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What is This?

Identity in Descriptions of Others Across Ethnic Groups in South Africa

**Byron G. Adams[1,2], Fons J. R. Van de Vijver[1,3,4],
Gideon P. de Bruin[2], and Cynthia Bueno Torres[1]**

Abstract
We examined the structure of identity implied in descriptions of others in four South African ethnic groups (Black, Coloured, Indian, and White). We tested the validity of an identity model with attributes, relational orientation, situational aspects, ideology, and valence as constituent dimensions of other-identity, and social distance as a moderator of constituent dimensions. Data were collected from 1,160 participants who provided descriptions of individuals they knew (parents, friends, grandparents, neighbors, and teachers) in semistructured interviews. Results confirmed that relational orientation provides a better conceptual framework of other-identity than individualism–collectivism: Personal orientation (individualism) and collective membership orientation (collectivism) are situated at the endpoints of the relational orientation dimension, with implicit and explicit relational orientation placed in between. We found that ethnic differences are most salient in implicit and explicit relational orientation categories in White and Black South Africans, respectively. We found that the identity of distal individuals was described in less abstract and more norm-regulated terms than the identity of proximal individuals. We concluded that all dimensions of the model are relevant for other-identity.

Keywords
other-identity, other-descriptions, identity structure, relational orientation, ethnicity, social distance

Identity refers to what makes a person unique and distinguishable from others as well as similar to others. It informs us about similarities to, differences from, and the empathetic links between individuals and groups (Ferguson, 2009). It also guides decisions about behavior (Weinreich, 2003). Identity is the conscious and unconscious process through which individuals define themselves both as personal and social beings (Ferguson, 2009; Schmeichel & Baumeister, 2004; Weinreich, 2003). As conceptual work on identity stems from personal and social identity

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perspectives (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999), we are interested in developing a global framework of how personal and social identity is structured. In this study, we intend to accomplish this by analyzing the identity of others (other-identity) in other-descriptions. The term *other-description* refers to a description of a person external to the self, such as a parent, a friend, or a teacher. An earlier study by Adams, Van de Vijver, and De Bruin (2012) addressed expressions of identity in self-descriptions across four South African ethnic groups (Black,[1] Coloured, Indian, and White). We focus on other-descriptions in the same four ethnic groups, and expect that similar to self-descriptions (Adams et al., 2012), other-descriptions can provide additional insight into the implicit structure of identity.

We start by providing an overview of the South African context and identity within this context as a precursor to investigating the structure of identity. We then discuss the model of identity as developed by Adams et al. (2012). Following this discussion, we relate identity to descriptions of others and introduce two additional aspects considered relevant for our view of the identity of others, especially in other-descriptions: These are the social distance dimension as a moderator of constituent dimensions in other-identity and the valence dimension as a fifth constituent dimension.

The Cultural Context of Ethnicity and Identity in South Africa

There are four major ethnic groups in South Africa: Black, Coloured, Indian, and White. The Black group (79.4% of the population) is composed of the nine indigenous Bantu-speaking groups. The Coloured group (8.8%) comprises people of mixed descent (primarily Black, Malay, Khoisan, Indian, and European). They speak mainly Afrikaans. The Indian group (2.6%) consists of the descendants of indentured laborers and traders who came to South Africa in the latter part of the 1800s from the Indian subcontinent with the prospect of building a better life. They have retained much of their South Asian subcontinental culture, and speak mainly English. The White group (9.2%) consists of Afrikaans- and English-speaking individuals who are descendants of the Dutch settlers who migrated to South Africa in the mid-1600s as well as English settlers from the early 1800s. This group also includes immigrants from a variety of other European countries who have settled in South Africa over the last 200 years (Statistics South Africa, 2010).

Since the beginning of Western colonization of South Africa in 1652, the economically and politically dominant White group has systematically discriminated against the indigenous people. During the apartheid era (1948–1994), this discrimination was formalized in policies and laws against the Black group and, to a lesser extent, the Coloured and Indian groups. Preexisting cultural and social differences between the various ethnic groups were intensified during apartheid because of legislation, such as the Group Areas Act and the Native Resettlement Act, which separated groups on the basis of ethnicity and language and assigned them specific areas of settlement (Athiemoolam, 2003; Jackson, 1998).

The democratization of South Africa in the early 1990s spurred a move toward social and economic redress through government policy, in particular affirmative action and the abolishment of laws that prevented intergroup contact. However, the segregation that characterized the apartheid era has not yet disappeared and South African society remains partially segregated in terms of social, political, and economic dimensions (Glaser, 2010). At present, the large majority of Black individuals are employed as unskilled and semiskilled laborers, whereas Coloured and Indian individuals are mainly employed in the service industry and trade, respectively (Roodt, 2009). The Black group has the highest unemployment rate (28.9%), followed by the Coloured (23.6%), Indian (10.8%), and White (5.6%) groups (Statistics South Africa, 2010). However, increased government initiatives to generate economic growth and policies, such as affirmative action and Black economic empowerment, have resulted in a steady growth in number of middle class individuals in the Black, Coloured, and Indian groups (Glaser, 2010).

The identity of these groups is a particularly interesting topic of study because each group's identity is rooted in traditional cultural aspects that long preceded apartheid, each group's identity was further reinforced by the apartheid regime that legalized oppression. In multicultural contexts, individuals need to make sense of their in-group (ethnic group) within the larger context. Through ethnic identity exploration and commitment, they develop a sense of who they are and how their group fits into the larger context (Phinney, 1992). This promotes a strong sense of in-group identity, which buffers the individual against discrimination (Smith & Silva, 2011), and promotes healthy psychosocial functioning (Roberts et al., 1999). Differences in the social, political, and economic experiences of each of these groups therefore play an important role for their identity (Jackson, 1998; Seekings, 2008). Although the Black identity is most commonly encountered in South Africa, the Western values of the White group remain dominant, particularly in economic and business sectors. Cultural distances between ethnic groups are still very real and large in South Africa, particularly due to the fact that each group has at some point experienced, and continue to experience some form of legal, political, or economic oppression (Mbembe, 2008).

A Model of Identity

Identity is primarily defined by personality (e.g., traits and dispositions), stable physiological–biological (e.g., sex and age), relational (e.g., with kin), social (e.g., religious and cultural), and contextual (e.g., socioeconomic status) factors (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; McAdams, 1995). It is uniqueness (personal aspects), complemented by similarity (social aspects) that contribute toward the ontogeny (a holistic perspective on the course of the individual's development) of identity. In the model of identity developed through the study of self-descriptions by Adams et al. (2012), identity is not conceptualized in terms of the strict personal and social perspectives considered above. The conceptualization of identity instead focuses on the broad underlying structure that allows for the classification of self-descriptions. The Adams et al. self-identity model highlights four broad constituent dimensions found in self-descriptions (Del Prado et al., 2007). As explained in more detail below, these dimensions refer to relational orientations, attributes, situations, and ideologies. The dimensions are informed by relationships with others (the relational orientation dimensions), usage of types of words (the attribute and ideological dimensions), and contexts of behavior (the situational dimension).

