

From Triple Quandary to Talent Quest: The Past, Present, and Future of A. Wade Boykin's Contributions to Psychology

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A. Wade Boykin's scholarship has provided key insights into the psychological realities of racially minoritized people and catalyzed revolutionary changes in psychology and education. Combining insights from personal and research experiences, Boykin authored the foundational triple quandary (TQ), a framework describing how Black Americans must navigate the often conflicting values and priorities of dominant mainstream society, the heritage culture of Black communities, and dynamics associated with being racially minoritized. TQ describes the unique developmental challenges faced by Black children, for whom misalignment between home cultural socialization and U.S. schooling often leads to pathologizing mischaracterizations of their attitudes and behaviors, resulting in chronic academic opportunity gaps. Boykin used his training as an experimental psychologist to empirically test the validity and explanatory utility of the TQ framework and to determine whether Black cultural values could be leveraged to improve student learning. Focusing on cultural values such as expressive movement, verve, and communalism, studies with his collaborators consistently supported Boykin's framework and predictions for improving Black student achievement-related outcomes. Beginning in the early 2000s, Boykin and his colleagues began to scale the lessons of decades of empirical work into the talent quest model for school reform. The TQ and talent quest continue to evolve in their application, as scholars and practitioners have found them relevant to a diverse range of minoritized populations in American society and beyond. Boykin's work continues to bear on the scholarship, career outcomes, and day-to-day lives of many scholars, administrators, practitioners and students across disciplines and institutions.

Public Significance Statement

This article advances the historic, present, and future impact of Dr. A. Wade Boykin's work and development of the triple quandary framework. By describing the dissonance between home cultural socialization, schooling, and societal institutions as experienced by Black people, Boykin's framework can be readily applied to other minoritized populations. His contributions to psychology and beyond address diversity, equity, and inclusion in learning and socialization settings, providing guides for systemic change across racial, class, and geographical considerations.

Keywords: socialization, culture, minority populations, African American, schooling

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C. Malik Boykin

In 1970, *Ebony* magazine published a paradigm shifting article by pioneering Black psychologist Joseph White titled “Toward a Black Psychology.” In the article, White issued a call to develop strengths-based approaches to programs designed to educate and support Black children in America. White argued that psychological interventions that centered the cultural assets and orientations of Black children would be more beneficial for them than those accounting for their perceived intellectual deficits. Then, a University of Michigan psychology graduate student, A. Wade Boykin, answered White’s call. Boykin’s scholarship centers the complex psychological lives of Black people. His synthesizing framework, the triple quandary (TQ), describes three psychosocial contexts that Black people must negotiate as a function of their unique positionality in American society: (a) mainstream values, (b) the Black cultural values of their communities, and (c) the experience of being minoritized (Boykin, 1983, 1986). The TQ framework therefore describes the complex navigation of these three realms. Originally related to Black identity and culture, it can be expanded to define the TQ faced by other ethnic and racial minorities navigating mainstream systems (Hurley, 2020; Lew, 2003; Mahalingam, 2012). Within the framework, Boykin also details integrity- and asset-based cultural capital of Black communities. After decades testing hypotheses about how these cultural assets can be leveraged in educational ecologies to better serve them, insights from empirical research on the TQ informed the talent quest model (TQM) of school reform (Boykin & Ellison, 2009; Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

What Led to the Development of TQ

Formative Experiences

Growing up in 50’s and 60’s Detroit as the son of a professional jazz pianist, Boykin lived in a household rich

with people and music, including the activity of frequent visits from musicians, his father’s bandmates, family members, childhood friends, and neighbors. There was laughter, noise, collaboration, improvisation, learning, and ongoing conversation indicative of the environmental variability later incorporated into his research (Boykin, personal communication, December 30, 2019). Using his lived experiences as a model, Boykin began tinkering with the effects of contextual factors on preferences for cognitive task complexity in children (Boykin, 1972). In collaboration with Hal Arkes, Boykin found that after completing the Head Start program, which aimed to help low-income children prepare for formal schooling settings, children preferred high-complexity cognitive tasks of the same complexity as tasks preferred by comparatively higher income children enrolled in nursery schools (Arkes & Boykin, 1971). This demonstrated that programmatic interventions could impact children’s orientations toward cognitive tasks and, potentially, their cognitive development. Boykin then shifted to research with his graduate school contemporaries, Frank J. Yates and William Collins, on the academic motivation of Black students at predominantly White universities. Broadly, they found that academic interventions seeking to understand the shared culture of Black students led to improved motivation, social connectedness, and engagement (Yates et al., 1974). These early works and experiences provided background for further exploration of the notion that culture could be an influential contextual factor in cognition and cognitive development (Boykin, personal communication, January 8, 2022).

