

Introduction to African American Psychology

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If you know the beginning well, the end will not trouble you.

—Wolof proverb

In the public interest

Recognizing Kenneth B. Clark's legacy

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Earlier this year, *The Review of General Psychology* issued its list of the top psychologists of the 20th century. As expected, Sigmund Freud, Ivan Pavlov and B. F. Skinner topped the list. I then scanned the list for Kenneth B. Clark. I was disappointed and surprised to find his name nowhere on that list of influentials.

The case for Clark

Why would I assume Kenneth Clark's name would be found in an article purporting to list eminent psychologists of the 20th century? There are several reasons. For one, Clark served as president of APA in 1970—the first African-American so honored. In 1994, he received APA's Lifetime Achievement Award, only the sixth time it had been bestowed.

But most importantly, Clark was central to one of the most significant U.S. Supreme Court decisions of the 20th century. When the court decided *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, one of the works cited was Clark's now-famous "Doll Study," which demonstrated the deleterious effects of racial segregation on the self-concept of black children. That research, conducted by Clark and his wife, Mamie Phipps Clark, not only influenced the Supreme Court justices to strike down the laws that mandated segregated schools, but arguably played a role in the demise of "separate but equal" in other areas of American life.

Never before had social sciences research been used by the highest court to make one of the most far-reaching decisions of the 20th century. Shouldn't that have helped Clark find a place, perhaps a reasonably high place, on a list of eminent and influential psychologists?

How did this happen?

The method used by the *Review of General Psychology* survey to generate the list of notables provides some clues as to how Clark was omitted. It relied heavily on the number of times an author was cited in journals and textbooks and on a survey of a sample of American Psychological Society members. Other factors were also taken into consideration, such as National Academy of Sciences membership, serving as APA president and being a recipient of the APA Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award. These criteria, particularly the number of journal and textbook citations, possibly worked against Clark. Certainly he was not short on honors and awards.

Still puzzled by his omission, I sought information about Clark from the Library of Congress, which, as it turned out, had quite a bit—168,500 items derived from publications, speeches, work papers and more that spanned 196 linear feet and occupied 500 boxes. Even a cursory review of these materials reveals a lot about how Clark spent his time. In addition to psychology, he worked with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League and other groups involved with the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. He and his wife were involved in many organizations that benefited the New York community in which they lived.

It is likely that he was one of the most socially active psychologists of the era when minorities, primarily African-Americans, struggled for equal rights and justice in America.

So, after my investigations, the question remains: How could such a distinguished psychologist be omitted from such a list?

There are clearly honors for psychologists whose works are cited by others—that is how the discipline advances. But there are some acts and ideas that cannot be ascertained by numbers. Eminence may be one of them.

Kenneth Clark and his works, in my opinion, deserve better.

Introduction, Definition, and Conceptual Frameworks

The preceding article provides a brief narrative of one “eminent” African American psychologist and makes a convincing argument for why Dr. Kenneth Clark should be included as one of the top psychologists of the 20th century. Notably, Dr. Clark’s work was a major contributing factor to one of the most significant U.S. Supreme Court decisions of the 20th century, and according to Tomb, he was one of the most socially active psychologists of the era. As we will see in this chapter, several African American psychologists along with Dr. Clark have made significant contributions in the field of psychology and in the wider society.

African American psychology encompasses many topics. In this chapter, we provide definitions and discuss conceptual frameworks for

studying and understanding African American psychology. Then, we examine historical influences on the study of African American psychology. The contributions of African American psychologists in defining and conceptualizing African American psychology are discussed in a section on self-determination. Following that section, we review the current status of African American psychology. Methodological issues are addressed, and the chapter ends with a summary.

WHAT IS AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY?

The fields of African American, Black, and African psychology have been defined by several scholars. Baldwin (1986)—a.k.a. Kambon—defines Black psychology this way:

African (Black) Psychology is defined as a system of knowledge (philosophy, definitions, concepts, models, procedures, and practice) concerning the nature of the social universe from the perspectives of African cosmology. Black psychology is nothing more or less than the uncovering, articulation, operationalization, and application of the principles of the African reality structure relative to psychological phenomena. (p. 242)

African American psychology has been studied primarily from two perspectives. The first perspective is that psychological concepts and theories are universal and thus, African Americans can be studied using universal laws and principles. The second perspective, taken from Africentric scholars, is that African American psychology is the psychology of people of African descent and these beliefs and behaviors are central to the study of African Americans. In this book, we use a convergent approach that captures both perspectives.

Baldwin's definition encompasses an Africentric perspective. Africentric psychology is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Africentric psychology considers core values, beliefs, and behaviors found among people of African descent and central to understanding African Americans. Likewise, Azibo (1996) considers African American psychology to be African or Black psychology. He writes, "All human life processes including the spiritual, mental, biological, genetic, and behavioral constitutes African psychology" (pp. 6–7). In these definitions, Baldwin and Azibo do not make a distinction between African psychology and African American psychology, arguing that all people with origins in Africa are African.

One way of understanding the two perspectives in the psychology of African Americans is to consider differences between two schools of thought regarding Black/African psychology (Azibo, 1996). One school of thought is pro-Black and the other is pro-Africentric. In contrasting the two, Azibo notes that the pro-Black school of thought has focused on the

African in the U.S. experience and has not used the African structure to provide the patterns for interpreting the experience of African Americans. Although this school of thought has been useful in changing myths about Blacks based on a deficit model, it does not capture the core of the African experiences. To capture the core African experience, Azibo advocates that an Africentric proactive school of thought be taken. This school takes the position that African philosophy is critical to understanding the psychology of Black/African people. To understand African American behavior, one must understand the behavior of Africans.

