of parents and other elders, etc. Consequences individuals experience due to engaging in taboo behavior set(s) are: first, self-awareness that one is engaging in 'not respected' or 'not valued' behaviors; second, initially being reminded of the noncompliance by other community members; third, being exposed to others' reactions to the noncompliance; fourth, if 'not respected'' behavior set(s) harm or violate others, internal and/or external community resources are used to intervene; however, if an individual's noncompliance does not harm or violate others, community acceptance and accommodation follow.

Maintaining community ties with those beyond the physical boundaries of the community. Community members continue to serve as information resources regarding community events and needs as well as sources of support and encouragement to those who physically separated. Members periodically plan community reunions in order to facilitate the maintenance of ties of those who no longer live in the immediate area. The community ties often bind members for a lifetime.

These are just some very broad generalizations about functional minority communities. Not all racial/ethnic minority groups adhere to all of the above principles. It is also important to note that there are some ethnic groups represented within the majority population which have used some of the above principles as means to survive external pressures. However, the author believes that racial/ethnic minorities have continued

to do that which eludes world powers in spite of negative media, political underrepresentation, racial discrimination in all critical arenas of living (i.e. school and work), and economic impoverishment. The previous section only serves as an overview of the principles that appear to strengthen the sense of belongingness and fellowship that are common where there is unexpected 'peace'.

In general, the above principles reflect the three primary components of the transcultural caring model: the preservation of others; the accommodation of others; and, the comfortable open exchange of ideas, opinions and attitudes as an avenue toward increasing self and other awareness. All facilitate peaceful coexistence. Individuals participating in the maintenance of peace in such 'communities' can have the following experiences:

1. Feel as if they are inherently valuable;
2. Believe that their presence is important to others;
3. Believe that they are not alone in spite of being different;
4. Are aware of others perceptions of them;
5. Are comfortable with the role of conflict and disagreement in the process of learning;
6. Are more aware of self in relation to others in the world around them;
7. Are empowered by a sense of being a valued contributor in the process of maintaining a peaceful co-existence

with others;

8. Can be a victor without subjugating or alienating others;
9. Have a sense of responsibility and achievement related to the pursuit of common goals that are mutually beneficial to all parties by affiliation alone, and not by what they individually produce; and,
10. Have status and respect within the community without wealth.

Peace can be experienced to the same degree that each of us will commit to altering negative attitudes that limit our caring for self and others, that influence the effectiveness of our work with those we serve, that affect the communities within which we work and within which we choose to live. Peace is an option and the outcome of a commitment and consistent decision-making. Why would we want it any other way?

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Table 1

Racial/Cultural Identity Development

Stages of Minority Development Model	*Attitude toward Self*	*Attitude toward Others of the Same Minority*	*Attitude toward Others of Different Minority*	*Attitude toward Dominant Group*
Stage 1—Conformity	Self-depreciating	Group-depreciating	Discriminatory	Group-appreciating
Stage 2—Dissonance	Conflict between self-depreciating and appreciating	Conflict between group-depreciating and group-appreciating	Conflict between dominant-held views of minority hierarchy and feelings of shared experience	Conflict between group-appreciating and group depreciating
Stage 3—Resistance and immersion	Self-appreciating	Group-appreciating	Conflict between feelings of empathy for other minority experiences and feelings of culturo-centrism	Group-depreciating
Stage 4—Introspection	Concern with basis of self-appreciation	Concern with nature of unequivocal appreciation	Concern with ethnocentric basis for judging others	Concern with the basis of group-depreciation
Stage 5—Integrative Awareness	Self-appreciating	Group-appreciating	Group-appreciating	Selective appreciation

Table 2

Transactional Analysis of Sue's Cultural Identity Quadrants

IC-IR	IC-ER
I. (Assertive/Passive) I'm O.K. and have control over myself. Society is o.k., and I can make it in the system.	*IV. (Assertive/Assertive)* I'm O.K. and have control, but need a chance. Society is not o.k., and I know what's wrong and seek to change it.
EC-IR	**EC-ER**
II. (Marginal/Passive) I'm O.K., but my control comes best when I define myself according to the definition of the dominant culture. Society is o.k. the way it is; it's up to me.	*III. (Passive-Aggressive)* I'm not O.K. and don't have much control; might as well give up or please everyone. Society is not o.k. and is the reason for my plight; the bad system is all to blame.

Note. IC - Internal locus of control

EC - External locus of control

IR - Internal locus of responsibility

ER - External locus of responsibility