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Table of Content

1. **Impact of self-concept and body dis-satisfaction on students' fear of negative evaluation in University of Ibadan**
   Shyngle Kolawole Balogun, Ayomipe Ajoke Temola & Adebayo Victor Adeyemi 5-23

2. **Psycho-educational intervention and stress management among business persons amidst crises situations**
   Ijang Bih Ngyah-Etchutamb 24-45

3. **Shifting gender norms and sexual/gender-based violence, wealth access, decision-making and gender equality in Nigerian tertiary institutions**
   Oluwatoyin Ilesanmi, Damilola Ibironke Adefisoye, Lanre Ikuteyijo Oluyemisi Obilade, Akanni Ibukun Akinyemi, Oyeyemi Babalola & Olutoyin Mejiuni 46-77

4. **Standardization of theory of mind task battery (TOMTB) in Lagos State**
   Olufolakemi Victoria Adedeji, Kehinde O. Ayenibiowo & Ibinabo S. Agiobu-Kemmer 78-93

5. **From anecdotes to science: The characterization of mind in Africa and its diaspora**
   Kayode A. Oguntuashe & Olufolakemi Victoria Adedeji 94-109

6. **Household financial resources as a determinant of openness to substance use among undergraduates of the University of Lagos**
   Sylvester Ororume Atiri, Simon Omonigho Umukoro & James Otieno Ekele 110-128

7. **Spousal communication among dual-income early career couples as predictor of employee's behaviour at work: An empirical study of selected banks in Lagos**
   Gabriel A. Akinbode 129-141

8. **Weight and age as correlates of negative self-image among undergraduate female fitness centre users at the University of Lagos**
   Uzochukwu N. Israel, Sylvester O. Atiri & A.M. Akande 142-150

9. **Differences in men's educational Status, ethnicity and women's educational pursuit after marriage**
   Malomo Bolajoko Ibiyemi, Ajala Muniru Alimi & Oluyoye Onyeka Maureen 151-174

10. **Organisational citizenship behaviour as a catalyst to continuous improvement and economic revitalisation in Africa**
    Elizabeth Ibukunoluwa Olowookere 175-189

From anecdotes to science: The characterization of mind in Africa and its diaspora

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Abstract
This article focused on the historical progression of developmental psychology and its description of the essential features of the mind of man in Africa. In doing so, it exposed the strengths and weaknesses of the prevailing research paradigms. It argued that a major pitfall is to be found in importing from Biology, Darwin's evolutionary theory in general and the concept of the survival of the fittest in particular. This led Bowlby to anchor his concept of attachment in the mythical dyad, the mother and child instead of the group or commune proposed by Darwin as a sine qua non for survival. Both of these misled psychologists into adopting the individualistic conception of mind which left in its wake, two outcomes. One, it pushed Western scholarship about developmental sciences into a blind alley unable to fully reconcile theory with data. Two, it produced a caricature of mind in Africa, where until recently, the communalistic or group psychology held sway. The article claimed with some empirical evidence that the grafting of individualistic orientation onto a collectivist foundation has inevitably stultified the development of mind in Africa and its diaspora.

Key concepts: Developmental psychology in Africa; Darwin and child development; paradigmatic shift in developmental psychology; individualistic and collectivist orientations in Africa.

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Introduction

Charles Darwin's "On the origin of Species" (1876) is well-known for espousing his theory of evolution based on the principle of natural selection, but he is not quite as famous for his seminal and pioneering contributions to Psychology, particularly, developmental psychology. In publications like the "A Biographical sketch of an Infant", Darwin (1877) established the 'natural history of babies' by painstakingly observing and recording landmark growths and developmental milestones in his oldest son's first year of life. His observations drew on the principle that insights into the evolution of human agency could be drawn from the analogy of actions directly observed during development in infancy. By 'agency', he meant those acts which human beings may share with animals, some of which, like sex, may make some of us wince and others as lofty as caring for the sick, the aged and even the worship of God. He was particularly interested in explaining naturalistically those attributes, thought to be uniquely human, which are underscored by what Darwin referred to as conscience and the moral sense. The highest of these were sympathetic actions (today often subsumed under empathy) 'to men of all races, to the imbecile, maimed and other useless members of

