

Prophetic Psychology's Projective Model: Assessing Self-Narratives Across Time in Youth and Adults with the Oshodi Sentence Completion Tests

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the Oshodi Adult Sentence Completion Test (OASCT) and Oshodi Youth Sentence Completion Test (OYSCT), two culturally grounded projective measures developed within the Prophetic Psychology framework. In this context, “prophetic” is not spiritual, but refers to the human capacity for psychological foresight, symbolic rehearsal, and future self-construction. Designed to assess narrative identity across past, present, and future timeframes, the tools revealed distinct temporal and cultural patterns in a diverse adult ($n = 34$) and youth ($n = 31$) sample. Youth narratives emphasized future-oriented beliefs and motivation, while adults demonstrated greater narrative complexity, resilience, and systemic awareness. Both instruments showed high inter-rater reliability and cultural relevance, supporting their validity for assessing temporal self-construction. Findings highlight the universality of future-oriented psychological processes and the importance of Afrocentric frameworks in shaping identity.

Keywords: Narrative identity, Prophetic Psychology, sentence completion tests, temporal orientation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human psychological life is inherently temporal. Individuals do not live solely in the past or remain fixed in the present—they continually imagine, anticipate, and strive toward possible futures. This forward-looking capacity shapes decision-making, motivation, identity formation, and emotional well-being. Yet for much of psychology's history, theoretical models have largely privileged retrospective and present-centered processes. Within dominant Euro-American traditions, frameworks have often emphasized pathology, trait stability, or stimulus-response mechanisms, leaving the aspirational and anticipatory dimensions of the mind underexplored.

In recent decades, this imbalance has begun to shift. Cognitive science and psychology now increasingly recognize future-oriented cognition as a central function of the human mind. Suddendorf and Corballis (2007) describe this faculty as *mental time travel*—the uniquely human ability to project oneself across temporal contexts. Seligman et al. (2013) advanced the *Homo Prospectus* model, emphasizing that human beings are not merely reacting to the present but continually simulating possible futures to guide current choices. Similarly, (Zimbardo & Boyd's 1999) Time Perspective Theory demonstrates how dominant temporal orientations (past-, present-, or future-focused) influence behavior, emotion regulation, and overall life satisfaction.

Despite these advances, mainstream psychological theory still tends to treat the future as an auxiliary or outcome-based concern rather than a primary driver of psychological life. Even influential approaches such as narrative identity theory (McAdams, 2001), goal-directed behavior models (Carver & Scheier, 1998), and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasize agency in the present moment, often through the lens of past experience, but still stop short of placing imagined futures at the center of human functioning. Moreover, these models often reflect cultural assumptions—individualism, linear



time, and present-moment rationality—that may not align with other cultural ontologies, especially those foregrounded in multicultural and cultural psychology research (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993).

In the context of Black psychology, this oversight carries distinct weight. Foundational scholars such as Akbar (1984), Nobles (2006), Myers (1987), and Fanon (1967) have illuminated how historical trauma, systemic oppression, and cultural dislocation shape identity and mental health. Yet much of the work has understandably centered on healing the wounds of the past and surviving the challenges of the present. Fewer models have placed equal emphasis on how Black individuals and communities actively envision, narrate, and build transformative futures. This creates a theoretical gap: how do historically marginalized groups not only cope with adversity but also transcend it, reimagine themselves, and re-author their life narratives through an intentional relationship with the future?

This paper introduces Prophetic Psychology, a future-centered framework grounded in the foundational theory of Psychoafricalysis (Oshodi, 2019). Here, the term *prophetic* is explicitly secular—it does not refer to religious prophecy or spiritual revelation. Rather, it denotes a distinct set of human psychological capacities: the ability to envision possible futures (*psychological foresight*), to mentally and emotionally rehearse those futures (*symbolic rehearsal*), and to align present actions with chosen moral and aspirational trajectories (*moral visioning*). Within this model, the future is not a vague abstraction but an active psychological space that can be inhabited, shaped, and integrated into one's evolving identity.

