

generate some basic psychological models of the African reality structure that allow us to explain as fully as possible the sociocultural forces that account for such a dangerous phenomenon as is the current state of Black mental health. Additionally, we need models that will explain the psychological forces that actually define the phenomenon of Black mental health, its operation, and those preventive-intervention mechanisms that are necessary to correct and irradicate the self-destructive tendencies noted earlier. Toward this overall objective, let us first consider what the nature of the African personality is, and second, how our understanding of the African psyche allows us to explain the obvious aberration in it to account for the current self-destructive predicament of African-American mental health.

THE AFRICAN PERSONALITY

Although many attempts have been made toward articulating the nature of the Black personality, few have undertaken such explanations within the framework of the African reality structure, or what we call "African cosmology" (Baldwin, 1976). The crucial difference between the theories of the first variety (non-Africentric theories) and those of the second (Africentric theories) is that the former tend to conceptualize the Black personality as more or less the net result of Western oppression (i.e., emphasis on the Western or European reality in the nature and operation of Black personality), while the latter point to the natural and fundamental condition of the Black personality (i.e., emphasis on the African reality structure in the nature and operation of Black personality). The Africentric theories thus allow us to conceptualize not only the natural condition of Black personality but also the extent to which the Black personality has become estranged from its natural condition under the "unnatural" influence of the Western reality structure that dominates American society