The Relational Orientation Dimension: An Alternative to Individualism–Collectivism

We define relational orientation as the perceived importance individuals or groups attach to relationships and it reflects the degree to which self- or other-descriptions deal with personal and/or relational aspects. The concept is rooted in existing frameworks of individualism–collectivism (Triandis, 1995), considered culture-level dimensions; self-construal (independence–interdependence; Markus & Kitayama, 1998; Somech, 2000), and Brewer and Gardner's (1996) trichotomous model of self-representation, which refers to interpersonal relations (see Brewer & Chen, 2007), considered individual-level dimensions.

Individualism–collectivism (similar to independence–interdependence) is characterized as individuals' perception of themselves, how they relate to others, and the goals and concerns that influence how they behave (Fischer et al., 2009). More precisely, individualism is defined by personal autonomy and the achievement of personal goals, and collectivism is where an individual is viewed primarily as part of a group and the achievement of communal goals and well-being is valued above those of the individual.

Individualism–collectivism forms the theoretical basis for a large number of cross-cultural inquiries (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). The model has also met with criticism, which usually amounts to the argument that the simple individualism–collectivism dichotomy does not do justice to the complex patterning of observed cross-cultural differences. This has resulted in research attempting to unpack it in a more detailed manner (see Brewer & Chen, 2007; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; A. P. Fiske, 2002; Realo, Allik, & Vadi, 1997; Somech, 2000; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

In particular, Brewer and colleagues (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Brewer & Gardner, 1996) have argued for an extension of the individualism–collectivism dichotomy through the inclusion of a middle category, labeled interpersonal relatedness, which refers to how individuals relate to close others in comparison with the general group. This is also in line with the work of Realo et al. (1997), who found evidence for differentiating subgroups of collectivists, who have different foci of collectivism, namely, family, peers, or society.

In line with this work, we reconceptualize individualism–collectivism in terms of the relational orientation dimension. Here, personal orientation (individualism) and collective membership orientation (collectivism) are situated at the endpoints of the relational orientation dimension. In a personal orientation, identity is strongly influenced by intraindividual characteristics (e.g., age and gender), internal characteristics (e.g., cognitive skills, abilities, and dispositions), and external characteristics (e.g., appearance). In contrast, in a collective membership orientation, relationships, and interindividual aspects, such as group membership, acceptance, and belonging, are seen as more important parts of identity. The African concept of *Ubuntu*, which advocates personhood through others (Bamford, 2007), is similar to the idea of a collective membership orientation. The concept focuses on how one relates to others and involves a self-definition in which others play a crucial role. In South Africa, the White group is traditionally regarded as individualistic, and the Black, Coloured, and Indian groups are regarded as collectivistic (Eaton & Louw, 2000; Laher, 2008; Seekings, 2008).

Adams et al. (2012) tested the applicability of the individualism–collectivism framework to self-descriptions as a cultural dimension in the South African context. They found that individualism–collectivism, as a cultural dimension, did not provide a detailed account of relational aspects present in these groups. They identified two limitations of the individualism–collectivism framework in their work on self-identity. First, individualism–collectivism could not distinguish clearly between the three collectivistic groups (i.e., Black, Coloured, and Indian). These groups vary greatly in terms of cultural, linguistic, social, and religious aspects so that the use of collectivism as a single label ignores salient differences among them. Second, the cultural differences found did not primarily involve individualism–collectivism (the endpoints of the relational orientation dimension). In addition to the endpoints of the relational orientation continuum, they distinguished two intermediate positions that showed much more cross-cultural variation than the endpoints. These are labeled implicit and explicit relational orientation.

Implicit relational orientation is closer to the personal orientation end of the continuum, which is the endpoint of the relationship orientation dimension that is akin to individualism, whereas explicit relational orientation is closer to the collective membership orientation end of the continuum, which is the endpoint akin to collectivism. Descriptions pertaining to an implicit relational orientation imply the presence of others but do not contain explicit references to them; examples are "being kind" or "being helpful." In explicit relational orientation descriptions others are not only implied but also explicitly mentioned; for example, "being kind to strangers or friends."

In line with previous studies on individualism–collectivism (e.g., Oyserman et al., 2002), self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1998) and self-representations (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), Adams et al. (2012) proposed that similar to these dimensions, relational orientation provides a continuum along which individuals and cultures may be distinguished. Where the Black,

Coloured, and Indian groups were expected to use more collective group membership descriptions, the White group was expected to use more personal orientation descriptions. However, in relational orientation, personal orientation descriptions were salient for all groups, and the largest ethnic differences were found in the two middle categories: implicit and explicit relational orientation. Black and Coloured South Africans were more relational, whereas the White and Indian groups were less relational (Adams et al., 2012).

The Attribute Dimension

The second constituent dimension is related to research in personality (Church et al., 2006). The attribute dimension is defined by content characteristics of descriptions; more precisely, it refers to the presence of dispositions (e.g., "being gregarious"), actions (e.g., "hitting children"), preferences (e.g., "liking good food"), and emotional states (e.g., "feeling sad"), among other content that are present in descriptions (see Table 1 for categories and examples of attribute descriptions). Dispositions are considered to be stable personal attributes and important from a personality psychology perspective. They are argued to be important in individualistic Western groups and contexts (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Church, 2009), and found to be mainly presented in the self-descriptions of the White and Indian South African group, who are also a less relationally oriented group, according to the results of Adams et al. (2012). In addition, dispositions were the least represented category in self-descriptions of Black South Africans who were the more relationally orientated group.

The Situational Dimension

Similar to the attribute dimension, the situational dimension is also related to research on personality (Church et al., 2006). The third constituent dimension considers the degree to which descriptions are contextualized. It examines the conditions that are used to specify attributes (De Raad, Sullot, & Barelds, 2008; Matsumoto, Hee Yoo, & Fontaine, 2009) by assessing the conditions and contexts associated with attributes such as dispositions, preferences, and behaviors (e.g., "liking coffee only in the afternoon" or "enjoying being alone at home"). Situational descriptions are considered crucial for understanding behavior in collectivistic non-Western contexts, and non-Western individuals would describe others more contextually than Western individuals (Choi et al., 1999; De Raad et al., 2008). In the Adams et al. (2012) study, results on this dimension were generally inconclusive; Coloured South Africans were more relationally orientated and provided more situational self-descriptions than other South African groups.