Baldwin similarly makes a distinction between Black psychology and African psychology (Baldwin, 1991). According to Baldwin, Black psychology was formed as a reactionary to Western psychology. The Black psychological approach concerns itself with the psychological consequence of being Black in America. However, Baldwin argues that because African people preexisted European people as a distinct cultural group, it follows that a distinct African psychology existed, irrespective of when and how it was articulated by social scientists. Baldwin makes the point that indeed Black psychology is African psychology.

Aldelbert Jenkins (1995, 2004) takes a different approach in his study of the psychology of African Americans. Jenkins uses a humanistic perspective taken from Western psychology. A core assumption of the humanistic approach is that African Americans have always been and are currently active, planful, and proactive in shaping their destinies. Jenkins abandons the mechanistic conceptualization that posits that one's behavior is caused by external environmental forces. Instead he maintains that even under the most oppressive situations, individuals make choices and strive to exert some control over their outcomes. Jenkins notes that subtle efforts that have historically and or are currently being made by African Americans are often directed at resisting oppression. These efforts may not be conceived as logical from the perspective of Whites, but they have been useful in helping African Americans define themselves and have made possible an alternative conception of self. Jenkins provides the example of how money spent by a poor African American man on luxury items, such as an expensive car, may be seen as irrational behavior. However, according to Jenkins purchasing an expensive car could be an act of resistance for this individual. A luxury item may help him to define and express a sense of dignity that otherwise would not be obtained from an oppressive environment.

Convergent Perspectives

There are convergent viewpoints in conceptualizing the psychology of African Americans. Both perspectives acknowledge that African American psychology is a science and, consistent with a Western conceptualization of psychology, it is organized and structured. This means that there is a systematic approach to understanding the psychology of African Americans, although

there may be disagreement on the methods used for conducting scientific work. Both perspectives consider the scope and content of African or African American psychology to be fairly broad and diverse. African/African American psychology includes the study of behaviors as well as thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and ways of interacting and being. All perspectives underscore the importance of self-definition and self-determination. For example, from the perspective of Africentric scholars, self-knowledge is a requisite for achieving well-being. Jenkins's humanistic theory also acknowledges the striving for self-determination and mastery.

African and Western Psychology

African American psychology can be distinguished from Western psychology, not only by the population studied (i.e., African Americans), but also by the nature of the discipline. Azibo (1996) distinguishes African psychology from Western psychology by its nature and essence. According to Azibo, the essence of African psychology was seen in the practice of the people from Kemit (ancient Egypt, the place of original civilization). The Kemit approach to understanding humans was through self-realization, whereas Western psychology's approach was through domination (Kambon, 1998).

One feature of Western psychology is the importance that is placed on observable behavior. Although Freud's influence made the unconscious a part of the scope of Western psychology, psychology has primarily focused on that which can be observed. The focus on observable behavior is attributed to the great weight that Western psychology has placed on prediction and control of the behavior of people. African psychology considers self-knowledge and intuition to be as important as that which is observable (Grills, 2004; Myers, 1988).

In summary, there is no one definition of African American psychology. The definition depends on the perspective that is taken regarding the influence of African and American/Western cultures on the psychology of African Americans. We acknowledge both African and American influences on behavior.

Historical Perspective on the Psychological Study of African Americans

ORIGINS OF AFRICAN PSYCHOLOGY

African American psychology began in ancient Kemit (Egypt), a civilization that began in 3200 B.C. According to Azibo (1996), African

psychology can be traced to the period in time in which Africans produced an “organized system of knowledge (philosophy, definitions, concepts, models, procedures, and practice concerning the nature of the social universe” (p. 4). From this perspective, African American psychology pre-existed Western psychology. African psychology is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

EUROPEAN SCIENTISTS’ CONTRIBUTION TO RACISM

In 1976, Robert Guthrie published the book, *Even the Rat Was White*. The second edition was published in 1998. This book reviews the contributions of the European scientific community in influencing American psychology and beliefs about Blacks and how Blacks have been studied over the past two centuries. The book illustrates how scientific racism contributed to the perception of the inferiority of Blacks and justification for racism and oppression. Contributions from Guthrie’s book are highlighted next.

Comparative Studies in Physical Anthropology

Studies done by physical anthropologists in the late 18th and 19th centuries compared differences in the physical attributes of Blacks and Whites (Guthrie, 1976/1998). These included skin color, hair texture, skull shape and size, facial structure, and posture. Observed differences were always found in favor of the superiority of Whites and the inferiority of Blacks. In studies that looked at skull size as an indicator of intelligence, it was concluded that the Black man’s skull and brain were smaller and therefore less complex than the White brain.

In 1898, the Cambridge Anthropological Society began a cooperative venture between psychology and anthropology. When scientists were sent to New Guinea to study the mental attributes of its residents, they concluded that the natives of the South Pacific were inferior to Westerners on all traits, including intelligence. This study was the beginning of studies of racial differences.

Darwin’s Survival of the Fittest

In 1859, Darwin published his theory on the survival of the fittest. The key assumption of this theory was that only the strongest and most intelligent could survive. According to Guthrie (1976/1998), this doctrine greatly influenced American psychology by emphasizing individual differences, an assumption that currently underlies much of the work in psychology. The vast majority of research on African Americans within the

field of psychology during the first half of the 20th century looked at individual differences in the psychological attributes of African Americans and Whites. The findings generally showed African Americans to be inferior on individual difference variables.

