

A PSYCHOMETRIC EXAMINATION OF THE AFRICENTRIC SCALE

Challenges in Measuring Afrocentric Values

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The articulation of an African-centered paradigm has increasingly become an important component of the social science research published on people of African descent. Although several instruments exist that operationalize different aspects of an Afrocentric philosophical paradigm, only one instrument, the Africentric Scale, explicitly operationalizes Afrocentric values using what is arguably the most commercial and accessible understanding of Afrocentricity, the seven principles of the Nguzu Saba. This study examined the psychometric properties of the Africentric Scale with a sample of 167 African American students. Results of a factor analysis revealed that the Africentric Scale is best conceptualized as measuring a general dimension of Afrocentrism rather than seven separate principles. The findings suggest that with continued research, the Africentric Scale will be an increasingly viable option among the handful of measures designed to assess some aspect of Afrocentric values, behavioral norms, and an African worldview.

Keywords: *African-centered psychology; Afrocentric cultural values*

For at least three decades, Black psychologists have devoted their lives to undo the racist and maleficent theory and practice of mainstream or European-centered psychological practice. Nobles (1986) succinctly surveys the work and conclusions of prominent European-centered psychologists and concludes that the European-centered approach to inquiry as well as the assumptions made con-

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cerning people of African descent are inappropriate in understanding people of African descent. To understand the complicated and intricate psychology of African people, theory must be created, research must be conducted, and practice must be applied that are developed out of the experience and worldview of African people throughout the diaspora (Nobles, 1986; White, 1970). To that extent, several researchers (e.g., Baldwin & Bell, 1985; Grills & Longshore, 1996; Montgomery, Fine, & James-Myers, 1990) have heeded the appeals of earlier Black psychologists by developing measures that to varying degrees tap into African values and an African worldview. The current study examined the latest measure of African-centered values created by Grills and Longshore (1996).

African-centered psychologists have contested the universality of Eurocentric theory and practice for working with persons of African descent (Akbar, 1996; Hilliard, 1995; Nobles, 1986), and they acknowledge the diversity of the cultural experience and its effect on psychological functioning. According to Akbar (1996), knowledge of self is the ultimate goal of the human experience. Thus, for all psychologists generally and Black psychologists specifically, developing ways of assessing identification with African-centered values has wide implications for working with people of African descent. The argument against universalism of the human experience and the understanding of cultural identity will benefit from the development of multiple Afrocentric or African-centered measures. The ability to assess ways in which African people experience the world can inform more appropriate theory and practice for this population. A paradigm shift from European to African-centered thought can positively affect the delivery of psychological services to people of African descent. Specifically, a decrease in the misdiagnosis, overdiagnosis, and underdiagnosis of psychological disorders will improve the quality of mental health services for clients of African descent (Parham, 2002). Additionally, an understanding of African people consistent with African-centered values and an African worldview can correctly inform the conceptualizations of all African descended people. Thus, cultural misrepresentation and identity confusion may be ameliorated.

Studies of racial and cultural identity have been a critical endeavor in Black- and African-centered psychology. In a recent content analysis of the *Journal of Black Psychology*, racial identity studies were found to be among the most published studies over the past 20 years (Cokley, Caldwell, Miller, & Muhammad, 2001). Several theories and models of racial identity development have been generated (Cross, 1971, 1991; Helms, 1986; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Cross's and Helms's racial identity models focus on the developmental progression of reactions of Blacks to White oppression, while the Sellers et al. model focuses on the ideological dimensions, public perceptions, private feelings, and importance of being Black. Other theories that are more grounded in Afrocentrism examine notions of African self-consciousness (Baldwin & Bell, 1985), the Black self-concept (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Nobles, 1995), and the extended self-concept (Nobles, 1991). These latter theories indicate a more concentrated focus in the area of an African identity rooted in an African worldview. The Grills and Longshore (1996) measure of Afrocentrism furthers the work in this area by being the first measure of Afrocentric values explicitly grounded in the Afrocentric principles of the Nguzu Saba. Thus, this measure links identity to the adherence to Afrocentric cultural values, traditions, and/or behavioral norms. For Grills and Longshore, neither phenotypic characteristics, which determine racial categorizations, nor reactions to the dominant culture are the informants of African identity. Instead, adherence to African cultural practices and belief systems are hypothesized to determine the identity of people of African descent.