Starting his career as a cognitive psychologist, Boykin sought to collaborate beyond his appointments in Psychology and Africana Studies at Cornell University. Thus, from 1976 to 1978, Boykin pursued his interests in collaboration with anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists as a fellow at the Institute for Comparative Human Development. Founded by Michael Cole, the institute convened interdisciplinary scholars to study the impact of cultural variation on thinking and learning (The Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, n.d.). During this period, Boykin cofounded the Conference on Empirical Research in Black Psychology (Boykin et al., 1979) and produced or contributed to several scholarly articles, including two seminal articles that laid the bedrock for his influence on the field of psychology.

The 1978 Articles

Much of the extant psychological research about Black people reached one of two pejorative conclusions. One conclusion, broadly summarized as the biological deficit model, claimed that Black people’s social, economic, and academic performance outcomes in America were the result of genetic and biological inferiority to White people. Unsurprisingly, the advent of psychology as a social science incorporated such a stance (Guthrie, 2004; Winston, 2004).



Sean T. Coleman

Foundational White psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall, E. L. Thorndike, and Lewis Terman used empirical methods to promote this thesis (Guthrie, 2004). Racist notions of biological deficits have persisted throughout the history of psychological research and are still represented in research literature to date (American Psychological Association, 2021; Roberts & Rizzo, 2021). The other conclusion, broadly summarized as the cultural deficit model, claimed that Black people's academic performance is the result of maladaptive and pathological cultural value systems (see Boykin, 1978b, 1983, for a critique). Consequently, an antipositivist chorus emerged among Black psychologists (and Black people in general) that understandably rejected empirical methodology as a fundamentally Anglocentric and White supremacist approach to knowledge production (Clark et al., 1975).

While acknowledging this perspective, Boykin (1978a) argued for the value of empirical research to his peers in the Association of Black Psychologists. He encouraged Black psychologists to “keep the baby” (i.e., use the empirical process for the advancement of Black communities) but “throw out the bathwater” (i.e., reject racist paradigms that guided many White researchers). Boykin argued that these research methodologies could increase the understanding of the unique, context-specific, psychological processes faced by Black people, while developing culturally responsive interventions and generating a more representative articulation of data yielded by Black populations. In this spirit, Boykin (1978b) published a pretheoretical article on the concept of psychological/behavioral *verve* as a factor that differentiated the learning preferences and academic performance outcomes of Black and White people. In this (and other) work, Boykin criticized how White social scientists habitually mischaracterized Black households like the one he

grew up in as wild, noisy, and chaotic. He offered that such home contexts should instead be expected to cultivate learning styles that best respond to similar levels of stimulation, task variability, collaboration, and other cultural value-based themes. Such orientations and behaviors, though usually devalued as inappropriate for mainstream schooling contexts, could be leveraged to support students' learning. With this initial publication, high *verve* orientation became one of several cultural factors that would later constitute the Afro-cultural realm within his TQ framework (Boykin, 1983, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985). Through empirical inquiry, Boykin shifted the focus of his work to critiquing public school classroom learning contexts that did not recognize or respect the cultural values that informed the development of cognitive skills for most Black children.

Development of the TQ

From 1978 to 1979, Boykin served as a residential fellow at the interdisciplinary Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CABS, n.d.), at Stanford University. Each cohort at CASBS features scholars from many disciplines, who present concepts and working papers to one another to gain cross-disciplinary feedback about their ideas (CABS, n.d.). It was here that Boykin, then the first tenured Black professor of psychology at Cornell, met Leslie Hicks, cofounder of the first psychology doctoral program at a Historically Black University, who soon recruited Boykin to join him on the faculty at Howard University. At CASBS, Boykin substantially advanced his thinking about culture and cognition, generating ideas that he eventually published in a 1983 chapter, “The Academic Performance of Afro-American Children” (Boykin, personal communication, June 10, 2019). Sourcing research from several disciplines, this chapter contains the first mention of the TQ and describes several theoretical advancements: Boykin (a) described the aforementioned cultural deficit approach explaining disparities between Black and White students' performance in American schools. He reviewed several sets of findings from his contemporaries (e.g., Geneva Gay and W. Curtis Banks) that subvert this interpretation with empirical findings (Boykin, 1983). (b) Boykin summarized, compared, and contrasted two alternative approaches to explaining Black–White school performance differences (i.e., the cultural-differences approach and the social-structural approach). In Boykin's view, the cultural-differences approach took the position that the challenges Black students face in the classroom arise not from cultural deficits but from a cultural clash between the values, behavioral expectations, and learning styles represented in Black homes and American schools. Employing his background as a research psychologist, Boykin described the *cultural-differences approach* as valuable but relatively vague, as it did not describe cultural differences in enough detail to test hypotheses or to design interventions. In contrast, Boykin