Galton's Eugenics

Galton's work in the 19th century also contributed to promoting a belief in the racial inferiority of Blacks. Galton's theory was that intelligence and other personality attributes were inherited. If intelligence were inherited, then one would not expect those of lower intelligence to improve in ability (Guthrie, 1976/1998). Galton's theory of eugenics was promoted to improve the race through selective mating and sterilization. The improvement of the human race could be done by genetic control of those who were of inferior intelligence and those who were social deviants. The application of eugenics resulted in Blacks and other ethnic minorities being disproportionately included among those who were inferior and unfit.

AMERICAN SCIENTISTS' CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENTIFIC RACISM

Like their European counterparts, American scientists also conducted research to support the intellectual inferiority of African Americans (Guthrie, 1976/1998). The implication of this research on social policy has adversely affected African Americans.

Jensen's (1969) work on intelligence encouraged the belief that some people were genetically inferior to others. According to Jensen, intelligence was essentially determined at birth, and genetics or inheritance accounted for about 80% of intelligence. Note the similarity between this theory and that of eugenics.

In regard to public policy, a theory that intelligence is predetermined adversely affects people who may need environmental and social supports to improve their conditions. For example, compensatory programs such as Head Start were designed to provide economically disadvantaged children an academic boost prior to beginning school. However, if the reasoning is that intelligence is fixed at birth, there is little that can be done to change one's ability, and compensatory programs are not likely to do much good.

Research on the intellectual inferiority of African Americans is seen in more contemporary times in the work of Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) book, *The Bell Curve*. These authors provided data that suggest that intelligence differs among racial groups and that African Americans are at the lowest end of the bell curve. A major point of the book is that most social problems, especially those found among economically and socially

marginalized people, cannot be solved because they are linked to intelligence, which is mostly inherited. Therefore, environmental supports put in place to solve these problems will not be useful if the cause of the social problem is due to intelligence that is inherited.

A broad implication of *The Bell Curve* is that the poor, the uneducated, and the unemployed—of whom African Americans constitute a sizeable percentage—will live a life of unproductivity. Social programs cannot help these individuals, due to their lower intelligence (Haynes, 1994). Another implication of *The Bell Curve* is that people who are socially and intellectually inferior cause many of the social problems in this country.

The Bell Curve has been subject to intense scrutiny and criticism because of its erroneous assumptions and methodological flaws (Fairchild, 1994; Haynes, 1994). The inference of causality based on correlational data is a major methodological flaw as is the importance given to what an intelligence tests means. That is, to assume that lower intelligence scores cause social problems is erroneous when cross-sectional correlational data are used to make these assumptions. Also, to assume that an intelligence test score is the best indicator of intelligence, adaptability, and general life success is flawed.

Intelligence Testing

Intelligence testing, according to Guthrie (1976/1998), was an important factor in perpetuating scientific racism during the first part of the 20th century. Binet and Spearman were early contributors to scientific racism in that their work on intelligence testing was used to show intellectual differences between Blacks and Whites.

In 1904 Alfred Binet, a French physician, developed the Simon-Binet Scale, the forerunner of the Stanford-Binet test of intelligence that is still in use today. Charles Spearman developed the two-factor theory of intelligence that says that mental tests measure two factors: a general factor and a specific factor. The assumption is that the general factor measures general intellectual capability. The problem with this conception of a general factor of intelligence is that it emphasizes the general intellectual capacity while deemphasizing other mental attributes that may be more contextual or culturally specific (Williams, Williams, & Mitchell, 2004).

The earliest test of racial differences in intelligence was done using the Binet scales in 1912. In this study, Alice Strong measured the intelligence of 225 White children and 1,125 Black children. Black children were also categorized according to skin color (dark, medium, and light). Strong (as quoted in Guthrie, 1976/1998) noted that the “colored children excelled in rote memory . . . however, they are inferior in aesthetics judgment, observation, reasoning, motor control, logical memory, use of words, resistance to suggestion, and in orientation or adjustment to the institutions and

complexities of civilized society” (p. 64). In other words, the Black children were inferior to Whites on conceptual and intellectual attributes.

In 1916, Ferguson published a study titled, *The Psychology of the Negro: An Experimental Study*. This study was considered a classic. It reported that the Negro had deficits in abstract thinking, but was very capable in sensory and motor abilities. Given capacity in these types of skills, Negroes should be useful for doing manual work. Overall, much of the early work of American scientists perpetuated the myth of Black inferiority.

STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

In American psychology, studies of Negroes, Coloreds, Blacks, Afro-Americans, and African Americans have been conducted throughout the last century in the United States. Often, theories and conceptual frameworks that may be useful for Western psychology have been erroneously applied to the psychology of African Americans. For example, consider the concept *self-esteem*, a frequently studied topic in Western and American psychology. In understanding what self-esteem is from an African as well as a Western perspective, one must understand the difference between Western and African conceptions of the self. Using a Western definition, self-esteem can be defined as a feeling of liking and regard for one's *self*. From an Africentric perspective, the personal self is indistinguishable from the self that is derived from membership in the African community (Nobles, 1991). Therefore, one's affiliation to one's group defines one's view of self. The African proverb, “I am because we are and we are because I am,” characterizes this notion of the self. Thus, the self-esteem of people of African descent may be different from that of Whites, and it also may function differently for African Americans than for Whites (see Chapter 9 for a more detailed discussion).

