

*Celebrating*

**BLACK**

**HISTORY**

**MONTH**

The field of Psychology is a difficult one. From understanding our behaviors, the brain, how children think, to collecting data and testing hypotheses, or calculating P-values or the standard deviations within data, the overall field of psychology can be a frustrating subject to tackle at times. At one point, Psychology was a white-dominated field, including men and women.

## Setting a precedent

The contributions of Black psychologists to the field of Psychology set precedent for the many future African-American Psychologists, neuroscientists, and researchers to make a name for themselves.

## Dr. Cecil Sumner : the "Father of Black Psychology"

The first Black psychologist, according to many sources, was Francis Cecil Sumner, nicknamed the "Father of Black Psychology" for his studies on racial bias, inequality, racism, and his role as a professor and dean of Psychology at Howard University. He also worked in Psychoanalysis, where he argued that we can understand individual sex differences along psychoanalytic lines. At the time, it was unheard of for a Black individual to engage in this line of research.

Sumner cared deeply about the education of Black folks as well; through his dissertation, he discussed deeply about how there should be fewer black institutions and colleges, but it wasn't because he didn't believe they shouldn't be educated, but because he believed that the Black institutions deserved more funding and resources. I firmly believe that his words may have been misconstrued in order to fit the narrative that Black colleges weren't intellectually equipped to teach their students. There's also a sub-point to be made that he likely believed that if he said that there should be fewer Black institutions and that African-Americans were culturally delayed, therefore needing segregation since they couldn't keep up with the white population, it would then lead to immediate funding and resources for Black students.

Francis Cecil Sumner is not mentioned often in many Psychological Journals or books, acknowledging his presence as the first Black psychologist and the "Father of Black Psychology" recognizes him as the focal point of Black psychology and the segue into the studies of racial bias, inequality, and racism.

## **Crediting Black women in Psychology**

Black women are oftentimes left out of conversations surrounding education and the advances they've made in various fields. If you were to read any Psychology textbook for class, you'll likely not find any Black women being credited for their studies.

### **Dr. Marie Maynard Daly : Ph.D.**

Marie Maynard Daly was a biochemist from New York. She is known as being the first Black woman to receive a PhD. in chemistry from Columbia University, graduating cum laude in 1942 with a BA in chemistry as well.

Daly also produced a dissertation titled the "Study of the Products Formed by the Action of Pancreatic Analyse on Corn starch." Marie M. Daly worked on the composition and metabolism of the components of the cell nucleus. Lastly, Daly also established a scholarship fund at Queens College for African Americans in commemoration of her father, who inspired her to continue working in the field of chemistry as he had to drop out of college due to economic circumstances.

## **Challenging the norm**

The racism behind IQ tests, SATs, and literacy tests is not subtle, whatsoever. There are many factors at play when it comes to these tests and Herman George Canady sought to research it.

### **Dr. George Herman Canady : Breaking down bias**

Canady was an African American social psychologist and was the first to study how the race of the test proctor may create bias in IQ testing through his master's thesis. He explicitly stated how the race of the test proctor (white) negatively affects Black children's IQ scores. The research showed that rapport between the examiner and the elementary school children showed an obvious impact.

Canady produced and wrote a publication titled the "Psychology in Negro Institutions", to highlight the issues within predominantly Black colleges and institutions. At the time, it was the only known publication to highlight and discuss the issues black colleges face; it was published 1938.

## **Sparking conversation**

In a white/male dominated field, Black psychologists and sociologists were and still are being excluded from conversations centering the subject.

## **The future of Psychology**

As books become scarce and information becomes buried, it can be harder for the Black youth and future psychologists to seek out the information. In the majority of Psychology textbooks, the achievements and contributions they've all made are not seen nor are they included within the textbooks or credits.

## **Moving forward**

There are still many more Black psychologists, sociologists, and neuroscientists' achievements whom we know little about, and it is up to us to find out about it.