2. Introduction and Background

− *View on psychology in Africa & why African Psychology did not develop*
− **1. Mainstream psychology** – *predominantly Euro-Americocentric science* exported to Africa and the East resulting in a lack of development of a specific personality theory from a purely African perspective.
  ▪ A few cross-cultural investigations focusing mainly on cognitive functioning were done – knowledge of functioning & personality of Africans was acquired from anthropological studies.
  ▪ Knowledge of general psychological functioning of Africans obtained from anthropologists, philosophers and theologians who studied the life, worldviews, values, norms & customs of Africans.
− **2.** Overviews of psychological investigations undertaken dealt with specific topics (intelligence, self concept, certain personality attributes & attitudes) and were done from a *purely Western oriented framework*.
− Lead to the establishment of *The Association of Black Psychologists (ABP)*.
  ▪ **Aim**: to promote Africentric psychology – "Black is beautiful"
  ▪ **Main focus**:
    → Establish the roots of African psychological thinking.
    → Establish an African cosmology that would serve as a basis for an "Africentric paradigm".
    → Vindication of opposition to & critique of "Eurocentric psychology"
  ▪ **(-)** Most work lacked indigenous African flavour concentrating on Indigenous African psyche.
    → Concentrates on Afro-American psyche and seeking of African heritage and cosmological roots.
− Nsamenang suggests explanation of why African psychology is underdeveloped:
  ▪ **3.** Scientific psychology's theories & method are still Eurocentric & primary focus is on topics that reflect externalised orientation – thereby neglecting/excluding folk knowledge & local issues.
  ▪ **4.** Africans have neither heard nor know the meaning of the term 'psychology'
− Hammond Tooke suggests:
  ▪ **5.** Western diagnostic categories are not always applicable to African patients.
  ▪ **Mainstream psychology neglects possibility that Africa may have psychological dimensions that are unique & valid**.

− *Main obstacles to developing African perspective in Personology*
− The quest for Africanisation of psychology can be ascribed to 3 factors:
  ▪ Psychology collaborated in the oppression of blacks through the comparison of the 'primitive' African with the 'modern' Western mind.
  ▪ Psychology in USA & SA had little relevance to the problems facing the black and the poor. When attention was payed to these populations, models were used which were unsuited to understanding the local conditions of life resulting in the effectiveness of psychology in resolving the problems being questionable.
  ▪ Psychologies imported to the continent do not accurately portray African life and mentality - ∴ questioning the appropriateness and acceptability of mainstream theoretical and empirical knowledge for Africa.
− If African psychology should materialise, it should draw on both indigenous and westernised knowledge systems as both these cosmologies exist together in contemporary Africa.
    → Both sources should first be carefully considered before any conclusions about the functioning of Africans can be drawn.
− When studying African behaviour, important to note that Africans are currently in a **transitionary phase**.
  ▪ Shift from traditional to more modern, Westernised way of life and does not necessarily imply a development from a lower to a higher level, or that the modern way of life is more progressive and qualitatively better than a traditional way of life.

- ▪ Most Africans are in the middle of these two ways of life and it would be difficult and reductionistic to situate their functioning within a single way of life.
- – African socialization model – **3 different levels of acculturation**:
  - → **Traditional**:
    - • Persons who are little affected by modernisation & who function within an established constant framework of their traditional culture.
  - → **Transitional**:
    - • Persons living and shuttling between 2 cultures in the course of their daily lives.
  - → **Modern**:
    - • Individuals who engage fully in the activities of contemporary industrial and post industrial society, with little or no contact with traditional society. This category can be sub-divided:
      - o Individuals who have, and desire no contact with the traditional society of their ancestors.
      - o Modern individuals who have no direct contact with their traditional background, but desire and take pride in upholding certain of the traditional values & practices.
  - ▪ The above distinctions that have not been taken into account when studying personality of Africans may have contributed to error variance and distorted findings.
- – **African perspective**:
  - ▪ The term 'African' refers to polymorphous grouping of the indigenous peoples of the sub-Saharan region of Africa, and includes:
    - → Geographical diversity in terms of topography and climate.
    - → Human diversity of different population groups.
    - → Linguistic and religious diversity.
    - → Diversity that comes with the ways of life that fall somewhere between traditional and modern.

