

# Daudi Azibo: Defining and Developing Africana Psychological Theory, Research and Practice

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## Abstract

As one of the major theorists in African-centered psychology, Daudi Azibo has consistently been about the task of defining, describing and defending African-centered psychology. Through Azibo's scholarship, the production, dissemination and consumption of information relative to the psychology of Africana people has been explored and expanded. Azibo argues that an African-centered liberation psychology must establish and position itself as a viable discipline that is able to counter the cultural and political hegemony of Eurocentric psychology. It is suggested that Azibo's body of work constructs an intergenerational and intellectual bridge that connects the pioneers of African/Black psychology with the more recent voices in the discipline.

**Key words:** African-centered psychology; Africana psychology; Liberation psychology; African-centered theory; African-centered methodology; Africana intellectual history; Nosology

Daudi Azibo has been at the forefront of the formulation of an African-centered psychology. He was born in Washington, D.C. and attended Xavier University for his freshmen year of college. After transferring and graduating from Rider University in 1978, he obtained his M.S. and Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis. He was an assistant professor of African American Studies at Temple University (1987-1992), and achieved the rank of full professor of psychology at Florida A & M University (1993-2004). His having worked at both Temple University and Florida A & M University should not be overlooked. The Department of African American Studies at Temple University, chaired by Molefi Asante, in 1988 became the first Ph.D. program in African American Studies. The psychology department at Florida A & M, chaired by Joseph Baldwin/Kobi Kambon from 1985-1997, is the only psychology department known to have an African-centered emphasis within its curriculum (Kambon, 1996). Thus, by serving with both Asante and Kambon, Azibo has contributed to the development of two major programs that can be considered as the bastions of African-centered thought within the hallowed halls of both ivory and ebony towers. He has also taught at SUNY-New Paltz, Grambling State University and Delaware State University.

Azibo is a prolific scholar in the area of African-centered psychology. His published books include: *African-centered Psychology: Culture-Focusing for Multicultural Competence* (2003), *African Psychology in Historical Perspective and Related Commentary* (1996) and *African American Psychology: Theory, Research and Practice* (1992). Azibo has published over fifty-five articles mostly in numerous Africana Studies related journals such as *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, *The International Journal of Africana Studies*, *The Negro Educational Review*, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *The Journal of Non-White Concerns*, *Imhotep: An Afocentric Review* and *The Afrocentric Scholar*. In a content analysis of the *Journal of Black Psychology* (JBP) conducted by Cokely et al (1999), Azibo was ranked the highest contributor to the JBP during the 15-year period from 1985-1999.

Additionally, the May 1998 (v. 24, #2) and the 1994 (v. 20, #3) issues of the *JBP* were devoted to Dr. Azibo's work on the Azibo Nosology and Black Liberation Theology and Liberation Psychology, respectively. His scholarly research and outstanding contributions to African-centered psychology resulted in his being awarded the prestigious Distinguished Psychologist award by the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) in 1993.

Azibo's understanding of what would evolve into African psychology was shaped and formed by his relationships with several prominent Black psychologists. The major influence in Azibo's early articulation of Africana psychology was Robert L. Williams. For many Africana scholars, particularly those who matriculate at predominantly white institutions, graduate school can be a period that involves intense academic and personal conflicts. Fortunately for Azibo, he was able to ease the conflicts typically associated with this stage and connect with a *jegna* (an intellectual warrior that transfers their knowledge, wisdom and understanding to younger scholar/activists) such as Robert L. Williams. After being discouraged from meeting with Dr. Williams by his graduate advisor, Azibo was even more determined to meet with this esteemed Black psychologist. Eventually, he met this eminent scholar he had studied and admired from afar. Azibo was encouraged by the relentless and rigorous research of Williams. For Azibo, Williams was the perfect role model for Africana psychology. Azibo states that "in most of my work I have used and built upon his (Dr. Williams) theorization about African personality and comparative methodology" (p. 576). Williams' conceptualizing of concepts such as Ebonics and Afrocinging begin an early discourse on the definition of Africana psychology. The collective Black mind, the Black Intelligence Test for Cultural Homogeneity (BITCH), the Black Personality Questionnaire (BPQ), and the Themes Concerning Blacks Apperception Test (TCBAT) are examples of the work by Williams that inspired Azibo's conceptualization of Africana psychology.

