Black Psychology and the African Psychology Institute

Taasogle Daryl Rowe[1]

The history of African American discourse in psychology falls into three overlapping movements: (1) the *Traditionalist* School—relabeled as the *Resistance* School to better reflect the thrust of this movement, (2) the *Reformist* School, and (3) the *Radicalist* School (Karenga, 1993), or Banks's (1982) typology—*deconstructionists, reconstructionists*, and *constructionists*, where the deconstructionists seek to reveal conceptual errors in Western psychology, the reconstructionists develop more relevant models, and the constructionists develop new models to advance knowledge (Piper-Mandy & Rowe, 2010). Banks's primary argument is that although the methods and approaches varied in examining the experiences of and responses to African/ Black life, the clear, consistent, and compelling aims were to humanize the lived realities of persons of African ancestry.

The first thrust (*Negro Psychology*) challenges how traditional psychology could explain African American behavior; it is more *unconscious* and emphasizes application of theory. The second thrust (*Black Psychology*) challenges traditional psychology based on understanding African American experience; it is *conscious* and highlights theory construction. Finally, the third thrust (*Emerging African Psychology*) challenges the philosophical assumptions on which all theory relating to persons of African ancestry is based; the challenge is *self-conscious* and focuses on theoretical principles, premises, and postulates (Piper-Mandy & Rowe, 2010). All three thrusts challenge Western psychological hegemony.

[1]Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Taasogle Daryl Rowe, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045, USA.
Email: daryl.rowe@pepperdine.edu

Summary of Key Contributors

White (1972) argued that the cultural experiences of persons of African ancestry in the United States demanded a shift in conceptualizing our psychology. Akbar (1991) argued that Afrocentricity involves the identification of the continuous ancient voice in its call to our realization of an authentic African people. Hilliard (1997) suggested that to reawaken the African mind, we must ensure that the goal of our educational and socialization processes is to live up to the principle of *Ma'at*, based on his study of ancient Kemetic principles and practices. Finally, Nobles (1985), argued that culture can be understood from two interwoven features: (1) cultural manifestations (the behaviors of a culture) and (2) cultural substance (the principles that govern the behaviors of a culture), giving culture its dynamic character. Cultural hegemony is based on the use of one cultural center to define and explain the behavior of another culture. African-centeredness refers to the cultural center of African cultures.

African American psychological discourse has had a single unbroken focus. Each school furthers the challenge to Western thought, starting with challenges to application, continuing with challenges to policy, and concluding with challenges to underlying principles.

African-Centered Metatheory

Asante (1987) argued that African ideals and values be placed at the center of discourse involving persons of African ancestry, culture, and behavior; and that Africans are subjects—not objects—in the examination of human ethos. Asante argues that the history, production, and place of African people has been defined and controlled by European and Euro-American interests and images, which forces Africans (and others) to have a false view of themselves and of their contribution to humanity. African-centered metatheory—a system of interlocking, mutually verifying constructs about the nature of human beingness and human functioning on which theory is constructed—is a development in the social sciences that addresses the specific sociocultural issues, contexts, strengths, and preferences associated with the distinguishing qualities of persons of African ancestry. African-centered metatheory explains how African-ancestry communities change, consistent with our worldviews. The identification of African ideals, images, and interests, codified in African worldviews, provides the only consistent template for understanding African reality.

The African Psychology Institute

Beginning in 1994, a model for training mental health professionals to work more effectively with African ancestry populations was developed by the African

Psychology Institute (API; Rowe, 1994). The API has several aims: (1) to establish the requisite knowledge and skills for implementing African-centered psychology (ACP), (2) to structure and deliver an instructional curriculum in ACP, and (3) to certify psychologists to address the particular psychological needs of persona of African ancestry (Obasi, Speight, Rowe, Clark, & Turner-Essel, 2012). The API prepares current Black/African mental health professionals in the ongoing proposition of reclaiming, reconstructing, and restoring African wisdom to the development of African-centered healing arts; and produces and trains a new generation of African psychologists/healers.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

References

Akbar, N. (1991). Evolution of human psychology for African-Americans. In R. Jones (Ed.) *Black psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 99-123). Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry.

Asante, M. K. (1987). *The Afrocentric idea*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Banks, W. C. (1982). Deconstructing falsification: Foundations of a critical method in Black psychology. In E. Jones & S. Korchin (Eds.), *Minority mental health* (pp. 59-72). New York, NY: Praeger Press.

Hilliard, A. G., III. (1997). *SBA: The reawakening of the African mind*. Gainesville, FL: Makare.

Karenga, M. (1993). *Introduction to Black studies* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: University of Sankore Press.

Nobles, W. (1985). *Africanity and the Black family: Development of a theoretical model*. Oakland, CA: Black Family Institute.

Piper-Mandy, E., & Rowe, T. D. (2010). Educating African-centered psychologists: Towards a comprehensive paradigm. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, *3*(8), 5-23.

Obasi, E. M., Speight, S. L., Rowe, D. M., Clark, L., & Turner-Essel, L. (2012). The Association of Black Psychologists: An organization dedicated to social justice. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *40*, 656-674.

Rowe, D. M. (1994). Revisiting the African Psychology Institute: Pre-convention activities, 1994. *Psych Discourse*, *25*(7), 15-16.

White, J. L. (1972). Toward a Black psychology. In R. Jones (Ed.), *Black psychology* (pp. 43-50). New York, NY: Harper & Row.