AFROCENTRIC WORLDVIEW, HETERO-NORMATIVE ETHOS AND BLACK LGBTQ INTELLECTUALS MATRICULATING THROUGH AFROCENTRIC PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES (HBCUs)

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ABSTRACT

While the Afrocentric Worldview is established with elements of interdependence, communalism, and kinship at its foundation, many Afro (of African-descent) and African-American scholars within social science/helping-fields, such as psychology, have come to view “alternative” sexual orientations (i.e., homosexuality or bisexuality) as functional or dysfunctional solutions to problems existing in Black America. Afrocentric Worldviews include key concepts of racial and cultural survival thrusts. We must examine the marginalized subgroup of Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-, and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals navigating through higher education, especially those within the Afrocentric-driven fields, such as psychology, at a Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs). This chapter discusses (1) several theoretical concepts that guide driving philosophies and academic curricula,
(2) possible ramifications and experiences Black LGBTQ scholars face as they navigate through such educational contexts and (3) possible stances gay and straight scholars may take when operating under a paradigm/worldview with views that may seem counter to “alternative” sexual orientations.

Keywords: Afrocentric-worldview; HBCU; LGBTQ; psychology; Black America

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In searching for communities relative to their racial/ethnic identity, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-, and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals may navigate through Afro (of African culture/worldview(s)) or Black/African-American (Blacks American, minorities of American culture/worldview(s)) contexts. To provide an example of this topic’s importance, and ways in which LGBTQ individuals may face adversities in an Afro/African-American context, the chapter first opens by presenting a conversation held in an “Afro/Black/African-American Psychology” forum between an Afrocentric psychologist and laypersons interested in the field of African-American Psychology. Next, the chapter offers a brief explanation as to establish the importance of psychology as a field of study; specifically, providing a contextual framework for the necessity of studying Afrocentric approaches within psychology at HBCUs. The authors then provide contemporary definitions relative to sexuality, sexual orientations, gender identity, and related psychosocial concepts. Additionally, relative to the mental health of those deemed as holding non-normative sexual preferences and/or gender identities, the chapter offers past-to-present perspectives assumed by professionals and students operating under traditional/western psychological paradigms. After establishing this foundational context, a few of the theoretical concepts that guide academic curricula within Afrocentric Psychology are discussed. Not all HBCU Psychology/Social Science programs utilize an Afrocentric approach (Jackson-Lowman, 2017); further, to our knowledge, there has been no empirical research that outlines the experiences and/or ramifications in LGBTQ samples matriculating through such programs. Given this, subsequent to offering a general crux of the Afrocentric Psychological paradigm and curricula that students may be exposed to when attending an HBCU, authors denote possible ramifications and experiences LGBTQ students may face as they navigate through educational contexts such as these. Finally, since there yet exists evidence-based best practice, the chapter concludes by positing the question of whether said LGBTQ individuals should take a reactant or integral approach toward the aforementioned Afrocentric Worldviews and whether heterosexuals in such educational contexts (students and professors within Afrocentric programs at HBCU) should take an exclusionary or inclusionary approach toward those that identify with sexual orientations that are often perceived as “reactive,” “alternative,” “dysfunctional,” or in some cases “deviant,” given diaspora’s core ethos.
COUNTERPRODUCTIVE OR COUNTER-COLLECTIVE?

The transcript below includes 95 percent of a Facebook dialog about LGBTQ Blacks. The conversation was held between complete strangers, individuals in a closed Facebook Group aimed to focus on topics surrounding Afro/African-American/Black Psychology. While this conversation serves as an overall purpose of displaying the types of interactions LGBTQ scholars may face while in school, or engaged in the field of psychology, with others in or interested in psychology (Afrocentric or non-Afrocentric in thinking), it also proved some insight as to how the works of prominent African-American Psychologists may be perceived as “anti-gay.” Names have been removed to protect the identities of those involved. Few modifications have been made for grammar and content clarity.

Original Post (Saturday, November 11, 2017, 8 pm) Layperson 2 (male):
Question: why do a lot of our Sisters embrace the homosexual culture of emasculate d/effeminized Black men, even though it is counterproductive to our collective livelihood and longevity? Thing is they will be the very first ones to complain about “it not being no real men out here.”

Layperson 1 (female):
“The agenda is real […] they are selling the trans movement hard to the black community […] At the end of the day […] these people cannot reproduce […] Atrazine [a controversial pesticide/herbicide of the triazine class] […] emasculating black men […] a win–win for white supremacy […] they are the resistance? The resistance to what? It’s insulting that the media is using gay black people to push the agenda […] often citing the civil rights movement […] being black […] and being gay […] or trans (a form of body dysmorphia) […] are by no means the same thing […].

Afrocentric Psychologist: let us first get one thing straight; homosexuality and masculinity/femininity are two separate things […] just because you identify as being gay does not mean that you are automatically effeminate. The “culture” of some does not apply to all […] I believe Black women are more accepting of efficiencies in gay males because they [these gay males] are open about their sexuality. The “down-low” culture is to thank for this wave of acceptance toward feminine gay Black men. Furthermore, we tend to see higher amounts of animosity, ostracism, and strife directed to masculine gay Black males […]. What is counterproductive: not addressing the root of the problem […] being divisive will not help to promote racial pride, appropriate modeling of malehood/adulthood, [nor healing with the Black community]. It is important to talk about and understand elements of sexuality and human behavior [as they relate to us as Black peoples] […].

Layperson 2 in reply to Afrocentric Psychologist: if trans gender folks wan[ted] people to accept them for who they are, they did not accept themselves for who they were born to be. As far as homosexuality in [the] Black community, it doesn’t produce no offspring, so it is counterproductive to Black nationhood building.