Prophetic Psychology is organized around seven interrelated domains—attitudes, beliefs, motivation, conflicts, emotional state, perception of self, and perception of others—that together reveal how individuals weave past experience, present action, and future vision into a coherent narrative system. In doing so, it bridges empirical research on hope theory (Snyder *et al.*, 2002), future self-continuity (Hershfield, 2011), and anticipatory resilience (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) with African-centered philosophies that conceptualize time as cyclical, communal, and morally infused (Asante, 2009; Mkhize, 2004). By reframing the future as both a psychological driver and a culturally embedded moral horizon, Prophetic Psychology expands the scope of psychological science and offers a framework for understanding human agency as a process of *future-becoming*.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

The adult sample consisted of 34 individuals aged 20–68, representing a purposeful cross-section of cultural and racial backgrounds: 12 Black Americans, 5 Hispanics, 4 Whites, and 10 Nigerians. All Nigerian participants were recruited in Nigeria, while all other participants were recruited in Miami, Florida. This intentional bifocal recruitment strategy allowed the study to capture both continental African and diasporic perspectives, a design choice aligned with the Afrocentric (sometimes called Africentric) grounding of Prophetic Psychology. By incorporating respondents from distinct yet interconnected cultural contexts, the study sought to reflect the layered realities of African heritage, displacement, and adaptation.

The youth sample comprised 31 participants between the ages of 12 and 17, primarily of Nigerian origin ($n = 27$), with 3 Black Americans and no White or Hispanic participants. While this demographic profile skews toward Nigerian youth, it offers a valuable lens into adolescent identity development within a collectivist cultural frame. Nigerian adolescents often grow up with strong intergenerational ties, moral expectations, and communal responsibility narratives, which are highly relevant to the study's focus on temporal identity construction. Including a small group of Black American youth provided an initial, though limited, point of comparison for how future-oriented self-narratives manifest across diasporic contexts.

This is an exploratory and first-of-its-kind study introducing a novel theory and assessment model grounded in Prophetic Psychology. As a foundational investigation, the use of small, purposefully selected samples is consistent with early-stage research aimed at conceptual clarity and methodological feasibility. The goal was developmental rather than statistical generalizability. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure cultural relevance and alignment with the exploratory, theory-generating nature of the study. This culturally diverse adult sample and Nigerian-centered youth group were intentionally selected to reflect both diaspora and continental African perspectives foundational to the theory. The focus was on examining temporal narrative structures within relevant cultural frames, not on cross-group comparisons.

Despite the modest sample size, the study achieved high inter-rater reliability ($\kappa = 0.82$ for youth, $\kappa = 0.71$ for adults), confirming tool stability and scoring consistency. Recruitment was voluntary, non-institutional, and conducted outside clinical settings, preserving ecological validity while operating within the ethical and logistical realities of culturally specific psychological research.

This study represents the foundational stage in the creation and initial validation of two culturally grounded projective assessments—the Oshodi Adult Sentence Completion Test (OASCT) and the Oshodi Youth Sentence Completion Test (OYSCT). Designed within the Prophetic Psychology framework, these tools were constructed to elicit narrative responses that reveal how individuals perceive themselves across past, present, and future timeframes. By centering temporal imagination and symbolic meaning, the instruments aim to capture not only personality dynamics but also the ways in which cultural identity and collective memory shape an individual's sense of becoming.

The present work provides the first empirical demonstration of their structure, administration, and scoring reliability, laying the groundwork for broader longitudinal, cross-cultural, and applied research in educational, clinical, and policy contexts. To enhance transparency and clarity, a summary table of participant demographics and inter-rater reliability scores is provided in [Table I](#).