The Ideological Dimension

The fourth constituent dimension, which stems from the self-description study by Adams et al. (2012), is related to aspects of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The ideological dimension accounts for references to cultural, religious (spiritual), and ethnic indicators. These references to social aspects of identity are considered important in collectivistic non-Western groups (Laher & Quy, 2009; Phinney, 1992, 2000; Verkuyten & De Wolf, 2002; Yeh & Hwang, 2000). In the South African study, these descriptions were found to be used more by individuals in the Black group, which is considered generally more relational than the other groups (Adams et al., 2012).

Relating Identity to Descriptions of Others

Our objective is to understand how identity is construed by examining other-descriptions. It is important that we relate identity, mainly associated with self-descriptions, to these

Table 1. Coding Scheme.

Categories	Definition	Example
Relational orientation dimension		
Personal orientation	Individualistic, personal dispositions/ traits, states, and behaviors that are focused on the target individual	"He is intelligent"
Implicit relational orientation	Relational orientation without a target	"He is friendly"
Explicit relational orientation	Relational orientation with a target	"He helps his friends"
Collective membership orientation	Indicates membership with large or small groups, and roles	"She is a mother" or "He is Venda"
Attribute dimension		
Preference description	Interests, attitudes, and beliefs	"He loves people"
Purpose description	Wants, aspirations, and desires	"He wants to do well"
Emotive description	Feelings and emotional states	"He is feeling sad"
Competency description	Skills, abilities, and knowledge	"He knows how to solve problems"
Action description	Activities, actions, habits, and practices	"He grows vegetables"
Dispositional description	Dispositions, traits, and personal states	"He is quiet"
Virtue description	Personal qualities and virtues	"He has a sense of humor"
Situational dimension		
No-context specification	Provides no additional information	"He is strict"
General content specification	Qualifying adverbs/adjectives and general, nonspecific targets	"She has legs like a bottle"
Conditional and temporal specification	Situational, conditional, and temporal indications	"She is sometimes social" or "He hits them if they are lazy"
Context specification	Provides a specific context	"She is strict at church"
Other		
Ideological dimension	Spiritual, ideological, religious beliefs, actions, and membership	"She is Christian" or "He likes traditional food" or " She prays"
Valence dimension		
Negative valence	Negatively attributed behavior	"He beats other people's children badly"
Neutral valence	No indication of positively or negatively attributed behavior	"He is a father"
Positive valence	Positively attributed behavior	"He gives money to the poor"

other-descriptions as there are currently no well-defined and tested models of other-identity in psychology. If self-identity, that is, our view of "who we are," is based on interactions with others, and self- and other-identity are intertwined, then the study of identity should address both how we construe our own identity and how we construe the identity of others. According to Weinreich (2003), when we describe others we provide an "evaluation of the overall attributes of another [person as he or she is] in line with [our] own value system" (p. 47). The psycholexical tradition argues that important everyday concepts about personality are captured in the lexicon and that studying personality-descriptive terms in a language can therefore result in the identification of implicit theories of personality among speakers of the language (e.g., Saucier

& Goldberg, 2001). We argue that the same reasoning applies to the study of other-identity and that its structure can be identified by studying the use of other-descriptions.

Having thus far considered constituent dimensions of identity inferred from self-descriptions (Adams et al., 2012), we consider two additional aspects in other-descriptions: the social distance, considered a moderator of other-identity and the valence dimension, considered an additional constituent dimension.

The Social Distance Dimension

Social distance refers to the proximity of others to the self. Other-descriptions are often construed in the confines of roles, related to relational identity (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). Roles provide an individual with the structure to participate in society (McCrae & Costa, 2003), and expectations associated with such roles provide patterns of behavior attributed to an individual occupying a particular position in society (Biddle, 1986). We did not make the seemingly obvious choice of including roles as a constituent dimension of other-identity as roles are categorical variables that can come in endless varieties (Ferguson, 2009). This makes them impractical to use in our model of identity. Furthermore, the link between roles and the underlying structure of identity as defined in this study is unclear as to whether the structure of other-identity would vary across roles and, if this is the case, what dimensions, or typologies are relevant in this description of variations in other-identity. Therefore, we focus on a moderating dimension associated with roles: social distance, which can be deemed relevant for the structure of other-identity.

Social distance extends the in-group–out-group dichotomy that is popular in the intergroup relations literature (e.g., Elder, Douglas, & Sutton, 2006; Triandis, 1995). Social distance considers the psychological (Nan, 2007) and emotional (Van de Vijver, Mylonas, Pavlopoulos, & Georgas, 2006) distance between individuals and/or groups. The social distance dimension in our study refers to the relative distance (or alternatively, proximity and closeness) between a target person and other individuals or groups (Kocan & Curtis, 2009; Lee, Sapp, & Ray, 1996). According to individualism–collectivism, collectivistic groups make clearer distinctions between proximal (in-group) others and distal (out-group) others than individualistic groups (Fijneman, Willemsen, & Poortinga, 1996; Triandis, 1995).

There is less clarity, however, as to the prevalence of this variation in the social distance dimension across ethnic groups. Yet we consider several conflicting perspectives from North America and Western Europe that consider the relationships between social distance and the degree of language abstraction in Western groups. First, S. T. Fiske and Cox (1979) argue that proximal others are described more abstractly, whereas distal others are described more contextually. Second, contrary to this perspective, McAdams (1995) states that abstract language is reserved for the "psychology of the stranger," the distal other, and that proximal others would be described with more context. Third, the Linguistic Intergroup Bias Model (LIB; Maas, Milesi, Zabbini, & Stahlberg, 1995) considers social distance in conjunction with valence.[2] Here, positive descriptions of proximal others and negative descriptions of distal others are described more abstractly while negative descriptions of proximal others and positive descriptions of distal others described more contextually.

These perspectives provide no clear guideline to predict the dimensions in which other-identity would vary less or more less across ethnic groups, particularly non-Western groups where we generally expect other-descriptions to be more contextualized. Therefore, our examination of social distance with other-descriptions across ethnic groups is limited to whether more relational groups show more variation in other-descriptions with social distance where less relationally orientated groups are expected to vary less in the descriptions of others with social distance.

The Valence Dimension

Simon (2004) considers valence, which he defines as the "attractiveness of self-aspects" (p. 76), an important aspect of identity construction. The valence dimension is, within the context of this study, defined as the positive, neutral, and negative nature of descriptions. Social identity theory suggests that to satisfy the need for positively valued distinctiveness, individuals who are more proximal to the perceiver and share similar in-group characteristics are viewed more positively (e.g., Turner, 1999) than distal individuals. This is in line with attribution theory (Mosso, Rabaglietta, Briante, & Ciairano, 2010) and models of self-enhancement (Heine, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005), where the self is characterized more positively than others. Other-identity is expected to show more positive valence for proximal, socially valued individuals than for distal individuals who are more on the periphery of a person's social network.