Afrocentric Psychologist in reply to Layperson 2: racism all stated with the abandonment of the “hue-man” race […] you should read Dr Francis
CressWelsing’s book [...] [S]he [did] a good job of outlining the root of the problem [...] to understand the elements of homosexuality and trans[individuals], you must understand the history and contextual elements [...] and doesn’t alienating your people (gay, straight, trans, confused, or sterile alike) seem counter-productive to the Afrocentric paradigm of collectivism? The livelihood of Black nation building is up to us all [...] Hence, me as a gay Black male, teaching straight Black students aids in [the] effort [...] or should I abandon my contribution to Black nation building because I cannot have a child?

Layperson 2 in reply to Afrocentric Psychologist: actually Dr Frances Cress Welsing was against homosexuality and effeminization of Black men read her book The Isis Papers the Keys to Color.

Afrocentric Psychologist in reply to Layperson 2: Yes, this is the book you should read [...] I teach from it, I’m well versed in its content. [Dr Welsing was actively and vocally] against racism [...] read the book [...] she never says, “I’m against gays and effeminate men.”

[Of note, while an individual may be against the acts of homosexuality and the effeminization of Black men, this does not necessarily mean they are against individuals.]

Layperson 1: I agree there are gay men and women that do not fall into stereotypical patterns of behavior [...] like being feminine, mincing about [...] from men, or hype masculine posturing from women [...] [I]s homosexuality being promoted [...] ? [A] very specific type of gay black male is being promoted [...] [D]o you really believe it is being done to protect the dignity and safety of gays in our community? [T]he acceptance that many b[lack] w[omen] have toward gay b[lack] m[en] is not related to black women and our own sexuality [...] [B]eing honest, a lot of openly g[ay] m[ales] that [I] have come across work in industries where women are being catered to [...] there is a rapport that is built [...] not to mention [...] mothers are less inclined to reject their children [...] and the large percentage of single woman headed households [...] [G]ay blacks that have been rejected by family [...] are vulnerable to the manipulations of outsiders [...] [S]o, it is not surprising that some sell out [...] not acceptable, but not surprising [...] [A]nd they are being used against the better interests of the community [...] .

Afrocentric Psychologist in reply to Layperson 1 Amen! It’s all systemic [...].

Layperson 1 in reply to Afrocentric Psychologist: [...] [W]e cannot allow our community to be divided [...] they are manipulating all of us [...] with the help of a handful of duplicitous black people [...] of all sexual persuasions [...] [W]e should not feel badly about calling out people [...] [Y]et not to degrade them based on their behaviors [...] but to highlight the damage that they are doing [...] [T]ake Lee Daniels for example [...] I understand that he was treated poorly and that contributed to his mentality [...] his behaviors are distinctly anti-black [...] just my 2 cents [...].

[Of note, several controversies surrounding Lee Daniels were circulating in the media around the time of this blog discussion: Daniels, producer, director and
writer of popular controversial films like Monster’s Ball, Precious, and the TV show Empire. In an interview with The Hollywood Reporter (2017), Daniels discussed his tumultuous childhood, and past which influenced his writing, suffering mental health, loss of friends to HIV/AIDS, and previous desire to catch HIV. Most relevant to the discussion at hand is the controversy whereby Daniels was accused of actively promoting the acceptance of homosexuality in the Black community. (for more see Sieczkowski’s (2015a) Huffington Post article entitled “Lee Daniels is using ‘Empire’ to ‘Blow the Lid Off’ Homophobia in the Black Community”; Galloway, 2017).

Layperson 1 in reply to Afrocentric Psychologist: it is a loss that you will not reproduce brother [...] no disrespect intended [...] studies have not been done on the subject as far as I know [...] but the very real effect that same sex couples will lead to dwindling birth rates is a concern [...] that and the promotion of a specific kind of g[ay] b[lack] males [...] (the ultra-feminine) [...].

What amounts to buck breaking [...] that has a set of us in the conscious community pointing to Dr Welsing’s work [...] recently it seems as if there is a serious push to promote homosexuality in black countries and within our community here in the states [...] by the media [...] and by the STATE [...] [W]hy? Again [...] anyone that thinks the w[hite] p[re]t[erm] b[irths] have an interest in preserving the dignity and well-being of the black race is delusional, to say the least [...].

Afrocentric Psychologist in reply to Layperson 1: I agree, wholeheartedly [...] I think you get my point [...] I am in no way attempting to push my sexuality onto anyone else. I understand the plight of the Black family unit versus surviving unit (see Welsing (1991)). These are all things that we must discuss as a community, with all parties. The future of Black America (and AFRICA), inevitably, depends on our action or lack of action [...]. Until WE, collectively, understand what is happening nothing will be done to change it.

Layperson 3: I think that the average Black person is unprepared and lack[s] knowledge on how to deal with homosexuals. I also think that many Black people lack knowledge on how to avoid our children from getting caught up the homosexual lifestyle. I also think that many Black women that support the degenerate homosexual death style is because they do not care, and also because they fear real masculine Black men. In my opinion, homosexual males are not men. They are just males. They are not a threat to the system of racism and White Supremacy, which is why the behavior is encouraged. They only seem to stand up and speak out when they want to encourage other Black people to accept their degenerate lifestyle. I have sons and I would never allow my sons to be mentored by a homosexual male, nor would I encourage or have them model after a homosexual male because a homosexual male does not exemplify true authentic African warrior manhood.

Afrocentric Psychologist in reply to Layperson 3: Well put. I agree with the majority of your statement, there is a need for more men to step up to rear children [...] I do feel that the best role model for a male is another straight male
[...] but, when these straight males aren’t stepping up, we will continue to have more males remaining in a “boy-like” state [...].

[Roughly 11 pm – Layperson 1 then posted a video of an African-American male that had de transitioned from a trans woman].

The conversation thereafter quickly shifted into a debate surrounding “Black women embracing mainstream White feminist ideologies, rather than incorporating Afrocentric values that would complement Black feminist ideologies [...]” ([...] and if ‘feminism’ really exists, when considering Afrocentric values and worldviews). Shortly thereafter the creator of the Facebook Group posted a list of “approved” and “unapproved topics,” the unapproved topics list included: #3. Feminism and “Black” Feminism and #8. Non-African forms of sexual intercourse and non-binary gender discussions.

