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**Bibliographic Essay:****African (Black) Psychology:****Transformed and Transforming****Wade W. Nobles**

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**I. Introduction**

Several years ago I was asked to write a review essay on black psychology. The original guideline for this assignment was to respond to the questions, why is there a need for a black psychology and where is it (the field) going? However, at that time (circa 1983) I believed, as I do now, that such a framework prevented me from accurately expressing the vital nature and the historical legacy of the black psychology movement. In attempting nevertheless to approximate the original interest in this essay I watched this paper take several shapes and forms, grow and die only to come alive again. It is in this last attempt that I have accepted the inevitable truth that the structure and limitations of an article of this kind may be incapable of capturing and reflecting the essential passion and full integrity of African (black) psychology. With that realization stated at the outset, and with a desire to at least provide some guidance in understanding the vital nature and historical legacy for the reascension of African (black) psychology, this article will do the following: (1) identify the African philosophical roots of the human discipline known as psychology; (2) discuss the inadequacies of western psychology's view of and application to African peoples; and (3) provide a limited review of contemporary black psychology's reascension.

**II. Ancient African Roots of Psychology**

Many thinkers, both black and white, have viewed the development of African (black) psychology as nothing more than the "need" of some psychologists who happen to be black to create an area of expertise which gives them preeminence in some aspects of

[4]

the general discipline of psychology. This point is illustrated by recent collections of psychological studies on black people by black and white scholars (Guterman, 1972; Deutsch, 1968; Prather, 1977; Jenkins, 1982). The "tone" or colour of their subjects is the only thing that distinguishes and gives legitimacy to these "black" psychology studies. It is, in my opinion, not true that African (black) psychology can be relegated to either general psychology which is being "blackened" or to a sub-speciality based on the race of the subjects. In either case, African psychology amounts to nothing more than a style or a passing fad.

More accurately, the development and reascension of African psychology should be viewed as the recovery of a mode of thought and analysis which has laid dormant in the beingness of African (black) peoples. This paper will argue that the contemporary emergence of black psychology is evidence of an original and older body of knowledge correcting itself. The pivotal thesis in the field (cf. Cedric X, 1975) clearly argues that the discipline of African (black) psychology is rooted in, and therefore must explicate and understand, ancient human thought. Accordingly, African psychology is an effort to recreate a psychology of human beingness and has the potential to revitalize or be an alternative to general psychology. In starting with ancient human thought, this author recognizes that the blacks of ancient Egypt (Kmt) were the first philosophers and psychologists. An analysis of the reascension of black psychology should begin, therefore, with the establishment of critical thought in ancient Africa and move to its clarification during ancient Africa's "naissance". The impact of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian modification of ancient African thought is also critical to the understanding of the historical backdrop of African (black) psychology.

It is a thesis of this paper that the European modification of ancient thought explains the resultant problems and inadequacies of modern western psychology and provides the context within which contemporary black psychologists are struggling to correct.

African naissance is used to mean that most of the "new" or first human inventions were initially recorded as African experiences. The European (re) naissance was accordingly a revival of art, literature and learning based on "classical" sources which had their origins in ancient Africa. After years of denial, a consensus has developed around new evidence that the origins of human civilization were in Africa and the initial creators were black. This point

[5]

has been noted and advanced by black scholars (Rogers, 1961; Snowden, 1970; James, 1976; Williams, 1976; Diop, 1967; Asante, 1980; Jackson, 1980), as well as other scholars (Churchward, 1978; Delubicz, 1961; Adams, 1977).

The whole field of Egyptology and the treatment of African contributions to human civilization can be understood as partly the transubstantive errors of investigators who gave erroneous meaning to "things" African (Nobles, 1983). However, a more complete understanding of the treatment of "things" African can be better explained as "scientific colonialism", amounting to the political control of knowledge which is carried out by a sophisticated process of falsifying the production of information and ideas (Nobles, 1979). Parenthetically, the process of scientific colonialism can be viewed as having three distinct features. The first is "unsophisticated falsification" where facts, information and ideas are simply destroyed and/or falsified. The second feature, "integrated modificationism", is where original facts, information and ideas are distorted, suppressed or modified in order to fabricate "new" facts and ideas. The third feature of scientific colonialism is "conceptual incarceration". The knower is given a set of "concepts" and definitions to engage in the process of knowing. The false or incorrect concepts themselves, however, inhibit the process of knowing and the knower becomes a prisoner of alien "ideas". The notion of conceptual incarceration allows us to understand the delimiting quality of faulty or erroneous concepts provided in the process of scientific understanding. The uses of wrong concepts prevent (i.e. incarcerate) the scientist from fully understanding the phenomena under investigation. Conceptual incarceration essentially leads to cognitive confusion. Under the process of scientific colonialism, knowing is rigidly controlled by the methodology or mechanisms of destruction, distortion, fabrication, suppression and confusion (Hilliard, 1978).

The necessity of nineteenth-century "Aryan" scholars to falsify western civilization's black ancestry is part of the process of scientific colonialism. The African naissance represented the longest period in human development where humanity invented, experimented, and adopted beliefs about the origin and structure of the universe and mankind's nature and role in the universe.

In recognizing that the ancestors of African-Americans, as well as all modern-day African peoples, were the naissance people, one must also recognize that none of the feats or accomplishments of mankind's naissance could have been accomplished without a system of thought (philosophy) to guide them. The "wonders of the world" are the physical remains of the ancient African mind. The ideas which supported the civilization would be the "things" to be protected.

[6]

It has been suggested that the ancient battles which were fought in Egypt over territory were behavioural evidence of the "conflict of minds" (Ngubane, 1979). The battles over unification of upper and lower Egypt were more than battles to unify a land mass. They were struggles to protect the African naissance from foreign destruction, corruption and/or modification.

Of the many ancient African ideas about the nature of mankind and human conduct, the two which seem to be central in understanding Africa's contribution to the development of psychology are related to the question of *being* and *becoming*. The African ideas relevant to these two concerns are found in the beliefs that (1) human beings and society are governed by divine inspiration and (2) the process of becoming is governed by the notion of the complementarity of difference (Diop, 1967). With regard to the Memphite theology, one of the most noted translators of ancient Memphite wisdom was the prophet Moses. History and the Bible inform us that Moses was the author of "Genesis". Yet Moses was an Egyptian priest, a hierogrammat and learned in the mysteries of Egyptian wisdom. Moses lived during the twenty-first Egyptian dynasty (around 1100 B.C.) which suggests that his training had been guided by centuries of ancient African development. Accordingly, it is not surprising to see that the creation story of Genesis (1100 B.C.) coincides rather closely with the creation story of the Memphite theology of the ancient black inhabitants of the city of Memphis (around 4-5000 B.C.). What this obviously suggests is the fact that the Genesis of Moses (tenth century B.C.), the first book of the Pentateuch (eighth century B.C.), and the doctrines of the early Ionian philosophers (fifth century B.C.) can all be placed on a time line which finds the birth of their common "ideas" in the depth of black Africa at the city of Memphis (James, 1976).

In psychological terms what is important here is that through an analysis of Memphite text, one is able to see how the Memphite theology speaks to the ancient African recognition that (1) all things are created by and are of God and (2) all phenomena are characterized by "unity" through the complementarity of masculine and feminine principles. Hence, the "psychology" of the human naissance i.e., ancient black psychology, would incorporate these two "ideas" as the substance of human behaviour. A mutated version of these two ideas or notions is ultimately what modern scholars recognize as Greek thought and to the extent that western psychology is also based on Greek philosophy, it has its roots in the Greek mutation of ancient African thought. The mutated versions of ancient African ideas, their misrepresentation, and premeditated falsification is the core basis, in the opinion of this writer, of the current inadequacies of western psychology.

[7]

In recognition that the modern discipline of psychology emerged from the historical Aryan sense of consciousness and their resultant perception of their resolute position in the universe, the inadequacies of western psychology for all people and all cultures becomes embarrassingly self-evident. The correction of these historical misinterpretations and falsifications is one of the main reasons for the (re) ascension of black psychology. To the extent that African (black) psychology can be viewed as a rejection of the faulty psychologizing which evolved from the Greek mutation, it can also be viewed as an attempt to reassert the African "law of being" as the cornerstone of human psychology. The latter point we shall return to later in this discussion.

### *The Greek Mutation and Western Psychology*

The analyses of the origins of Greek philosophy by scholars like George James (1976), Chancellor Williams (1976), Frank Snowden (1970) and Yosef Ben-Jochannan (1971) have strongly established that the legacy of human wisdom, that many believed is derived from the golden age of Greek philosophy, is misplaced or erroneous. James (1976), for instance, noted that the period between 600 B.C. and 322 B.C. or from the time of Thales to Aristotle was not conducive to the development of philosophical systems and that, in actuality, Greek philosophy was imported from ancient African. He notes, for example, that:

**The teachings of the Egyptian mystery system travelled from Egypt to the island Samos and from Samos to Croton and Elea in Italy, and lastly from Italy to Athens in Greece through the medium of Pythagoras, and the eclectic and late Ionic philosophers. Accordingly, Egypt was the true source of the mystery teachings and therefore any claim to such origin by the ancient Greeks is not only erroneous but must have been based upon dishonest motives (p. 1631).**

If one examines closely the teachings of Greece's most notable philosophers, Socrates (cf. Rogers, 1901), Plato (Jowett, 1937; Morrow, 1962) and Aristotle (cf. Jaeger, 1962), the presence of ancient African thought becomes clearly evident. Socrates, for instance, adopted values to govern his life which were the methods used in the ancient African mystery schools to enable the initiates to cultivate "the virtues". His idea of "mind" or "nous" as intelligence, which underlies creation, is a representation of omniscience or omnipotence symbolized by the "open eye of Osiris" (cf. James, 1976).