society…….' Greater appreciation of Darwin's fertile insights into human development can be obtained in his "Expression of emotions in man and animals," first published in 1872 in which he described the expression of maternal love and affection for infants and the young infant's capacity to read the mother's emotional expressions. It even extended into the pivotal role of PLAY in social development. Now, it has been argued that Darwin's thesis expressed in *The Origin of Species* laid a strong foundation for the principle of individualism in psychology. Others have gone further to claim it as a basis that established individualism as a cornerstone of Western Intellectual tradition. The idea is that natural selection pits the individual against the other in the struggle for adaptation and survival. In fact, more unforgiving critics would argue that the only "entity directly to benefit from natural selection is the individual, or more precisely, the individual's 'selfish' gene." (Dawkins, 2006).
However, when it comes to Darwin's natural history of human agency, like conscience, his theory became rooted more in the opposite direction, that is, co-operation and interdependence. These two distinct roots, Individualism, and communalism (or groupness) will form the kernel of this article. Psychology as a discipline in the West took the path of individualism perhaps influenced by the population theory of Malthus (1826) and perhaps also the economic theory of Adam Smith. It has been argued that these three theories provided the platform which enabled the placing of an enduring emphasis on ontogenetic development (Schweber, 1980 and cited in Bradley, 2020). This thinking was captured in Biology and comparative psychology by Haeckel's (1874) aphorism that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" by which he meant that embryological development reflects or mirrors the evolutionary development of the phylum of which the individual is a member. This appears to be particularly evident in the embryological development of vertebrates including Homo *sapiens*. The recapitulation view has fallen into disrepute among biologists because embryos themselves 'evolve' by adapting to inter-uterine environment and therefore cannot totally replay their phylum's evolutionary history. However, some psychologists still employ the idea by drawing a parallel between development in neonates and cultural evolution. For example, Bruner's (1972) "the nature and uses of immaturity," draws a powerful parallel between the three psychological stages of development of the human neonate, namely, the enactive, iconic and the symbolic on the one hand, and certain important phases in the cultural evolution of mankind on the other hand. At the enactive stage, the child's actions on himself, other persons and objects are encoded and stored in his memory. So, acting on objects in the world is their major mode of representation as indicated, for example, in repetitive shaking of a rattle to produce similar sound. This would correspond to the period of cultural evolution, when early man was learning to fashion tools, like flints, to achieve some ends such as killing game. At the second stage called iconic, the child stores information in visual images like a mental picture.

This, for Bruner corresponds to the cultural phase when early man learnt to paint on cave walls or used smoke to send signals. The most powerful mode of representation occurs at the symbolic stage when information is encoded in symbols like words and language. It is the most adaptive form of representation, because unlike actions and images which are closely tied to their referents, symbols are arbitrary and also flexible and hence they can be detached from what they represent. The cultural equivalent of this is the emergence of Mathematics, Logic and musical notation. The developmental psychology of Piaget (1970) took the argument further by positing a parallelism between the stages he observed in the acquisition of knowledge in the child and important watersheds at which paradigms shifted in Western science and Mathematics. Hence, development in the child has been used to shed light on our cultural past. It has also served as a mirror which reflects adaptations to cultural, social and cognitive challenges in contemporary times. Interest in these matters runs deep and

fascinating insights and knowledge into the nature of mind have come about from them.

A few of such insights are in order at this point. The baby's mind construed as a "tabula rasa" is no longer tenable as empirical studies have shown that the perceptual world of the infant is structured, coherent and dynamically stable. Within this world, they display preferences for visual patterns depicting human faces on a 2-dimensional surface and they prefer these to geometric figures (Fantz and Nevis, 1967). In addition, when strapped in a chair and placed in front of a blank TV screen, they soon learn that the behaviour of light bulbs on the screen was contingent on the movement of their heads either to the right or left of the headrest. Within this 'game', 2-month-old infants "decoded" experimenter's contingencies, generated and tested 'hypothesis" about which pattern of head movement turned on the lights and which one turned it off (Papousek, 1967). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that young babies have rudimentary knowledge of object permanence, density, causality and can in fact make anticipatory responses to observed events (Bower, 1979; Mundy-Castle and Anglin, 1974). These are phenomenal achievements hitherto thought to be beyond the ken of infants. Many more of these can be gleaned from "The competent Infant." (Stone, Smith and Murphy, 1974). However, in the 1970s, there appeared to be a blind spot in the growing vision of infant competence: the omission of the social and motivational elements from the picture. The reason for this blindness has been described by Trevarthen (2003) as resulting from widespread adoption of a philosophy and its method which "led the way to an objective and rationalistic epistemology" (p. 198). Its result was a vision of infants which lacked any reference to their social agency, their communal world, their motives to share, their intentions to seek, create and negotiate meanings…….the very things which make the infantine performance possible in the socially-contrived experimental conditions which produce the 1970s vision of 'the competent infant'!

