
Implicit Personality Conceptions of the Nguni Cultural- Linguistic Groups of South Africa

Cross-Cultural Research
45(3) 235–266
DOI: 10.1177/1069397111402462
Online version of this article can
be found at:
<http://ccr.sagepub.com/content/45/3/2>
35

Velichko H. Valchev¹, Fons J. R. van de Vijver^{1,2},
Jan Alewyn Nel², Sebastiaan Rothmann³,
Deon Meiring⁴, and Gideon P. de Bruin⁵

Abstract

The present study explored the personality conceptions of the three main Nguni cultural-linguistic groups of South Africa: Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 116 native speakers of Swati, 118 of Xhosa, and 141 of Zulu in their own language. Participants provided free descriptions of 10 target persons each; responses were translated into English. Twenty-six clusters of personality-descriptive terms were constructed based on shared semantic content and connotations of the original responses. These clusters accounted for largely identical content in all three groups. The clusters represented an elaborate conception of social-relational aspects of personality revolving around the themes of altruism, empathy, guidance, and harmony. The patterning of responses suggests that the individual is viewed as inextricably bound to his or her context of social

¹Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands

²North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

³North-West University, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

⁴University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

⁵University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

Corresponding Author:

Velichko H. Valchev, Department of Cross-Cultural Psychology, Tilburg University,
Room P 209B, PO Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, Netherlands
Email: v.h.valchev@uvt.nl

relationships and situations. The findings are discussed with reference to the Big Five model of personality and the culture and personality framework.

Keywords

implicit personality conceptions, culture and personality, Nguni, South Africa

The present study aims to explore the implicit personality conceptions of the three main cultural-linguistic groups of the larger Nguni language group in South Africa: Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu.¹ Different approaches to the concept of personality have been accommodated within the field of personality psychology. A point of agreement is that personality refers to an overall structure associated with a certain degree of consistency in behavior across time and situations (Pervin & John, 1999).

The trait conceptualization of personality has provided a useful theoretical framework for the exploration of this structure. Personality is described in terms of a number of constituting characteristics, or traits, organized along a few high-level dimensions. Studies in this tradition have identified different numbers of dimensions that are supposed to be sufficient for capturing the core of normal personality. The currently most widely accepted model of personality is the five-factor model (McCrae & Costa, 1999) which represents personality in five dimensions: Neuroticism (or Emotional Stability), Extraversion, Openness (or Intellect), Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. The lexical Big Five model (John & Srivastava, 1999) is closely related to the five-factor model; the two models are in agreement as to the number and meaning of dimensions despite differences in terms of theoretical premises, methodology, and exact composition of the personality dimensions. Substantial evidence has been accumulated to support replicability of the basic five dimensions across languages and cultures (McCrae et al., 2005; Saucier & Goldberg, 2001).

The validity of the trait approach has been questioned on the grounds that traits might not offer an adequate conception of personality in some cultural contexts (Church, 2001; Triandis, 2001). Researchers in the Independent–Interdependent-self tradition (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1998; Triandis, 2001) have examined the way in which the notion of self is constructed in different cultures. Their analyses suggest that in collectivistic cultures, more so than in individualistic cultures, the self is perceived in terms of the person's social relationships and roles rather than as a coherent structure organized along a few dimensions. The self varies across social relationships and

contexts and does not show the consistency assumed by the trait perspective. The relevance of social-relational contexts and the situational basis of the sense of self has also been ascertained in the anthropological (e.g., Ewing, 1990) and social-psychological literature (Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

Culture and Personality

The study of culture and personality forms a broad scientific field that has attracted theoretical and empirical attention from different disciplines in the 20th century. Early anthropological studies often addressed overall personality types, or characters, and their association with culture (see Bock, 1999; LeVine, 2001). Researchers in this tradition typically focused on one configuration of personality that is characteristic for a given culture (e.g., Benedict, 1934; Mead, 1928) or the most prevalent within a given culture (e.g., DuBois, 1944). An in-depth approach, employing a range of ethnographic, qualitative methods, is shared by a great part of this tradition. In the decades after 1950, cultural anthropology to a large extent shifted to more particular topics of mind and cognition, whereas in psychology the engagement with the topic of personality went through a revival, thanks mainly to the developments in the trait approach. LeVine (2001) concludes his review of the history of culture and personality with the position that, even after the period of decline and disgrace in the mid-20th century, the study of culture and personality is still a valid enterprise that generates relevant questions. LeVine suggests that a successful approach to problems of culture and personality should combine, among others, ethnographic, linguistic, and psychological research.

The psychological study of culture and personality encompasses two broad streams: cross-cultural trait psychology and cultural psychology (Church, 2000; Van de Vijver & Leung, 2001). The first approach mainly deals with identifying universal personality dimensions and comparing cultures along those. The latter focuses more on the interpretation of personality within specific cultural contexts. The studies that have replicated the questionnaire-based five-factor model can be considered a typical representative of the cross-cultural trait approach (e.g., McCrae et al., 2005). In these, a model first developed in North America has been tested in other cultures using translated versions of inventories initially devised in English. The same five factors tended to emerge in languages from different language families, spoken in 50 different cultures. The impressive evidence for the universality of personality structure has allowed researchers in the five-factor-model tradition to investigate empirically long-standing questions in culture and personality

such as the culture-level associations between personality and cultural values (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004) and between self-reported personality traits and national character stereotypes (Terracciano et al., 2005).

However, research in this universalist tradition has been criticized for not tapping culture-specific personality traits (Church, 2001). The universal replicability of a fixed array of personality concepts does not preclude the possibility that there may be other personality concepts especially salient in certain cultural contexts. Cultural-psychological and indigenous studies address these questions with a more emic approach. As a prominent example, the research in China by Cheung and colleagues (2001) started from a review of personality descriptions from indigenous Chinese sources (literature, proverbs, and everyday discourse terms) and identified a dimension central to personality in the Chinese context, Interpersonal Relatedness, which could not be subsumed within the five-factor structure and had incremental value in behavior prediction.

Lexical Approach and Studies on Free Descriptions of Personality

The lexical hypothesis provides a framework that is relatively free from presumptions about universality or culture-specificity of personality constructs. The lexical hypothesis states that characteristics important for the understanding of human behavior become encoded in language as single terms (Goldberg, 1981). If a representative sample of frequently used personality-descriptive terms is extracted from a language's lexicon, these can be subsequently used to derive underlying personality dimensions. Informants are asked to rate themselves and/or familiar others on each of these terms (typically comprising a list of a few hundred) and dimensions are identified by factor analysis.

The lexical approach formed the basis for the establishment of the Big Five model, but systematic research started rather than stopped there. Saucier and Goldberg (2001) noted that the Big Five structure is generally replicable in the Germanic and some other European languages. Recently, the six-factor HEXACO model was proposed (Ashton & Lee, 2001, 2007) to account for findings of lexical studies in several Indo-European languages as well as Hungarian, Korean, Turkish, and Filipino. It features rotational variants of the original Big Five factors plus a new Honesty factor capturing variance from Agreeableness and Conscientiousness as well as previously unaccounted variance in the domain of fairness. However, both Saucier and Goldberg's extensive overview and the analysis of 14 trait taxonomies from 12 different languages by De Raad et al. (2010) indicated that only three

factors—Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness—emerge consistently across different languages. In summary, partly invariant, partly different dimensional solutions have been identified in lexical studies, attesting to the ability of the lexical approach to represent implicit personality traits without starting from any of the common theoretical trait models.

The lexical approach typically samples personality terms from dictionaries. A theoretically related but empirically different approach is to study free descriptions of personality derived from interviews. This approach has been applied in relatively few monocultural (e.g., D'Andrade, 1985; John, 1990) and cross-cultural (Harkness et al., 2006; Kohnstamm, Halverson, Mervielde, & Havill, 1998) studies. Several studies have identified structures similar to the Big Five; Kohnstamm et al. (1998) identified a number of additional facets which could be interpreted as specific to the area of child personality. Many of these studies have only analyzed trait adjectives as descriptive terms (the study by Kohnstamm et al. is a notable exception). In fact a major advantage of freely generated personality descriptions is that they provide information about the context in which the descriptors are used. To make use of this information, whole sentences and phrases should be considered. The perusal of context information makes the free-descriptions approach especially suited for the exploration of emic personality conceptions in different cultures (Mervielde, 1998); this advantage is particularly important in cultures where situational definitions of the self (definitions where the context is included, for example, definitions of the self based on relational properties) are more salient.