Eric A. Hurley

summarized the *social-structural approach*: The American education system is tied to an economic opportunity structure designed to perpetually result in stratification which influences what children are taught, how they are treated, and what is valued. He critiqued this approach as being unduly pessimistic in not allowing hope for a path forward to improve the learning context for Black students (Boykin, 1983). Boykin (c) proposed combining these approaches into a dynamic framework that leverages cultural differences to guide *alterations* to the social-structural contexts of school environments and meet the learning demands of Black students. He described fusing these two formerly competing approaches as taking a *cultural approach*. Boykin theorized that a cultural approach would allow (Black) psychologists to consider which aspects of African American (AA) culture are at odds with American education system culture and embed them into structural interventions to facilitate student's learning. Last, Boykin (d) explained this cultural approach by contrasting mainstream American culture and AA culture. This contrast informs the specific challenges that AA students face in society and the classroom. In this, Boykin outlined the components of the TQ framework and the implications it has for illuminating a path forward (Boykin, 1983).

TQ as Cultural Approach

To establish a common language for incorporating features of culture into his work, Boykin integrated influential cultural anthropologist Cora Du Bois' universal concerns argument, thus providing descriptions of how cultural systems address group concerns about the nature of the cosmos, humankind's relation to said cosmos, and people's relations to each other (Boykin, 1983, 1986; Du Bois, 1955). Boykin then modified and expanded Du Bois' profile of mainstream American cultural values to consist of (a) effort optimism,

(b) material well-being, (c) possessive individualism, (d) egalitarian-based conformity, (e) the democratization of equality, and (f) a person-to-object orientation (Boykin, 1983; Du Bois, 1955). According to Boykin, the dominant culture of society and thus schooling systems operate to naturalize values, homogenize members of society, and ostracize deviations from mainstream cultural ideals (Boykin, 1983, 1986). AAs, then, are forced to navigate this self-reinforcing system which reproduces the existing social order, includes their own derogation (with other racial/ethnic minorities), and marginalizes their lived experiences (Boykin, 1983).

Black Culture

In response (in part) to frustration with the frequent publication of cultural deficit models in social science research and influential policy reports, a number of Black scholars in the 1960s and 1970s were thinking about what it would mean to abandon the White mainstream standards of normalcy and the consequent practice of correcting and explaining its errors concerning Black people while building alternative frameworks for understanding Black people and the Black experience. Several of them sought to understand and define Black culture on its own terms. This cross-disciplinary group of scholars had intimate knowledge of the positive and protective factors that helped them navigate racism as marginalized persons and connect to a shared reality. Many of these scholars studied elements of African cultures salient within AA communities and theorized about global commonalities found among people in the African Diaspora. To contrast American cultural values against AA cultural values, Boykin sourced and contributed to a growing body of literature on the defining elements of Black culture. Synthesizing and expanding the work of contemporary Black scholars such as sociologist Badi Foster and social psychologist James Jones, Boykin proposed nine interconnected dimensions of AA culture: spirituality, harmony, expressive movement (movement), psychological verve (verve), affect, communalism, expressive individualism, oral tradition, and a social time perspective (Boykin, 1983, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985).

Importantly, these themes do not assume a monolithic view of Black people or their social navigation. Acknowledging that the orientations of individual Black children are determined by their own particular circumstances, Boykin and Allen (2002) describe how, for many children, such themes are appropriated early in development via their culturally structured home and community lives. Such themes take on developmental salience for children who are so socialized because they become linked to positive affect and significant others. Further, because these themes permeate the conditions for the development and practice of emerging skills, they come to guide the children's



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perceptions and perspectives and therefore significantly shape their behavioral and cognitive repertoires. Boykin's primary view was "based on the premise that there is a social-cultural integrity—not a disadvantage or a deficit—that informs the psychological lives of Black people" (Boykin, 1986, p. 62), and that the nine dimensions were among its organizing themes. Boykin further noted how several of these dimensions of AA culture will tend to be at odds with themes in mainstream American culture. He linked these concepts to W. E. B. DuBois' notion of double consciousness wherein Black people experience the push and pull of biculturality as a "two-ness" (DuBois, 1903). Specifically, Boykin (1986) highlighted negotiations between competing values such as spirituality and materialism, or stylistic-based individuation and individualism rooted in wealth accumulation. An important implication of these ideas is that themes in AA culture could be significant resources to academic learning because their inclusion would provide opportunities for such children to exercise existing competencies in the service of attaining new ones. Moreover, learning contexts that include salient cultural themes would be more likely to sustain and enhance students' motivation to engage in required tasks than contexts characterized by less familiar themes. James Jones, author of another leading theoretical framework articulating Black cultural values focusing on Time, Rhythm, Improvization, Orality, and Spirituality theory, noted:

[Boykin] came at it from a slightly different perspective, but we're talking really about the same general idea that there's a cultural capital that Black people generally have that is activated to deal with an obstructionist environment. It's capricious. It's willful. It's oppressive ... how do you navigate that? ... I think we were both, and others as well, trying to figure out *how do you get through that?* So, that became the focus and though we went about it in different ways, I think we

ended up in more or less the same place where these are real assets. (Personal communication, October 11, 2021)