In hindsight, it seems obvious that, in order to fully understand the beginnings of human sociability, we must look beyond isolated individual babies facing televisions, or indeed beyond desert-islanded dyads, if we are to come to grips with the glee that infants take in playing their parts in their families and communities. This suggests a need to balance the equation and arrive at a much more complete picture of the functioning of mind. But in what ways have the individualistic Western psychology conceptualized the mind of man in Africa and its diaspora? What consequences follow therefrom? To answer these questions, we turn to a description and analysis of early developmental psychology literature in Africa.

Early developmental psychology in Africa

The French experience

In French speaking Africa, the focus of much of the research in Psychology in the 1950s and 1960s was on the characterization of the African mind and personality. The African mind was construed as lacking in the powers of abstraction, while 'his' personality suffered from a lack of individualism. If the mind could not discern abstractions, then it was rooted in the concrete, practical experiences of life and living. If the personality was devoid of the powers of attaining itself, perhaps fully individuating, then it was intricately bound up with the collective. These orientations were thought to derive from environmental conditions into which the child was born "where musical and dancing elements, rather than abstract ideas dominate" (De Coster and Georis, 1963). Shackled down by these conditions, the African child experienced great difficulties in adapting to the demands placed on them by institutions of modern colonizing society such as education, economy and urbanization. In short, acculturation to European norms posed a huge challenge. The problem here has/had to do with the favoured research methodology. Studies in the 50s and 60s employed methods that were mainly observational, sometimes anecdotal, sometimes not even stated or even in some

cases just an appeal to the experience the author has had "working with African women and children" as claimed for example by Knapen (1962) in her article on the comparison of the development of the personality of the African and the European. Before her, Biesheuvel (1959), though not French, had "tested" his hypothesis about the effect of abrupt weaning on the personality of the African personality without explicitly describing his research method other than claiming it to be 'observational. At best, psychological tests constructed and validated in France were administered to African children to assess their educability as by Valantin and Collomb (1962) who employed five mental tests developed in France for measuring intelligence, abstract intelligence, perceptual organization and so on. To reiterate, the early psychological literature on child development in French speaking Africa is replete with studies which relied on non-systematic observations and the use of tests and interview methods developed in France, for example, Clignet (1964); Fremine (1963). An exception to the rule perhaps was the work of Desamai and Gineste (1963) which was also observational but was very detailed and offered useful practical guide for the teacher, who wished to teach African children how to observe events occurring in the world in which they lived.

Another discernible concern of early research interest in child development in French Africa combined medical conditions with psychological development. Studies in this category tended to be clinical and quasi-experimental in nature. Examples include Geber and Dean (1956) on the psychological changes accompanying kwashiorkor. However, even here, the Gesell Scale (comprising subscales of locomotion, manual ability, adaptive behaviours, language and personal-social behaviour) is foreign and standardized against non-African populations.

The English experience

What about the English-speaking African experience? Are there any significant differences from French studies, either in the personnel who carried out early research in child development, or in the methods used? Well, a survey of the literature indicated that the field was dominated by non-Africans as in the case of French Africa, but a few Africans had become active, albeit coming from cognate disciplines like Education (Abiola, 1966), and Psychiatry, (Lambo, 1962; 1969). However again, the dominance of expatriate scholars meant a reliance on the use of psychological tests designed abroad. Examples include Mundy-Castle (1968) on Gestalt continuation and design-copying by Ghanaian children. This is also true in his earlier studies of African children's responses to depth cues in pictorial materials designed to test depth perception (Mundy-Castle, 1966). In both studies, Ghanaian children aged between 5 and 10 years were the participants, and the test materials were European. A review of articles on cross-cultural studies important enough to be re-printed in Price-Williams (1969) compendium showed that all the 27 authors were non-African. Furthermore, although there were 23 articles grouped into sections they were essentially about personality, culture, and intelligence and preponderantly, all relied on foreign based psychological/sociometric tests.

Interestingly enough, the early French and English works appear to agree that an important "constant" in the development of the "African" personality is the African cultural approach to infant rearing characterized by protracted breast-feeding, demand feeding, demand sleeping, extensive and frequent body contact and interaction with many members of the household. Other "constants" include stimulation of psycho-motor development to encourage early sitting, crawling, standing, and walking, involvement in dance, music and rhythm, singing and insistence on obedience and respect for elders and tradition. This type of 'indulgent' up-bringing promotes a collectivist as opposed to an individualistic orientation and personality. It also selects social rather than technological intelligence (Mundy-Castle, 1974). It has to be said though, that even at this time in the historical development of Psychology on

the African continent, continuous attempts were made to refine concepts, adapt and modify tests and instruments and also sharpen methodological tools. These efforts led to a shift in perspectives from "culture-free" to "culture-fair" testing by psychologists. In the same breath, sociologists and anthropologists developed concepts such as "frames of reference" and "ethno-centrism" to achieve some balance in both theoretical and methodological perspectives. Echoes of the work of the great Bartlett (1930) on "ecological validity" provided some beacon which led to calls for the training of indigenous African psychologists. Fortunately, a series of events occurred, which ushered in a change of some significance. It is to this change that we now turn.