## **Defining African-centered Psychological Theory**

Azibo provides an elaborate conceptualization of the growth and development of African psychology. In *African Psychology in Historical Perspective and Related Commentary* he posits that an understanding of Black psychology "requires knowledge of three things: its past, its future prospects as discernible from its past, and its present functioning. These are the issues of origin, essence and destiny" (Azibo, 1996, p. 3). According to Azibo, the five origins of African/Black Psychology and their corresponding essences are: (1) African Psychology I: Ancient Kemet (Egypt) circa 3200 B.C. with an emphasis on cultivation of the human soul and human illumination; (2) Eurocentric Psychology II: Wilhelm Wundt 1879, the Father of Eurocentric Psychology, in which the research emphasizes the scientific study of behavior inclusive of psychoanalytic depth processes and emphasizes control of behavior; (3) African Psychology III: Francis Cecil Sumner, 1920, the Father of African-U.S. Psychologists, in which the fundamental assumptions are the same as Eurocentric psychology with an added reactive thrust of refuting racist and pejorative theory and research on Africans emanating from

Eurocentric Psychology; (4) African Psychology IV: Founding of the Association of Black Psychologists in 1968, with basic principles similar to African Psychology III plus the proactive pro-black camp (which is concerned with the authenticity of the African-U.S. based experience) and the proactive Africentric camp (which foundation is African philosophy and thus returns to African Psychology I) and (5) African Psychology V: Wade Nobles' publication on the African philosophical basis of African Psychology in 1972, where the basic assumptions here are the same as the Africentric proactive camp in African Psychology IV which emphasizes African philosophical thought and returns to African Psychology I (Azibo, 1996; Jamison, 2009). Other categorizations of the schools of thought and/or conceptual approaches in Black Psychology are found in the work of Banks (1999; 1992; 1982), Karenga (1992), Kambon (2012) and Holliday (2009). Azibo's historical as well as conceptual presentation of the origin, essence and destiny of African Psychology takes a slightly different path and departs from previous articulations of the competing schools of thought and methodological approaches within African Psychology. While other scholars focused on ideological differences and/or methodological approaches (Karenga, 1992; Kambon; Holliday; 2009), Azibo combines historical, ideological and methodological understandings of African psychology.

For example, in Guthrie's (1998) *Even the Rat Was White* and in Karenga's (1992) well known schema in *Introduction to Black Studies* it is possible to identify Francis C. Sumner as the "Father of Black Psychologists" based on his being the first person of African descent to obtain a Ph.D. in Psychology. However, based on Azibo's structure of the origin and essences of African psychology it is obvious that while Sumner may be the Father of Black Psychologists it would be a mistake to label him the father of Black Psychology (Azibo, 1996). The title "Father of Black Psychologists" recognizes Sumner's distinction as being the first Black psychologist proper, while "The Father of Black Psychology" could at most indicate that he was the first to attempt to utilize cultural specific psychological concepts and theories (Azibo, 1996; Jamison, 2008). The title "Father of Black Psychology" has been applied to Joseph White based on his groundbreaking article "*Toward a Black Psychology*". However, based on Azibo's definitions of the origin and essence of Black Psychology, even Joseph White's early articulation of Black Psychology does not meet the criteria for an African-centered psychology. As important as Joseph White's article is in the early quest to define and develop a Black Psychology, for Azibo, it still fails to adequately discuss the African root of the American fruit (Nobles, 1974).

When Azibo's defining criteria is applied within the overall context of schemas offered by Karenga (1992), Kambon (2012) and Holliday (2009), the origin, essence and destiny of an African-centered psychology becomes clear. In Azibo's conceptualization, Eurocentric Psychology II and African Psychology III present themselves as clearly different approaches to psychology that involve Black psychologists applying psychological theories to people of African descent, but at their ideological, conceptual and methodological core, they do not represent an authentic African Psychology. For Azibo, African Psychology I is the original ascension of African Psychology with the ancient Kemetians' profound and prophetic understandings of the human soul and its manifestations in human behavior (Akbar, 1985; Nobles, 1986).