2.2. OASCT and OYSCT Structure and Full Prompt Sets

The Oshodi Adult Sentence Completion Test (OASCT) and Oshodi Youth Sentence Completion Test (OYSCT) each contain 21 open-ended prompts designed to elicit narrative responses across seven psychological domains—attitudes, beliefs, motivation, conflicts, emotional state, perception of oneself, and perception of others. These prompts are sequenced to move fluidly between past, present, and future timeframes, encouraging participants to articulate self-perceptions, aspirations, and unresolved tensions. While the adult and youth versions share structural symmetry, the youth form employs developmentally simplified language to ensure clarity and accessibility without sacrificing thematic depth.

2.2.1. Adult Version (OASCT) Prompts

- When I think about my past, I often...
- One memory that still affects me today is...
- In childhood, I was always told to...
- A decision I regret not making is...
- If my younger self could talk to me now, they would say...
- Right now, I feel most confident when I...
- A belief that guides me today is...
- When faced with uncertainty, I tend to...
- My current struggle is...
- I feel most like myself when I...
- Five years from now, I hope to...
- If nothing were holding me back, I would...
- My future self wants me to...
- Success, to me, looks like...
- I know I am growing when I...
- When I think about tomorrow, I often...
- A hope I keep quietly to myself is...
- My dream life would include...
- A part of me that wants to be heard is...
- I am beginning to realize that...
- The next step for me is...

2.2.2. Youth Version (OYSCT) Prompts

- When I think about things that happened before, I often...
- One thing I remember that still matters to me is...
- When I was younger, people often told me to...
- Something I wish I had done is...
- If a younger version of me could talk to me now, they would say...

TABLE I: SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTER-RATER RELIABILITY

Group	N	Age range	Cultural backgrounds	Location	κ
Adults	34	20–68	Black Am. (12), Hispanic (5), White (4), Nigerian (10)	Miami (24), Nigeria (10)	0.71
Youth	31	12–17	Nigerian (27), Black Am. (3)	Nigeria (27), USA (4)	0.82

Note: Cultural identification was self-reported or contextually inferred. κ = Cohen's Kappa.

- Right now, I feel most sure of myself when I...
- One thing I believe in now is...
- When I'm unsure about something, I usually...
- Something that's hard for me right now is...
- I feel like the real me when I...
- In a few years, I hope I can...
- If I could do anything, I would...
- The future me would tell me to...
- To me, being successful means...
- I can tell I'm growing when I...
- When I think about tomorrow, I usually...
- Something I hope for but don't say out loud is...
- My dream life would have...
- A part of me that wants to speak out is...
- I'm starting to understand that...
- The next thing I need to do is...

The prompt design of both instruments reflects key Afrocentric psychological concepts, particularly those rooted in communal identity, cyclical time orientation, and intergenerational continuity. For example, items like “If my younger self could talk to me now...” and “The future me would tell me to...” intentionally draw on African-centered traditions that understand the self as connected to past and future selves, family legacies, and communal obligations (Asante, 2009; Nobles, 2006). This temporal layering resonates with cultural frameworks where identity is formed not in isolation, but through dynamic relationships with ancestry, community, and collective aspirations. These influences ensure that the instruments are grounded in culturally congruent worldviews while remaining adaptable to cross-cultural applications.

2.3. Instruments

The Oshodi Adult Sentence Completion Test (OASCT) and the Oshodi Youth Sentence Completion Test (OYSCT) each contain 21 items designed to evoke projective, narrative-style responses. Every item is mapped to one of seven psychological domains—attitudes, beliefs, motivation, conflicts, emotional state, perception of oneself, and perception of others—ensuring balanced coverage of internal and relational dimensions. The prompts are intentionally structured to span past, present, and future orientations, reflecting the Prophetic Psychology framework's emphasis on temporal imagination, symbolic meaning, and self-concept development. While the adult version employs more complex language and life-span references, the youth version uses developmentally accessible wording without altering thematic intent.