Personality Study in South Africa

The dominant approach to personality assessment in South Africa has been to import Western-developed personality instruments and apply them directly to the local population. Several studies have explored the construct equivalence of these instruments in different groups, addressing the extent to which they measure psychometrically equivalent constructs in each group (Van de Vijver & Leung, 2001). The outcomes indicated weak equivalence across ethnic groups (Abrahams & Mauer, 1999; T. R. Taylor & Boeyens, 1991; but see also Abrahams, 2002; Prinsloo & Ebersöhn, 2002). A recurring finding was that the imported assessment batteries, all of them in English, did not function well for people of African descent whose native tongue was one of South Africa's indigenous Bantu languages. Some studies have explicitly sought to replicate the five-factor structure in comparisons of individuals of African and European descent (in South African discourse called "Black"

and “White,” respectively). Heuchert, Parker, Stumpf, and Myburgh (2000) administered the NEO-PI-R to college students from both groups and found evidence for construct equivalence. I. Taylor (2000, cited in Meiring, Van de Vijver, Rothmann, & Barrick, 2005) administered the NEO-PI-R to African- and European-descent employees of a large company and failed to find the Openness factor in the African sample.

Reducing the cultural diversity of South Africa to a dichotomous distinction between individuals of African and European descent, however, is an oversimplification of the country’s multicultural context. As of the end of Apartheid in 1994, there are 11 distinct official languages in South Africa (besides a number of others that are recognized but not official). Each of these is the first language of a relatively distinct cultural group. The first study to do justice to South Africa’s cultural diversity on an empirical level was the one by Meiring et al. (2005). These researchers explored the functioning of the 15FQ+, an adapted version of a questionnaire designed to measure Cattell’s 16 personality factors (Tyler, 2002), in samples from all 11 language groups. Several factors were not well replicated. In addition, scales had poor reliability in all indigenous African groups. A subsequent study showed that these problems could not be remedied by adaptation of item content (Meiring, Van de Vijver, & Rothmann, 2006).

A more optimistic picture is suggested by the findings with the Basic Traits Inventory (BTI; Ramsay, Taylor, de Bruin, & Meiring, 2008; N. Taylor & de Bruin, 2005), developed as a culturally valid measure of the five-factor model in South Africa. Items of the BTI were devised taking local context into account. The inventory had similar factor structure and reliability values across African- and European-descent samples (N. Taylor & de Bruin, 2005) as well as across Bantu language groups (Ramsay et al., 2008). It is important to note, however, that none of the previous studies has paid attention to indigenous personality dimensions in South Africa.

Present Study Framework

The present study forms part of a large project ultimately aiming at the development of a new personality inventory for South Africa (South African Personality Inventory, SAPI), locally derived from indigenous conceptions of personality in all 11 language groups. The present study addresses the personality structure that emerges from qualitative data in three languages: Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu. These belong to the Nguni language group within the larger group of Bantu languages. The other eight official languages of South Africa are Afrikaans, English (both Germanic), Sotho, Northern Sotho, Tswana (in the

Sotho-Tswana group), Ndebele, Tsonga, and Venda. All except Afrikaans and English are Bantu languages. Ndebele is often classified as a Nguni language (Guthrie, 1948; Wolff, 2000), but its position in this group is not undisputed (Van Warmelo, 1974) and some sources place it in the Sotho-Tswana group (Lewis, 2009). These differences in classification may in part be due to the split between northern and southern variants of the Transvaal Ndebele spoken in South Africa, of which especially the former has been heavily influenced by close contact with Northern Sotho people. Given these ambiguities in the classification of the variants of Ndebele, we decided not to include the language in our study.

Historians of Southern Africa warn against equating language with ethnic groups in historical context (Nurse, 1997; Van Warmelo, 1974). As far as contemporary analysis is concerned, however, cultural groups are clearly identifiable by language. The sociolinguistic analysis of Slabbert and Finlayson (1998), for instance, illustrated the association of language with ethnic social identity in different groups. Presently, Zulu is spoken as home language by nearly 11 million people in South Africa, thus being the most common first language. It is mostly spoken in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Gauteng. Xhosa is spoken as home language by close to 8 million people; it is dominant in the Eastern Cape and parts of the Western Cape. Swati is the home language of 1 million people living mainly in Mpumalanga (for all three languages: Statistics South Africa, Census 2001). It is also the main language of Swaziland, where it is spoken by close to 1 million people (Lewis, 2009). Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu are to some extent mutually intelligible.

The present study explores the personality concepts of Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu speakers as they are manifested in free personality descriptions in semi-structured interviews. It was chosen to study free descriptions instead of dictionaries, first, because lexicography and written production in general have only a very short history in these three languages. The first written texts date from the 19th century (Doke, 1959) and proper lexicography of the Nguni languages can be assumed to be far from solid. Second, because the main researchers were not speakers of the studied languages, the issue of context is crucial. Free person descriptions (provided in the native languages and translated into English) provide insight into specific aspects of personality-relevant meaning of words that remain out of the focus of any existing dictionaries.

The present study is unique in exploring simultaneously three cultural groups of African descent not studied at such level of detail so far. This study is similar to the classical anthropological approaches to culture and personality in that it focuses on identifying emic cultural perspectives and employs qualitative methods. It is also dissimilar in that it involves an individual-level

empirical comparative investigation with specific reference to the trait perspective and the lexical approach. The aim of the present study is to identify the main implicit personality concepts in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu. Those will be the building blocks for the construction of an indigenously derived, culture-appropriate model of personality and, subsequently, an accompanying personality inventory for these cultural groups.

Method

Informants

For the Swati language group, 116 informants from Swaziland (69 females, 38 males, 9 missing data), aged 18 to 74 ($M_{\text{age}} = 27$ years; 15 missing data) were interviewed. Seventy-nine lived in rural areas and 36 in urban areas (data for one person were missing). In Xhosa, 120 informants took part: 68 women and 52 men; age ranged from 16 to 75 ($M_{\text{age}} = 34$ years), all lived in urban areas in the Eastern Cape. In the Zulu group, 141 participants (69 women, 72 men) were interviewed. Age ranged from 18 to 72 ($M_{\text{age}} = 33$ years). Participants were rural ($n = 107$) and urban ($n = 34$) residents of KwaZulu-Natal ($n = 136$) and Gauteng ($n = 5$).

Instrument

Identical, semistructured interviews were conducted in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu. Participants were asked to describe 10 target persons: a parent, oldest child or sibling, a grandparent, a neighbor, a person they do not like, best friend of the opposite sex, a colleague or a friend from another ethnic group, teacher or a person from the village whom they liked very much, teacher or a person from the village whom they strongly disliked, and best same-sex friend; six informants in Xhosa and 78 in Zulu also provided self-descriptions. The choice of target persons was based on the consideration that the informants should have experience with and be able to relate to these persons, avoiding the danger that they would speak in abstract terms about persons they do not know. They were asked to provide a number of characteristics for each target person. Four prompting questions were used: "Please describe the following people to me by telling me what kind of person he or she is or was," "Can you describe typical aspects of this person?" "Can you describe behaviors or habits that are characteristic of this person?" and "How would you describe this person to someone who does not know him or her?"

Procedure

Interviews were conducted by persons belonging to the respective language groups (one interviewer for Swati, two for Xhosa, and five for Zulu) who were specially trained for this research. Data were collected in the informants' own environment (at home, school, or work, respectively). Participation was voluntary; interviewers were paid for their work.

The interviews were tape-recorded. All interviews were transcribed and translated from the transcriptions into English by the interviewers. English was chosen as the common language of the project because it has the largest lexicon of personality-descriptive terms and because no member of the research team speaks all Bantu languages. The interviewers were instructed to render the intended meaning of the personality descriptions in the translation, while staying close to the structure of the original utterances. The quality of the translations was checked by independent multilingual language experts who were also cultural experts on the respective language groups. Workshops and frequent interactions with the interviewers as well as the language and cultural experts were used to ensure linguistic and cultural accuracy of the translations. Responses were entered in Excel data files: the original and the corresponding English translation per response. In entering the data, each separate characteristic referring to a given target person or group of characteristics presented together as a single unit (e.g., in a phrase or sentence) was treated as a single response. Organized in this way, there were 4,892 responses in Swati, 5,153 in Xhosa, and 6,460 in Zulu.