Wind of change

One of the outcomes of the Second World War (1939-1945) was the return from the war front of indigenous peoples of Africa who had campaigned in North Africa and Asia on the side of the "free" but colonizing world. It then became difficult to justify the retention of the colony to a people who had fought to liberate the world from the tyranny of Nazism and Fascism. Besides, a new elite, educated in Europe and America had sprung up in many African countries and they were helping to quicken the pace of agitation for freedom from political and economic domination. Ghana became independent from British rule in 1957, Nigeria followed suit in 1960. Many other African countries gained independence from their European colonisers in the 1960s and quite naturally the first priority for a large number was to invest heavily in the education of their peoples including the establishment and/ or strengthening of institutions of higher education. For example, Nigeria which up until independence had only one University, built four more in 1962. The thirst for education led to at least two things that are relevant for our discussion here. First, the investment of the sixties produced qualified Africans in the Sciences, Medicine, Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences including Psychology who could contribute to scholarship in developmental psychology. These scholars included Durojaiye (1975), Bakare (1975) and Okonji (1971) whose work on Piaget's classificatory behaviour in children could be said to have partly influenced a revision of the method hitherto in use in cross-cultural psychology. Furthermore, Okonji's stature in the field led to the inclusion of his work in Berry and Dasen (1974) "Culture and Cognition: Readings in Cross-Cultural Psychology," the only African scholar to be so honoured! Secondly, the call for the training of indigenous psychologists to complement the efforts of expatriates became strident as Greenfield (1972) joined in when she suggested that "African psychologists and assistants should be trained at every possible turn…….and Africans coming from a number of different backgrounds should be asked to comment on research hypotheses, procedures and interpretation of results." Mundy-Castle (1968) was concerned that there were very few African psychologists at the international conference on "Social Psychology and National Development" which held at the University of Ibadan in 1966. However, by 1985 he was pleased to note that there were five fully fledged departments of psychology in the country and several units strong in different aspects of psychology as in Benin, Ilorin, Enugu and of course Aro-Hospital in Abeokuta made famous by the Cornell University study by Lambo et. al (1963) all providing training and strengthening the research capacities of young Africans in various branches of the discipline. (Mundy-Castle, 1985)

We should index another wind of change which originated in Europe, but blew across the African continent affecting the fortune of psychology for the better. This was the re-emergence of phenomenology and the rediscovery of Darwin's (1872) central hypothesis about infant mind and its development in "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals". Darwin's hitherto long forgotten hypothesis is that the most human of all human

traits, springs from an inherent 'groupness,' which he saw as the capacity to interact with more than one member of the group at the same time. This group psychology, for Darwin, came first and therefore may be considered primitive. The impetus for re-visiting Darwin's work appears to be the hypothesis of John Bowlby too hastily tagged the 'attachment theory.' This hypothesis has largely been refuted, especially by cross-cultural research in Africa (Vicedo, 2017; Keller, 2021). Bowlby (1958) introduced the highly speculative idea of 'environment of evolutionary adaptedness' and came up with a claim that attachment evolved because pre-human babies (in Africa) generally depended on their mothers for protection and not the group as a whole. He had no research-backing for this claim. Current research evidence from Africa, e.g. by Strum on baboons, disproves it (Strum,1987). Before him, it was thought that the tie between babies and their mothers was based mainly on material support like food and nutrition, which are necessary for the child's survival. This view was revised in the light of Bowlby's discovery of the motive for attachment which in his view is emotional security, protection and care. For decades, scholars took the work of Harlow (1959) on rhesus monkeys as experimental evidence that verified Bowlby's attachment hypothesis. However, it has been suggested that on the contrary, the findings show that socialising with peers is more important for baby rhesus monkeys than a bond with their mother, Vicedo (2017) But the theory's importance for clinical work should be credited to Ainsworth (1969). It should be noted that although Bowlby conceived attachment "as a life-long connectedness between persons," he did not think that it needed to be reciprocal. In a nutshell, attachment as conceived by Bowlby appears to be a one-sided phenomenon and so has little, if any communication value. The non-reciprocal nature of attachment hypothesis and its implications eluded the attention of scholars many of whom did excellent work relating dimensions of attachment like the need for warmth, protection and body contact with child survival and development within the mother-child dyad. They failed to apprehend the theory for what it is, a culturally biased, vision of infancy, which is not universal. It theorises the 1950s Britain, where it was born – a time after World War 11 when mothers were sent home to have 'Babies for Britain' and look after them alone in their homes. It has little applicability to the majority of world cultures where extended families are the norm, e.g. in Islamic families, babies are often breast fed by several women or 'milk mothers'(Johnson, 2018)

