

## **TRIOS: A Psychological Theory of the African Legacy in American Culture**



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*TRIOS is comprised of attitudes, beliefs and values about time, rhythm, improvisation, orality and spirituality. It is proposed that TRIOS represents the cultural foundation of an African legacy for African Americans and provides a means of coping with slavery and various forms of racism over time. TRIOS is a model for the dual processes of self-protective and self-enhancing motivations for targets who must live in a universal context of racism. TRIOS is described as a context-dependent theory of being-in-the-world, as opposed to doing-in-the-world. Evidence for the origins of TRIOS elements in African and Caribbean culture is presented. A scale to measure TRIOS is described and evidence for racial/ethnic differences shows that African Americans score higher than other racial/ethnic groups. The implications of TRIOS for psychological well-being of African Americans and a wide array of future research questions are discussed.*

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It is a humbling and profound honor to receive the Kurt Lewin Memorial Award. Thank you Norman Miller and other members of the selection committee, and SPSSI for continuing the Lewinian legacy, and embodying the essence of the positive possibilities of a humane society. In recent years, the haiku has become my ally to express profound feelings or ideas. By way of thanks I offer this:

Lewin's impact huge  
His theories practical  
The Honor is mine.

Lewin is my intellectual great grandfather (Lewin begat Festinger who begat Kiesler who begat Jones), I have been shaped and molded in many ways by his ideas. An émigré from the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, he understood the inhumanity of racism and the magnification of its pernicious effects in the context of authoritarian dominance. As a proponent of field theory, he understood the significance of context and the psychological force of multiply determined perceptions and actions. For Lewin the field was not simply a description of relevant aspects of the environment, but the dynamic energy that moved the person through it with direction, purpose and intention. The field is culture and personality and interpersonal and intergroup relationships extending across time from the past into the future. It is experiences and imaginings, in one's own life or that of others with whom one is connected. The field exists in a person's head at a given moment in time. The vector of these cognitive structures into the force that propels people to move or locomote is expressed by the equation  $B = F(S_t)$ , where  $S$  is the situation at the moment  $t$  and is comprised of the Person ( $P$ ) and his or her Psychological Environment ( $E$ ) at time  $t$ . This leads to the well known formula  $B = f(P, E)$ . To simplify, "context matters," all of it. That it matters is vitally important to our contemporary understanding of human behavior. How it matters is the focus of our most significant and meaningful theories and their practical consequences.

In this paper, I will explore my ideas about context in the Lewinian tradition. I propose a theory of behavior in a field that includes pre-Diaspora African cultural foundations, their evolution, adaptation and transformation in the Diaspora among African descended peoples, and their infusion into the general psychological fabric of human tendency and possibility over time. Personal lifespaces conjoin the cultural lifespaces to tie a Gordian knot that cultural psychologists express thus: "culture and psyche make each other up" (Shweder and Sullivan, 1992).

I'll begin by recapping my ideas about prejudice and racism, emphasizing cultural racism, as a critical component of this theory. Next, I will introduce TRIOS and outline a set of principles about African culture and its continuing influence on the cultural psychology of African Americans. To preview, TRIOS is an acronym for the psychological elements of a cultural system and consists of time, rhythm, improvisation, orality, and spirituality.

TIME: personal perspectives on the past, present and future

RHYTHM: patterns of behavior in time, flow, entrainment, movement

IMPROVISATION: goal directed creative problem solving under time pressure; a distinctive style

ORALITY: preferences for oral face-to-face communication, and personal expression, and the meaningful role of spoken words in human affairs

SPIRITUALITY: belief in the value of a higher power and unknown forces that influence all living things and one's life in particular

Next I will describe TRIOS, the instantiation of this cultural legacy, in contemporary psychological terms. I will review recent findings that attach empirical possibilities to this TRIOS vision, and suggest new ways to think about contemporary issues in social relations. And I will conclude by suggesting theoretical and empirical possibilities that may be fruitful to pursue in the future.

### **Cultural Racism: An Origination Story**

Racism is a crime against humans and against humanity. Social psychological analysis has focused on prejudice—but racism is different. I have suggested a three-part model of racism by which individual, institutional, and cultural levels combine to create and reflect social structures and influence individual cognitive structures (cf. Jones, 1997, Figure 17.1). Racism presupposes the superiority of one's own racial group over others; it rationalizes privilege based on the superiority presumption, and provides a rationale that makes privileged dominance both rational and normative (cf. Jones, 1997; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). These tendencies operate at the individual level and function much like race prejudice. These tendencies operate also at aggregate organizational levels by which institutional policy, practice, organization, and outcomes are manifestly linked to racial disparities. This edifice of racism suffuses our culture in prevailing ideologies and worldviews, including values, beliefs, symbols and myths, language, aesthetics, and so on. These levels of analysis have both top down and bottom up influences on how we think about and respond to race.

Further, the need to formulate identifiable connections between culture and individual levels of psychological processes requires that we recognize the commonalities and differences in racial socialization of people from privileged and stigmatized groups. Traditional psychological research on racism has focused on the effects of race on members of privileged groups. TRIOS focuses more on the psychological processes that characterize stigmatized groups, in this case, African Americans. While we represent these macro-level elements in our theories, specific theoretical propositions occur at the level of the individual, as do, of course all of our measurements. If culture and psyche make each other up, we need to formally represent culture in our theoretical formulations. TRIOS is an attempt to do that.

*The Universal Context of Racism*

Continuing to employ Lewinian ideas, I believe that racism's implications and consequences are asymmetrical with respect to targets and others. Targets are people who live daily with the possibility of threat, bias, denigration, denial, and truncated opportunity. Individual and collective histories of targets are psychologically available at any given moment, and, thus, are part of the situation that influences behavior. This leads me to two assumptions:

First, *racism is an accessible, explanatory construct with motivational consequences*. Lewin offers the *Principle of Contemporaneity*—" . . . any behavior or any other change in a psychological field depends only upon the psychological field *at that time*" (Lewin, 1943, p. 201). This principle means that a person's psychological *past* and his or her psychological *future*, and his or her construal of the immediately *present* context, is contemporaneously accessible and capable of dynamic interplay. I am proposing that racism is a psychological reality at any given time for targets and it consists of the targets' personal, as well as collective, racial pasts and futures, and their construal of the racial nature of their immediate experience. There are two types of motivational consequences of the universal context of racism: (a) *self-protective motivations*, by which one is oriented to detecting the occurrence of, protecting oneself from, the avoidance of anticipated, and conquering if confronted with, racism. Needless to say this takes a lot of energy. (b) *self-enhancing motivations* by which one is oriented to sustaining, defending, and enhancing one's self-worth and humanity. I argue that both of these motivational tendencies are triggered by the universal context of racism, but the self-protective, more than the self-enhancing motives, have been the subject of theory and research on race. TRIOS is a theory that combines both in the service of promoting psychological well-being among African Americans.