WHAT IS A DISCUSSION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING?
A Brief Bit of Background on the First Author

As a scholar that identifies as a gay Black man, my upbringings, personal experiences, educational background, relationship with my “Black-ness,” and my relationships with African-Americans that are perhaps considered most in tune with their Afrocentric roots (elders in the field Afro/African-American Psychology), affords me the insight to communicate and discuss the topic presented above on a deeper level. This book chapter seeks not to focus on the etiology of homosexually or LGBTQ “lifestyles,” the morality of said individuals or said practices, nor the context of LGBTQ communities. These components will be mentioned, in brevity; the sole aim of this body of work is to shine a light on factors (e.g., heteronormative theories, philosophies, or curricula) that may influence the experiences of young LGBTQ scholars matriculating through an Afrocentric Psychology Program at an HBCU.

I grew up in a poor, single-mothered household. I can count on one hand how many times I have physically interacted with my father, all be it his number having been saved in my original Nokia 3310 mobile, Sidekick 2, and current iPhone 8. I grew up in the projects of Jersey City, New Jersey. Most of my male, first cousins ended up in jail a time, or two. The majority of my primary schooling was completed in an urban, primarily Black school system. I attended high school in St. Augustine, Florida; a stark contrast. The primarily White, rural town afforded me a whitewashed secondary, high school education. To date, I am the only one in my family to earn a tertiary degree, a Doctoral degree in Psychology. My undergraduate studies at Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) allowed me to learn in an environment that screamed to the depths of my soul “you are at home [...]” The Afrocentric Paradigm thrust of FAMU’s Psychology Department exposed me to worldviews, value systems, and ideologies that seemed so innate that one would dare to deem them elementary [...]..

“Until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” “A fish does not know it is wet.” “I am because we are.”
“Hotep,” and “Ashe.” While these are some of the most “cliché” African proverbs — even in popular societal/cultural settings — their meanings begin to reverberate through your core when you gain a deeper, more contextualized understanding of their implications in the field of human behavior.

In the above conversation, one of the most profound things that resonated with me on that Saturday eve was a statement made by Layperson 3; the brother exclaimed, “I think that the average Black person is unprepared and lack[s] knowledge on how to deal with homosexuals [...]” This book chapter will focus more on the beginning portion of this statement, that which surrounds content knowledge. We will close by discussing the uncertainty many African-American LGBTQ individuals may experience as they navigate a societal terrain of Black America and the educational context of focus. Suggestions are provided relative to Afrocentric HBCU (Psychology) programs utilizing an Afrocentric approach to best “deal with homosexuals [...]”

**THE IMPORTANCE OF AFROCENTRIC PSYCHOLOGY**

According to Kambon (2003a, 2003b, pp. 132–134), the Afrocentric Worldview defines human—nature relations as interdependent and inseparable (…elements of) the survival of the corporate whole of nature ([…] that is) related to principles of inclusiveness ([…] building on) relationships between kinships and community, social, affiliation, shared participation and communal experience (through religion, culture, or association which are) fundamental in the lifestyle of people of African descent through the world. Yet, many Afro and African-American scholars have and continue to urge that elements of “alternative” sexuality (i.e., homosexuality or bisexuality) may be looked upon as functional or dysfunctional solutions to problems existing in the (American) environment whereby evolutionary and developmental trends have led to recurrences of psycho-reactive behaviors of people of color (Dumas, 1999, pp. 105–106; Welsing, 1991, p. 81). Non-heteronormative sexual orientations are believed to be resultants of those operating under an oppressive society in which the true elements of Afro/Black survival lie in acts that protect the “family” unit and the inevitable survivable of the Black genetic code (Welsing, 1991, pp. 81–87). Thus, the keys of the Afrocentric and reactant African-American Worldviews are concepts of racial and cultural survival thrusts (see Kambon, 2003a, pp. 120–121). In examining the subgroups of the broader marginalized groups of African-Americans — or individuals of Afro-descent — those that identify or relate to LGBTQ communities, consideration must be taken with regard to how hetero-normative elements of the Afro/African-American Worldviews impacts LGBTQ individuals of color. More specifically, those within the field of psychology navigating through higher education (with an Afrocentric curricula) at a HBCU must be further considered for examination due to the facts that (1) the drives of such ethos are most prevalent at the field’s core (Kambon, 2003a, pp. 118–123) and (2) racial and sexual identities are further established, cemented, and integrated into ones’ adult sense-of-self during
the college years (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Bosen, 2014; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Squire & Mobley, 2015, pp. 468–470).

DEFINING TERMS

“A fish does not know it is wet.”
— Ghanian Proverb

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines sexual orientation as “an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes.” Sexual orientation also refers to a person’s sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions (Gates, 2012). Heterosexuality is defined as the romantic or sexual attraction primarily to those of the opposite sex. Heteronormativity is defined as a worldview that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation. Heteronormativity has been considered to encompass hegemonic social systems of norms, discourses, and practices that construct heterosexuality as natural and superior to all other expressions of sexuality (Robinson, 2016). With these beliefs come additional beliefs that there exists a need for individuals who fall into categories perceived as being “sexual minority” to adapt and change themselves to fall in alignment with norms of heterosexuality. Often, individuals strive to be accepted into the more dominant society of heterosexuality as this sexual orientation has long been established as “normal,” thus making any other behavior deviant (Drescher, 2004, 2015; Evans & Broido, 1999; Harmon, 2016; Lewis & Ericksen, 2016).