However, Trevarthen (1974), a University of Edinburgh psycho-biologist pioneered the technique of filming infant-mother dyads and minutely analysing streams of intercalating sequences on a frame-by-frame basis. This led him to the discovery of what he called innate or primary inter-subjectivity, which he defined as the capacity that infants have to "share mental states with others." This predates the theory of mind (TOM) which came into being to explain the early emergence of non-egocentric responses at ages well below those predicted by Piaget's cognitive theory. The theory of inter-subjectivity arose from a general philosophical background of existentialism and phenomenology which posits that at the very instance of human conception, the latent potentiality of an individual mind is activated giving rise to a nucleus of consciousness. Nine months after, at the moment of birth, the mind is formed and awaits fertilization by human culture. Normally, this is brought about through the special relationship, (social, emotional, and motivational) which binds babies with their mothers and also the innate constraints bestowed on man in virtue of his evolutionary history. These inborn constraints fit the infant for survival in their physical and social world. They make it possible for them to adapt and respond appropriately to conditions such as sucking their mother's breast, communicating with mother and other persons. All of these happen before the emergence of speech through the use of gestures and facial expressions. Furthermore, infants were empowered by the same innate mechanisms to differentiate

between objects and persons, sit, crawl, speak, walk and generally develop their intelligence. During this process of development, the social universe is constructed first, well before the objective one and in fact makes its apprehension possible. This means that an understanding of objective reality is made possible through social interaction with other persons. Hence, the concept of objectivity, which is so firmly rooted in many psychological theories and particularly Piaget's epistemology is in fact a function of subjectivity. Inter-subjectivity, therefore, is that "distinctively human process whereby meaning is created between people, through the sharing of ideas and actions and by cooperative creative endeavour.

Objectivity, then, is ultimately and fundamentally subjective and social. (Mundy-Castle, 1982). Inter-subjectivity is a pre-requisite for human survival. It is the psychological process which enables the appreciation of intentions, thoughts, feelings and motives of persons with whom we are interacting. It reveals itself as an inborn interest in inter-personal relations and develops simultaneously with perceptual and motor functions. It is deeply affected by emotional dependence and attachment, and it functions to regulate cognitive development (Trevarthen, 1980). He has since gone on to make a distinction between primary and secondary inter-subjectivity. Secondary inter-subjectivity occurs when infants and their mothers are engaged on a joint task with or without an object and narratives and points of interest are negotiated sometimes with the baby initiating and leading the flow of communications. He has also proposed the Intrinsic Motive Force (IMF) as a foundation for sharing narratives of action and emotion during interactions. Out of the hundreds of scientific articles published by Trevarthen and his able students, mention should be made of at least one which showed that 2-month-old infants do consciously adjust their bodies by stiffening up their arms and legs in anticipation of being carried by an adult. Typical adjustments include making their legs more rigid, opening their arms upwards and outwards, raising their chins, arching their backs and generally getting ready for the pick-up. Interestingly, while all these adjustments are going on, the baby's eyes are trained on the face of the approaching adult and not on their arms. By the age of 3, 4 months, the babies' adjustments are much smoother (Reddy, Markova, & Wallot, 2013). Interestingly, the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria have a dictum to the effect that "omo t'oba sipa, l'angbe" meaning, a child desirous to be carried would ready themselves by opening wide their arms. This is a clear reference to infants lying supine or young children sitting but inviting adults to pick them up. It appears to be a universal posture, but its semiotics may differ from culture to culture. In parts of Africa where it is interpreted as an invitation to be carried, the accepting adult flows into the embrace. The resulting mutual synchronicity and adjustments are made by both parties. In fact, this permits mother and the new-born to sleep in the same bed without baby running any risk of being crushed by mother's movements even when asleep! Trevarthen's research on infancy is without any doubt one of the most cited in the world (Bradley, 2020).

Alternative method or alternative interpretation

One of the requirements for an adequate scientific theory is a body of systematically collected observations using an appropriate method and a device that offers an explanation for the observed phenomena and which must accord with reality. What do we have in the case of the theory of mind in Africa?