In addition, the need for stronger differentiation between proximal and distal others can be expected to increase the variability of valence of other-identity. Where the LIB model (Maas et al., 1995) postulates that valence is associated with a level of abstract language use, we argue that valence is influenced by the need to balance proximal "assimilation" (where proximal others may serve as an extension of the self) and distal "differentiation" (where distal others are in the periphery; Simon, 2004, p. 78). Through their need for positive distinctiveness (Turner, 1999), individuals in all ethnic groups would provide positive descriptions more consistently when describing proximal others in comparison with distal others (Mosso et al., 2010; Sedikides et al., 2005). Therefore, we expect that valence in the identity of distal others would vary more than that of proximal others across all groups.

The Present Study

In the present study, we investigate the underlying structure of identity by considering constituent dimensions and a moderating dimension of identity across ethnic groups in other-identity by examining other-descriptions. In the study of self-descriptions, Adams et al. (2012) identified four constituent dimensions (the relational orientation, the attribute, the situational dimension, and the ideological dimensions). We argue that this model of self-identity is also relevant for understanding other-identity. In addition, we argue that a model of other-identity should be more complex than a self-identity model because other-identity is potentially influenced by more factors than self-identity. More specifically, we argue that other-identity varies along two additional aspects: social distance and valence.

In self-descriptions in Adams et al. (2012), for relational orientation, Black and Coloured South Africans emerged as more relational, and the White and Indian groups emerged as less relational. With respect to other-descriptions, we expected the same:

> **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Other-identity is described more relationally (using explicit relational orientation and collective group membership) in the Black and Coloured groups, and least relationally (using more personal and implicit relational orientations) in the Indian and White groups.

As we found that the attribute, situational, and ideological dimensions are somewhat related to our expectations for the relational orientation dimensions, we have combined our expectations into a single hypothesis. Similar to what was found for self-identity (Adams et al., 2012), more relationally oriented groups are expected to describe others more in terms of situations (contextually), to provide more ideological descriptions such as references to ethnic or religious groups, and to describe others using less dispositional descriptions:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Descriptions of other-identity given by individuals from more relational ethnic groups use more situational and ideological, and fewer dispositional references than descriptions given by individuals from less relational ethnic groups.

With social distance as a moderator, we expect constituent dimensions to vary more in other-descriptions of more relationally orientated individuals, as they make clearer distinctions between proximal and distal others. We expect other-descriptions of less relational individuals to be more consistent across social distance levels:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Other-identity varies more with social distance in more relationally orientated ethnic groups than in less relationally orientated ethnic groups.

Finally, with respect to the link between valence and social distance, we expect other-identity of proximal others to be described more positively than that of distal others, and that individuals would be more consistent (less varied) in the valence they assign to proximal individuals than distal individuals (more varied). These predicted mechanisms (of more positive valence of other-identity of proximal individuals and more variability in other-identity of distal individuals) are not expected to vary with ethnicity. Therefore, we test the following hypotheses without referring to ethnic differences:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Identity of proximal others is described more positively than identity attributed to distal others.
Hypothesis 5 (H5): Valence is more varied in the identity of distal others than in the identity of proximal others.

Method

In this study, we extracted person-descriptions of others from the qualitative data set of the South African Personality Inventory[2] (SAPI) project (see Cheung, Van de Vijver, & Leong, 2011; Nel et al., 2012; Valchev et al., 2011). The main objectives of the SAPI project are the development of an indigenous theoretical model of personality and the development of a personality measure that can be fairly used across all language/ethnic groups in South Africa and complies with South African labor legislation (Van de Vijver & Rothmann, 2004)

Participants

The SAPI project made use of a stratified sampling strategy to obtain samples from the four ethnic groups identified in South Africa (see Adams et al., 2012; Nel et al., 2012, Valchev et al., 2011, for more details). Participants who provided descriptions for the five social distance categories (parent, grandparent, best friend, teacher, and neighbor) were used for the purpose of this study. A total of 1,160 participants across the four ethnic groups provided 22,779 descriptions of others: Black ($n = 1,014$; generating 18,655 descriptions), Coloured ($n = 23$; 616 descriptions), Indian ($n = 48$; 1,389 descriptions), and White ($n = 75$; 2,119 descriptions). The mean age was 32 years ($SD = 11$). There were slightly more females than males in all groups. Group differences in age and gender composition were not significant.

Instrument and Procedure

In the qualitative phase of the SAPI project, participants were interviewed in their first language and asked to describe others (parents, friends, grandparents, neighbors, and teachers). Participants

were asked to describe (a) others, referring to the kind of person they are, (b) typical aspects of the other, (c) behaviors and habits characteristic of the other, and (d) the other to someone who does not know him or her. Trained interviewers conducted semistructured interviews. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and, where applicable, translated into English. Language experts provided quality checks for the data at every step of the process.

Coding Scheme

We coded descriptions of others based on the coding scheme developed by Adams et al. (2012) for the first four constituent dimensions. This scheme was based on the data and literature on the Twenty Statements Test (Bond & Cheung, 1983; Del Prado et al., 2007; Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). We followed an iterative process, where the proposed constituent dimensions and their respective categories were discussed among the authors. This resulted in each description being coded independently on every dimension and thus each other-description was assigned six ratings. Table 1 provides a detailed explanation of the coding scheme with the first four constituent dimensions derived from the study by Adams et al. (2012): (a) relational orientation dimension, (b) attribute dimension,[3] (c) situational dimension, and (d) ideological dimension (see Adams et al., 2012, for a full description of coding scheme for these categories).

The (e) valence dimension (negative, neutral, and positive valence) was the additional constituent dimension considered in this study and the (f) social distance dimension (placing individuals in proximity to the person describing them), was considered a moderator dimension; these were derived in a similar manner as the original constituent dimensions. For social distance, we coded the proximity of individuals using the results generated by Van de Vijver et al. (2006) to rate individuals (others) from proximal to distal in the following order: parent, friend, grandparent, neighbor, and teacher.

In the current study, four independent coders were trained by the lead author to code other-descriptions using the self-description code book developed by Adams et al. (2012) to which codes for valence and social distance were added. After 1 month of training, the first author assessed interrater reliability to evaluate the quality of the coding process by establishing interrater agreement. The coders rated different dimensions of the data in pairs to assess the degree to which they agree. Coders in this study obtained an average interrater agreement of 91%. When there was disagreement or uncertainly in coding a particular description, coders consulted with each other and confirmed their decision with the lead author of this article.

Statistical Analyses

We conducted loglinear analyses to examine the relationship between ethnic groups and the four constituent dimensions of identity (relational orientation, attribute, situational, and ideological). A separate analysis was conducted for each constituent dimension with ethnic group, as hypotheses involved specific dimensions. Loglinear analyses allow for a detailed study of associations between ethnic group and the dimensions of identity in contingency tables by indicating the significance in main and interaction effects (Cramer, 2006). Ethnic groups and the categories of an identity dimension were the classificatory variables, while cell frequencies were the dependent variables. Note that the need to separate analyses implied multiple tests of the null hypothesis of no association.