[8]

The statement, "Man know Thyself", which Socrates is most noted for, can be found inscribed on the outside of the mystery temples of ancient Africa (Egypt) and one doesn't have to stretch the imagination to see how the African belief in the complementarity of male and female attributes of God could be mutated to the "principle of opposites" and reflect itself in Socrates' doctrines of opposites and harmony. Finally, Aristotle's doctrines of immortality, salvation of the soul and the Summum Bonum are examples of the ancient African theory of salvation (cf. James, 1976). Clearly, Socrates' ultimate indictment, condemnation and death for introducing "foreign gods" and corrupting Athenian youth should raise the question, what was the source of his Greek teachings which made them both foreign and dangerous?

History further informs us that Socrates' student, Plato, (1937) escaped from Athens after the death of Socrates and returned, after twelve years away, to begin his famous academy. Parenthetically, it should be noted that one could view the academy of Plato as a mutation of the African University or mystery system. Plato himself acknowledged and gave reference to Africa as the source of Greek philosophical thought. He in fact stated that:

We Greeks are in reality, children compared with these people with traditions ten times older. And as nothing of precious remembrance of the past would long survive in our country, Egypt has recorded and kept eternally the wisdom of the old times. The walls of temples are covered with inscriptions and the priests have always under their own eyes that divine heritage, . . . the generations continue to transmit to successive generations those sacred things unchanged: songs, dances, rhythms, rituals, music, painting, all coming from time immemorial when gods governed the **earth in the dawn of civilization (p. 424).**

With an awareness of the African origin, it is rather easy to see that the complementarity of masculinity-femininity of ancient Africa resulted in Socrates' doctrine of opposites which, in turn, found expression in Plato's theory of ideas wherein he makes a distinction between the ideas (noumena) and their copies (phenomena). Plato himself admitted that his role in Greek philosophy amounted to no more than a recorder of Socrates' wisdom (which we now know to be African). He stated in his Second Epistle that, "There is not and never will be a work of Plato; the works which now go by that name belong to Socrates, embellished and rejuvenated".

[9]

Plato's (cf. Morrow, 1962) use of "the doctrine of the mind" and "the doctrine of the Summum Bonum" like Socrates' before him can be traced to the ancient African mystery systems (cf. James, 1976). Similarly, the attributes of the soul and justice found in Plato's doctrine of "the ideal state" point to their own origin found more directly in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. A further similarity is provided by Williams (1976) who points out that African civilization created "chiefless society" where democracy reached its highest development. People actually governed themselves without chiefs, self-government was a way of life and law and order were taken for granted. Like most things, the African "chiefless society" predates Plato's "ideal state".

### *The Aristotelean Conspiracy*

History again informs us that Aristotle was Plato's pupil for twenty years. He also became the tutor of Phillip the Great's son, Alexander. As tutor to the son of the conquering king of Macedonia, Aristotle was charged with educating and influencing the development of the future Alexander "the Great". Hence, much of Aristotle's time must have been spent being exposed to "ideas" which were the mental currency of the period that Phillip, and later Alexander, were set upon conquering. Where Plato gave credit, Aristotle rejected and reformed his former teacher's teachings. Seeing philosophy as a subject or a tool, Aristotle departed from the Platonic tradition and thereby began to sever the ties that Greek philosophy had with Africa. Hence, the conspiracy was for Aristotle to claim authorship; eliminate any evidence of the true origin of this thinking and, thereby, guarantee Alexander's control and dominance over the known world. As one of the earliest acts of scientific colonialism Aristotle, through the access provided by Alexander's victorious army, falsified the origin of Greek thought.

Clearly Aristotle saw the "foreign invention" (i.e. philosophy) which caused Socrates to forfeit his life, as a political weapon which would assist Alexander in concretizing his rulership. Through a methodology of revision and modifications, Aristotle shaped, forged, and falsified a Greek legacy.

One can suggest that the conspiracy between Aristotle and Alexander was one of conspiring to falsify the African roots of Greek thought and to fabricate Greece's authorship (Dryden, 1864). As evidence of this conspiracy one simply needs to

interpret Plutarch's recording of a letter from Alexander the Great to Aristotle (cf. Dryden, 1864). In this letter or message Alexander wrote:

Alexander to Aristotle, greeting. You have not done well to publish your books of oral doctrine; for what is there now that we excel others in, if those things which we have been particularly instructed in be laid open to all? For my part, I assure you, I had rather excel others in the knowledge of what is excellent, than in the extent of my power and dominion. Farewell (p. 805).

The message of this letter seems rather clear. Until Alexander gave Aristotle the keys to the libraries of the African mystery system, Aristotle, by his own admission, had only written books on nine different areas. The books Aristotle is now credited with range from 400 to 1000. With Aristotle knowingly representing himself as the author of 400 to 1000 books, his commander-in-chief could feel more comfortable in representing Greek/Macedonian culture as excelling all "others in the knowledge of what is excellent".

With the exception of Rene Descartes, psychology's contemporary development depended heavily on works authored and/or maybe "claimed" by Aristotle. Aristotle, in this regard, is credited with influencing western psychology in several major ways (i.e., locating the intellectual and motive features of the mind) in the natural sciences; presenting the senses of objects of study; inventing the first laws of learning; emphasizing the role of early experiences, education and habit to the formation of psychological dispositions (Jaeger, 1962; Nuyens, 1948).

Clearly, western psychology owes much of its current structure and orientation to Greek philosophy. However, if Greek philosophy is in fact mutated African ideas, then the failure or weakness of western psychology may be found in its mutated roots or stolen legacy. Hence, in suggesting that Aristotle played a role in the Greek mutation, one simply gives licence to the recognition that to the extent that Aristotle influenced the development of western psychology, the discipline of western psychology should also be called into question. The body of fact and opinion called psychology should be re-examined for the implicit confusion which invariably remains when one attempts to revise/modify sometimes conflicting ideas which are derived from differing world-views.

### III. Western Psychology: Its Inadequacies and Views of African People

Many psychologists, both black and white, have noted the inadequacies of western psychology. In general these reviews, (cf. Akbar, 1981, 1985; Asante, 1980; Baldwin, 1976; Clark, 1972; Jackson, 1979; King, 1976 and Nobles, 1973) have suggested that the failure of western psychology is found in both its approach to and conception of the study of mankind.

Psyche in the word psychology means "soul". It, as Akbar (1985) pointed out, was derived from the ancient African "Sakhu" which meant understanding, illumination, the eye, the soul of being (cf. Massey, 1974). Hence, psychology should be the study of the human spirit or the study of human illumination (understanding). Mankind in western psychology is however viewed as an "object" and not a spiritual force. In fact, in western psychology the material world is most often viewed as essential and observable behaviour, the only critical dimension of being.

This limited conception of human beingness is compounded by the assumption in western psychology that physical life and human consciousness are co-terminal. Accordingly, mankind's psychology is the result of biological determinants and/or historical experiences with a dash of random error (chance). This of course results in the need to predict the occurrence or frequency of any particular behaviour. Accordingly, psychology gets reduced to a procedure for quantifying human existence. Western psychology becomes therefore mathematically precise while remaining a science without illumination.

The failure of contemporary western psychology is due, in part, to the legacy of its basic assumptions and narrow perception of the nature of human beings.

It is indeed the misapplication of western philosophical assumptions about the nature of African (black) people which made the reascension of black psychology necessary. Western psychology's reductionist and compartmental character is a consequence of the field's philosophical foundations. That foundation is revealed, in part, through the early history of western psychology's development (Boring, 1929). An important exercise, would be to examine meticulously the critical philosophical-psychological treatise which shaped and reshaped western psychology. Readers who are interested in this area are directed to Francis Bacon's *NOVUM* (1878), John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1956), Rene Descartes *Meditations* (1901), George Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1963), David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1905), Shaftesbury's *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* (1965), David Hartley's *Observation on Man* (1970), Donald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1970), Spinoza's *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (1955), Leibniz's *New Essays* (1890), Immanuel Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1905),

Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1974), Julien De La Mettries's *L'Homme Machine* (1912) and Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind* (1910).

The psychology of Sigmund Freud is illustrative of the problems discussed here. If one were simply to use Freud as representative of psychology, a grave misrepresentation of the field would be committed. From the early 1800s until this day trends in western psychology have emerged, declined and re-emerged. These historical trends range from *psychophysiology* with its emphasis at different times on "phrenology", mind-body dualism, brain physiology, sensation and hypnotism, to *experimental psychology* with emphasis on psychophysics, unconscious inference, scientific observation, Wundt's system, perception, apperception and mental processes and laws; to *modern psychology*, with emphasis on content psychology, act psychology, systematic psychology, animal psychology, evolutionary psychology, mental inheritance, educational psychology, gestalt psychology, behaviourism, brain functioning, functional psychology and dynamic psychology.

