

BLACK PAPER 101

Task Force for Measuring Impact in Africology (Black Studies)

August 7, 2017

The Task Force for Measuring Impact in Africology (MIA) aims to resolve longstanding concerns regarding agency as well as visibility and equity in the treatment of scholarship published in journals committed to the Black Studies/Africology discipline.¹ More specifically, we and many others in the discipline have noted the imbalance and misdirection of conventional, predominantly Eurocentric assessments, such as those of Web of Science/International Association of Scientific, Thomson Reuters/Clarivate Analytics, and Technical and Medical Publishers (STM; each discussed further below), which apply strictly statistical methods to article citations and journal ranking by self-selected area-aggregates (e.g., Social Sciences, Genetics & Molecular Biology, Medicine, etc.) without consideration of disciplinary size, needs, or recognized impact. This approach clearly advantages the numerical majority, and results in what we rightly view as a coup against the intellectual prestige and professional advancement of non-Eurocentric, numerical minority scholars who may in fact be revered and supported by the community of their discipline while ignored or denied by the broader academy. If our goal is realized, then for the first time in the history of the neo-colonial, post-Apartheid, post-Civil Rights experience of African peoples both in Africa and in the Diaspora, we will have achieved the creation of a self-defined and achievable measurement and/or configuration that is applicable to the work of Black Studies scholars and the cultural, educational, and economic needs of the communities served by our scholarship.

We propose the adoption of Afrofactor and Afrifactor scores, together referred to as the A-factors, by each Department of African American Studies, Department of African Studies, Department of Africana Studies, Department of Africology, etc., which will be based on a unique calculation of article citations for journal impact (Afrofactor) and significance or centrality (Afrifactor) from the heart of Black Studies, rather than the margins or tails of Western interests and statistical norms. Methodologically detailed in the pages below, the “A-factors” were designed to (1) give the power of examination to the thinkers and consumers whose expertise defines what Black Studies is in the first place, (2) improve the validity of tenure and promotion decisions by affording greater evaluative influence to Departments adopting the nomenclature and standards of the A-factors, and (3) increase the overall visibility of highly regarded Black Studies research in the global academic marketplace.

¹ Victor Oguejiofor Okafor (2014) offers a compelling map of the evolutions in naming that the discipline has experienced since the first Department of Black Studies established in 1968 in the U.S., to African American and Africana Studies in the decades between 1970 and 1990, to now Africology which was quietly applied with E. Uzong’s *Africology* in 1969. Each evolution, as discussed by Okafor, has reflected the intellectual and practical duality that has existed for continental Africans and Diasporic Africans on the issues of political struggle and cultural stability. Preeminent scholars of the discipline, many of whom were active at the genesis of Black Studies, such as Molefi Kete Asante, Maulana Karenga and Winston Van Horne, have endorsed the name and terms of Africology.

We stand with college and university departments as well as independent research organizations and other programs dedicated to promoting scholarship that systematically inquires “into the life and cultures of peoples of the African world” based on the principles of Black empowerment that “goes back to the time period of the black power movement” of the 20th century (Okafor, 2014). Thus, the A-factors are further designed to be inclusive of the larger knowledge circle that informs Africology from both inside and outside of academia, where the academy has tended to exclude research and other intellectual contributions independent of colleges/universities even when the discipline has been enriched by them. Aptly referred to as “the two Black Studies intellectual camps” by African American Studies librarian and philosophy bibliographer Thomas Weissinger (see Zulu, 2017a, p. 104), we agree that “citation analysis and impact factor studies” can be devised and applied to the Black Studies/Africology discipline in a way that responds affirmatively to the historical and contemporary intellectual directions of our scholars and community.² As a collective discipline of diverse fields of study shaped in part inside of a mired political milieu, ours has been a long and tumultuous journey, though not without recognizable successes, perhaps broadly beginning with the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) and its *Journal of Negro History*, reported to have been “among the first 100 prestigious scholarly journals and the first African American journal to join the JSTOR project” (Hornsby, 1999, p. 296). ASALH began in 1915 by Carter G. Woodson of course, with a purpose to promote, research, preserve, interpret, and disseminate information about Black life, history, and culture at a time when such promotion, research, preservation, etc., was refused to Black scholars by the general American academy, popular presses and organizations. Today, we continue to find ourselves in need of Black enterprise in order to promote and sustain Black Studies/Africology scholarship. The MIA Task Force renders this paper as a clarion call for balanced and reciprocal power that is just and positive in purpose, and only achievable if pursued in self-determined unity and collective action (Karenga, 1999). Most importantly, it is the mark of a well-established academic discipline to authorize its own terms and standards for excellence, which we must do if we wish to secure our positions as the distinctive thinkers, researchers, artists, and teachers of the African presence in the world.

