current behavior within a historical context (as, the subordinated tendency of
with the group and not the individual as the unit of analysis. In (b) consider
way's (Pruittfield, 2000). Specifically, it refers to (a) emphasizing the collective,
distinguishing from European American or White psychology in a number of
as a contemporary growing and changing field (see Jones, 1999a, 2003). It may be
Defining African American or Black Psychology is difficult, because it

WHAT IS AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

describe specific strategies for classroom interaction.
offer resources for instructors teaching African American psychology.
Curriculum: In this chapter we provide a definition and description of the field.
the end of the 1990's, however, it had gained a solid place in U.S. college
African American Psychology was virtually unknown 35 years ago. By

AND HARRELL W. RICHARD
HALFORD H. FAIRCILD, LISA WHITTEN,

RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES
AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY:
TEACHING

14

CITATION:
European American psychology; (c) focus on both the material and the immaterial or spiritual (vs. emphasizing only that which can be seen, measured, and manipulated); (d) consider introspection ("knowledge from within") as a valid means of data collection (vs. an external orientation characterized by observations, surveys, or experiments); (e) see harmony in nature (vs. seeking to control nature); (f) counter racism and sexism (vs. ignoring or even promoting those ideologies); and (g) be grounded in a set of values that seeks African liberation on the continent and throughout the African diaspora (vs. the "value-free," "neutral" or "objective" approach of European American psychology).

However, it should be noted that this list is idealized. African American psychologists are trained in European American schools and traditions and embrace many of the values of that training. Thus, these distinguishing features are not alternatives to European American psychology, but different emphases.

TEACHING AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

The teaching of African American psychology began in the 1920s and 1930s, with the efforts of African American psychologists Francis Cecil Sumner, Charles Henry Thompson, Inez Beverley Prosser, and others (Guthrie, 1998). However, broader scholarly attention to teaching this material began with the publication of the Sourcebook on the Teaching of Black Psychology (Jones, 1978). Still available from the publisher, this early manual offers a wealth of concrete suggestions, although its list of curricular resources is out of date.

Courses and Specialty Areas

The field of African American psychology has become so extensive that an entire curriculum could (and should) be developed. Such a curriculum would parallel, to an extent, the curriculum in White psychology by offering courses in developmental, abnormal, counseling, and social psychology, and in other core areas. In addition, specialty courses unique to African American psychology might focus on such areas as Black or African identity, traditional healing methodologies, or male–female relationships. The following suggested topics and resources are germane to introductory or specialty courses within African American psychology—as well as courses within the general psychology curriculum. Useful general resources, particularly at the introductory level, are Jones (2003); Parham, White, and Ajamu (1999); and Guthrie (1998), who provide critiques detailing the omission of African Americans from mainstream psychology as well as mainstream psychology's preoccupation with dehumanizing African people.

Developmental psychology

Developmental courses can include the entire life span or focus on a particular period along the continuum. Hill (1999) and McAdoo (2002) are useful resources on African American children. Jones (1999b) provides an excellent compilation on children, youth, and parenting. Course topics in child development might include the debate over the pedagogical uses of Ethnice, or African American dialects (see Fairchild & Edwards-Evans, 1990; Seymour, Abdulcartin, & Johnson, 1999); cross-ethnic issues in cognitive and psychological assessment (Cunningham, Henggele, & Pickrel, 1996); and the continuing controversy surrounding transracial adoption (Abdullah, 1996; Baden, 2002). Gibbs (1998) is an excellent resource on Black adolescence. Course topics on this period might include the development of racial or ethnic identity (Resnicow, Soler, Braithwaite, Sellassie, & Smith, 1999); cross-ethnic comparisons of sexual norms and behaviors (Miller, Forehand, & Kotchick, 1999); and the factors that contribute to the development of youth gangs, particularly in urban areas (Quamina, 1999). Resources are also available for the adult and elderly periods, particularly regarding factors affecting mental and physical health (Bowles & Kingston, 1998; Brunswick & Messeri, 1999; Joseph, 1997; Mills & Henretta, 2001; Ramsey, 1998).