Freud, though he belonged primarily to dynamic psychology, stands almost alone as representing the field of psychology. Freud's single influence cannot be denied.' During his sixty years of active work, Freud singularly and sometimes personally influenced some of the greatest minds of western psychology. When we look at Freud's contributions, one is able to see, for example, that Freud simply built upon Greek thought and philosophy (particularly the Orphic mystery). Implicit in his analyses and theories are, for instance, the unquestionable acceptance of good and evil. The fundamental principle of Freudian psychology (cf. Hall, 1954; Strachey, 1953) is that the structure of the "mind" is formed in childhood and that the child is a being with "needs". The "mechanism" which influenced and/or satisfied these needs developed by Freud stemmed directly from Greek mythology. The human possibilities implied in the Oedipus Rex tale of Greek mythology is demonstrative of the Greek influence on the psychology of western psychology. For Freud the Oedipal crisis was the chief structuring experience of the "psyche". The main feature of the Oedipal process was the child's sexual feelings of anxiety in relation to threats (against its genitals) by an omnipotent figure (i.e., the parents). Freud believed that this Oedipal was universal.

However, without even a detailed elaboration of the Oedipal tale, one can see that, far from universal, the Oedipal myth is no more than one version of the original Orphic mystery. Freud's recognition of the child's sexual feelings for the parent of the opposite sex is obviously related to Zeus fathering a son by his own daughter. Similarly, the "ambivalent feelings" can be viewed in the context of the Orphic duality of good and bad. Finally, the feelings of anxiety in relation to parental threats can be considered a modern-day version of identifying with the evil Titans.

What is probably more relevant in Freudian psychoanalysis is that it represents evidence that remembrance of the Orphic story is embedded in the structure of the western psyche. As a "victim" of that psychic structure, Freud was able to transfer the image of human destruction (the tale of the Titans) on to destruction of a part of a human (castration) and thereby resolve the personal anxiety invoked by his own theory. The real issue here was not just childhood sexuality and fear of castration. It is how do western theorists view the human psyche and whether or not that view is accurate and/or applicable to all peoples.

#### *Western Psychology's View of African Peoples*

Robert V. Guthrie's book, *Even the Rat was White* (1976), should be required reading for comprehensive examination in psychology. It provides us with by far the best overview of the problems and inadequacies of western psychology. In regards to psychology and race, Guthrie points out that western psychologists not only provided inaccurate data that led to racist conclusions, but that their behaviour and conduct also call into question the intentions of psychological research. This latter point is very important. It may very well have been the "intentions" of western psychology which necessitated the reascension of black psychology. Is it unimaginable to suggest that the covert and in some instances overt "intention" of western psychology has been to accept as true the inferiority of African peoples? The works of western psychology must speak for themselves.

In regards to African peoples, western psychology in general accepted as a basic a priori assumption that African peoples were inferior. The conduct of western psychology in fact proceeded as if this a priori assumption was a proven fact.

Even though Sigmund Freud never addressed in any of his major works the issue of African-American psychology, in *Totem and Taboo* (1950) he does attempt to explicate the psychology of contemporary society by examining and theorizing about the traditional practices of so-called primitive peoples. It needs to be pointed out in this regard that by interchangeable reference to the practices and behaviours of African peoples as "savage" or "primitive" Freud did more than attempt to find Darwinian justification for his "primal horde theory". He in effect gave historical credence (without any proof whatsoever) to the belief that African peoples held an inferior position to whites on the evolutionary chain.

Freud's star pupil, Carl Gustav Jung, believed that certain psychological maladies found amongst Americans were due to the presence of black people in America. He noted that "The causes for the American energetic sexual repression can be found in the specific American complex, namely to living together with 'lower races, especially with Negroes.'" (1950, p. 29).

He went on to say that living together with "barbaric" races exerts a suggestive effect on the laboriously tamed instincts of the white race, and tends to pull it down. In his lecture to the Zurich Psychoanalytic Society in 1912, Jung spoke more fully on the psychology of the Negro and had this to say:

The psychoses of Negroes are the same as those of White men. In milder cases the diagnosis is difficult because one is not sure whether one is dealing with superstition. Investigation is complicated by the fact that the Negro does not understand what one wants of him, and besides that is ignorant (does not know his age, has no idea of time). The Negro is extraordinarily religious: his concepts of God and Christ are very concrete (Jung 1950, p. 552).

It was apparently the "intention" of white scholarship to demonstrate the actuality of its racially motivated and/or imaginary African-American inferiority. The result was an intellectual atmosphere which has heavily influenced western psychology.

One need only to recognize that from as early as the 1700s, social scientists were "proving" the so-called inferior nature of the African. In 1735 Carl Von Linnaeus' discussion of natural systems (cf. Linnaeus, 1735) argued that natural racial distinctions could be made based on colour, temperament, custom and habit. This view predictably "revealed" for blacks the qualities of "capriciousness", "negligence", "slowness", "cunning", and "phlegmatic". In 1853 Bremeister published his *The Black Man: The Comparative Anatomy and Psychology of the African Negro* in which he concluded, "it is not worthwhile to look into the soul of the Negro. It is the judgment of God which is being executed that, at the approach of civilization, the savage man must perish".

It was probably no accident that shortly after the US emancipation of African slaves, Sir Francis Galton (cf. Galton, 1869) proposed the development and implementation of a "science of heredity" (i.e. eugenics). England's "good knight" believed that black people were a race grossly inferior to "even the lowest of any White people". In 1869 Galton published his major work on "hereditary genius" and argued that, based on his "scientific scale of racial values", he was able to conclude that the average intellectual standard of the Negro was at least two grades below that of whites. It is, of course, revealing that he chose to mention nothing of slavery which ended in the US less than four years prior to his "findings" as a factor in the discovered intellectual deficit. Galton, who was reportedly Charles Darwin's cousin, was adamant in promoting the idea of racial improvement through selective mating and sterilization of the "unfit". The acceptance of Galton's eugenic doctrine (circa, 1860s) marks the point at which the natural inferiority of the African was accepted as a factor requiring no further proof by the scientific community.

English philosopher, Herbert Spencer, also greatly influenced the thinking of American psychology on this issue. Spencer, two years Galton 's junior, coined the term "survival of the fittest" and developed the "doctrine of Social Darwinism".

Spencer believed that the suffering of the poor was nature's mechanism for insuring the survival of the fittest. In 1896 (cf. *Principles of Psychology*), he proposed that science be used to select the best character of the various inferior races and then breed them in scientific mixtures planned to salvage whatever rudimentary human worth was present.

About forty years later, Bache (1895) concluded that Africans were highly developed in physiological tasks and attributes. With a sample of only eleven African people and the prevailing scientific techniques for measuring "reaction time", he concluded that all Africans were highly developed in physiological tasks and attributes yet were slower being(s) in comparison to white on auditory, visual and electrical reaction time. Parenthetically, the Bache research helped to inspire the Cambridge Anthropological Society to launch an expedition to New Guinea for the purpose of "measuring" psychological attributes of various races. The New Guinea experiments culminated in the St. Louis World's Fair experiments. At the fair the World's Congress of Races convened many of America's prominent psychologists (e.g., R.S. Woodworth, later APA president) to "test" various black African types. In spite of the ceremonial atmosphere of the St. Louis World's Fair, these "scientists" were able to maintain the rigours of scientific investigation and, to no one's surprise, found that the darker-skinned participants rated lower in intelligence.

In 1916, G.O. Ferguson, in a study conducted on the psychology of the black man, offered the following prescription:

Without great ability in the process of abstract thought, the negro is yet very capable in the sensory and motor power which are involved in manual work. An economy would indicate that training should be concentrated upon these capabilities which promise the best return for the educative effort expended (p. 125).

Ferguson theorized that black people were intelligent in proportion to the amount of white blood they possessed. He continued his attack on black people by characterizing "defective morals as a negro trait". This statement caused other researchers to explore the moral attributes of other minority people.

Edward L. Thorndike, who served as president of American Association for the Advancement of Science, and thought by many to be America's greatest psychologist, wrote in his book, *Human Nature and the Social Order*, that, "The principle of eliminating bad genes is so thoroughly sound that almost any practice based on it is likely to do more good than harm" (p. 44). Thorndike, who also helped to develop

[16]

The leaders of western psychology simply confirmed this "scientific" position. The the army intelligence test believed **and stated that the institution of slavery existed because the black man's original nature was conducive to exploitation. He, in effect, said that we were enslaved because it was predetermined by our natures. Nine years before he died, he completed his monument to American psychology and education (i.e., *Human Nature and the Social Order*), and offered twenty "principles of action" or "solutions" to the problems of human nature and the prevailing social order. The first and most important principle was "better genes" and, not surprisingly, he was an outspoken advocate of sterilization programmes to "eliminate bad genes".**

**In the early 1900s with the emergence of American psychology, G. Stanley Hall did not break with the tradition of his European predecessors. As the founding father of the American Psychological Association, G. Stanley Hall (1846-1924) was also influenced by the Malthusian doctrine. His philosophy reflected the essence of the Machiavellian theory which also deals with the dichotomy of white and black. He believed, for example, that "what is true and good for one lle., the Caucasian and the African] is often false and bad for the other". If we were allowed to reflect back on the period in history in which Hall was born, we would see however that he had reached adulthood before the American system of slavery was abolished. With this in mind, we realize that Hall had internalized the myths about racial inferiority, stupidity, and laziness regarding those of African ancestry. In fact, in a blatant justification for slavery, and possibly a counterposition to the writing of a young black sociologist named W.E.B. DuBois, G. Stanley Hall published a treatise on "The Negro in Africa and America". In this work Hall stated that:**

**Among the tribes of Dahomey, ... and in the Fan, Felup Wolop, Kru, and other strips. *sometimes* resort to cannibalism, use an agglutinative speech, believe profoundly in witchcraft, are lazy, improvident, imitative, fitful, passionate, affectionate, faithful, are devoted to music and rhythm and have always practised slavery amongst themselves.**

**He goes on to state as fact that "polygamy is universal, fecundity is high and mortality great. Strong sex instincts are necessary to preserve the race. As soon as the child can go it alone, it begins to shift for itself. Stealing is universal and is a game and falsehoods are clever accomplishments". "Our staves" he states, "came from the long narrow belt, not many miles from the sea. . . It is surprising to see how few of the designated traits the Negro has lost, although many of them are modified" (190b, p. 350).**

[17]





Hall's racism was, however, not limited to only black people. It was also extended to include Indians and Chinese into the group he classified as "adolescent races". Hall fervently believed that no two races differed in their physical and psychological traits as did the Caucasian and the African. In relation to his "recapitulation theory", he accordingly considered black people to be in a stage of incomplete growth. He also believed that heredity was the dominant factor determining educational capacity.

