

# **Psychopathic traits in a group of Basotho students**

By

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### Abstract

In the light of the controversy surrounding the concept and assessment of psychopathy, the main aim of this study was to determine the relevancy of psychopathy-related measures from a non-Western and more specific black African perspective. More than 100 Basotho (Sesotho-speaking) Psychology students were assessed with measuring instruments which had been translated into Sesotho. The total reliability of these instruments was found to be acceptable, but the reliability coefficients for most of the subscales were unsatisfactory. The validity of the instruments could also be questioned. Significant correlations were found among the measures. When the results of the present study were compared with an American sample, it appeared that the Basotho group scored higher on primary psychopathy but lower on secondary psychopathy than the American group. However, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution, as there were several shortcomings that derived, among others, from the translation and administration of the questionnaires, as well as the researchers' neglecting the impact of language of instruction versus that of home language.

**Key words:** psychopathy, Basotho, Sesotho, cross-cultural assessment, translation

### Samevatting

In die lig van die kontroversie rondom die konsep en assessering van psigopatie, was die hoofdoel van hierdie studie om die relevansie van psigopatie- verwante meetinstrumente vanuit 'n nie-Westerse en meer spesifiek swart Afrika- perspektief te bepaal. Meer as 100 Basotho (Sesotho-sprekende) Sielkunde- studente is geassesseer met meetinstrumente wat in Sesotho vertaal is. Die totale betroubaarheid van die meetinstrumente was aanvaarbaar, maar die betroubaarheidskoëffisiënte vir die meeste subskale was onbevredigend. Die geldigheid van die instrumente kan ook bevraagteken word. Betekenisvolle korrelasies tussen die meetinstrumente is gevind. In 'n vergelyking tussen die resultate van die huidige ondersoek en dié van 'n Amerikaanse studie het die geblyk dat die Basotho-groep hoër tellings rakende primêre psigopatie, maar laer tellings ten opsigte van sekondêre psigopatie as die Amerikaanse groep behaal het. Die resultate van die huidige studie moet egter met versigtigheid geïnterpreteer word, aangesien daar verskeie leemtes was rakende byvoorbeeld die vertaling en toepassing van die vraelyste, asook die invloed van onderrigtaal versus moedertaal.

**Sleutelwoorde:** psigopatie, Basotho, Sesotho, kruiskulturele assessering, vertaling

## Literature Review

### *The concept*

The existence of the personality type, today popularly known as the psychopath, has been known for about 2500 years (Cleckley, 1976). From everburgeoning research in a variety of scientific disciplines and the popularity of the concept in the media, it is evident that the intrigue that envelops this phenomenon remains. It is equally true, however, that various aspects of psychopathy are clouded by uncertainties and controversies.

One of the core issues relates to the definition of psychopathy which has undergone a significant metamorphosis over time. Researchers have therefore struggled with the inclusion criteria for the disorder, while clinicians have grappled with arriving at accurate diagnoses. A major factor that has contributed to this perplexity has been the confusing manner in which the term “psychopathy” has been both rejected and corroborated by different authorities. For example, while researchers such as Hare (1995) and Lykken (1995) strongly support the term, the tenth edition of the International Classification of Diseases (1992) only includes sociopathy and dissocial personality disorder. Although the American Psychiatric Association (1994) only uses antisocial personality disorder, the association states that the category has also been referred to as psychopathy, sociopathy and dissocial (“dyssocial”, p.645) personality disorder.

Many prominent psychologists, especially in the forensic psychology field, hold the view that although psychopathy overlaps with the above-mentioned concepts, it deserves its place as a separate taxonomic entity. This acknowledgement has led to valuable research in different areas of the syndrome. One such area that holds promise concerns developments in the traditional personality versus behavioural domains. It is generally accepted that it should not be an either or debate, but rather that both dimensions should be considered in the assessment of psychopathy. Barlow and Du Rand (2002) rightly point out that even though most psychopaths meet the criteria for antisocial personality disorder, not all of these individuals diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder (according to the DSM-IV the diagnostic criteria of this disorder consist mainly of behavioural criteria) are psychopaths.