In essence, this is a dual-process model of adaptation and psychological health. It shares certain features with an ego-resiliency approach (cf. Block and Kremen, 1996). When the threatening qualities of a context are perceptually, cognitively or emotionally salient, self-protective motives and mechanisms are aroused (e.g., stereotype threat, Steele, 1997). In the ego-resiliency model, self-enhancing motives are released when the context is perceived to be secure. However, I argue that, in addition, self-enhancing motives may be released: (a) as a way to combat the negative elements of a threatening environment (eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you may die), or (b) as a way to convert a threatening environment to a non-threatening context (I can't be hurt if I stay true to my inner core, principles, or being). This dual-process model, then, provides an understanding of how a stigmatized, dehumanized and targeted context can elicit adaptive mechanisms that are both self-protective and self-enhancing. I am, here, referring to individual level processes by which a person feels threat as an individual, but it could be based on his or her membership in a stigmatized group. Self-protective

and self-enhancing processes may occur at either the individual level (an action a person might take), or in concert with others in the stigmatized group (collective action).

Another feature of this model is that while self-protective process may more likely be individually based (the person's construal of the psychological moment in time stimulates an adaptive response), the self-enhancing mechanisms are aided by a psychological community of others whose positive responses affirm self-worth. This dual-process model may help explain the strong tendency toward individualism among African Americans (cf. Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier, 2002), but suggest also that traditional notions of collectivism (e.g., Triandis, 1994) may need to be modified to capture the psychological dynamics of self-enhancement through collectivism suggested here (cf. Jones, 1999). Further, this dual-model is consistent with a distinction between stereotype *threat* (evoking self-protective mechanisms), and stereotype *obligation* (evoking collective affirmation mechanisms; cf. Marks, 2002).

Second, *psychological tensions result from individual versus group level dynamics*. Lewin defines *Psychological Conflict* as the "... overlapping of at least two force fields . . . in such a way that equally strong and opposite forces overlap at certain points (Lewin, 1944, p. 197). I propose three sets of conflicted force fields: (a) Personal identity versus reference group orientation captures the relative importance of personal uniqueness versus group belonging needs at a moment in time (Brewer, 1991); (b) Racial identity versus superordinate identity reflects the relative importance of in-group distinctiveness versus superordinate group identity. For example, Marvin Kalb queried Jesse Jackson on *Meet the Press* in 1984, asking him whether he was "a Black man who happened to be an American running for the presidency or the reverse, an American who happened to be a Black man running for the presidency." Mr. Jackson resisted this imposition of psychological conflict by claiming their compatibility—" . . . my interests are national interests"; and (c) Instrumentality versus expressivity pits the desire for self-expression against the perceived self-constraint that may be required for mainstream success.

Belonging to a marginalized minority group creates the potential for conflicts and tensions in each of these domains. How targets resolve these psychological tensions or conflicts substantially influences their range of behavioral and attitudinal options in a universal racism context.

Lewin made the following observation in 1946:

... One of the most severe obstacles in the way of improvement seems to be the notorious lack of confidence and self-esteem of most minority groups. Minority groups tend to accept the implicit judgment of those who have status even where the judgment is directed against themselves. There are many forces which tend to develop in the children, adolescents, and adults of minorities deep-seated antagonisms to their own group . . . The discrimination which these individuals experience is not directed against them as individuals, but as group members, and only by raising their self-esteem as group members to the normal level can a remedy be produced. (Lewin, 1946, p. 151)

Lewin presupposes that targets in general suffer devalued collective self-esteem (cf. Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992). However, research on racial identity suggests that racial identity for Blacks is based in part on a high regard for Blacks as their reference group (Cross, 1991; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). At the individual level, Crocker and Wolfe (2001) found no support for diminished self-esteem of Blacks. If anything, Black self-esteem is demonstrably higher than other ethnic/racial groups including Whites. One mechanism by which Black self-esteem can be maintained is by decoupling self-worth from outcomes in domains perceived to offer low probabilities of self-affirmation. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) argue that contingencies of self-worth (CSW) may be selectively chosen to reflect self-protective or self-enhancing needs. Osborne (1995) used a protective disidentification analysis to explain the observation that the correlation between self-esteem and grade point average declined substantially for Black males between 8<sup>th</sup> (.22) and 10<sup>th</sup> (.08) grades, but not for White males (.25 and .26, respectively). What matters, I believe, is the perceptual context in which one's experience is set, and the motivational systems that provide meaning and understanding to it. The psychological dynamics and normative cultural influences will affect a host of interpretations of phenomena related to psychological well-being.

Lewin proposed that minorities developed deep-seated antagonisms toward their own group, and that their self-esteem suffered by virtue of their group membership. The Osborne data suggest that self-esteem may actually be strengthened by embracing one's own group and "dis-identifying" with the broader social context in which adverse outcomes are widely expected. Rather than being a source of antagonism, the in-group can be a source of self-esteem maintenance and enhancement. This possibility requires a more complex cultural theory of African Americans. It is certainly true that minority groups are aware of the implicit judgments of high status groups and do take them into account. However, it does not necessarily follow that *awareness* of those judgments leads, as Lewin suggests, to deep-seated antagonisms to their own group. I propose that TRIOS provides a way of conceptualizing a basis for positive regard at both individual and collective levels. Further, TRIOS proposes a worldview that organizes the meaning of behavior, and charts strategies for navigating the universal context of racism toward positive psychological well-being. Let me now turn to assumptions underlying these theoretical possibilities.

### **TRIOS: A Theory of Culture and Psyche**

There are many different ways to think about culture. I borrow from the Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) definition that culture consists of: (a) patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting that are transmitted by and through symbols; (b) the core of traditional ideas and the values attached to them; and (c) products of action and conditioning elements of future actions. By these criteria,

culture is: *psychological*—patterns of thinking, feeling, behaving, and valuing; *symbolic*—representations of psychological meaningful patterns; *historical*—cultural elements are selectively derived and transmitted over time; and *dynamic*—cultural elements both shape meaning and are transformed by events and actions.

I argue that contemporary African American culture is continuous with its African origins. The evolution of contemporary African American culture follows a dual-process model of *reactionary* and *evolutionary* mechanisms (cf. Jones, 1988). Reactionary mechanisms consist of adaptation-coping sequences that emerge over time to address the ecological challenges members of the cultural group face. These challenges require a variety of psychological and social means of coping with two fundamental aspects of an oppressed status—(a) loss of freedom, and (b) dehumanization. Evolutionary mechanisms consist of those expressions of psyche that reflect the core cultural ethos of a people. I propose that TRIOS can be used instrumentally as a means of recovering certain forms of physical and psychological freedom, and that TRIOS can frame the foundation of a humanized existence in a hostile environment. I also suggest that TRIOS reflects the core African cultural ethos.