The data were cleaned, leaving out idiosyncratic responses such as names or references to objective life circumstances (e.g., "He works in Johannesburg," "He is married"), physical characteristics irrelevant for personality (e.g., "Tall," "Has a dark complexion"), and broad evaluative terms with no further specific meaning for personality (e.g., "Good," "Bad"). We retained more specific evaluative terms like *kind* and *evil-hearted*. This selection of responses to include in the analysis is in line with the principles applied in most lexical studies (Ashton & Lee, 2005). The analysis was based on the English translation, but substantial use was made of the responses in the original languages, as illustrated later.

The outcomes of all analysis stages (outlined in the next section) were continually discussed within the research group. To enhance interrater consistency, several researchers worked in tandem on the categorization of responses. Discrepancies were discussed and categories lined up so as to ensure consistent assignment of content and labeling. The initial outcomes were

presented to language and cultural experts on the three Nguni language communities at a specially organized workshop. The experts provided feedback on the accuracy and meaningfulness of the categorization of original responses. This feedback was taken into account in subsequent analyses.

Analysis Outline

The analysis spanned three stages: labeling, categorization, and clustering (see Peabody, 1987, for a description of a related procedure). In the initial stage, qualitative personality labels were assigned to all responses, and responses with the same label were grouped together. For instance, the Zulu responses “Is loving,” “He loves people,” “My grandmother loves us, her grandchildren,” and “We are fond of each other” were assigned the label *loving*. Synonyms and antonyms were grouped together. We used inferential terms (like *aggressive*) to represent responses that featured concrete verbs (like *beating* or *fighting*). Making this inferential step allowed us to establish commonality of meaning across the three languages and to reduce noninformative variation in very specific references (usually behavioral descriptions; cf. Harkness et al., 2006, on decisions reducing noninformative cultural variability in rare descriptive terms).

Phrases that referred at the same time to more than one characteristic were assigned one label per characteristic. For example, “He is a short-tempered person yet who likes people” was labeled both as *short-tempered* and *loving* (after an indication by language experts that the distinction between *liking* and *loving people* is not lexically marked in these languages). Similarly, responses that could be interpreted in more than one way were assigned multiple labels after their ambiguous meaning had been confirmed by a Nguni language expert. For instance, “When jokes were cracked, he would keep quiet” could point to either lack of sense of humor or general quietness and was thus included in both the humorous and quiet groups of responses.

The second stage of analysis (categorization) lined up the labeled groups of responses within and between languages and condensed them further. The categories were structured in such a way as to ensure homogeneity within each language and consistency across the three languages. The number of responses in each category was recorded per language. Groups with a low number of responses (generally below four) were included in larger categories when the content allowed it or were disregarded.

Extensive reference was made to the pattern of co-occurrence of responses in the original languages, which in several cases suggested interpretations quite different from the one based solely on the English translation. For example,

in Swati, the phrase that had been translated as *secretive (unesifuba)* appeared in contexts where the intended meaning was “able to keep other people’s secrets”: “He is secretive, you can tell him your secret,” “One who is not secretive, tells about people’s issues without being sent to do so.” Consequently, these responses were categorized as discreet. This categorization stage of the analysis resulted in a total of 173 homogeneous categories of personality-descriptive terms, which we refer to as facets (see Appendix A). There were 139 facets common to at least two of the three Nguni languages, and 34 appeared in one language only.

Finally, in the clustering stage, we proceeded with combining these low-level facets into middle-level clusters representing personality constructs. This analysis is in line with the suggestion of Saucier and Goldberg (2001) to pay specific attention to middle-level constructs, which, as the authors note, “carry most of the load in everyday personality description” (p. 872). Clusters were formed with a view to combining intracluster homogeneity with inter-cluster heterogeneity. Semantically related facets were put in the same cluster. Language and cultural experts were consulted and asked for feedback at several stages and again at the end of the process. The previous two analysis stages condensed responses by putting together synonyms and antonyms and closely related references. In contrast, the clustering stage put together facets each of which had its own, distinct content and which were not straight synonyms. The analysis was based on the semantic content of the original responses in their own contexts, whereby the facet labels only had reference functions.

The process of semantic clustering was guided by two principles: combining facets with a least common denominator of responses (with as few theoretical presumptions as possible) and accounting for the patterns of co-occurrence of original responses. As an example of the first, more general principle, the Approachability cluster was formed by putting together facets (approachable, arrogant, friendly, stubborn, etc.) which all had to do with the quality of a person to be approachable and open to others and others’ opinions versus to put oneself above others. To give an example of the second principle within the same cluster, the friendly responses could be interpreted in different ways given the breadth of the concept. The regular occurrence of responses like “Is friendly and approachable. You can ask him any question,” “Is friendly and speaks to everyone” (Swati), and “Friendly to everyone” (Xhosa) gave strong indications that this facet could best be included in the Approachability cluster. As another example of the second principle, combining responses related to positive emotions and to activity in the Positive Emotions/Enthusiasm cluster was supported by the occurrence of responses like the Zulu “I am hyperactive, I always laugh, and I don’t frown.” However,

placing the responses of Positive Emotions/Enthusiasm together with those in the Sociability cluster into a broader Extraversion cluster would imply a link between positive emotions and extraversion, which is open for debate. In lack of concrete evidence for this link in the present data, Positive Emotions/Enthusiasm and Sociability were thus held apart, although they can be expected to be related in an overarching Extraversion dimension.

The clustering analysis identified 26 clusters consisting of between 2 and 10 facets each (except for the larger Miscellaneous cluster). The clusters, with the facets they include and the frequency of responses in each of these facets per language, are presented in alphabetical order in Appendix B. Each cluster was based on facets found in at least two languages; the clusters cover largely identical content for all three languages. The single-language facets (added at the end of the process) all fell within the already formed clusters and did not alter but complemented their content. The frequency of responses in each facet and the number of distinct facets constituting a cluster were taken as indication of the salience of the respective personality-descriptive terms (cf. Mervielde, 1998; Peabody, 1987; Saucier & Goldberg, 2001).

Results

Responses

The bulk of responses in all three languages referred to behaviors and characteristics in fairly specific contexts and a relatively small proportion of the responses involved abstract personality terms such as traits. Informants tended to qualify the person descriptions they gave in three ways (examples can be found in Appendix C). First, they provided particular examples of behaviors instead of identifying an underlying trait. Instead of calling a person *respectful*, they pointed out that the person “doesn’t greet” (the occurrence of responses “respectful, greets” allowed the interpretation of greeting behavior as indication of respectfulness). Instead of referring to the general trait of caring, they listed many specific and distinct instances of caring behavior.

Second, informants qualified traits by situation, employing constructions such as “[the target person] is [trait] especially when/with [situation]” and “[the target person] is [trait] but [in certain situations] is [opposite of the trait].” Statements like “Outspoken especially when someone is wrong” (from a Xhosa speaker) and “Is a vicious person especially when you do not do as you had promised” (from a Swati speaker) seemed to imply that in the perception of informants the person displays a particular trait only in a particular situation. Responses like “Is reserved on certain occasions”

(from a Swati speaker) explicitly denied the cross-situational consistency of the indicated trait.

Third, traits were expressed in terms of, or qualified by, social relationships and roles. Social roles (e.g., a parent, a father) were often presented as quasi-personal characteristics. Specific relational contexts seemed to define the meaning of traits, for instance in “She is humble to her husband” (Xhosa) and “She had a sense of humor toward her grandchildren” (Zulu). Finally, whereas participants were asked to describe single target persons, there were many responses including both the speaker and the target person. Person descriptions were thus often phrased in the first person plural as in “We love football” and “We help each other.”