While African Psychology IV was dominated by attempts of Black psychologists to bring about a psychology for people of African descent in America based primarily on American cultural experiences (pro-Black camp), it overall did not apply the proper historical perspective of the Africentric camp which at that time was a minority perspective. Azibo argues that African Psychology V is an undaunted onset of the reclamation and revitalization of the original Sakhu concept articulated by the Kemetians and applied to the contemporary experience of African people throughout the African diaspora (Azibo, 1996; 2001; Jamison, 2009; Nobles, 1986). Thus does Azibo's historical perspective explain the re-linkage of nascent African psychology with original psychology of the ancient Nile Valley in an origin-essence-destiny framework.

## **What is in a Name?**

The proverbial question what is in a name is critical to Azibo's development of African-centered psychological theory. A name is not only a label or a title but a concept that defines the essence and thus the function of a particular construct. One of the most valuable lessons Azibo learned from Williams was the importance of naming, creating and developing culture specific concepts and theories. According to Azibo (2008), Williams taught "don't be afraid to use terms, concepts and techniques from Black language and experience and validate them in your scholarship and research" (p. 577). However, Williams was not the only Black psychologist that influenced Azibo as a precocious young scholar. Scholars such as S.M. Khatib, Charles Thomas, Bobby Wright, Joseph Baldwin/Kobi Kambon, Na'im Akbar, Francis Cress Welsing, Frantz Fanon, Wade Nobles and W. Curtis Banks also influenced his theorizing and research on the psychology of African people (Azibo, 2008). The ideas, thoughts and terminology used by these scholars are readily apparent in Azibo's formulation of African-centered psychological theory. Azibo further elucidates on his innovative use of new scholarly language:

I employ terminology and concepts like mentacide, Negromachy, materialistic depression, psychological misorientation, psychological Africanity/Blackness, the process of identity diffusion (instead of Nigrescence), consubstantiation in Divine Ka, self-extension orientation, sexual misorientation, theological misorientation, Jonestown syndrome, internal versus external bias, own race preference, own-race maintenance... (2008, p. 577).

Ani (1994) and Nobles (1986) are also examples of African-centered theorists, who like Williams and Azibo, contributed to creating new terminology and concepts that reflect cultural values that are grounded in Africana life experiences. However subtle, these nomenclatural nuances reflect more than minor rhetorical devices but major theoretical and conceptual differences in how scholars approach, study and understand the African personality.

The connection between nomenclature and theoretical conceptualizations is further seen when Azibo states, “there is a great need to recognize the distinction between personologists and those whose work addresses only aspects of African personality such as Black identity development...” (1998, p. 207). African-centered personologists take the position that the African personality must be: (1) defined Africentrically and thus grounded in the African worldview and (2) articulated as a complete/whole theory (Azibo, 1998). On the other hand, theorists who *write about aspects* of African personality focus on one or two aspects of African personality and lack an emphasis on the African worldview (Azibo, 1998). In “*The distinction between African Personality Personologists and Other Personality Scholars: Implications for Research on Identity Development and an Entreatment for Reconceptualization*” (1998), Azibo presents a conceptual framework and criteria for what should constitute an African-centered personality theory. In a sense, he lays the structural foundation and provides the theoretical nuts and bolts of what constitutes an African-centered personality theory and how theories emanating from the African-centered paradigm can be identified and utilized.

