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Any Time Is Trinidad Time! Cultural Variations in the Value and Function of Time

James M. Jones
University of Delaware

William T. Brown
Norwalk Community College

In 1973, I spent a year in Trinidad and Tobago studying calypso humor (Jones & Liverpool, 1976). But the cultural expression that captured my attention and has persisted in my own research is the idea that, "Any Time is Trinidad time." What does that mean? My initial assumption was that in Trinidad, like my experiences in the United States, things operated on "colored people's time" (CPT). CPT I was familiar with. Events started when the principals arrived, not when the appointed hour was reached. They ended in similar fashion. If someone said she would meet you at 7:00, you might inquire "Is that CPT time?" to know how to manage your own behavior. In essence, CPT is a variable, casual attitude about and value of time that has consequences for behavior.

What I discovered in Trinidad is that time perspective is a cultural attribute, a syndrome even. As a cultural attribute, Any Time is Trinidad Time (ATTT) is



not just an attitude about time, it is a value of personal and cultural meaning. That is, *time* has no inherent value; it is not per se an asset. Rather, one's behavior is almost entirely determined by social relationships, personal intentions, preferences, and motives. Time is not a metric by which progress and accomplishment are calculated, but a "yoked control" that mirrors behavior, but exerts little effect on it. The anthropologist E. T. Hall (1983) referred to behavior in time as the *dance of life* that intimately connects feelings, emotions, actions, and verbal and nonverbal displays in a temporal *pas de deux*.

McGrath (1988) refers to a society that values time as a *temponomic* society. In this society, time has inherent value and is treated like an asset. What I discovered in Trinidad was a comparative cultural difference between this temponomic view of time, and a view that was indifferent to time. In this chapter, we call this temporal indifference a *temponostic* orientation. When time is inherently valued, it is treated like any other asset (time is money) and as a result, can be saved, invested, and should not be wasted. Furthermore, the values that arise in conjunction with this temponomic view become fundamental to the character of a society. Behavior that regards time as an asset is rewarded, and behaving indifferently and capriciously toward time is punished (the Puritans called their children to account for their time: "How have you spent your time today?"; cf. Sobel, 1987; see also the aphorism "An idle child is the Devil's playmate").

By contrast, when time has no inherent value, it has little effect on behavior. In temponomic society, time functions as an *independent* variable that often dictates and structures behavior. In a temponostic society, time functions as a *dependent* variable that is structured and given meaning primarily as a consequence of behavior. Temponomic society operates on "clock" time according to schedules and rules of engagement that structure the flow of daily living. Temponostic society operates on "event" time (Levine, 1997), by which the flow of daily living is determined by the transactions and events that occur. The temporal profile of the society is computed from the behavior patterns produced by events, not the other way around.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the ramifications of cultural differences in temporal orientation. The ATTT temponostic perspective is contrasted with the temponomic perspective and the two are the fulcrum on which the present and future time orientations turn. It is possible as well to consider the past as an aspect of time that shows cultural as well as individual variation. At the individual level, past orientation is often associated with a variety of neurotic and adverse mental states (Holman & Silver, 1998; Jones, Banicky, Lasane, & Pomare, 2004), although aspects of a past orientation have also been linked with more positive behaviors (cf. Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999, and Boyd &



Zimbardo, chap. 5, this volume). But as a cultural syndrome, a strong past orientation may play a more constructive role in the management of psychological and behavioral patterns because of the associations with values of tradition, security, and conformity (cf., Schwartz, 1992).

The view we adopt suggests also that present orientation plays a pivotal role in the mechanisms that emerge to cope with oppressive circumstances. If one lives in a social condition where the contingencies between present behavior and future outcomes are diminished if not severed, then achieving desirable future outcomes may depend on the ability to repeatedly and consistently manage and control the immediate situation or context. This necessity promotes a present-time focus and it could be argued that in a present-oriented person or society the "present drives the future." In a future-oriented person or society, distal goals organize a person's present motivations and behavioral decisions; thus the "future drives the present" (Jones, 1988).