Although developed with a narrow focus, the Grills and Longshore (1996) measure has wide implications for the field of Black/African psychology. They identified two primary needs for a measure of Afrocentrism for social services with a large substance-abusing clientele: client-treatment match and hypothesis testing. Making the most appropriate matches between the client and program or therapist was a major focus of the development of this measure. Grills and Longshore acknowledged the diversity within people of African descent with respect to their identification with

African cultural origins. Given the varying degrees to which an individual will identify with their cultural heritage, assessment of this level of identification can assist practitioners in determining the suitability of African-centered programs and therapeutic approaches when working with clients of African descent. Thus, consistency and continuity in client need and client care were a major benefit of this measure in the setting for which it was initially developed. The ability to generalize these benefits to other community, mental health, social service, and counseling environments was also mentioned.

The development of this measure has the potential to benefit the field of African-centered psychology specifically and the discipline of Black studies generally. In terms of psychological treatment, Grills and Longshore (1996) discussed the use of the measure as an indicator for progress for clients in treatment. Earlier theories suggest that a positive relationship exists between healthy mental functioning and an African-centered identity; thus, identification as African-centered may be associated with one's progressive mental health functioning (Akbar, 1981; Azibo, 1996; Kambon, 1996; Nobles, 1986; Parham, 2002). The Grills and Longshore (1996) measure potentially affords researchers the opportunity to explore and test this hypothesis. Therefore, this measure might provide a direct benefit to validating Afrocentric theory and hypothesis testing, as well as testing the mediating effects of an African-centered identity on mental health and other psychological or behavioral indices.

Williams (1975) identified the purpose of Afrocentric psychology as setting forth definitions, conceptual models, tests, and theories of the normative behaviors that are informed by the experiences of people of African descent. The fundamental absence of this guiding principle in the work with people of African descent has meant an experience of oppression, misrepresentation, and psychological abuse of African descendents. The self-report measure of Afrocentrism, developed from the Nguzu Saba, concerns itself specifically with a conceptualization of African descended people consistent with African principles for healthy daily living. Its primary focus is conceptualizing African descended people

from their own perspective. Thus, it is a seminal step in the journey toward self-determination within the African-centered community.

Despite the obvious benefits to the field of African-centered psychology and the discipline of Black studies, the Africentric Scale warrants a much closer and critical examination. There are several methodological concerns surrounding the development of the scale. Grills and Longshore (1996) gathered data with the measure in four studies; however, as acknowledged by Grills and Longshore, the samples were small and nonrepresentative. The sample size of the first study included 29 African Americans in a substance-use recovery group, and the sample size of the second study included 57 African Americans and 21 White Americans in a methadone maintenance clinic. The sample size of the third study included 25 African Americans attending an African American history and culture study group, and the sample size of the fourth study included 78 African American and 93 White American arrestees. A factor analysis, which is usually used in the early stages of scale development (DeVellis, 1991), was used in the fourth study. Although the details were not entirely clear, it appears that the factor analysis was used only on the data collected from the 78 African Americans. As Grills and Longshore (1996) correctly note, at least 10 cases per item have been strongly recommended in factor analysis (Tabachnik & Fidell, 1989). Contrary to Grills and Longshore's (1996) statement that "as few as 50 cases may be adequate, so long as there are notably more cases than factors" (p. 100), a minimal sample size of 150 would have been more appropriate for the study. Nonrepresentative sampling was also an issue for the studies. Although the argument can be made that in most published psychological research samples are nonrepresentative (i.e. college students taking undergraduate psychology classes), the nonrepresentativeness of Grills and Longshore's samples was particularly pronounced. Participants consisted of three distinctive groups: (a) members of an African American history and culture study group, (b) substance abuse clients in treatment and in recovery, and (c) arrestees in Los Angeles city and county jails. Although Grills and Longshore should be commended for recruiting such a diverse, albeit small, African American sample, it

still remains that these participants were not representative of most African Americans. Further analysis of the measure should include respondents more representative of the population studied.