- – *Why African perspective on indigenous psychology is necessary*
- – **Nobles**:
  - ▪ Personologists who don't take traditional perspective into account use scientific colonialism as they lay down Western formulations & conceptualisations as standards against which behaviour should be understood and explained.
  - ▪ Too many people look at Africa through a Euro-American lens & don't allow underlying African life & worldviews to speak for themselves.
  - ▪ Believes there should be **indigenous psychology**.
- – **Nsamenang**:
  - ▪ Pleads for indigenous understanding of behaviour of Africans to avoid the problem of misunderstanding 'African reality' and degradation of the African.
    - → A lot can be learned from the wisdom embedded in African folklore, idioms & spatial use of cues, BUT Western-based epistemology & methodology is not the best way and is not sensitive enough to extract the essence of African wisdom.
    - → Progress in psychology in Africa will only be made with the emergence and development of an indigenous body of psychological knowledge.

3. The view of the person and the worldview underlying the perspective
- – View of person and worldview are founded on a holistic and anthropocentric ontology.
  - ▪ Implies humans form an invisible whole with cosmos (∴ unity with God, humans & nature).
  - ▪ Humans form the point of departure and the centre of the universe from which everything is understood and explained.
  - ▪ "a man-centred in society"
- – Sow maintains that 3 cosmic orders/realities can be distinguished, namely

3.1. The macro-cosmos
- **Domain in which God is encountered**.
  - Religious existence that surrounds the full humanness of Africans.
- According to African myths:
  - Originally no distinction between God and humans – they lived with one another
  - God withdrew from day-to-day existence resulting in people having to become self-reliant – gave rise to human's first religious experiences.
  - Withdrawal of God:
    - → The transcendence of God.
    - → **Ancestors serve as important intervening medium and contact with God**.
      - Ancestors are more important than God in everyday existence & form important part of daily African functioning.
- Daily functioning of traditional African is fundamentally **religious functioning**.
  - Africans are notoriously religious in the sense that all levels of life are filled with religion.
  - There is no distinction between sacred and worldly, between religion and non-religion or between the spiritual and a physical, material facet of life.
  - Traditional religion does not focus primarily on the individual, but on the community the individual belongs to.
    - → ∴ Religion is interlinked with **collective functioning** on the micro-cosmic level.
- Few Western personality theories recognise religious basis of human functioning to account for the 'inherent religiousness' of Africans.
  - Jung expresses religion as one of the earliest and most universal expressions of human mind
    - → Any psychology touching on structure of the human personality can't fail to take note that religion is, amongst other things, a psychological phenomenon located in the psyche of human beings.
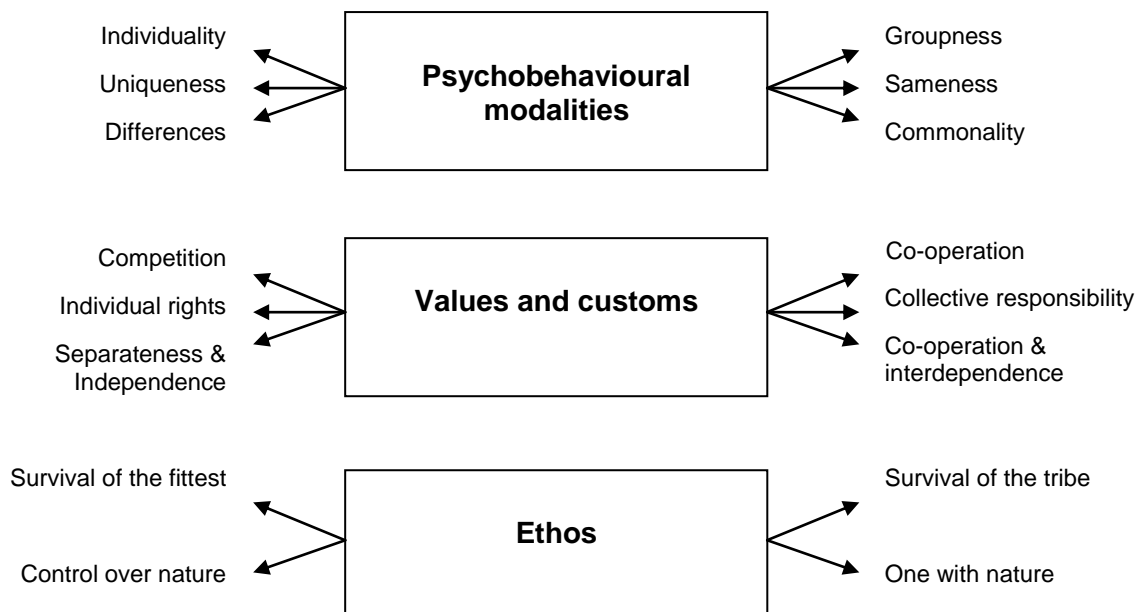
3.2. The meso-cosmos
- Is a kind of no man's land.
  - Coincidence and forces of ancestors, malignant spirits and sorcerers have control.
- Situated in the world of individual and collective imagination.
  - It involves:
    - → The ancestors
    - → The living reality (humans and animals)
    - → The natural physical reality (environment)
- Is important in understanding behaviour of Africans as they are inclined to explain all conflict (+ sickness & death) with reference to the meso-cosmos, which is the domain of ancestors, malignant spirits, sorcerers and Shamans who influence & determine human behaviour.
  - Most important are ancestors as they:
    - → Mediate between the living and the 'living dead'.
    - → Influence the lives of the living.
  - Ancestors not experienced as deities/spirits, but as persons with whom a speaking relationship can be attained.
- **Sow:**
  - Meso-cosmos is:
  - Place that gives rise to all good & bad fortune.
  - Is the site of dramatic events as well as the source of worldly success.
  - The day-to-day psychological fate of human beings is modulated by a subtle dialectic of complex relations between humans and the creatures of the cosmos.
- This is the level from which an African perspective explains human dynamics.
  - African perspective attributes behaviour completely to **external agents** outside person.
    - → Self is seen as "outside" (the natural world & social relations) and not "inside" as a self that controls and changes the world.