Another approach taken by American psychology has been to use information gathered from White populations as the norm and then to compare African Americans with Whites. This approach is seen with the use of measures that have been developed to assess individual difference traits. For example, continuing with the example of self-esteem, a measure of self-esteem that does not include the collective nature of self-esteem may not be relevant for African Americans. Given the problem of non-normative data, we have seen, over the past two decades, more effort directed at the inclusion of African Americans and other ethnic and cultural groups within normative samples when measures are developed.

A related problem is when methods that are based on Western psychology are used to study African Americans. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the method for acquiring knowledge may differ for different cultural

groups. According to Africentric scholars, self-knowledge is the most important type of knowledge and is the basis for all knowledge. Self-knowledge then is more important than knowledge that is acquired from the external environment. In this regard, understanding how a person who participates in a research project perceives him- or herself may be just as important as seeing how he or she responds to external stimuli.

Within American psychology, the preferred methodology for conducting research has been the experiment. Experiments are believed to be superior in producing valid and factually correct information. Experiments also provide a context in which predictions—and subsequently control—can be more exact. Yet, experimentation may not be the best way to obtain information about African Americans. Other, more naturalistic methods such as interviewing and systematic observations may be more useful singularly or in conjunction with experimental approaches.

A large percentage of studies done in American psychology have focused on differences among African Americans and Whites. During the first part of the 20th century, most of the research conducted on African Americans involved comparative studies that contrasted African Americans and Whites on individual difference traits (Guthrie, 1976/1998). This focus on differences led to African Americans being viewed as having deficits on many psychological characteristics. Studies that examine within-group differences among African Americans are just as important to aid in understanding why some African Americans do well and others do not. In the next section, we provide an overview of comparative studies on African Americans.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES

The vast majority of the studies conducted by psychologists on African Americans during the first half of the 20th century were studies that compared Colored, Negroes, and Blacks with Whites. For the most part, these studies examined differences between African Americans and Whites on intelligence, mental ability, and personality. Studies were conducted with children, adolescents, and adults. Studies on intellectual differences employed standard individual intelligence tests such as the Stanford-Binet, as well as group tests to assess mental functioning. One such test used was the Army Classification Battery (ACB). The ACB was developed by the army to assess soldiers' aptitude on different assignments. The ACB test was used in several studies that examined differences in mental ability and intelligence between African Americans and Whites. One study that examined differences between Negroes and Whites on the ACB of intelligence found that Negroes scored lower than Whites (Roen, 1961).

Other studies conducted during the first half of the 20th century investigated differences between African Americans and Whites on personality

attributes, traits, and temperaments. Findings from representative studies are reviewed next. The method used to carry out these studies was influenced by the social and political climate of the time, with most findings reflecting negatively on African Americans. These studies, which almost always found inferior traits among African Americans, contributed to the climate of racism and discrimination against African Americans.

A study published in the 1920s is illustrative of the studies of this era. Peterson (1923) tested White and Colored children using several group intelligence tests and individual learning tests. He found significant race differences, with White children scoring higher on both group and individual tests. He noted in his findings that the White 8-year-old children scored higher than the Negro 10-year-old children. Peterson pointed out that these differences were especially salient because of the fact that 60% of the White 8-year-old children came from poor sections of the city, whereas 97% of the 10-year-old Negro children came from one of the best Negroes schools in the city. He reported that about 83% of the Whites were smarter than the Negroes, and that only 15% to 18% of the Negroes were as smart as the Whites. According to Peterson, differences between the two groups were most striking on tasks that required abstract and logical thinking. In making recommendations stemming from his findings, he suggested that there be less abstract and conventional types of education for Negro children. Peterson did not mention that even though the Negro children may have attended one of the best Negro schools in town, these schools had substantially fewer resources than the poor White schools.

Findings of inferior functioning among African Americans were also seen in early studies on personality traits. Roen (1961) found that Negroes in his study lacked self-confidence more than did Whites. Furthermore, low self-confidence among Negroes was associated with lower intelligence test scores. Roen speculated that the lack of pride in historical achievement, coupled with a negative socioenvironmental context, had led to internalized intellectually defeating personality traits that contributed to lower intelligence scores.

Many studies found that African Americans had elevated scores for problem behaviors. For example, Hokanson and Calden (1960) found even when Negroes and Whites both came from predominately northern working-class settings, Negroes had personality deficits higher in several areas of the Minnesota Multiple Personality Inventory (MMPI). The authors suggested that special norms be developed for Negro and White subjects. Regarding general adaptation to society, studies found that White and Negro adolescents of similar mental ability differed in personal and social adjustment (Pierce-Jones, John, Jackson, & King, 1964).

In a review of psychological studies published between 1943 and 1958, Dreger and Miller (1960) found that Whites were superior to Negroes on several attributes including psychophysical, psychomotor, intelligence, and temperament traits (i.e., neuroticism). They noted that differences

between Negroes and Whites were smaller among young children. In none of these studies did the authors find superior performance among African Americans.

Given the findings from psychological studies, it is no wonder there was an assumption of African American racial inferiority during most of the 20th century. These studies were conducted by researchers at prestigious universities who had the authority of their position and “scientific” credibility for their work (Guthrie, 1976/1998).