More specifically, we propose that cultural orientation to and value of time can importantly influence behaviors at the individual level, and that these variations are linked to different strategies and preferences for achieving health and well-being, socializing children, and structuring family dynamics. These basic ideas are illustrated and argued from the perspective of African Americans specifically, and persons from African descent more generally. The first section discusses culture principles of time, different ways in which time is conceived and influences behavior, and the values that arise. The second section explores the idea that time is a functional instrumentality in individual and collective lives. Whereas means-ends patterns promote the temponomic agenda, living in the now defines the temponostic strategy. The third section argues that temponomic and temponostic perspectives can and do coexist and taken together promote a comprehensive temporal perspective.

CULTURAL PRINCIPLES OF TIME

Hall (1983) puts time at the center of culture by declaring that, "Because time is a core system of all cultures, and because culture plays such a prominent role in the understanding of time as a cultural system, it is virtually impossible to separate time from culture at some levels" (p. 4). There has been much theorizing and empirical research regarding the origins, structure and consequences of time perspective as an individual-difference construct (cf. Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Culture operates at the collective level like personality functions at the individual level. In this section, we briefly discuss the fundamental nature of time as a cultural construction. The overriding point is that time perspective is a cultural value as well as an organizing principle for relationships, norms, and expectations.



There are a myriad of definitions of culture but we prefer the Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) definition, which provides a broader perspective on it:

Culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and creating, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. Culture systems may . . . be considered products of action, [or] as conditioning elements of future actions. (p. 86)

By these criteria, culture is psychological, symbolic, historical, value based, and dynamic. By dynamic we mean it is both a template for behavior and the nature of meaning as well as a consequence of behavior. That is, we create culture continuously. Our orientation to and value of time is constantly shaping our culture-meaning systems while also responding to them.

Let us illustrate by an example from Jones' Trinidad sojourn. When is it time to leave a party? The night before I was to leave Trinidad after a 1-year stay, I was at a party given by a local journalist. I had to be at the airport by 11:00 a.m. the next morning and still had some packing to do and final preparations to make. I had stopped wearing a watch so I inquired about the time. I was told it was 1:00 a.m. and was amazed. I immediately said, "I have to go. I have to prepare for my trip tomorrow." I was chastised and rebuked for letting the clock dictate my behavior: "What is dat? You drinking, dancing and havin' a good time and now you look at the clock and say you have to go. Come nah mon, stay!" I knew enough to know that my "reasons" were not valued in this cultural milieu. Value lay in the now, not in preparing for the next thing. I stayed and still made my flight the next morning!

Hofstede's Four Dimensions of Culture. One of the earliest comprehensive empirical studies of culture was the classic work of Hofstede (2001) in which he identified four dimensions of culture: *power distance*—substantial power inequalities exist between those high and low in authority and are commonly accepted and valued; *individualism*—the degree to which ties among individuals are loose, and people pursue goals and acquire identities that are self-contained, valued, and contrasted with *collectivism*—which is the value of inclusion and connectedness of individuals to their primary groups; *masculinity* is clearly demarcated from femininity in terms of both role expectations and individual characteristics. Masculinity is assertive and competitive and femininity is nurturing and modest. These qualities are separable from the genders of the people who enact them; and *uncertainty avoidance*—the degree to which one feels uncomfortable in unstructured situations. This tendency leads to the value placed on order, rules,



and structure and a belief in absolute truth, whereas *uncertainty acceptance* is associated with flexibility, relativism, and tolerance.

The Fifth Dimension—Confucian Dynamism. Hofstede and Bond (1988) report a study in which traditional Chinese values of Confucianism were assessed across 22 countries and compared with the results from the original Hofstede study. What emerged is a construct labeled *Confucian dynamism*, which was subsequently relabeled as orientation toward the present or the future. High-scoring countries valued persistence, hierarchical ordering of relationships, thrift, and sense of shame. Low-scoring countries valued personal steadiness and stability, protecting one's face, respect for tradition, and reciprocity with others. Eastern countries tended to be low scorers whereas Western countries tended to be high scorers. The high-scoring end was associated with a future orientation, whereas the low-scoring end was associated with greater value placed on the present and the past.

