African American Psychology

I. Ethnicity
- Similar to culture, though more context specific. E.g. there are many ethnicities contained within a culture.
- Defined by a sense of shared experience and peoplehood, defined by a unique socio-cultural heritage that is transmitted across generations.

Jean S. Phinnen  “When we talk about american ethnic groups, what do we mean?”

- Race and Ethnicity are not useful or descriptive categories (discrete variables)
  Discrete variables are numerically represented by their average. Lose the variability present in the groups.
- Need to identify the aspects of Ethnicity that are meaningful and useful for psychologists.
  - Culture - values, attitudes, and behaviors that distinguish ethnic groups.
  - Identity - subjective sense of ethnic group membership held by group members.

Components
- Self Labeling - Preference for the group
- Sense of Belonging - Ethnic Interest and Knowledge
- Positive Evaluation - Involvement with group activities

Process of ethnic Identity Development
  1) Ethnicity taken for granted based on what others/soc. thinks/says.
  2) Period of Exploration: investigate meaning and implications of group membership
  3) Achieved Ethnic Identity: Fully integrate view of ethnicity with view of self. Not a static point of development (always in flux)

- Minority Status: experiences associated with powerlessness, discrimination, and prejudice.

All of these variables are measured on a continuum not as discrete categories. If we measured all of this, rather than ask a single question about group membership, then we may begin to investigate ethnicity in a meaningful manner.

II. D. Phillip McGee “Introductory Comments on African-American (Black) Psychology
1. Black vs. African American
   – Hall - African American, bc it is the preferred term
   – D. Philip McGee - Black & African American are equivalent terms and the choice of which to use is a academic, social, personal & political choice.

2. What is African American (Black) Psychology = any research addressing psychology from the African American perspective (p. 17 footnote). How studied not who.
   Origins = 1920's Francis Sumner earns Ph.D.
   1938 Herman Canady organizes black psychologists
   1960's APA begins to recognize black issues
   1968 ABPsi (Assoc of Black Psychologists) forms in protest against APA
III. Maulana Karenga “Black Psychology”
   A. Three Schools of Black Psychology
      - Traditionalists -
        1) Defensive &/or reactive posture
        2) Not focused on Black Psychology, but on redefining psychology in general.
        3) Focus on changing white attitudes
        4) Critical of psychology, but offers no substantive corrections

      - Reformists -
        1) Both historical revolution and a current posture
        2) Less emphasis on white attitude change and more on changes on public policy.
        3) want to develop Black Psychology within the context of traditional focus on
           benefitting blacks, whites, and general culture.

      - Radicals -
        1) totally unconcerned with the state of traditional psychology
        2) focus on the analysis, treatment, and transformation of black people
        3) focus on developing a view of psyc from the African perspective which is opposed to
           and opposite of the European world view.
        4) Black Psychology should aim to change social reality through cultural and political
           struggle.

   B. Traditionalist Psychologists
      1. Kenneth Clark - First Black Pres of APA
         - The black baby doll studies cited by Supreme Court in Brown Vs. Board of
           Education. Taken as evidence of the damaging effects of segregation.

         - Traditional Analysis of Segregation
           -Like all forms of cruelty and tyranny, debases all those associated with it
             (victims, victimizers, and accessories)
           - Victims are blamed for their lack strength (portrayed as fantasy oriented,
             sexually excessive, matriarchal, and irresponsible children), e.g. that they
             cause their own plight. Not the result of inferiority, but a result of brutally
             enforced segregation.

           - Criticizes psychology for its focus on trivial minutia and the individual without
             considering the larger perspective of prejudice and oppression, that constricts
             efforts aimed at identifying truth

      2. William Grier & Price Cobbs
         - Black Rage (1969) book = whites must understand what they are doing to blacks
           in order to establish attitude change.
         - View the psychological principles identified by studying whites are also true of
           blacks. (Such a view may ignore the ethnocentrism of western social science).