In spite of the reports of inferior psychological attributes found in most psychology publications, some scholars as early as the 1940s were questioning the racial bias of psychological tests, especially intelligence tests. In commenting on why test items that differentiate between Black and Whites should be replaced, Pastore (1946) pointed out that test items that differentiate between boys and girls are eliminated because they are unfair. However, items that differentiate between Whites and Blacks have not been eliminated in intelligence testing. He concluded that this leads to no differences being seen for boys and girls, but differences being seen between Negroes and Whites.

A large amount of research on African Americans published during the first half of the 20th century was concerned with whether or not the results of differences between Blacks and Whites were due to genetic inferiority or the environment. Studies were cited to provide evidence for both positions. Those who made the argument that the environment was the cause of inferior performance among African Americans presented evidence that African Americans could learn when provided an opportunity. Witty (1945) argued that the scores for the Army General Classification test, a test of intelligence, were associated with educational opportunities for soldiers within their local communities. To support this statement, Witty provided evidence that Negroes improved in performance when given the opportunity. In a special training unit, illiterates were given an 8-week course to develop fourth-grade skills. The essential skills were attained by 87% of the Negroes and 84% of the Whites. He concluded that these findings showed evidence that Negroes are equal to Whites in the ability to learn.

In accounting for environmental influences on low Negro self-concept, Grambs (1965) wrote:

It does not take much imagination to understand that generations of being told one is unworthy do to a group's own validation of its worth. . . . The self-esteem of the Negro is damaged by the overwhelming fact that the world he lives in says, “White is right; black is bad.” The impact on the Negro community is to overvalue all those traits of appearance that are most Caucasian. Evidence is clear that in almost every Negro family, the lighter children are favored by the parents. (p. 14)

The first part of the 20th century saw much work devoted to justifying the inferiority of Blacks within American psychology. However, during the second half of the century, this assumption began to be questioned.

Self-Determination

Several critical events provided the impetus for the development of a contemporary psychology of African Americans. A pivotal assumption was that African Americans had to define for themselves what constitutes the psychology of African Americans. The emergence of a voice among African American psychologists (albeit few in number) occurred during the sociopolitical struggles of the 1960s for civil rights and equality in all aspects of life. The demand for civil rights was seen in all institutions including educational institutions. Black Nationalism and the Black Power movement were also driving forces for self-determination during the 60s. These sociopolitical movements set the stage for self-determination.

AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

During the first part of the 20th century, a few African Americans were beginning to enter the field of psychology. Despite many obstacles, African Americans managed to become psychologists (Guthrie, 1976/1998). Two of the major obstacles for African Americans were geographical location of graduate programs in psychology and the cost of graduate school. Most graduate-level universities in the South, where the majority of African Americans lived, did not admit African Americans. This meant that African Americans had to go north in order to attend graduate school. However, out-of-state tuition was expensive, as was travel costs to get there. This situation, along with the low incomes of most African Americans during this period, made it very difficult for African Americans to go to graduate school even if they were accepted.

At this time, most African Americans attended predominately Black colleges. White universities required African Americans who had received their bachelor degree from a predominately African American university to complete an additional year of undergraduate school to demonstrate that they had the ability for graduate school. This resulted in a longer period of matriculation for African Americans than for Whites (Guthrie, 1976/1998).

Despite these obstacles, a few African Americans managed to obtain a Ph.D. in psychology during the first quarter of the 20th century. Francis

Sumner was the first Black to receive a Ph.D. in psychology in 1920 from Clark University in Massachusetts. Because of this distinction, Sumner is referred to as the Father of Black psychology. Sumner conducted his dissertation research on the psychoanalysis of Freud and Adler. He became chair of the Department of Psychology at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Howard became a leading university for providing training in psychology to African Americans at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Charles Henry Thompson was another early recipient of the Ph.D. in psychology. He received his Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Chicago in 1925. Dr. Thompson conducted his dissertation research on teacher curriculums.

In 1938, Herman Canaday at West Virginia State College convened Black professionals interested in Black psychology and established a Black psychologists committee within the American Teachers Association (ATA). The ATA was the professional organization for Black educators.

THE ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGISTS

The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) was organized in 1968 when African American psychologists attending the predominately White American Psychological Association (APA) Conference reacted to what they felt were nonsupportive, if not racist, positions regarding ethnic minority concerns. A group of African American psychologists met during the 1968 APA meeting in San Francisco and generated a list of demands (Guthrie, 1976/1998). The reactionary position of African American psychologists at this meeting was consistent with the self-determination and protest ideology of the 1960s. African American psychologists were tired of being ignored and were fed up with research, policies, and programs that were discriminatory to African Americans.

The demands that African American psychologists made included:

1. The APA must integrate its own workforce with more African Americans
2. The APA should work to gain the admittance of more African Americans in psychology graduate schools
3. Racist content found in APA journals should be eliminated
4. The APA should establish programs so that concerns specific to each minority group can be addressed

Following the 1968 meeting, African American psychologists in attendance decided to form their own organization rather than to try to effect change within the APA.

The thrust of ABPsi today remains similar to that articulated over 35 years ago. Some of the agendas of the ABPsi today are as follows: First, to provide training and support to African American psychology students. The ABPsi encourages and promotes the professional development of African American undergraduate and graduate students through scholarships, support of students in their research activities, and publications directed at assisting students in their graduate education. The student Committee of ABPsi provides support to and a forum in which students can address important topics facing them, the universities they attend, and communities in which they live. The student ABPsi has been especially beneficial to students who attend predominately White universities as it introduces them to African American psychologists.