There were additional problems with the factor analysis. Grills and Longshore (1996) reported that four factors had eigenvalues that exceeded 1 (which typically suggests that there are approximately four factors). However, they go on to report that a one-factor solution may be appropriate, but this is based on very questionable statistical logic (i.e., the split between the first two factors was approximately three times larger than the split between the second and third factors). They then state that the number of eigenvalues greater than 1 suggested a possible multifactor solution. It is not clear what logic guided their choice of the number of factors. They ended up identifying and labeling three factors (general dimension of Africentrism, individualism-communalism dimension, and cooperative economics dimension) but indicated that the Cronbach's alpha for the cooperative economics dimension was low. The authors then send mixed messages about the number of factors when they say, "We believe that a one-factor solution is the most meaningful way to account for item relationships" (p. 99) and then state, "a two-factor solution is, in our view, entirely compatible with a favorable conclusion regarding the construct validity of this measure" (p. 100).

Although apparent shortcomings in sampling and statistical analysis compromise the interpretation and validity of their findings, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic. By including non-African-descended participants as well as African-descended participants, Grills and Longshore (1996) were able to confirm that the African American participants would score higher on the Africentric Scale than White participants, thus verifying their hypothesis. Furthermore, they reported that African Americans in a community group devoted to the study of African American history and culture scored higher on the Africentric Scale than African Americans who were not in the community group.

Given the potential of the Africentric Scale to significantly contribute to the African-centered psychological literature and given the increasing popularity and importance of Kwanzaa in applying

Afrocentric values in the lives of African Americans, it is extremely important to devote more attention to this scale to ensure that it produces reliable and valid scores of Afrocentricity. The current study examined the psychometric properties of the self-report measure of Africentrism by Grills and Longshore (1996). We believe that this study will build on the earlier study by using a larger sample of African American college students. The collective work employed to explore the psychometric rigor of this measure continues the efforts to develop quality psychological instrumentation designed specifically to inform work with people of African descent.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 167 African American undergraduate college students attending one public historically Black university (HBU; $n = 84$) located in the South and one public predominantly White university (PWU; $n = 83$) located in the Midwest. The participants ranged in age from 17 to 40, with a mean age of 21.38. Of the participants, 52 (31.1%) were men and 115 (68.9%) were women.

INSTRUMENTS

Africentric values were measured using the Africentric Scale (Grills & Longshore, 1996). The Africentric Scale is a 15-item scale developed to measure Afrocentric values and behaviors as articulated through the seven principles of the Nguzu Saba. The Africentric Scale uses a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*. Reliability has ranged from .62 to .82 (Grills & Longshore), while validity coefficients ranging from .53 to .59 have been found with the subscales of the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (Grills & Longshore). Items that do not reflect Afrocentric values (e.g., "The success I have had is mainly because of me, not anyone else"; "I have very little faith in Black/African American people) were reverse-scored. Higher

scores on the Africentric Scale reflect a stronger adherence to Afrocentric values.

A demographic sheet was also included. Demographic information included sex, age, and racial composition of school.

PROCEDURE

Participants at the HBU were recruited through several undergraduate psychology classes taught by one professor. Participants were given extra credit for participating in the study. Participants at the PWU were recruited through Black American studies (BAS) classes and a psychology of race and racism class. Consent forms were attached to the surveys. Participation in the study indicated consent by the participants. Students in the BAS classes were given either \$3 or candy, while students in the psychology class were given extra credit for participating in the study.