The observation that the African infant is reared in an environment that is rich, highly stimulating physically, emotionally, nutritionally (by being breastfed on demand) and involving multiple 'mothers' has received empirical support from psychologists and psychiatrists (Durojaiye, 1975; Dawson,1967; Lambo,1969). However, what does it mean really to be socialized by many mothers, siblings and other significant others? It probably implies that some or all of the following will occur:

The infant would be fed on demand by mother initially. After weaning, the baby would be fed by multiple others. The baby would experience high levels of physical stimulation and body contact, while awake and even during sleep as individual cots are seldom used. Exposure to vocal, linguistic and language stimulation would also be high in the general ambience of the child. Such stimulation would also be directed at them in the form of family cognomen, especially during bathing times. The frequency and intensity of these would increase, when the baby is being pacified and especially when they are ill. Through these and other cultural devices, the child would learn to value the group and the community, acquire the notion of respect for people based on age, status, kinship and authority. Obedience would be imbibed and cooperation with group members would be inculcated. Between birth and the end of early childhood around 5 years, the child would have learnt many of the highly valued cognitive, emotional, social and language skills required to navigate the world of persons and objects in his community. This may be described as primary socialization.

Attendance in elementary school brings with it a process of secondary socialization. This occurs within a context that is different from the traditional homestead. The language would be different from the mother tongue and is likely to be a foreign one. At best, it would be a mix of the two. There would be new authority figures using rules and concepts that are in many cases at variance with the knowledge and cognitions derived from the primary process. The collectivist orientation which has served the child so well at the primary socialization stage is now regarded as dysfunctional in school. To give an example, unless a task is designated by the teacher as "group assignment" it is expected to be tackled by the child as an individual with minimal or no help at all from others. The resulting conflict is resolved by a process similar to what linguists call 'code-switching.' This refers to the capacity to plan, select and deploy a lexicon or a sentence considered to be appropriate to a context. To do this successfully, the speaker must have a large repertoire and a discerning mind. The suggestion here is that schooling leads to a "bicameral" mind in Africa. Small wonder then that it was in the African child that the notion of general and specific intelligence construed by Spearman as a unitary concept was split into two by Mundy-Castle and others who labelled them, social and technological intelligence. To be fair, although he distinguished between the two intelligences, Mundy-Castle stressed that they are deeply interdependent. According to him, Western cultures tend to place greater emphasis on technological intelligence, whereas third world countries stress social or what is now called emotional intelligence. But a truly adapted intelligence would embrace the two since they are complementary. The point to note is that cultural devices would be created and chosen to facilitate the type of adaptation preferred by a people. To underscore the point, who a child plays with and what he plays with would in some sense be a function of cultural preference or "affordances" to use a Gibsonian terminology.

The functioning of the mind of wo/man in Africa is dual not only in terms of accommodating itself to apparently irreconcilable material and spiritual explanations of phenomena, but also in terms of perennially struggling to come to terms with the demands of the collectivist and individualist existences. The collectivist orientation or groupness-thinking derives quite naturally from the demands of group life. Generally speaking, group-life is the most common form among human beings. Freud in fact claimed that the psychology of the group is the oldest and most primitive psychology and on this he keeps company with Darwin. Yoruba cosmology lends mythological support by asserting that Olodumare (God) creates children and arranges them in groups in His abode ready to give them to whomsoever He pleases. Hence, when a child is despatched to the planet earth, contact is still kept with the group on a

spiritual level. Sometimes the child is aware of his belongingness to an ethereal group, but most times, there is no recollection. This worldview of "primordial" and pre-natal groupness has crept into Yoruba nursery rhymes. For example, Ogundipe (2009) reminds us of one such rhyme which is native to Owo town in South-West, Nigeria. It is sung with children holding hands in a circle;

Ilajori o Refrain: kolobo
Ilajori o
Awa jo yeye
Awa jo muwe

The first line says "the essence of being"
The third line says "together we are"
The fourth line says "together we know book" or "together we are brilliant"