2.4. Procedure

All participants completed the OASCT or OYSCT individually, either in person or through secure remote formats. Sessions were conducted in settings free from distractions to optimize reflective engagement. Responses were documented verbatim and anonymized prior to scoring. Two trained raters, familiar with the theoretical and cultural underpinnings of the instruments, independently evaluated all responses using a structured scoring rubric aligned with the seven psychological domains. Domain scores were then aggregated to generate a total score for each participant. Inter-rater reliability was calculated to assess scoring consistency across raters.

2.5. Scoring and Reliability

The scoring rubric for the OASCT and OYSCT is a structured three-point scale designed to assess the level of insight, temporal orientation, and psychological adaptability within each of the seven interpretive categories. This rubric is grounded in the core tenets of Prophetic Psychology, which emphasizes not only what a person expresses but how clearly, they integrate symbolic, temporal, and emotional meaning across narrative domains. A score of “2” reflects what the framework terms *prophetic alignment*—the coherence between present stance and a preferred future identity. This form of narrative integration is theoretically linked to psychological agency, future self-continuity (Hershfield, 2011), and moral direction (Bandura, 1986). Conversely, lower scores reflect fragmentation, emotional avoidance, or underdeveloped future orientation. The rubric does not measure pathology but symbolic readiness and developmental alignment across time.

Every sentence completion item is scored from 0 to 2, with the following criteria:

- **Score 2:** High emotional coherence, clear future orientation, and strong sense of agency.
- **Score 1:** Partial or ambivalent insight, with some temporal awareness but limited integration.

- **Score 0:** Psychological disengagement, avoidance, or fragmented self-reflection.

Each instrument contains 21 items, producing a possible score range of 0–42. Higher totals indicate greater narrative integration, psychological resilience, and the capacity to link past experiences with envisioned futures.

Two trained raters—each familiar with the theoretical underpinnings and cultural considerations of Prophetic Psychology—independently scored all responses. Raters underwent targeted training, were blinded to participant demographics, and adhered strictly to the rubric. Inter-rater reliability, calculated using Cohen's Kappa, yielded $\kappa = 0.82$ for youth and $\kappa = 0.71$ for adults, indicating strong agreement and scoring stability.

2.6. Validity

The OASCT and OYSCT demonstrate strong face validity through their alignment with natural conversational language, culturally embedded meaning-making, and the narrative exploration of time as a psychological dimension. Their structure encourages reflective storytelling that mirrors everyday self-assessment, thereby enhancing ecological validity.

The instruments are particularly effective in surfacing personal meaning, revealing internalized hopes and conflicts, and projecting envisioned futures—features central to the Prophetic Psychology framework. By doing so, they offer a culturally grounded, temporally rich lens into human development and identity formation. This design positions them as suitable tools for clinical assessment, educational guidance, and cross-cultural research, especially within communities where collective memory and future aspiration are interwoven.

3. RESULTS

Qualitative analysis revealed distinct temporal and developmental patterns across age groups and cultural contexts. Among youth participants, future-oriented responses were most prominent in the domains of motivation and belief, suggesting early identity formation rooted in purpose, moral reasoning, and aspirational ideals. For example, one Nigerian youth participant wrote, *"In a few years, I hope I can help my community like my uncle does,"* highlighting familial modeling and communal aspiration. Another participant shared, *"The future me would tell me to never stop trying,"* capturing motivational alignment and anticipatory resilience.

While the study primarily emphasized narrative themes, total score patterns also reflected developmental trajectories: youth responses scored highest in motivation and belief, while adult participants demonstrated greater overall narrative coherence and temporal integration across domains.

Nigerian youth—who comprised the majority ($n = 27$)—frequently referenced communal obligation, ancestral responsibility, and education as intergenerational legacies, reflecting Afrocentric principles of collective identity and cultural continuity. While these cultural markers were particularly pronounced in the Nigerian subgroup, the measured constructs—anticipatory thinking, symbolic selfhood, and future identity construction—were evident in all youth responses, indicating potential adaptability of the OYSCT across diverse contexts. The absence of White or Hispanic youth participants remains a limitation for broad cross-cultural generalization.