First, we consider the model fit, which assesses whether there is an interaction between the ethnic group and a constituent dimension, and whether this interaction (indicated by residuals, the difference between observed and expected values) differs significantly from zero (a poor fitting model). A Likelihood Ratio Test (LR) that is significant at $p < .05$ indicates a poor fitting model. Next, we inspect the main effects of ethnic group and constituent dimension. The main

effects of ethnic group were not interesting as they mainly reflect differences in sample size. Main effects of categories within constituent dimensions indicate that some categories were more popular than others were and that this popularity is shared across ethnic groups.

Finally, as our hypotheses refer mainly to interactions in ethnic groups and categories of constituent identity dimensions, and assessing whether the interaction was significant (LR test), we examined the standardized residuals. The standardized residuals provide an indication of which categories were significantly over- or underrepresented in one particular ethnic group, compared with the other ethnic groups. Standardized residuals close to zero indicated that frequencies of a particular constituent dimension in other-descriptions would be as expected in a model with only main effects, whereas standardized residuals with absolute values larger than 2.58 (and 3.29) indicated significant effects at $p < .01$ (and $p < .001$) in a similar manner to z scores. As a way to reduce Type I error probability, we chose $p < .01$ (where traditionally $p < .05$ is considered).

Results

Relational, Attribute, Situational, and Ideological Dimensions

We examined the structure of other-descriptions in terms of the relational orientation dimension (H1; a summary of hypotheses and their confirmation is presented in Table 2). We expected other-identity to be less relational in the Indian and White groups, and more relational in the Coloured and Black groups. A poor fit of the main effects-only model, $\chi^2(9, N = 26,040) = 188.48$, $p < 001$, confirmed the significance of the interaction between ethnic group and relational orientation. In each group the most common responses for all groups were personal orientation descriptions ($b = 2.38$, $p < .001$) in the relational orientation dimension.

The largest cultural differences in relational orientation were found in the implicit and explicit relational orientation, which are the middle categories of the relationship orientation dimension. The Black group used significantly more explicit relational descriptions compared with the Coloured and White groups, with the Indian group somewhat in the middle. Implicit relational orientation responses were given most by the White and Coloured groups and least by the Black group. The two extremes of the relational orientation dimension, typically associated with individualism (personal orientation) and collectivism (group orientation), did not show ethnic differences. Table 3 illustrates that personal orientation responses were the most common in all the groups, including the Black group. In contrast, group membership responses had very small frequencies in all groups. It can be concluded that H1 was partially confirmed. However, like in the previous study (Adams et al., 2012), ethnic groups differed in the middle positions (implicit and explicit orientations) rather than in the extremes typically associated with individualism and collectivism.

Next, we examined the structure of other-descriptions in terms of the attribute, situational, and ideological dimensions (H2). We expected that ethnic groups with a more explicit relational orientation and collective membership orientation would make use of other-identity descriptions that included fewer dispositional descriptions, specified more situational aspects, and made greater use of the ideological dimension. The poor fit of the loglinear model confirmed the interaction between ethnic group and each dimension; attribute dimension, $\chi^2(18, N = 23536) = 1,089.04$, $p < .001$; situational dimension, $\chi^2(9, N = 26040) = 66.07$, $p < .001$; and ideological dimension, $\chi^2(3, N = 26040) = 58.88$, $p < .001$. An inspection of the main effects revealed that dispositional descriptions ($b = 3.06$, $p < .001$) were the most common descriptions in the attribute dimension, with context-free descriptions ($b = 3.88$, $p < .001$) without ideological references ($b = 3.22$, $p < .01$) being used most in all ethnic groups.

Standardized residuals (see Table 3) indicated that the Black group made greater use of preference descriptions than the other groups, while dispositional descriptions were used more

Table 2. Summarized Results of Hypotheses.

Hypotheses	Result	Explanation of result
Hypothesis 1: Other-identity is described more relationally (using explicit relational orientation and collective group membership) in the Black and Coloured groups, and least relationally (using more personal and implicit relational orientations) in the Indian and White groups.	Partially confirmed	The Black group was more relational, and the Coloured, Indian, and White groups less relational.
Hypothesis 2: Descriptions of other-identity given by individuals from more relational ethnic groups use more situational and ideological, and fewer dispositional references than descriptions given by individuals from less relational ethnic groups.	Partially confirmed	The Black and White groups are the most and least relational, respectively, presented the least, and most dispositional descriptions and the most and least ideological references. The Coloured and Indian groups are placed in the middle. However, situational specification presented no clear patterning across ethnic groups
Hypothesis 3: Other-identity varies more with social distance in more relationally orientated ethnic groups than in less relationally orientated ethnic groups.	Partially confirmed	Other-identity varies in terms of attributes and situations specified across social distance in all groups, not only more relational groups.
Hypothesis 4: Identity of proximal others is described more positively than identity attributed to distal others.	Confirmed	Identity of proximal others is described more positively than distal others.
Hypothesis 5: Valence is more varied in the identity of distal others than in the identity of proximal others.	Confirmed	Distal others are described with more variation than proximal others.

frequently in the White group. The Coloured and Indian groups yielded results in between those of the White and Black groups. Although no clear pattern was discernible for the situational dimension, the analyses showed that the Indian group used more general content specification than the other groups. In addition, the ideological dimension was used more often by the Black group than the other ethnic groups, with the White group making the fewest ideological references. The second hypothesis was therefore confirmed in relation to the dispositional descriptions and ideological descriptions, but was not conclusively confirmed for the situational dimension.

Social Distance as a Moderating Dimension

To test the third hypothesis, we reduced the number of categories in the situational and attribute dimensions to avoid small cell frequencies in the loglinear analyses. We dichotomized the situational dimension that initially considered the condition or situation specified, such as "he is *sometimes* kind" (conditional and temporal situational specification) or "she is strict *at home*" (context specification). The new scores reflected the presence (e.g., "He is sometimes kind"; or "She hits children when naughty") or absence (e.g., "She is sweet") of a condition or situation. The attribute dimension was also reduced to include only the three most commonly used categories (preference, action, and dispositional descriptions). Loglinear analysis was used to test models that considered higher order interaction effects of ethnic group, social distance, the reduced attribute dimension, and the dichotomized situational dimension.

Table 3. Proportions (P) and Standardized Residuals (SR) of Relational Orientation Dimension, Attribute Dimension, Situational Dimensions, and Ideological References Across Ethnic Group.