   C. The Reformist School
      1. Charles Thomas : helped found and co-chair the ABP. First major figure in the
         reformist movement.
         - Assigns the role of “instructive intervention” to black psychologists, to bring
           about change in black attitudes, self-mastery, social competence, and personal
           fulfilment.
- Social scientists have a responsibility to change the black condition.
- Argues for the Ethnic perspective. Ethnicity frames the issue as a cultural one, not a biological one, and breaks down patterns of self-hate and self-denial.
- Critical of socio-biology that ignores cultural influences
- Critical of cultural pathologists’ preoccupation with the deficits of the victims not the institution of victimization.
- Critical of the integrationists that believe blacks can act like whites if we give them more opportunities to be treated as white.

2. Joseph White:
- Toward a Black Psychology (1970)
- the Western Middle Class view of psychology, derived from the study of white families is not applicable to “Black folks” and lead to incorrect, weakness-dominated, and inferiority-oriented conclusions about blacks.
- Blacks need a psychology constructed from their point of view in order for it to be useful.
  - Black Psychology can take what is useful (existentialist stress on pain and struggle as unavoidable, and self-theorists’ stress on understanding one’s experiential background to understand the individual) and reject the rest.

3. William Cross
- The Negro-to-Black conversion (Negrescence = the process of becoming black)
  1) Pre-encounter (prediscovery) = out of touch with racial/ethnic self-dominated by western view of the negro.
  2) Encounter (discovery) = shocking event/experience that jars one free of their previous mode of thought. Begins the search for a black identity.
  3) Immersion-emersion = immerse self in black culture and reject all white culture. Later emerge from extreme groupism and racism and limited view of blackness in isolation, begin to accept white humanity.
  4) Internalization = security with identity, receptiveness to debate, and action and resolution of conflict.
  5) Internalization-commitment = identity is expansive and not defensive.

D. The Radical School
1. Na’im Akbar
- Traditional Psychology’s “Intellectual Oppression” geared toward the mental degradation of a people.
- “Democratic Sanity” Model of Mental Health: insane behavior was determined by the degree to which it deviated from normal behavior in a given context
- Criticizes Traditional Psychology’s focus on “documenting deficits of Afro-Americans” based on Democratic Sanity models.

2. Joseph Bladwin (Kobi Kazembe Kalongi Kambon)
- Definitional Systems = World View = Shape how we experiences, perceive, and respond to daily events. Also, includes philosophical and social system for attaching meanings or values to experiences (including how the self is evaluated and experienced).
- Black living under white domination = Alien World View
- Race = Biogenetic Commonality = principle binding condition underlying the
evolution of definitional systems which have a racial character.
- European World View is not Universal World View, and is diametrically
opposed to Black interests. It can not give legitimacy to African Social Reality.
- European control access to the formal tools to enforce a world view (economics
and political power).
- Blacks need conscious, collective resistance aimed at liberation of Blacks, Black
Psychology can provide a frame of reference for such resistance.
- Bio-genetic (racial) tendency to affirm black life, make group a priority
(including survival of culture and institutions), and engage in
activities that promote the survival, dignity, and mental health of its people. (As
opposed to white bio - genetic tendencies)
-Africentric Approach
  1) Bio-Genetically determined character of the personality.
  2) intra-psychic integrity of the personality that can’t be separated from
the context fo the whole.
  3) personality is social and collective = it must be evaluated as such.
  4) personality is racially distinctive and is affirmed within its own context,
but destroyed by other contexts (e.g. there is no adaptation)
- Two Core components of the African Personality
  1) African Self-Extension Orientation. (self and other are one).
  2) African Self-Consciousness is imbedded in ASEO. (individual thought
is symbolically collective).