Gender and the family

Sufficient material exists to develop courses that focus on African American women, men, the family, or some combination of these. Courses focusing on women might include topics such as work (Turner, 1997); health (Lawson, Rodgers-Rose, & Rajaram, 1999); identity (Collins, 2001); male–female relationships (Bethea, 1998); and mother–daughter relationships (Wharton & Thorne, 1997). White and Cones (1999) provided a good general resource on African American men; special topic areas might include fathering (Bowman & Forman, 1997); career development (Chung, Baskin, & Case, 1999); and mental health (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Hopp & Herring, 1999). Another important topic is family issues for African American lesbians and gay men (Greene & Herek, 1997; Mays, Chatters, Cochran, & Mackness, 1998). McAdoo's (1996) book remains an excellent resource of general information on Black families, whereas more recent works focus on parenting (Anderson, 1999); historical perspectives (Gadade, 1999); family structure (Jarrett & Burton, 1999); marriage (Orbuch, Veroff, & Hunter, 1999); and social support (McCabe, Clark, & Barnett, 1999).

Educational psychology

African American educational psychology is of central importance in understanding adult outcomes. Specific topics include the aforementioned role of language (Hoover, 1998); assessment (Jones, 1996); the relationships between academic achievement and identity (Spradlin, Welsh, & Hinson, ...
2000), and debates about race and IQ (Helms, 1997). Students may examine intelligence testing by reading a racist perspective (e.g., Rushton, 1996) as well as arguments that debunk scientific racism (e.g., Fairchild, 1991; Helms, 1997). Recent work on stereotype vulnerability—the idea that African American youth perform more poorly when there is the possibility of confirming negative stereotypes about academic achievement—is also worth exploring (Steele, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Employment and economics

Employment and economics are key areas of investigation within African American psychology. Much of the literature on the economics of being African American have focused on welfare and other forms of public assistance (Vartanian, 1999). Because the rate of unemployment is much higher for African Americans than for other ethnic groups, it is important to investigate its effects on physical and mental health (Rodriguez, Allen, Frongillo, & Chandra, 1999). It is also essential to examine the role of racial discrimination in the workplace, including the effects on health outcomes (Mays, Coleman, & Jackson, 1996) of differential access to jobs (Bronson, 1997) and earnings (Tam, 1997). Additional important topics in this area are career development for men (Chung et al., 1999) and women (Turner, 1997), Black professionals (Holder & Vaux, 1998), and racism in the workplace (Kirby & Jackson, 1999).

Personality

One of the most exciting areas of investigation in African American psychology is personality, particularly with respect to identity issues (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1998). This work has focused on the challenges to a healthy sense-of-self within a sociocultural milieu that degrades Black people (Jones, 1998a). Other research has focused on African American masculinity (Bush, 1999); African self-consciousness and commitment (McCowan & Alston, 1998); and acculturation into the majority (rejecting) culture (Snowden & Hines, 1999), with implications for mental health (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Racial attitudes are also part of the processes and products of personality development (Hudson & Hines-Hudson, 1999).