Homosexuality is defined as the romantic or sexual attraction primarily to those of the same sex. Lesbianism would be the gender-specific definition of a homosexual woman that is primarily attracted to other women. Nonpolitical definitions included four subgroups; those who defined lesbianism as sex/love with women, lesbianism as a true essence, just happen to love a women, and lesbianism as only one small aspect of the person (Eliason & Morgan, 1998). The term “gay” may specifically refer to a homosexual man or a man that has a primary attraction to other men. In other instances, the word gay may not be gender-specific and could refer to a woman or man that identifies as being attracted to the same sex.

Bisexuality refers to an individual that would identify as being someone who is both sexually/romantically attracted to both genders, woman and man. Women are more likely to identify as bisexual while men are more likely to identify as gay (Gates, 2012). It has been implicated that bisexuality suggests that you are somehow indifferent to the sex of your partners and bisexuals can essentially “choose” to be gay or not gay by selecting either same-sex or different-sex (hetero-) sexual partners (Gates, 2012). This has been one of the ongoing arguments surrounding sexual orientation; do individuals identifying as homosexual do so choosily, or is sexual attraction unconscious and/or innate? Again, while relevant to the fields of social sciences, this chapter does not seek to tackle this debate.
Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior(s) do not conform to those typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth (Gates, 2012). “Queer [or Questioning]” serves as an umbrella term that encompasses many people as it intersects with sexual orientation and gender identity. It includes anyone who does not associate with heteronormativity; rather they have non-binary or gender-expansive identities.

An individual that would be considered “out” or “openly gay” is an individual who willingly acknowledges their sexual identity. In the developmental histories of gay men and women, there are often periods of difficulty in acknowledging sexual orientations either to self or to others, (see Drescher, 2004, 2015). On the contrary, an individual who is considered to be “closeted” is an individual who does not willingly admit their sexual identity to others. These individuals often perceive their homosexuality as being so unacceptable that it must be kept out of conscious awareness, from self or others. These feelings typically prevent the individual’s sexual orientation from being integrated into their public persona (Couzens, Mahoney, & Wilkinson, 2017; Drescher, 2004, 2015). Closeted individuals may be aware and able to accept their sexual identities within themselves but there may be instances where individuals do not want to acknowledge their sexual identities to others (i.e., perceptions of family value systems, religion, cultural acceptance of LGBTQ individuals, etc.). Many people, regardless of race and ethnicity, gender, or social class, hide from others that they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; or in cases of queer/non-lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgendered (LGBT) identifiers, hide that they have engaged in sexual/romantic relationships with members of their own gender and/or experience desire for such relationships. In large part, these denials occur due to fear of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic violence, discrimination, prejudice, and rejection from friends and family (Couzens et al., 2017; Grollman, 2013). In a social experiment, psychologist Solomon Ash discovered that individuals are likely to conform public behaviors via providing incorrect behavioral responses primarily to assure that other continue to perceive them in a higher regard, even in instances where mixed with complete strangers (Ash, 1951, 1956). It is likely that individuals may behave counter to their private persona to protect their acceptance in various social circles (family and/or friend groups).

“Down Low” is a slang term that refers to men who openly identify as heterosexual but whom secretly have sexual relations with men. In general, keeping something “on the down low” means keeping it a secret. But, some suggest that the expression originates among Black communities in the US to refer specifically to secret relationships, including infidelity or extramarital affairs in heterosexual relationships (Grollman, 2013). The term has more pervasively been acknowledged to relate to “heterosexual,” African-American men that engage in homosexual rendezvous (Green, 2006, p. 893). Lipstick Lesbian, another slang term, is often used to denote a woman who identifies as homosexual and maintains a feminine physical public presentation. Conversely, stud is a slang term whereby homosexual women present an overly masculine physical persona (in
dress, body language, and/or deepened vocal expression; Kennedy & Davis, 1994). In 2011, Laura Lane-Steel outlined the historical influenced Black female masculinity and constructions of Black (female) gender norms. She outlined the higher prevalence of studs in the African-American/Black community; stating that, “studs strategically construct and perform their masculinity in ways that shield them from sexism, racism, and homophobia both in and out of their Black community.” By adopting the particular type of masculinity common among their Black male peers, it has been extrapolated that studs often gain access to some levels of male privilege and power which, in turn, can act as useful defense mechanisms against multiple types of discrimination and oppression (Lane-Steel, 2011).

Sexual Orientation is a term used to describe our patterns of emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction — and our sense of personal and social identity based on those attractions (Sexual Orientation (n.d.)). Throughout history, under Western/Eurocentric paradigms, there have been presentations of many differing views (e.g., those in support of, those against, and those with no stance) surrounding sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is believed to exist on a continuum with heterosexuality on one side and homosexuality on the other side. Alfred Kinsey created the “Kinsey Scale” to show that individuals may not fit solely into the category of heterosexual or homosexual. The Kinsey Scale ranges from zero to six with zero being exclusively heterosexual and six being exclusively homosexual (Herke, 2012; Kinsey Scale, 2017). Richard von Krafft-Ebing described homosexuality as a degenerative sickness in his Psychopathia Sexualis while Sigmund Freud believed all human beings were innately bisexual; only homosexual or heterosexual through experiences (as cited by Herke (2012)).

Since homosexuality and “alternative” sexual orientations deviated from what psychologists considered “normal,” theories of pathology labeled homosexuality as a disease; that which needed a cure. Homosexuality was listed as a disorder in the first and second edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; initially, within the paraphilia spectrum. Later, homosexuality was placed on a sexual orientation disturbance spectrum. Psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Edmund Bergler infamously wrote in a book for general audiences, “I have no bias against homosexuals; for me they are sick people requiring medical help” (as detailed in Drescher, 2015). Homosexuality was first listed as a “sociopathic personality disturbance,” and later listed as a form of “sexual deviation.” Freud wrote:

Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function, produced by a certain arrest of sexual development. Freud, 1960 (as reported by Sieczkowski, 2015b)

Homosexuality continued to be viewed as pathological, and psychoanalysts even developed “psychoanalytic cures” to treat homosexuality. Most gay activists accepted the pathological explanation in an attempt to avoid the sin and immoral explanation given by religion. Homosexuality was removed as a mental illness from the DSM in 1973 at an annual meeting with the APA. Sexual
Orientation Disturbance was later replaced with Ego Dystonic Homosexuality then removed completely. The prevailing view of sexual orientation in Western psychology has been dichotomous and unidimensional (Garnets & Kimmel, 2003).

