

The Use and Abuse of Religious Beliefs in Dividing and Conquering Between Socially Marginalized Groups: The Same-Sex Marriage Debate

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This article discusses the use and abuse of religious beliefs and their role in divide-and-conquer strategies. Divide-and-conquer strategies are engaged to disrupt potential coalitions between and among marginalized group members, specifically sexual minority groups and people of color. Tensions between these groups have been exacerbated by the debate on same-sex marriage and comparisons between the discriminatory treatment of each group. A component of this discussion includes a brief exploration of one of the historical abuses of religious doctrine used to legitimize the marginalization of people of color and sexual minorities in the United States. For African Americans, one form of marginalization was reflected in criminalizing interracial marriage, and for members of sexual minority groups, a form of marginalization is denying group members the right to marry. The author also explores culturally competent and respectful disciplinary and clinical responses to religiously derived prejudice against sexual minority group members and people of color and discusses the implications for multicultural discourse.

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The multicultural psychology discourse initially focused on ethnoracial issues and on the concerns of people of color as the core of diversity studies. More recent trends have significantly expanded the multicultural paradigm to in-

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Beverly Greene received the Award for Distinguished Senior Career Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest. Award winners are invited to deliver an award address at the APA's annual convention. A version of this award address was delivered at the 117th annual meeting, held August 6–9, 2009, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Articles based on award addresses are reviewed, but they differ from unsolicited articles in that they are expressions of the winners' reflections on their work and their views of the field.

clude gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic class, disability, spiritual and religious orientations, and membership in other socially diverse and disadvantaged groups. This new focus on multiple aspects of identity emphasizes affirmative rather than deficit perspectives (Silverstein, 2006). Although in the inclusion of multiple identities, each identity was originally examined in isolation from the others, contemporary theorizing now considers the intersectionality of multiple identities in the subjective experiences of individuals, especially identities that create multiple experiences of marginalization (Cole, 2009). Multicultural perspectives are concerned with examining the effects of membership in diverse groups on the psychological development, vulnerability, resilience, and coping mechanisms of group members. New perspectives are also concerned with the role of institutional racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other oppressive ideologies and practices on the development of psychological theories and paradigms as well as on their application in the delivery of psychological services.

In this article, I chronicle the evolution of multiculturalism from an original exclusive emphasis on race/ethnicity to the current emphasis on intersectionality. I consider the fact that most people have a kaleidoscope of identities, some that are privileged and others that are marginalized. This kaleidoscopic matrix in turn creates shifting alliances and conflicts between groups and subgroups, leaving disadvantaged groups vulnerable to the manipulation of dominant groups who benefit from dividing and pitting them against one another. I then examine the special case of same-sex marriage and the ways in which religious values and doctrine have been selectively used to pit African Americans who are not gay against members of sexual minority groups, which include lesbian and gay African Americans. I argue that religious beliefs, which have traditionally been accepted at face value as cultural givens, must be examined and rejected if they are used to do harm.

Sue, Sue, and Sue (1999) acknowledged a history of resistance to including factors other than race and ethnicity in the multicultural discourse. For example, Sue et al. cited Janet Helms's concern that the inclusion of identities other than race in multiculturalism would be used to avoid the discomfort of addressing racism by diverting attention away from problems that are a result of racial inequity and the discomfort elicited by those discussions. Such diversions were seen as running the risk of permitting White Americans and an overwhelmingly White majority of American psychologists and mental health professionals to avoid confronting personal and paradigmatic racial biases. Concerns about the potential for avoiding inquiries about race were not idle.

There is a history of avoiding the scrutiny of racial bias in psychological theory, research, and practice that has had negative implications for the professional literature and

has, at times, degraded the quality of professional practice with people of color. That historical perspective extends to resistance to including factors other than gender in the earlier stages of the feminist discourse and to including factors other than sexual orientation in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual discourse (Greene, 2000a). Socioeconomic class, religion, and disability were often ignored altogether but, when mentioned, were discussed in isolation as well. Each of the aforementioned components of the discourse tended to view the identity of its focus as if it were the master identity or master locus of marginalization.

Furthermore, there are still many White Americans as well as some people of color who find it impossible to acknowledge the persistent reality of racism and its toxic effects on the well being of people of color (Greene, 1996, 2003). Fine (2002) referred to this behavior as *Eurobonics*. In Fine's analysis *Eurobonics* is one of the characteristics of White Americans that is reflected in their belief in the meritocracy myth, the concept of rugged individualism, and the inability to see their White skin privilege. The meritocracy myth and the concept of rugged individualism embody the core of the belief that everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, has the same choices and social opportunities and that goods and services are distributed equally. In this context, those who find themselves on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy or who struggle unsuccessfully to achieve are deemed lazy, lascivious, stupid, or all of those things. Maintaining these assumptions requires the erasure of race and, with it, the erasure of a history of race-based oppression and daily challenges for people of color. We know that social opportunity is not accessible equally to all citizens, but it is important to ask what and whom the meritocracy myth protects and whom it harms. Rendering the systemic locus of social disadvantage invisible and blaming its victims exists for other forms of social marginalization as well as race with similarly deleterious effects (Greene, 2000b).