Minoritized Social Status

Given competing value systems of mainstream and Black cultures that Black people negotiate daily, Boykin completed his articulation of the TQ by adding the minority (or minoritized) social status. Here, there is the devaluation of Black culture and Black people actively and tacitly communicated by society, expressed in school culture and curricula, and experienced in systems of social stratification. School books, mainstream media, and the realities of economic inequality further communicate the position of Black people in the social hierarchy (Boykin, 1983). The key aspect of this realm is that a minoritized status "produces adaptive and compensatory reactions, social perspectives, and defensive postures that help one to cope with the predicament created by the oppressive forces" (Boykin, 1986, p. 66).

TQ Faced by AAs

The TQ faced by ethnic and racial minorities describes how they must negotiate the often-competing priorities of their own heritage culture, the cultural requirements of the Eurocentric mainstream culture, and the particular pressures and dynamics that accompany their status as an oppressed minority group. Born of his own observations of Black homes and communities, Boykin employed the TQ as a guiding framework to examine schooling systems throughout his career and to effect changes therein. Given his training in experimental psychology, it follows that accompanying empirical work first emphasized validation studies.

At a time when cultural variables were primarily the domain of anthropologists and qualitative sociologists, Boykin and his colleagues engineered ways to assess such variables in quantitative experimental research. Further, they leveraged the TQ framework to produce some of the most convincing early evidence of its significance to education, cognitive development, and general psychological phenomena. Student preferences, performance, learning, and achievement outcomes have been examined in a range of similar experimental studies by Boykin and colleagues for over 40 years. The findings have cohered around the basic premise that mainstream classroom environments that ignore or even penalize students' culture-based repertoires of attitudes, preferences, and behavior may be a substantial factor in many Black children not reaching their academic potential (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Moreover, the studies consistently find that those same cultural assets *can* and so *should* be leveraged to foster and enhance their learning and achievement as well as their socioemotional experiences and outcomes in school.



Kenneth M. Tyler

Empirical Support for Afro-Cultural Contexts

A multitude of studies have examined the various contentions such as Black American culture is (a) substantially distinguishable from the Euro-centric mainstream culture dominating the United States and (b) a heritage culture of our African origins. (c) Black American socialization patterns emphasize specific cultural themes that shape how AA children perceive, think about, and respond to their environments. (d) The processes and priorities of U.S. schooling reflect and enforce dominant culture to the exclusion and degradation of others. (d) Afro-cultural themes can be infused into pedagogies and therefore leveraged to enhance AA children's schooling and learning experiences as well as their performance on various tasks related to their academic environments and success. These contentions make up the TQM. Cultural factors and their impact on cognition and learning were the mainstay in the network of research labs where Boykin and associates (i.e., graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and additional collaborators) took a phenomenological approach to examining the nine dimensions of Afro-cultural worldview. Research involved home observations, interviews, and surveys, but mostly experimental studies that further validated and extended understanding of the TQ framework. After a number of investigations documenting and validating basic premises, the work began to examine the generalizability of those findings to increasingly realistic school-like settings. Researchers eventually tested the effectiveness of culturally infused pedagogies employed in real classrooms using content taught by students' own in-service teachers over whole academic units. Such work is aimed at aligning the schooling process and culture-informed pedagogical approaches to benefit large numbers of AA students in scalable ways. Of primary

interest to the researchers working with Boykin during his early tenure at Howard University were the cultural themes verve, expressive movement, and communalism. What follows is a brief summary of the findings and empirical support amassed over the years for those themes.

Verve

As mentioned, the home and community environments of many AA children have been characterized as relatively high in physical stimulation, which Boykin (1983) suggested could result in a particular receptiveness or preference for heightened levels of verve (physical stimulation) in other contexts such as schooling. Boykin's (1982) first empirical studies of verve helped to establish that AA homes are averagely characterized by high verve affordance, which relates to AA student's responsiveness to differently configured presentations of basic cognitive tasks. This line of work was replicated by Tuck and Boykin (1989) who found that the performance of AA students was also better on problem-solving tasks (e.g., color matching, listening, schema reproduction, and visual scanning) presented in relatively high-variability contexts, compared to low-variability contexts. A 1997 study (Boykin, Allen, et al., 1997) using the same tasks additionally found that socio-economic status mediated verve effects, with lower income students experiencing a greater difference and favoring the high-variability context compared to middle-income students. Boykin and Bailey (2000) reported that the addition of background stimulation (music) enhanced the benefits of the high-variability presentation for AA children but undermined the performance of their European American counterparts.