Recent research by Johansson, Andershed, Kerr and Levander (2002) suggests that psychopathy actually consists of a three-factor structure, separating the personality component into two further divisions of the affective and interpersonal dimensions. This could have important implications for research and practice since the boundaries of the definition would then be more clearly defined. Other researchers have adopted a similar focus in attempting to define the concept, claiming that the assessment or diagnostic criteria of psychopathy should include social adaptive functioning (Baird, 2002). This was proposed as part of a process in distinguishing between primary and secondary psychopathy, which was originally introduced by Karpman (1948). It received seemingly little attention at the time, but has clearly shown that the concept is in revival mode. The concept has been elaborated on by various researchers in the past decade (Baird, 2002; Morisson & Gilbert, 2001; Lykken 1995). Its increased inclusion in the focuses of research suggests that it is considered a valuable contribution and a concept with great potential.

It is understandable that the stated advances in the psychopathy area have resulted in the development of various instruments to measure this construct. This aspect is discussed next.

### ***Assessment of psychopathy***

The assessment of psychopathy has developed alongside the development of the concept itself. Some time after the emergence of the concept, psychopathy was referred to as “a mythical entity” (Blackburn, 1988, p.511) and that its assessment was therefore considered to be an almost impossible task. But the fascinating nature of the concept and with the persistence of many researchers, various measuring instruments, based on the available information at the time, were developed in an attempt to demystify psychopathy. Some were more successful than others, and today a variety of instruments can be utilized with some confidence.

The measures presently used to assess psychopathy may be divided into two broad categories: general personality measurement instruments and psychopathy-specific instruments. The most commonly used psychometric measures of personality in the assessment of psychopathy include the Minnesota Multiphasic

Personality Inventory (MMPI), the Million Clinical Multi-Axial Inventory (MCMI), the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF), the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI) and even projective techniques such as the Rorschach. However, various experts criticise these instruments.

For example, the main criticism against the well-known MMPI is that it was not designed for forensic settings. In addition, the content of some items in its psychopathic deviate scale “seems either irrelevant to or negatively associated with psychopathy” (Hemphill & Hart, 2003, p.93). The MCMI was found to have low, and the PAI low to moderate diagnostic agreement with the most widely supported psychopathy-specific measure, the Psychopathy Checklist Revised (Hemphill & Hart, 2003). The 16-PF again does not provide a diagnosis of psychopathy, and relies on the perceptions of the interpreter to form an opinion of the person he is dealing with (Karson & O’Dell, 1976). This provides opportunity for bias and incorrect judgement. This is also true for projective techniques whose scoring allows for subjective interpretation and can reveal more about the interpreter than the subject!

Psychopathy-specific instruments such as Hare’s Revised Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R), the Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI) and Levenson’s Psychopathy Scale (LPS) were developed based on theories of psychopathy as they emerged. The PCL-R was constructed from Hare’s two factor premise (personality and behavioural characteristics) and is regarded as the most widely used and researched psychopathy-specific measure (Hare, Clark, Grann & Thornton, 2000; Brinkley, Schmitt, Smith & Newman, 2001). It has been proven to be a psychometrically sound measure of psychopathy and is therefore considered the most accurate and comprehensive measure available to clinicians at present. Other more recently developed measures such as the PPI and LSP have not been researched as much. It also has a slightly different focus than the PCL-R. The PPI is primarily concerned with the assessment of personality traits, while the LSP is particularly concerned with primary and secondary psychopathy. Constant efforts to investigate and increase the reliability and validity of these measuring instruments could contribute to our understanding of psychopathy.

The validity of self-reported psychopathy has also been questioned with arguments of malingering and subjects' presenting socially desirable responses (by a population already known as sly and manipulative) that severely restrict the validity of self-report measures of psychopathy (Hart, Hare & Harpur, 1992). However, with the development of psychopathy-specific self-report measures and the inclusion of personality constructs into these questionnaires (as opposed to merely behavioural or anti-social acts), the indicators of validity regarding these are slowly increasing (Hare, 1985; Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995; Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996).