- $\rightarrow$ Individuals can't hold themselves responsible/accountable for their own behaviour & actions as the causes of all behaviour & events are ascribed to external, supernatural beings or powers.
- $\rightarrow$ There are implications for this kind of behaviour:
  - **1.** Personal initiative in searching for solutions is repressed since people are at the mercy of supernatural beings & powers.
  - **2.** Behaviour and events can't always be explained on empirical and rational grounds & one has to look for invisible powers and beings behind the empirical rational reality.
- Problem of modernisation is **destruction of historical rootedness** found in the macro- and meso- cosmic orders of traditional Africans.
  - Without solid religious base, people are left to struggle with the conflict of losing historical rootedness provided by ancestors while confronting the demands of the technological society whose foundations seem flimsy for Africans.
  - The loss of rootedness found in the macro and meso cosmic orders serves as a guideline for their daily lives in the micro-cosmic order.

3.3. The micro-cosmos
- The domain of the person in their everyday collective existence.
  - Influenced by the macro-cosmos and the meso-cosmos.
- Collective existence amongst Africans is typified by ubuntu or batho.
  - 'a person is only a person because of other people'
  - Is a code of ethics which governs people's interactions with others.
  - Holdstock – "concept refers to that which ultimately distinguishes us from animals."
- Ubuntu is not a theoretical construction, it manifests itself through the interaction of people and through the good things people unthinkingly do for each other and their community.
- People with ubuntu don't take advantage of others but use their strength in a compassionate and gentle way to care for and help others (especially the weak, children and elders).
- Holdstock:
  - Links ubuntu with Rogerian theory:
    - $\rightarrow$ Rogers emphasises empathy, positive regard & congruence as essential elements for sound human relationships and necessary conditions for psychotherapy.
- The difference in ethos and values between Westerners and Africans that creates differences in behavioural modalities can be seen in the domain of collective existence, particularly in relationships between individual & community:
  - **Differences between European and African ethos with regard to individual & community:**

European ethos	African ethos
1. Rests on the principle of individual survival. Based on the survival of the fittest. Based on divine commandment of Judaeo-Christian origin to control & rule nature.	**1.** Rests on survival of the community. Based on union with nature.
2. Principles have given rise to such values as: • Competition • Individual rights • Autonomy • Individuality • Uniqueness • Responsibility for oneself • Individual differences.	**2.** Principles give rise to values that centre around: • Co-operation • Interdependence • Collective responsibility
In personality theories, these principles are expressed as concepts such as *ego, I-identity, self concept, self-realisation, and self-actualisation*.	Individuality, uniqueness and differences are replaced by 'communality', 'group-orientation' and 'agreement'.