There are two things to note about this fifth dimension. Confucian dynamism is not one polarity versus the other, but there are strong Confucian elements in both. Thus the critical element here is the need to find the "middle way" (cf. Nisbett, 2002). The second finding is that both polarities were positively related to economic change as measured by change in gross national product (GNP) from 1965 to 1985. That is, both high- and low-scoring nations on Confucian dynamics were ranked among those with strong economic growth. Thus with respect to time, if culture and time are intertwined, and if orientation to the past, the present, or the future can occur in combination not only as "pure forms," then cultures as well as individuals might importantly be analyzed regarding their "bitemporality" or biculturalilty. The dichotomy we posed at the beginning may be too simple. Rather than juxtaposing temponomic and temponostic approaches, we need to consider the conditions under which either or both are most likely to occur and with what consequence.

Cultural Variations in Time Perspectives. The basic distinction made about cultures comes down to a contrast between an orientation toward the future (temponomic) and a preference for living in the present (temponostic). Hall (1983) distinguishes these perspectives with the concepts of *monochronic time* (M-time) and *polychronic time* (P-time). M-time is characterized by doing one thing at a time, following schedules, and considering time to be tangible. P-time is characterized by "doing many things at once." Punctuality or even time-based appointments are regarded lightly, and time is intangible. P-time is social and thus is based on "transactions." M-time is arbitrary, imposed, and



ultimately learned as a consequence of cultural socialization. But, Hall argues, M- and P-time are not mutually exclusive and often interact. M-time is business time, work time, official. P-time is often play time, or social time. We work (M-time) and we play (P-time), and people and cultures have a capacity to do both. But culture is "patterning" of behavior, and the dominant pattern defines the cultural character. So when I purchased a rug in Morocco, it was a long process involving green tea, music, chatter, and of course bargaining. It was a P-time social occasion as a means of producing an M-time business transaction. Even in the United States, business deals may get brokered on the golf course.

Brislin and Kim (2003) discussed these dimensions of time in relationship to international business dealings across cultural boundaries. Of the many dimensions of culture that might be relevant, Brislin and Kim delineate time as crucial. They propose 10 ways in which intercultural transactions may be complicated by differences in time perspective and values: (a) clock versus event time; (b) punctuality; (c) task versus social time as workday activities; (d) M-time versus P-time; (e) relative importance of work versus leisure time; (f) fast versus slow pace of life—fast pace related to both higher economic productivity and coronary heart disease; (g) long periods of silence—may be uncomfortable to clock time, temponomic cultures, but valuable opportunities to show respect and calm in event time societies; (h) past, present, and future orientation—variations indicate the relative importance of tradition, short-term versus long-term goals, efficiency, the value of time; (i) symbolic nature of time—time is money, control a sign of power, important issues get more time; (j) time efficiency—faster is better in some cultures, not in others.

But what about cultures for whom the future is not so prominent. Mbiti (1970) argues that in many African cultures, language does not recognize the future, only the present (*sasa*) and the past (*zamani*). By this reckoning, time moves "backward." That is, because the future is only a "hypothetical construct," it has no tangible place in human affairs. Ancestors are culturally crucial because their life and spirit is responsible for the present. What lies ahead of us is the role of ancestor. Once an ancestor, we belong to the past and a *zamani* existence. The life chain is a cycle from present to past with only a fleeting moment in which a short-term future may come into fuzzy view.

This *sasa-to-zamani* axis can be considered a cyclical view of time. It is contrasted with the more familiar linear view in which the past precedes the present which precedes the future. In this linear world, events are discrete, time and space are bound together, and Newtonian physics is gospel. To illustrate, Cottle and Klineberg (1974) developed the "lines test," in which a respondent first places a hash mark on a straight line to indicate the point of his or her



birth. Then a mark is placed at the beginning of the present, the beginning of the future, and one's death. The net of this exercise is five temporal regions: the "historical" past (prior to one's birth), the personal past, the present, the personal future, and the "historical" future (time after one's death). This procedure demonstrates the presumed linearity of life and the flow of time from past to future.