### ***The successful psychopath***

One of the most neglected areas of psychopathic research has to do with the so-called successful (also known as the primary or sub-clinical) psychopath. Important advances have been made not only in the refinement of the concept and assessment of psychopathy, but also in the gathering of research information on different populations such as children, as well as across gender, ethnic and cultural groups (Lilienfeld, 1998). Research has mainly focused on criminal samples in the past, but a growth in research interest about non-clinical samples has been noted (Widom, 1977; Belmore & Quinsey, 1994; Levenson, Kiehl & Fitzpatrick, 1995; Forth, Brown, Hart and Hare, 1995). The construct of successful psychopathy and its assessment, as it is claimed to be manifested in non-criminal samples, requires further investigation and research to arrive at reliable and valid findings about prevalence and dimension. Successful psychopaths have been under-researched due to the fact that they fly under the radar and thus have not been identified. Whereas their demise has gone largely unnoticed, or rather undocumented until recently, the successful psychopath is less easily accessible, as opposed to criminal populations which are concentrated in prisons and rehabilitation facilities. This relatively new research area has therefore changed the preference of interpretation and scrutiny into a more dimensional argument, as opposed to categorical classification (Baird, 2002). Although only in their infancy, these concepts hold great promise for the future understanding of psychopathy in the general population. Some of the significant findings reported is that successful psychopaths, compared to unsuccessful (secondary) psychopaths, have higher task performance (Devonshire, Howard & Sellars, 1988), superior self-concept and dominance (Morrison & Gilbert, 2001), as well as higher achievement dispositions (Ross & Rauch, 2001).

By expanding the focus to include the successful psychopath in the general population and the dissection of differences in functioning compared to the unsuccessful psychopath, possible opportunities for developing preventative measures might emerge. The potential implications of these are immense because not only the individual “suffering” from or predisposed to psychopathy should benefit, but also the community that is presently burdened by often intangible or undetectable physical and emotional harm.

### ***Psychopathy and culture***

The majority of research findings on the manifestation of psychopathy have been Eurocentric, with research participants that have therefore mainly been Caucasian. Cross-cultural studies have been conducted on especially African-Americans, but this group is considered to be relatively far removed from their African cultural origins, and is therefore not representative of a traditional non-Western culture. Taking cross-cultural differences into consideration is essential when we interpret research findings and compare groups. For example, European and Western cultures express key values such as competition, independence, separateness and individual rights, whereas African cultures tend to focus on co-operation, collective responsibility and interdependence (Triandis, 1995).

The afore-mentioned lack of cross-cultural data on especially the manifestation of psychopathy represents a serious lacuna that precludes our generalising present Eurocentric findings to other cultures. This seems to be particularly true for the African continent where numerous cultures and ethnic groups abound.

African cultures are often viewed as sharing the same characteristics. However, this is not necessarily true. Visitors to the African continent often find the scope of cultural diversity astounding, if not overwhelming. For example, in South Africa there are 11 official languages, while many others are spoken. The differences in the cultural and related value systems among some of these African groups have been the cause of conflict for centuries. At the same time, many, if not almost all, African cultures have become so intertwined not only with other African, but also with Western cultures that unique traditional cultures are in the process of erosion. This,



of course, does not mean that certain cultural or ethnic groups no longer exhibit typical features – indeed these differences often cannot be isolated on the basis of superficial observation. In addition, various studies have reported results that support the notion that there are cultural differences in personality (Pethman and Erlandsson, 2000; Marsella, Dubanoski, Hamada and Morse, 2000; Triandis and Suh, 2002).

Difficulties such as misdiagnoses as a result of cross-cultural psychometric evaluation are well-known (Gregory, 1996; Kanjee, 2001). For example, the commonly cited psychopathy study by Cooke and Michie (1999) suggests that the differences between American and Scottish samples could be attributed to methods of assessment, specifically the intensity of diagnostic criteria and rates of actual diagnoses.

In the light of the afore-mentioned brief overview, it is clear that the major goal of the present study will be to investigate whether there is a correlation between the findings generated by various instruments measuring psychopathy when these are applied to a non-Western cultural group (Basotho students in South Africa). As the importance of related aspects --- primary psychopathy and cultural influences --- is evident, they have also formed part of the investigation.

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants and sampling***

A convenience sample of approximately 130 Sesotho-speaking undergraduate psychology students at the University of the Free State were recruited from psychology classes. The Basotho (often abbreviated as “Sotho”) culture, the focus of the present research, is one of the many “official cultures” in South Africa. The group consists of approximately seven million people, who mainly speak the Sesotho language. Three subgroups exist within this culture – the Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho and Tswana. It is the Southern Sotho group of about 2 million people who live in and around Lesotho – an independent landlocked country within South Africa. It is also the most common African language in the Free State province (which borders on Lesotho) where the present study was conducted.

### ***Procedure***

The students were motivated by, among others, pointing out that the opportunity would provide them with experience in the role of participant in a research project, and this would therefore create a frame of reference for future research. Students were also promised and remunerated to the amount of R50 for the time spent on completing the questionnaires. Both males and females were included.