Western view		African view
Individuality Uniqueness Differences	**Psychobehavioural modalities**	Groupness Sameness Commonality
Competition Individual rights Separateness & Independence	**Values and customs**	Co-operation Collective responsibility Co-operation & interdependence
Survival of the fittest Control over nature	**Ethos**	Survival of the tribe One with nature

- The personhood and identity of the traditional African is entirely embedded in their collective existence.
- Western injunction to actualise the self does not play the same role in daily life of traditional Africans.
    - This poses problems for Personologists as:
        - There is no role for the individual in the personality structure
        - The dynamics of the personality have to be attributed to activities of the ancestral spirits & other magical powers outside the individual personality.
- Individuality is a reflection of the individual personality & is not foregone through collective domination of the community.
    - Traditional Africans use individual names unique to the individual and not collective family names as the Westerners do.
- The Western concept of the personality & the Western explanation of behaviour with its focus on individual function are not suitable for understanding & explaining the behaviour of the traditional African.
    - African behaviour and functioning could be explained from an ecosystemic point of view:
        - Accent on the individual as a system comprising subsystems, which in turn form part of larger supra-systems.

4. Cognitive functioning and the concept of time

- In contrast to Westerners, cognitive functioning of Africans is described as **intuitive rationality** – they rely more on *intuition* and *emotion* than on pure *rationality.*
- The distinction between African and Western cognitive functioning does not mean that one is better than the other.
- African's rational functioning is closely interwoven with their collective way of life & can be typified as "the reason of the touch, the reasoning embrace, the sympathetic reason... European (Western) reasoning is analytical and discursive."
- Europe has given world civilisation of analytical reasoning, Africans contributed civilisation of intuitive reasoning.
- Western view of person is anchored in Descartes' maxim '*I think therefore I am*', and this view of human consciousness is responsible for the foothold gained by the **'cognitised view' of the person** in Western thinking.
- The Western definition of cognitive functioning is 'rationality' in which there is no room for intuitive thinking.

- **PASCAL** – "besides the logic of reason there should be place for the logic of the heart.
  - His view of 'logic of the heart' (*sentiment)* is closer to African cognitive functioning than to the Western 'logic of reason' (*raisonnement).*
- African view of cognitive functioning is opposed to the Western view and the difference between the two impacts & reflects different approaches and attitudes to life, humanity, work and business.
  - It also affects interaction with one another and the difficulty they have in understanding one another's motivations and behaviour.

CONCEPTS OF TIME:
- **African** conception of time:
  - Time is a **two-dimensional phenomenon.**
  - Time has a long history, a present and virtually no future.
- The future has no meaning for Africans as it has not yet been lived.
  - → The future has not been experienced, it does not make sense, ∴ cannot constitute part of time & people don't know how to think about it. ***(Except natural phenomenon).***
- The present and past derive meaning from people's unique experiences or from the things already lived & experienced by previous generations.
- Amongst traditional Africans, a distinction can be drawn between **actual time** and **potential time.**
  - *Actual time:* Events that are currently happening or have already happened.
  - *Potential time:* Something that will happen in the immediate future/ Something that will happen in the natural rhythm of phenomena.
  - *No-time:* Events that have not yet taken place and are considered to be outside of time.
- Time is not a mathematical construct, but is associated with the natural rhythm of the universe.
  - → Mathematical units imposed upon human activities in order to direct and determine these activities is, for Africans, at odds with the universe's natural rhythm.
  - → It is more important for Africans to **'be in time than on time'.**
- Time is something that has to be created and produced – they are not enslaved by time because they can create time to suit themselves.
- African concept of time can be fit partially into Freudian, Jungian or Skinnerian frames of reference due to the references made to people's past. However, the African view o time cannot accommodate the notion of *future.*
- The African view of time holds implications for how people plan their daily lives in a modern Western system that is geared towards future planning.
- **Western** conception of time:
  - Time has an infinite past, a present and an infinite future.
- Time is a commodity that can be bought and sold – '*Time is money'.*

5. Optimal development and mental health
- Due to their **connectedness with their physical and spiritual environments** and the **balanced use of the left and right hemispheres of the brain,** Africans are better equipped to reach and sustain optimal development & psychological health than Westerners