Relevance

The call for an Afrofactor/Afrifactor “as a measure of importance [that would] score the total impact of a journal” in Africology was first issued to the editorial board of *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies (A:JPAS)* by the founding Senior Editor, Dr. Itibari Zulu on November 20, 2014. Within a year, the discussion of possibilities for internal journal assessment, including the Zulu option was formalized in an article authored by Thomas Weissinger (2015) and published in *A:JPAS*. The issues presented by Weissinger (2015) in the formulation of a credible, trustworthy, and respected impact measurement that would suit the Black Studies tradition of focusing on both

² For instance, the works of such independent or unheralded scholars as Runoko Rashidi, and popular voices like the now passed Yosef Ben-Jochannan and Frances Cress Welsing have been largely unpublished and uncounted in traditional academic outlets (e.g., see Rashidi, 2016), yet celebrated and carried on via discourse within Black Studies/Africology on limited bases due to our lacking autonomous “impact factoring” indices and expectations. The same may be said also for independent journals celebrated within the discipline but relegated to index-unworthy status for academic excellence by the academy, such as *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*. The A-factors could indeed “bridge the gulf” for a stronger, more enduring discipline for Black people, thought, and culture (i.e., see Zulu, 2017, p. 104).

“academic excellence and social responsibility” to, or “scholarship and activism” in African communities continental and abroad were then discussed by members of the MIA Task Force (p. 99). Then, like a natural mystic blowing through the air, Akosua Adomako Ampofo (2016) penned an article published in the *African Studies Review* assessing many of the same problematics facing “Africanist” (p. 8) scholars gridlocked in the “epistemic power” assumed by White America and White Europe (p. 10). She states,

As we know all too well, not all voices have the same power—where we speak, and the authority of our voices don’t have equal reach, and hence impact our lives differentially. Some voices are marginalized by the way the academy is structured in different places around the globe, exemplified most sharply perhaps by the so-called impact factor syndrome. Since American and European journals are prized, African scholars both on the continent and in the diaspora seek to publish in these “high impact” journals to gain tenure, and they have to legitimize their own knowledge by referencing European and American authors. And as African and other Black scholars chase these journals, the continental and other purportedly less prestigious Black ones don’t receive the submissions that will promote them; scholars on the continent are deprived of the research, the journals stagnate, African experiences and perspectives are deprioritized, and the cycle continues. (p. 17)

We propose that the A-factors will effectively mark the ending of the cycle of shifting focus, deprioritizing, and minimizing Africological/Black Studies scholarship poignantly described by Ampofo (2016). Further, this paper is the culmination of our initial position and ideas for methodology informing the epistemological boundaries and application for both an Afrofactor and an associated Afrifactor in reference to Africology that will be designed to measure and rank more than the typical observational studies of Black people that describe our reactions to external phenomena, and more than from the scant few publications recognized by traditional Western evaluators such as *Web of Science*, in order to center and promote those scholars and journals that help to drive the conditions believed to improve Black life and psychology at the core, and for the long-term according to the actual Black Studies objective.

Thus, guiding questions for the A-factors at the outset of the MIA Task Force dialogue included, (1) what differentiates Black Studies scholarship from inquiries merely including African participation, and (2) what criterion(s) should be used as the deciding factor(s) for what qualifies as Black Studies/Africology research versus the mere study of some aspect of the Black experience. From these important questions on the fundamentals of the discipline for which the A-factors would be used came the following three major positions.

1. *The determination of what Black Studies scholarship is in its contemporary evolution as Africology continues to depend on both the relevance and service of said scholarship for the Pan African world community.*
2. *The best criterion for Africological authenticity of scholarly journals rests on their definitional validity of scope or mission in accordance with the popularly accepted definitions of Africology, and correspondingly, the rating of individual publications in Africology journals that should reflect the degree or strength of community reception of the work as measured by disciplinary citations and departmental ratings; and finally,*

3. *The truest assessment of Africological genus would find value in a twin metric that first centers internal grounding and relevance, while also finding functional coexistence through correspondence with external disciplines in search of reciprocity and harmony.*

Thus, the A-factors together constitute an article/journal citation tracker that can also be used to monitor author contribution disciplinarily over time, and a combined journal ranking and qualitative rating specific to Black Studies/Africology, while simultaneously responsive to the larger systems and institutions that co-operate the milieus that most Black Studies departments and other programs exist in or alongside. Actualizing the A-factors will be unequivocally beneficial particularly to professors in Black Studies, but, will also require that Black Studies scholars commit to prioritizing journals that endorse and utilize the A-factors in order to make the methods viable assessments and measurements of our scholarship so that those who have historically minimized our work and presence cannot succeed at disregarding them. In other words, we propose that scholars employed in Black Studies/Africology-area departments and programs (e.g., African Studies, African American Studies, Africana Studies, etc.) must ensure that the vast majority of their work is submitted to Black Studies journals in order for the discipline to survive into the rest of the 21st century and beyond. And while we also recognize that it would be inconducive to require that Black Studies scholars *only* publish in Black Studies publications given the multiple fields or areas of focus within the discipline, sometimes including multiple faculty appointments in other areas, we stand on understanding that the primary distinguishing feature of Black Studies/Africology involves the defining character of both what and how we engage information, thus we must out of necessity also develop and command the processes with which our scholarship is measured and ranked, and we must do it collectively from shared philosophical and professional ground.