Slavery is defined by the loss of individual freedoms and liberties for those who are its victims (for an excellent general overview of slavery and its influences see Franklin and Moss, 1994, chapters 3–8). The abject loss of freedom resulting from enslavement generated a primary psycho-cultural motivational system designed to gain control over one's body and over one's life. As a result, claiming psychological freedom in any and every form possible can be seen as a consistent pattern of psychological adaptation and a cardinal goal of social psychological development. Although slavery was officially abolished in the United States in 1865, the truncated rights and informal systems of constraint remained in effect for years after (cf. Vann Woodward, 1951).

Physical dehumanization was related to cultural and psychological dehumanization. African civilization was judged to be primitive and its inhabitants barely human. Over more than 400 years, persons of African descent in America have been dehumanized and marginalized. It is not surprising that self-esteem, self-worth, and individual and collective identity have been issues at the forefront of our psychological analysis of African Americans. Taken together, we can reasonably expect that the ongoing quest for freedom and dignity is not just a civil rights agenda, but psychological motivation that organizes and energizes the dual-process mechanisms of self-protection and self-enhancement.

This dynamic process has unfolded over centuries with psychological consequence. The foundation for psychological mechanisms and adaptation capacities followed from the cultural conditioning that preceded the arrival of Africans in America. Faced with a new and challenging situation, Africans in America utilized those cultural patterns they knew to cope with and adapt to these new dangerous and threatening contexts. It is these prior culturally conditioned attributes and capacities that make up the evolutionary mechanisms. As a result, the reactionary

mechanisms were not invented out of whole cloth on the spot of the first conflict on a slave ship or at Jamestown plantation in 1619. Rather, they constitute the application of the evolutionary tendencies (here I am suggesting they can be summarized by TRIOS) to survival and adaptation.

We should note that this dual-process model is the cultural equivalent of the dual-process model presented earlier as an individual-level mechanism. That is, the self-protective mechanisms correspond to reactionary mechanisms, and the self-enhancing mechanisms correspond to the evolutionary mechanisms. Whether describing a person coping with a potentially threatening environment or a cultural group who are stigmatized and targeted for dehumanization and systematic oppression and constraint, these two classes of responses and human needs operate.

This dual-process model also parallels DuBois' (1903) observation about "double-consciousness" at the turn of the last century:

... It is a peculiar sensation this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, A Negro; two warring ideals on one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. ... (pp. 214–15)

Over time, the dynamics of these processes expand from simple physical and psychological *survival*, to physical and psychological *well-being*. Progress in rights and opportunities, however much qualified, opens up new avenues of possibility and expands the range of goals to which the reactionary and evolutionary mechanisms may be directed. As progress in individual rights and statutory protections has progressed, the contexts for constraint and dehumanization become more subtle. The psychological mechanisms that mediate appropriate adaptation to these perhaps more ambiguous contexts are importantly transformed over time by the subtle necessities of coping with threats that are more veiled but not necessarily less pernicious.

Through this dynamic interaction, the conditioning or evolutionary mechanisms are modified and transformed by the reactionary adaptation-coping sequences. We may project a dynamic process of continuity and change that connects contemporary African American psychological culture to its historical roots. I propose that TRIOS comprises one version of those psychologically meaningful historically derived mechanisms. I further argue that TRIOS provided the repertoire of skills, perspectives, beliefs, and values that informed the initial means of adapting to and coping with the horrific experiences of slavery. Overtime, TRIOS elements were modified by the exigencies of ecological challenges, and underwent transformations that established their relevance and utility as modes of adaptation for survival in the new world.

In order to make this set of assumptions practical, one needs to (a) specify the cultural elements of origin, (b) describe the ecological challenges, (c) trace the reactivity processes and their influence on these original cultural elements,



and (d) describe the current set of core cultural elements and how they function in a contemporary context. For the purposes of this paper, I will *stipulate* that TRIOS can define those psychologically meaningful origins, and that these TRIOS elements mediated reactivity to the ecological challenges faced by Africans in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Diaspora. Over time, the TRIOS elements define both the evolution of African cultural origins in the Diaspora as well as their dynamic change as a result of reactionary processes.

### *Origins of TRIOS*

TRIOS emerged as a way of organizing several different observations I made about African American culture. It began with the observation that racism was at its core a problem of culture (Jones, 1972, 1997). Research on sports activities (Jones & Hochner, 1973) led to the differential assessment of the self-paced versus reactive hypothesis (Worthy and Markle, 1970) which proposed that Blacks would be better at reactive sports activities (hitting in baseball, shooting field goals in basketball), while Whites would be superior at self-paced activities (free throw shooting in basketball, pitching in baseball, golf, bowling). Our data showed that Blacks were superior at all baseball activities (although they were underrepresented among pitchers, suggesting not so much ability, but a racially biased selection criterion). There was no racial difference in field goal accuracy, but Whites were reliably more accurate at free throws. Given the dominance of Blacks in basketball, I reasoned that it could not be a matter of ability, but the cultural context in which basketball skills develop. I argued that the improvisation characterized in part by individual style could explain this difference. Free throws lacked currency in this improvised world of stylistic expression, and this *psychological* element could explain the statistical difference in performance.

To this notion of improvisation was added concepts of time, rhythm, spirituality, and orality derived from spending a year in Trinidad. The idea that “any time is Trinidad time” led to the understanding that a present-time orientation is not simply a failure of valuing time and the future (which has been called *tempnomics*; cf. McGrath & Kelly, 1986), but a way of exercising personal freedom and control. It fed into both rhythm and orality, as patterns of behavior were free and hence often irregular or syncopated. Orality, defines the primacy of the spoken or sung word, and the ability of speech to forge bonds between and among people. Calypso music told the stories of the Trinidad people from year to year, and the celebration of Carnival put these stories in a musical context, expressing themselves in humor, joy, and vibrant rhythms of color and movement. The Calypsonian emerged as the modern day griot, telling the tales of life in Trinidad and Tobago in rhythm and song. Finally, Shango captured the intersection of religion and spirituality and contributed to the final TRIOS element.

*African Associations With TRIOS*

From these inductive process of observation and association, I summarize selective evidence that these relatively contemporary observations are linked to more substantial and compelling cultural data that are consistent with the origination of these TRIOS concepts in an African cultural context. I have borrowed from the writings of more or less contemporary scholars who are historians, anthropologists, philosophers, and linguists (e.g., Mbiti, 1970; Jahn, 1961; Senghor, 1956; Sobel, 1987).

*Time.* Time is typically parted into past, present, and future. Cultures around the world have come to value different aspects of these time zones and characteristic cultural and personality differences have emerged. For Africans, time was slow moving and practical, *deriving from* tasks and behaviors *not prescribing them*. This view distinguishes event time from clock time (Levine, 1997). Mbiti (1970) suggests that in Swahili no word for the future exists, only for the past (Zamani) and present (Sasa). Thus I believe that a present-past time orientation may be central to early African cultural systems.