Despite the importance of ethnicity as a salient focus of identity, when the focus of research is on the ethnicity of the members of a specific group, all group members cannot be regarded as if their experiences of their ethnicity are the same. People of color who are marginalized within their own ethnic group may experience ethnicity in ways that are distinctly different from the groups' dominant members (Greene, 2000b). People of color who are not dominant within their ethnic group may also have an experience of multiple marginalization that is unique if they are marginalized both within and outside of their ethnic group for having identities that are stigmatized by dominant and non-dominant groups. Theirs may be a very different experience of home than the ethnic group's dominant or mainstream members. However, appropriate questions about differences and similarities in those experiences may not even arise if no thought is given to the inclusion of and

attention to other aspects of identity as an active part of research design and analysis (Cole, 2009; Greene, 2000b). It becomes impossible to understand clients' experiences in authentic ways if psychologists view clients' multiple and salient social identities as if they develop or operate in isolation from one another. The degree to which other identities may affect the experience of ethnicity cannot remain unexamined nor can it be underestimated (Greene, 2000a, 2000b, 2003).

Understanding the degree to which one aspect of identity affects other aspects in an individual is central to developing an understanding of the more complex intersectional nature of that person's experience and his or her uniqueness. This takes on new meaning when an individual has more than one identity that is socially marginalized. Similarly, different forms of social marginalization, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so forth are not discrete but are interconnected in ways that inform the discussion of diverse beliefs and values and respect for the diversity inherent in those values.

From Multiculturalism to Intersectionality

Convergence of Race, Sex, Gender, and Class

Race, ethnicity, gender, sex, and class oppressions are interconnected and illustrate how oppressive ideologies can be mutually reinforcing. Ethnosexual mythologies (Greene, 1996, 2003) are defined as sexualized ethnic stereotypes of people of color, which vary by gender and were historically used to justify the sexual and other forms of exploitation of people of color. I view race, class, and sex as inflammatory components of news events that can elicit intense feelings about those events. The trial of wealthy Black celebrity O. J. Simpson for the alleged murder of his wife Nicole, who was White, is one example. I assert that Simpson's trial garnered prolonged unabated public scrutiny, not just because of his celebrity, but because Simpson and the accusations against him fulfilled the horrific White American sexualized stereotype of Black men as animal-like brutes who are hungry for and dangerous to White women. This inflammatory trend was also found in Anita Hill's allegations of sexual harassment, which fueled Clarence Thomas's Senate judicial confirmation hearings. Considerable outrage was directed at Hill by many African Americans, not always because she was disbelieved, but because her accusations fueled preexisting sexual stereotypes about Black men. Aside from the concerns of many African Americans about airing dirty racial laundry, many also believed that her education and class standing protected her from sexual harassment (Daniel, 1995). In 1997, a Haitian immigrant, Abner Louima, was the focus of an arrest of questionable validity outside of a night club in New York City. While in police custody, Louima was repeatedly sodomized with the handle of a bathroom plunger by arresting officers in the bathroom of the precinct (Ko-

cieniewski, 1997). Louima's injuries were so severe that he required medical attention the following day while still in custody and subsequently needed seven operations to repair his damaged colon and bladder. When a suspicious nurse at the hospital asked arresting officers to explain Louima's injuries, the officers alleged that Louima, who was not gay, must have received the injuries as a result of abnormal homosexual activities. Perhaps targeted for harassment because he was Black, Louima was sexually assaulted by White men, who were not gay, whose allegations suggested that Louima was ultimately to blame for his injuries. His attackers made no distinction between consensual sex between two gay men and a brutal assault.

Cultural critic and Princeton professor of philosophy and religion Cornel West (2005) analyzed the relationship among class, race, and sex for African Americans. West observed that distortions of Black sexuality and racialized sexual perceptions have always influenced perceptions of race that have been expressed historically for African Americans. The racialized sexual perceptions that West referred to are reflected in the degradation of Black bodies and African physical characteristics on the one hand and their exploitation on the other. The exploitation of Black bodies served as a pillar of White supremacy and the center of wealth in the Western hemisphere, bringing race, sex, and class oppression together (McNally, 2004; West, 1996, 1999, 2005). The routine rape of slave women, the need to view male slaves as hungry for and dangerous to White women, and the related need to literally castrate Black men during lynching expressed fear of the body on the one hand and desire for it on the other. The fear was not of the body literally, but of what is made of one for desiring that which is a devalued, disparaged, and taboo object. When a person desires that which is devalued and taboo, feared aspects of the self are projected onto the object of forbidden desire. To be rid of the fears and anxieties that result from coveting that which is devalued and taboo requires that the object of desire/fear be dominated, discredited, disfigured, and often destroyed. When desires were expressed across racial lines in the context of White supremacy, that desire breached rigid social boundaries. The intensity of the irrational prohibition of race mixing is reflected in the historical depiction of interracial sexual relationships and marriage as pornographic and in the criminalization of them supported by a majority of the electorate at one time. Gaines and Leaver (2002) wrote that 37 of the 50 states criminalized interracial marriage, with 22 states' laws specifically focused on Black and White unions. Nearly 30 states had such laws from the time those states were admitted to the union until the last law was removed from the books in the state of Alabama in December of 2001, despite their nullification by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1967. The long history of legitimacy that miscegenation laws enjoyed highlights the dangerousness

and tenacity of legalized discrimination despite its blatant unfairness. Once enacted, laws prohibiting same-sex marriage may prove similarly difficult to dismantle.