Second, ABPsi has been engaged in strong advocacy against racist and discriminatory practices within the discipline of psychology as well as other arenas. The ABPsi has emphasized the need for culturally competent practices, treatment, and services. As early as 1969, the year after the formation of ABPsi, African American psychologists were arguing against the use of culturally biased tests. Robert Williams, then chair of ABPsi, asked for an end to using tests that were not standardized on African Americans, arguing that they were not valid. To illustrate what he perceived as cultural bias in testing, Williams developed a test labeled the "Bitch" test, the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity. Williams showed that when the Bitch test was administered to White samples, they fared poorly in comparison to African Americans. The discriminatory nature of testing as it affects African Americans continues to be one of the major issues addressed by ABPsi.

ABPsi and/or its members have articulated positions on several other practices that are discriminatory against Black people and have promoted agendas that aid in improving the mental, physical, social, economical, and political status of all people of African descent. To this regard, ABPsi has developed position papers and press releases, and have provided information to the general public on racist research, practices, and policies. For example, a special issue of the official journal of ABPsi, *The Journal of Black Psychology*, was dedicated to exposing the fallacies found in the book *The Bell Curve*, which promoted racial inferiority. A 2004 issue of *The Journal of Black Psychology* was devoted to HIV/AIDS epidemiology, prevention, and treatment for people of African descent.

Third, ABPsi has been active in addressing social, psychological, and health problems found among people of African decent through training, education, and programs at the local, state, and national levels. Training in topics related to mental health, substance abuse, HIV, and children and families are offered by local chapters, at the national convention, and by members throughout the country. ABPsi and its members provide health screenings, mental health assessment, expert testimony, consultation to agencies, and other activities in communities throughout the United States.

Fourth, ABPsi has promoted an awareness of the problems and concerns facing Blacks throughout the diaspora. A related mission is to increase connections and collaborations among Blacks throughout the world. For example, racial apartheid in South Africa, tribal conflict, and famine in African countries have been publicized through ABPsi. Annual national conferences of the ABPsi have included Blacks from other countries, and there have been collaborative activities with Blacks from other countries including the Caribbean, Africa, and South America. Two ABPsi annual conferences have been international conferences, held in Jamaica and Ghana.

TOWARD A BLACK PSYCHOLOGY

A seminal message that contributed to the recognition of the field of Black psychology was articulated by Joseph White (1970) in an *Ebony* magazine article titled "Toward a Black Psychology." A recent update to this article appeared as a chapter in the fourth edition of Reginald Jones's book *Black Psychology* (2004). In this article, Dr. White, a professor at the University of California, Irvine, explained how it was difficult, if not impossible, to understand the psychology of Black people using theories that were developed by White psychologists to examine White people (Guthrie, 1976/1998). In this article, White strongly advocated a Black psychology defined by Blacks.

This article received a lot of attention from the public. Some felt that the position of Joseph White was polarizing for African Americans. Others felt that this position dichotomized psychology into Black and White disciplines. Still others felt that a psychology formulated from the experiences of Blacks would marginalize Black psychology. The perspective that Black psychology was in some way different from White psychology was perceived by some as creating a lower-class psychology for Blacks. Others felt just as strongly as Professor White that it was time for Black psychology to be formulated for the authentic experiences of Blacks.

THE JOURNAL OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGY

The Journal of Black Psychology is the official journal of the ABPsi. The journal began in 1974, six years after the formation of the ABPsi, and has grown from publishing issues twice a year to publishing issues four times per year. In addition, special issues that focus on specific topics are published on a periodic basis. Some of the more recent special issue topics have included sickle cell disease, racial identity, African American children, HIV prevention, and substance abuse prevention. *The Journal of Black Psychology* publishes contributions within the field of psychology that are

directed toward the understanding of the experience and behavior of Black populations. The major disciplines of psychology are represented in the journal, including clinical, counseling, social, educational, organizational, and cognitive psychology. Journal articles tend to be empirical but also include theoretical reviews, commentaries, case studies, and book reviews. *The Journal of Black Psychology* was relied on extensively in gathering research and literature for this book.

STUDIES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN OTHER JOURNALS

There have been an increasing number of studies on African Americans published in journals other than *The Journal of Black Psychology*. This increase has been partially due to the increase in African American psychologists and to an increasing awareness of cultural diversity. Publications have expanded the knowledge of African Americans and informed the psychological community on culturally congruent approaches to studying African Americans. The more recent writings have also focused more on understanding African American behaviors from a positive, culturally appropriate framework rather than a negative, culturally deviant framework.

INFLUENTIAL AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGISTS

Several African American psychologists have influenced the field of African American psychology. Next, we highlight individuals who have made important contributions. We selected these individuals based on several considerations: (a) These individuals were the first to obtain a doctorate in psychology or the first in other accomplishments. (b) They have developed new theories and conceptual frameworks. (c) They have conducted research that has impacted social policy and improved conditions for African Americans. Some have been influential because they have advanced theories that have been a catalyst for others who have followed them; still others have had a large impact because of how prolific they were. Some are listed because they have directly and indirectly influenced our teachings and writings.

Francis C. Sumner

Sumner, the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in psychology in the United States (in 1920) is regarded as the Father of Black Psychology (Guthrie, 1976/1998). This accomplishment is noteworthy because at the time he received his degree, only 11 Blacks out of a total of 10,000 recipients

had earned a Ph.D. between 1876 and 1920 in the United States. Working against many barriers, Francis Sumner earned his degree at Clark University in Massachusetts. At the age of 15, he enrolled as a freshman at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania after having passed an examination in lieu of a high school diploma. He enrolled in Clark College in 1915 and also received a degree in English.

