



Discovery amid Diversity

The NYSPA Division of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity Newsletter



Winter 2024 Edition: Where's the Love?

We have been a nation under stress with significant political divisiveness, hate crimes and social injustice. The war in Ukraine and the Middle East has fueled disagreements and has divided us even further. The United States Department of Justice (U.S. Department of Justice, 2023) reported hate crimes being on the rise, with 59.1% being attributed to race, ethnicity, or ancestry, 17.2% to sexual orientation, and 17.3% to religion. Also, mental health conditions among BIPOC and marginalized populations continue to rise.

We place significant focus in our trainings and work on our ethical principles and code of conduct. We are called to Respect People's Rights and Dignity, Principle E, and to do no harm,

Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence. We are called to establish relationships of trust and to be responsible in our work, Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility. We are called to be just, Principle D: Justice (Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, 2017). But... where is the love?

Years ago, as I was talking to a friend of mine, this person said to me, “Well Mayra, I don’t have a magic wand to save the world.” Although at first, I was distraught by this comment, it became one of my main topics in my presentations. As psychologists we have a responsibility to our clients and the public. We have a commitment and duty to those experiencing hate, discrimination, and social injustice. We were driven to the psychology field due to humanitarian compassion and concern for others. But fear and lack of flexibility in our thinking impairs our growth. The truth is that each of us is a magic wand to change the world. Magic wands are not exclusive to one leader or a small group of people to pursue changes in our society. Magic wands are within us. We can combat hate and racism. My invitation to you is to activate your magic wand of hope, advocacy, care, and love.

Mayra Zoe Ortiz, PsyD
2024 President -elect
Division of Culture, Race and Ethnicity

DCRE Community News

2024 Town Halls

The DCRE board is planning several town halls throughout the year, including one at NYSPA. Stay tuned for emails about where and when. Your participation will be so very welcome.

SHARE YOUR VOICE

Do you have a topic of interest you would like to appear in our newsletter? We are always looking for engaging stories, research, and topics concerning culture, race, and ethnicity. Please feel free to submit these to Dr. Ryan Tessier (dr.rtessier@gmail.com)

JOIN THE DCRE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

We are pleased to announce our new DCRE Mentorship program! Please email us if YOU are interested in serving as a mentor to other psychologists interested in DCRE. Mentors can share valuable experience with their mentees and provide support around issues including (but not exclusive to) cultural and diversity matters in their work. It is a wonderful opportunity to not only grow our field but foster professional development and community within our division. We'd like to also encourage our early career members to join and volunteer as mentors, as we embrace an environment of mutual learning and hope to learn from the knowledge and perspectives of all our members. Please reach out to Dr. Hong Ngo (dr.hongtngo@gmail.com) if you are interested.

Currently available mentors (we will continue to update this list):

Psychological assessment, developmentally disabled population: Dr. Ryan Tessier

Clinical neuropsychology, SMI inpatient populations, prescribing psychology: Dr. Edward Korber

Immigrant populations, issues of acculturation, family systems, developmental issues, working with Hispanic culture: Dr. Dinelia Rosa

This Edition's Spotlight

This month we highlight two articles discussing both the month of love and the monthly celebrating Black history. For the first article, we discuss the importance of understanding the cultural differences and the need for understanding across couples of diverse backgrounds and traditions. This month's article is from Ankit Nayal from [Flamme](#).

Cultural Differences in Relationships: Navigating Love Across Diverse Backgrounds and Traditions



In this article, Ankit Nayal explains that navigating love across diverse backgrounds is a significant challenge in our ever expanding world. People from all occupations have their own culture, their own system of values, norms, worldviews, and deeply ingrained belief systems that guide our behaviors, influence our perceptions of the world, and manage the give and takes of a relationship. Culture is best described as the “prism or a lens through which you interpret the world.” Developing cultural intelligence therefore is essential for self-awareness and for understanding the actions and reactions of others from diverse cultures.

Culture influences expectations in relationships, such as how we express affection, which roles we adopt, and the ways we manage conflicts. In multicultural relationships, especially, gaining a deep and nuanced understanding of each other's cultural influences can not only prevent misunderstandings but also add a layer of depth to the relationship. It helps each partner understand the 'why' behind their significant other's actions, making it easier to find common ground and build a resilient, harmonious relationship. In this way, culture:

1. Dictates not only what we say but how we say it. The contrast in communication styles between distinct cultures can sometimes be glaring and can affect relationship dynamics profoundly. The expression of emotions and ideas can vary dramatically between cultures. For instance, some cultures encourage an open and overt

expression of feelings, both positive and negative. In contrast, other cultures might place higher value on restraint, subtlety, and implication, where less is more, and silence can speak volumes. Awareness of these differing values can minimize misunderstandings and strengthen the emotional bond between partners.