Biracial and multiracial people frequently elicit discomfort and hostility from others because in addition to being difficult to neatly categorize, they are expressions of that which is historically taboo. They are the tangible evidence of racial lines that have been crossed and boundaries that have been breached that expose the fundamental fallacy of those boundaries (Root, 2001; Ross, 2002). The very person of biracial and multiracial individuals challenges and then illuminates the artificiality of racial and other social categories. I am not referring to the common cultural experience that is derived in part from ethnic cultural derivatives or as a function of common treatment that is raced, gendered, sexually oriented, disabled, or aged. I am speaking about who human beings are with respect to their capacity to create important connections across boundaries based on myths about those categories and differences.

Same-Sex Relationships

The need to discredit or destroy a taboo object of desire is enacted in the violent attacks on gay men and women and on transgender persons. Perpetrators of attacks often cite their "disgust" as the rationale for such behavior or suggest that their "better natures" were compromised by the corrupting influence of the object of that desire/fear. Same-sex relationships challenge the rigid boundaries that frame the meaning of sex and gender, that frame what constitutes maleness and femaleness in ways that make same-sex relationships a threat to a system organized around patriarchal domination (Greene, 2000a, 2000b, 2008; Kaschak, 1992). Such a system requires clear distinctions between what constitutes male and female. Distinctions between male and female are maintained, in part, by embedding the object of sexual desire in the definition of normal maleness and femaleness (Kaschak, 2002). Like cross-racial sexual relations, same-sex relationships violate artificial boundaries about who is supposed to be an object of desire and for whom, who gets to decide, and who benefits most from such arrangements.

Interracial and same-sex relationships may be seen as prohibited forms of desire. Policing prohibited desire historically punished transgressors unless the expression of that desire took the form of an assault by a dominant person over a subordinate person. Slave masters who raped female slaves were tolerated. The heterosexual male who sexually assaults gay men or other vulnerable males by force is tolerated. There can be rape, but the love and mutuality that the legitimacy that marriage symbolizes disrupts the carefully constructed categories designed to keep everyone in their place in the social hierarchy in ways that maintain the status quo of dominance and subordination (Root, 2001; West, 2005). Marriage symbolizes love and

mutuality; therefore, marriages across forbidden social lines are intrinsically disruptive because they challenge not only the validity of the categories themselves, but the hierarchies of privilege and disadvantage that the categories are presumed to legitimize (Kaschak, 1992; Root, 2001; West, 2005).

West (2005) observed that real love is unpredictable. The unpredictability of real love is expressed in the way that it crosses socially constructed, arbitrary categories and boundaries, illuminating the illusions that those boundaries represent. Thus, love as expressed in the legitimacy of interracial marriages and same-sex marriages is dangerous to those in power and important for them to control. Hence, there is a history of policing love and marriage between members of different social groups and, when necessary, using selective interpretations of religious scripture or doctrine to support doing so. In a nation, republic, or group where hierarchies of worthiness have been erected around these arbitrary categories, of race, sex, social class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and so forth, when the illusory nature and illegitimacy of the category is exposed, the illegitimacy of these hierarchies and what they are used to justify is exposed as well (Root, 2001; West, 2005). The danger of real love and mutuality is, therefore, in its potential to be subversive to those who are in power because they need the people that they dominate to believe that those categories used to justify their domination are real and that the hierarchies they are used to rationalize are legitimate and just, when they are really abuses of power (Ross, 2002; West, 2005; Wildman, 1996). These social boundaries are in place to maintain and justify the system of social privilege and disadvantage status quo. When desire crosses lines that are forbidden, the transgressors may be punished by the enactment of legislation that formally denies them access to opportunities and status enjoyed by others, and they may be punished informally when they are demonized in ways that give others license to harm them through acts of random violence and harassment with relative impunity.

Multiple Identities, Privilege, and Disadvantage

When individuals have multiple identities, some of those identities or characteristics may place them in privileged groups, whereas other identities place them in disparaged groups. Those identities intersect with one another simultaneously. However, people are usually more comfortable focusing on the locus of disadvantage than on a locus of privilege (Greene, 2000b; Wildman, 1996). Therapists are no exception. Being disadvantaged may evoke empathy and concern, particularly from other people who are similarly disadvantaged; however, being privileged may evoke anger, resentment, and a lack of empathy for those struggles that are not protected by the privileged identity (Boyd-Franklin, 1993; Greene, 2003).

African Americans seem to have no problem acknowledging being descendants of slaves, of stolen people, of people who were the objects of genocide. It is doubtful, however, that African Americans would readily acknowledge being descendants of the African people in those tribes who colluded with slave traders and facilitated the selling of other Africans (Greene, 2000b). Certainly, most people would not brag about being descended from slave holders, or Nazis, or others who knowingly profited from human misery. There is shame and guilt associated with such admissions that can be readily understood in the context of the ego ideal. When confronted with the ways that we fall short of our ideal, we experience shame. Holzman (1995) suggested that when people are aware of the power and privilege differentials between themselves and others, guilt can be an immediate and powerful reaction and one that they would like to get rid of as quickly as possible. In a society that is racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist, and so forth, it is unlikely that one can have privileged characteristics and not have benefited from them.

If we conceptualize human identity as a matrix, it need not dilute our focus on any one aspect of identity, but it complicates our analysis. It is an inquiry that requires understanding which kaleidoscopic constellation of identities is a part of every individual's makeup (Jones, 1997). More complicated, nuanced matrices of identities are not accurately depicted when reduced to and understood as categories with no connection to one another. The complexity of the experiences of most people is not captured within the narrow confines of those categories when they are disconnected from one another. All people juggle the interactive and interrelated identities of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and other identities that I have mentioned simultaneously and throughout the life span (Cole, 2009; Greene, 2003). Different identities can have different levels of importance at different developmental junctures as well as in different contexts.