In furthering western psychology's understanding of African-Americans, Lewis Terman (1916) provided his best thinking on the subject in regards to intelligence. Terman noted that African-American and other ethnic minority children:

Are uneducable beyond the nearest rudiments of training. No amount of school instruction will ever make them intelligent voters or capable citizens in the true sense of the word. Their dullness seems to be racial, or at least inherent in the family stock from which they come. . . children of this group should be segregated in special classes and be given instruction which is concrete and practical. They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers. . There is no possibility at present of convincing society that they should not be allowed to reproduce, although from a eugenic point of view they constitute a grave problem because of their unusual prolific breeding (pp. 91-92).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Lewis Terman was an early advocate of "tracking according to ability". He, in fact, conducted an experiment in Oakland, California during the 1930s which resulted in racial segregation of students through testing.

In the early 1900s McDougall (1921) also attempted to establish the position that all people of African descent were innately and intellectually inferior to whites. He states that:

The colored men of this country are largely, I suppose, of mixed white and negro descent. It may be suggested that the native inferiority in respect to this quality (intelligence) is an evil effect of cross-breeding of these two widely dissimilar races. This is a possibility. But facts are strongly against it. First the colored men of the Northern states showed distinct superiority to those of the South. Have they not a large proportion of White blood? I do not know but, I suspect it. . we have the allegation, frequently made, that every colored man who has risen to high distinction has been of mixed blood. It is perhaps difficult to prove the rule, but it is difficult to find exceptions (1921, pp. 54-55).

[18]

As recently as twenty years ago, Harry Stack Sullivan (1964) offered a rather unfounded and bizarre contribution to the field's understanding of African-American. He states:

Heterosexual activity seems to be one of the few unrestricted recreational outlets. I judge that there are many definitely promiscuous people and that this laxity arises from factors of personality development as well as from a permissive culture. Vividly outstanding factors in the structure of many Negro family groups are superficially identical with those which in Whites eventuate in arrest of heterosexual development and thus to obligate homosexual or bisexual behaviour, . . it would require careful intensive personality study of a number of Negroes to convert one of my surmises in this connection into fact (1964, pp. 103-104).

An analysis of this psychological tradition or "intellectual atmosphere" which extended from 1735 to the present is important because it is the environment in which contemporary black psychology was to re-emerge. In fact, Francis Cecil Sumner, the first African-American to receive a PhD in psychology, received it at Clark University where G. Stanley Hall brought American psychology into world recognition. Since Hall reached his own adolescence during American slavery, he wrote as noted above that Africans, Indians and Chinese were members of "adolescent races" and were in a stage of incomplete growth. It was, no doubt, his belief in the nineteenth-century notion of the "white man's burden" which led him to train, in spite of his better judgment, several black scholars in psychology.

#### IV. African (Black) Psychology's (Re) Ascension

As the first black psychologist, Sumner was to be followed during the next thirty years by only thirty-one additional African-American psychologists. This rate amounts to about one black PhD psychologist per year. Like the theories discussed earlier, the training of black psychologists is clearly symptomatic of the intellectual opinion about the innate inferiority of African peoples. It seems also in this regard that the "better" the school, the more extreme that symptom. In the mid 1960s, the APA reported that while granting a total of 3,767 PhDs from 1920 to 1966, the ten most prestigious schools (Harvard, Stanford, Michigan, Berkeley, Yale, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Brown, and Iowa) had only granted eight PhDs to black individuals.

[19]

Few black psychologists still devote time to debating or accepting the existence of a black psychology (cf. Baldwin, 1980). Yet the inception of black psychology is somewhat clouded. For instance, if one accepts the awarding of Summer's degree in 1920 as the start of black psychology, then black psychology is some sixty years old. In a very recent publication, White (1984) suggests that the modern era of the black psychologist began in 1968 with the formulation of the Association of Black Psychologists. Hence, if one takes the establishment of this Association as a marker point, then black psychology is only fifteen years old. On the other hand, if one utilizes Jackson's (1979) reactive phase of black psychology as the marker point then the discipline is slightly over a decade old. If, however, one takes the era in ancient Kmt when black scholars began to ponder the function of Sakhu and its relevance to human behaviour as the beginning of black psychology then the discipline is some 3-4,000 years old. Putting the difficulty of determining the actual date of its inception aside, the necessity of its development goes almost without question.

What necessitated the development of African (black) psychology was, first, the recognition that general psychology had failed to provide a full and accurate understanding of black reality. In fact, its utilization had, in many instances, resulted in the dehumanization of black people. Secondly, the philosophical basis of this body of theory and practice, which claims to explain and understand "human nature", is not authentic or applicable to all human groups.

This latter point was further clarified by Williams (1975) who in writing a brief history of the formation and development of the Association of Black Psychologists stated that black psychologists had finally broken the symbiotic relationship with white psychology and that black psychology must be about the business of setting forth new definitions, conceptual models, tests, and theories of normative behaviour which must come from or be relevant to the black experience. However, even with solid agreement on the necessity and direction of a black psychology, the so-called new discipline found itself engaged in a struggle to agree upon a definition. Some of the confusion around definition was simply differences in what black psychologists saw as the purpose or goal of the field. For example, in 1970 Joseph White referred to black psychology as an accurate, workable theory of black behaviour drawn from the authentic experience of black people in American psychology. Two years later in what was offered as the foundation for black psychology, Nobles (1972) suggested that black psychology was more than general psychology's "darker" dimension. Nobles went on to make the distinction that African (black) psychology is rooted in the nature of black culture which is based on particular indigenous (originally indigenous to African) philosophical assumptions.

Methodologically, he suggested therefore that black psychology must concern itself with the mechanism by which the African definition of black Americans has been maintained and what value its maintenance has offered black people. Hence, Nobles concluded, the task of black psychology is to offer an understanding of the behavioural definition of African philosophy and to document what, if any modification, it has undergone during particular experiential periods.

In the mid 1970s, a small team of black psychologists led by Cedric X, 1975 (now known as Syed Khatib) attempted to clarify the critical distinction of black psychology which they argued should rightfully be called African psychology. This team which called itself the Society for the Study of African Sciences (SSAS) suggested that African psychology is the recognition and practice of a body of knowledge which is fundamentally different in origin, content, and direction than that recognized and practiced by Euro-American psychologists. The Society for the Study of African Science's team further suggested that the operationalization of African psychology is based on the assumption that the African race is evolutionarily more advanced than Caucasians and, therefore, is the original source of whatever genetic factors account for contemporary white and black behaviour in the world. In a fundamental departure from most thinking in black psychology, this small group of scholars went on to suggest that intelligence must be redefined and that it is directly related to the presence of melanin in the human genetic make-up. In 1980 Joseph Baldwin suggested that African (black) psychology should be defined as a system of knowledge concerning the nature of the social universe from the perspective of the African cosmology.

During the last fourteen years the pendulum of definitions has swung from the Jacksonian position (cf. Jackson, 1979) which suggests that black psychology is basically a generic designation for an emerging perspective in the field of psychology to a position which posits that black psychology centres on the uniqueness of black responsive behaviour (Smith, 1977; Sims, 1977; Williams, 1978), to the position captured by Cook and Kono (1977) who noted that black psychology is not merely another mode of thinking but rather, they asserted, a third great psychological-philosophical tradition.

#### *The Struggle in Black Psychology*

In terms of black psychology's confrontation with orthodox or western psychology, Curtis Banks (1983) the current editor of *The Journal of Black Psychology* has offered probably the most important contribution to date.