	Black		Coloured		Indian		White	
Categories	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR
Relational orientation dimension								
Personal orientation	.37	−0.77	.35	−0.85	.39	1.12	.39	1.87
Implicit relational orientation	.28	−2.87***	.36	3.43***	.30	0.18	.36	6.46***
Explicit relational orientation	.32	4.06***	.25	−2.98***	.27	−2.42**	.21	−8.46***
Collective membership orientation	.03	−1.21	.05	1.66	.05	3.04***	.04	.22
Attribute dimension								
Preference description	.22	9.76***	.07	−7.12***	.05	−12.08***	.05	−15.23***
Purpose description	.02	0.90	.02	−0.72	.02	−1.24	.02	−1.27
Emotive description	.00	0.90	.00	−0.32	.00	−1.80	.00	−1.04
Competency description	.01	−1.51	.01	−0.18	.02	4.56***	.01	0.93
Action description	.37	1.04	.45	3.33***	.35	−0.77	.31	−4.34***
Dispositional description	.36	−7.43***	.45	2.27	.53	8.48***	.58	13.97***
Virtue description	.02	−2.23	.01	−1.06	.03	2.41**	.03	5.27***
Situational dimension								
No-context specification	.65	0.20	.65	0.26	.59	−2.93***	.67	1.64
General content specification	.27	−1.30	.27	−0.05	.35	5.74***	.26	−0.77
Conditional and temporal specification	.08	1.70	.07	−0.17	.06	−2.04	.06	−3.31***
Context specification	.01	0.48	.01	−1.26	.01	−0.65	.01	−0.18
Other dimension								
No-ideological dimension	.96	−0.57	.98	0.41	.97	0.46	.98	1.10
Ideological dimension	.04	2.85***	.02	−2.04	.03	−2.29	.02	−5.49***

**p < .01. ***p < .001.

We also wanted to establish if other-identity would vary more across social distance in ethnic groups that presented more explicit and collective membership orientation than in ethnic groups that presented more personal orientation and implicit relational orientation (H3). We first examined the relationship between situational dimension, ethnicity, and social distance. A poor model fit, $\chi^2(38, N = 26040) = 932.59$, $p < 001$, indicated a significant interaction effect. Table 4 shows that fewer situational aspects were specified for the most proximal individuals (parent and friend) in all groups. Other-identity descriptions of the most distal individuals (teachers) were more situational in the Black and Indian groups than in the White and Coloured groups. There was no clear pattern for descriptions of grandparent and neighbor (middle social distance). Identities of proximal others were described with less situational context, while identities of distal others varied with situational context across all ethnic groups.

We then examined the relationship between the attribute dimension, ethnicity, and social distance. Again a poor model fit, $\chi^2(61, N = 22332) = 2,038.12$, $p < 001$, indicated a significant interaction effect. The results are displayed in Table 5 and indicate that across all groups, other-identity is less dispositional and more contextualized in descriptions of more distal individuals than of more proximal individuals. In addition, action descriptions were most

Table 4. Proportions (P) and Standardized Residuals (SR) of Ethnic Group and Social Distance Across the Dichotomized Situational Dimension.

	Parent		Friend		Grandparent		Neighbor		Teacher	
	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR
Black										
No-situation specified	.25	3.61***	.23	2.80***	.18	−2.36**	.13	2.19	.20	−5.51***
Situation specified	.20	−6.81***	.17	−8.76***	.20	1.25	.12	−1.03	.31	14.71***
Coloured										
No-situation specified	.30	2.99***	.26	2.00	.20	0.64	.19	3.87***	.06	−7.95***
Situation specified	.18	−1.96	.27	1.58	.21	0.29	.22	4.30***	.12	−3.77***
Indian										
No-situation specified	.26	0.17	.29	2.72***	.19	−1.35	.09	−6.15***	.20	−3.22***
Situation specified	.22	1.07	.18	−0.69	.21	2.78***	.07	−1.29	.30	6.25***
White										
No-situation specified	.30	5.61***	.30	7.37***	.22	2.91***	.09	−2.91***	.10	−10.12***
Situation specified	.19	−3.92***	.24	0.17	.22	0.36	.14	0.64	.22	−1.60

**p < .01. ***p < .001.

often used, particularly for teachers (distal targets), in the Black and Indian groups. We also found differences in the use of dispositional descriptions. The structure of other-identity in the White group was more dispositional for more proximal individuals (parent, friend, and grandparent), whereas the structure of other-identity in the Black group had more preference descriptions and fewer dispositional descriptions for these individuals. H3 was thus partially confirmed.

The Valence Dimension

We examined valence (negative, neutral, and positive descriptions, scored 0, 1, and 2, respectively) across social distance. The identity attributed to proximal individuals was expected to comprise more positive elements (H4). Prior to the analysis, we aggregated individual participant valence scores per target person. This yielded five scores (one for each target person) per participant. We removed participants missing two or more target person-descriptions. This resulted in a subsample of 764 participants (66%) from the original 1,160 participants. We then used the linear regression function (with random error added to the regression estimates) to replace missing values. An ANOVA was used to examine significant differences in mean valence scores (dependent variable) across social distance (independent variable). There was a significant interaction effect between social distance and valence, $F(4, 760) = 183.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .49$. According to Table 6, proximal individuals were described more positively than distal individuals were described across all ethnic groups. In addition, the dispersion of valence scores tended to increase with social distance; standard deviations for distal target persons are larger, confirming H4.

Finally, we expected the identity attributed to distal individuals to show more variation than the identity attributed to proximal individuals (H5). We tested this difference in

Table 5. Proportions (P) and Standardized Residuals (SR) of Ethnic Group and Social Distance, Inclusive of Self-Descriptions, Across Reduced Attribute Dimension.

	Self		Parent		Friend		Grandparent		Neighbor		Teacher	
	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR	P	SR
Black												
Preference descriptions	.41	8.26***	.28	8.77***	.22	4.99***	.25	12.79***	.10	−0.29	.15	−5.53***
Action descriptions	.14	0.11	.20	−6.05***	.21	−1.84	.16	−7.89***	.13	1.28	.31	16.55***
Disposition descriptions	.23	−6.78***	.25	−2.55**	.21	−6.06***	.20	−2.91***	.14	0.75	.21	−5.24***
Coloured												
Preference descriptions	.17	−6.51***	.26	−3.38***	.26	−3.06***	.26	−2.66***	.18	−1.80	.04	−5.08***
Action descriptions	.20	3.99***	.25	1.85	.23	1.77	.17	0.13	.25	7.90***	.11	−3.01***
Disposition descriptions	.37	1.18	.28	2.62***	.28	3.27***	.24	2.49**	.15	2.40**	.05	−5.73***
Indian												
Preference descriptions	.14	−5.55***	.33	−5.06***	.12	−6.06***	.30	−4.35***	.10	−4.41***	.10	−6.72***
Action descriptions	.10	−1.90	.22	−1.08	.21	−0.60	.19	−0.54	.07	−3.45***	.31	3.75***
Disposition descriptions	.59	5.78***	.26	5.96***	.29	8.89***	.20	4.22***	.07	−2.01*	.18	1.18
White												
Preference descriptions	.02	−9.80***	.25	−7.26***	.28	−6.43***	.22	−6.44***	.13	−5.10***	.12	−8.21***
Action descriptions	.06	−4.20***	.20	−3.83***	.26	0.31	.20	−1.65	.13	−0.59	.20	−2.87***
Disposition descriptions	.80	11.88***	.31	13.27***	.28	12.29***	.24	9.89***	.09	0.55	.09	−5.19***

Note. Self-descriptions have been added from the study by Adams, Van de Vijver, and De Bruin (2012) for comparison with other-identity descriptions across social distance. This distinction is made clear in the discussion section.
**$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 6. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for the Valence Dimension as a Function of Social Distance.