For Azibo (1998), a whole theory must at the very least include statements including but not limited to the following: (1) the major constructs used by the theorist to explain the structure of the personality; (2) the what and the how of the forces that move personality; (3) the organismic and environmental factors involved in the developmental processes which impact the personality; (4) the aspects of disorder and disorganization in the African personality and (5) the treatment techniques that describe what is to be done about psychopathology and how these techniques are employed. Using Azibo’s criteria, a prime example of a theorist whose major work fails to meet the criteria and qualifies as one who writes about aspects of African personality without incorporating a worldview analysis is William Cross and his Nigrescence theory. The Nigrescence model attempted to account “for the progression of African Americans through sequential stages to arrive at a healthy racial identity” (Bellgrave & Allison, 2006, p. 20). The stages in the process of Nigrescence are: (1) Pre-encounter; (2) Dissonance/Encounter; (3) Immersion-emersion; (4) Internalization and (5) Internalization-Commitment. Whether scholars were validating the theory with empirical research, expanding the theoretical parameters of the theory, appropriating the theory for use with different diasporic populations, or countering the claims of the theory by offering alternative interpretations, a substantial amount of the literature on cultural identity in Black psychology has responded in some shape, form or fashion to Cross’ theory of Nigrescence (Akbar, 1981; Azibo, 1988; Banks, 1976; Baldwin, 1979; Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991, Jamison, 2008).

Azibo’s critique of Nigrescence, similar to most of his work, is grounded in the intellectual history of Africana psychology. Similar to Azibo’s critique, both Akbar (1989) and Kambon (2012) have expressed the pitfalls and limitations of Nigrescence theory. Azibo’s opposition to Nigrescence is two-fold. Based on the criteria that he defined for African personality theory, Azibo objects to the terminology and the theoretical/conceptual underpinnings of Cross’ Nigrescence theory. Cross (1979) defines Nigrescence as the process of becoming Black and asserts that the use of the term is derived partly from the word Negro and the Negritude movement.

However, Azibo argues that this definition is limited and somewhat deceiving in that there is no land named Negro that incorporates the land, history and culture of a people (Clarke, 1992). Thus, he asserts that a generic term such as psychological Africanity is more appropriate since it can be used to encompass the whole of the African diaspora while simultaneously accounting for the diversity within African uniformity (Azibo, 1998).

The second objection entails what Azibo perceives as the alleged developmental stages that take place in the person of African descent as they proceed from a de-Africanized to an Africanized and/or at minimum African American consciousness (Azibo, 1998). Along with Akbar (1989) and Kambon (2012), Azibo agrees that Nigrescence is lacking because: (1) it fails to affirm that African identity is the core context of the 'real black' self; (2) it only considers racial/cultural identity as a role component of the core Black personality; (3) it considers immersion into one's real racial/cultural identity as an extreme and transient condition as opposed to a natural cultural process of affirmative development and (4) its inherent ambivalence in the assumption that inner security with Blackness is evident in either renegotiated relationships or the formation of relationships with members of other racial/cultural groups. In continuing these earlier critiques but from more of a paradigmatic perspective, Azibo deconstructs one of the most popular and often referenced theories associated with the psychology of people of African descent in an attempt to construct an African-centered psychological theory.

The fundamental issue that Azibo and other African-centered psychologists have with reform theorists such as Cross is that their analysis is situated in how people of African descent respond to the negative aspects of living under oppressed conditions. Thus, within this framework, the African personality develops strictly as an abnormal defense reaction to the conditions of white supremacy. However, Azibo argues that the Africana personality is much more than a reactive defense mechanism. It is motivated by internal cultural cues rather than external social responses to racism. In "*Towards a Metatheory of African Personality*", Azibo opines that Africana personality theory must: (1) explain the nature of the spiritual essence underlying human personality; (2) explain how spiritual essence impacts the psychological functioning of African people; (3) explain the interplay between the spiritual, mental and physical dimensions of the human personality and (4) explain how the interplay between these dimensions impact psychological functioning (Azibo, 1991). Thus, Azibo's approach asserts that the core of the Africana personality is found at the deep structural level of Africana culture (Nobles, 1986).

## Developing An African-Centered Research Methodology

Within the disciplines of Africana Studies and Africana Psychology, there has been much discussion on the role and function of methods/methodology (Boykin, 1979; Banks, 1999; Carruthers, 1996). Azibo warns that “when the African psychologist’s starting point for psychological conceptualizing is not the African worldview and its *utamawazo*, the ‘Black researcher’s paradox [and theoretician’s paradox] is being played out” (p. 226). Similar to Carruthers (1996) and Nobles (2006), Azibo (1996) describes the researcher’s paradox as:

Being part of the Black community and being trained on theory and research approaches which simply do not jibe with the reality of life for African persons [is dissonant and retarding where] ...Black researchers ...theorize the same theory as their white counterparts [and] continue to be part and parcel to a system...which perpetuates the misunderstanding of Black reality... (p. 226).