*Rhythm.* Chernoff (1979) comments that:

... one of the most notable features of African cultures is that many activities—paddling a canoe, chopping a tree, pounding grain, or simply moving—seem set in a rhythmic framework ... the African dancer may pick up and respond to the rhythms of one or more drums, the dancer, like the drummer, adds another rhythm, one that is not there. He tunes his ear to hidden rhythms and he dances to gaps in the music. (pp. 143–144)

Rhythm is recurring patterns of behavior set in time and gives shape, energy, and meaning to psychological experience. It is complex and is a means of attaching psychological structure to the external world. It is also an internal response to the rhythmic patterns of the external world. Entrainment captures this process and links a person to his or her environment in a dynamic way.

*Improvisation.* Like rhythm, improvisation is a way of connecting the internal and the external worlds. Improvisation is a means of control and a way to structure interactions among people. With respect to music, Chernoff (1979) notes that:

Improvisation is not so much in the genesis of new rhythms as in the organization and form given to the already existing rhythms, and a musician's style of organizing his playing will indicate the way he approaches from his own mind the responsibility of his role toward making the occasion a success (p. 82).

Improvisation then serves both a social integrative function as well as a personally expressive one. Improvisation is an organizational principle that is goal-oriented and expressive. Improvisation enables creative solutions to problems that arise in

a given situation. Moreover, the expression of one's soul and spirit is an improvisational action.

*Orality.* This is a broad concept, which in an oral tradition, includes storytelling, naming, singing, drumming, and the important lessons of socialization and cultural transmission. The Word (Nommo) is the life-force, and as Jahn (1961) suggests, "... all activities of men and all movement in nature rest on the word . . . a newborn child becomes human only when his father gives him name and pronounces it." This tradition was shown to dramatic effect when Kunta Kinte was named in a ceremony in the 1977 television miniseries, *Roots* (Haley, 1976). The important meanings and values of African culture are spoken or sung, not written down. The organizing principles and values of culture are handed down through stories and parables. The oral tradition connects the present to the past. Orality gives meaning to life and binds people together in common understandings and humanity. The griot in the African cultural tradition is a professional storyteller. The life of a people is told in stories that chronicle major events, parables or truths to live by, and important values and life lessons that serve as guides for living.

*Spirituality.* This may be the most central aspect of African origins. According to Jahn (1961) all things can be assigned to one of four categories: *Muntu*—god, spirits, and human beings; *Kintu*—all forces which do not act on their own but under the control of Muntu; *Hantu*—time and space; *Kuntu*—modalities such as beauty, laughter. The importance of this taxonomy is that all categories are *forces*, which lead them to have effectance in the world. The universal force comes from the stem *-ntu*. Spirituality in this conception is the idea that forces beyond human beings act with effect in the world of human beings. In a field force sense, causality is multiply determined, and not all causes are material or knowable. TRIOS, then, is a worldview that directs culture as well as reflects it. The psychological correlates of this cultural conception diverge from one constructed on the principles of a European-derived materialistic individualism. TRIOS is the nexus from which we trace the dynamics of African-European cultural contact in America.

### *Ecological Challenges in the New World*

The ecological challenges of slavery engaged the patterns of TRIOS in adapting-coping sequences. In this oppressive environment, the opportunities for expression, social organization, and control demanded each of the TRIOS elements. Creole or pidgin languages emerged to enable oral communication among people who may have spoken somewhat different languages or dialects (cf. Morgan, 1998). Improvisation was a means of creating linguistic meanings that were privileged among the native speakers and, thus, shielded the speaker from

adverse consequences when speech was heard by a person hostile to his well-being. Expression of the human spirit was made possible through music, song, and dance. Social organization was necessarily improvised as were strategies for control of self-protective, collective actions. The cultural patterns became practical means of coping, adapting, and surviving. Thus, humanity was preserved through employing known and deep cultural principles and practices.

### **TRIOS: Psychological Principles and Hypothetical Possibilities**

As a cultural worldview, each TRIOS dimension reflects human capacity developed from the fabric of experience, necessity, belief, and evolutionary success. Psychological concepts derive from a particular cultural history and the problems and issues it defines. Mainstream psychology is inspired by European-American cultural concerns and worldviews that celebrate individual initiative and success. TRIOS offers an alternative origination of basic psychological ideas, situated in the context of African psychological culture and its elaboration in the African Diaspora. In this context, psychology is inspired by African American cultural concerns and worldviews that emphasize the human life force and the universal spirit that sustains the individual.

TRIOS rests on three related organizing principles: (a) TRIOS concepts are driven by and responsive to context; (b) contexts are immediate and contain relevant information that shape what things mean, and validates or confirms one's self-conception; (c) individual elements of TRIOS are distinctive as well as synergistic in combination. As a result, TRIOS as a whole should be taken as a worldview, instantiated over time, and expressed by individuals who have been enculturated to it. Let's examine each of these principles in turn.

#### *TRIOS and Context*

TRIOS presumes that a large percentage of meaningful events occur within a context. Context describes a moment in time, but contains cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal representations of people, places, things, and events that are not only psychologically or physically extant in the immediate context, but may exist outside of that moment. This approach reflects Lewin's idea of the situation as it can be objectively portrayed and as it is construed by a person at a particular moment in time. From the outside looking in, we speculate on a person's construal of the situation and its impact on behavior.

Another way of looking at context is as an object of regard with goal-relevant properties. Goals that can be achieved in a context include self-presentation, social influence, hedonic intentions, desires, and social control. Each of these context-driven goals can be achieved through the elements of TRIOS. Further, these goals can be linked also to motivations triggered by historically-derived responses to loss of freedom and dehumanization.

Encounters in the moment derive meaning from the relevance of ongoing behaviors and their interpretation. Simply put, context is dynamic. For example, from a contextual viewpoint language is not dependent on semantic meaning so much as its paralinguistic features, inflections, body language, facial cues, and so on. Conventional meanings of words are replaced by colloquial or neologistic meanings that privilege the speaker over the audience. In Trinidad, “mamaguy” describes verbal utterances whose meaning is opposite to its semantic content. “Your hair looks very nice today,” means just the opposite when a person is “mamaguying” you. More commonly, we are culturally aware, now, that “bad” can mean “good,” as can “stupid” or “dope.” Understanding is not just cognitive (“I understand”) or perceptual (“I see what you’re saying,” or “I hear you”), but emotional (“I feel you”). By strategic use of inflection, a simple affirmation (“uh-huh” with a rising inflection and head nod) can become a negation (“uh-huh” with a falling inflection and head shake). Alternative linguistic conventions in this contextual arsenal include the diminutive alternative (home equals “crib”), the graphically illustrated action (to leave is to “bounce,” to show appreciation is to “love,” to be an exemplar of the group or geographical area is to “represent”).