Current events may differentially affect an individual's awareness of feelings of vulnerability about certain aspects of their identity. Police shootings or the disproportionate use of excessive force with citizens of color, such as the Rodney King beating and trial as well as the Abner Louima assault, and the murder of gay men, lesbians, and transgender individuals, such as Matthew Shephard, Brandon Teena, and Sakia Gunn, are examples of such events. Depending on the event and the nature of the individual's previous experiences, it may heighten a sense of awareness of select identities, pride, shame, or fear associated with them.

Failing to appropriately acknowledge the existence of privileged identities also fails to accord appropriate attention to what is done with the power and influence that accompanies privilege. This is not limited to the harm one may do with the power that accompanies privilege, but

extends to the ways that such power may be strategically used to further the well being of the disadvantaged.

Privileged Identities, Power, and Elitism

The elite or privileged may be viewed as people with a disproportionate amount of wealth, status, and power in a hierarchical social structure at which they are at or near the top (West, 2005). Psychologists or persons with advanced degrees may be considered a part of an elite group. Philosopher West (2005) asserted that the challenge to people who are elites is to avoid the practice of elitism. Elitism is defined as the arbitrary or destructive use of the power or influence that is a part of being elite or privileged (West, 2005; Wildman, 1996). Avoiding elitism requires maintaining an awareness of someone else's vulnerability to injury or harm as a result of our actions or inactions. In clinical practice, therapists have an explicit responsibility to do this. It is important to be aware of the power and influence that is a function of privileged status in order to be aware of how that influence is used. An awareness of our power and influence is necessary if we are to use the power accorded elites in the service of justice and fairness. In West's analysis, the power used in the service of justice is not arbitrary and is not based on moral rhetoric but on moral legitimacy. Moral legitimacy is explicitly rooted in using power in the interest of social justice in ways that create more justice with the goal of alleviating suffering and misery, of healing, not afflicting.

West (2005) used the term *gangsters* to describe persons or institutions for whom all that matters is what they want from someone who is vulnerable to them and neither those persons nor the way they are harmed matters as long as the gangsters' aims are achieved. The gangsters that West described come in all races, sexes, sexual orientations, religious affiliations, ages, and other dispositions. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the potential for humanity and actions in the interest of human welfare and justice even in those who are associated with gangster institutions. People associated with such institutions have the capacity to use their power, even if it is just their knowledge of an institution, to assist those who do not have that knowledge at all in negotiating challenges that ease their suffering. Avoiding the acknowledgement of identities that are privileged does not mean that privilege will not be used in harmful ways; rather, it makes it more likely that it will. When privilege is used without awareness, there is a greater potential for the privileged to engage in some form of marginalization and to do harm. A lack of awareness of privilege also limits the potential to use power in the interest of alleviating suffering by promoting social justice.

Marginalization Without and Within

Marginalization that takes the form of heterosexism harms people. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)

people are harmed in many of the same ways that people of color have been harmed by the persistence of stigmatizing religious, social, and psychological folklore used to justify their exploitation and harm. When religious belief and members of the clergy in communities of color are selectively put forth to speak for the entire community in their support of unequal treatment of LGBT members, the harm done is not limited to majority LGBT people but extends to LGBT people of color and their communities as well. Many members of communities of color view LGBT members as White, male, financially well off, well educated, and therefore privileged. Although group members with these descriptors may be more visible, LGBT men and women comprise a heterogeneous group. Hence, antagonists in communities of color do not appreciate the degree to which their actions harm members of their own community. LGBT people of color are harmed in the same ways that people of color in general have been harmed when religious values were used to support the doctrines of White supremacy and ethnic domination; however, LGBT people of color face multiple marginalization. Doctrines of White supremacy and domination go back as far as the origins of our country, where they were used to rationalize behavior ranging from stealing the land we currently occupy from its indigenous inhabitants, murdering them, and colonizing the few who remained standing on reservations to developing the nation's wealth and resources on the backs of its slaves and its Mexican, Chinese, poor White, and other disenfranchised labor.

Raoul Moncayo (1998) observed that all of the members of disadvantaged groups are not equally disadvantaged and that all do not automatically learn to be understanding of disadvantage just by virtue of their marginalized identity. Many may even identify with rather than reject their oppressor or the ideology that oppresses them. Like members of dominant groups, members of marginalized groups may not wish to focus attention on their privileged identities relative to one another or their influence and power, preferring to focus solely on their disadvantage relative to the dominant group. However, both cultural realities and cultural mythologies are usually shaped and articulated by the most privileged or dominant members of any group. It is not the most vulnerable who are given license to speak for the entire group or culture (Guinier & Torres, 2002; Moncayo, 1998). Guinier and Torres (2002) referred to this practice as a tyranny of the majority in which the unchecked power of a slim majority is permitted to be completely overbearing when it comes to all minority interests. This was reflected in the recent Proposition 8 initiative designed to change California's constitution so that marital rights accorded LGBT persons by the State Supreme Court's reading of that constitution would be rescinded. West (1999, 2005) described this use of majority power as an imperialist disposition and likens imperialists to play-

ground bullies. According to West, the bully on the playground gets to determine what reality is and what morality is. The morality discerned is not a righteous morality because power is not derived from being right. It is derived from being bigger and stronger or by controlling the institutions that regulate the life on the playground (Mendieta, 2004). It is only when all of those who are marginalized come together that they become powerful enough to minimize the bully's toxic effects. In this context, however, one often confronts the divide-and-conquer practices that are too often successful at disrupting coalitions between and among marginalized groups.