As early as 1969, E. Uzong argued in *Africology* that, “Africology is a name used to designate that department of African studies that deals with African cultural and social changes and development,” and “Applied Africology deals with African social and economic problems and solutions” (p. 3). Considering, the MIA Task Force acknowledges three major definitions of Africology that find seamless agreement with both the genesis of Black Studies and the timeless accuracy of African philosophy and cultural traditions across space and time (see Table 1). The first is that presented by William E. Nelson (1997), the second by Winston Van Horne (2014), and the third is provided by Molefi K. Asante (2009), whose definition fittingly caps at the point of direction toward operationalization. Journals unifying under the A-factors umbrella for disciplinary citation tracking and journal impact measurement do so in alliance with these definitional terms within the discipline which guide an assessment process that we have needed for almost 50 years.

The next section highlights significant points that demonstrate the criticalness of the A-factors to current and future Black Studies scholars, including specific areas of the academy. Comparison with or rooting in conventional evaluation parameters are kept to a minimum, and when referenced is done so only to further indicate the viability of the A-factors for Africology.

Table 1

MIA Task Force definitional parameters for the Africology discipline.

| Definitional Terms for Measuring Impact in Africology | |
|--|---|
| Nelson (1997) | Africology is a rigorous, scientific pursuit of knowledge about individuals of African descent that as a discipline cuts across disciplinary lines to produce order, coherence and understanding out of a vast array of social scientific materials. It is the prism through which people of African descent may correctly interpret the world around them, and test the truth of the answers received through its disciplinary focus on the basis of realities uniquely emanating from African experiences. Furthermore, Africology must as Professors James Stewart and Russell Adams have instructed, offer an epistemology that allows African people to determine their own reality and speak to the world about their plans for transforming the world as they know it. |
| Van Horne (2014) | Africology is the study of the centrality of Africa in the emanation of human beings as sentient and capable of constructing concepts of right and wrong as ethical mores and natural laws. The centrality of Africa in the emanation of humanity guides life-preserving contra life-destroying behaviors transmitted trans-generationally, trans-millennially, and universally. Africology thus describes and explains the spread of initial Africans across the planet over millennia, and makes known the forces that contribute to the rise, persistence, interaction, and /or extinction of separate and distinctive groupings of human beings. |
| Asante (2009) | Accepting Van Horne’s definitional terms, Africology is therefore based on sound intellectual principles and rational grounds. Broadly, it is the study of Africa, while narrowly, it is the Afrocentric study of African phenomena transgenerationally and transcontinentally. The meaning, boundaries, and substance of the Africology discipline are seen and operationalized by the historical, philosophical and cultural grounding of Afrocentric study which is known by its seeking of African agency in every situation, analysis, or critique. Thus, the knowledge produced by Africologists and the validation of that knowledge by other scholars within the discipline are central to our academic identity. |

Utility

In his seminal text, *Dude, Where’s My Black Studies Department: The Disappearance of Black Americans from Our Universities*, Cecil Brown (2007) makes a disturbing observation that led him to raise a critical question. Namely, before concluding even the Foreword to his text, Brown (2007) draws our attention to the heady realization that our “Black presence on campus [is] dependent upon both a strong Black student body and a good Black Studies department” (p. ix). Naturally, the two depend on each other in many ways. Thus, implicit in his major research question—where are all of the Black students on college campuses in the U.S. following the successful establishment of Black Studies departments in the wake of Black Power Movement struggles for space and legitimacy within institutions of higher learning—is the resounding alarm of the discipline’s failure to maintain its standing over time. Indeed, Brown’s work was sadly not only relevant to the University of

California at Berkeley 10 years ago, but clairvoyant for the future of all Black Studies departments that may at any given time be lacking in one of the areas traditionally assessed for “impact” by largely White institutions, including programs on continental African and North American Historically Black College and University (HBCU) campuses that depend on neo-colonial models and “philanthropy” or “donor aid” (Asante, 2016).

We should therefore be unsurprised by the fact that, about nine years after the publication of Brown’s book, Dawn Rhodes (2016) published a news report in the *Chicago Tribune* entitled, “Black Studies Struggle at State Universities Under Current Fiscal Climate.” The professors that Rhodes interviews warn, “academia shouldn’t be treated like a popularity contest, and letting numbers decide what programs are offered means that [disciplines] like African-American studies and women’s history” could “lose a place in the ivory tower.” While Illinois’ public universities reportedly award tens of thousands of undergraduate degrees every year, “barely two dozen are in African-American” or Black Studies” (Rhodes, 2016). This has been the trend not simply for a short while, but for at least the past 20 years, the highest major year for Black Studies in Illinois being in 2012, wherein a meager 21 students graduated from the field. Meanwhile we know that interest in African-centered, Black Studies education amongst people of African descent especially has not waned, but rather increased in the past 15 years or more because degree-seeking, mirroring social movements continentally and in the Diaspora has been on the rise specifically at HBCUs (Dixon, 2017; Koziowski, 2015; Strauss, 2016). As reported by Koziowski (2017), enrollment at HBCUS rose at least 4.5% between 2002 and 2012 alone, finding in her journalistic research that the standing 105 HBCU institutions “matter more than ever to some students who speak of mentorship, high expectations and a celebration of black culture that can’t be found elsewhere” (np).