A SELECTION OF RELEVANT AFROCENTRIC THEORIES/PERSPECTIVES

Until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.

— Zimbabwean Proverbs

The American Psychiatric Association’s decision to remove bisexuality and homosexuality from the list of mental (behavioral) disturbances resulted from the increasing number of white males seeking this mode of sexual expression, due to an increasing consciousness of true white male weakness. Male bisexuality and homosexuality can be viewed as the sexual expression of male weakness, passivity, and effeminization. The motivation for these feelings and their sexual expression results primarily from the developing challenge by “non-white” men throughout the world to white male power and projected superiority. This challenge has assumed various subtle and overt forms during recent decades.

— Welsing, 1974

While there exist many various theories that exist in the field of Afrocentric Psychology, this chapter utilizes several randomly selected theories (1) Welsing’s (1974) theory of programmed passivity and effeminization of males, (2) Welsing and Kambon’s Survival Unit (1991) (Survival Thrust (2003a, 2003b)) vs. Family Unit theory, and (3) elements of Kambon’s (2003a, 2003b) Cultural Misorientation theory. There exist a plethora of other theories that could be examined under an Afrocentric paradigm; however, these were selected for this chapter as their content may directly or inadvertently send messages that are hegemonic and heteronormative in nature (those focusing solely on male-female relationships, or devaluing same-sex relationships; Robinson, 2016) and/or their message may fail to allow for discussion of same-sex relationships within the context of an Afrocentric Psychology educational context at an HBCU.

Psychological Programming of Passivity.

In her 1974 paper entitled *The Politics behind Black Male Passivity, Effeminization, Bisexuality, and Homosexuality*, psychiatrist, Dr. Francis Cress Welsing explained the importance of the human brain as being the organ most vital for all patterns of existence. Welsing emphasized elements of logic, emotional response, and patterns of behavior as being functional or dysfunctional solutions to external patterns posed by the (societal/contextual) environment. Through repeated accounts, making sense of information and situations, the brain addresses problems by decoding perceived and possible scenarios. Thus, Welsing conjectured that patterns of male passivity, effeminization, bisexuality, and homosexuality could be looked upon as functional or dysfunctional solutions to specific problems (Welsing, 1991, p. 82). The basis of these beliefs was derived from understanding that *traits*: a distinguishing set of characteristics
belonging to a person are rooted in genetic potentials. These traits are either expressed or repressed. The likelihood and degree to which genetically predisposed traits become active in behavior is directly and indirectly resultant upon given conditions.

During the 400 plus years of enslavement and time since, Black men in the United States have been subjected to conditions that force them into passive and cooperative roles of submission. Much like Lane-Steele’s (2011) theoretical perspective, behavioral scientists consider evolutionary perspectives to account for the onsets and perpetuations of various behavioral trends. According to Welsing (1991, p. 83), elements of Black (male) oppression have been enacted in the form of fear, physical castration, lynching, and other overt and subtle forms of abuse, violence, and cruelty. Given the works of other Black/African-American scholars (Dr. Amos Wilson, Dr. Mwalimu K. Bomani Baruti, Carter G. Woodson, and Dr. Kobi K. K. Kambon, to name a few), it is vital we mention the cognitive and emotional forms of abuse as contributing to the oppression of people of color. Mental enslavement/Mentacide, brainwashing, miseducational practices, and cultural misorientation are just a few ways that people of color have and continue to be subject to subversive conditions.

Given these conditions that Black men and women have had to endure during and after enslavement, Welsing (1991, p. 84) posits that:

White men in this world area have at least a vague, perhaps unconscious, understanding that after 20 generations (400 years), male passivity has evolved into male effeminization, bisexuality, and homosexuality. These patterns of behavior are simply expression[s] of male self-submission to other males in the area of people activity called “sex.” Males also can submit to males in any of the other eight areas of people activity—economics, education, entertainment, labor, law, politics, religion, and war. Oppression is forced submission and cooperation in any of these areas of people activity.

Further, Welsing notes that elements of male effeminization, bisexuality, and homosexuality are abnormal, dysfunctional, reactions to an environmental context that has not been established for the optimal development of people of color. In reality, American structures and social environments are predicated around a fabricated framework that best serves “white male mental [stability] and protection,” from a setting that, when considering the Black genetic potential to annihilate the White phenotype, rightfully equates to Black males ascending to potions of prominence. In her analysis, Welsing (1991) continues to note that:

The more the Black male strives to stand [in this fabricated reality], the weaker the white male feels by comparison, and the greater the white male’s thrust to effeminize the Black male—to weaken the Black male’s psychological potential for aggressive and assertive challenge, forcing him to remain submissive to “The Man.”

Considering elements of sexual orientation as behavioral reactions to environments, functional or dysfunctional unconscious neurological “solutions” to “problems,” or genetically predisposed traits that have persisted via ancestral occurrences of passivity (or sexuality), we open the door to an outmoded yet
resuscitated line of analysis surrounding sexuality. Differing theoretical perspectives permit for opinions of sexual orientations as being innate or resultants of continued human programming, given contextual environments. *These dialogues typically surround theories including both evaluations of etiology and subsequent optimal development/functioning.* Barring these arguments and perspective, we must seek to offer an initial discussion, which considers the state and development of LGBTQ individuals of color matriculating through an academic program offering Afrocentric–Ethos that may seem heteronormative in presentation.