Dividing and Conquering Between and Among Marginalized Group Members

Divide-and-conquer tactics on the part of dominant groups have a long history of undermining coalitions both within marginalized groups as well as between them. Jackins (1979) observed that the crucial social means for perpetuating all kinds of oppression is dividing the oppressed and pitting them against each other, so that different groups of oppressed people cooperate in oppressing each other to the benefit of dominant groups.

L. Greene (personal communication, March 3, 2006) observed that ideologies and belief systems of dominant groups often find their greatest currency in sectors of the population that are most oppressed by them. Paradoxically, they often proliferate in periods where disparities and contradictions in wealth and power are greatest. Coalitions within marginalized groups are often disrupted when materially successful group members are enlisted to chastise their vulnerable or less successful counterparts for their own misery while holding themselves up as examples of either the eradication or minimization of social inequity. Marginalized and colonized people often behave in ways that are self-defeating and that exacerbate their already precarious social condition; however, that is only half the story. Their derivative behavior is many times used to conceal the often intransigent nature of the structural assaults on them, which are systemic in nature. Their personal failing is not an appropriate place to end an analysis of their condition because that behavior always occurs in a systemic context. Messages that solely exalt personal responsibility are comfortingly seductive because they contain an element of truth. It is important for individuals to take personal responsibility for their behavior. However, marginalized people who scold their own enjoy wide media exposure and support, whereas those who put forth a systemic and more complex analysis are not routinely afforded that exposure (L. Greene, personal communication, March 2, 2006). Furthermore, when more complex analyses are discussed, they are trivialized as blaming the system and as liberal failures to encourage personal responsibility. Taking systemic factors into account is not synonymous with en-

couraging people to abdicate responsibility for their actions; however, oversimplifying it as such allows for the avoidance of examining systemic uses and abuses of power and undermines the cohesion of coalitions within marginalized groups. Such practices are used to disrupt coalitions between marginalized groups as well. Taking systemic factors into account is an essential ingredient in understanding behavior because it situates actions in a context that is necessary to understand them.

African Americans and other people of color are often sensitive to the potential for having their painful history of struggle with racism compared to and appropriated by White Americans who have other identities that are marginalized when it is convenient for Whites to claim those other identities and when coalitions and comparisons benefit them (Gates, 1993). However, people of color have experienced the disappointing dissolution of those coalitions when White Americans who have invisible marginalized identities and less experience managing the stigma associated with those identities find them dangerous or inconvenient to claim or when they are rewarded by dominant groups for their silence about racism within and outside of their ranks. Some African Americans view members of sexual minority groups as if they are all White and dominant and fail to see sexual minorities as a racially heterogeneous group. Persons with this view may also minimize the toxic effects of heterosexism because they view it as a concealable difference. Viewing sexual minorities as White and dominant can lead to the assumption that White persons are unlikely allies in African Americans' struggles with racism. LGBT men and women of color are ignored. Marginalization may be viewed in this case only through the prism of race. Furthermore, joining coalitions with people of color against racism may lead to abusive treatment and situations that majority identity persons do not routinely experience, are less prepared to manage, and from which they may wish to escape as quickly as possible (Pinderhughes, 1989). For these reasons, people of color are often suspicious of comparisons between racism and other forms of oppression, as well as the potential for successful coalitions between themselves and marginalized White Americans. The opportunistic appropriation of struggles with racism and the formation of cross-racial coalitions, which are subsequently abandoned when there is a cost involved, trivializes the challenges of racism for people of color. This, in conjunction with the long history of being victimized at the hands of majority persons and having that victimization denied, leaves many people of color even more uncertain about the legitimacy of such alliances. Such apprehensions create situations that are rife for exploitation by those who benefit from undermining coalitions between those groups.

In the aftermath of the 2008 elections, White Americans who are members of the LGBT communities asserted that

African Americans voted in such large numbers in favor of Proposition 8 as to have a greater responsibility for passage than other factors or groups. During the course of campaigns for the passage of the referendum, Black ministers who do not support same-sex marriage were often given a great deal of media exposure, whereas those who did not support Proposition 8 were marginalized. Prior to the election, the California chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), one of the nation's oldest, largest, and most conservative civil rights organizations, openly opposed the proposition (Serwer, 2009). In March 2009, the NAACP's national office publicly announced its opposition to Proposition 8 as the unfair singling out of one group for discrimination and urged California courts to repeal the measure (Johnson, 2009). Long-time civil rights activist Julian Bond, in his keynote address to the Human Rights Campaign in March 2009, rendered a scathing critique of many of the rationales used to support the measure and exhorted all citizens who believe in social justice to support repeal of the measure (Johnson, 2009). Bond's words and the NAACP's stance received very little coverage. Although a majority of African American voters voted in favor of the measure and many do not support same-sex marriage, such assertions ignore the presence of many other factors that contributed to the failure to defeat the bill as well as many diverse components of homophobia within African American communities. An extensive discussion of those components is beyond the scope of this article; however, the reader is referred to Greene (2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2008). Although homophobia is a persistent problem in African American communities, depicting African Americans as intrinsically antigay serves only to further exploit tensions between two groups who have faced similar forms of ill treatment from the dominant cultural status quo in the United States (Gates, 1993; West, 1996, 1999, 2005). It is important to ask who benefits most from divisions between these groups.