Adult participants demonstrated more narrative complexity across all seven domains. Black American adults often engaged deeply with conflict and emotional state, situating their reflections within the contexts of intergenerational trauma, systemic injustice, and persistent hope for transformation. One adult wrote, *"I regret not speaking up sooner—it's a silence I still carry,"* reflecting emotional introspection and unresolved inner conflict. Another stated, *"Five years from now, I want to look back and know I didn't give in to what held my father down,"* illustrating how memory, motivation, and legacy can converge in future-directed identity work.

Nigerian adults showed strong coherence between past and future self-concepts, often emphasizing resilience, duty, and spiritual continuity. These themes align with African-centered psychological frameworks that prioritize communal responsibility, moral imperatives, and continuity of identity.

Across cultural groups, responses converged on themes of growth, responsibility, and liberation. Notably, future-oriented narratives were more elaborate among participants who expressed a strong cultural identity or community attachment, supporting the proposition that agency and self-regulation are reinforced by coherent value systems.

Both instruments were received positively, with participants reporting no difficulty in understanding prompts and no instances of cultural dissonance. This feedback supports their content validity and affirms their relevance in eliciting authentic, emotionally resonant responses. The high inter-rater reliability scores ($\kappa = 0.71$ for adults; $\kappa = 0.82$ for youth) further confirm the scoring system's consistency and interpretive robustness.

4. DISCUSSION

The present findings affirm the core claim of Prophetic Psychology: people do not merely recall a past or endure a present—they actively author a future, and that authorship is visible in the way they talk about themselves across time. The OASCT and OYSCT elicited coherent, emotionally saturated narratives in which participants linked remembered experience, present stance, and envisioned possibility. In this sense, the instruments did more than “capture traits”; they surfaced temporal identity work—the ongoing effort to align who I have been, who I am, and who I am becoming (Oshodi, 2019).

4.1. *Developmental Signal: Early Futurity, Adult Integration*

Youth responses clustered in beliefs and motivation, suggesting that anticipatory cognition emerges early as a felt orientation toward purpose and possibility. The language of hope, obligation, and imagined pathways showed up before fully elaborated life stories, which is developmentally sensible: adolescents often experiment with preferred futures before they can weave them into a settled narrative arc. Adult responses, by contrast, showed broader temporal integration—memories revised in the light of present values and future aims; conflicts reframed as steps toward an envisioned self. This pattern supports the view that futurity is not a late add-on to personality but a driver of identity consolidation across the lifespan.

4.2. *Cultural Grounding Without Cultural Confinement*

The study's Afrocentric grounding was evident, especially among Nigerian youth and adults who invoked communal duty, ancestral continuity, and education as legacy. Yet the form of the narratives—the movement from past pain to present resolve to future direction—was shared across groups. This duality matters: it shows that Prophetic Psychology can honor cultural specificity (how futures are imagined and why) while retaining cross-cultural applicability (that futures are imagined at all). The tools therefore operate as culturally responsive without being culture-bound (Mkhize, 2004; Nobles, 2006).

4.3. *Mechanism of Change: Prophetic Alignment*

Across many protocols, participants spontaneously articulated what this framework terms prophetic alignment—the felt coherence between current choices and a preferred future self. When alignment was clear, narratives carried agency, commitment, and moral direction; when misaligned, responses tilted toward ambivalence or avoidance. This suggests a clinical and educational mechanism: helping people name, rehearse, and align daily actions with envisioned identities can convert aspiration into practice. It also clarifies why future-oriented talk can be therapeutic in itself—it organizes emotion and behavior around an intelligible horizon rather than only around past injury.

4.4. *Contexts of Constraint and Possibility*

Black American adults frequently situated their stories in the realities of intergenerational trauma and systemic constraint, yet even there, future talk functioned as psychological counter-space—a way to reassert authorship under limiting conditions (Akbar, 1984; Fanon, 1967). In Nigerian adults, futurity was often braided with resilience and spiritual continuity, highlighting how sociohistorical context shapes the content of prophetic imagination even as the **process** remains humanly general.