Anecdotes they are, but they are powerfully suggestive of the prevalence of group or collectivist orientation and the promotion of a collectivist existence. However, is there empirical evidence for the Darwinian concept of group life? Fortunately, some have come from Selby and Bradley (2003) who tested Freud's (1922) and Bion's (1961) hypothesis that group psychology is primal by initially filming trios of 6 to 9-month-old infants securely fastened to their infant chairs (buggies). The children who were meeting for the first time in the psychology lab were introduced as were their parents. Shortly after, they were left alone by their parents. Then micro-analysis of non-verbal behaviour captured on films was meticulously done on a frame-by-frame basis. Results indicated that the children could, if they wanted, initiate a 'conversation' by looking at one another; invite another to engage in a 'toe-holding' play while at the same time trying to catch the attention of a third infant. The psychologists were so encouraged by this "startling" finding that they expanded the size of the group to a quartet. In the words of the researchers, "One intriguing finding was that the start of mutual gaze between two group members strongly attracted the attention of one or both their companions----rather than the two companions pairing off in parallel" (Bradley, 2020 p. 448). They concluded that babies "generate context-specific meanings in groups communication and that babies relate to more than one other at a time." They think this observation suggests the existence of an innate 'groupness' rather than the 'dyadic program' put forward by Bowlby in his attachment theory (Bradley et al 2024).
Before Bradley, we had found that 4-year-olds could use questions to direct a peer's mental processes to achieve a goal. They worked in pairs on a joint task wherein one hides a biscuit in one box out of an array of four, similar in all dimensions of shape, colour and size except one. The goal was for the hider to tell the finder so he can find it without making errors. Sometimes, the hider went beyond the dyad to ask the experimenter, Kayode, have I told him right? (Oguntuashe, 1992). Similar findings occurred in the transcription and analyses of video tapes of mother-infant dyads at play in Lagos which revealed many episodes where mothers were inputting that their 9–11-month-old babies were directing intentions and motives to persons other than the pair in the laboratory, that is, to third parties outside the immediate context (Alli, 1987; Oguntuashe, 1985). Everything taken together, it may be concluded, at least tentatively, that the progression of development of our humanity is from communal or group to the individual. We think the Bradley results observed within groups of much younger children provide support for the propensity to groupness in man.

The gains of collectivistic over individualistic orientation

To recapitulate, Darwin's two great insights of natural selection and propensity to groupness appear irreconcilable. The former appears to be very well -known, but in fact is not because very few scholars read Darwin – so they think they understand him, but they do not (Bradley,

2022). For example, many have misinterpreted the concept of natural selection to provide a platform for individualism as it confers a strong advantage on those individuals, who become fitter and more adaptable as they struggle and compete for resources. However, this is not what Darwin says in *The Origin of Species* – he says it benefits *the community*!

> "Natural selection will modify the structure of the young in relation to the parent, and of the parent in relation to to the young. In social animals it will adapt the structure of each individual for the benefit of the whole community; if the community profits by the selected change" (Darwin, 1876, p.69)

The lesser-known concept of groupness is tucked away in lesser-known notebooks, diaries and a book on "*The Descent of Man"* (1874) that very few psychologists and fewer-still, biologists read. To compound the issue, natural selection somehow has come to undergird prevailing theories of child development until the works of Trevarthen and his students started gradually and consistently to roll back the carpet. How might the two "apparently opposed" concepts be reconciled? We would like to suggest, in agreement with Butler, (1917) that natural selection might have been at work during the evolution of our ancestors but that probably changed during the stone age when man acquired the capacity to fashion tools to-an-end, meaning making tools with a purpose in mind. The capacity to choose to make one tool rather than another forced the direction of evolution away from the body and became extra-somatic as strongly argued by the biologist Medawar (1957). What then might be the advantages of groupness be? Clearly, group life is more economical, more effective even for gathering and hunting and would quite easily lead to division of labour, specialization and eventually group sedentary existence and all the advantages that come with it. Moreover, the group has qualities that may not inhere in its individual members.

Implications of grafting individualism on collectivistic orientation in africa and the diaspora

What happens when human beings erect social and cultural institutions that appear to run against the grain of nature in order to harness, shape and direct the course of growth and development? Freud (1922) provided some interesting propositions which may shed light on the question when he suggested that severe and punishing psycho-pathological outcomes may be due to discord between Individual psychology and Group psychology. If psycho-analysis is not proof enough, there is some evidence from Sociology, Social Psychology and Cultural Anthropology indicating that maladaptive, antisocial and even criminal behaviours may result from the impact of rapid urbanization, alienating social institutions and "cultures in collision".

Perhaps the most affected Social Institutions are, the Family and the School. We take the family first. Middle Class parents in the United States of America have very high scholastic expectations of their children compared with their working-Class counterparts. This expectation somehow affects school performance as middle-class children tend to outperform their working-class peers in school. Similar relationships have been found across cultures. Now, let us look at obedience among children. Kikuyu children in Kenya who were between the ages of 5 and 9 years were given instructions to do or refrain from doing certain tasks like playing with or refraining from playing with some toys. The instructions came from two sources, their own mother or another child's mother not known to the child. Compliance was high and almost equal in both cases on a set of ten tasks. Sub-urban American children matched for age behaved differently, obeying own mother significantly more than other

mother, (Munroe and Munroe, 1972). Clearly, African Societies place greater emphasis on social intelligence than America during the process of socialization…..a path that leads to a higher level of individualism in one and a greater dose of collectivism in the other. If these two groups of children are enrolled in school (another powerful social institution with equally powerful expectations and demand-characteristics of its own), the African child is likely to be more at a disadvantage unless they come from the emerging middle classes that share similar values with its Western counterparts (Oguntuashe, 2010). This may be a pointer to one of the outcomes or at least an implication of grafting individualism on a collectivist orientation. It is perhaps akin to what Cleaver (1965) eloquently described as putting "Soul on Ice".