In response to the criticism that black psychology contains too little serious scholarship and rigorous research, Banks correctly points out that black psychology has stood only precariously on the periphery of conventional science and that it is not inconsistent to have founded a field of inquiry (i.e., black psychology) upon a concern for black people and simultaneously make the aim of that field theory building and knowledge acquisition. To the critics of black psychology, Banks notes in this regard that "if *this* is not apparent, it is only because they haven't thought about it clearly" (Banks, 1982). In suggesting the foundations of critical method in black psychology, Banks reviewed the role which innovative conceptions, criticism and refutation play in scientific revolutions. He points out as did Kuhn (1962) that the eventual disenchantment with conventional paradigms is more sociological than logical and that revolutionary shifts often occur in such a way that the new and old paradigms hardly have grounds for critical interchanges (cf. Lakatos, 1970). Banks points out that given the unifying theme of the Association of Black Psychologists, the focus of concern for black psychologists has not been the "dispassionate pursuit of knowledge about the lawful nature of human behaviour". He further argues that neither has the current growth of black psychology been marked by any consistent appeal to a unified conception of knowledge or by a confidence that the characteristics of human experience occur in a lawful manner. In the early period of black psychology Banks notes that, like all scientific revolutions, criticism in black psychology was more sociological in character than logical. The important point, however, was that the primary theme of criticism revolved around an emerging community of scientists who rejected the conventionally accepted paradigms and discoveries of western psychology as germane to an understanding of black people. In so doing, this group of black scholars cast down the gauntlet of confrontation to orthodox psychology.

The existence of black psychology stands as evidence that previous approaches to inquiry and the a priori assumptions which underly them are no longer necessary or sufficient as an explanation of black behaviour. It is in this fact that non-black psychologists see the importance, relevance and even danger of black psychology.

The approaches to inquiry, analysis and treatment found in black psychology are reflected in a wide range of perspectives and various explanations regarding the psycho-behaviour rat condition found in black life. One dimension of this continuum of black psychological activity is found in what has been labelled the "traditional school" (cf. Karenga, 1982). This dimension is defined by its lack of concern for the development of black psychology and its continued allegiance to the Eurocentric model of psychology.

On this latter point, it is probably more true that adherents of this dimension simply failed to recognize or comprehend the Eurocentricity of western psychology and thus falsely internalized its universal applicability.

As noted by some scholars (Guthrie, 1970), this dimension of black psychological activity also concerned itself with changing white attitudes about blacks and provides important critiques of the failure of western psychology. But it fails to offer unique and/or substantive corrections of white psychology's inadequacies. Dr Kenneth Clark is a good example of a black psychologist involved in the traditional western psychology. As the first and only black to serve as the president of the APA, Dr Clark has historically refused to accept the fundamental importance of *race* or culture as a defining condition for the discipline of psychology.<sup>2</sup> In attempting to utilize the insights gleaned from western psychology, Dr Clark, nevertheless, provided us with a critical analysis of the psychological impact of racial segregation. His work and insights on the damaging effects of segregation became part of the testimony and persuasive argumentation in the historic Brown vs. Board of Education, 1954 Supreme Court decision. In Dr Clark's major study of the psychosocial aspects of black urban life (Clark, 1965) he was one of the few social scientists to correctly point out that racial segregation psychologically debilitates all human beings. However, in accepting the traditional western psychological perspective about black people, he also accepted the psychological profile of black people's innate and/ or conditioned inferiority.

In spite of dependence on western psychological assumptions, Dr Clark was able to use his critical mind to point out that much of the irrelevance of behavioural science research was due to the western social scientist's preoccupation with trivia or human exotica; and, that the sacred mask of objectivity in many, if not every instance, was a frail attempt to hide the insensitivity and irresponsibility of western social scientists. The other significant contributors to the traditional school of black psychological activity are William Grier, Price Cobbs and Alvin Poussaint. In the book *Black Rage*, Grier and Cobbs (1968) attempted to give insights from traditional western psychological theory to demonstrate to the wider American community the effects of racism on black people. They argued that black people felt "enraged" or experienced a sense of psychological rage as a consequence of inhumane and racist treatment. Having established the "fact" of black rage, Grier and Cobbs proceeded to offer American slavery as the base experience, and racial oppression as the determining condition which shaped the psychology of black people. Like Clark, Grier and Cobbs accepted uncritically the psychological principles available in western psychology as applicable to all people no matter what their race or cultural background. In attempting to focus attention on the critical issue of violent behaviours as a psychological problem facing the black community, Alvin Poussaint provided the field with an analysis of why blacks kill blacks (Poussaint, 1972). Though covering a wide range of critical issues from black suicide to black sexuality, the real

substance of Poussaint's work is found in his criticism of the racial and socioeconomic bias characteristic of traditional western psychiatry. In this regard, Poussaint points out, like many black psychologists before and after him, that inadequate training in psychiatry results in the inability of its practitioners to distinguish "deviant" behaviour from what is in fact simply "different" behaviour. Poussaint, furthermore, points out in his work that the white academics and/or theorists create self-serving theories about black people. This is nothing more than a subtle and transparent attempt to maintain an oppressor's false sense of superiority. In rightfully identifying the role that white society plays in the destructive nature of black people, Poussaint's intellect and courage helped him to point out boldly that in the final analysis black people must take full responsibility for the ultimate transformation of their lives and life conditions.

The failure of the traditional school is of course in its devotion to primarily informing us about what white people are doing to black people. Hence, the extent that this dimension of black psychological activity informs us about the effect of white domination, it only helps us to understand black people as the resultant condition of white behaviour. As such, it provides us with very little insight into the intrinsic psychological reality of black people.

Frances Cress Welsing (1970) advanced the most controversial theory in the field of black psychology to date. It should be mentioned because it has made an impact on the work of both those who agreed and disagreed with it. What Welsing challenged the field to do was to ask questions about the psychological *nature* of oppressive whites. What is controversial is that she ascribes oppressive psychodynamics to the presence or absence of genetically transmitted melanin. Building on the insights of Fuller (1969), Welsing argued that white supremacy is in fact like other neurotic drives for superiority or domination and, as a neurotic drive, it is founded upon a deep and pervading sense of inadequacy and inferiority. The basis of this neurotic disorder, she contends, is the "quality of whiteness" found in white people. For Welsing, "whiteness" is not ascribed to culture and social conditioning but rather to a genetic inadequacy. This quality, she stated, is in fact a deficiency based upon the genetic inability to produce sufficient amounts of melanin. Welsing went on to suggest that the "sense of numerical inadequacy and genetic colour inferiority" led white people to respond to people of colour with domination and destruction and to respond to their own sense of self-hate and alienation with an elaborate system of defense mechanisms. Frances Welsing believed that the above insights and conceptualizations would reduce black people's vulnerability to manipulation and messages of white supremacy (Welsing, 1981).

Some reject all of Welsing's theory. Others accept her psycho-dynamic notion but reject her melanin theory. Still others reject her psycho-dynamic notion but accept her melanin thesis. However one reacts, Welsing's psychology and controversy was helpful in freeing many black intellectuals from white intellectual domination. Several black scholars have continued that Welsing initiative in focusing on the psychology of oppressive white people. Bobby Wright, for instance, was one of the first black psychologists to highlight the pathology found in the nature of western psychological thinking. In *The Psychopathic Racial Personality* (1975), Dr Wright asserted that Europeans (whites) are psychopaths and their behaviour reflects an underlying biologically transmitted proclivity with roots deep in their evolutionary history. The psychopath is an individual who is constantly in conflict with other persons or groups. He is unable to experience guilt, is completely selfish and callous and has a total disregard for the rights of others. Phil McGee (1976), Richard King (1982), and Wade W. Nobles (1976) have used parts of the Fuller-Welsing theory in redefining areas of psychological functioning like intelligence, consciousness, memory, psychic awareness, and learning ability. The work of these black psychologists and the analyses they represent has probably stimulated more critical thinking in black psychology than any other issue.

The complexity of the contributions to African (black) psychology was further enriched by the recognition (from the discipline's inception) of the need to grapple with understanding the fundamental nature of what it is to be human (cf. Cedric X et al., 1972). Contributions inspired by this recognition appeared almost simultaneously. Nobles (1972), Akbar (1975) in the early days and Jackson (1979) in the mid 1970s as well as Baldwin (1980) and Semaj (1980) in the early 1980s, began to develop a line of reasoning which compelled black psychology to view the behaviour of African (black) Americans as having traditional African cultural and philosophical antecedents. Within this tradition, Matthews (1972) reasoned that the African mode of thought has explanative impact for understanding how African (black) Americans come to know their reality. In what, to some, is considered one of the "classics" in African (black) psychology, Cedric X et al. (1975) in their article "Voodoo or 1.0.: An Introduction to African Psychology" have argued that African psychology should *be* based on African concepts or paradigms. The discipline of African psychology they argue must first go to and understand the roots of human thought. Secondly, it should provide an understanding of the mystery of melanin. Thirdly, it must understand the nature of black intelligence as being of fundamental importance to the understanding of human intelligence. Fourthly, since "self-knowledge" is a critical factor in "consciousness" and "intelligence", African psychology must provide an understanding of the nature of African self-concept, "the extended *self*" and black personality.

As a discipline, African (black) psychology is in a state of development and transformation. The diversity and complexity found in the discipline is characterized by its struggle with the epistemological dilemma of orthodox psychology. In this sense, the field provides an alternative response to the trend in western psychology toward "mentalism" wherein even though there is speculation about that which cannot be seen, the ultimate truth and credibility of knowledge and information is found in the mind-set of one narrow spectrum of human culture (i.e., Euro-American) and "operationalism" wherein any behaviour or phenomena that western psychological technology cannot measure does not exist. In this last regard, a critical aspect of black reality such as spirituality or soul becomes epistemologically meaningless in orthodox western psychology. Accordingly, the field of African (black)

psychology reflects a need to expose orthodox psychology to empirical falsification while simultaneously protecting the field of black psychology from becoming metaphysical speculation and political dogma.