As not all Black students will be able, whether consciously or fiscally, to attend a HBCU, the question that all professors, department chairs, and other stakeholders in the Black Studies tradition and Africology discipline should be asking is why the perception of “Black culture” as nonexistent outside of the HBCU network persists in 2017. Case in point, a critical point missed in Rhodes’ (2016) analysis, and Brown’s (2007) text as both set out to answer the question of where the Black Studies programs have gone on national campuses is the systemic role that the academy as a whole plays in the “popularity contest” imposed onto Africological scholarship which, as with every other discipline, serves to steer the prominence and attractiveness of Black Studies departments.

Being Factored Out of Impact Factoring

Of the more than 81 countries covered in the 2016 Journal Citation Reports (JCR) by *Web of Science* via Clarivate Analytics, previously serviced through Thomson Reuters and originally produced by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI),³ only three African regions were included. Of these, South Africa’s presence was the overwhelming African location, followed by Nigeria and Uganda, with areas of focus tending toward AIDS, zoology, and Earth and other health science research. Appallingly, of the staggering 11, 365 journals assessed, across 234 recognized disciplines, less than 10 included a subject-oriented focus, such as the *Journal of African Cultural Studies* and the *Journal of African Media Studies*, nearly all of which were located in either England or South Africa. In the United States, only two, the *Journal of Black Psychology* (JBP) and *Journal of Black Studies*

³ Confirmed by Amanishakete Ani via conferences with subject librarians at the University at Albany, as well as representatives working in the Technical Support department of Clarivate Analytics on August 8, 2017.

(JBS) are included. This level of inclusion, or rather exclusion, of Africological research must be further tested against the facts that, (a) according to The STM Report (2015), another conventional research indexer, the U.S. accounts for over 30% of the global share of research article output, and England 35%; and (b) Itibari Zulu (2017b) has completed an outline of 50 Africological or Africology-motivated journals, which he refers to as “a descriptive review” based on “the online content they provided in relationship to Africology (i.e., African Diaspora Studies, African Studies, Africana Studies, African American Studies, Afro-American Studies, Black Studies, Pan African Studies, etc.) via their public affirmations” (p. 9), most of which are not acknowledged by the above referenced ranking and indexing organizations. Yet, despite the significant bias within these metrics, these agencies have been historically taken for standard, and used in the processes of tenure and promotion, as well as in decisions toward departmental support and longevity (STM, 2015).

As long as African students, whether continental or abroad are left to the allure of institutional numbers that rank and resound foreign, non-African scholarship as the standard, even for African scholars within Africology, then the majors of those disciplines will continue to draw higher enrollment of African students, all the while casting higher and higher shadows of doubt over both Africology journals and departments alike (e.g., Ampofo, 2016). Our mission is to disallow the abuse and abasement of our knowledge via the creation and employment of the A-factors in three primary areas, from “top-to-bottom”:

1. At the points of tenure and promotion in college/university settings, wherein Africologists are too often subjected to high-risk for denial or rejection on the basis of invalid rigor, impact, or relevance assessment by non-Africology boards.
2. Equity in funding for research and applied projects in both university settings and others in which grantors are reliant upon conventional methods of rating and critiquing ideas proposing to improve outcomes in a given community or for a particular issue of concern.
3. The restoration of the Black Studies spirit and tradition for the important reason of inspiring the next generations of African students to know themselves, achieve at their highest levels, and carry on the tradition that has become a staple in the “humanities” around the world since the 1970s.

Furthermore, not only are the evaluating processes of the academy clearly biased, but also the agencies given responsibility for the evaluations are kept elusive by a circulating rostrum of European and North American-based agencies that set prices for both data access and inclusion criteria at values far higher than many African/African Diasporan departments and institutions are able to afford. For example, The University at Albany pays upwards of \$100,000 per year for its *Web of Science* subscription, which allows librarians, faculty and students, administrators, etc., access to impact factor, Eigenfactor, journal ranking, and total citation data that drives the *JCR* and institutional decision-making based on it. The need for A-factors that track the citation frequency of articles and authors published within Africology journals, and an Afrifactor that measures the amount of journal centrality within the discipline, and maybe even the academy at large, is apparent.

Overview of Current Academic Methods of Assessment and Measurement

To make clearer the misfit and misrepresentation of the academy's current evaluation procedures for impact factoring (for both individual articles and authors, dubbed the *h-index*), and conversely, to highlight how and why the A-factors offer the best fit and representation for Black Studies/Africology research, we provide in this section some of the important definitions and processes of the current academic evaluation and ranking system led by *Web of Science/Clarivate*, and adopted by other more recent and freely accessible ranking and indexing agencies, such as Google Scholar and SCOPUS. To start, an "impact factor" is a metric or score for journals based on the number of times articles published in a respective journal have been cited over a given or prescribed period of time, divided by the total number of articles published in the journal in that time. The current standard is to use a discrete two-year window of time for which to calculate journal impact, and further, all sources must be made electronically available to the computing and reporting agency. Specifically, the impact factor for a journal is produced using a basic division equation of,

$$\frac{X/2y}{N/2y}$$

(Where X equals the number of citations for published articles in the last two-year period, and N is the total number of articles published in the journal over the same period)