### Survival Unit vs. Family Unit

*Ubuntu—* “I am what I am because of who we all are”

— Bantu Proverb

Welsing’s theories surrounding racism, in an analysis on secondary-causes of effeminacy in Black men (stemming from 20 generations of Black male submission under oppressive conditions — enslavement), highlight patterns of imposed submission and reinforcements of said submission through everyday institutions (*Welsing, 1991, p. 86*). Further, Welsing discusses the dynamics of the Black family and the single-mother head-of-household trends remaining as a trend in the Black community [...].

I make the distinction in terminology between *family [-units]* and *survival-unit* because “the family,” by definition, is a social institution that functions to support maximal development and protection of the young. However, under white supremacy [systems], Blacks and other non-whites are not to be developed maximally; they are permitted to survive as functional inferiors, *alienated from self and from their own kind*. The non-white survival-unit is not permitted to defend itself or its young. The survival-unit functions accordingly. (p. 87)

I conceive that Welsing is indeed correct, we are continuing to navigate through social systems, institutional dynamics, and environments that are not completely conducive to Black family units thriving and persist. The question remains, “Should we shun or alienate BLACK LGBTQ individuals, forcing them to devise survival units that may not promote Afrocentric values in them or their subsequent heirs/mentees? Or, should we incorporate these individuals into an augmented family structure that allows for the restoration of communal/interdependent values and ideologies?” Based on *Lewis and Ericksen’s (2016)* analysis of student a faculty-student interviews and focus groups, whereby researcher observed avoidant classroom climates, reserved levels of faculty support, and a limited scope of institutional policies surrounding LGBTQ students (and an existence of an LGBTQ-accepting campus climate); I posit that LGBTQ individuals at HBCUs struggle to find either a family unit or survival unit within their colleagues and institutional faculty, staff, and administration. (*For additional literature on Survival Unit vs. Family Units see Welsing, 1991*). Based on our review of the literature, there exists no current research that analyzes levels of fictive-kin, feelings of communal support on campus, or the extent to which these students find comfort from peers, faculty/staff, or administrators of HBCUs.
Cultural Orientations

In 2003, Kambon noted the systemic components that perpetuate cultural misorientation. Kambon deemed cultural misorientation a conceptualization of basic personality disorder or psychopathology/psychological misorientation among African people in America where unrecognized—unacknowledged mental disorders in African peoples are sanctioned, nurtured, and reinforced by the institutional structure of European American culture/society (Akbar, 1981; Azibo, 1989; Baldwin, 1984, 1985; Kambon, 1992, 1998a, 1998b; Nobles 1976; for a more extensive review of cultural misorientation see Kambon, 2003b). Kambon noted that Blacks employing Eurocentric socialization/modification processes help to perpetuate cultural misorientation and subsequent mental un-wellness in the Black community. These socialization factors include deviations away from Afrocentric practices toward Eurocentric practices in: (1) Parenting Practices (including worldview thrusts), (2) Extended Family contributions to childrearing (including worldview thrusts), (3) Worldview Orientations of Home’s Social and Physical Environments (i.e., photographs, religious icons of Afro imagery), (4) Worldview Orientation of the School—Social—Physical Environment (culturally relevant teaching), and (5) Worldview Orientation of the General Neighborhood Community Surroundings and Experiences of Regular Occurrences (see Kambon, 2003b for a full elaboration of Eurocentric socialization practices/examples). Of note, Role Modeling served as a key sub-category in each of the five socialization processes describe. In the initial Facebook Forum Discussion, one individual noted the importance of heterosexual Black males mentoring and advising young Black boys. I agreed. The presence of a positive, Black, heterosexual male role-model (and a healthy male-female parental relationship) may indeed serve as a socialization factor necessary to assure the development of a heterosexual child. However, as the literature notes, there is an alarmingly high absence of Black men serving as instrumental and functional agents within Black families and Black homes (see Belgrave & Allison, 2010 for additional elaboration denoting African-American family structures and structural trends). Further, homosexual children also come from homes where there exists a healthy male–female parental relationship.

Kambon (2003b) outlined several institutional sources of cultural misorientation: (1) Education, (2) Religion, (3) Media, and (4) Distorted African Cultural Icons, Images, and Symbolism in America. With regard to education, Kambon highlighted the fact that African-Americans typically rely on Europeans paradigms that include European historiography, curriculums riddled with White Supremacy/Eurocentrism (assumptions, beliefs, and values) that aid in the mis-education of Blacks, resulting in perpetual states of misorientation/anti-African orientations among Africans in America (Kambon, 2003b). The lack of culturally relevant institutions is seen in educational settings ranging from kindergarten through higher educational levels. Kambon (2003b) notes that independent African-centered institutions are few in existence, unpopular, and typically poorly supported. The benefits of HBCUs start at the cultural level; most HBCUs allow for more culturally relevant experiences for students of color.
Furthermore, African-American typically experience more interaction with faculty members, establish higher teacher-student rapport, and have higher psychosocial development (i.e., self-esteem levels; Oates, 2004; Van Camp et al., 2010). Considering this, it is important to begin a discussion surrounding the experiences of a doubly marginalized group, Black LGBTQ collegiate students matriculating through an HBCU.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR LGBTQ HBCU STUDENTS**