Language provides a compelling argument for power “in” the situation. In each of these cases, the language captures the interpersonal, intragroup, and the intrapsychic meaning of things, and links the speaker and the audience in a union fortified against the outsider who, absent cultural understanding, is marginalized and stripped of power to harm. What an utterance means or an actor intends is defined by the parameters in the context itself. The anthropologist E. T. Hall (1983) made a similar point in his distinction between *context-rich* and *context-poor* communications. Context-rich communications are semantically sparse and thus their meaning is derived by locating the utterances in a rich web of cultural nuance and meaning. Context-poor communications, on the other hand, are of necessity semantically dense and rely on the literal meaning of words which are both explicit and durable over time and place.

The community of perceivers who know the culture-symbols get it, and outsiders don’t. Thus one gains a measure of control when meaning is context-dependent. Conversely, imposed meanings that are instantiated and defined in a hostile culture impose external controls and reduce one’s flexibility at self-definition. It is reasonable, then, to perceive this reliance on context as a means of gaining personal control in the situation and ultimately, control of one’s self-worth.

The resurgence of culture in psychology (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Markus and Kitayama, 1991) has focused attention on the context as a variable in human behavior. One aspect of culture-as-context is the way in which the self is implicated in the construal of the meanings of things. The broadest distinction of self-relevant variables is independence from or interdependence with others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). A similar distinction is made by Individualism and Collectivism (cf. Triandis, 1994). The TRIOS analysis, though, conceives the collective and individualistic self-construals as complementary, not oppositional.

Collectivism can be expressed at the level of the individual (Jones, 1999). Psychologically, meaning is defined in this context, at this time. What a person means is determined by parameters of the immediate context itself. Further, who I am is also defined in that context. My creative improvisational performance, if accepted by the audience, defines the qualities of character I possess and lay claim to. My audience is crucial to who I am, as a result. My authentic self is not imposed on me, but defined by my actions, my speech, and my dress. It makes a self-defining statement of who I am. As we will see, the vital elements of TRIOS are jointly impacted in this contextual analysis.

What is important here is that the collective may affirm the individual, but also that through the expression of culturally sanctioned individualistic aspects of TRIOS, an individual may simultaneously affirm the collective (cf. Jones, 1999). Rather than choosing between an individualistic or collectivistic orientation, TRIOS joins them. A recent meta-analysis of individualism and collectivism has shown that African Americans are more individualistic than Whites, and are not more collectivistic (Oyserman et al., 2002). African Americans are more individualistic than Whites with respect to directness of communication with others, privacy of self-thoughts, and competition with others. Two other distinguishing features of African American individualism are that when individualism is defined by self-knowledge, African Americans are *not* more individualistic, but when defined by their personal uniqueness, they are *more* individualistic.

With respect to collectivism, although African Americans are less collective than Whites overall, they are more collective when it *excludes* seeking advice from others, moderating one's behavior to fit the context, or accepting authority. Blacks are not more collective than Whites when collectivism is defined by group harmony, a preference for group-based work, or inclusion in groups. In sum, the TRIOS perspective emphasizes strong individualistic and collective orientations to adaptation, coping and well-being, and the data on individualism-collectivism seem to support this general tendency. However, the story may be more complex than that.

Centuries of oppression, dehumanization, and discrimination require African Americans to seek and secure relatively independent sources of self-worth. Further, the community of others who can validate an African American's self-worth must be carefully chosen in a generally hostile context. It is possible that being individualistic means something different for a person in an oppressed context than it does for a person who is in a relatively secure context. Individualism in the service of survival and establishing self-worth may be of a different quality than individualism that serves personal achievement and enculturated self-representations. Further, collectivism may have less to do with duty and obligation—which can impose significant restrictions on individual freedoms—than with establishing a self-protective community (meta-culture) whose symbolic representations and privileged understandings help to establish support for individualistic expression and well-being. Collectivism, like individualism, serves survival and self-worth needs and goals for individuals. The ability of members of a group to validate

one's self-worth is not specifically reflected in the collectivism concept, and duty to others in one's group is not the same thing.

### *TRIOS as Worldview*

TRIOS is well suited to a context-driven worldview because each of its dimensions either reflects or provides a means of controlling aspects of a given context. We often consider goals, expectations, plans, and intentions in an extended time frame. That is, the basic motives in psychology seem to rest on connecting the present to a distant future that is typically desirable and presumed to be attainable (McGrath & Kelly, 1986; Zaleski, 1994; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Specific motives consist of figuring out where we want to be in the future, and establishing means-end sequences that help us reach our goals (Jones, Banicky, Lasane, & Pomare, 2003).

As a cultural syndrome, TRIOS reflects the psychological realism of being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is not only a present-time focus, but it is also a spiritual focus where living status (being) is shared with others in the broad lexicon of spirituality related to Muntu (Jahn, 1961). It is improvisational because one is successful by virtue of continued life (being), not by life's products (doing). It is oral because it is only now that we meet face to face and define and redefine, express and reveal our essential nature. The language of being-in-the-world is immediacy (the durative "be" in linguistics, "I be going . . ."; cf. Smitherman, 1977). Being-in-the-world, then, is defined as a focus on the fundamental challenges of living and the acceptance of a place in a universe in which all things matter. More practically, being-in-the-world is a self-system that does not take the future for granted, and lets go of the past.

What might one expect from such a theory? Well, one thing is that TRIOS elements may formulate themselves in a coherent way that is structurally integrated. Second, African Americans who are relatively more TRIOSic should have a higher level of psychological well-being. Third, to the extent that other groups may also experience dehumanization, restricted freedom, and marginalization, they may also be inclined toward TRIOSic qualities.

Now let us turn to some initial attempts to organize these ideas into empirically measurable and conceptually testable hypotheses.

### **The Structure of TRIOS**

Since the first publication of the TRIOS concept (Jones, 1979), I have described the basic five dimensions and talked about their possibilities as reflections of psychological processes for African Americans. I will now describe some of the preliminary evidence for the psychological coherence of TRIOS.

The conceptual premise is that TRIOS represents a worldview that has psychological correlates in the attitudes, cognitions, values, and behaviors of African

Americans, and that the structure of this worldview moderates or mediates important behavioral outcomes. It is hypothesized that persons of African descent will endorse the TRIOS dimensions, and that the dimensions will mediate psychological well-being to a greater degree than for members of other ethnic/racial groups. The following sections discuss preliminary evidence for the structure of TRIOS and ethnic/racial differences in their endorsement.