In essence, the impact factor is a score that descriptively quantifies a journal's salience or import in its topical area via a citation average. It is assumed that, the less citations a journal receives for its composite list of published articles, then the less meaningful or important it must be in its discipline and by extension in the larger academic world. This is fine—in essence. In reality, however, the impact factor offers only an illusion of clarity and equity for journals that are outside of the majority's areas of interest due to it being based purely on descriptive statistics wherein "the majority rules," and where by virtue of simply being fewer and/or not completely online, some journals and connected disciplines are categorically deprioritized and cast completely out of visibility for future valuation. More specifically, deprioritization quickly becomes extinction for many "unpopular" journals because the impact factor is used not only for scoring and ranking purposes, but also for determination of inclusion or exclusion in the JCR "index," which is the primary criterion for whether or not a journal is to be considered (1) important to its discipline, *and* (2) noteworthy within the full spectrum of the academic world. In summary, journals that do not receive a significant enough citation:articles ratio (i.e., impact factor) as deemed acceptable by the standard bearers of research excellence are not included in the JCR, and are therefore far less likely to be "indexed" in many scholarship databases, such as Academic Search Premier via EBSCO and JSTOR, and consequently relegated to academic insignificance.

As a result of the tipped scale inherent in the current impact factor method which stands to favor academic majority interests, scholars publishing in journals such as those created out of Black Studies/Africology rarely receive due professional credit for their work. Furthermore, neither do the journals themselves and the intended audience(s) of Africological scholarship receive the potential benefits made possible through the mutual exchange of information, understood from an Africological perspective as something akin to community antiphony (Welsh-Asante, 2003); or, communal call-and-response. It is here also that two other

measurements of scholarship are called into question, and they are what is referred to as the h-index and, the more recent, Eigenfactor.

Just as the impact factor is an average citation calculator for journals, the h-index is a calculation of the mean citations that an author garners for his or her total number of publications from other authors. The upsides of the h-index in terms of clear and equitable standards is that scholars are generally compared to other scholars in their discipline rather than outside of their discipline, and, most data sources allow h-index tracking for much more extended periods of time than the allotted two years for journal citations to compute an impact factor. However, the glitch even in this tool is that these data sources are also indexing servicers; meaning, they consider or include only those authors who have published for the journals that have been indexed and thus counted as “impactful” by *Web of Science* and/or the other non-Africology based organizations aforementioned, such as SCOPUS, and the similarly situated Eigenfactor.

The Eigenfactor may be described as a graphical reconstruction of “the geography of scientific thought” intended to “retrace the paths along which intellectual activity has proceeded” (University of Washington, 2017, np). Specifically, the Eigenfactor quantifies the “approximate importance” of journals within a predetermined network with other journals using linear-algebraic formulas and coefficient arrays to determine journal proximity one to another on the subject of citations, and the origins of citations within the network vectors. Using pictorial nodes (i.e., encircled journal abbreviations connected to each other via straight lines), the size of each node is commensurate with its impact factor within the network, and the shape and distance of lines connecting nodes indicate their degree of citation communication or sharing. The Eigenfactor is therefore a journal impact metric, which can also serve as a disciplinary assessment, mapping out both the central journals in the discipline, as well as the strength of journal focus across the discipline. Overall, the Eigenfactor may be considered more impressive or robust than the standard impact factor in that it factors in a wider range of journals and considers the origin of citations in relation to the journal being cited to create a way to scholastically frame journal networks or entire disciplines, however, it is once again limited by its quantitative approach to recursive sources of information ultimately delivering more of the same academic discrimination.

The current standard implemented throughout the academy to rank and index journals using the *Web of Science*-modeled impact factor and h-index for authors, as well as the Eigenfactor out of the University of Washington, are clear and equitable tools to apply to journals only when all things are equal; that is, when a journal is meted against other journals in its area of focus or discipline based on a formalized, generally accepted basis for understanding the importance of timing, topics of interest, and scholarly rigor for the discipline. As outlined above, the greatest shortcoming of the standing models for Black Studies/Africology is that they are settled on a logic of inclusion that instead serves to *exclude* Africology journals at the outset of measurement and ranking. Thus, Africological scholarship is rendered meaningless, and our scholars are made invisible. In the next two sections, we will present the options that we have considered for actualizing our goal of incorporating a self-determined means for the evaluation and monitoring of Africology journals especially in the space of contemporary higher education that we initially fought to create, and now intend to keep.