Bailey and Boykin (2001) extended research to more school-related task performance (spelling, vocabulary, mathematics, and picture sequencing, all presented in a story format) and task motivation. The researchers reported that AA students' task performance was again significantly greater in the high- than the low-variability context. AAs reported higher levels of home sensate (vervistic) activity and greater preferences for physical stimulation and variability than European Americans. For European American students, there was no difference in performance as a function of variability, and AA students reported significantly greater task motivation in the high verve settings than European Americans.

The verve work continues, with a few nonaffiliated labs reporting similar findings in real classrooms. For example, Carter et al. (2008) reported greater verve expression among AA students and a marginally negative relationship with reading and math outcomes on state assessments. Young (2017) reported further success using a high verve pedagogy for teaching coordinate planes in real math classrooms. Collectively, the research supported Boykin's (1994) proposition of the existence of verve as a distinct theme in AA

culture and the notion that this theme may be leveraged to enhance AAs' school performance.

Expressive Movement

Boykin and Ellison (1995) defined rhythmic movement expression (RME) as the premiums placed by AAs on the interconnectedness of movement expression, percussion, and polyrhythmic syncopation that render movement and music integral to engaging with life and vital to individual and collective psychological health. This is reflected in AAs' characteristic patterns of speech and activity trending toward kinesthetically complex repertoires of movement and gestural display (see also Jones, 1979; Morgan, 1980).

As with *verve*, the earliest empirical research for RME was aimed at validating the construct and its relevance to cognition and learning. The research methods were similar to those described earlier except that in the RME work, performance is generally measured after a learning phase configured to encourage high movement expression (HME) or low movement expression (LME). Boykin and Allen (1988) studied 6- to 9-year-old AAs and reported that performance on a picture-matching memory task was better among those who learned via a rhythmic presentation of the pairs in which coordinated movement was modeled and encouraged (HME) than for those who learned via a call and response repetition procedure in which movement was not encouraged or modeled (LME). In a similar study including European American students, Allen and Boykin (1991) found the same pattern of results for AA participants. White students, however, performed better when they learned in the LME condition, presumably because their home contexts provided fewer opportunities to be socialized to HME in the context of learning. The study also reported an independent enhancing effect for AA children when music was played during the performance phase. Allen and Butler (1996) found the same pattern and extended the work to more academically relevant analogical reasoning skills such as encoding, inferring, and mapping information acquired from a story presented in a HME or LME learning phase. Boykin and Cunningham (2001) used the same tasks in a sample of AA 7 and 8 year olds and reported that not only was students' performance superior in the HME condition but that the infusion of HME actions and behaviors into the story content (e.g., high movement content) further enhanced performance. A follow-up study (Cunningham et al., 2017) including White students replicated the pattern for Black students and found that, similar to other work, White students' performance was best in the LME context with LME actions and behaviors in the story context (e.g., low movement content). Other studies have reported similar patterns of superior performance for AA children in HME contexts using polyrhythmic syncopated music and movement over other styles of music (Cole & Boykin, 2008) and modes of movement (Serpell & Cole,

2008). Thus, through empirical study, Boykin and colleagues helped to establish the measurable and demonstrable utility of movement in learning contexts.

Communalism

Perhaps the most researched dimension of Black culture to date, communalism, denotes a compelling awareness of the fundamental interdependence among people that fosters paramount commitment to social bonds and relationships (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Bailey, 2000). It includes the four subdimensions: social orientation, group duty, identity, and sharing (Hurley et al., 2005). Accompanying research has pursued both theoretical and conceptual advancement as well as practical and pedagogical applications for schooling. Theoretical and conceptual work includes the development of the well-cited communalism scale (Boykin, Jagers, et al., 1997) and other measures employed to document the salience of communalism in home socialization practices (Boykin et al., 2005; Coleman, 2013; Tyler et al., 2005) and protecting and promoting well-being (Boykin et al., 2004; Gooden & McMahon, 2016; Schwartz et al., 2010) in a range of AA populations. Other work extended the paradigm, establishing the developmental range in which communalism may benefit student learning (from as young as ages 2–5; Watkins, 2002, and as old as high school and college; Hurley et al., 2023), and that a key mechanism of these effects may be their culturally learned skills for avoiding what Steiner (1972) termed process loss during group work (Hurley & Allen, 2007) and by examining continuities between communalism as it occurs among AAs and other members of the global Black Diaspora (Hurley, 2020; Hurley & Hurley, 2021; Hurley et al., 2021).