Clinical and counseling psychology

An extensive body of theory and research exists on clinical and counseling issues regarding African Americans. Instructors will find Jones's (1998b) edited collection on African American mental health a useful general resource. Topics for study might include the etiology, prevalence, or treatment of specific disorders or behavioral problems, such as Alzheimer's disease (Ausch, 1997); anxiety (Neal-Barnett & Crowther, 2000); psychiatric disorders associated with HIV/AIDS (Myers & Durvasala, 1999); coping with HIV/AIDS (Ball, Tannenbaum, Armistead, & Maguen, 2002); anger (Franklin, 1998); eating and body image disorders (Demarest & Allen, 2000; Harris & Koba, 1997); drug and alcohol abuse (Brunner, 1999; Burlew, Need, & Johnson, 2000; Obox, Hubbard, & Anthony, 1999); or suicide (Burt, Hartman, & Matteson, 1999). A key issue to understand is that the mental and social functioning of African Americans are affected by their second- (or third-) class status in a racist social order. This affects the way that problems originate, express themselves, and are treated (Thompson, 2002). Failure to take this into consideration can lead to misdiagnoses, inappropriate treatment strategies, and the inability to ameliorate the presenting problems. Instructors might introduce important new work on "African-centered" therapeutic approaches (Okepu, 1999; Phillips, 1998), including traditional African approaches to medicine and healing (Ashanti, 1998; Grills & Rowe, 1998). Another essential topic for students to consider is the race of therapist. African American clients, depending on their own racial identity, may or may not need an African American therapist (Carter & Boyd-Jackson, 1998). In addition, racial attitudes of the therapist may affect initial clinical impressions (Abreu, 1999); therapeutic progress (Leary, 1995), and ultimate therapeutic success (Sterling, Gottheil, Weinstein, & Serota, 1998).

Teaching Strategies

We have found a number of specific strategies to be useful in teaching African American psychology. Interactive techniques (vs. relying solely on lectures) are usually more effective in helping students to grapple with challenging material (Richard, 1996). We also recommend the videotaped lectures by eminent psychologists that are available from The Association of Black Psychologists (P.O. Box 55999, Washington, DC 20040-5999), featuring a wide range of dynamic speakers so that students can see and hear about cutting-edge thinking and research in the field.

Assignments and discussion

We have found several approaches useful for engaging students in active consideration of the course content. One involves requiring them to write brief thumbnail sketches of the readings and more lengthy reaction statements, which allow them to offer any personal reaction, positive or negative, that they have to the reading material. The class then sits in a circle, and after the instructor makes brief introductory remarks, the students are asked to share those reactions. This assures that students come to class well prepared and produce a stimulating interchange of ideas, with the instructor helping to clarify or amplify key points. Another useful approach is to have students work on separate components of an assignment and then come
together to share their insights and knowledge. This can involve the critical analysis of readings or a review of one another's papers. The instructor organizes the students into heterogeneous groups, which fosters cross-fertilization of ideas and exposure to varied learning and thinking styles (Whitten, 1993). Students generally respond well to collaborative exercises when cultural and racial issues are addressed (Whittlesey, 2001).

**Movies and movie clips**

The presence of African American themes in popular motion pictures has grown over the last 10 years or so. Instructors may find many opportunities to show movies—or, preferably, movie clips—in order to generate discussion around pertinent issues in the course. Movies produced and directed by Spike Lee are particularly helpful. For example, *She's Gotta Have It* (S. J. Lee & Lee, 1986) explores sexuality; *Jungle Fever* (S. Lee, 1991) examines color consciousness, marriage, and interracial relationships; *Do the Right Thing* (S. Lee, 1989) explores race relations; and *Bamboozled* (S. Lee, 1999) focuses on color consciousness and identity. *Sankofa*, an excellent movie by the independent filmmaker Haile Gerima (1993), portrays slavery and examines African American identity issues. Another independent movie, *One Week* (Seaton, 2001), ignites discussions about relationships and HIV/AIDS. Useful documentaries include *Ethnic Notions* (Riggs, 1996), which examines media images; *Nappy* (Douglas, 1997), which focuses on hair and racial identity; and *A Question of Color* (Sandler, 1992), which explores color consciousness in the African American community.

**CONCLUSION**

Theory and research in African American psychology have progressed enormously over the last 30 years. A curriculum reflecting this body of knowledge could easily include a dozen or more courses. One of the challenges within the field of psychology in the years to come will be to expand its parameters and diversify its content so that this broadened vision becomes a reality.

**REFERENCES**


Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test per-