Methodology

We have established in the previous sections that all disciplines are bound by rules of epistemological expectation. This is no less true for the multitude of ethnic studies, including Black Studies/Africology than it is for any other area, be it engineering, biology, or psychology. Having presented boundaries or parameters that we find useful, indeed essential, to the setting of standards for assessment of Africology scholarship above, we now consider the methods for assessing those boundaries and parameters by the scholars claiming participation in the discipline as they publish in academic and independent journals. Hence, as we introduce the A-factors as the methods of assessment for the discipline we also offer greater detail regarding what is meant by Africological research versus, for instance, the sociological studies of discrimination, or psychological inquiries into the root of racism/White supremacy, or the impacts of “mis-education”.⁴

For understanding of Africological research, we rely on James B. Stewart’s (2008) elucidation of the “Riddles, Rhythms, and Rhymes” of the methodological terms for sound Africology research. He explains that five characteristics may be used to,

...differentiate Africana Studies [Africology] analyses from traditional inquiries: (a) rejection of “victimology” orientations in favor of approaches focusing on efforts by African Americans to shape their own destiny (Africana agency), (b) interpretation of contemporary developments through a framework of analysis that explores the effects of historical forces in shaping current conditions (continuing historical influences), (c) use of multiple analytical methods and modes of presentation to understand and articulate the complexities of the experiences of peoples of African descent (wholism/multidimensionality), (d) exploration of policy implications (simultaneous pursuit of academic excellence and social responsibility), and (e) exploration of historical and continuing cultural and political linkages between Africans in Africa and Africans in the Diaspora (pan-Africanism) (see Stewart, 1992). (p. 179)

He continues to explain that it is obvious that no single investigation should be expected to incorporate all of these methodological elements of Africology, but, that the absence of specific characteristics, namely (a) and (b) from a study would indicate to us that it “is more appropriately identified with a field of inquiry other than [Africology], per se” and that, “Conversely, studies incorporating more of these characteristics are more representative of the type of [] scholarship envisioned by founders than [those] possessing fewer of these elements” (p. 180).

In outlining the components of an Africology research product, Stewart (2008) provides us with a rubric that may be used for the purposes of *assessing* scholarly activity in the discipline. Where assessment in an educational sense is meant to gauge the depth of a scholar’s understanding or comprehension of instruction, in our case it refers to the checking for Africological consistency in the

⁴ Carter G. Woodson’s (1933) classic *The Mis-education of the Negro*, as well as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s (1986) seminal, *Decolonising the Mind* are invoked here as instrumental to the African world’s understanding of the significant impacts of colonization and racism on the minds and behaviors of Black people since the 17th century, but that would be incorrectly identified as Africological research vis-a-vis their theses being located in the center of European-to-African or White-to-Black phenomena and on the margins of African epistemology, tradition, pre-colonial reality, etc., at best. While such work is vital to African survival, it must not be accepted as a replacement or proxy for Africological study, lest we perpetuate the very same ideological attacks of erasure and minimization on ourselves that Western academies and measuring agencies have done.

intellectual focus and rigor of a scholar's publications. Assessments combined over time, or, of a single event but covering large spaces of information to determine a composite picture refers to *measurement*. Knowing what to assess for on a particular subject, comparing it against a standard or with a particular yardstick in mind, and then measuring its dimensions to produce a score or ranking in the determination of its standing alongside others also assessed altogether constitute the truest and most effective *evaluation* process. Where the academy's standard as it relates to Black Studies/Africology is to avoid assessment for inclusion of disciplinary standards and priorities, its evaluation process is therefore incomplete and predestined toward our failure. Further, with regard to the metrical canons of the academy, namely time, source, and location, Africology is further maligned considering that we rely as much or more so on book literature than on journal articles, and also on what we consider to be classical scholarship. Our discipline then necessitates consideration of a wider time and source reference than the standard two or five-year borders for significance that is embraced in most other areas of the academy. And finally, location-wise, we do not recognize or respect that which does not recognize or respect our epistemological and axiological positions—thus, *Web of Science* and academic search databases like Academic Search Premier and JSTOR should no longer serve as the decision-makers of whether or not our scholarship matters and is worthy enough to be locatable to our scholars and the wider community.

The MIA Task Force takes the position that we have the necessary skill set and determination to decide our own evaluation methods and apply them where we find need, with respect to our discipline and livelihoods. To begin the process of instituting a responsive and complete evaluation method, we propose that (a) a qualitative component be incorporated to assess for disciplinary standards in the evaluation of scholarship in Africology; (b) we operate and monitor our own quantitative measurements of journal and author standing and/or progress; and (c) that Stewart's (2008) articulation of the aspects, energy, and dimensions of sound Africology investigations serve as the yardstick for assessing our publications en route to measurement and evaluation. With this, we turn to the methods for the A-factors, as the new evaluation standard for Black Studies/Africology.

Methods

Afrofactor:

This is a metric that would count the number of citations out of a total number of publications for a given journal within the discipline. In other words, the Afrofactor is the average citation calculator for Black Studies/Africology journals only. Not entirely different from the conventional impact factor metric provided by such databases as Web of Science and Google Scholar and used toward deciding the importance of a journal to its connected discipline, the Afrofactor would be the key indicator of a particular journal's contribution to Africology. Once in the network, the influence of Afrofactor citation tracking on journal ratings would also serve to encourage editors to hold authors publishing in their respective journals accountable for citing other scholars published within the discipline, thus strengthening the cohesion of Africology, and increasing the robustness of the second A-factor. Also, in addition to its importance to journals, the metric could also be used to build a database of individual Africologist contributions. In fact, what the academy views or uses as our weakness—that being our discipline's size—can and should be used by us as a testament of our strength.