In “*Science and Oppression*”, Carruthers (1996) raises the pertinent point that “The dismantling of the scientific methodology would leave a void that must be filled” (p. 188) and Semaj’s “*Towards a Cultural Science*” (1996) offers to fill this void with a cultural science that addresses some of the oppressive aspects of the Western research paradigm. While Nobles (2006), Carruthers (1996) and Semaj (1996) paved the intellectual road that Azibo travels, it is in Azibo’s work that we find a comprehensive review of the conceptual intricacies that allow scholars to understand some of the problematic ideological and theoretical issues and establish appropriate methods/methodologies that can be utilized with Africana populations.

In “*Understanding the Proper and Improper Usage of the Comparative Research Framework*”, (1992) Azibo deconstructs and constructs simultaneously. Azibo uses his critique of the comparative research framework as an opportunity to expose the fallacies that are inherent in the standard approach to research methods that promotes and perpetuates Eurocentric hegemony within the social sciences. Azibo (1992) argues that the comparative research approach is “improper if the racial groups are not equated on any relevant variable that do more than describe or report the differences” (p. 21). In reconstructive and constructive mode, Azibo also provides three examples of the proper usage of the comparative research framework which include: (1) deconstructive compulsion (the research refutes notions of African inferiority in areas such as intelligence); (2) question compulsion (the research question is one of race differences on a variable that is straightforward such as gender, health or income that explains the reasons without attempting to explain the meaning for the groups); and (3) construct compulsion (the construct is representative of aspects of the African worldview such as African self-consciousness, cultural misorientation etc.).



Azibo's theoretical constructs have practical implications for how African psychological principles manifest in the intense publish or perish culture of academia. The implications are further seen in how psychological research is often conducted by scholars in and/or affiliated with African American Studies Departments. While many African American Departments, Programs and/or institutes do not incorporate Black Psychology as a major part of their curriculum (Jamison, 2008), a cursory glance at these curriculums shows that those that do include psychological theory often engage scholarly approaches to African people as the study of Blacks and not as Black Psychology (Clark, 1972). Hence, there is no cultural framework or analysis applied. This analysis is relevant because in the name of merging standard psychology with Black psychology, some Black psychologists have incorporated race as a variable, and in doing so, assume they are practicing Black psychology. This is a phenomenon that Wilson (1978) referred to as White psychology in Black face since these types of analyses do not explicitly address the role of culture or worldview.

In order to counter the troublesome components of the developmental identity approach, the problematic aspects of the comparative research approach and the theoretical perils that the research methods process can present for scholars attempting to produce culturally relevant research, Azibo devised the theory-derived steady approach to research methods. This approach is articulated in "*Personality, Clinical, and Social Psychological Research on Blacks: Appropriate and Inappropriate Research Frameworks*" (1996). Azibo traces the historical lineage of the theory-derived steady state approach to Africana social and academic areas such as the Harlem Renaissance, Negritude and the Black Power movement. The steps involved in the theory-derived steady approach are: (1) constructs used in researching the Black personality are selected *only* from theoretical positions about psychological Blackness; (2) instruments *conceptually derived* from the constructs are used to assess the Africanity (i.e. state or level of Blackness) in the sample; and (3) data collection is completed and hypothesis are tested (Azibo, 1996). This is not to suggest that data is not important but that the research questions and the cultural relevance of the data that emerges from research questions is conceptually influenced by the particular theoretical and interpretative framework applied. In developing the theory derived steady state approach, Azibo provided a concrete example of Kambon's (2012) assertion that "theory and research derived from the Africentric conceptual framework should therefore generate a more valid and reliable portrayal of African psychological functioning and behavior" (p. 290). Hence, for Azibo, it is not a question of to be empirical or not, but rather a question of whether to be African-centered or not? In other words, Azibo is arguing that it is the theoretical orientation/methodology that influences the particular research methods/procedures that are utilized that are important.