Sumner joined the faculty at Howard University, Washington, D.C., in 1928 and was chair of the Department of Psychology from 1928 to 1954. During this period, he established strong graduate and undergraduate programs in psychology. Under his leadership, the department produced many influential Black psychologists and provided training, especially at the bachelor's and master's levels. Both Mamie Clark and Kenneth Clark, two other influential African American psychologists, received training at Howard University.

Mamie Clark and Kenneth Clark

This husband and wife team is best known for their work on racial preferences among Black children. Their classic doll studies were published in the 1940s and early 1950s. In these studies, Black children were shown Black and White dolls and told to choose the one that looked like them, the one they preferred, the one that was a good doll, and the one that was a bad doll. The Clarks concluded from their findings that Black children preferred White dolls. This classic study led the Clarks to argue that Black children who attended segregated schools had low self-esteem. The findings were used in arguments against racial segregation, the most famous of which was the 1954 landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*. Prior to this, Blacks had received inferior education in segregated schools. The *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark decision ruled that separate but equal education was unconstitutional. That is, schools could not be separate and equal at the same time. Although there were several subsequent methodological criticisms of the Clark and Clark doll studies, they continue to be classic studies of racial identity and preferences. Kenneth Clark was the first and only Black to be president of the APA.

William Cross

William Cross's model of the development of racial and ethnic identity has generated a considerable amount of work over the past three decades and continues to do so today. Cross's model was labeled a "nigrescence" model. Nigrescence models accounted for the progression of African Americans through sequential stages to arrive at a healthy racial identity (Cross, 1978). These stages were subsequently labeled as pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization commitment.

Each stage is characterized by certain affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions. Racial identity theory is discussed more extensively in Chapter 9. Cross's model has been revised and augmented by several other scholars including Janet Helms and Thomas Parham. The theory of racial identity has prompted much research (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1998).

Reginald Jones

Reginald Jones is included as an influential psychologist because of the large amount of work he has published on Black psychology. Jones has published over 20 books on African American psychology and related topics, and his books have provided comprehensive coverage of Black psychology. Many of his works are edited volumes that include a variety of authors, perspectives, and topics. His book on Black psychology was the first to be published on the topic. The first edition of *Black Psychology* was first published in 1972, and the fourth edition was published in 2004. *Black Psychology* includes chapters on several topics including African philosophy, personality, assessment, intelligence assessment, counseling, racism, racial identity, cognition, and language. We frequently consulted Jones's *Black Psychology* when writing this book.

Some of the other books on African American psychology that Jones has edited include *African American Identity Development* (1998); *Advances in African American Psychology* (1999); *African American Children, Youth, and Parenting* (1998); *African American Mental Health* (1998); *Black Adolescents* (1989); and *Handbook of Tests and Measurement for Black Populations* (1996). The books authored by Dr. Jones have been used in African American psychology classes and similar courses throughout the country. Dr. Jones is currently a professor emeritus at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia.

James Jones

James Jones is included as an influential African American psychologist for two reasons. First, his book on *Prejudice and Racism*, originally published in 1972 and revised in 1997, is a classic examination of prejudice and racism. In this book, Jones provides an analysis of the different types of racism, that is, individual, institutional, and cultural.

Second, Dr. Jones has substantially impacted African American psychology in his role as the Director of the APA's Minority Fellowship Program. In this position, Dr. Jones has been responsible for managing a program to increase the number of African American and other ethnic minority scholars who obtain doctorates in psychology. The mission of the minority fellowship program is to improve the quality of mental health treatment and research on issues of concern among ethnic minority

populations in psychology by offering financial support and by providing guidance and training in becoming a psychologist. The minority fellowship program began in 1974 with Dalmas Taylor as the first director. James Jones became director in 1977 and continues to direct the program.

Africentric Psychologists

Beginning in the 1970s, several African American psychologists began writing and educating people about the importance of understanding African philosophy as a basis for understanding African American psychology. These include Na'im Akbar, Asa Hilliard, Wade Nobles, Joseph Baldwin (a.k.a. Kobi Kambon), Daudi Azibo, and Linda James Myers. The work of these psychologists is often published in *The Journal of Black Psychology*. Chapters were also published in Reginald Jones's edited book, *Black Psychology*. Several of these psychologists are highlighted in Chapter 2.

AFRICAN AMERICANS' PRESENCE WITHIN THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The APA is a membership organization of approximately 150,000 members. The mission of APA is to advance psychology as a science and profession as a means of promoting human welfare. Divisions within APA operate that are geared to disciplines and interest of APA members (APA, 2005).

Several components of APA represent the professional interests of African American psychologists. APA's Division 45, The Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues, encourages research on ethnic minority issues and the application of psychological knowledge to addressing issues of ethnic minority population. One distinction between APA's Division 45 and the ABPsi is that the APA's Division 45 supports ethnic minority issues of all ethnic minority groups and ABPsi is more specifically focused on Black issues. The official journal of Division 45 is *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*. This journal is published quarterly.

The Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs at APA seeks to increase the scientific understanding of how culture pertains to psychology and how ethnicity influences behavior. It also focuses on promotion, recruitment, retention and training opportunities for ethnic minority psychologist, increasing the delivery of appropriate psychological services to ethnic minority communities, and promoting better inclusion of ethnic minorities in organized psychology (APA, 2004).