Communalism as a pedagogical strategy promotes the expression of collective identity, interdependence, sharing, and socioemotional satisfaction (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). As with RME, experimental studies of communalism generally include a culturally informed learning session before performance is measured. Several studies have examined AA students' performance in learning contexts configured to be consistent with a communal cultural orientation as opposed to traditional modes of educational practice (Boykin et al., 2005; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Coleman et al., 2017, 2021; Dill & Boykin, 2000; Hurley et al., 2009). As with the other dimensions, the work began with studies employing basic cognitive tasks such as memory for word pairs (Ellison & Boykin, 1994) and progressed to a range of increasingly school-relevant learning tasks including creative problem-solving, vocabulary learning, story text recall and inferencing (Boykin & Bailey, 2000), math estimation (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Hurley et al., 2009) and fractions (Coleman et al., 2017, 2021), transfer learning of ideas learned for one task to related tasks (Serpell et al., 2006), and peer tutoring (Dill & Boykin, 2000). Across all of these

iterations, the research has consistently found that AA children's cognitive performance is enhanced when working in communal learning environments compared to conditions that include individualistic or competitive elements.

Transition to Implementation

In the quindecennial between 1980 and 1995, Boykin—along with his graduate students, colleagues, and collaborators—conceptualized testable hypotheses and built a research paradigm fertile for implementing lab and field studies to test components of the TQ framework. As the evidence mounted that culture-informed pedagogical approaches for AA students could be effectively implemented in real school settings, Boykin and his associates launched the talent development model which aimed to help educators build upon students' assets in order to yield higher order thinking skills and enhance achievement (Boykin, 2000; Boykin & Ellison, 2009) on school-wide scales. Based on this model, children are capable of succeeding when afforded the opportunity to receive rich, demanding curricula with assistance and support (Boykin et al., 2004). In this pursuit, Boykin established the Center for Research for Educating Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) at Howard University, partnering with Johns Hopkins University from 1994 to 2004 to test programmatic and systemic approaches to school reform aimed at educating the whole child. CRESPAR used the talent development model in scholastic settings to test ecological and cultural interventions, asserting that every child has the capacity to succeed in school and life.

The TQM

In 2004, Boykin rebranded the Howard University arm of CRESPAR to be the Capstone Institute of Research (as it is currently named). Building on insights gained from the implementation science conducted by the team at Howard University, Boykin and his researchers formed the expanded TQM using additional relevant research focused on building students' assets through interlocking transactional pedagogical and climate strategies. The TQ framework spring boarded the TQM with a focus on cultural assets and their application in education (the major institution for socialization, learning, and whole child development) in order to design and test organizational interventions in schools aimed at increasing cultural continuity between home and school contexts for improved student outcomes (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Their evidence-based research overwhelmingly indicated that transactions between educators and students are key to student development, both cognitively and affectively (social-emotionally). The mission at Capstone Institute with the TQM continues to focus on conducting research and evaluation, using best practices in teaching, learning, and developing leadership to positively transform schooling for traditionally marginalized students. As such, Boykin's empirical training continued to influence his methodology

(J. Jones, personal communication, October 11, 2021). In the words of Jones, “[Boykin] took his ideas and parlayed them into a set of approaches that [took] him out of the lab and ... the academic discourse into settings where his work can be applied.”

On Impact and Influence

On Psychologists

From his first mention of the concept, the TQ would dramatically influence not only Boykin's future work but also that of several notable psychologists and scholars across multiple disciplines. Stephanie Rowley, a developmental psychologist and dean of the School of Education at the University of Virginia stated: “Discovering [Boykin's] work made me want to become a psychologist. The realization that I could study us [Black people] with such rigor and insight was powerful” (personal communication, September 22, 2021). Boykin's work has demonstrated value for prominent scholars in several subdisciplines in psychology. One instance is foundational research on Black racial identity and the development of healthy self-concepts relative to racial identity attitudes, clinical psychologist Bill Cross (Cross, 1991).

Influential personality psychologist at Boykin's alma mater, University of Michigan, Robert Sellers learned of the TQ as an undergraduate student in the “Psychology of the Black Experience” course Boykin taught at Howard for 40 years. Sellers cites the mainstream and Afrocultural realms of TQ as helping to inform the development of the expanded framework that underlies his Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1998). In her unified framework that describes and synthesizes race and ethnicity as related and dynamic social processes, prominent social psychologist, Markus (2008) cites Boykin among foundational scholars who help us to recognize discontinuities between Black and mainstream cultures that inform the socially coconstructed, racialized, and minoritized experience of Black people.

While Boykin discussed distinct features of Black culture in his original TQ articles, he also explored how other ethnic frames of reference are distinct from Euro-American culture (Boykin, 1983, 1986). These additional ethnic minority frames can be readily integrated, as scholars from multiple ethnic backgrounds have applied the TQ framework to several marginalized groups and their contexts. For example, developmental and cultural psychologist Ram Mahalingam learned of the TQ in a seminar while he was in graduate school and has since used the framework in theoretical and empirical work studying Sikh and other South Asian peoples' experiences (personal communication, October 7, 2021). Mahalingam (2012) adapted the framework to South Asian people's experiences in the United States navigating the bicultural context of mainstream American values and the values and expectations of South Asian cultures, families, and communities, all while negotiating a mythic, problematic, and

societally imposed “model minority” status. Additionally, Mahalingam (2007) describes the complex experience of Dalits, a stigmatized caste group in India, who must navigate the TQ of mainstream Indian culture, the cultural values of their own Dalit communities, and the dynamics of being a member of a stigmatized group in Indian society.