How do we get out of the entrapment?

We have reviewed recent empirical evidence from the psychological literature showing the following;

That groupness, group think and collectivist orientation is native to the mind of man universally as revealed in neo-natal studies of groups of infants.

This quality of mind was grasped by scholars like Darwin over a century and a half ago but was supplanted by another idea of Darwin which has been interpreted to augur well with an individualistic ideology, an idea very powerfully central to capitalism.

This collectivist orientation of mind has social, spiritual, emotional and cognitive components. It has for a long time been recognized in Africa and the Diaspora as native, indigenous and autochthonous and has been used as a resource for cultural adaptation.

Early anthropological and developmental psychological literature which relied on unsophisticated research techniques, biased instruments, and sometimes mere anecdotes and which also were looking to measure individualistic orientations and traits found the opposite and concluded it was the reason Africans were different from Caucasians.

Senghor (1964), although an African, fell into the trap when he established a rather spurious basis for his theory of Negritude, claiming "Reason is European as Emotion is African." Collective orientation is not either or both, but all, that is, everything. To get out of the trap is to accommodate oneself to both reason and emotion for they are not really in opposition. An individual grows out of the collective but remains rooted in it. Jung called this 'individuation' – it's the opposite of or complements 'socialisation'. In fact, the two are mutually inclusive as we were forced to realise in our collective struggle against the Corona virus disease called Covid-19. The behaviour of one individual may imperil the chances of survival of the collective and vice versa.

We find support for this position in two fields, psycho-pathology and the Social Psychology of Resilience. Western psycho-therapy is rooted partly in the notion of the therapist assisting the client to gain an insight into the nature, causes, influences and consequences of their conditions. Thereafter, the two parties would jointly decide on the appropriate modes and channels for "working through" the issues. An analysis of the steps to be taken usually reveals that its effectiveness relies heavily on both manifest, potential or inherent powers of the individual clients. However, in African traditional psycho-therapy, there is a heavy recourse to the social psychology dynamics of the client's primary group which is usually the extended family. According to Zemplini, Diop and Martino (1966) the steps are as follow;

1. Cure begins even before the therapist is seen by family members. This is because family members go through a process of consensus building around the nature, cause and a possible reason for the condition. In fact, the "agreed" nature of the condition, the "diagnosis" would be pivotal in suggesting an appropriate therapist.

2. The first visit to the therapist is crucial. “He centres his attention on facts, events and signs which allow him to discover the identity of the pathogenic agent that is culturally admissible,”

From the above, it seems clear that in African traditional psycho-therapy, the focus is on the collective, the family and the progression is from the group to the individual. It should be noted that strands of this approach have been assimilated fruitfully into Western psychiatric practice. The danger of course is well-known and documented, the shifting of responsibility from the individual to the other and the reluctance to accept the consequences of one’s actions.

Support has also come for the primacy of the collectivist orientation in the fact of its retention in the African Diaspora not only in the Americas, but also in the West Indies. Despite being cut off from the motherland for 500 years and being subjected to horrendous experiences designed to erase their social, cultural and psychological identity, vestiges of collective orientation have survived and retained in many Diaspora communities. For example, Sudarkasa (2006) identified seven core family values that undergird the African-American family system still in the USA. These are, respect, responsibility, restraint, reciprocity, reverence, reason and reconciliation. Taken together, they spring from the collectivist-orientation fount and have in fact enabled the survival of the African-American mind despite changes in family structures that may sometimes confuse the un-initiated Western scholar.

From the foregoing therefore, one recommendation appears appropriate. Africa and its Diaspora should wholly and totally embrace its identity, in terms that are physical, social, cultural and psychological. The biological, historical and existential experiences of mankind have undeniably shaped our collective responses to those challenges thrown up in our environments. While these responses are not “fixed-action-tendencies” they dispose man in certain directions rather than others. The collectivist orientation is one of them. Of course, learning makes possible the acquisition of myriads of other response patterns including the individualistic orientation. The quest is to embrace the two into a coherent foundation for erecting an authentic African Psychology system that would respond effectively to the demands of the new millennium such as STEM.

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