Status of African American Psychology Today

TEACHING AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

Today, African American psychology is taught at many colleges and universities. The course is often cross-listed with African American studies. Increased interests in African American psychology is attributed to several factors, including the growing appreciation for cultural diversity, increased enrollment of African American students, recognition of the contributions of African American psychology to general psychology, and increases in the number of African American faculty who can teach this course.

NUMBER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGISTS

To date, data on the exact number of African American psychologists could not be obtained. However, statistics reported by APA show that there has been a shift in the number of Ph.D.-level psychologists of color. In 1977, 7.5% of the new doctorates in psychology were people of color. This number had increased to 17.7% by 2000 (APA Research Office, 2000). Among Ph.D.s in the workforce, only 2% were people of color in 1973 compared to 9% in 1999. Although the increase has been fairly substantial, the percentage of people of color within psychology is still significantly less than one would expect given their representation in this country. Also, it is important to note that this number represents all people of color, including Hispanics, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Native American/Alaska Natives, and Blacks.

AFRICAN AMERICAN FACULTY AND GRADUATE STUDENTS IN GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGY

The presence of African American faculty in psychology departments, specifically graduate departments, is important. Graduate departments provide training at the doctoral level. African American faculty are important insofar as they generally tend to encourage research on issues of concern to African Americans, assist in recruitment and retention of African American students, and teach classes and integrate material on African Americans in the curriculum of courses taught. An APA survey of departments of psychology gathered demographic data on faculty and graduate students (APA Research Office, 2000). In 2000, racial/ethnic minority faculty represented approximately 10.5% of all full-time faculty in doctoral-level programs. Because all ethnic minority faculty are included in this figure, the number of African American faculty is much lower.

Statistics compiled by APA on the percentage of ethnic minority students in doctoral programs show that in 2000 7.2% of first-year students in doctoral programs were African American, 6.3% of students were Asian, and 5.6% were Hispanic (APA Research Office, 2000). Consistent with faculty, the number of students enrolled in graduate programs is not representative of the ethnic group representation in this country. One of the barriers to the enrollment of African Americans is the lack of mentoring at the undergraduate level for preparation for graduate schools. The lack of mentoring may occur at both predominately White and predominately African American colleges and universities. African Americans who attend predominately White institutions may not develop a relationship with faculty and/or be provided the type of guidance needed to prepare for graduate school. Students attending predominately African American schools may have more interactions with faculty, but because most African American universities are traditionally teaching universities, they may not be exposed to the research experiences that are often required for graduate school.

Methodological Issues

Some of the methodological issues that were historically problematic in studying African Americans remain today. The best methods for studying African American populations may differ from the methods for studying other ethnic groups. For example, the experimental method is the favored method in psychology and has been considered the gold standard for conducting research. However, it may not always be the best way to arrive at an understanding of the psychology of African Americans. Other methods such as interviewing and observing may be more appropriate, depending on what is being studied. African psychology (discussed in Chapter 2) considers self-knowledge and intuition to be as important as source of knowing as observable data. Self-knowledge is derived from asking people about themselves not from observing them under experimental conditions.

Another methodological consideration is the relevance of the constructs that are being examined for African Americans. A construct may not hold the same meaning for African Americans as other ethnic groups. An earlier example we used was how the concept of self-esteem is used. For people of African descent, the concept of self includes the collective as well as the individual self. From a Western psychological perspective, the self is individualized. Another construct that may differ is that of the family. Who constitutes the African American family? What is an effective family? What does it mean to have a functioning family? The answers to these questions may differ for African Americans than for other groups. Clearly, more research is needed to better understand when constructs are universal and when constructs are culturally specific to African Americans.

The relatively low percentage of African American psychologists contributes to some of these methodological issues. The problems and questions of interest are often identified and studied by those most affected. We return to methodological and conceptual issues throughout this book pointing out how these issues affect the validity and practicality of studies conducted on African Americans.

Summary

The proverb at the beginning of this chapter suggests that when the beginning is understood, the end will be successful. This chapter was written to inform the reader about African American psychology, its origins, and historical events and people. By so informing the reader of the history, we hope that the reader will be successful in learning about this field of psychology.

The origin of the study of African American psychology can be traced to ancient Kemet in that it is during this period of time that Black people produced a systematic body of knowledge. European theories, including Darwin's survival of the fittest doctrine and Galton's eugenics, contributed to the belief in the inferiority of Blacks. This belief perpetuated discrimination and racism. Contemporary scientific work on racial inferiority is seen in Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) *The Bell Curve*.

During the first half of the 20th century, the study of African Americans in American psychology was largely comparative, and findings showed African Americans to be inferior to Whites on intelligence, personality, and general adaptation. Obtaining a Ph.D. in psychology was very difficult for Blacks. Frances Sumner obtained his degree in 1920 and is known as the Father of Black Psychology because of this achievement. In 1968, a period of self-determination began. The ABPsi was formed by African American psychologists who felt that the predominately White APA did not address the concerns of Black people. Since then, there has been an increase in culturally appropriate publications. There has also been an increase in the number of African American psychologists, and an increase in awareness of cultural diversity in psychology. The APA has offices (e.g., the Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs) and programs targeted at African American psychology professionals and students. More college students are becoming familiar with African American psychology as many colleges and universities teach courses in it.