4.5. *Assessment to Application*

Because the OASCT and OYSCT prompt symbolic rehearsal—imagining and feeling through possible futures—they can serve as bridges between assessment and intervention. In schools, they can anchor guidance conversations about goals and values; in clinics, they can surface change talk and clarify next steps; in community programs, they can scaffold collective visioning. More broadly, they support a shift away from assessment that merely catalogs symptoms toward assessment that cultivates direction (Seligman *et al.*, 2013).

4.6. *Limitations and Next Steps*

The study is exploratory, with modest samples and limited youth diversity. Future work should enlarge and diversify cohorts, test measurement invariance across groups, and examine outcomes longitudinally (e.g., whether higher prophetic alignment predicts academic persistence, well-being, or reduced risk behavior). Methodologically, pairing these instruments with brief future-self interventions could test their utility as change levers, not just measures. Finally, integrating a simple alignment index—linking stated future aims to reported daily actions—could sharpen both clinical feedback and research precision (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

In sum, these results indicate that future-oriented narration is accessible, measurable, and meaningful across contexts, and that the OASCT/OYSCT provides a structured yet humane way to hear it. They

make visible what often stays implicit: how people become through the stories they dare to talk about tomorrow.

5. CONCLUSION: EXPANDING PSYCHOLOGY'S TEMPORAL IMAGINATION

The Prophetic Psychology projective model advances a simple but generative claim: human beings live through time, and the stories they tell about **what comes next** organize emotion, agency, and identity. This study shows that future-oriented narrative construction is not only measurable but also thematically rich and culturally resonant—offering empirical footing for a capacity long honored in Afrocentric thought yet underemphasized in mainstream assessment (Akbar, 1984; Nobles, 2006; Seligman *et al.*, 2013). By treating time as both a causal and symbolic dimension of psychological life—and situating that stance within an African-centered epistemology—the model offers a practical alternative to present-dominated, pathology-first approaches (Mkhize, 2004; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

What these instruments make visible is prophetic alignment: the degree to which a person's current choices cohere with an envisioned self. When alignment is strong, narratives show clarity, purpose, and moral direction; when weak, they show ambivalence or avoidance. The OASCT and OYSCT surface this alignment without presuming pathology, inviting respondents to rehearse preferred futures and to anchor present action in that horizon—an evidence-aligned pathway to agency and restoration (Bandura, 1986; Bryant & Veroff, 2007).

Crucially, while the theory is Afrocentric in grounding, the questions themselves are human—about past, present, and future—and thereby cross-cultural in use. Our data reflect this dual truth: Nigerian and Black American participants drew on distinct cultural symbols and communal meanings, yet the form of future-making (linking memory, stance, and possibility) appeared across groups. In contexts marked by trauma, displacement, or systemic constraint, this kind of future talk functions as a psychological counter-space—reclaiming authorship under pressure (Fanon, 1967; Myers, 1987).

This work is novel and exploratory. The sample is modest and underrepresents some ethnicities; broader youth diversity is especially needed. Those limitations do not negate the central contribution; they set the agenda. Large, longitudinal, and demographically varied studies should test measurement invariance, track outcomes (e.g., well-being, academic persistence), and examine whether strengthening prophetic alignment mediates change. Parallel development of companion measures (e.g., a streamlined alignment index and the Prophetic Cognition Inventory) can deepen quantitative precision.

For practice, the implication is immediate: these tools can be used now—in clinics, schools, and community settings—with appropriate cultural humility and awareness of their Afrocentric roots. They serve as bridges from assessment to intervention, turning evaluation into a structured conversation about direction, values, and next steps. For research and policy, the charge is to build systems that do not only look backward in analysis but forward in imagination—making room for individuals and communities to author the futures they intend.

In sum, Prophetic Psychology offers not merely two instruments but a language of possibility—a way to hear how people become who they are by narrating who they are becoming.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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