Western	African

· Westerners' functioning is dominated by the left hemisphere of the brain – attempting to investigate, analyse and take things apart in order to understand and explain them logically.
  – This functioning is subject to imbalance in functioning of both hemispheres.
	· The holistic view of the person and worldview gives rise to balanced use of both hemispheres.
	  – Instead of one-sided dominance, the tendency of the African mind is to bring things together: to see, experience and express parts of things identified by left

- Imbalance causes stress & tension & induces Westerners to seek help in pharmaceutical and relaxation aids to relieve tension.
- Westerner's stress and tension can be ascribed to the accenting of individuality.
  - In practice, individuality constantly refers individuals back to themselves & places them in predominantly competitive relationships with others, in which they measure themselves against others.

hemisphere as whole, complete entities.
  - The right hemisphere is not repressed in the African mind & therefore is allowed to freely interact with the left, infusing it with creative imperatives.
- African's **collective existence** promotes optimal development and functioning.
- Selflessness of Africans offers the essential security that counteracts anxiety and tension.
- The role of **music, dancing** and **rhythm** in their daily lives is a form of communication and a way to achieve emotional equilibrium.
  - Music in African culture features in all emotional states. *(Music and rhythm are not luxuries but part and parcel of their communication).*
  - Music becomes the expression of real feelings in the course of which passive listening is not possible; active participation through dancing/singing becomes a means of expression.
  - Music, dance and rhythm are mechanisms which form an intricate part in attainment of a fulfilled life, and play an important role as psychological healing devices.
- The unconscious in the Freudian sense of repressed contents of consciousness and defence mechanisms is not present amongst Africans as amongst Westerners.
  - Africans give more direct and immediate expression to all content of the consciousness through cultural activities such as dance, song, oratory, painting and sculpture.

6. Views on psychopathology

- The African view of psychopathology cannot be separated from their holistic ontology and the role of ancestors, malignant spirits & sorcerers play in determining their behaviour.
- *Holistic ontology* – physical, mental, societal health refers to a ***state of wholeness and integration*** and ill health refers to a ***state of fragmentation and disintegration.***
  - Illness is not split into either physical or mental suffering, the body and mind are a unit and the mind is never experienced as separate from the body.
- Mental illness is not devoid of physical symptoms, and all mental disorders are seen as psychosomatic disorders by Africans.

- - - Psychosomatic interrelation is based on the concept of a *primary* and *invisible unity* between body and mind, rather than on the Western idea of *reciprocity* between mind and matter.
        - → It is not uncommon for Africans to describe mental illnesses or troubles in purely physical terms.
  - The holistic premise also implies that Africans believe that the body is considered to be either well or ill, not just some part of the body.
  - ***Difference between Western and African definitions of stress:***
    - ***Western:*** Stress is work and object related.
    - ***African:*** Stress is due to strained relationships with either one's spiritual agents or within one's community. It could also be due to a feeling of guilt arising from a breach of communal norms.
  - Linked to the mesocosmic order, African psychopathology cannot be separated from the role ancestors, malignant spirits and sorcerers play in their lives.
  - Pathological behaviour & illness is seen as the result of disharmony between a person and their ancestors/ caused by evil spells or deeds of the malignant spirits or sorcerers.
  - Africans believe that various ills, misfortunes, sickness and injuries are the result of witchcraft, ancestral anger or *thwawa.*
    - ***THWAWA –*** the process of becoming a traditional healer.
      - → If a person is called to become a traditional healer and they do not carry out the order received from an ancestor, the responsible ancestor punishes the person via emotional disturbance, epilepsy, injuries or ailments.
      - → If the patient goes through the rites of *thwawa* carrying out the directives of the ancestor who was a *sangoma or nyanga,* he or she will fully recover.
  - Pathology in African culture is not ascribed to the question of **what** caused the illness, but **who** brought it about.
  - In the Western context, the patient presents the doctor with a reason for their consultation (in the form of physical symptoms, but in African culture, it is the healer who tells the patient why they have come to see the healer.
    - Traditional healers don't start their diagnosis of the illness with a physical examination, their primary concern is with the patient's background in socio-cultural and in divine/supernatural relations.
      - → Most forms of traditional healing involve triangulated mediation between the healer, patient and the ancestors.