*Sense of Community*

The unique and specific experiences, perspectives, health issues, and concerns of sexual minority students are not fully captured in the currently available literature (Evans & D’Augelli, 1996; Hershberger & D’Augelli, 2000; Rankin, 2003; Ryan, 2001). For Black college students that consider themselves members of the LGBTQ community, the levels of alienation (perceived or actual) may be higher if these individuals fail to feel a connection with peers and/or faculty members. Fewer than 10 percent of the nation’s 3,500 colleges and universities have *sexual orientation* in their non-discrimination policies, and only about 40 institutions have professionally staffed centers that provide services to, for, and about sexual minority students, faculty, and staff (National Consortium for Directors of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, 2003). In 2009, the Human Rights Campaign noted that of roughly 15 percent of HBCUs had some formal policy surrounding non-discriminatory practices, equal opportunity, anti-harassment policy and/or institutional components aimed at creating LGBT resource centers (Oguntoyinbo, 2009). In 2014, Sharon J. Letterman-Hicks, the chief executive officer for the National Black Justice Coalition (NJBC) called for HBCUs to “stop other-izing our LGBT community.” Furthermore, Letterman-Hicks went on to state that “We must encourage the leadership of HBCUs to create a safe, responsible and inclusive environment for LGBT students (Hudson, 2017).” HBCUs have not always been welcoming environments for LGBTQ students, largely because of deeply entrenched anti-LGBTQ values among Black people that emanate from Black religion/churches, cultural/familial teachings, value systems, and traditions prevalent in the African-American community (Harmon, 2016). To this extent, curricula that present theories that may seem heteronormative or anti-LGBTQ (by way of ignoring sexuality or solely focusing on heteronormative relationships) capture one such instance of value systems that may inadvertently send negative messages to LGBTQ Black students at HBCUs. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students often remain closeted because of the hostile climate they experience on college campuses (Harmon, 2016; Rankin, 2003). A reported 74 percent of LGB undergraduate and graduate students rated their campus as homophobic, and 60 percent of LGB students reported concealing their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid discrimination (Rankin, 2003). The importance of connecting the environment to identity is particularly relevant with the LGB student...
population, given that the college environment is often the context for the coming out process (Evans & Broido, 1999; Harmon, 2016). With all this in mind, when we begin discussing how to deal with LGBTQ individuals, far too often these students are overlooked, alienated, or in some instances shunned by peers and/or faculty (Hudson, 2017; Lewis & Ericksen, 2016). During the first author’s matriculation through an HBCU psychology program, rooted in the Afrocentric paradigm, the curriculum failed to highlight sexual orientation as a component of development, product of socialization, and/or component of mental wellness. To provide one particular example, the text surrounding cultural misorientation (Kambon, 2003b) (a key piece of work in the specific curriculum of focus) notes individual factors that lead to misorientation and subsequent mental wellness factors, one of which include male-female interactions/relationships. I ponder why the text fails to note elements of sexual orientation, gender identity, or “alternative” gender/orientation-based proclivities. As a student and now as a faculty member, I found great comfort in establishing relationships with faculty members, including the great psychological scholar Dr. Kobi K.K. Kambon. While courses like African-American Experiences (history curriculum) and African-American/Black Psychology provided me with an insight into African history, Afrocentric Worldview systems, and ethos and value systems that promoted a healthy Black identity development, I do feel as though discussions surrounding sexual orientations/gender identity may have increased a sense of familial unity within the classroom environment. To date, my relationship with Dr. Kambon is fabulous! We discuss elements of Black development and I look at him as a mentor and role model; however, during my educational career, elements surrounding sexual orientation seemed to be avoided within the classroom. This relates to the trends seen in Lewis and Ericksen’s (2016) analysis of HBCU faculty members; in their sample, attitudes, and classroom practices surrounding direct discussion of issues that specifically relate to LGBTQ topics/issues were often far and few.

At the 2017 Association of Black Psychology Conference (ABPsi), Dr. Huberta Jackson-Lowman, ABPsi President stressed the need for inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in the research and efforts to promote African and Pan-African development. I believe her words to the convention mark a step forward to understanding that we are at a place of developing a Surviving Family Unit that must incorporate all voices (Jackson-Lowman, 2017). Far too often LGBTQ teens have been shunned away from family members, friends, or loved ones, due to their sexual orientations. This alienation does not help these individuals to cope with other factors of development (i.e., identity establishment, relationship management styles, and interpersonal skills). Only by utilizing the Afrocentric paradigms and worldviews of Collectivism and Interdependence will we come together to address the many institutional and systemic issues that plague the state of Black America, and peoples of color. Next, the chapter will discuss the challenges African-American LGB Women and Men may face. (Note: due to the limited literature surrounding trans-individuals at HBCUs, the authors have opted to forgo coverage; however, a bulk of the following content may also apply to trans students.)
Challenges of African-American Women

African-American women face many challenges that result from sexism and racism in the dominant culture. Negative culturally contrived stereotypes about Black sexuality do not help lesbian/bisexual women in their establishment of a sexual orientation (Greene, 2000). Females make up approximately 60 percent of HBCUs’ demographics. Moreover, the percentage of female enrollment at HBCUs has been cited as being a positive predictor of graduation rates among HBCU students (Cheng, Suwanakul, & Wu, 2015). Students attending college often do so to secure an economic future. With the high female to male ratio seen across HBCU campuses, and the high probability of females matriculating through and graduating from undergraduate and graduate programs (Cheng, Suwanakul, & Wu, 2015), women are more likely to seek a mate that is able to provide financially (based on the parental investment theory; Trivers, 1972). One can only extrapolate the higher occurrences of lesbianism may result as a reoccurrence of environments that present a lower pool/access to viable male candidates (all the while withstanding the gay, down low males on HBCU campuses; Drescher, 2004, 2015; Hallman, 2003). In many cultural groups and communities, lesbians are deemed defective women who “want to be men” and are socially subordinate to heterosexual women (Greene, 2000). Ethno-sexual mythologies or the sexual myths created by the White American culture about African-Americans play a role in the stereotypes and internalized homophobia generated within the African-American community. The belief in male dominance and superiority is an active ingredient in homophobia; in the context of this belief, social action is predicated on the devaluation of women, lesbians, gays, and transgendered persons (Greene, 2000). Many lesbians, excluding lipstick lesbians, are seen as masculine, while gay males are seen as feminine (Greene, 2000; Sánchez, Greenberg, Liu, & Vilain, 2009). Social groups define what is and is not masculine vs. feminine, often confusing these traits/mannerisms to be directly linked to sexual orientation, as opposed to being mutually exclusive (Sánchez et al., 2009). The assumption that a lesbian’s sexual orientation is inconsistent with an authentic “Black” identity represents another expression of homophobia, one that complicates the process of integrating one’s sexual orientation identity with other aspects of one’s person (Greene, 2000).