Members of ethnic minority groups who have a long history of being victims of domestic terrorism may have a perceived need to clearly identify those who are the enemy and those who are safe by narrowly defining the boundaries of identity that define their group members' authenticity. There may be a need to perceive the group as more homogeneous than it could ever realistically be. The problem with such assumptions is that safety is presumed to be found in similarity, shared characteristics, circumstances, treatment, or identity. History has proven that assumption to be unreliable. People who are similar are not always safe; those who are different are not always the enemy. Safety and danger must be discerned as a function of behavior, not identity or demographics. When individuals are viewed through multiple identity and intersectionality paradigms, the parameters of similarity and difference become

broader, multilayered, and more complex than a master identity can accurately depict. In this context, determining who is a potential ally and who is dangerous is a complex endeavor. African Americans and other people of color have painful narratives of negative stereotypes being used to rationalize their undeserved ill treatment. Although that history and its painful sequelae must be validated by therapists as well as by our society when group members or clients seek redress or express appropriate outrage at such treatment, it should not be used to silence or invalidate the damage that results from discrimination inflicted on members of other marginalized groups, such as LGBT men and women. Furthermore, LGBT men and women are represented across ethnicity, social class, religious affiliation, ages, and all other social groups. No marginalized group that invalidates the suffering of LGBT men and women fails to harm their own group members as well.

Successfully understanding and disarming oppressive ideologies and institutional discrimination requires an understanding of how they are connected to and serve one another, how they are mutually reinforcing, and how an exclusive focus on any one, as the master oppression, can, in fact, facilitate rather than mitigate their continued practice. In the mad scramble to claim most oppressed or most worthy status, divide-and-conquer tactics become most effective at separating potential allies among marginalized people and groups from one another. The result is that the most privileged and dominant ruling elite flourish and always to the continued detriment of their disadvantaged counterparts.

Respect for Diverse Valuative Frameworks and Religious Derived Prejudice

As culturally and ethically competent educators, researchers, and clinicians, one of our fundamental and most cherished values is that we do not harm people; our attempt is to heal, not afflict (Greene, 2006). One of the driving forces behind our practice as culturally competent psychologists is the value of those personal and professional activities that promote the betterment of human welfare. Bettering human welfare is reflected in activities that strive for the fairness and inclusiveness that is embodied in social justice. Recent discussions in the multicultural discourse have addressed the issue of respect for diverse cultural and religious valuative frameworks, orientations, and beliefs. Some of this has been prompted by the intense debate about same-sex marriage and the heightened visibility of LGBT people asserting their right for full equity under civil law with increased intensity. However, when we attempt to determine what constitutes respect, it sometimes appears as if only the unexamined acceptance and adherence to such values would be so defined. Religious values of clients and members of our profession about same-sex desire and sexual orientation feature prominently in those

discussions, with the assumption that there is an inevitable conflict between them. Cultural and religious values are often discussed in the multicultural literature and debates not only as if they are homogeneous, but as if they are independent of a broader social milieu that is blatantly patriarchal and homophobic. Cultural and religious values are often discussed as if they are independent of a racist, sexist, classist, and ableist social context and as if those beliefs are intrinsically protected from any kind of scrutiny or critique. Determining how to engage in a respectful critique is challenging. Religious belief systems, religious institutions, and members of the clergy are all part of the human endeavor and, as such, are not infallible. Religious affiliation does not separate the world into the good people and the bad people. Everything that takes place among human beings outside of religious congregations takes place within them as well, because they are all part of the human condition. There is also a difference between attempting to be in spiritual connection with a deity and presuming to speak for the deity or presuming that the deity personally approves of whatever actions you choose to take against people when you disagree with or disapprove of them. Hence, religious and spiritual perspectives and their use are no more entitled to be free of scrutiny in therapies and in the broader society than any other belief, particularly if there is reason to believe that their implementation will harm someone. Religious groups and doctrines are also extremely diverse, which is why there exists a wide range of congregations within the same denominations. There is as much diversity within those groups as there is between them because there are many people of good faith who read the same text in the Bible, Koran, or Torah and both see and believe very different things. That represents in some ways part of the transcendence of faith, that God speaks to each in his own voice.

Louis Farrakhan, the 9/11 terrorists, W. D. Muhammad (son of the late Elijah Muhammad), Malcolm X, and millions of people throughout the world are all Muslims. However, that tells us little about Muslims. Furthermore, we do not view the 9/11 terrorists as representative of the Muslim faith because they used their understanding of Islam to egregiously harm people that we do not think should have been harmed. Thoughtful people understand that the behavior of terrorists has little to do with the teachings of the prophet. Al Hibri (Moyers & Ganguzza, 2002) pointed out that Islamic terrorists and those in the West who would like to demonize Islam as a violent religion often refer to a line in the Koran that does say, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." However, she pointed out that they fail to quote the rest of that verse, "but forgiveness is better" (Moyers & Ganguzza, 2002). Al Hibri explained that in examinations of actions attributed to religious doctrine, we must separate the meaning of religious belief and faith in scriptural text from the selective use of

certain texts in isolation from an entire document to further the aims of dominant groups in their quest to maintain the political status quo in which they are dominant and maintain power.