An analysis of the work in the field of black psychology reveals both the scientific diversity and complexity of the field. In analyzing black psychology as a scientific revolution Banks (1982) has suggested that the diversity in black psychology be thought of in terms of critical method, criticism and refutation. From the perspective of revolutionary shifts from conventional paradigms, Banks conceptualizes black psychology's diversity in terms of three critical methods (i.e., deconstructionist, reconstructionist and constructionist).

The important point for Banks was that the primary theme of criticism revolved around an emerging community of black scientists who rejected the conventionally accepted paradigms and discoveries of western psychology as germane to an understanding of black people. It is clearly helpful in clarifying both the scientific diversity and the complexity of the field.

#### *The Deconstructionist Response*

The approach associated with the deconstructionist trend in African (black) psychology (cf. White, 1970; Banks et al., 1976,1978; Wright, 1975, 1981; Guthrie, 1976; Nobles, 1976; Jackson, 1979; Hilliard, 1977; Smith, 1978; Wilson, 1978; Baldwin, 1979, 1980; Lawson, 1980; Hilliard, 1981), essentially attempts to expose the error and weaknesses found in general psychology. The work done by the deconstructionists has been empirical falsifications of assorted theories. Asa Hilliard's research, "IQ as Catechism: *Ethnic* and Cultural Bias or Invalid Science" (1981) represents a good example of this trend in black psychology. Utilizing the standard criteria for evaluating scientific empirical methodology, Hilliard found the current use of the IQ test in public schools to be more religion than science. By essentially invalidating the

use of the IQ test in public schools, Hilliard exposes the *use* of these tests to further criticism in black psychology.

Earlier, the same issue of intelligence and the same methodology of deconstruction was the basis for the Bay Area's Association of Black Psychologists (1972) efforts to point out the misuses of intelligence testing. The Larry P. Class Action Suit resulted in the presiding judge declaring a permanent ban on the use of standardized intelligence tests as the primary criterion for placing black and other minority children in classes for the mentally retarded. Parenthetically, the Larry P. case, though widely publicized, represented only one example of black psychology being used to promote and protect the welfare of the black community. Black psychologists and the perspectives emerging from this new discipline were also instrumental in the planning and follow-up of the prestigious Vail Conference on Patterns of Professional Training in Psychology (Korman, 1972). The perspectives of black psychology have also resulted in the California Psychological Examining Committee considering preparation in ethnic psychology as a requirement of both initial licensure and continuing education for licensure renewal.

Charles Thomas was one of several black psychologists who caucused at a national APA convention. This black caucus later emerged and formed itself as the National Association of Black Psychologists. As the first chairperson of ABPsi, Thomas was instrumental in shaping the early character of black psychology (i.e., concern for the oppression of black people, attack on the negative attributes of western psychology, etc.). Thomas (1971) suggested that black psychologists must take on the fundamental task of "instructive intervention" which results in changes of black attitudes, self-mastery, social competence and personal fulfillment. Though Thomas developed the "Negro to Black Conversion Model", his real contribution to the emerging field of black psychology was in his insistence on (1) community engagement and (2) racial awareness. In the first regard, he asserted that, as social scientists, black psychologists have an ethical responsibility for changing the black condition. This he believed would happen by black psychologists defining, defending and developing information systems which will give blacks increased sociopolitical power. In regards to racial awareness, Thomas argued that ethnicity provides both a frame of reference for the development of countervailing institutional social forces and it encourages self-activated behaviour which in turn breaks down patterns of self-hate and self-denial. Hence, black psychologists should focus on and take pride in their blackness.

In evaluating the performance of black adolescents on convergent and divergent tasks, Anna M. Jackson (1979) assessed variations in responses on a variety of materials. Through utilizing revised measures of Thorndike's and Longe's list of commonly used words, her "deconstructive" methodology revealed both the weakness of conventional



conceptualizations and guided Jackson's investigation of the concept of cognitive styles. Predictably, the conclusion of Jackson's work differed dramatically from the conventional. Her deconstructive research points to the fact that differences obtained in previous black-white studies may well be related to differences in cognitive style rather than conceptual skills, deprivation, or factors of social class. Similarly, in response to the writings of Christopher Jencks, Ronald Edmonds et. al. (1973) argued that the evaluative techniques currently used in the public schools are biased.

Like Thomas and most black psychologists, William Cross (1971) was especially concerned with the need for psychological liberation from conditions of oppression. Cross attempted to classify the stages of "identity emphasis" black people went through under systems of oppression. In this regard, he offered a model which suggested the stages a person goes through in the process of what he also called the negro-to-black conversion. His model (1978) and Thomas' (1971), Cross defined as models of "Negrescence" or the process of becoming black.

In focusing on a very critical area of importance, Thomas Hilliard (1977) provided a black psychological perspective to psychology and the law. Utilizing the deconstructive methodology, Hilliard pointed out the weakness of western diagnostic techniques in assessing the mental condition of low-income black defendants. He noted that few white clinicians are aware of the different "values, communication styles and system of reference" characterizing black behaviour. Given the limitations of both western psychology and its practitioners, Thomas Hilliard further noted that it is not surprising that black defendants are often seen as anti-social, sociopathic, and/or psychopathic.

In "Blackness and Mental Illness: Proposed and On-going Research in Schizophrenia" William Lawson (1980) noted that it is clear that race may introduce a diagnostic as well as a treatment bias toward physiological differences. He points out that it may be that blacks have more brain dopamine and that different neuroleptic dosages may *be* required because of the greater neuroleptic reserve. In refuting or "deconstructing" the prevailing opinion in western psychology that race is not a factor in the diagnostic and/or treatment of schizophrenia, Lawson argues for a distinct black physiology based on melanin and a distinct black culture.

In a series of studies conducted by the Banks social learning laboratory at ETS, Curtis Banks submitted several major areas of psychology to empirical falsification. Under Banks' deconstructive methodology the psychological literature on achievement (Banks, McQuater and Hubbard, 1977) locus of control or sense of powerlessness (Banks, Ward, McQuater and Debritto, 1980), delay gratification (Banks, McQuater, Ward and Ross, 1983) and white preference behaviour (Banks, 1976; Banks, McQuater and Ross, 1979) were all found to be wanting of serious revision. External locus of control was found in only 10 percent of the empirical validation studies. The inability of blacks to delay gratification was found to be without empirical foundation whatsoever. The white preference behaviour

literature, upon which over forty years of theorizing about black self-hate had been constructed, was also found to be without "evidential" support.

### *The Reconstructionist Response*

The approach associated with the reconstructionist trend in African (black) psychology (cf. Clark, 1972; Hayes, 1972; Wright, 1975; Jackson, 1979, 1982; Akbar, 1976; Boykin, 1977; Savage, 1977; Myers, 1978; Gary, 1978; Jones, 1979; Smith, 1980; King, 1980; Semaj, 1980a, 1980b) has devoted itself to correcting the errors in western psychology and "reconstructing" it into a more sensitive and relevant model. The works found in the reconstructionist method directly confront the dilemma of "mentalism" and operationalism. Joseph White (1970) for instance, provided one of the earliest reconstructionist criticisms of western psychology. He contended that when western psychological theories are applied to the lives of black people, many incorrect "weakness dominated" and "inferiority oriented" conclusions seem to abound. Accordingly, he suggested that a black frame of reference is necessary in order to enable black psychologists and "others" to come up with more accurate and comprehensive explanations of black life. He went on to argue that not all traditional white psychological theory is useless and that the task is to build a black psychology by incorporating what is useful and rejecting the rest.

William Hayes (1972) utilizes the notions found in behaviourist theory, to point out the process of conditioning a class of people defined as culturally deprived. He noted that "interventionists have institutionalized preschool programmes by establishing thousands of jobs whose existence is contingent upon the existence of a class of children called "culturally disadvantaged". In focusing on the consequences of behaviour, Hayes and Banks point out that the objective emotionally detached researcher whose only interest is in the advancement of knowledge is a myth. In fact, they argue it is common for psychologists to accept uncritically those conclusions which are consistent with their "conditioned" biases. Given this state of affairs, they also point out that the probability of effective preventive programmes is probably inversely related to the increasing number of service and research interventionists with vested interests in the theory of cultural deprivation.

Dr Bobby E. Wright (1981) utilized general psychology to analyse the role that dominant Euro-American groups played in black self-destructive behaviour. In regards to the alarming increase in black suicide, Wright points out that in the not too distant past suicide in the black community was virtually non-existent. Black suicide he argued should be viewed as a behavioural response to a "White specified environment" where black self-destructive behaviour is the direct result of the systematic and deliberate destruction of the black mind. Dr Wright entitled this type of destruction as mentacide (Wright, 1981).

A predictable result of reconstructionist method is its attempts to sensitize general psychology's practitioners to *the* reality of black people. Savage and Adair (1977) suggested that current methods of intelligence assessment must be altered by immersing the assessors in the subject's cultural milieu prior to assessment. In order to assure cultural validity, these authors advocated that the assessment take place in the presence of a team of local persons (indigenous members of the culture) who will collaborate with the experts in the assessment procedures.