Specifically, as previously mentioned, the vehicle for the larger academy's evaluation and indexing system is the Internet. That is, all citations are tracked and all indexing and reporting is done based on online data profiles. So, in addition to the methodological biases presented above, there also exists an impasse of technological proportion standing between current academic evaluation procedures and the work of Black Studies/Africology in that not all of our journals are available online, and, we rely upon far more than digitally traceable publications in our assessment and measurements of scholars and their scholarship. By self-reporting and locally digitizing our own work, both of which may be done in a number of ways that would not remarkably alter or add to our current responsibilities, we can create our own brand of scientific tracking, indexing and reporting. Therefore, the success of the Afrofactor, and the Afrifactor described below, will depend on our collective commitment and agency to communicate, stimulate, and support one another more than any other.

Afrifactor:

This metric is necessary for measuring the impact of Africology journals based on the total number of citations that is received from other journals within the Africology network primarily, and secondarily, those from other areas. Using both linear and coefficient-wise models to perform network and vector centrality measures, respectively, the Afrifactor would inform us of which research journals Black Studies/Africology scholars are citing by the size of the journals' nodes (or circles), and, which journals are demonstrating the strongest concentration linkages to each other based on the width and lengths of their respective lines. Further, as articulated by Professor Kevin Cokley (2017), "The Afrifactor index would allow scholars to assess the degree to which Black studies journals "boundary cross" (np), as both a checks and balances of maintaining the discipline, while also estimating our global, interdisciplinary relevance or "impact". Thus, the Afrifactor is not altogether different than the increasingly common Eigenfactor, except that the Afrifactor is, again, specific to maintaining a dialectal self-check and ranking score for journals within Africology.

Here, it is remembered that Africology is a discipline of interdisciplinary means as an end to meeting the multifaceted needs of African peoples, and before this, the fulcrum of philosophical wholism that is the cornerstone of the African worldview (e.g., Diop, 1987; Little, Leonard, & Crosby, 1981). Nevertheless, as with the Afrofactor, the Afrifactor should demonstrate a great emphasis in Africology scholars publishing in Africology journals and citing from them as well. This point should further be understood as both a disciplinary requirement, and, a strategic action.

For example, there is a presenting problem that must be resolved in our construction of the Afrifactor, however, and that involves the issue of how to measure citations from non-Africology publications (particularly journals) in Africological works published in Africology outlets, and vice versa, citations of Africology-based journals in non-Africology publications. In other words, given the dual nature of the Afrifactor, that is to both measure the impact of Black Studies/Africology journals unto themselves for disciplinary efficacy and fairness, and, to engage the rest of the academic world in scholarship and exchanges of information, there must be a process for including all data, combining internal Africological works with external products. However, we already know that our works have been largely excluded from the databases of the academy, and by those same means of exclusion, the data profiles stored by the academy that represent the research history of

other areas with whom ours may share citations remain coveted and/or for ungodly purchase in the databanks of Web of Science, SCOPUS, etc. Resolving this issue is not our first line of business, but one that we would be remiss not to mention in this introduction of the A-factors. In the end, the resolution of even this problem may be found in the collective efforts of Africologists working together with other Africologists in our common goal for real academic freedom.

Getting Started

Unquestionably, accomplishing the goal of a well-defined and regularly practiced epistemology for Africology requires a shared commitment on the part of scholars, academic departments and journal editors whose stakes in the discipline are in large measure destined together. Fermenting the kind and degree of relationship necessary between Africology scholars/departments and journals will undoubtedly occur in stages, perhaps even protracted stages, however, we believe as we hope that you do that it is possible to accomplish with a well crafted plan and healthy dose of dedication.

To get started toward the creation and implementation of the A-factors, we propose the following procedures:

1. Journals are called on first to affirm their commitment via a memo of understanding addressed to chief Editors outlining the range of objectives that would qualify an outlet for Africology certification. Zulu's (2017) impressive review of 50 Africology, or Africology-possible journals is an ideal start for calls of understanding.
2. Upon receipt of editorial commitment to the cause, MIA affiliate journals would then rate themselves on an A-factor-relevant scale of quality and current standing. The A-factor quality and current standing scale would mostly consist of yes/no answers to a set of "soft criteria" needed to establish a baseline for Africology inclusion (e.g., Is there an editorial board? Is the journal digitally archived and accessible? Does the scope or mission of the journal have an international focus? Etc.). A major aspect of this initial qualitative assessment would also incorporate, for example, Stewart's (2008) rubric. Importantly, the quality assurance rating for the A-factors is not intended as a ranking tool for the purposes of promoting competition, but instead an essential data organizer in Afrocentric fashion. As Editors themselves are well aware, journals meeting such criteria are important at the point of tenure and promotion, etc. Furthermore, the collection of qualitative data on Africology journals via a rating scale would also provide a necessary level of order (rather than the Eurocentric notion of "standardization") to allow scholars, their departments and any other research institution to confidently use the discipline's self-defined assessment and ranking system.
3. An important next step involves Black Studies/Africology departments across the country. Once a sufficient enough number of quality assurances from journal editors are analyzed, then departments will be contacted and invited to complete a departmental memo of understanding, unique to (a) academic mission statements, and (b) perceived level of security in being equitably evaluated in terms of scholarship by the conventional academic methods. Departments would then receive participation guidelines to assist in the actualization of the A-factors' utilities. Implied here is the understanding that Black Studies departments must promote and enforce publishing in Africology journals in order to meet the goal of attaining the higher equity and esteem that scholarship in the discipline is due.
4. Upon receipt of departmental agreements, and with journal commitments in hand, the first