Target person	M	SD
Parent	1.58	.44
Friend	1.70	.41
Grandparent	1.49	.53
Neighbor	1.30	.75
Teacher	1.10	.47

Note. Target persons are placed from the most proximal to the most distal in terms of social distance. All means for social distance differ significantly from one another.

variance by computing the mean valence of the two most proximal (parent and friend) target persons (considered here the pretest), the mean valence of the two most distal (neighbor and teacher) target persons (the posttest) and testing the difference in variability between the pre- and posttest. Statistically, this procedure involves a test of two correlated variances (Geenen & Van de Vijver, 1993). Higher pretest variance compared with posttest variance would oppose our hypotheses. First, there was a weak correlation between the valence of the most proximal and most distal target persons, $r(764) = .07$, $p = .053$, indicating the independence of proximal and distal valence. Next, the *t* test assessing similarity of variances was highly significant, $t(762) = −9.12$, $p < .001$, indicating that the posttest variance was significantly higher than the pretest variance, confirming H5. The identity of distal others showed more variation than the identity of proximal others.

Discussion

Drawing on self-description literature (Del Prado et al., 2007), we examined the psychological representations of identity derived from the ways in which people describe others using data collected from four South African ethnic groups (Black, Coloured, Indian, and White). Our objective was to establish (a) whether constituent dimensions of identity, as identified in self-descriptions by Adams et al. (2012), would present in a similar manner in other-identity across the same ethnic group, and (b) whether two additional dimensions (the social distance and valence dimensions), considered important for other-descriptions, contribute toward our understanding of identity. Results confirmed that the structure of the constituent dimensions for other-identity were mostly similar as for self-identity across ethnic groups. This indicated meaningful cross-ethnic similarities and differences. Similar to the findings of Adams et al. (2012), context-free dispositional descriptions (e.g., "He is intelligent") were most prevalent. While the addition of social distance and valence provided valuable information about how individuals construe other-identity, the most novel dimensions of the model of other-identity arguably involve relational orientation and social distance. Other-descriptions provided insight into the implicit structure of attributed identity and in the sections that follow, we describe the implications of these dimensions for models of other-identity.

Relational Orientation: Beyond Individualism–Collectivism

Similar to the Adams et al. (2012) study, we found no differences on the extreme relational orientation categories, but clear differences in the middle categories. These differences were mainly between the non-Western (Black) and Western (White) groups. We found that in the Coloured group, other-identity was more similar to that of the White group; with the Indian group occupying a more intermediate position, which placed them more with the Black group. These results for the Coloured and Indian groups, are somewhat contrary to what was found with self-descriptions.

At its core, the relational orientation dimension deals with how people relate to others. This dimension cannot be captured in a simple dichotomy. We agree with previous conceptual and empirical critique of the individualism–collectivism dimension (see, for example, Oyserman et al., 2002), and the related self-construal (independence–interdependence; Markus & Kitayama, 1998) that these dichotomies are inexact and inadequate (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

Realo et al. (1997) argue that there were at least three distinguishable types of relations within collectivism. Our relational orientation dimension emphasizes various social aspects of identity in a broader sense than the simple individualism–collectivism dichotomy. More specifically, the traditional view that the White group is individualistic and the Black group is collectivistic fails to acknowledge that the relevant ethnic differences are better captured by what could be called varieties of collectivism (implicit and explicit relational orientation). Referring to the Black group as simply collectivistic ignores the fact that individualistic descriptions (i.e., related to dispositions and preferences) are much more common than references to group membership in this group. In a similar fashion, referring to the White group as individualistic does not acknowledge the importance of implicit relational descriptions in this group, which have clear collectivist components. Overall, the results suggest that describing the identity of ethnic groups in South Africa as individualistic or collectivistic does not satisfactorily explain their construction of social aspects of their self- and other-identity.

If identity is viewed as a process of negotiation of personhood in terms of personal, social, and contextual aspects (Simon, 2004), then the importance of identifying the interactional properties accounted for by relational orientation is apparent. The content analysis of utterances about the

identities of others used in this study strongly suggests that people do not construe identities in terms of a simple dichotomy between self and others or between in-group and out-group. Instead, descriptions of others often refer to a wide variety of relational aspects. We argue that relational orientation allows for a more measured depiction of relational aspects of identity.

In addition, relational orientation may be possibly linked to social relational aspects of personality salient in non-Western contexts (Cheung et al., 2011; Nel et al., 2012). In personality, social relational aspects, such as agreeableness (Big Five; McCrae & Costa, 2003), interpersonal relatedness (Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory, Cheung, Cheung, Wada, & Zhang, 2003), relationship harmony and softheartedness (SAPI in South Africa, Nel et al., 2012), account for basic tendencies of the person. In accordance with the links made between personality and identity by Clancy and Dollinger (1993) and McAdams (1995, 1996), these personality aspects may inform the relational aspects of identity. Considering identity as a negotiated process between self, others, and context, relational orientation takes into account what relational aspects the person values most with respect to his or her identity.

Social Distance as Moderator

The use of language is crucial in understanding how identity construals vary with social distance. Proximal individuals are usually described more positively than distal individuals are described. In addition, in our data, participants described proximal individuals using more personal or abstract language (dispositional and preference descriptions), including terms such as "intelligent" or "friendly." In contrast, participants described distal individuals using more functional or concrete language (action descriptions), including terms such as "giving" to "animals," "orphans," or "the homeless." While this finding is in line with predictions by S. T. Fiske and Cox (1979), they are contrary to those of McAdams (1995). Although we treated social distance and valence dimensions independently, we find that the LIB model (Maas et al., 1995) may provide some insight into why proximal others are described both more positively and abstractly than distal others, who are described less positively and often more contextually. It may be interesting for future studies to consider the associations between social distance and valence across groups.