Due to Azibo's emphasis on worldview constructs, it makes sense that he situates the epistemological component as the most central and crucial arena in which transubstantive errors (meanings of error) can occur (Nobles, 1986). Standing on the intellectual shoulders of previous scholars, Azibo (2001) acknowledges that it is from "Joseph Baldwin, Wade Nobles, Gerald Jackson, and Na'im Akbar, that I learned and gleaned the fundamentality of the African Worldview to authentic African scholarship and pedagogy" (p. 420).

In "*Articulating the Distinction Between Black Studies and the Study of Blacks*", Azibo remixes Clark's (1972) "*Black Studies or the Study of Black People*", and emphasizes the importance of the African worldview in research relative to people of African descent. Azibo (2001) asserts that the African worldview is also elaborated by Nobles' discussion of culture that states "a people's cultural deep structure is seen to be their conceptual universe as it emerged in response to, or in answer to, the notions of the three cultural factors (i.e. cosmology, ontology, axiology) and the three cultural factors (i.e. worldview, ideology and ethos)" (p. 423).

In stressing the importance of an African worldview analysis, Azibo (2001) also argues that it should be taught and incorporated in graduate training. However, he urges that courses should not be "mere, meager, meandering offerings on 'worldview' or 'deep structure' of this or that professor in this or that seminar" (p. 430), but "*a formally required course on the African worldview*" (p. 430). Another advocate for the centrality of the African worldview and the need to employ a worldview framework to the critical analysis of African descent people is Karanja Carroll. Carroll (2008, 2010) provides a conceptual genealogy of the worldview concept relative to African psychology and Africana Studies. In conjunction with Azibo, Carroll (2010), explains the relevance of worldview constructs to the intellectual history of African psychology as follows:

African-centered psychology has been able to produce such research through its usage, development and interpretation of the concept/framework of *worldview*. Through the connective relationship between scholars of African descent in the early 1970s, worldview became an essential component that would later be foundational to African centered psychology. (p. 40)

Azibo (2001) asserts that establishing the African worldview as the foundation for Africana research and intellectual work enables Africana scholars to "meaningfully carry on in the work started by our ancestors and overcome, that which oppresses us...standing in the African worldview...The resulting conceptualization is the pathway for the founding and furtherance of African liberation" (p. 436). It is in effect a clarion call for a theoretical assault on the assumed universalism of the Eurocentric paradigm that has defined the conceptual boundaries of Africana intellectual work.

Thus, for Azibo, an African worldview that incorporates the totality and complexities of Africana experiences is a cultural imperative and theoretical necessity that must be applied to any systematic analysis of African people if African people are to begin the process of not only understanding reality but liberating themselves from their contemporary conditions.

## **An African-centered Conceptualization of Mental Illness**

In partial response to the influence of the DSM-III that emerged from the Eurocentric paradigm that universally defines who is “crazy” and what constitutes mental illness, Azibo developed the Azibo Nosology. It can be argued that the Azibo Nosology (1989) is Azibo’s most important contribution to the field of Africana psychology. In fact, Azibo (2008) comments that in addition to his extensive publication record the Nosology “is likely the major single reason for my selection as a Distinguished Psychologist” (p.581). The Nosology was initially developed between the years of 1979-1981. However, it was not until eight years later that the Nosology was published in the *Journal of Black Psychology (JBP)*. The Nosology was the fifth most cited article in the history of the *JBP* (Azibo, 2008). The Azibo Nosology is based on the following assumptions: (1) the nature of the relationship between personality order and disorder, (2) the utter criticality of the self in personality or mental order and disorder, and (3) the reality that values are fundamentally inherent in the diagnostic process (p. 178). With the Nosology, Azibo (1989) constructs a “diagnostic system to classify the intricate cultural manifestations of mental illness” (Jamison, 2008, p. 33). The basic conceptual schema consists of the following theorists and concepts that manifest within Africana experiences: (1) mentacide (Wright, 1979) (2) psychological misorientation (Kambon, 2003), (3) negromachy (Thomas, 1974), (4) alien and anti-self-disorders, self-destructive disorders, and organic disorders (Akbar, 1981) and (5) psychological brainwashing, psychological burnout and oppression violence reaction (Fanon, 1967). Though not exhaustive of the 18 disorders contained in the nosology, this treatment attempts to briefly highlight the major theorists, concepts and themes that undergird the Azibo Nosology.