### *Measuring TRIOS*

Thurstone's (1928) declaration that "Attitudes Can Be Measured" became for me an interrogative, "*Can TRIOS be measured?*" First, students from my graduate seminar on the Cultural Psychology of African Americans and I wrote 100 questionnaire items constructed to tap the five TRIOS dimensions. Table 1 describes the underlying characteristic of each TRIOS dimension and a sample item assessing it. Using a 7-point Likert scale for responses with a range of -3 "not at

**Table 1.** TRIOS Domains and Assessment

Dimension Name	Description	Sample Item
<i>Time</i>	*Focuses attention on the present; immediacy of goals or behavior.	I try to live one day at a time.
	*Setting goals and planning for the future.	I make extensive plans for the future.
	*Emotion laden thoughts about the past.	I think about the past a lot.
<i>Rhythm</i>	*An internal rhythmic process with external dynamic properties—flow, entrainment.	I always try to get in synch with surroundings.
	*Importance of and preference for physical expression.	Music and dance are important forms of personal expression.
<i>Improvisation</i>	*Creative problem solving in conflicted contexts.	When something disrupts my goals, I often figure out how to achieve them anyway.
	*Personally characteristic expressiveness or style.	I have a personal style that is all my own.
<i>Orality</i>	*Preference for verbal exchange that is face-to-face.	I always try to deal with people straight up and face to face.
	*Words, speech, and humor are fundamental modes of personal expression.	I often feel that my experiences are not "real" until I tell someone about them.
	*Means of creating and maintaining social bonds.	In my social group, laughter often holds us together.
	*Means of communicating cultural values, knowledge and expectations.	The most important things I know come more from stories I have heard than things I have read.
<i>Spirituality</i>	*Belief in a higher power or force.	Belief in God or a greater power, helps me deal with the circumstances of my life.
	*Control and responsibility is shared with this force.	There are forces that influence my life that I cannot explain.



all true of me” to +3 “very true of me,” with the “0” point labeled “not-relevant to me,” we obtained responses from 200 people including students in classes at the University of Delaware, Howard University, friends, relatives, and neighbors. We created non-empirically-derived subscales based on the TRIOS dimensions the items were written to assess, and computed item-subscale correlations. We eliminated those items with a poor correlation, along with those that we judged to be poorly worded or confusing. This left us with 60 items, which we augmented with additional items to assess aspects of the TRIOS concept that were missing in the original item set.

Specifically, we added several items related to the interpersonal and social nature of Orality that included (a) in-group cohesion through humor, (b) the high context nature of Orality which implies that nonverbal cues matter more than literal utterances, and (c) the significance of psychological comfort in a social context as a condition for success. We further added two items from the Singelis (1994) scale assessing cultural differences in construal of the self (one tapping interdependence and one independence). Finally, we added several items designed to tap the past orientation, since the original set only addressed present and future orientations.

We then administered this expanded set of 77 items to a larger sample from several sources including a private university in California, a city college in Los Angeles, a private predominately Black university on the East Coast, a public university on the East Coast, Delaware, a predominantly Black high school in Philadelphia, a public university in South Florida, and others notable by their convenience. The final sample consisted of 1415 respondents of whom two thirds were women and one third men, a little over 40% were White, 21% were Black, 19% were Latin, 11% were Asian, and 9% were of mixed race or did not provide racial information. The age range was 14 to 62, with the average age for each group between 20 and 21 years.

### *The Structures of TRIOS*

We conducted an exploratory principal components factor analysis (EFA) on the entire sample of respondents for the 77 items, setting an eigenvalue cutoff at 2.0. This produced six factors. We then removed all items whose commonalities were less than .30 and re-ran the EFA, setting a five-factor criterion, and using an oblimin rotation. The five factors that emerged accounted for 43 percent of the common variance. Table 2 summarizes the factor structures and items that loaded above .40 on each.

I will summarize the factor structure in order of the TRIOS model rather than the order in which the factors were extracted. The factor structure reproduces the TRIOS dimensions rather well.

*Time* in the TRIOS model is represented broadly as a present-time orientation—living-in-the-now. Time emerged as the fourth factor extracted and is characterized as present orientation. Its character appears to be as much

**Table 2.** Five-Factor Structure of TRIOS

	Factor Loading
<i>F1–Spirituality–alpha = .88</i>	
Belief in God or a greater power helps me deal with the circumstances of my life.	.87
Belief in a higher power is important to me.	.85
Sometimes, you just have to put your life in the hands of a higher power.	.82
There is a higher force (other than myself) that directs my path in life.	.77
I pray or consult with a person who shares my spiritual beliefs before I make a major life decision.	.75
In most every aspect of my life, I am strengthened by my spiritual beliefs.	.71
I believe that the world is full of powerful and unknowable forces.	.58
There are reasons beyond our understanding for everything that happens.	.56
There are forces that influence my life that I cannot explain.	.43
<i>F2–Improvisation–alpha = .72</i>	
When a situation arises, I usually know 2–3 different ways to handle it.	.68
When things do not go as planned, it is easy for me to devise another plan right on the spot.	.67
I can figure my way out of almost any situation.	.67
When something disrupts my goals, I often figure out how to achieve them anyway.	.64
I always try to deal with people straight up and face-to-face.	.60
I have a personal style that is all my own.	.48
<i>F3–Orality in Social Context–alpha = .69</i>	
It is important to be yourself at all times.	.67
It is important for me to be comfortable in a situation in order to be successful.	.63
In my social group, laughter often holds us together.	.61
Humor is key to my relationships with my friends.	.60
It is important for me to maintain harmony in my group.	.60
My personal identity is very important to me.	.55
<i>F4–Present Orientation–alpha = .61</i>	
Preparing for what might happen in the future is often a waste of time.	.63
It's better to live the present moment to the fullest than to plan for the future.	.60
When I try to envision the future, I draw a blank.	.58
It is important for me to plan ahead and have goals that organize my life.®	–.52
I have made extensive plans for the future.®	–.48
<i>F5–aRhythmia–alpha = .35</i>	
I often feel anxiety when I am late for a scheduled event.	.53
If I feel someone is attacking me, I sometimes struggle not knowing what to do.	.50
I often feel that my experiences are not “real” until I tell someone about them.	.47

*Note:* Based on sample *N* of 1415, Principle Components Analysis, Oblimin Rotation. ® indicates that an item is reverse scored.

anti-future as it is present focus. Two items pit a present focus opposite a future one, and a positive response chooses the present over the future. A third item renders the future invisible. And the final two items reject planning for the future as an important life process. This leaves us with a self-contained present notable by the absence of thoughts about the future. It is important to note that this version of present orientation is neither hedonistic or pleasure seeking, nor a fatalistic view of an uncontrollable future as other scales have found (cf. Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

It is simply an expression of living-in-the-now uninfluenced by future possibilities, and a *preference* for this approach to life. The reliability of the six-item time (present orientation) subscale is acceptable at .61.