In the cyclical world, space and time are only casually related, events overlap, things occur simultaneously, and Einsteinian relativity is a core operating system. Cottle and Klineberg (1974) also developed a "circles test," which simply asked respondents to draw three circles representing the past, the present, and the future. In this way, issues of overlapping temporal regions, the size of these regions, and so forth could be calculated. The circles test admits a more cyclical view of time (for a review of additional measures of time orientation, see chaps. 2 and 5, this volume).

Summary. Time is a core cultural concept; it's cultural significance achieves a level of value that gives rise to characteristic beliefs and behaviors. Time is generalized and abstract as well as concrete in situations.

TIME AS VALUE—TEMPOINOMICS

Future orientation is a value that follows from the temponomic perspective. Hofstede, (2001) based his cultural studies on Rokeach's (1973) idea that a value is "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (pp. 159–160).

One value arises from the attitude or belief in the contingent probabilities associated with present actions and future outcomes (Jones, 1988). Specifically, believing that a specific act in the present (e.g., studying hard) increases the likelihood of the occurrence of some future goal state (becoming a medical doctor, having a rewarding career), attaches value to those contingent beliefs, and provides behavioral control. In a "just" world, one could argue, people control their futures and the outcomes that follow.

Another way is to attach value to the behaviors that lead to attainment of desirable future goals. There is ample experimental evidence for the value-based belief in setting goals, and realizing them. For example, DeVolder and Lens (1982) defined "perceived instrumentality" as the perceived contingent relationship between present study behaviors and future outcomes. They found among Belgian male adolescents a positive relationship between perceived instrumentality and academic performance.



Individual Differences in Time Orientation

In our own work, we have found similar evidence of the link between characteristics of future orientation (temponomics) and academic achievement. To test these time orientation effects, Jones et al. (2004) developed a temporal orientation scale (TOS). The TOS is a 15-item self-report scale with 5 items each assessing one's past orientation (I think about the past a lot), present orientation (The joy in my life comes from what I am doing now, not from what I will be doing later), and future orientation (I am able to resist temptation when there is work to be done).

Past Orientation. A past-oriented person thinks about the past a lot, and seems to want to relive those experiences. The reasons for reliving them appear to be twofold: One is to change them, which implies that the experiences were not as positive as the person would have liked, and the other is to return to what may perhaps have been a happier time. Past-orientation scores were positively related to neuroticism, and negatively related to conscientiousness in the NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1986), and positively associated with depression (Beck Depression Inventory [BDI]), rumination (Lyubormirsky & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1995), and pessimism (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994).

Present Orientation. A present temporal orientation suggests a person who truly lives in the present by not dwelling on the past and not looking ahead to the future. The present focus is on enjoyment, which is an important aspect of the present-oriented person's behavioral motivation. The present-oriented person is focused on the now (living day-to-day), not on the future or the past. Present-orientation scores were positively related to extraversion (NEO), optimism, and impulsivity (Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Joireman, Teta, & Kraft, 1993), and negatively related to goal orientation (Malouff et al., 1990), and concern with future consequences (Strathman, Gleicher, Boninger, & Edwards, 1994).

Future Orientation. A future-orientation is characterized by planful action, delay of gratification, self-discipline, perseverance, punctuality, and the use of means-ends behavioral chains to meet long-term goals. Future-orientation scores were significantly related to conscientiousness and extraversion in the NEO, optimism, goal orientation, and concern with future consequences, and negatively related to impulsivity (Zuckerman Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire, ZKPQ) and depression (BDI).



Using the TOS to assess temporal orientation, we have explored the association of temporal orientation and several markers of academic achievement. For example, college students who set academic goals, internalize those goals as part of their self-concept, and believe in their personal efficacy in reaching those goals, show higher academic performance than those who either do not formulate academic goals, or do not internalize them when they do (Lasane & Jones, 1999).