DESCRIPTION OF ANALYSES

As mentioned earlier, to conduct a meaningful factor analysis, there should be a minimum of 10 participants per item. Therefore, a minimum of 150 subjects was needed for this study. The current sample included 167 participants. The early stages of development of the scale, combined with the inadequate sample size used in the original study and the questionable results from the original study, led us to the conclusion that there was not enough information to determine (a) what the factor structure really would be and (b) if the underlying factors would or would not be correlated. Therefore, to estimate the number of factors, we conducted two principal components analyses with both varimax and oblique rotations. A varimax rotation is used when the underlying factors are not correlated, whereas an oblique rotation is used when the underlying factors are correlated. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was also examined. The KMO value indicates whether a particular data set is appropriate to be factor analyzed based on various properties of the data (Norusis, 1993). Values of .70 or higher suggest that it is appropriate to proceed with an interpretation of the factor analysis,

whereas values below .70 suggest that the data is less than optimal for factor analysis interpretation. Finally, a .40 cutoff for inclusion of an item was used to interpret the meaning of a factor.

RESULTS

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was .659. We proceeded with interpretation of the factor analysis, while keeping in mind that the data were less than optimal for interpretation. An examination of the component correlation matrix from the principal components analysis with oblimin rotation indicated that the factors were not meaningfully correlated; therefore, we interpreted the results using varimax rotation. The principal components analysis resulted in six eigenvalues greater than 1. Cattell's scree test suggested that there were between five and seven components/factors. Examination of the five-, six-, and seven-factor solutions revealed that the six-factor solution was most parsimonious. The six-factor solution accounted for approximately 62% of the variance. However, it should be pointed out that each solution contained several meaningless components/factors, as indicated by lack of interpretability and extremely low reliability coefficients. The first factor contained four items and accounted for approximately 21% of the variance and had a Cronbach's alpha of .54. The four items were the following: "I have very little faith in Black/African American people"; "I have more confidence in White professionals, like doctors and teachers, than in Black/African American professionals"; "I am doing a lot to improve my neighborhood"; "Blacks/African Americans need to stop worrying so much about 'the community' and take care of their own needs." The first factor was named Anti-Black Individualism. The second factor contained three items, accounted for 10.24% of the variance, and had a Cronbach's alpha of .61. The three items were the following: "I must do all I can to restore Blacks/African Americans to their position of respect in the world"; "It hurts me when I see another Black/African American person discriminated against"; "It is important that Blacks/African Americans decide for themselves what to be called and what their

needs are.” The second factor was labeled Collectivism. The third factor contained two items, accounted for 9.83% of the variance, and had a Cronbach’s alpha of .53. The two items were the following: “Blacks/African Americans should make their community better than it was when they found it”; “Blacks/African Americans should build and maintain their own communities.” The third factor was labeled Community Orientation. The fourth factor contained two items, accounted for 7.9% of the variance, but had a Cronbach’s alpha of $-.63$. Thus, it was uninterpretable. The fifth factor contained three items, accounted for 6.8% of the variance, but had a Cronbach’s alpha of .49. It was also uninterpretable. The sixth factor contained three items, accounted for 6.77% of the variance, yet had a Cronbach’s alpha of .38. These items were also not cohesive and did not measure a meaningful idea. Thus, this factor was deemed uninterpretable. The Cronbach’s alpha for the entire scale was .73. Table 1 contains the rotated component matrix/item loadings and communalities from the factor analysis.

Because approximately half of the participants came from an HBU and half came from a PWU, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in Africentric values based on racial composition of the school. Results indicated that there were no significant school differences in Afrocentric values, $F(3, 151) = .094, p > .05$. Another ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were significant sex differences in Afrocentric values. Results also indicated that there were no sex differences in Afrocentric values, $F(1, 154) = 3.11, p > .05$. Table 2 contains the means and standard deviations.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to examine the psychometric properties of the Africentric Scale. Although the Africentric Scale has been in existence since 1996, there has been only one published study using it. The small and nonrepresentative sample used to validate the scale combined with the questionable statistical

TABLE 1
Summary of Principal Component Analysis (N = 167)