2. Affects how we convey messages. High-context cultures rely heavily on non-verbal cues and the situation or setting to convey meaning. In contrast, low-context cultures expect explicit, straightforward communication, where the words spoken carry the primary weight of the message. Knowing where you and your partner stand on this spectrum can greatly enhance the quality of your communication and reduce potential points of friction.

3. Affects how each partner understands gender roles. People from the same culture may have differing expectations based on their own personal views or experiences. Consequently, it is essential to discuss and align your expectations with those of your partner to forge a balanced relationship.

4. Places different emphasis on family and responsibility. In some cultures, family is highly involved in relationships. They may be involved in everything from the initial stages of the relationship to resolving conflicts within the couple. On the other hand, some cultures emphasize the independence of the nuclear family unit, excluding extended family from direct involvement in the couple's life. Some cultures also place a strong emphasis on caring for elderly family members, frequent family gatherings, or even the expectation of returning 'home' at regular intervals. These expectations can put varying degrees of pressure on a relationship and need to be navigated carefully.

5. Can be subject to religious Differences: For some individuals, aligning with a partner who shares the same faith is non-negotiable, forming the bedrock of the relationship. For others, the relationship represents a confluence of different religious streams, requiring both parties to find meaningful ways to honor and respect each other's belief systems.

Religious differences often extend into the practical details of life: from celebrating different religious holidays to conflicting philosophies on child-rearing and discipline. Navigating these differences successfully necessitates a blend of compromise, open dialogue, and a mutual respect for the role faith plays in each other's lives.

6, Can create language barriers: While love is often cited as a universal language, the practicalities of day-to-day communication cannot be ignored, especially when language barriers exist. Language serves as the linchpin of relationship dynamics. Consequently, any barrier in this regard is a significant hurdle that needs strategic addressing for the relationship to thrive. Being proactive in learning each other's languages or even engaging in professional translation services for crucial life events

can prove to be invaluable. Multilingual relationships require an extra layer of effort to build and sustain effective communication.



The question then becomes how one navigates cultural variances. What can we teach our clients and patients and even learn for ourselves. The following are just some suggestions that encourage a healthy mix of cultural intelligence, personal responsibility, and the need to adapt.

1. Creating an environment that encourages candid discussion about cultural perceptions, deeply rooted values, and even fears or anxieties is crucial for relationship health.
2. educating oneself about the partner's cultural heritage, traditions, and societal norms can preemptively defuse many potential disagreements.
3. Learn the art of Compromise and Adaptation:
4. Crafting a Shared Cultural Narrative. Forging a new, hybrid culture, a unique blend of both their worlds can serve as a reference point for resolving conflicts, and it helps establish a set of mutually agreed-upon values and expectations.
5. Recognizing When conflicts reach a point where they threaten the relationship's stability, it may be beneficial to seek the expertise of counselors specializing in cross-cultural or interfaith issues. These professionals can offer coping strategies, communication techniques, and tools that can substantially improve relationship dynamics, guiding the couple towards a more harmonious existence.

The main takeaway of this article is that relationships often involve nuanced challenges requiring mutual understanding, respect, and thoughtful negotiation.

Celebrating Black History Month

February is designated Black History Month. This is a symbolic designation and reminder that Black history shall be remembered and celebrated every single day. Here is a reminder of a Game Changer, as described by APA in an interview with him, Dr. Joseph White.



Dr. Joseph White was affectionately referred to as “the father of Black psychology.” White was born on December 19, 1932, and passed away at the age of 84 on November 21, 2017. He was a distinguished psychologist, teacher, mentor, consultant, writer, and clinical supervisor. Throughout his work as a licensed psychologist, White dedicated his life to social justice and advocacy towards the need for diversity within the field of psychology.

In 1970, Dr. Joseph White published the article "Toward a Black Psychology" in a non-scientific magazine, Ebony Magazine. This important article became the cornerstone of

African American Psychology as a professional field and the rise of ethnic and cultural psychology. The article argued that psychology was created by White people with limited applicability to the African American experience. The application of White psychology to Black people resulted in weakness-oriented deficit finding, rather than an accurate appraisal of the African American experience from a strengths-based conceptualization.