It is important to know that these linkages of future orientation and academic achievement involve not only the ability to formulate goals but also internalizing the value of avoiding or suppressing behaviors that are believed to interfere with reaching desired goal. Lasane and Jones (2000) showed that the relative value placed on social relationships in part determined whether a person would make behavioral decisions that undermined their already established academic goals. Present-oriented college students were significantly more likely than future-oriented to choose a socially desirable alternative that conflicted with an academically relevant one. Present orientation, it seems, is characterized by the value of interpersonal transactions and events, not schedules or goals.

Brown and Jones (2004) investigated the relationship between the future temporal orientation (FTO) and academic performance of African American high school students. We proposed a positive relationship between FTO and academic performance but predicted that it would be mediated by students' perceptions of the usefulness of an education and the value they placed on academic work. We hypothesized further that the relationships between FTO and these mediators would be moderated by students' perceptions of school and societal inequity. Consistent with general findings (cf. Raynor & Entin 1983; Van Calster, Lens, & Nuttin, 1987) future-oriented African American students tended to also have higher grade point averages (GPAs). Those students with strong orientations toward the future also tended to see education as more useful for reaching later life success, and indicated higher perceived intrinsic value for academic work and activities. In addition, perceptions of social equality moderated the relationship between educational usefulness and the intrinsic value of academic activity, such that those students who perceived that their schools were unfair valued academic work less and did more poorly but only if they were low in future orientation. So future orientation leads to positive academic performance because of its positive association with educational values and academic activity, although this relationship can be diminished by the perception of unfair bias against you or your cultural or ethnic group.

The findings at the individual level of personality support the general argument that temponomics and temponostics (M-time and P-time) reflect fundamentally different value systems and guide behaviors that correspond to them.



In a temponomic world, goals are valued and behaviors conform to the parameters of goal attainment. In a temponostic world, individual autonomy and social relationships are valued and behavior conforms to these parameters.

CONTROLLING TIME—TEMPONOSTICS

“Time flies when you’re having fun.” Why exactly does time “fly”? To answer that we must consider the alternative in which time slows down—“the watched pot never boils.” In the latter case, if we attend too closely to the details of an event as it unfolds in time, we are unconsciously setting up a stopwatch and ticking down the seconds. The *implicit* time of an event is tracked as we pay close attention to it. But when we are having fun, what we are not doing is “paying attention.” We are engaging in one moment, not monitoring a succession of moments. Every cognitive fixation that is linked to a temporal unit allows us to trace its temporal path. In a temponostic world, time is not attended to; it flies and we have fun!

So a temponostic society or person is one in which time is not closely attended to; it has no inherent value; it is a silent partner in life. So where does order come from? It comes from the requirements of cultural patterns and values, social relationships, and personal intentions. ATTT is a cultural pattern or prescription. It is also a value, and it describes how things get done. It is not the absence of order, but we might define the qualities that distinguish a temponostic from a temponomic order. Order is inductive, bottom-up, derivative of the flow of behavior. This is contrasted to the deductive, top-down, and generative way in which time dictates order in the temponomic mode. In the former, the individual has substantial freedom and control to do what they want when they want. In the latter, the individual is constrained by the order, by the schedule, and by structure imposed by time.

Temporal Aspects of Behavioral Control

Let’s look more closely at ways in which temponostic perspectives enhance personal control. The context is the state of being enslaved, marginalized, and discriminated against—the African American and African diasporic case. In its essence, slavery created a necessity to live in the now, to manage and control what was happening or could happen to you at any moment in a capricious and unpredictable world. Being present oriented was a necessity. But to change your lot, you also had to look ahead to the future (e.g., how could one ever make the trip on the Underground Railroad from deep in the South to the North and to Canada?). One has to be acutely sensitive to the nuances of the present while keeping one’s “eyes on the prize.”



We turn now to a model of psychological and cultural adaptation predicated on contexts in which connections to the past and projections into the future are tenuous, and the present circumstance is threatening to one’s physical and psychological well-being. Time and several variables associated with time combine to create a model of coping and adaptation labeled TRIOS.