3. Linda James Myers
- The Optimal Africentric World Veiw :
  1) Holistic-Spiritual/Unity = Spiritual and Material are united (Animism) ;
helps one to loose individual ego/mind and experience collective identity.
  2) Communalism : the extended self = self equals all others including
ancestors past and future.
  3) Proper Consciousness : Truth is internal (not external as exemplified in
European world view).
- The Suboptimal Eurocentric World View-
  -racist, sexist, and materialistic (Hegemony)
  -socializes member to seek key life values (self-worth, peace, happiness)
through externals (materialism)
  - racists and sexists are the oppressors who act out and project their own
feelings of insecurity onto the oppressed.
  - this world view fragments people into categories.

4. Wade Nobles
- Black Psychology - is more than the psych of underprivileged and ghettoized. It
is derived from the African values, customs, attitudes, and behavior of Africans in
Africa and the New World.
– African Philosophy is grounded in the notion of oneness with nature and
survival of its peoples
  1) Roots of philosophy in religion (religion = life practice)
  2) Humans united with god and universe (not separate) (animism)
  3) Time is experienced not calculated
  4) Immortality for the dead through recognition and remembrance.
    (ancestor worship)
5) extended self, collective identity

- Surviving Africanisms
  - Stress on survival
  - man and nature are one
  - oral tradition (folk tales and rappin)
  - time is phenomenal, flexible, and potential not mathematical (CP time).
  - Rock n’ Roll is an Africanism (syncopated beat).

5. Frances Cress Welsing
- The Cress Theory fo Color-Confrontation and Racism (White Supremacy”
- Neeley Fuller’s Argument “Textbook of White Supremacy”
  1) White supremacy was the only functional Racism
  2) All 3rd world people are victims of it
  3) racism is not merely an individual or institutional phenomena, but a universal system of domination.
  4) European theories and systems of political and economic organization are designed to establish, insure and expand white domination

Cress’s expansion.
  1) supremacy drive is a neurotic drive for superiority and domination based on feelings of inadequacy and inferiority
  2) source of inferiority is genetic inability to produce melanin
  3) European whiteness makes them the world minority, and they are paranoid, because of real likelihood that they could be genetically wiped out by dark skinned phenotype.
  4) hostility and aggression toward dark skinned people develops as a defense mechanism.

- White minority and genetic inferiority also leads to self-hatred and alienation. Whites develop defense mechanisms for this as well.
  1) repression and denial of feelings of inadequacy and inferiority
  2) discrediting & despising dark skinned people.
  3) suntanning to gain color
  4) develop white supremacy myth
  5) projection of hate and sexual desire on dark skinned people
  6) obsession with body but alienated from sex
  7) dividing people of color into diff. groups to make them minorities. (e.g. African American).
  8) efforts of population control in 3rd world.

Symbols if White Power
  1) The Cross
  2) The Gun
  3) Smoking Objects (Conspicuous Leisure)
  4) Boxing (masculine competition, desensitizes on to brutality)
  5) Paper Money
  6) Various Sizes and Colors of Balls (sporting) (old testament, new testament, old balls and new balls) In a court of law you give testimony
7. Bobby Wright
- Blacks have been distracted by false issues (democracy, capitalism, Marxism, Christianity, and education) to keep them from seeing that the real issue is genocide.
- When relating to Blacks, White Europeans are Psychopaths. this Psychopathology is genetically transmitted and rooted in their evolutionary history
- Psychopath = one who is constantly in conflict with others, guiltless, selfish, callous, and disregards the rights of others.
- Evidence for this
  - Killing in the name of christian god, Inquisition, crusades, american manifest destiny, KKK is white and christian, Pope blesses Italian Planes before bombing Ethiopia
  - Whites are sexual and relationally dysfunctional, and project this dysfunction onto blacks.
  - Whites refuse to accept blame for degradation of black America.
  - We reject authority and discipline (even our own law)
- Direction for Blacks
  1) break through illusions of White Psychopathic Society and develop strategies for liberation
  2) Black and Whites are at war, blacks need to behave accordingly.
  3) solutions to black problems can be found in work and life of black heroes. “Blaze new paths towards Black’s rendezvous with destiny”