Bobby Wright’s concept of mentacide conceptually anchors the Azibo Nosology. Bobby Wright (1984) defines mentacide as “the deliberate and systematic destruction of a group’s minds with the ultimate objective being the extirpation of the group” (p. 19). In the Nosology, Azibo elaborates on Wright’s notion of mentacide and adds the concepts of alienating mentacide and peripheral mentacide which are biological disorders that are created by and stem from the social and cultural implications of alienating mentacide. The Azibo Nosology is further theoretically grounded in the intellectual history of Africana psychology through the utilization of the concept of psychological misorientation. According to Baldwin (1980), psychological misorientation refers to the use of an incorrect psychological orientation. Building on Baldwin, Azibo takes the position that most mental disorders that occur within the African psyche are related to psychological misorientation (Jamison, 2010). Thus Azibo, drawing on the work of earlier scholars in Africana psychology, argues that except for a few exceptions there are cultural factors that impact and influence Africana mental disorders (Jamison, 2010; Kambon, 2003).

Charles Thomas, one of the founders of the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) and the first editor of the *JBP* argued that the oppression of people of African descent created social roles that were designed to sustain and maintain oppressive conditions, such as: (1) hybrid or bad niggers; (2) conformists or good Negroes; and (3) marginalists or white middle class Negroes (Thomas, 1974; Karenga, 1992, Jamison, 2008). Thomas argues that these personality types among people of African descent, while at times pathological, should not be viewed as the sum all of their personality, but as responses/reactions to oppressive conditions. Therefore, he takes the position that “if Blackness came into existence as a healthy support state, it cannot be logically used as a symptomatology of maladaptive behavior” (Thomas, 1974, pp. 21-22). Thus, it is not being Black that is pathological, but the internalization of a worldview that argues that being Black automatically relegates a person to a subordinate position of inferiority that can only be corrected by futile attempts to identify with and/or become like their oppressor that is problematic. Azibo takes Thomas’ concept of Negromachy and incorporates it as one of the foundational components of his Nosology.

A major conceptual shift in the diagnosing of Africana mental disorders is witnessed in Na’im Akbar’s articulation of Africana mental disorders (1989). Akbar classified the four mental disorders exhibited among people of African descent as: (1) the alien-self disorder that is characterized by a person unaware or salient as to issues concerning race and/or culture, (2) the anti-self-disorder that manifests as a person being antagonistic toward their cultural selves and others that are representative of and/or reflect their cultural selves, (3) the self-destructive disorder that refers to behaviors such as drug abuse, alcoholism and forms of self-directed violence, and (4) the organic disorders which are classified as mental disorders that are thought to have a chemical and/or biological origin but actually originate in psychosocial conditions (Akbar, 1989). Akbar’s early attempt to categorize mental illnesses among African people created the intellectual space for Azibo to begin the process of extending and expanding the guidelines/criteria for defining and developing cultural specific diagnoses.

The revolutionary psychiatrist Frantz Fanon also addressed the issue of reactionary psychoses among people of African descent. Drawing on Fanon’s analysis of the psychology of oppression in the “*Wretched of the Earth*” (1967), Azibo re-named Fanon’s grouping as reactionary disorders. Hence, under the rubric of psychological misorientation, Azibo combines the concepts of cultural misorientation (Kambon, 2003) and cultural imposition (Fanon, 1967) and identifies psychological brainwashing, psychological burnout and oppressive violence reactions as mental disorders in the Nosology. Azibo (1989) defines psychological brainwashing as “a process used to purge a given thought or ideology from the mind” (p. 191) whereas psychological burnout is “a deep-seated fatigue accompanied by with disgust, disappointment, and even doubt and disillusionment (p. 194) that people of African descent will ever be successful. Similarly, Fanon (1967) argues that “with the exception of a few misfits within the closed environment, we can say that every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation, every affective erythrism...is the product of his cultural situation” (p. 152).