For a much more detailed bio on Dr. Joseph White, please go to

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/01/game-changer>

<https://medium.com/alonesy/dr-joseph-white-the-godfather-of-black-psychology-3b9d26377ad7>

<https://blackmail4u.com/2020/02/18/dr-joseph-l-white-the-father-of-black-psychology/#more-5034>

A call for therapists: Black History and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Are Not Synonymous



During Black History Month, schools across the country will plan activities to spotlight the accomplishments of Black people. That recognition is essential, but it also poses a risk. In his article, Dr. George Farmer explains how confusion occurs in schools every year because there is a level of discomfort from non-Black teachers teaching Black history. Because of lack of

factual knowledge or lack of depth of knowledge, Schools compromise and incorporate activities about race, acceptance, and equity instead of Black history.

Dr. Farmer argues that while Black history and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) are both critically important, the two are not the same. Black History Month is meant to instill pride in young Black children to see the vast accomplishments of Black people on the foundation of the world despite the brutal hardships of the past, while at the same time educating those outside the Black community. When Black history is taught correctly in schools, there is an intentional integration of pride in Black people's accomplishments, past and present, woven into the school's culture. However, when is seen as merely a continuation of significant emphasis on diversity, valuable lessons are lost.

The difference between Black history and DEI is that the diversity in DEI is far more than Black people. Diversity is a commitment in the thinking process of race, religion, socio-economic status, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Where schools fall short is the belief that teaching Black history is diverse in content. Diversity is an intentional process beyond Blackness. It is a commitment to acceptance in thought and action. When referencing DEI, inclusion is an intentional commitment to change that is found in language. It is the acceptance of *all* people evident in the everyday words and print. Unfortunately, the emphasis on Black equality can get lost in the shuffle and Dr. Farmer offers three ways to avoid Interchanging Black History with DEI.

1. Understanding and teaching Black history while maintaining DEI. Schools must acknowledge that teaching race is different from teaching Black history. There needs to be concrete emphasis on specific historical figures and events.
2. Avoid tasking a committee to overseeing a commitment to DEI. When the committee approach is implemented, checking boxes becomes the primary concern.

All racial distinctions, cultural differences, economic status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, equity, and inclusion wind up getting grouped together, including Black history. The old saying, 'too many cooks in the kitchen' rings true here, as Black history can become diluted.

3. Allow the rightful space for DEI and Black history to run without conflating the two. Approach Black History unapologetically and intentionally to help celebrate the life, accomplishments, and contributions of Black people worldwide. Also, make an intentional commitment in thought and action to DEI. Create a space where content is presented with ample context that lends to Black history's historical significance. Commit to policy reform and analyze human resource practices to ensure DEI remains a priority in districts.

Now, what does this article mean to us as psychologists? Dr. Farmer's ideas can easily be applied to non-Black therapist attempting to teach diversity to their patients. Yet we are all subject to the same pratfalls as educators. In our role, we often help people come to embrace their racial identity and use it to strengthen their own thought process and pride. We also teach our clients to develop cultural intelligence and better understand the ways of other ethnicities. However, we do a disservice if we focus on a *general* approach rather than a personal one.

This means as a therapist you must know your client. For Black people, it is important to understand their own challenges and the context that shapes their individual lives. Though we try not to, it is easy for us to fall into stereotypes or misunderstand the severity of experiences in their community. Here it is important we help our clients develop their own pride in their culture and not just provide generalized statements encouraging them to be 'more open-minded to other cultures.

We can also have a significant impact on younger Black clients than their schools can. While schools focus on the general diversity alluded to by Dr. Farmer, we can inspire these youth to discuss their culture, identifying the pros and cons of the way they view the world through their cultural lens. We can also help them identify with famous Black leaders throughout history and engage them in a conversation about how these people must have felt when facing substantial challenges ahead of them. Learning from the deeds of the past can help shape the future and when we devote time in our sessions to celebrating Black History Month, and not just diversity, we can provide an invaluable service that can resonate with Black clients throughout their life.



Suggested Readings

This month, we have two excellent articles on Black psychologists and their contribution to the field, and two articles exploring the incredible diversity and neurological components of the psychology of love.

<https://guildservices.org/blog/8-black-psychologists-who-made-history/>

<https://allthingsdiverse.com/the-importance-of-black-history-month/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychology-yesterday/202306/the-psychology-of-love-0>

<https://www.apa.org/topics/marriage-relationships/brain-on-love>

Quality of Life Improvements for DCRE Members

Exercise Techniques

This month, we are sharing two wonderful mindfulness techniques perfect for the winter months: mindful baking and mindful nature walks.