To quantify these observations, we used data from an independent ongoing study on the characteristics of personality descriptions in South Africa in the framework of the broader project that the present study is embedded in, the South African Personality Inventory (SAPI), in which all 11 official language groups are included. We compared the personality descriptions of our Nguni samples with those of a combined sample of native speakers of the two Germanic languages in South Africa, Afrikaans ($n = 70$) and English ($n = 119$), in which the same interviews were held. Nguni speakers used fewer traits (proportion in Nguni-speaking group = .39, proportion in Germanic-languages-speaking group = .62; Pearson $\chi^2[1, n = 28,414] = 1,460.30, \mathbf{j} = .23$), more behaviors, preferences and perceptions (Nguni = .53, Germanic = .28; Pearson $\chi^2[1, n = 28,414] = 1,850.43, \mathbf{j} = .26$) and more qualified descriptions in general (Nguni = .33, Germanic = .19; Pearson $\chi^2[1, n = 28,414] = 681.42, \mathbf{j} = .16$) than speakers of the two Germanic languages. All differences were significant at the .001 level; effect sizes ranged from small to medium. It can be concluded that the qualified nature of the responses was an important characteristic in the Nguni group that was found to a lesser extent in the groups speaking Germanic languages.

Clusters

To present a coherent picture of the 26 clusters as personality concepts in a unified model, we examined their relationships against the backdrop of the Big Five personality dimensions (with the possible inclusion of Honesty). We are not using the Big Five as a template for our data but as a frame of reference because those five dimensions are commonly seen as the lingua franca of personality (De Raad, Perugini, Hřebíčková, & Szarota, 1998). The relationships between the 26 clusters based on the semantic clustering analysis are presented in Figure 1. Each cluster is represented in the figure as a

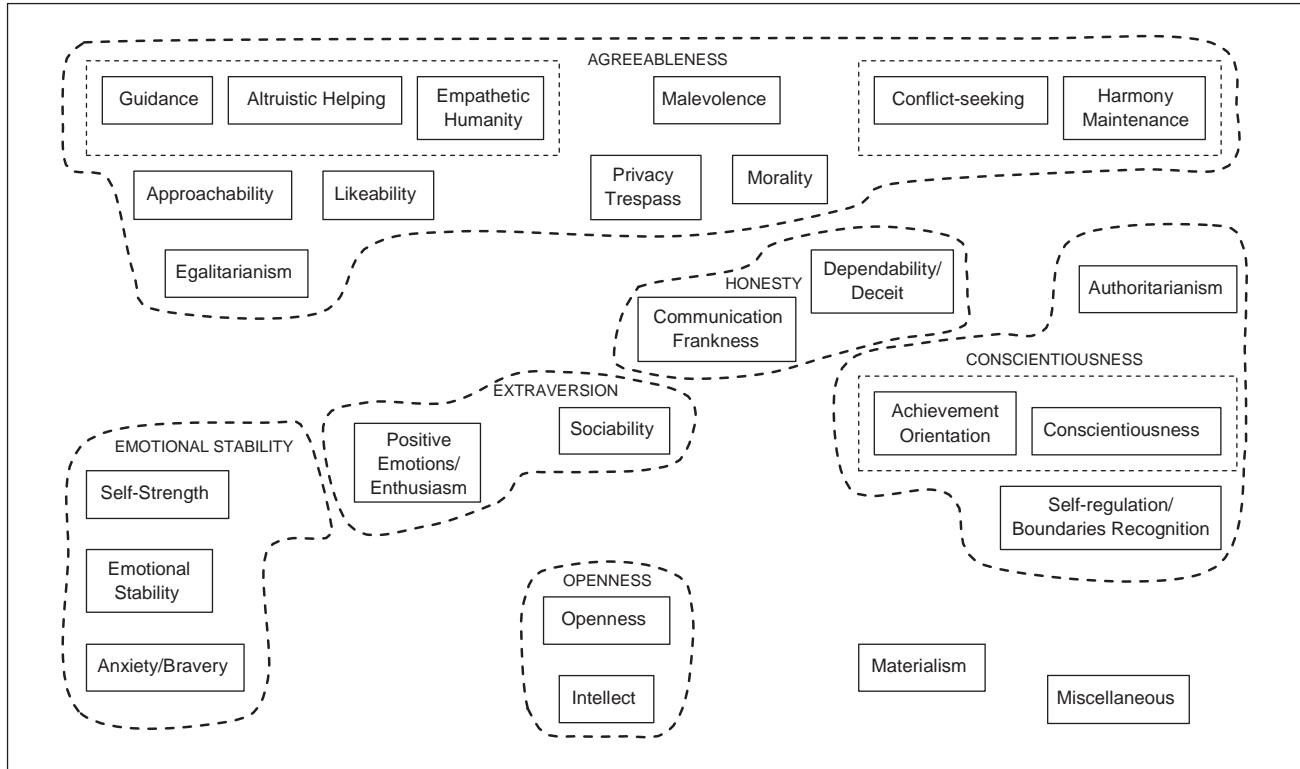


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the semantic interrelations of the 26 clusters of personality-descriptive terms

solid-line box; more strongly related clusters are depicted closer to each other. The dash-line boxes enclose clusters whose semantic proximity is the strongest in terms of the original responses. The bigger, dotted-line figures represent the space of possible personality dimensions.

The whole upper third of Figure 1 is occupied by clusters that could be interpreted as variations on an Agreeableness theme. The three upper-left corner clusters identify a rich spectrum of altruism, empathy, humanity, social commitment, and beneficence. Care-giving and shepherding are the common themes of these three clusters. The Guidance cluster includes responses referring to the quality of being a good guide, encouraging and promoting others' development. A person with these characteristics teaches well—not only in school matters but also as a teacher in life—and will offer advice in times of need (e.g., “One who gives guidance about life,” “Gives advices when you are in trouble” [Swati]). The Altruistic Helping responses refer to being there for other people, providing help and protection and being generous toward people in need (e.g., “She always gives you what you need,” “Always helpful in many things when I have problems” [Zulu]). As is the case with all clusters—either on the level of responses or facets—Altruistic Helping is codefined by concepts on the negative pole, here envy and selfishness. Empathetic Humanity refers to compassion and consideration of other people's needs (e.g., “Feels for others” [Xhosa] and the negative formulation, “He doesn't consider what may upset another person” [Zulu]). The concept can have an interpersonal or broader societal expression. The responses of the loving facet, for instance, refer to both interpersonal love and loving all people. There is also a specific concept of being attentive to community needs (e.g., “Sympathetic and cares for people in their community” [Swati], “Is so helpful when something goes wrong in the community” [Xhosa]).

The three immediately lower clusters in Figure 1 refer to different aspects of social relationships. Approachability represents the quality of being open to others' opinions (vs. stubborn) and not placing oneself above others. The Likeability cluster represents the characteristics of liking to entertain and please others and being a pleasant person to be with. The Egalitarianism responses refer to treating people equally, in a broad social context as well as in family relationships.

The two upper-right clusters in Figure 1 represent characteristics associated with interpersonal and social harmony. Relationship harmony is the common theme here. Responses include references to living peacefully with others (e.g., “Likes to live well with people” [Swati]), maintaining good relationships (e.g., “Unable to keep good relations” [Xhosa]) and acting to restore and maintain relationship harmony (e.g., by apologizing and forgiving).

The three clusters in the middle of the upper part of Figure 1 also center on questions of social functioning. Malevolence includes responses about being intentionally hurtful, physically and verbally, enjoying aggression, and being ill-willed. The Morality responses refer to behaving against the norms and laws (e.g., by stealing or murdering) versus being principled and abstaining from condemnable acts. Privacy Trespass refers to the tendency of a person to transgress interpersonal boundaries (e.g., by gossiping).