As Azibo elaborates on Fanon (1967) and Akbar's (1989) initial diagnostic classification, he provides preliminary answers to Africana psychological concerns about: (1) what are some basic indices of mental disorder in African descent people; (2) what kind of African-centered classification system (Nosology) is needed in order to accurately and reliably identify African mental disorder and (3) how does the diagnosing of African mental disorders from the Africentric perspective differ from the Eurocentric perspective (Kambon, 2012). Azibo's gathering and synthesizing of the various pieces of African personality into a comprehensive whole demonstrates the breadth and depth of his understanding of the theoretical and conceptual foundations of Africana psychology.

A major critique of the Nosology is that it was not created by clinicians and thus questions arise as to the Nosology's function within an applied clinical context (Harrell, 1999). These criticisms notwithstanding, the fact that Azibo possessed the intellectual audacity to construct a Nosology is groundbreaking in and of itself. Azibo (2008) states that the Nosology was not constructed to be "supplemental nor an oppositional nosology to the DSM or ICD, but a freestanding, African culture-specific diagnostic system for classifying mental disorder in Africans" (p. 580). Instead, Azibo intends for the Nosology to be an authentic African-centered diagnostic system and not simply a knee-jerk reaction to the often culturally biased DSM. However, the Azibo Nosology challenges what Ethan Waters (2010) refers to as the globalization of the American psyche. In his text "*Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche*" Waters states that the exporting and importing of Eurocentric psychological definitions have taught the rest of the world to think like Euro Americans and in the process this worldview has homogenized the way the world conceptualizes mental illness. Waters (2010) asserts:

Western mental health practitioners are prone to believe that...the 844 pages of the DSM-IV prior to the inclusion of culture bound syndromes describe real disorders of the mind, illnesses with symptomatology and outcomes relatively unaffected by shifting cultural beliefs...if they are unaffected by culture, then these disorders are surely universal to humans everywhere (p. 5).

The cultural and political factors that impact the contemporary moment and influence how we define what is considered normal and/or abnormal are too often marginalized (Metzl, 2009). Thus, the Azibo Nosology is oppositional by default in that its very existence as either an alternative and/or supplemental diagnostic tool questions the assumed universalism of Eurocentric definitions of what constitutes optimal mental health or disorder for African people.

## **Conclusion: Toward an African-centered Liberation Psychology**

Azibo has been a major contributor in the growth and development of theory, research and practice within African-centered psychology. However, Azibo is clear that the ultimate goal of African psychology is not just detached academic scholarship, but the liberation of African people. Thus, his ideas about liberation psychology are a culmination of his theorizing on the relevance of African-centered psychology. In fact, Azibo's conceptualization of African-centered psychology "makes liberation psychology part and parcel to African psychology...there can be no 'liberation psychology' per se except that it proceeds from an African psychology base" (Azibo, 1992, p. ii.). While this may appear to sound basic, the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this statement have profound implications. Given the applicability of the African worldview and the non-applicability of the European worldview to the social, cultural and political reality of African people, Azibo (1992) argues that an African-centered approach to liberation psychology "nails the lid on the coffin for Eurocentric thought and Eurocentric psychology regarding any pertinence for liberation psychology" (p. ii). Hence, Azibo advances the idea that regardless of the surface level appearance of cultural relevance to African descent people, if the foundation of liberation psychology is not grounded and firmly rooted in Africana culture at the deep structural level then that psychology does not advance the best interests of African people and thus cannot be truly liberatory.

In the final analysis, Azibo argues that African-centered liberation psychology must establish and position itself as a movement that is able to counter the cultural and political hegemony of Eurocentric psychology. According to Azibo (1992), this theoretical and ideological counter-punch can only occur through "driven and knowledgeable practitioners" (p.23). In the intellectual tradition and revolutionary spirit of Frantz Fanon, Azibo has gone about the task of describing and defining a psychology of liberation. Through the work of Daudi Azibo, the production, dissemination and consumption of information relative to the psychology of Africana people has advanced to the stage where Africana psychologists have the clarity of options and/or the ability to put themselves in a position where African-centered psychological theory, research and praxis can constructively and substantively impact the lived experiences of Africana people and lead to a psychology of Africana liberation.

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