MIA report detailing the current list of committed journals and academic departments would be issued. This report would also necessarily include the task force's statement of Africology journal rankings, based largely on the self-reported quality assurance scales discussed in point number two, but also on blinded reviews of Africology content/focus completed by departmental members signed in to the network. It is at this step that the discipline's scholar-journal relationship would begin to be collaboratively mended together. As aforementioned, the guiding intent of the A-factors is to provide a scholarship assessment and measuring system that prizes both contributor (scholar) and publisher (journal) positions as contingent, or rather commissioning parties with the same vision and focus; that is the maintenance of respect for the Black Studies tradition and the strengthening of Africology as a discipline for the sake of African communities.

5. Finally, the second MIA report is planned to include quantitative data of A-factor measurements. This, however, which is the epitome of scholarly (and in some ways community) advancement, will depend on the agreement and concerted efforts of our journals, departments, and scholars in the ways outlined above.

In conclusion, the highest commitment in our view rests on the shoulders of individual scholars themselves, whose submissions to journals are the driving force of the academy period. At the very same time, we also recognize that many different factors drive scholars to submit to particular outlets over others, and it is our hope that focusing attention on Black Studies/Africology at the departmental level will serve to capture the interests of scholars' via their obligations to their departments, as well as to create invigorated commitment to the flagship organization of Black Studies/Africology in the U.S. since the inception of the discipline, and that is the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), which endorses the MIA Task Force. If the import of this proposal for A-factors resonates with Black Studies faculty, journal editors, independent research consortiums, etc., then it is we who must champion the cause of establishing these new assessment and measurement tools by ensuring that our best scholarship is made abundantly available to those who desire to learn and develop with us. Only in this way will our full power to determine our professional and communal reality be made manifest.

Closing Remarks

As stated throughout this paper, the work of the MIA Task Force is directed toward ensuring the autonomy, integrity, and longevity of the Black Studies intellectual program, epistemologically and disciplinarily regarded as Africological. Ultimately, our goal is to self-define what constitutes a high quality, high impact or low quality, low impact journal based on the merits of its publications in connection with the epistemological boundaries set forth by the Africology discipline. Importantly, high quality for us is indistinct from high impact in that intellectual rigor and relevance in Black Studies/Africology necessitates epistemological resonance with the common worldview, traditions and present sociopolitical conditions of African peoples globally, as demonstrated in the classical works of Diop (1974; 1987), Asante, (1980), Nelson (1997), and the more recent, Karenga (2002), Myers (2003), Stewart (2008) and many others. As a discipline, Africology expects that the works produced from its genus will assist its scholars and communities alike. Conversely, the academy in general has proven that it does not share in the same standards and is unlikely to consider changing its position toward accepting our concerns as logical or valid given that its most highly ranked scholars have included those who not only define African people and cultures as unintelligent and

uncivilized, but who have also been at the very helm of deciding the academy's ideal standards applied to scholarship.⁵ Certainly, the intellectual contributions of Black Studies/Africology scholars have not been respected or fairly treated in the past 50 years since the initiation of Black Studies, neither in the continental African universities, the U.S., nor Europe (e.g., Ampofo, 2016; Rhodes, 2016). If we are paying attention to the lessons provided through history, then the consequences of our failure to support the A-factors is the eventual demise of Black Studies/Africology in which case we will be robbing future generations of thinkers and social leaders throughout the African world.

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⁵ J.P. Rushton is exceedingly well known for his "research" into the topics of racial intelligence, crime, disease, and development. Works throughout his career, some of which are co-authored, have included, for instance, *Race, evolution, and behavior* (1995), "National difference in intelligence, crime, income, and skin color" (2009), and "IQ, skin color, crime, HIV/AIDS, and income in 50 U.S. states (2011). As stated on the back cover of the 2000 edition of his 1995 text, "In 1992 the Institute for Scientific Information ranked him the 22nd most published psychologist and the 11th most cited," and he was further "listed in *Who's Who in Science and Technology*, *Who's Who in International Authors*, and *Who's Who in Canada*." Perhaps most significant was Rushton's influence in the academic evaluation process, e.g., "Productivity and scholarly impact (citations) of British, Canadian, and U.S. departments of psychology" (1978). Notably, ISI via Thomson Reuter, now Web of Science via Clarivate, began impact factoring in 1975; within just five years of the first Ph. D. program in African American Studies (then the Afro-Asian Institute) was begun by Dr. Molefi Kete Asante at Temple University in 1971.

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