The right-hand, middle-high clusters in Figure 1 define a Conscientiousness dimension. The core is formed by Achievement Orientation and Conscientiousness, which involve conscientiousness in the traditional sense of diligence. Achievement Orientation refers to goal-oriented behaviors and qualities of determination and persistence. Conscientiousness includes characteristics such as competence and dedication to one's work, task-orientation, dutifulness, planning and caring for one's future, neatness, and orderliness. Self-Regulation/Boundaries Recognition includes responses referring to the person's ability to recognize and function within the given restrictions of reality, for instance by acting according to one's age and social role, regulating one's wishes and urges, and, in the case of a child, obeying a parent. The references to obedience have exclusively positive connotations: Obedience is pictured as the desirable quality of fitting well within reality constraints, as successful socialization rather than lack of assertiveness (e.g., "She likes an obedient child whom she will encourage to continue with the behavior" [Swati]). There was also a group of responses indicating failure to adhere to external constraints and exhibiting maladaptive, nonfitting behaviors like teaching drunk, driving without a driving license, and spending too much time on the street without giving a notice. The Authoritarianism cluster refers to the tendency of controlling others forcibly, with a strong emphasis on strictness and imposing order. An overly strict father would be a prototype of this cluster. Authoritarianism could be attracted to the negative pole of the Agreeableness dimension.

The lower-left corner clusters in Figure 1 could form an Emotional Stability dimension, with even-temperedness as its central defining theme. Most responses of the Emotional Stability cluster deal with the question how easily a person can be brought to certain emotional states, notably anger, and with the proclivity to experience such emotional states. The Self-Strength responses concern ego-functioning and the extent to which a person is independent and self-confident and has a positive sense of one's self versus needs the attention and help of others to function (e.g., "Short-tempered, always crying for attention" [Zulu]). The Anxiety/Bravery cluster is formed by a relatively small number of responses referring to fear and bravery.

Around the center of the space of Figure 1 there are two clusters that could define an Extraversion dimension. Sociability refers to the proclivity of a person to seek and enjoy other people's company and communication. Positive Emotions/Enthusiasm combines responses referring to general activity, liveliness, and sense of humor (see the Analysis Outline section for an example of an utterance and the rationale for forming this cluster).

The Openness/Intellect domain is relatively narrowly represented as its two defining clusters refer to fairly specific aspects of intellect. The open-minded facet of the Openness cluster, for example, is based exclusively on responses about interest in other indigenous African languages and cultures. Similarly, the responses in the creative facet refer specifically to creating traditional art. It is noteworthy that many responses of the Intellect cluster place an emphasis on practical manifestations of intelligence. "Clever" is used mainly with positive connotations (e.g., "She is not shy, she is clever and is able to get help when a need arises" [Swati]). Two of the facets of this cluster, observant and understanding, have a specific reference to interpersonal aspects of intelligence (e.g., "She could easily see when you had a problem" [Zulu], "Was kind and used to understand the learners' problems" [Swati]). Even the responses forming the knowledgeable facet in many cases refer not to the mere possession of knowledge but to sharing it with others (e.g., "knowledgeable, but doesn't share knowledge" [Xhosa] and "He isn't selfish with knowledge" [Zulu]).

An Honesty dimension would include the clusters of Dependability/Deceit (where an important aspect is the ability to keep other people's secrets; see examples in the Analysis Outline section about the "discreet" responses), Communication Frankness, and possibly some of the upper-row, Agreeableness-related concepts in Figure 1, notably Morality.

Finally, the position of the Materialism and Miscellaneous clusters is hard to define. Materialism includes responses about a person's appreciation of material goods and money. Only few of these responses have a negative undertone. Many responses feature the phrase "likes *nice* things," which (in the first person) is also often provided in self-descriptions. The nature of the "nice things" is better understood in more concrete references like "He likes nice things like sweets, yoghurt" (Zulu) and "Loves good things and dressing well" (Xhosa). The Miscellaneous cluster, in turn, accommodates facets that do not seem to represent basic personality dimensions. The responses in some facets (e.g., liking men/women) are hard to interpret in personality terms. Others feature vague terms out of context, such as *free-spirited* or the *resourceful* responses which could be referring to material or psychological

resourcefulness. Finally, some facets refer to very narrow areas of personality functioning, like substance use, or very specific characteristics, like staring.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to explore the basic concepts of personality in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu as expressed in freely generated personality descriptions. The study identified 26 clusters of personality-descriptive terms common to the three languages. The overall pattern of responses pointed to an elaborate conception of the person in his or her context of social relationships.

Person in Situation in Social Context

On the level of individual responses, personality characteristics were often expressed in terms of concrete behaviors and were qualified by situational and relational constraints. Compared with the items in the International Personality Item Pool (<http://ipip.ori.org/ipip/>), which is used widely nowadays, our database is rich in qualified responses, as illustrated in Appendix C. The preponderance of references to specific behaviors in the responses may be a consequence of different factors. First, these references may have been triggered by the interview prompt asking informants to describe characteristic behaviors of the target person (even though the other prompts referred to more general descriptions) or this could be a general method effect. Mervielde (1998) noted that free personality descriptions are often phrased in concrete behavioral terms. Eliminating responses with concrete behaviors, however, would have severely impoverished our data and possibly “cut out” important cultural aspects. Besides, this method effect does not readily explain the multiple instances of situational and relational trait qualifications. Second, in comparison to English and Afrikaans, the Nguni languages seem to have fewer words for traits, although we are not aware of any formal comparison of the lexicon size regarding traits. Finally, the implicit views of Nguni speakers on the power of traits to explain everyday behavior may be relevant. Church (2000, 2009) refers to the tendency among individuals from collectivistic cultures to deemphasize internal factors in the explanation of behavior as the lower “traitedness” of behavior in collectivistic cultures.

We acknowledge that an interpretation of human behavior in a dichotomous framework of individualism–collectivism may lead to oversimplifications (see, for example, Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Spiro, 1993).

Moreover, populations in South Africa, especially in urban settings, are currently in transition from more collectivistic to more individualistic values. Nevertheless, the rather limited traitedness of the personality descriptions made by Nguni speakers is a noteworthy finding which may be related to the features of collectivistic cultures posited in this framework. The idea of personality characteristics bound to situation and relational contexts is at odds with the Western conception of traits with its emphasis on cross-situational consistency. Our findings are in accordance with studies that have pointed to the importance of situational and relational aspects for the conception of self and personality (Ewing, 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1998; Triandis, 2001; see also Church, 2000, 2009).

On the more global level of the clusters of personality-descriptive terms, a similar general observation can be made. In their overall pattern, the clusters present a detailed picture of the person functioning in his or her social environment rather than the person out of context. The 26 clusters can generally be related to the six-dimensional space defined by Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Openness, and Honesty. We found that the clusters in the Agreeableness sector strongly overshadow the rest in density (number of facets and responses) and level of elaboration. In all three Nguni groups, the details of empathetic, altruistic, and prosocial versus antisocial behavior, interpersonal, and social harmony seem to merit a central place in the conception of personality.

Ashton and Lee (2001) suggested that two broad aspects of behavior are governed by corresponding groups of personality dimensions: prosocial versus antisocial tendencies (Agreeableness, Honesty, and Emotional Stability) and engagement with endeavor in different areas (Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness). Also looking at higher order constructs but with a different empirical approach, Digman (1997) identified two higher order factors accounting for the variance of the five-factor model: a “socialization” factor (encompassing Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability), and a “personal growth” factor (encompassing Extraversion and Openness). In our data, clusters relating to prosocial versus antisocial tendencies and to successful socialization are larger in number, more elaborated, and based on larger arrays of responses.

It is remarkable that even the dimension that can be expected to be the least “social”—Openness/Intellect (typically expressing idea-related endeavor, Ashton & Lee, 2001, and aspects of personal growth, Digman, 1997)—is expressed in social-relational terms among Nguni speakers. For the Nguni,

one is not just intelligent but rather socially intelligent and clever in practical situations; one is not merely knowledgeable but shares knowledge; a person is not open-minded in a general sense but in the sense of being open to learn about “other cultures” or “our language.” These outcomes are in accordance with the literature on indigenous concepts of intelligence in Africa in which social and relational aspects are more pronounced than in Western conceptualizations (e.g., Serpell, 1993).

A reassuring outcome of the present study is the finding that personality can be conceptualized in essentially the same terms in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu. The clusters share common content across the three languages, and the single-language facets are predominantly small and could be attributed to translation and sample specifics. Several clusters in the spectrum of interpersonal and social relationships seem to point to concepts that are not well represented in Western models. Guidance stands out the most; the ability of an individual to be a good role model, to enhance others’ advancement through life by providing advice, encouragement, and inspiration is an important personality characteristic in all three Nguni groups. The concept does not seem to be tapped by personality measures currently in use.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The free-descriptions approach employed in the present study allowed the identification of the most salient personality concepts in the three Nguni cultures and offers insight into their content. The main limitation of this approach as seen from a quantitative perspective is that the frequencies of responses in the separate facets can only be interpreted in relative terms. The emergence, for example, of a high-frequency tidy facet in Swati does not imply high levels of tidiness of the Swazi as compared with the other groups. It only indicates facet salience, but generalizations about actual differences in tidiness between the cultural groups are not warranted.