On Education Scholars

In foundational work on culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (1992) referenced the nine dimensions as bridgepoints for understanding how reportedly outstanding teachers of Black students achieve success (see also, Gay, 2018). Ladson-Billings asserts that teachers, schools, and systems that educate Black youth should use the TQ framework to situate the value of culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom as a pathway to improve historically marginalized student outcomes. Additionally, in pioneering work on racial socialization and orienting children toward navigating the role of race in school and society, clinical psychologist Stevenson (1995) has consistently evoked the TQ as part of their thinking on the ecological contexts of Black parents and children. Stevenson adds:

With those 9 expressives of Blackness He legitimizes the diversity of styles and expression . . . and that opened the door for not only other ways to assess what’s going on for Black people and Black children . . . but . . . it changes how you’re theorizing about Black people and Black children. (Personal communication, August 4, 2022)

In research on Korean American high school dropouts from low-income backgrounds, sociologist Lew (2003) cites TQ to describe how navigating mainstream school culture, the values of their families and communities, and model minority myths provide unique challenges for this group of students placed at risk by society. The model minority myth serves to tacitly endorse deficit models of Black and Latino students’ lack of success and to blame Korean students who are simultaneously facing the structural barriers of poverty, which brings restricted access in their own communities and in mainstream schools, as well as racism for the academic outcomes these barriers lead to (Lew, personal communication, July 15, 2022). Through a series of interviews with second generation Korean American students from high and low economic status families, she found that social class helped to determine whether they could access the social capital embedded within their ethnic community networks to successfully navigate mainstream schooling. Additionally, Reyes Rodriguez (2016) used TQ to describe barriers and pathways to feelings of belongingness for English-language learners in elementary schools in Rio Grande, Texas. These examples, among others, support Mahalingam’s perspective on the flexibility of the TQ, stating that one can “take the same model to South Africa or to India and work with it” (personal communication, October 7, 2021).

The TQ framework also helps individuals to better process lived experiences and make sense of their own realities. Brenda Allen is a former doctoral student of Boykin’s and a collaborator with him on early seminal work. She is presently the president of Lincoln University (Pennsylvania), the first historically Black University in the United States. When interviewed about her work with Boykin, Allen recalled that the developmental seminar she took, taught by Boykin, dramatically changed the ways that she was able to view and process her experiences (personal communication, October 25, 2021). Growing up, she recalled feeling how “different” she was “as early as second, third grade.” After the seminar, she better “understood that it [feelings of being different] was differences in how she was managing her life [coping compared to her peers].” Oftentimes, such coping strategies are implicit, and Black individuals or other people of color may not be able to recognize or process how their school environment shaped their coping mechanisms until they are in higher education or other self-reflective environments. However, students perceive their day-to-day experiences and implicitly or explicitly cope, each adaptive reaction, mechanism, and adjustment technique (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985) is bound to affect their psychological outcomes at some point in their lifetimes. This is largely due to the notion that each of the three domains in the TQ “require three distinct, largely nonoverlapping psychological and behavioral repertoires” (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985). In Allen’s case, she seemed in awe of how one graduate school class could completely and immediately alter her view of her childhood experiences, while concurrently revealing the dissonance between her negotiation of the TQ she faced and that of the peers she grew up with. Now, she strives to lead with a cultural approach to organizational leadership rooted in the same principles learned from Boykin and his frameworks, working to effect change through pedagogy and increased understanding (B. Allen, personal communication, October 25, 2021). Allen’s work with Boykin also influenced her career. “Publishing papers from that [initial] vantage point” opened the doors for later on in her career, allowing her to influence change. Allen stated:

It’s everything that I do. It’s probably why I’m here [at Lincoln]. Everything about who I am as a person fundamentally changed during my first year [as a] grad student when I took a class with Wade. You can ask anyone who knew me. [It changed] how I saw myself as a Black woman. I’m always going to be a little rough, and the triple quandary taught me that that was okay. That the things about my community or myself are not to be ‘woe is me’ but to be celebrated . . . to think about myself in a different way. When I started to think about myself in a different way, I started to think about my community in a different way [and those who are left behind]. That’s why the talent development portion of the work is so important. It gave me insight into who I am. Part of being back in these environments is teaching people of color how to see their value . . . that there is a lot of value in Black life. We are able to negotiate and balance all of these experiences. If we understand how to capitalize on that skill alone, can you imagine what Black people are

capable of-if we only understood how to capitalize on that talent. I sit now trying to do just that. There's a lot of talent on this campus [at Lincoln]. The triple quandary steps back and all the work of Black psychologists makes sense. It gives you language to explain the diverse ways in which African American people manage their lives. That's a meaning system that didn't exist for understanding the Black experience, that didn't exist before [Boykin] put it to paper. (B. Allen, personal communication, October 25, 2021)