The work of Wade Boykin (1977) represents a good example of a black scholar attempting to adapt some of the strategies and techniques of western psychology in order to better explain the African-American experience. Boykin states that:

I have not come to reject the importance of empirical research, just to put it in its proper scope. I have tried to forge a fresh presuppositional framework which can be coupled with the relative "traditional" research process, that will allow me to work from an Afro-American perspective in experimental psychology (Boykin, 1977:13).

In "Experimental Psychology from a Black Perspective" Boykin reveals both his affinity for an African-based psychology and its challenge. He notes that:

The naive requirement that man be able to step outside of the world and reflect dispassionately back on it does not seem tenable. Instead, the philosophy prevalent in many African tribal societies holds that man cannot be separated from nature; it is more tenable that the two be continuous and in harmonic unity. According to this philosophy it is absurd to believe that man can be separated from himself.

The ability of the "deconstructive methodology" (coupled with the reconstructionist methodology) to correct western psychology is revealed clearly in black psychology. In this regard *the* thinking of Lewis King (1976) is most informative. In "Toward a Restoration of Creativity in Psychology", Dr King points out that men of racist inclination have twisted science to justify predetermined outcomes. In this sense, King rightfully believes that western psychology has become a tool for the continued oppression and maintenance of imperialism over peoples of colour. The deconstructionist methodology is clearly forcing western psychology to modify its conventional and accepted practices.

### ***The Constructionist Response***

The constructionist trend in African (black) psychology (cf. Nobles, 1972,1973; Akbar, 1974,1976; Pasteur and Toldson, 1982; McGee, 1976; King, 1976; Myers, 1978; Baldwin, 1976, 1980, 1981; Jackson, 1979; Khatib, 1980; Myers, 1981; Williams, 1981; Semaj, 1981; Hale, 1982; Harper-Bolton, 1982; King, 1982; McAdoo, 1979) reflects the belief that work found in the field must in part result in simultaneously promoting the welfare of black people and advancing the critical growth of knowledge.

Many in the field of black psychology consider the contribution of Clark et al, "Voodoo or I.Q.: An Introduction to African Psychology" (1975) to be the seminal work in the field. In this article Khatib and his associates openly seek to articulate an authentic ontological and epistemological base on which to construct new techniques for analyzing and understanding the psychology of African-Americans. They state that "we find our rationale for the development and articulation of an African psychology in the realization of the assumptions which White people hold about themselves and the world". Some of these assumptions are: (1) that the world is basically material as opposed to spiritual; (2) that the black man is basically inferior to the white man; (3) that the self is independent of other selves and the environment; and (4) that black people and white people can be measured by the same yardstick in terms of behaviour. Parenthetically, it should be pointed out that reactions to these four distinguishing assumptions, as well as much of the critical thinking in this classical article, have framed a great deal of contemporary black psychology.

In stressing the role of naturalness, spirituality, and the holistic organization of man and the universe in human behaviour, Naim Akbar (1975) states that religious and cultural beliefs are critical to any "constructive" understanding of black behaviours. The core personality traits instrumental to adaptive functioning for black people, he asserts, are: (1) the absence of competitive attitudes; (2) a pervasive sense of caring and concern; and (3) an affective orientation. These traits Akbar contends have permitted black people to deal effectively and innovatively with the racist hostilities of both pre- and post-slavery American society.

In attempting to construct a model of mental disorders among African-Americans, Naim Akbar (1981) also developed a new criterion for optimal mental functioning or "normality" in black populations. Inherent in Akbar's descriptions of mental disorders is the conceptualization of normality as a oneness of the self and others and the consequent display of humanistic or "natural" behaviours. Ultimately for Akbar, mental disorders and unnatural human behaviour are the results of inhuman conditions associated with racist oppression. Akbar in turn identifies mental health as the affirmative identification and commitment to one's African (natural) identity. Accordingly, he constructed a system of mental disorders (i.e., anti-self, alien-self, etc.) which demonstrate African-American insanity to be a result of engaging in behaviours which deny one's African identity and survival imperatives.

Having criticized the self-concept literature, Nobles offered the field an analysis which suggested a clear relationship between "scientific colonialism" and the "negro" self-concept (Nobles, 1973). In part he suggested that upon submitting the self-concept literature to critical analysis it was apparent that science had been equally guilty of colonialism and oppression. He noted specifically that western psychology as a tool of oppression and domination is probably best seen in the scientific investigation of "black" intelligence and self-conception. In moving beyond the



critique of the literature, Nobles set about to "construct" the basic philosophical and cultural bases for the study of the black self-concept. In this regard he argued that a conception of the self rooted in the African world-view and philosophical tradition is the only adequate basis for defining the black self-concept. He further argued that the African philosophical notions of interdependence and consubstantiation (Nobles, 1976) translate into an "extended" definition of the self where one's self-definition is dependent upon the corporate definition of one's people. In effect, the people's definition "transcends" the individual definition of the self, which itself "extends" to include one's self and one's kind. He concluded by offering the notion of the "extended-self" as the most accurate classification of the process of the black self-concept.

As a constructionist Joseph Baldwin (1976) noted that definitional systems were key because they determined how we perceive and respond to the various phenomena that characterize the ongoing process of everyday existence. Hence, Baldwin focused on constructing models of black personality as authentic definitional systems. In so doing, he noted our own African definitional system would in turn provide us with a clear frame of reference from which to examine ultimately the psychological nature of black oppression. An understanding of black oppression would in turn result in our psychological and physical liberation from white oppression.

In his work on personality, Joseph Baldwin (1980) emphasizes the biogenetic origins of black personality and character traits and suggests that these traits are innate, cultural, specific and unique. Any change in the basic black personality structure occurs as a consequence of diluting the African genetic structure itself. Baldwin also recognizes that confusion regarding African values and black identity can result in what he defines as "misorientation". The resultant maladjustment from "misorientation" he contends can only be effectively addressed by the re-establishment of cultural links and cognitive restructuring.

Like many constructionist black psychologists, Amos Wilson (1978) also recognized that the psychology of black people began in Africa and, therefore, its study must start with the African question. In focusing on the psychological development of the black child, Wilson was guided by the recognition that black psychologists must be extremely careful about blindly adopting European-based psychology and applying its models to black people. Wilson contended like Welsing (1970), and King (1982) that the study of melanin is important in the study of black people, He noted that even white researchers have admitted black superiority in the areas of mental development, neurological functioning and psychomotor development. All of these he rightfully points out are related to a high level of melanin. He asserts that it is wrong to conceptualize melanin as simply a colouring agent, for it is an integral part of the psychosomatic system.

As a recent contribution to the constructionist methodology, the work of Pasteur and Toldson (1982) is critical. In the context of an African world-view, they have provided the field with an important examination of black expressive behaviour.

Using information about African culture, brain geography and the genetic substance melanin, they concluded that rhythm was the basis of "soul", a black expressiveness which they insist is far more evident in the behaviour of black-African peoples than in other races.

With this methodological breakdown, one could suggest that there were real and clear divisions in black psychology. This author believes, however, that the hard and rigid divisional lines seen in African (black) psychology should be viewed as illusionary and premature. History will demonstrate that the apparent "camps" found in African psychology are the results in part of the internationalization of the Euro-American compartmentalized world-view. We are at this time, still susceptible to readily seeing and emphasizing "differences". This internalization also makes our discipline open to the age-old "divide and conquer" strategy. It is my hope that as this field continues to reascend, its contemporary developers will not fall victim to the belief that these methodologies and responses are substantively different and, therefore, warrant classification as schools of black psychology. Each approach is equally important, complementary and necessary.

This author believes that it is important during the rebirth, that the contributions to African (black) psychology be "judged" by a criterion of racial enhancement. The ability to reveal or expose the truth of African reality will determine which of these apparent camps has more utility of continuing the advancement of the discipline. For this reason, the reader is cautioned against placing the contributions of black *thinkers* into artificial and premature divisions. The author has done so only in order to highlight the variation in the developmental response.

## V. Toward Becoming an African (Black) Psychology

Over a decade ago this author (cf. Nobles, 1972) argued that "Black psychology is more than general psychology's 'darker' dimension", and that African (black) psychology is rooted in the nature of black culture which is based on African philosophical assumptions. In continuing to support this initial position it is believed that the (re) ascension of African (black) psychology is confronted with the difficulty found in using European concepts to explain African realities. In realizing that "African psychology is the recognition and practice of a body of knowledge which is fundamentally different in origin, content and direction than that recognized and practiced by European-American psychologists", Cedric X et al., (1975) essentially pinpointed the epistemological dilemma or struggle faced by black psychologists attempting to develop a black psychology.

The (re)ascension of African (black) psychology is dependent upon the reclamation of African culture. The translation of contemporary expressions of African ideas such as complementarity of differences and divine inspiration/creation, requires that we also struggle with how commonly accepted ideas about human psychology have inhibited

our ability to "understand" African reality. This issue alone has emerged as a crucial epistemological dilemma (Nobles, 1979) for African (black) psychology. In addressing the Issue further, Cedric X (1975) noted that something as fundamental as the concept of causality itself creates problems. He further noted that "the spatial and temporal coordinates incorporated in European (western) concepts of causality are found to be inadequate in attempting to comprehend the thought patterns of African and other non-European peoples". Cedric X notes that *time* and *space* dimensions were selected as coordinates for determining causality in part because of a cultural disposition which answers the question of "what is real" as physical matter and "how do I know" as external. Hence, if the African reality is better understood as spiritual (cf. Akbar, 1980; Asante, 1980; Nobles, 1972), then the coordinates for knowing causality must be consistent with spiritual reality. The issue here is not simply the exchange of European coordinates for African ones. It is how our own natures must be reflected in the conventions we adopt or use to determine what is real and how we know it to be real.