The TRIOS Model: Being in Time

Jones (2003) has argued that present-time perspective is connected to a more general worldview of African origins consisting of five major characteristics referred to as TRIOS. These five qualities together—time, rhythm, improvisation, orality, and spirituality (or TRIOS)—describe a coordinated worldview that turns on the basic idea of present time as a context for behaving, creating, and being. In addition to the perspective on time (mentioned earlier in the first section), African culture also carried a strong oral tradition, and valued and utilized rhythm in rituals, celebrations, and communication. Furthermore, improvisation was a quality that surfaced in music and oral performances and became a crucial aspect of adaptation to the vagaries of the controlling system of oppression. Finally, spirituality connected one to a higher order that slowed down and expanded time, connecting one to ancestors. Nature and the universe thus transcended the capricious and oppressive circumstances, relieving one of having to internalize control in a world that did not make control easy. The future, in this world, follows from and is driven by the present and the success one has in controlling it.

ATTT encompasses all of these TRIOS elements, although they are coordinated by their focus on the present. In a temponostic society, what matters is the life being lived, not the life that is being planned. Rhythm is integral to ATTT. The rhythm of the language, cadences, inflections, pronunciations, all punctuate the flow of behavior. Hall (1983) captured the centrality of rhythm well when he noted that “individuals are dominated in their behavior by complex hierarchies of interlocking rhythms . . . every facet of human behavior is involved in the rhythmic process. . . . Rhythm is, of course, the very essence of time” (p. 140). Rhythm is captured in the cadences of the calypso, the colors of the Carnival costumes, the jumping up on Jouvier morning preceding Ash Wednesday. Improvisation occurs in time as well, because its essence is the online success of creatively solving unanticipated challenges or the spontaneous expression of a thought, a desire, or means of attaining a goal. It is contrasted with the planning approach, which tries to foresee and even create the contexts in which a given behavior will unfold. Improvisation is a value expressed as preference for being-in-the-now, for creating one’s life moment by moment in characteristic ways that define one’s individuality. *Orality* is the composite of oral influences



that also occur in time, and become the basis for the creation of meaning, the forging of social bonds, the transition of core values and beliefs across generations. The "story" helps to create the life; the "song" provides the motivational impetus to live it. Movements, like the Civil Rights Movement, draw their energy and power from orality. The songs ("We shall overcome"), the speeches ("I have a dream"), and the stories (of struggle and moral purpose, heroic acts and noble deeds) define intention, value, and possibility, and provide an anchor to the cultural representation of collective experience. Spirituality expands time to the universality of our common experience now and forever, before and after. Spirituality contextualizes the present in a timeless world in which the linearity of M-time and its rules and abstractions have little weight. In the spirit world, time does not move, it just is.

So TRIOS is a cultural worldview that is organized around the momentary capacities of the present to contain the meaning of life, and the vast possibilities of timelessness to embrace the past, present, and future simultaneously.

TRIOS and Context. Context describes all of the available mental representations, emotional experiences, and situational cues and challenges in a moment in time. In Lewin's (1943) field theory, the *principle of contemporaneity* proposes that "any behavior or any other change in a psychological field depends only on the psychological field at that time" (p. 294). The psychological field at a given time includes the psychological past and the psychological future. The psychological past is an "origin" of the psychological present, and the psychological future is a "consequence" of it. So context here describes more than the physical aspects of a situation; it also defines the psychological representations of the situation and what preceded it and what may follow from it.

By this reasoning, situations may vary as a function of the relative density of the psychological past or psychological future brought to bear. The more influence exerted by the psychological future, that is the more goal-related influences, the more constrained the present becomes. The more the psychological past influences the construal of the present, the more constrained one may be by past events and their representations. The greatest flexibility and control one may have in a situation is one where the psychological past and psychological future have minimal roles. That is the meaning of living or being in the now. It is this sense that TRIOS is proposed to capture.

TRIOS and Meaning. Encounters in the moment derive meaning from the relevance of ongoing behaviors and their interpretation. Thus being present oriented is not simply a matter of the relative tendency to focus attention on the present and the resulting individual differences in behavioral tendencies to be



sociable, risk takers, and so on. It also means that values and goals are pursued in the moment, the present context. The situation contains all that is needed to define and control outcomes.