Similarly, members of the Ku Klux Klan, Nazis and their sympathizers, Martin Luther King, Condoleezza Rice, and George Bush are all Christians, but this tells us little about Christians or Christianity. Martin Luther King perhaps had more in common with Gandhi than with any of the people previously mentioned, yet Gandhi was Hindu. It is unlikely that we would ask the representatives from the Ku Klux Klan to be the spokespersons in a discussion about Christianity because their Christian values are used to support an agenda that is aimed at the destruction of people that we do not think it is permissible to harm. This raises issues that are important when we convene forums for the purpose of establishing dialogues across differences, particularly but not exclusively religious and spiritual differences. The first, who we ask to be the representative for any large diverse religious group in any discussion, sets the stage for the kind of dialogue we can have and whether it is a dialogue or a hateful diatribe. If we choose people who have the most extreme and exclusive positions, it does not create dialogue. Such choices often contribute to more tension and can make worldviews seem much farther apart than, in fact, they are. It can also be used to elevate marginal and extreme ideologies to a level of influence and credibility they do not deserve. The second issue is what happens when faith-based values are being used to target people when there is not agreement about whether it is permissible to harm them. People who are members of sexual minority groups are still legitimate targets of random violence, domestic terrorism, and unequal treatment/protections under the law. Discrimination against sexual minority group members is not only encouraged and tolerated, it is legally required in some contexts. They are discriminated against in many jurisdictions in the same ways that states practicing racial segregation, criminalizing interracial marriages, and carrying out other infringements and denials of civil liberties and constitutional rights were given license to do until the Federal government, in the context of social movements and advocacy, determined that such practices violated the constitutional rights of free citizens.

Legitimized inequality gives license to harm. The question of whether psychologists are being appropriately tolerant of a different valuative framework that causes harm becomes the subject of debate when the people who are a focus of a groups' harmful actions are deemed expendable or deserving of ill treatment. However, in the context of our goal to act in the interest of human welfare, no one is expendable, and there are no groups of human beings that it is permissible to harm.

The Selective Use and Abuse of Religious Texts

Most religious texts have internal inconsistencies that are a function of ambiguities in translation over time, manipulation by political leaders who sought to use those texts for their own political advantage and gain, and a part of the mystery and transcendence of faith. Al Hibri (Moyers & Ganguzza, 2002) argued that the ultimate congruence of those inconsistencies is based on a leap not of fact but of faith that the contradictions will be reconciled with increased spiritual awareness, most often considered a life-long goal.

Homophobia/heterosexism among African Americans is explained in part by the argument that, because African Americans are largely a part of Christian traditions, African Americans would understandably be uncomfortable with nontraditional sexual orientations. This argument is presented as if the interpretation of doctrine and leadership of all Christian denominations and all members of that group are in agreement on this point. That would be a gross overstatement. There is a diversity of perspectives both within African Americans as a group and within Christians. Furthermore, African Americans did not come to the United States as Christians but rather as slaves often forbidden from practicing their indigenous beliefs. Slaves, for the most part, were pieces of property without souls in an evil enterprise supported by mainstream Christian denominations. Indeed, many slave quarters and auctions were held on church property. This is not an invalidation of Christianity *per se*; however, it serves as another potent example of how religion can be hijacked. Once hijacked, Christian and other religious beliefs can be used to support the selective abuse of people in our society who are unpopular, those who make others uncomfortable, or those for whom there is a desire to exploit their labor, territory, or possessions without their consent or adequate compensation. Furthermore, Christian theology has been an important source of liberation theology for African Americans in their struggle against racism. This clearly illustrates the capacity for African Americans and other groups to use religious doctrine and scripture selectively in ways that are affirming and support social justice and fairness rather than the status quo of social pathology reflected in the many ways that it is used to reinforce and justify homophobic rhetoric and behavior.

It is problematic but not unusual for religious teachings and doctrine to be selectively used to support behavior that maintains rather than challenges oppressive social hierarchies at different points in our history. For example, in a patriarchal culture, there are many verses from the Bible, the Koran, and the Torah that can be used to suggest that women should occupy a second-class citizen status. In the Bible, there are passages that were once widely used to suggest that God intended for white skinned people to

dominate people of color. Similarly, in a homophobic culture, selective verses can be used against LGBT men and women. History, however, has shown that the Bible and other religious texts have been selectively used to support miscegenation laws, racial segregation, the holocaust, slavery, sexism, genocide toward Native Americans, and the forced sterilization of people deemed mentally and therefore morally defective among other historical abuses of nondominant groups.

Peter Gomes, Harvard University dean of the College of Divinity, wrote,

The legitimating of violence against homosexuals, Jews, women and Blacks, as we have seen, comes from a view that the Bible stigmatizes these people and therefore they are fair game. . . . If the Bible expresses such a prejudice, then it can't be wrong to act on that prejudice. . . . Every anti-Semite and racist has used that argument with demonstrably devastating consequences, as our social history all too vividly shows. (Gomes, 1996, pp. 144–172)

The more uncompromising, judgmental, perfectionist, self-righteous, and controlling a person becomes, the more they alienate others, and the more one may observe a compensatory defense against their fragile sense of self-esteem or their projection of their own sense of inadequacy or rage onto others (Booth, 1991). Their sense of self can remain intact only if other people come to be demonized and then viewed as bad, evil, or inferior if they do not have the same view of the world. When people are deemed evil or inferior, it becomes easier to distance rather than reach out to them and to justify such distancing. Moreover, once at a distance from them, it becomes easier to make it permissible to hurt them. This kind of behavior and rhetoric is clearly evident in the language of hate speech used by people who are actually preaching hatred and bigotry and using religious doctrine or selective verses from religious texts to support their behavior. Obsessive concern with minutiae, rules, and ritual can easily replace the spirit in spirituality that is aimed at bringing people across conflicts and tensions together as part of the human condition, regardless of their differences. For many people who adopt this position, religious doctrine or belief is used to relax their sense of conscience about the realistic abusive nature of their behavior toward others and the damage they inflict (Booth, 1991).