The reliance on English translations is another limitation. The extent to which the obtained personality-descriptive terms reflect variance of implicit traits in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu—and not in English—remains unknown. What can be ascertained, however, is that the clustering of these terms represents the core elements of the personality descriptions made in the three Nguni languages. The English lexicon is larger than those of the other languages spoken in South Africa; hence, the danger of leaving out substantial details in

working with translations can be considered limited. Even though a larger lexicon does not necessarily mean that the semantics are comparable in the critical areas, by considering utterances in their context and their patterns of co-occurrence we have minimized possible misinterpretations of the relationships between personality concepts.

It is an important finding of the present research that in the Nguni group, personality is dominantly described in terms of the person's functioning in social and situational context. In fact, this limited "traitedness" might be a factor contributing to the poor reliability coefficients of personality measures found in the native groups of South Africa (e.g., Meiring et al., 2005). Future research in these cultures should gain from incorporating context elements in personality assessment. The benefits of contextualized assessment have been demonstrated by Schwartz et al. (2001). These authors developed a questionnaire format (the Portrait Value Questionnaire) presenting abstract values in concrete, contextualized terms and demonstrated that this format is particularly well suited for populations where the understanding of abstract terms may be problematic (their validation samples included low-educated participants in South Africa as well as adolescent girls in Uganda). The limitations stemming from abstract questionnaire item formulations, as well as the general limitations of U.S.-developed and standardized questionnaires to uncover emic concepts in other cultures, are acknowledged by authors in the five-factor-model line of research (McCrae et al., 2005). Our study suggests that personality testing in South Africa may improve substantially if questionnaire items are framed in concrete and contextualized terms and advances the development of personality testing in South Africa by identifying some of the most salient indigenous concepts.

Conclusion

The present research identified 26 clusters that constitute the main components, or "building blocks," of personality in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu. The content of these clusters indicates a strong emphasis on harmonious functioning in social environment, virtues of empathy and benevolence, and generally successful socialization. The exploration of indigenous personality concepts demonstrated in this study provides an example of a path to be followed toward the advancement of cross-cultural personality research based on ecologically valid stimuli.

Appendix A

Examples of Facets Identified in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu

Facet	Original responses		
	Swati	Xhosa	Zulu
Advising (55/58/151)	Gives advice when you are in trouble	Always willing to give advice	She likes giving some advice
Aggressive (92/41/151)	Likes to give advices about life	Gave me good advice	She has a good advice
	Likes to fight One who beats up people	Aggressive Likes to fight	A person who likes fighting He beats people all the time
Caring (169/273/66)	Cares about people	Caring	Cares about everyone
	She is caring	Like a parent	Caring person
Cheerful (27/86/82)	Likes laughing	Always laughing	She likes to laugh
	Is always in high spirits	Funny and fun to be with	She was always happy
Evil-hearted (128/-/31)	Is evil-hearted and wishes others bad luck		An evil-hearted person
	Practices witchcraft hence is evil-hearted		He is a witch, he does bad things in other people's households
Friendly (79/67/14)	Is friendly and approachable	Always friendly	She was friendly, always smiling
	Is friendly to everyone	Friendly to everyone	She welcomes you with friendliness
Guiding (36/17/42)	Gave guidance on how to behave	Always guiding us	She showed the way to children
	One who gives guidance about life	Guides children when wrong	She shows you the way when you have done wrong

(continued)

Appendix A (continued)

Facet	Original responses		
	Swati	Xhosa	Zulu
Humble (28/27/32)	He is humble and does not regard himself as superior He is humble and always welcoming	A humble person Is down to earth	Very approachable and humble She is down to earth and approachable
Influential (-/7/12)		Influenced into liking Biology Can make people love his subject	He made me hate accounting The way she was teaching us, he made me love Afrikaans
Inquisitive (33/32/22)	Is inquisitive of affairs that do not concern her One who likes to pry into others' affairs	Interested in other people's things that do not concern them Puts her nose into other people's businesses	Very inquisitive, always asking questions Likes other people's business

Note: The number within parentheses next to each facet indicates number of responses in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu, respectively. A complete table is obtainable from the first author.

Appendix B

Clusters of Personality-Descriptive Terms and Constituting Facets (in Alphabetical Order)

ACHIEVEmENT ORIENTATION	ALTRUISTIC HELPING	ANXIETy/ BRAVERy	Approachability	Authoritarianism	COmmUNICATION FRANKNESS	Conflict-seeking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement-oriented (53/56/95) Assertive (-/6/9) Determined (8/20/-) Enterprising (-/28/16) Hard-working (367/99/89) Perseverant (-/13/14) Competitive (X4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generous (301/192/51) Helpful (178/242/115) Jealous (97/28/38) Problem solving (10/9/25) Protective (-/10/5) Selfish (19/35/24) Supportive (12/153/11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courageous (36/8/2) Fearful (13/5/7) Anxious (X7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approachable (25/68/12) Arrogant (45/26/27) Friendly (79/67/14) Humble (28/27/32) Proud (16/10/14) Stubborn (30/33/12) Undermining (53/9/2) Flexible (X14) Patronizing (X4) Pretentious (X5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authoritarian (4/43/13) Critical (-/24/15) Demanding (-/5/12) Disciplinarian (73/75/79) Strict (6/57/20) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulative (-/25/19) Emotional Sharing (8/26/37) Open to others and self (-/37/17) Outspoken (3/15/5) Secretive (-/16/6) Straightforward (7/33/-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argumentative (9/9/5) Intimidating (21/6/6) Irritating (-/6/12) Peaceful (14/60/30) Provocative (32/3/-) Troublesome (29/22/70) Instigator (S6)
Conscientiousness	DEPENDABILITY/DECEIT	Egalitarianism	EmOTIONAL STABILITy	EmPATHETIC HUMANITy	Guidance	HARmONy mAINTENANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competent (5/30/53) Concrete work (34/34/50) Conscientious (-/26/4) Dedicated (82/26/14) Future-oriented (9/3/7) Organized (-/11/9) Punctual (3/12/13) Tidy (457/37/27) Careless (S12) Talented (Z6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discreet (33/29/-) Honest (6/28/24) Loyal (-/5/8) Pretending (-/11/9) Trustworthy (91/56/44) Truthful (100/32/71) Promiscuous (S113) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discriminative (48/69/32) Fair (6/12/-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional (13/8/6) Even-tempered (15/19/31) Patient (16/13/38) Sensitive (2/19/10) Short-tempered (66/23/89) Temperamental (72/-/8) Predictable (S3) Emotional stability (Z12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attentive (14/44/24) Caring (169/273/66) Community-involved (12/11/28) Compassionate (102/48/32) Considerate (25/18/19) Loving (90/209/256) Respectful (373/88/81) Ubuntu (-/20/6) Welcoming (32/7/-) Accommodating (X15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advising (55/58/151) Didactic/good teacher (32/83/45) Encouraging (25/82/40) Guiding (36/17/42) Influent (-/7/12) Promoting (-/15/6) Role model (7/17/12) Empowering (X6) Uplifting (Z7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructive (-/20/5) Cooperative (-/10/3) Forgiving (21/11/17) Relationship harmony (28/11/93) Well-mannered (57/73/50) Peacemaker (X7) Soothing-to-repair-relationship (X6) Tolerant (X10)

(continued)

Appendix B (continued)