For example, from a contextual viewpoint, language is not dependent on semantic meaning so much as on 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.

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 that 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.

TRIOS Functions in Time: The TRIOS Scale. Finally, we present some data that provide evidence that TRIOSity is more broadly characteristic of Af-



rican Americans and Africans than Whites, Asians, and Latinos. Jones (2003) reports the development of a scale to assess the degree to which one endorses the dimensions of TRIOS. The dimensions are highly related and using a cumulative composite score is generally warranted.

Time is represented broadly as a present-time orientation—living in the now (e.g., Preparing for what might happen in the future is often a waste of time; It's better to live the present moment to the fullest than to plan for the future; When I try to envision the future, I draw a blank).

Rhythm reflects the synchrony and timing of behavior in relation to the environment and with others (e.g., I often feel anxiety when I am late for a scheduled event; If I feel someone is attacking me, I sometimes struggle not knowing what to do; I often feel that my experiences are not "real" until I tell someone about them). The three items that form this factor were actually written to tap—time, improvisation, and orality, respectively. 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.

Improvisation is a reflection of the belief that one can successfully overcome unforeseen obstacles, 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 (e.g., When a situation arises, I usually know two to three different ways to handle it; When things do not go as planned, it is easy for me to devise another plan right on the spot; I can figure my way out of almost any situation; When something disrupts my goals, I often figure out how to achieve them anyway). 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.

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 (e.g., It is important to be yourself at all times; It is important for me to be comfortable in a situation in order to be successful; In my social group, laughter often holds us together; It is important for me to maintain harmony in my group). Orality presupposes a high-context social environment and 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 socially constructed self is reflected by the need for a personal social identity defined by personal properties and invariance across



settings. Furthermore, feeling comfort in the social context may be a precondition for psychological well-being.

Spirituality is defined by a belief in a higher power as a functional element of one's daily life (e.g., Belief in God or a greater power helps me deal with the circumstances of my life; In most every aspect of my life, I am strengthened by my spiritual beliefs; I believe that the world is full of powerful and unknowable forces; There are reasons beyond our understanding for everything that happens). There are two aspects to this measure of spirituality: first, that everyday functionality of spirituality such that spiritual beliefs and priorities help one cope with everyday life; and second, that spirituality reflects powerful and unknown forces that intervene to determine life events.

TRIOS: Initial Results. The TRIOS Scale was administered to 1,415 respondents of whom two thirds were women and one third men, a little more than 40% were White, 21% were Black, 19% were Latin, and 11% were Asian (Jones, 2003). The age range was 14 to 62, with the average age for each group between 20 and 21 years. African Americans scored significantly higher than all other groups on the composite of TRIOS, and in addition, they scored significantly higher than or as high as any of the other racial/ethnic groups on each of the individual TRIOS dimensions. Latinos/as scored higher than Whites and Asian Americans on TRIOS, and Asians and Whites did not differ.

We sought to further test the implications of a high level of TRIOSity by exploring the moderating role of TRIOS in the relationship between self-reported stress and psychological well-being (Jones, 2004). If TRIOS has the sort of control and adaptive functions suggested earlier, then, we reasoned, high TRIOS level will buffer the relationship between stress and well-being so that at high levels of stress, psychological well-being will be less severely reduced.

College students at a public predominantly White university, a private historically Black university, a community college serving predominantly African Americans, and a university in the African country of Ghana completed the TRIOS scale and measures of stress and well-being. Stress was measured in two ways: a college students hassle scale (ICSRLE: Kohn, Lafreniere, & Gurevich, 1990) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The ICSRLE and the PSS each assesses the degree to which a person has experienced a variety of "hassles" or "stressors" during the past month. Psychological well-being was also measured over the previous month in two ways: Depression was assessed using the CES-D Scale (Radloff, 1977), which asks participants to indicate how often they have experienced certain feelings such as fear, happiness, crying fits; sadness, and positive and negative affect were assessed using the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, &



Tellegen, 1988), which asks respondents to indicate to what extent they have felt 10 positive and 10 negative states such as hostile, excited, scared, strong, and so on.