Summary of Contributions and Future Directions

Similar to many research scientists, Boykin used observations from his own life growing up in a musical and high stimulus household in 1950's Detroit to guide his cross-pollination of cognitive psychology training with emergent themes from Black psychology. This led him to a number of formative collaborations and cross-disciplinary communal research environments to further develop his conceptions of how Black culture could impact cognitive development and learning. Through these experiences, Boykin manifested the TQ framework. Together with students and collaborators, he used the framework to guide a rigorous, innovative, and influential program of empirical study on the impact of culturally congruent contexts on learning and development. Particularly through the Afro-cultural dimensions of *verve*, communalism, and expressive movement, Boykin and his associates have demonstrated that culture matters for Black students' development of cognitive skills and academic performance. Early findings using the TQ framework began a stream of scholarly productivity spanning 5 decades and continuously demonstrating utility for scholars in several subdisciplines of psychology and beyond.

Since the beginning, Boykin has stated that the TQ faced by minoritized youth can impact their psychological outcomes (Boykin, 1983, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985). He argued that viewing minoritized existence in mainstream systems from a tridimensional (as opposed to mono- or bidimensional lens such as American or African American) may reduce oversimplification of clinical symptomologies among Black people (Boykin, 1983, 1986).

There are many opportunities to utilize the TQ framework to advance theoretical and empirical (quantitative and qualitative) knowledge of minoritized experiences and develop intervention strategies to support minoritized peoples. As Boykin defined the nine dimensions of AA culture for the purpose of developing empirical studies to test the impacts of culture on cognition, opportunities exist to define other cultural experiences for similar programs of study. This provides fertile and underexplored ground for future psychological and educational inquiry. For example, Mahalingam notes how TQ could advance thinking about cultural brokering, a practice where minoritized immigrant youth translate American culture to the adults in their households and communities. In this, American values are being communicated from youth to elders in the language and terms of the

family's culture of origin to help the family better navigate their minoritized status (personal communication, October 7, 2021).

Performance disparities in psychological testing and academic high-stakes standardized testing have largely focused on low-socioeconomic status populations and continue this focus. For AAs, differences in performance were often attributed to lack of resources for families and in communities (Boykin et al., 1979). The academic performance of low-income AAs was forwarded as a topic of widespread concern and debate (Cole-Henderson, 2000; Gordon, 1999; Hale, 1980; as cited in Boykin et al., 2004). To address this concern, Boykin and associates used the TQ as a framework to better equip AA students from low-income backgrounds to successfully negotiate the rigors and challenges posed by the American educational system. Thus, a programmatic research effort was deployed that aimed to cultivate enhanced performance in AA children by capitalizing on the cultural assets brought to the learning environment (Boykin, 1994). Although the widespread focus has been on the academic opportunity gap for low-income AA students, several investigations have sampled from among AAs in a cross section of socioeconomic and regional strata (Bailey & Boykin, 2001; Boykin, Allen, et al., 1997; Dill & Boykin, 2000; Marryshow et al., 2005), supporting the contention that the relevance of such deep structure cultural themes transcends socioeconomic status and geographical boundaries.

Boykin's early empirical examinations of the TQ provided necessary structure for the TQM of comprehensive school reform that has been used in interventions across the United States and abroad (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). The TQM offers a map to effectively engage and facilitate children's cultural assets that manifest across, and oftentimes despite, traditional, functional, and environmental factors. Specifically, this map shows education practitioners how to capitalize on children's cultural integrity to enhance cognition and learning through humanistic and/or transactional interactions. Additionally, through talent quest, Boykin addresses the need for policy changes that center student success, collaboration between legislators and policymakers, flexible language, and the allocation of support and resources by both financial and nonfinancial (e.g., time for meeting, planning, and professional development) means (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

Whether establishing conferences and research centers or investing in urban schools and Historically Black Colleges, Boykin's career models a foundational ethic and ongoing commitment toward leveraging our science and careers, building and strengthening institutions that serve minoritized communities, and legitimize their cultural expressions. The fruits of Boykin's work teach us that diverse cultures matter and have value for learning and development, and that we should exercise our power to define our own cultural realities and the intellectual frameworks used to understand them. Howard Stevenson summarized by stating:

If people integrated [Boykin's] work more, they'd have at least an intellectual place to put stuff. The real crime ... is that if other people aren't sharing [Boykin's work], [emerging scholars] don't even have an intellectual place to consider [cultural elements of the Black experience] in their work, whatever the topic You can't dream yourself [as a scholar of color] into the work the same way He's a giant and a legend, and made it possible for all of us to go deeper. (Personal communication, August 4, 2022)

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