A potent symbol of domestic racial terrorism and White supremacy in the 20th century was a burning cross. Paradoxically, the cross is the powerful Christian symbol of the redemptive love of Christ and God's love for all humankind, appropriated by the Ku Klux Klan in its reigns of terror directed at Black and other citizens. In that temporal context, psychologists understood expressions of self-hate among African American or Jewish clients as a function of a society that taught them to despise themselves and others to despise them, making them unjust targets of violence.

Hence, beliefs about sexual orientation do not occur in a historical or professional vacuum, but in a much broader social context in which some groups are privileged and others are socially disadvantaged. In this context, all values are not benign, and the way marginalized group members feel about themselves is related more to the pervasiveness of unquestioned negative stereotypes and ill treatment of them as opposed to their group membership per se (Lewis, Derlega, Griffin, & Krowinski, 2003; Mathy & Lehman, 2004).

Although the ethics of our profession dictate that we be accepting and respectful of human diversity and that diversity is reflected in differences in values, some of which are based on religious and spiritual perspectives, it also obliges us to do no harm (APA, 2007). It is important to acknowledge that some values, if acted on, may cause harm to people.

Polygamy is a frequently referred to relationship in the Bible; however, our society not only fails to endorse such relationships, it criminalizes them. Hence, we do not permit people to act on their beliefs just because they are religious or spiritual in origin. Distinctions are made between religious doctrine/law and civil law. This raises the question of why only selective, literal interpretations of some religious texts apply when LGBT people are the focus of discussion. Such duplicity in the use of religious text against people is not uncommon. A central question is whether the value in question supports or requires the scapegoating, marginalization, or estrangement of one group or groups from others in ways that cause harm. Does the valuative framework in question explicitly devalue a group and, in so doing, harm them? Every group in human history that has practiced social domination or genocide against another group did so out of a valuative framework, and such frameworks were often couched in religious belief or conviction. All had values to support their behavior that were often explained as a religious mandate, and they often enjoyed wide popular support. In those instances, for the most part, the dominant group or groups sought to impose their agenda on subordinate group members. LGBT men and women may be seen as a subordinate social group that some valuative frameworks deem inferior, defective, immoral, and even dangerous. On that basis, such groups may fail to condemn harm directed at LGBT people, and/or they may justify or even rejoice in their harm. LGBT people are harmed when they are denied equal access to social privileges and opportunities and when people sanction or fail to deplore random violence directed toward them (Lewis et al., 2003). In the context of patriarchal values and the contempt for same-sex relationships that continues to permeate the culture, religious doctrine is selectively used to support the social status quo. In this case, the homophobia that is a persistent feature of Western culture is a part of the context of some religious values and

the lives of LGBT people. The harm that is a function of their treatment and the compromised psychological functioning that sometimes results from it has been historically minimized or attributed simply to their group membership, thus blaming them for their dilemma. Clearly religious and spiritual beliefs and valuative frameworks can be powerful when used to bring families as well as social groups together in the spirit of love, harmony, and attempts to better understand one another, even in the midst of great conflict. However, they can also be used to encourage splitting, projection, fear, scapegoating, and even violent attacks against those who are deemed worthy of attack by demonizing them. Therefore, the issue of respect for diverse valuative frameworks is not really about the content of the value but the way the value is being used and what happens to people when it is used in particular ways. Multiculturalism seeks to contribute to the betterment of human welfare through a commitment to social justice and inclusiveness. As such, it must critique social pathology because failing to do so results in further harming victims of that pathology.

Summary and Conclusion

Multiple identities, conflicts of allegiances and loyalties, and those paradigms are a conundrum that psychologists must unravel and find ways of integrating into psychological theory, research, and practice. In the 21st century, we are compelled to examine the ways that multiple identity paradigms increase our understanding of the shifting conflicts and alliances between and within marginalized groups and individuals. Sexual minority groups, people of color, and the ways those groups are vulnerable to the manipulations of dominant groups have been the focus of this discussion. I have examined the role of the use of religious beliefs to disrupt the potential for coalitions between members of these two groups, even though both have been subjected to similar forms of discrimination through the policing of marriage. This article has also explored ways of understanding religious beliefs as extremely diverse entities and the importance of examining how beliefs are being used rather than their doctrinal content. Religious beliefs can be used in ways that bring people together across differences and conflicts and that focus on reconciliation, as sources of liberation and fairness. However, they have and continue to be selectively used to support destructive social pathologies, such as heterosexism, racism, and sexism. As culturally competent psychologists, we must be accepting of diverse beliefs and valuative frameworks; however, we are also responsible for scrutinizing beliefs and behaviors and identifying those that are harmful when they are used to cause rather than alleviate unfairness and suffering.

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