Results showed that Africans and African Americans were higher in TRIOS than Whites, and not different from each other. These race main-effect differences in endorsement of the content of TRIOS suggests stable racial differences in worldview. To determine if TRIOS level played the same or a different role across racial groups in the relationship between self-reported stress and psychological well-being, we conducted multiple regression analyses with well-being as the dependent variable, and stress, TRIOS, and the stress \times TRIOS interaction as independent variables. We conducted these regression analyses on the entire sample, and separately for Africans, African Americans, and Whites.

Results for the entire sample showed that stress was negatively associated with and TRIOS was a positive predictor of psychological well-being. Furthermore, stress was negatively associated with TRIOS. Analyses showed that TRIOS level moderated the relationship between stress and well-being such that stress and well-being were significantly negatively related when TRIOS was low, but were unrelated or slightly positive when TRIOS was high. This relationship held for Africans but did not hold for either African Americans or Whites, although it was in the same direction. Thus for Africans, TRIOS level moderated the relationship between stress and well-being. The same pattern was found for improvisation and spirituality for Africans but not for African Americans and Whites.

TRIOS: Summary. TRIOS is connected to time through the direct assessment of time as a dimension in the model, and through the functional association and centrality of time to the other four dimensions. We argue that TRIOS is a worldview that centers on beliefs about the meaning and functionality of time orientation and the values that are associated with it. We refer to it as a temponostic worldview in which being in the now, deriving the meaning of things, communicating, building social bonds, and enjoying the creative flow of personal expression and collective activity is contrasted with the rule-based, prescriptive temponomic worldview. It seems to better capture the worldview of African Americans and Africans than other groups, and plays a more functional role in everyday affairs for Africans than for American Whites or Blacks.

CONCLUSION

Discussion of temporal orientation or perspective seems to presume that the main temporal regions of past, present, and future are separate and function in-



dependently. Individuals as well as cultures are characterized by the single dimension on which they earn the highest scores. But as Lewin (1943) theorized, the past and the future are or can be integral to the feelings, motivations, thoughts, and behaviors that occur in any given situation. To the extent that the future and the past are relatively less influential in the present, then a person or culture may be characterized by the attributes associated with present-time perspective. Similarly, the more forcefully future considerations enter in the calculus of present-time experience, then a future orientation may dominate. Those who are continually influenced by the past to the relative disregard of the future may be "stuck in the past."

Equi-temporality

We tend to think temporal regions are related in a linear fashion with the past preceding the present and followed by the future. However, as Lewin argued, from a psychological view all temporal regions are accessible at any moment in time, thus there is the possibility of overlap and mutual influence among temporal regions. This mutuality and overlapping possibilities are better suited to a circular or cyclical relationship. This circularity is also found in cultural perspectives on time as we noted in the *sasa-zamani* axis of the flow of time in Africa.

Temporal regions may be "primed" by cultural values, episodic situations, or goal-oriented motivations. Goals may be distal, which make a future orientation more likely, or proximal, which makes a present orientation more functional.

In the TOS data, both present- and future-oriented participants were optimistic, and both showed areas of ability and achievement (PTO had higher SAT scores whereas FTO had higher GPAs). It is probable that the flexibility of adopting and utilizing multiple temporal perspectives and orientations as a matter of living is an effective way to organize one's life. We believe that a case can be made for the equi-temporality principle—that flexibly incorporating multiple temporalities and deploying them strategically in the service of situational demands and personal life values will yield the best results. Although we developed the argument that African culture promotes a present and past time orientation, we have found that African Americans are more bitemporal. (Boyd & Zimbardo, chap. 5, this volume, make a similar argument.)

So the conclusion should not be that temponomic cultures are better than temponostic ones. What we have learned is that one's individual or collective circumstances dictate which orientations to time have value and thus the capacity to organize and motivate behavior at an individual as well as a collective level. It was Jones' experience with ATTT that brought out the equi-temporality principle and allowed for adaptation and adjustment in culture-relative ways.



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