Intellect	Likeability	malevolence	materialism	miscellaneous	miscellaneous (cont.)	morality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligent (33/26/31) • Knowledgeable (9/11/3) • Observant (8/7/24) • Understanding (3/35/11) • Socially intelligent (Z3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertaining (5/8/-) • Kind (219/237/96) • Likeable (-/18/16) • Story-teller (6/8/13) • Indulgent (X7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusive (10/33/46) • Aggressive (92/41/151) • Cruel (-/49/30) • Denigrating (14/23/22) • Evil-hearted (128/-/31) • Verbally aggressive (80/29/91) • Vicious (S53) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciative (8/10/47) • Fashionable (43/26/54) • materialistic (3/15/8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absent-minded (-/3/11) • Home-oriented (-/25/22) • Liking men (13/2/21) • Liking women (33/9/34) • Recreational (42/110/234) • Relaxed (-/18/53) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religiosity (226/117/124) • Respectable (6/-/9) • Substance use (152/58/159) • Polygamist (S3) • Staring (S5) • Political (X5) • Popular (X3) • Resourceful (X6) • Specific interests (Z7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delinquent (205/17/65) • moral-conscious (25/60/73)
Openness	POSITIVE EmOTIONS/ ENTHUSIASm	PRIVAcY TRESPASS	SELF-REGULATION	SELF-STRENGTH	Sociability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative (-/13/16) • Eager to learn (53/27/36) • Open-minded (-/6/14) • Traditional (28/20/67) • Travelling (17/-/7) • Dreamer (X10) • Progressive (Z10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active (12/28/-) • Cheerful (27/86/82) • Humorous (33/43/65) • Playful (22/5/32) • Serious (-/5/4) • Optimistic (X6) • Pleasure-seeking (X16) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gossiping (127/31/58) • Inquisitive (33/32/22) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mature (2/20/8) • Naughty (8/7/20) • Obedient (14/2/7) • Responsible (15/43/27) • Wandering (9/-/14) • Greedy (S11) • Unruly (S5) • Disciplined (Z6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention-seeking (5/8/4) • Independent (6/30/19) • Needy (8/6/6) • Self-confident (-/8/12) • Self-respectful (50/30/38) • Suspicious/Trusting (-/8/9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicative (-/20/18) • Introvert (17/15/-) • Reserved (34/32/-) • Shy (76/14/8) • Sociable (51/166/150) • Talkative (93/113/126) • Noisy (X5) 	

Note: The number within parentheses next to each facet indicates frequency of responses in Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu, respectively. Facets found only in one language are marked by initial letter of the language.

Appendix C

Representative Personality Descriptions Referring to Particular Behaviors or Qualified by Situational or Relational Constraints

Particular behaviors

- Cares about the dead (S, caring; also for his home, father when needy, livestock, etc.)
- He is mean and would not even give you food when you just had a conflict (S, generous, mean/vicious)
- People who owe me, don't want to pay back my money (Z, reliable)
- Doesn't greet (X, respectful)
- She would pay last respect to the neighbors' funerals and she participated in their ceremonies (Z, respectful)
- Tells you when he is not going to do something (X, straightforward)
- you have to present her work or get punishment (X, strict)
- If you bring a complaint he doesn't respond but chases you away (Z, stubborn)
- A neighbor who can watch over your home when you are not around (S, trustworthy)

Situational qualifiers

- One who is generous especially when you ask (S, generous; also when you are hungry, when you come to her place, with food, with money, etc.)
- Dedicated and hardworking when it comes to home chores (S, hardworking)
- Is reserved but easily angered when provoked (S, reserved, even-tempered)
- Is reserved on certain occasions (S, reserved)
- He used to be serious when teaching (Z, serious)
- I like laughing to jokes but I am serious about life. (Z, serious)
- Outspoken especially when someone is wrong (X, straightforward)
- She is usually quiet, but if you engage her in a conversation she becomes talkative (Z, talkative)
- Becomes temperamental when you misbehave in class (S, temperamental)
- Gets vicious if you provoke him (S, vicious)
- Is a vicious person especially when you do not do as you had promised (S, vicious)

Relational qualifiers

- Is generous to people who are poor (S, generous; also to the neighbors, at home, etc.)
- We help each other (multiple instances in all three languages; also with advice, look after, respect, trust, understand, etc.)
- Like a parent (X, caring)
- She is honest to me and so am I to her (Z, honest)
- Is humble to her husband (X, humble)
- She had a sense of humor toward her grandchildren (Z, humorous)
- He hates disputes with people, especially neighbors (Z, peaceful)
- We love football (X, recreational)
- my father doesn't behave like a father (Z, responsible)
- She is a free person, but toward those she doesn't know she is shy (Z, shy)
- Although she is troublesome, we enjoy that because she is our grandmother (Z, troublesome)
- One who is trustworthy to neighbors and to the community (S, trustworthy)

Note: The text in the brackets indicates the language in which the response occurred (by initial letter), the facet in which it was included, and related examples.

Note

1. The official language names are siSwati, isiXhosa, and isiZulu, as used in the respective languages. In keeping with tradition in the English literature, the simple (root) terms (Swati, Xhosa, and Zulu) are used here; *Swazi* is used to refer to the speakers of Swati (see Hammond-Tooke, 1974, p. xiii).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

References

- Abrahams, F., & Mauer, K. F. (1999). The comparability of the constructs of the 16PF in the South African context. *Journal of Industrial Psychology, 25*, 53-59.
- Abrahams, F. (2002). The (un)fair usage of the 16PF (SA 92) in South Africa: A response to C. H. Prinsloo and I. Ebersöhn. *South African Journal of Psychology, 32*, 58-61.
- Ashton, M. C., & Lee, K. (2001). A theoretical basis for the major dimensions of personality. *European Journal of Personality, 15*, 327-353. doi:10.1002/per.417
- Ashton, M., & Lee, K. (2005). A defence of the lexical approach to the study of personality structure. *European Journal of Personality, 19*, 5-24. doi:10.1002/per.541
- Ashton, M. C., & Lee, K. (2007). Empirical, theoretical, and practical advantages of the HEXACO model of personality structure. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 11*, 150-166. doi:10.1177/1088868306294907
- Benedict, R. (1934). *Patterns of culture*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Bock, P. K. (1999). *Rethinking psychological anthropology: Continuity and change in the study of human action* (2nd ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.
- Cheung, F. M., Leung, K., Zhang, J. X., Sun, H. F., Gan, Y. G., Song, W. Z., & Xie, D. (2001). Indigenous Chinese personality constructs: Is the five-factor model complete? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 32*, 407-433. doi:10.1177/0022022101032004003
- Church, A. T. (2000). Culture and personality: Toward an integrated cultural trait psychology. *Journal of Personality, 68*, 651-703. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.00112
- Church, A. T. (2001). Personality measurement in cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Personality, 69*, 979-1006. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.696172
- Church, A. T. (2009). Prospects for an integrated trait and cultural psychology. *European Journal of Personality, 23*, 153-182. doi:10.1002/per.700

-
- D'Andrade, R. G. (1985). Character terms and cultural models. In J. W. D. Dougherty (Ed.), *Directions in cognitive anthropology* (pp. 320-342). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- De Raad, B., Perugini, M., Hřebíčková, M., & Szarota, P. (1998). Lingua Franca of personality: Taxonomies and structures based on the psycholexical approach. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 29*, 212-232. doi:10.1177/0022022198291011
- De Raad, B., Barelds, D. P. H., Levert, E., Ostendorf, F., Mlacic, B., Di Blas, L., . . . Katigbak, M. S. (2010). Only three factors of personality description are fully replicable across languages: A comparison of 14 trait taxonomies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*, 160-173. doi:10.1037/a0017184
- Digman, J. M. (1997). Higher-order factors of the Big Five. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*, 1246-1256. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.73.6.1246
- Doke, C. M. (1959). Bantu language pioneers of the nineteenth century. *African Studies, 18*, 1-27.
- DuBois, C. (1944). *The people of Alor*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ewing, K. P. (1990). The illusion of wholeness: Culture, self, and the experience of inconsistency. *Ethos, 18*, 251-278. doi:10.1525/eth.1990.18.3.02a00020
- Goldberg, L. R. (1981). Language and individual differences: The search for universals in personality lexicons. In L. Wheeler (Ed.), *Review of personality and social psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 141-165). Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.
- Guthrie, M. (1948). *The classification of the Bantu languages*. London, UK: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute.
- Hammond-Tooke, W. D. (Ed.). (1974). *The Bantu-speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Harkness, S., Moscardino, U., Bermudez, M. R., Zylicz, P. O., Welles-Nyström, B., Blom, M., . . . Super, C. (2006). Mixed methods in international collaborative research: The experiences of the International Study of Parents, Children, and Schools. *Cross-Cultural Research, 40*, 65-82. doi:10.1177/1069397105283179
- Heuchert, J., Parker, W., Stumpf, H., & Myburgh, C. (2000). The five-factor model of personality in South African college students. *American Behavioral Scientist, 44*, 112-125. doi:10.1177/00027640021956125
- Hofstede, G., & McCrae, R. R. (2004). Personality and culture revisited: Linking traits and dimensions of culture. *Cross-Cultural Research, 38*, 52-88. doi:10.1177/1069397103259443
- John, O. P. (1990). The "Big Five" factor taxonomy: Dimensions of personality in the natural language and in questionnaires. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality theory and research* (pp. 66-100). New York, NY: Guilford.
- John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). The Big-Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 102-138). New York, NY: Guilford.