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
Anti-Black							
	5. I have very little faith in Black/African American people.	.75	-.03	.10	.06	.06	.09
	10. I have more confidence in White professionals, like doctors and teachers, than in Black/African American professionals.	.74	.19	-.08	-.15	.10	.05
	8. I am doing a lot to improve my neighborhood.	.55	-.04	.35	.40	-.07	-.03
	7. Blacks/African Americans need to stop worrying so much about "the community" and take care of their own needs.	.44	.15	.15	.38	.37	-.15
Collectivism							
	15. It is important that Blacks/African Americans decide for themselves what to be called and what their needs are.	-.01	.83	.15	.10	.10	-.15
	14. It hurts me when I see another Black/African American person discriminated against.	.21	.71	-.04	-.03	-.04	.18
	12. I must do all I can to restore Blacks/African Americans to their position of respect in the world.	.05	.62	.10	.09	.17	.37
Community Orientation							
	11. Blacks/African Americans should build and maintain their own communities.	-.05	.03	.80	-.04	.13	.10
	1. Blacks/African Americans should make their community better than it was when they found it.	-.02	.12	.76	.06	-.03	.11
Uninterpretable							
	9. The success I have had is mainly because of me, not anyone else.	-.02	.06	.01	.82	.15	.04
	6. I owe something to Blacks/African Americans who suffered before me.	.04	.20	-.10	.52	-.03	.54
Uninterpretable							
	2. The problems of other Blacks/African Americans are their problems, not mine.	-.01	.13	-.04	.11	.82	-.01
	4. I am more concerned with reaching my own goals than with working for the Black/African American community.	.27	-.13	.28	.35	.50	.09
	3. The unity of the African race is very important to me.	.23	.15	.12	-.23	.50	.51
Uninterpretable							
	13. I make it a point to shop at Black/African American businesses and use Black/African American owned services.	.02	.06	.22	.05	-.01	.75
	6. I owe something to Blacks/African Americans who suffered before me.	.04	.20	-.10	.52	-.03	.54
	3. The unity of the African race is very important to me.	.23	.15	.12	-.23	.50	.51

TABLE 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Afrocentric Values

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>HBU</i>		<i>PWU</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Afrocentric Values	3.04	.33	3.13	.33	3.12	.36	3.09	.30

NOTE: HBU = historically Black university; PWU = predominantly White university.

analysis has made it necessary for a follow-up study to be conducted to address some of the limitations of the initial study.

The results of the study indicated that there is reason for both concern and optimism about the validity and reliability of scores from the Afrocentric Scale. In terms of validity, the first red flag was generated by the marginal KMO value of .66. This value suggested that there was possibly something about the way respondents answered the items that would make it very difficult to interpret the results of a factor analysis. This, indeed, turned out to be the case, as three of the six factors were uninterpretable. The remaining three factors could be interpreted, although some seemed to contain multiple ideas. For example, the content of the items that made up the second interpretable factor reflected at least three of the principles of the Nguzu Saba. The item "I must do all I can to restore Blacks/African Americans to their position of respect in the world" seems to reflect the idea of *Nia*, or purpose, as reflected by the following definition:

To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

The item "It hurts me when I see another Black/African American person discriminated against" seems to reflect the idea of *Ujima*, or collective work and responsibility, as reflected by the following definition:

To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together.

The item “It is important that Blacks/African Americans decide for themselves what to be called and what their needs are” seems to reflect the idea of Kujichagulia, or self-determination, as reflected by the following definition:

To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created for, and spoken for by others.

According to Grills and Longshore (1996), the items were created to tap into each of the seven principles of the Nguzu Saba. Here, we see that three items representing three different principles all loaded on the same factor, which made naming the factor somewhat difficult.

The content of the items that made up the third interpretable factor reflected at least two of the principles of the Nguzu Saba. The item “Blacks/African Americans should make their community better than it was when they found it” seems to reflect the idea of Kuumba, or creativity, as reflected by the following definition:

To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

The item “Blacks/African Americans should build and maintain their own communities” seems to reflect the aforementioned principle of Ujima. This item also seems to reflect the principle of Nia.