Significance of ANCESTORS in lives of Africans:
- Ancestors – they represent archetypes from the collective unconscious and pathology occurs when an imbalance exists between the conscious and the unconscious.
- As archetypal projections, ancestors communicate in altered states of consciousness such as:
  - Dreams
  - Hypnogogic perceptions
  - Trance conditions
  - Hallucinations
- Ancestors are not experienced as abstract projections but as real persons who manifest themselves during waking in the form of visions and voices, or through a medium or diviner and through sleep through dreams.
- Misery in this life is invariably considered to be due to ceremonial negligence in honour of the ancestors.
  - When proper respect has been paid to the memory of the deceased by the performance of appropriate ceremonies, ancestors are experienced as benevolent guardians, capable of interceding on behalf of the living.
- Ancestors are seen as benevolent creatures that preserve the honour, traditions and good name of the tribe, and they play a vital role in the maintenance of mental health.
- Ancestors provide protection against evil and destructive forces.
  - If the demands of the ancestors are ignored, they send disorder and misfortune as punishment or warnings to amend one's behaviour.

- *Dreams* play an important role in the lives of African people but are not interpreted on a symbolic level as with Westerners.
  - To Africans, dreams are more like reflections of concrete reality.
    - → Messages received from an ancestor through a dream are taken at face value and acted upon concretely in waking life.
- Due to the fact that ancestors play an important role in the causation of mental illness, they play an important role in the healing and therapeutic process.
  - Patients cannot recover unless they listen to the voices of the ancestors.
    - → As breaking the connections with ancestors brought about the illness, recovery is only possible if ancestors are 'brought home' again and wholeness is attained by re-establishing the broken communication.

Significance of MALIGNANT SPIRITS and SORCERERS in African's lives:
- **Malignant spirits and sorcerers** are also seen as the cause of mental disorder amongst traditional African people.
- Spirits and sorcerers employ supernatural creatures to inflict misfortune but also to cause mental disorder.
- Accusations of malignant spirits and sorcery appear mostly in situations where the harmony of the group is threatened and a scapegoat is required to protect the well-being of the group.
- Western oriented psychologists caused a lot of paint o African patients by way of **misdiagnosis** and applying **'anti-therapeutic'** techniques by ignoring the cultural context and belief systems of African people.
  - If patients believed they were being bewitched or that ancestors had spoken to them, psychologists diagnosed paranoid delusions and auditory hallucinations.

7. Psychotherapy
- Therapeutic process in African context differs from Western Psychotherapy with regard to the importance of verbal communication & the role of the individual patient in the therapeutic process.
- **WESTERN**-style psychotherapy is typified as a 'talking cure' – **verbal communication** is most important feature of the process & is based on high priority attributed to verbal language as a means of communication.
  - Words do not have the same value in African culture as music and rhythm are more important ways of communication.
- Western people think and talk about, African people act and represent in dancing, singing, rituals and ceremonies.
  - Psychotherapy (mainly based on verbal communication) does not have the same effect in African context – ritual dancing may have a greater therapeutic value amongst Africans as it is known to create neurophysiological changes in the organism which could impact as a healing procedure.
- Within the African context, dream interpretation and analysis are not seen as a matter of verbalisation as in the Western context.
  - **AFRICAN:** Dreams are told bit by bit & accompanied by singing and dancing to the beat of a special drum to invoke help of the ancestors. (done in a group.)
- Western context – psychotherapy is predominantly focused on individual, and group and family therapy play a secondary role.
- African context – therapy/**healing is grounded in collective existence** of microcosmic order and the individual is seen as an integral part of the community.
  - Treatment for any mental dysfunction is not individual and requires co-operation of family and sometimes the active treatment of others in family.
  - African therapeutic systems endorse "collective social responses to afflictions" rather than individualistic diagnosis and treatment.
    - → Due to the ethos of collectivism, an African patent can send a family member as a substitute for a therapy session, whereas Westerners would see this as a form of resistance.
- The two healing worlds:
  - African – Spiritually oriented

    → Traditional healing involves throwing of the bones or an ecstatic trance.
      • *Similar to psychotherapy, traditional healers make use of rituals and objects steeped in symbolism which generally help to evoke the clients sense of trust and belief.*
   ▪ Western – Medically oriented
     → Rituals involve planned weekly sessions of therapeutic conversation.
 − Bothe Western therapists and African shamans are socially sanctioned healers of their cultures.
 − Both use rituals to help relieve clients of their stress.