*Rhythm* does not emerge clearly as a factor in this TRIOS structure. It was the fifth factor extracted, and had an eigenvalue of 1.98. The three items that form this factor were written to tap, in order, improvisation, time and orality. Although they do not reflect the original ideas of rhythm, they do seem to reflect an asynchrony in relationships between a person and his or her surroundings. I have tentatively labeled this factor "*aRhythmia*." The inability to mesh with one's circumstances or to handle aggressive actions or even to understand the meaning of things without further consultation suggests a negative reaction to one's environment. This may capture a blocked sense of flow between the person and his or her environment. This would be a negative instance of rhythm as conceived in the TRIOS model, and a high scorer on this factor would be considered "a-TRIOSic." The low reliability of these three items ( $\alpha = .35$ ) may be due to the small number of items that comprise it. Rhythm is a hard concept to capture in a paper and pencil measure. This dimension needs more work as it could be that we have unreliably selected items to assess it. I should note that one of the best rhythm items, "Music and dance are important forms of personal expression," emerges as a significant element in the first factor extracted for both African Americans and Hispanics in group-based EFAs. It could be that rhythm is more distinctively different across groups and that is why it works so weakly in the composite factor structure. Research to sort this out is ongoing.

*Improvisation* is a reflection of the belief that one can successfully overcome unforeseen obstacles, that one can achieve in spite of external barriers to success, and that one's manner of accomplishing this is heavily based on personal qualities that are self-defining. Improvisation is an individualistic orientation that can engender optimism about the future. It is also clearly set in the present and thus fits the more general idea that TRIOS is a context-driven concept. Improvisation was the second factor extracted, and the six items fit the TRIOS model quite well and form a reliable subscale ( $\alpha = .72$ ). Improvisation is captured by creative and effective problem solving in a challenging context. Uncertainty of expectations is countered by the belief that one will handle whatever arises. In this belief resides a feeling of control. This form of control is different from the kind based on control of events external to the self. Improvisation holds the self capable of controlling outcomes even when the circumstances are unpredictable, controlled by others, or perhaps even relatively likely to produce adverse outcomes. Belief in one's ability to handle whatever comes along is a comforting feeling and provides the person with a sense of optimism about the future. The addition of personal style to improvisation reflects the individuality of improvisation and its self-defining quality. Further, handling issues "face-to-face" implies the directness of the improvisational approach. Like the other dimensions,

improvisation is context dependent, and conveys both the self-protective motives through problem solving, and the self-enhancement motives through personal style and expression.

*Orality* was conceived principally as the oral expression of meaning through words and song in a social context. Orality conveys meanings handed down over time through stories, but also establishes social bonds through the privileged meanings, styles of speech, and preferences for in-group relations. Orality presupposes a high context social environment (cf. Hall, 1983). The complex nature of orality suggests that it might be captured by two or three different factors. The one that emerged as the third factor is labeled orality in social context (OSC). This six-item subscale attained acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .69$ ). OSC is characterized by a generalized sensitivity to interpersonal relationships in a social context. Relations with friends and in-group harmony reflect the use of orality to maintain social boundaries and promote in-group cohesion. The self as socially constructed also is reflected by the need for a personal social identity defined by personal properties and invariance across settings. Further, feeling comfort in the social context may be a precondition for psychological well-being. The implication of being in a comfortable social setting, tied to others through humor and social sharing, while maintaining positive personal identity support the idea that personal distinctiveness and group belonging are highly related (cf. Brewer, 1991). It also makes plausible the connections between individualism and collectivism as suggested earlier in this paper and elsewhere (Jones, 1999). Interestingly, the independent item ("be yourself at all times") and the interdependent item ("valuing harmony in my group") from Singelis (1994, p. 585) *both* loaded on this factor, again suggesting that this factor may tap both individually oriented and more collectively oriented sentiments. OSC suggests also that social context can be both a source of self-protective motives (cf. Tatum, 1999: *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?*), as well as a means of self- and collective expression and self-enhancement. Sitting together in one's group may convert an uncertain and uncomfortable environment into one that is more secure. The resulting psychological comfort then enables one to perform successfully.

*Spirituality* is defined by a belief in a higher power as a functional element of one's daily life. It is not synonymous with religiosity, but would probably be modestly correlated with it. It is further defined by the belief that there are forces in the world that influence one's outcomes that one neither knows nor can explain or understand. This view of spirituality is consistent with the conceptualization of spirituality in the TRIOS model. Eight items comprise the spirituality subscale, which was the first factor extracted, and had the highest reliability coefficient ( $\alpha = .88$ ). There are two aspects to this spirituality subscale. First is the everyday functionality of spirituality. Six of the items capture the idea that spiritual beliefs and priorities help one cope with everyday life. An additional three items portray spirituality as the powerful and unknown forces that intervene to determine

life events. It is often suggested that spirituality is related to an external locus of control, and is a substitute for the feeling of control implied by an internal self-focused locus. These spirituality items acknowledge that one may not be in control of everything that happens, but does not imply a passive, pawn-like relationship to one's circumstances. Rather, spirituality can serve an important function in taking control of one's life on a daily basis. Like improvisation, spirituality provides a sense of confidence that living and doing one's best is what one has a responsibility to do. This may be a very healthy attitude for a person who in fact faces a challenging circumstance that contains many obstacles that are unscripted and must be managed.

Taken as a whole, then, these measures of TRIOS fit the overall concept of TRIOS as a context-driven focus on being-in-the-world, and a five-dimensional structure reasonably well. Spirituality, improvisation and time (present-orientation) are quite faithful and reliable representations of the TRIOS model. Orality is well organized and reasonably reliable as well, but there are important aspects of orality that this single factor does not represent. Rhythm is clearly the weakest dimension and on the basis of the reliability coefficients, needs to be evaluated carefully and perhaps more items need to be chosen.

One recurring question concerns whether the five TRIOS dimensions function as separate factors, or can be combined into a single TRIOS index. To explore this question we conducted an EFA on the five-factors described above, and a two factor solution emerged in which spirituality, improvisation, orality in social context and present orientation constitute the first factor (26% variance) and aRhythmia and a negative loading of improvisation constitute the second factor (25% variance). We calculated the reliability index of all 29 items (reverse scoring the three aRhythmia items, and two present orientation items as noted) and obtained an alpha of .69. This suggests that the items comprising the five factors can be combined as a single TRIOS index. We combined these 29 items into a composite index of TRIOS and labeled it TRIOS-C. However, since the individual factors were also reliable (with the exception of aRhythmia), a preliminary conclusion is that a hierarchical model can describe the TRIOS structure. That is, TRIOS-C scores may be used as an estimate of an individual's overall level of TRIOSity. In addition, their individual subfactor scores could be used independently as predictors of attitudes and behaviors more relevant to specific dimensions. For example, present orientation is often linked to a variety of negative behaviors like unhealthy risk-taking and poor academic performance. But when present orientation is part of the TRIOS-C structure, it is tempered and buffered by the other TRIOS dimensions which may be related to more positive outcomes. The higher order TRIOS-C and the second order present orientation would thus make differential predictions about behavioral outcomes. Determining the validity and utility of these hierarchical relationships between TRIOS-C and the subscales remains for future research.