### ***Black Psychology: Transformed and Transforming***

Work in African (black) psychology should be guided by at least two major concerns. First, we must recognize our position in history. The reascension of black psychology is no less than the reclamation of the African ancestry of humanity (cf. Nobles, 1984). The historical record will show that the development of African (black) psychology has, from the discipline's inception, been guided and enriched by the recognition of the need to grapple with an understanding of the fundamental nature of what it is to be human. We are at the frightening point in time when those responsible for the modern development of black psychology must recognize that they have embraced a line of reasoning which views the behaviour of African-Americans as having as its antecedents ancient African thought and philosophy. This will compel us to utilize an Afrocentric framework for explaining human behaviour.

Secondly, we must recognize that the legacy of western psychology has left us with tools which distort any understanding of black reality. As a tool of understanding and remediation, western psychology is seriously flawed and ill-defined. Hence, to blindly adopt and utilize its methods and techniques will not result in an authentic and accurate understanding and treatment of black people. In most instances, psychology has been used to provide the scientific validation for racist beliefs regarding the innate inferiority of black people. This fact should always be ever present in our minds as we use the tools of western psychological analysis and method.

What is needed are creative, innovative and autonomous paradigms which will enhance the advancement of theoretical propositions designed to advance the discipline as a science.

In returning to one of the original concerns of this paper, what is black psychology and/or what is it becoming? The answer is simple. It is the discipline charged with understanding the fundamental nature of human beings. What is it becoming? It is a process of "returning to the source". While groping toward the future, it will be both the result and the cause of our transformation. In fact, those who come behind and chronicle this rebirth will note that the reemergence of African (black) psychology had little to do with the false dichotomies of the time (i.e., black vs. white). In examining our work they will, nevertheless, find evidence of our contemplating the issues of racism, classism, human development and even gender identity. Our reviewers, however, will summarily note that the thinking of the shapers of African (black) psychology's rebirth were consumed by the fire of their own transformation.

We are essentially on "the bridge". Black psychologists are squarely between the old western (white) psychology and the "new" African (black) psychology. We can look back to what we know as western-trained psychologists or look forward to what we are developing as African psychologists. The view from the bridge, though sometimes frightening, is most often just complicated by all the perspectives found on both sides of the river bank.

The result of being on the bridge is that the work we do is constantly changing as we continue to inform our efforts by the need to transform psychology. As we report on these developments, it should not be taken as an example of "the African (black) psychology", at least not in the sense of the complete or developed African (black) psychology. Most of the work of black psychologists should be seen as "African (black) psychology becoming".

Even now, the evidence is clear that, while the (re)ascension of African (black) psychology is transforming our discipline, we are simultaneously being transformed. We are redefining the discipline of science itself, let alone psychology, and we must reclaim the "tools of knowing" that were modified, dismissed and/or distorted during the Judeo-Greco-Roman mutation of African truths. In being transformed we are returning to "hear" the divinity in ourselves and to recognize ancient African truths that the fundamental nature of mankind is God. In accepting the spiritual nature of reality, we simultaneously are transforming psychology from essentially an explanation of "human behaviour" to an understanding and illumination of the laws of the "human spirit".

## Notes

1. In the late 1800s he gathered around him as devout disciples, later to be giants of psychology, men like Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, Harms Sachs, Sandor Ferenczi, Ernest Jones and Carl G. Jung. Later, through his influence on G. Stanley Hall, Freud personally came into contact with William James, Edward B. Titchener, James Cane and Franz Boas. To secure the progress of his theories and influence on modern psychology, in 1920 Freud organized a secret inner circle of six (6) loyalists (Otto Rank, Hanna Sachs, Sandor Ferenczi, Ernest Jones, Karl Abraham, and Max Eitington), and gave each one a ring like the one he wore. It was made with, an old Egyptian stone with the face of an old man cut on it. Clearly, Freud's "circle of six" as well as his disciples who defected or died (i.e. Adler, Jung) influenced modern man's notion of what is psychology.
2. Although an historically important black person in the field of psychology, Dr Clark has never formally or informally associated himself with the Association of Black Psychologists or the developing field of black psychology.

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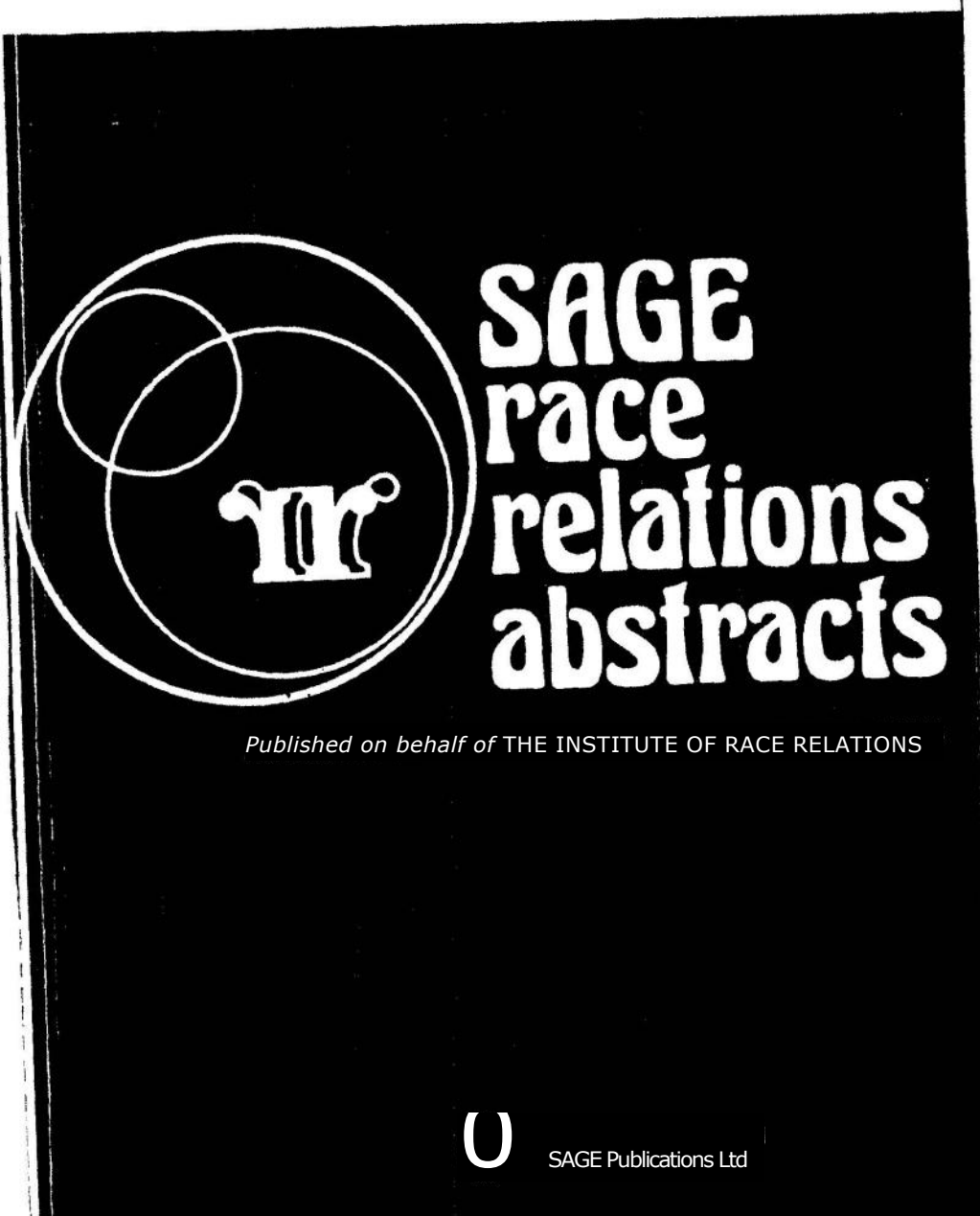
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### African (Black) Psychology: Transformed and Transforming



**CONTENTS**

<b>Bibliographic Essay:</b>	
<b>African (Black) Psychology: Transformed and Transforming</b>	
Wade W. Nobles	4
<b>Extended View:</b>	
<b>Perspectives on Teaching South</b>	
<b>Africa William Bigelow</b>	
	63
	63
Abstracts 6491-6636	<b>64</b>
Bibliographies	<b>69</b>
Adjustment and Integration	<b>70</b>
Area Studies	<b>71</b>
Associations, Organizations and Pressure Groups	<b>73</b>
Attitudes	<b>73</b>
Communications Media	<b>74</b>
Community Relations	<b>74</b>
Courts and Judiciary	<b>76</b>
Crime and Delinquency	78
Culture and Identity	79
Demographic Studies	
Discrimination	
Economic Studies	
Education	
General 80 Primary 82 Further 82 Higher 83	
Students 85 Syllabuses 86 Policy and Planning 87	
Employment	
General 87 Labour Relations 92	
Facts and Figures	93
Family and Adoption	93
Health	
General 94 Medical 96	