It may also be the case that changes in descriptions across social distance are due to the increasing influence of role expectations in relation to social distance. Social distance has an important influence on the structure of reported other-identity. Moving from proximal other-descriptions to distal other-descriptions resulted in three changes: (a) Distal descriptions are more functional and role-linked; (b) distal descriptions involve fewer psychological characteristics; and (c) descriptions of more distal persons involve more actions (and fewer dispositions and preferences). The functional aspects of roles appear to be important for predicting behavior, managing uncertainty, and making sense of the identities of distal individuals (Ferguson, 2009).

Ethnicity also moderates the role of social distance in other-descriptions. In descriptions of proximal individuals, abstract language in the White, Coloured, and Indian groups mainly took the form of dispositional descriptions, similar to what was found in studies of self-descriptions in our previous study (see Table 5, data about self-identity taken from Adams et al., 2012) and in studies of self-descriptions in Western cultures (Kashima, Kashima, Kim, & Gelfand, 2006). In the Black group, abstract language was more prevalent in preference descriptions (e.g., likes and dislikes) and in the descriptions of proximal individuals. In descriptions of distal individuals, concrete language in the Black and Indian groups was clearly represented by action descriptions. In contrast, the White and Coloured groups only indicated less use of abstract language. The increased contextualization in descriptions of the behavior of distal individuals is similar to Choi et al.'s (1999) finding concerning East Asians' attribution of behavior to others. East Asians attributed more contextual behavior to others. It is also evident that the Black group and, to a lesser extent, the Indian group place more emphasis than the White and Coloured groups on the

functional aspects related to distal individuals. Preference and dispositional descriptions seem to be more person-linked than role-linked for proximal individuals. We infer that due to the use of more contextual and less person-linked descriptions, roles become more important in other-identity with increasing social distance of the target person.

Other- and Self-Identity

Our study supports the idea that the structure of self- and other-identity is partly identical, partly different. The main similarity is that the structure of constituent dimensions across different groups in other-identity seems to be quite similar to that of self-identity. The main difference is that with the addition of valence and social distance, other-identity is generally role specific, and thus more contextually bound. Our argument is that self- and other-identity, with respect to the patterning of results in constituent dimensions, share many similarities and that self-identity can be seen as other-identity of the person closest to us. The way in which we use attributes, relational orientation, situational references, and ideological references is essentially similar for self- and other-identity. In both self- and other-identity we found that across ethnic groups the following categories are most salient across the dimensions: (a) The personal orientation followed by implicit and explicit relational orientation in the relational orientation dimension; (b) dispositional, action, and preference categories in the attribute dimension; (c) no-context and general content descriptions in the situational dimension; and (d) very little use of ideological descriptions (see Adams et al., 2012).

The similarity in the emerging structure of self- and other-identity across the different ethnic groups is not all that surprising. Even though descriptions of the self are known to be susceptible to biases, such as self-enhancement (Heine, 2003; Sedikides et al., 2005), it is not very likely that such biases would alter the structure of identity; it is more likely that such biases would make desirable attributes more likely to be mentioned in self-descriptions. Identity is seen as an interaction process, rooted in negotiations between individuals. In such negotiations, it is likely that structural features emerge that apply to all participants.

Limitations and Recommendations

It is possible that aspects such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, personality, and (in multicultural contexts) intercultural interaction may affect the constituent dimensions of identity and it is therefore important that these aspects be studied. Our data set did not allow for a test of these factors on other-identity. However, we recommend further inquiry into these individual variables based on the proposed constituent dimensions. Taking into consideration the sample characteristics, we acknowledge that future studies are needed to establish the external validity (generalizability) of our model and findings. This is particularly important given that the structure of other-identity started from our understanding of self-identity. Coders coded other-descriptions in line with the established self-descriptions model, and although we had an "other" category for the attribute dimension, we would recommend that future studies consider a more bottom-up, open-ended approach in their study of other-identity.

It is also likely that the intranational acculturation to the multicultural reality in South Africa since the early 1990s has had a considerable impact on the identities of different groups. Studies need to be undertaken to investigate the ways in which intergroup contact (Hewstone & Swart, 2011) and other intercultural experiences, such as discrimination, could help us understand the identity of South Africans and their intergroup relations. Relational orientation may be a good point of departure that can be used to redefine the cultural categorization of ethnic groups in multicultural societies. The construct could provide valuable insight into differentiating between

cultures as an expansion of individualism–collectivism, and as a means for inquiring into the relational aspects of identity, as they are present across groups.

Conclusion

In this article, we argue that other-descriptions provide additional information about specific differences across ethnic group identities similar to self-descriptions. This article also furthers the validity of the proposed identity model. Although our model is not exhaustive, there is sufficient evidence to confirm that the attribute, relational, situational, ideological, valence, and social distance dimensions provide enough information to distinguish between ethnic groups. Evidence has also been found for cross-ethnic similarities and differences that closely link other-identity to self-identity. This evidence suggests that individuals who are more proximal are described in a manner more similar to the self.

The construct of identity is caught between the social and personal aspects of the individual. Although self- and other-identity have the same basic structure, other-identity is influenced by more factors, notably social distance and the larger variability in valence descriptions. Social distance is particularly important as persons that are more distal tend to be viewed as "less psychological" and more linked to role-related behaviors than proximal individuals and the self. The complex nature of social contexts means that unknown variables have implications for the evolution of individual and group identities. We believe that we could assess these variables by better understanding the within-, between-, in-, and out-group differences that may contribute to identity structure (Hornsey & Jetten, 2007; Reid & Deaux, 1996).

Notes

1. While Black in South Africa in global terms refers to all historically disadvantaged "non-White" groups (African, Coloured—i.e., mixed race—and Indian), the term is used throughout this article to refer only to members of African descent.
2. The SAPI, an acronym for South African Personality Inventory, is a project that aims to develop an indigenous personality measure for all 11 official languages in South Africa. Participants are Byron Adams (University of Johannesburg and Tilburg University, the Netherlands), Deon de Bruin (University of Johannesburg), Karina de Bruin (University of Johannesburg), Carin Hill (University of Johannesburg), Leon Jackson (North-West University), Deon Meiring (University of Pretoria

and University of Stellenbosch), Alewyn Nel (North-West University), Ian Rothmann (North-West University), Michael Temane (North-West University), Velichko Valchev (Tilburg University, the Netherlands), and Fons van de Vijver (North-West University, Tilburg University, the Netherlands, and University of Queensland, Australia).

3. This was the only constituent dimension that contained a (small) amount of descriptions that did not fit into other categories, which included physical (e.g., "He is tall"), demographic (e.g., "He is from Hamanskraal"), or biographic (e.g., "He is 20") features. Due to the diversity size of this category, it was labeled miscellaneous and excluded from further analysis.

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