-
- Kohnstamm, G. A., Halverson, C. F., Jr., Mervielde, I., & Havill, V. L. (Eds.). (1998). *Parental descriptions of child personality: Developmental antecedents of the Big Five?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- LeVine, R. V. (2001). Culture and personality studies, 1918-1960: Myth and history. *Journal of Personality, 68*, 803-818. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.696165
- Lewis, M. P. (Ed.). (2009). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (16th ed.). Dallas, TX: SIL International. Retrieved from <http://www.ethnologue.com>
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 98*, 224-253. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1998). The cultural psychology of personality. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 23*, 63-87. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (1999). A five-factor theory of personality. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 139-153). New York, NY: Guilford.
- McCrae, R. R., Terracciano, A., & 78 Members of the Personality Profiles of Cultures Project. (2005). Universal features of personality traits from the observer's perspective: Data from 50 cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*, 547-561. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.88.3.547
- Mead, M. (1928). *Coming of age in Samoa*. New York, NY: Mentor.
- Meiring, D., Van de Vijver, A. J. R., Rothmann, S., & Barrick, M. R. (2005). Construct, item, and method bias of cognitive and personality measures in South Africa. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology, 31*, 1-8.
- Meiring, D., Van de Vijver, F. J. R., & Rothmann, S. (2006). Bias in an adapted version of the 15FQ+ in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology, 36*, 340-356.
- Mervielde, I. (1998). Validity of results obtained by analyzing free personality descriptions. In G. A. Kohnstamm, C. F. Halverson, Jr., I. Mervielde, & V. L. Havill (Eds.), *Parental descriptions of child personality: Developmental antecedents of the Big Five?* (pp. 189-204). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Mischel, W., & Shoda, Y. (1995). A cognitive-affective system theory of personality: Reconceptualizing situations, dispositions, dynamics, and invariance in personality structure. *Psychological Review, 102*, 246-268. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.102.2.246
- Nurse, D. (1997). The contributions of linguistics to the study of history in Africa. *Journal of African History, 38*, 359-391. doi:10.1017/S0021853797007044
- Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kimmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin, 128*, 3-72. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.128.1.3
- Peabody, D. (1987). Selecting representative trait adjectives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*, 59-71. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.52.1.59

-
- Pervin, L. A., & John, O. P. (Eds.). (1999). *Handbook of personality: Theory and research*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Prinsloo, C. H., & Ebersöhn, I. (2002). Fair usage of the 16PF in personality assessment in South Africa: A response to Abrahams and Mauer with special reference to issues of research methodology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *32*, 48-57.
- Ramsay, L. J., Taylor, N., de Bruin, G. P., & Meiring, D. (2008). The Big Five personality factors at work: A South African validation study. In J. Deller (Ed.), *Research contributions to personality at work* (pp. 99-114). Munich, Germany: Rainer Hampp Verlag.
- Saucier, G., & Goldberg, L. R. (2001). Lexical studies of indigenous personality factors: Premises, products, and prospects. *Journal of Personality*, *69*, 847-879. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.696167
- Schwartz, S. H., Melech, G., Lehmann, A., Burgess, S., Harris, M., & Owens, V. (2001). Extending the cross-cultural validity of the theory of basic human values with a different method of measurement. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *32*, 519-542. doi:10.1177/0022022101032005001
- Serpell, R. (1993). *The significance of schooling: Life-journeys in an African society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Slabbert, S., & Finlayson, R. (1998). Comparing Nguni and Sotho: A sociolinguistic classification. In I. Maddieson & T. Hinnebusch (Eds.), *Language history and linguistic description in Africa* (pp. 289-306). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Spiro, M. E. (1993). In the Western conception of the self "peculiar" within the context of the world cultures? *Ethos*, *21*, 107-153. doi:10.1525/eth.1993.21.2.02a00010
- Statistics South Africa. (2001). *Census 2001: Key Results*. <http://www.statssa.gov.za>
- Taylor, N., & de Bruin, G. P. (2005). *Basic Traits Inventory: Technical manual*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Jopie van Rooyen & Partners SA.
- Taylor, T. R., & Boeyens, J. C. A. (1991). The comparability of the scores of Blacks and Whites on the South African Personality Questionnaire: An exploratory study. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *21*, 1-11.
- Terracciano, A., Abdel-Khalak, A. M., Adam, N., Adamovova, L., Ahn, C.-K., Ahn, H.-N., . . . McCrae, R. R. (2005). National character does not reflect mean personality trait levels in 49 cultures. *Science*, *310*, 96-100. doi:10.1126/science.1117199
- Triandis, H. C. (2001). Individualism-collectivism and personality. *Journal of Personality*, *69*, 907-924. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.696169
- Tyler, G. (2002). *A review of the 15FQ+ Personality Questionnaire*. Pulloxhill, UK: Psychometrics.
- Van de Vijver, F. J. R., & Leung, K. (2001). Personality in cultural context: Methodological issues. *Journal of Personality*, *69*, 1007-1031. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.696173
- Van Warmelo, N. J. (1974). The classification of cultural groups. In W. D. Hammond-Tooke (Ed.), *The Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa* (pp. 56-84). London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Wolff, H. E. (2000). Language and society. In B. Heine & D. Nurse (Eds.), *African languages: An introduction* (pp. 298-348). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bios

Velichko H. Valchev is a PhD student in cross-cultural psychology at Tilburg University, Tilburg, the Netherlands. His PhD study is on language and personality in South Africa, and he is also interested in questions of national and supranational identity, beliefs and values, and research methods. He has several publications and congress presentations on topics in these areas.

Fons J. R. van de Vijver is professor of cross-cultural psychology at Tilburg University, the Netherlands and extraordinary professor at North-West University, South Africa (Potchefstroom campus). He has published more than 300 publications in various domains of cross-cultural psychology, such as equivalence and bias analysis, intelligence, acculturation, and multiculturalism. He is the former editor of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* and president-elect of the European Association of Psychological Assessment.

Jan Alewyn Nel is a senior lecturer at North-West University, South Africa (Potchefstroom campus). He obtained his PhD in industrial psychology from the same university. He is registered as industrial psychologist at the Health Professions Council of South Africa. His current research interest is in the field of psychometrics within industrial psychology, focusing on both qualitative and quantitative personality research. He is presently involved in studies on positive work-life interference, stereotypes within the South African context, and the effectiveness of negotiation within trade unions.

Sebastiaan Rothmann is professor of industrial/organizational psychology at North-West University, South Africa (Vanderbijlpark campus). He got his PhD from the same university. His research interests are in the field of subjective well-being in the work context. He has published 120 articles in peer-reviewed journals in the field of work-related well-being.

Deon Meiring is a senior lecturer at the Human Recourses Management Department at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa, and extraordinary assistant professor at the Department of Industrial Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. He lectures in advanced assessment practice and has extensive experience in assessment and development centers and the Situational Judgment Test (SJT) design. He is organizing committee chair of the 21st International Congress of the

International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) 2012 in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Gideon P. de Bruin (DLitt et Phil, Rand Afrikaans University, South Africa) is professor of industrial psychology at the University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa. He teaches multivariate statistics, research methods, and psychometrics. His research focuses on cross-cultural issues in psychological testing, personality assessment, career development, and job strain.