At one particular HBCU, a graduate student majoring in psychology sought to complete her master’s thesis research on issues surrounding mental wellness, lesbian communities, and sexual orientation development in women at her particular HBCU. Unfortunately, after posing the initial question to several faculty members the student was advised to “choose an alternative topic, as it will be difficult to collect enough reliable data on the topic.” It is likely that this incidence of faculty members discouraging a student from investigating issues that are clearly ingrained in current African-American social/cultural behavioral trends comes as a very disheartening reality faced by many LGBTQ students at HBCUs; sadly, there exists no research on the extent to which students of color are at HBCUs are encouraged or deterred from examining LGBTQ issues. So many struggle with the question of how to deal with LGBTQ Black individuals
(Lewis & Ericksen, 2016; Rankin et al., 2010) because not enough effort is placed on understanding, helping, and mentoring these youths into being an instrument for the collective Black liberation of people color navigating through the oppressive Eurocentric society (see Welsing (1991)).

Challenges of African-American Men

In American society, behaviors that define maleness are privileged or valued over behaviors that define femaleness, and the superiority of males is assumed and rooted in masculinity (see Welsing, 1991). Therefore, women are expected to be subordinate to men, and “normal” men and women are expected to adhere to traditional sex role and gender expectations (Greene, 2000). David and Brannon (1976) suggested that this ideology is dictated by four main rules: (1) men should not be feminine, (2) men must be respected and admired (3) men should never show fear, and (4) men should seek out risk and adventure. An African-American gay male is expected to not only develop a Black (or Afrocentric) cultural identity, he is also expected to persevere and not contradict that cultural identity with a sexual identity that conflicts the social conventions and mores surrounding said cultural identity. Men who experience greater conflict with traditional masculine ideals report more symptoms of psychological distress (Drescher, 2015; Good, Heppner, DeBord, & Fischer, 2004; Liu, Rochlen, & Mohr, 2005; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). The preoccupation African-American males experience relative to levels of masculinity, and projected sexual orientations, fuel cases of low-self-esteem, dampened self-imagery, sexual repression, and perpetuation of homophobia/homophobic behaviors (Couzens et al., 2017; Drescher, 2015; Morgan, Saunders, Dodge, Harper, & Sanders, 2018; Nedhari, 2009; Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012). In cases of identity repression, denial, and/or fear of social isolation, gay males may experience states of identity confusion, depression, feelings of worthlessness, or fear of not living up to societal and cultural norms surrounding sexual orientation and/or masculinity (Collier, 1995; Couzens et al., 2017). Again, early and appropriate male role modeling is key to assure healthy identity development, regardless of sexual orientation (Gates, 2011).

While individuals often develop an inclination of sexual orientation during adolescent years, individuals may be confused when feelings of bisexuality or homosexuality conflict with culturally accepted forms of sexual orientations (Couzens et al., 2017; Gates, 2011, 2012). Further, when Black men and women become exposed to Afrocentric Ideologies that promote Black hegemonic family structures, cultural worldviews, ethos, and value systems as those that lead to optimal development (or those presenting hetero-sexual orientations/ identity as “natural” and “normal”; Kambon, 2003a, 2003b; Welsing, 1991), they may come to perceive bisexual/homosexual orientations as being shunned upon, denigrated, or not worthy of inclusion in — within the instance of the Facebook dialogue — the Black nation-building efforts. This statement is reflective of the basis of this chapter. The conversations surrounding the extent to which Afrocentric ideologies, curricula, and/or worldview-driven behaviors intentionally
or inadvertently oppress and ignore LGBTQ students at HBCUs are not being held; thus, the research is not being done. Since there exists no research as it pertains to LGBTQ students’ reactions toward such content, it is important to consider the topic germane to the discussion of underserved populations at HBCUs.

CLOSING REMARKS

There exists research that focuses on Eurocentric Worldviews and systems as those that oppress Africans and other people of color; however, researchers must also examine whether Afrocentrists foster oppressive environments for this particular demographic. While studies in the field of psychology often denote an over generalization of college student respondents as a limitation in research, studies also note a lack of research surrounding either (1) African-American subjects or (2) subject matriculating through homogenous educational contexts such as HBCUs. Thus, there is a need to examine HBCU psychology students, especially those matriculating through a program that emphasizes Afrocentric paradigms as driving forces in curricula and course content. With this in mind, this chapter closes by posing the questions of how do we as Black people intend to deal with BLACK homosexuals and LGBTQ peoples? This chapter raises the question of whether the experiences and curricula content LGBTQ students come in contact with during their time in Afrocentric programs on HBCU campuses (primarily that of psychology) promote welcoming, accepting educational climate — or — are these students subject to a different form of an oppressive environment? Shall we take a true Afrocentric Worldview stance rooted in inclusion, communalism, and interdependence — welcoming our kin to aid, however possible, in uplifting the Black agenda? Or shall we take a Eurocentric stance of alienating those perceived as different; thus, perpetuating a divisive frame of mind whereby we individually strive for a “common goal” of Black empowerment, leaving behind those perceived as lost to Eurocentric Worldviews and cultural practices? [...] There exists no research to date on the topics proposed in this chapter. We hope that presenting these ideas and issues influences scholars to examine surrounding topics on this particularly underrepresented and doubly oppressed minority subgroup. Indeed, it does take the knowledge of a prepared mind to address this conundrum of whether or not to work with- or work against individuals’ (brain solutions) functioning, or dysfunction, as a reaction to the perpetual environmental and societal systems oppress on us all (as peoples of color) in global context that is becoming increasingly more acrimonious, hegemonic, and individualist.

REFERENCES