Mindful baking

1. Make one of your favorite dishes without any distractions; turn off the phone, TV, or music. Cook in silence and concentrate on how the preparation of the dish feels.
2. Listen to the sounds you make as you peel an onion, use the mixer to cream butter and sugar, or chop a carrot.
3. Take note of the colors as you mix the ingredients together or how fresh the vegetables smell when you first put them in the sauté pan.
4. Reflect on your memories and feelings, appreciating the moment you are in and the history your favorite dish carries with it.



Mindful Nature Walks

1. Bundle up and head outside for a walk around the neighborhood, in the park, or even a few minutes sitting in your backyard.

2. Concentrate on how the air smells, how it feels as you fill your lungs; the way the birds call out or the crack of a twig as you walk.
3. Think about how different winter sounds, looks, and feels from the other seasons. Take note of the colors, energies, and qualities you sense as you move through the outdoors.

Mindfulness Poetry

This month's mindfulness poem is called **Snowy Night** by Mary Oliver.

Last night, an owl
in the blue dark
tossed an indeterminate number
of carefully shaped sounds into
the world, in which,
a quarter of a mile away, I happened
to be standing.
I couldn't tell
which one it was –
the barred or the great-horned
ship of the air –
it was that distant. But, anyway,
aren't there moments
that are better than knowing something,
and sweeter? Snow was falling,
so much like stars
filling the dark trees
that one could easily imagine
its reason for being was nothing more
than prettiness. I suppose
if this were someone else's story
they would have insisted on knowing

whatever is knowable – would have hurried
over the fields
to name it – the owl, I mean.
But it's mine, this poem of the night,
and I just stood there, listening, and holding
out
my hands to the soft glitter
falling through the air. I love this world,
but not for its answers.
And I wish good luck to the owl,
whatever its name –
and I wish great welcome to the snow,
whatever its severe and comfortless
and beautiful meaning.



Quotes for the Season

"You've gotta dance like there's nobody watching, Love like you'll never be hurt, Sing like there's nobody listening, And live like it's heaven on earth." — William W. Purkey

"To share your weakness is to make yourself vulnerable; to make yourself vulnerable is to show your strength." — Criss Jami

"Keep on beginning and failing. Each time you fail, start all over again, and you will grow stronger until you have accomplished a purpose — not the one you began with perhaps, but one you'll be glad to remember." — Anne Sullivan

"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." — Booker T. Washington

Entertainment Ideas for the Spring

1. Create a windsock, kite, pinwheel, or your own weathervane. As the weather warms, get out there and let it fly!

2. Go on a walk or bike ride. Try these various walks as you observe the natural world:

- Senses walk: Use all of your senses to experience spring. Smell the flowers or grass. Listen to birds chirping. Feel the smoothness or roughness of a rock.
- Shape scavenger hunt: Look closely and you'll find shapes all around you. Look for 3D shapes such as a cube, cylinder, or sphere.
- Color walk: Find items for every color in the rainbow.
- ABC walk: Look for items that start with each letter of the alphabet.
- Learn about trees: Identify trees by their leaves, bark, seeds, and branches.
- Nighttime walk: Listen for nocturnal creatures such as bats and owls.

3. Collect items on your walk or around the area to create art. Paint sticks or rocks, press flowers, make sun prints, or mix some flower 'potions'.

4. Plant a garden. Try planting an herb garden or planting in containers. You can also choose plants to create a garden that attracts specific animals such as a bird or butterflies.

5. Make a bird feeder and go bird watching. Spy a spider weaving its web. Watch squirrels playing atop trees. Search for animal tracks.

6. Lie down and watch clouds. Let your imaginations run wild as you spot shapes in the clouds. Go stargazing! If you have a child, allow them to stay up past their bedtime to count the stars with you.

7. Go on a picnic. Bring a blanket, some books, and some delicious sandwiches or snacks.

8. Join or set up a mindfulness retreat in your area.

Monthly Acknowledgements

Compiled and edited by Dr. Ryan Tessier, PsyD, with assistance from the DCRE board!

Board Members

President: Mayra Ortiz

Secretary: Ryan Tessier

Treasurer: Ed Korber

Member At Large: Dinelia Rose

Member At Large: Robin Dean

Supporting articles for this month's spotlight

American Psychological Association. (2017). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct. (2002, amended effective June 1, 2010, and January 1, 2017). Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>

U.S. Department of Justice (2023, November 14). FBI releases 2022 hate crime statistics. [Fact sheet]. <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics>.

<https://www.flamme.app/cultural-differences-in-relationships-navigating-love-across-diverse-backgrounds-and-traditions>

<https://www.educationnext.org/black-history-and-diversity-equity-inclusion-are-not-synonymous/>