In terms of reliability, the overall Cronbach’s alpha of .72 was acceptable. This internal consistency indicates that overall, the items constituting the Africentric Scale were hanging together in a meaningful way. Put another way, the participants who completed the scale were fairly consistent in answering items that the creators of the scale thought measured a general construct of Afrocentrism. At the subscale level, three of the six factors yielded modest Cronbach’s alphas and were otherwise interpretable. Taken together, these findings suggest that conceptually, it may be more meaningful to think of the Africentric Scale as measuring a global,

unitary construct rather than measuring orthogonal dimensions of Afrocentrism that yield separate scores.

Some of these psychometric problems most likely could have been avoided by being more meticulous in constructing and validating the scale. However, to Grills' and Longshore's credit, we believe that they were operating from a philosophical base that does not easily lend itself to the empirical verification of traditional psychometric research. On closer examination of and reflection on the seven principles of the Nguzu Saba, it can be seen that there is a great deal of overlap between them. For example, the principle of *Nia* stresses the building and developing of our community, while *Ujima* emphasizes the building and maintenance of our community. In addition, *Kuumba* emphasizes that we leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it, which also requires that we build, develop, and maintain it. When Maulana Karenga identified these seven principles and created Kwanzaa, it is extremely doubtful that he thought about the psychometric repercussions of having substantial overlap among the principles.

The results also indicated that attending an HBU versus a PWU did not effect how Afrocentric students were. This suggests that the predominantly White environment does not have the deleterious effect on adherence to Afrocentric values as might be expected. Given that more African American students attend PWUs than HBUs, it is, indeed, encouraging to have empirical evidence that demonstrates this. This is consistent with previous research by Cokley (1999), who found that there was no difference in racial awareness in either environment. Additionally, the lack of significant sex differences indicates that males and females in this sample were equally Afrocentric, which is also consistent with research by Cokley (1999), who found that males and females did not differ in their level of racial awareness.

IMPLICATIONS

Although the overall psychometric properties of this scale are far from ideal, we believe that there is room for cautious optimism. An examination of responses at the item level revealed that in many

cases, the participants strongly endorsed items that reflect a sense of collectivism and community. For example, the mean for the item “It hurts me when I see another Black/African American person discriminated against” was 3.48, (out of total score of 4), while the mean for the item “Blacks/African Americans should make their community better than it was when they found it” was 3.29. Responses to items like these lend support to the belief that the identity of people of African descent is inextricably linked to Afrocentric cultural values and behavioral norms (Baldwin & Bell, 1985; Kambon, 1996; Nobles, 1991). African-centered psychologists, researchers, and scholars of the African diaspora should be encouraged by these findings.

LIMITATIONS

As mentioned earlier, there is an inherent limitation to using college samples, especially in light of the fact that many African Americans do not pursue college. College students are taught, in theory, to be more critical and analytical thinkers. It is possible that the college students in this study think very differently about their African American identity compared to non-college students. Relatedly, some students were located in an HBU environment, whereas other students were located in a PWU environment. Also, some students were in classes that emphasized African American culture (i.e., Black American studies classes), whereas other students were in a class that focused on race and racism, and still other students were in classes that were not explicitly focused on African American culture or race and racism. It is possible that students who were in classes that focused on culture, race, and racism may have had heightened awareness about being African American, which may have influenced the way they responded to the survey.

These limitations notwithstanding, we believe that the results provide support that the Africentric Scale is a viable option among the handful of measures designed to assess some aspect of Afrocentric values, behavioral norms, and an African worldview. We believe that Grills and Longshore were prescient in developing a short, easy-to-administer scale based on Afrocentric principles that

are increasingly finding their way in the holiday celebration and rituals of African Americans. Research with this scale can advance the research agenda and ultimately the praxis of an African-centered psychology.

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