**Table 3.** Mean TRIOS Scores by Race and Gender Total Sample Factor

	Spirituality	Improvisation	Orality in Social Context	Present Orientation	aRhythmia	TRIOS-C*
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>						
White ( <i>N</i> = 603)	.41 <sub>a</sub>	1.36 <sub>a</sub>	2.18 <sub>a</sub>	.05 <sub>a</sub>	0.45 <sub>a</sub>	.72 <sub>a</sub>
Black ( <i>N</i> = 293)	1.52 <sub>b</sub>	1.44 <sub>a</sub>	2.37 <sub>b</sub>	.29 <sub>c</sub>	0.17 <sub>b</sub>	1.09 <sub>b</sub>
Hispanic ( <i>N</i> = 295)	1.06 <sub>c</sub>	1.49 <sub>a,b</sub>	2.03 <sub>c</sub>	.24 <sub>b</sub>	0.33 <sub>a,b,c</sub>	.90 <sub>c</sub>
Asian American ( <i>N</i> = 150)	.87 <sub>c</sub>	1.23 <sub>a,c</sub>	2.17 <sub>a,c</sub>	.08 <sub>a</sub>	0.61 <sub>a,c</sub>	.75 <sub>a</sub>
<i>Gender</i>						
Males ( <i>N</i> = 408)	.70	1.49	2.15	0.17	0.12	.88
Females ( <i>N</i> = 804)	1.00	1.36	2.22	0.15	0.49	.85
<i>Significance</i>						
Race/Ethnicity	.000	.05	.000	.000	.023	.000
Sex	.000	.06	.018	.022	.000	ns
Race/Ethnicity × Sex	ns	ns	ns	.06	ns	ns
Cronbach Alpha	.88	.72	.69	.61	.35	.70

*Note.* Values within columns with different subscripts are significantly different from each other based on Tukey post hoc HSD statistic. \*TRIOS-C is the average of scores on Spirituality, Improvisation, Orality in Social Context and Present Orientation minus scores on aRhythmia.

### *Ethnic/Racial Differences in TRIOS*

Mean scores for each empirically derived TRIOS factor including TRIOS-C served as dependent variables in a 4 (race) by 2 (sex) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Tukey Honestly Significant Differences (HSD) statistics were computed for post hoc comparisons of racial/ethnic differences. Table 3 presents the mean factor scores for Whites, African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans for each of the five factors and TRIOS-C.

There were significant race main effects on each of the five dimensions, and significant sex main effects on all but improvisation. There were no reliable race by sex interactions on any of the dimensions. To summarize, African Americans scored significantly higher than all other groups on TRIOS-C. In addition, they scored significantly higher than or as high as any of the other racial/ethnic groups on all of the TRIOS dimensions. Hispanics scored higher than Whites and Asian Americans on TRIOS-C, and Asians and Whites did not differ. Hispanics also scored higher than Whites on spirituality, and present orientation. These results support the idea that dimensions of TRIOS have greater representation among persons of African descent as reflected in scores on the TRIOS scale.

### *Sex Differences in TRIOS*

There were no differences between men and women on TRIOS-C. However, there were significant sex differences on several of the TRIOS dimensions, which

further attests to the utility of a hierarchical view of TRIOS. Since we made no predictions about sex differences, and since none were found on TRIOS-C, we will not discuss these further.

Another way to explore racial ethnic differences in TRIOSic structure is to conduct separate EFAs for each group. Space limits do not permit a detailed discussion of these results, but suffice it to say that there were several differences in items that loaded on individual factors, as well as the order in which factors were extracted. For example, the EFA for Whites revealed a fourth factor labeled time, but it consisted of a *future* orientation. For Blacks, the present orientation did not emerge as a separate factor, but combined with orality to create what we labeled orality-in-the-now. Each separate factor structure suggested differences that could be interpreted to reflect subtle differences in cultural orientation. Whereas the differences in factor scores based on the total sample are nomothetic differences based on a common metric, the different factor structures may be more idiographically representative of cultural differences. Much more work needs to be done, but strong evidence is presented that the TRIOS measure captures ways in which ethnic/racial groups differ from each other on a common set of TRIOS dimensions. Preliminary factor analysis of each group suggests further that the items that comprise the TRIOS dimensions may array themselves somewhat differently for different racial/ethnic groups. The idea that they may differ from each other in how those dimensions are organized within ethnic/racial cultural contexts is worth exploring.

### Conclusion

TRIOS is conceptualized as a worldview reflecting a cultural ethos of African origins, and expressed by individual motivations for self-protection and self-enhancement in a universal context of racism. It is proposed that TRIOS is psychologically adaptive because it represents self-relevant beliefs and values that foster ego-resilience and optimism. TRIOS is an effective approach to living because it presupposes individual capacity, skill and successful functioning in challenging circumstances. A TRIOSic worldview is also supported by the value of others and the assistance that a spiritual life can provide.

It would follow from the outline of origins and character of TRIOS that African Americans should embrace its elements to a greater degree than other ethnic/ racial groups, particularly Whites. Further, it could be argued that a high level of TRIOS-ity would mediate psychological well-being in challenging psychosocial contexts. The empirically derived psychometric structure supports the underlying assumptions about its organization and coherence. The comparative analyses show that African Americans could be described as more TRIOSic than other racial/ethnic groups. This is a promising extension of the descriptive hypothesis about the TRIOS concept to an empirically validated measure of it.

A number of theoretical and empirical questions suggest themselves. Is TRIOS a personality or a cultural construct or both? The fact that the items are neither racially nor culturally specific, yet we obtain significant race and ethnic differences, suggests TRIOS taps into values and beliefs that vary by cultural group; hence it is a cultural construct. However, the factor analytic method itself implies a personality basis to the scale. It is most likely that the answer is both, and determining how the personality and cultural aspects operate will be an important future project. A related question is does TRIOS mediate or moderate psychological well-being similarly for different racial/ethnic groups? One might hypothesize that a high TRIOS score would be more significant for African Americans, or for persons who live in challenging circumstances.

One might also ask if TRIOS is represented by specific psychological mechanisms or cognitive structures and if so what are they? For example, in some preliminary research we find that high scores on TRIOS-C are related to the values (cf. Schwartz, 1992) of achievement, self-direction, stimulation, benevolence, and universalism, and are related to self-worth contingent on virtuous living (cf. Crocker and Wolfe, 2001). By contrast, spirituality is related to self-worth contingent on God's love (cf. Crocker and Wolfe, 2001) and improvisation is related to ego-resilience (cf. Block and Kremen, 1996). This sort of validity research will help direct us to domains in which we might expect TRIOS level to matter, and allow us to contrast the first-order TRIOS-C with the second order individual TRIOS dimensions.

Finally, since the items are not about race, but produce significant racial differences, it is possible that a person's TRIOS level might serve as a non-reactive index of his or her level of prejudice. The reason for this association would be that the TRIOSic worldview is generally non-evaluative and non-judgmental, and non-comparative. People who have such a worldview should be less likely to hold beliefs associated with conventional prejudice, and to embrace views more similar to African Americans. These and other questions are the focus of our current research.

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