Measuring instruments were made available during lectures, as well as at a specified location in the Department of Psychology. The questionnaires were not completed under controlled circumstances; students were allowed to complete the measures at their leisure. Anonymity was assured throughout the project. From the original 130, only 106 students' questionnaires were usable. The exclusion of 24 sets of questionnaires was mainly due to duplicating errors.

### ***Measuring instruments***

Four measuring instruments were utilised to achieve the aims of this study:

- a) *Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI)* (Lilienfield & Andrews, 1996). This is a widely used self-report measure of psychopathy and consists of 187 items which are rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from false, mostly false, mostly true to true. Its focus is on personality traits related to psychopathy. Studies involving non-criminal samples yielded psychometric results that support the use of the PPI in student and community samples (Lilienfield & Andrews, 1996; Benning, Patrick, Hicks, Blonigen & Krueger, 2003).
  
- b) *Levenson's Psychopathy Scale (LPS)* (Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995). This self-report measuring instrument was originally designed for use with college samples and consists of 26 items. It is divided into two separate scales measuring primary and secondary psychopathy, and items are rated on a four-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
  
- c) *Negative Emotionality Measure (NEM-30)* (Waller, Tellegen, McDonald & Lykken, 1996) assesses global maladjustment and requires a simple true or false answer to 30 items. It was included for purposes of investigating the

discriminant validity of the PPI, which measures psychopathic personality *per se*, rather than generalised emotional distress. The results of the two measures were therefore not expected to correlate significantly.

d) *Student General Deviance Scale (SGDS)*. The scale was obtained from Norman Poyhress from the University of South Florida, a well-known expert in the field of forensic psychology and the assessment of psychopathy. Although the scale is referred to in Levenson, Kiehl and Fitzpatrick (1995), no psychometric properties of the measure could be traced. This 24-item scale focuses specifically on the antisocial behaviour of students. Given the nature of the questions, it was decided to include this measure in the study.

The former measures, especially the first three, have been used widely in research in mainly the USA and have exhibited acceptable psychometric properties for that country. For this study the instruments were translated into Sesotho by two Sesotho-speaking clinical psychologists and back-translated by a professor in African languages. As these instruments have not been standardised to be used with a Sesotho-speaking population, an alpha coefficient was also calculated to determine the internal consistency of the instruments.

### ***Statistical analysis***

To investigate the relationship between the SGDS and the other measuring instruments, the Pearson's product moment correlation procedure (Howell, 2002) was used. For purposes of commenting on the practical importance of the statistically significant results that were found, we included an outline of how the practical significance of the results could be determined. To gauge practical significance, effect sizes were calculated. Given that the linear relationship between variables was investigated, Cohen's suggestion (Steyn, 1999) of implementing  $\rho$ , the correlation coefficient, and its guidelines, as effect size, was used. When results were interpreted, statistical significance and practical value were investigated by repeatedly referring to effect sizes.

When comparing the average scores of the two different cultural groups (South Africa versus USA), the *t*-test for independent samples was utilized. To calculate the effect sizes, Cohen's *d* was used.

## Results

As the measuring instruments were translated into Sesotho from the original English, it was considered important first to determine internal consistencies. This was done by calculating Cronbach's  $\alpha$ -coefficient with the assistance of the SPSS-computer programme (SPSS Incorporated, 1983). The coefficients for the total, as well as the subscale scores, are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ -coefficients for the total and subscales of the measuring instruments**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math>-coefficients</b>
<i>Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI)</i>	Total	0,700
	Machiavellian egocentricity	0,614
	Social potency	0,413
	Fearlessness	0,221
	Coldheartedness	0,457
	Impulsive nonconformity	0,334
	Alienation	0,504
	Carefree nonplanfulness	0,653
<i>Negative Emotionality Measure (NEM-30)</i>	Total	0,764
	Emotional sensitivity	0,508
	Nervousness-tension	0,359
	Worry-proneness	0,140
	Alienated tendencies	0,278
	Aggressive tendencies	0,629
<i>Levenson Psychopathy Scale (LPS)</i>	Total	0,586
	Primary psychopathy	0,449
	Secondary psychopathy	0,363
<i>Student General Deviance Scale (SGDS)</i>	Total	0,692

Table 1 indicates that, as far as the various total scores of the measuring instruments are concerned, the calculated coefficients displayed acceptable internal

consistencies. The instrument with the highest reliability was the NEM-30, followed in descending order by the PPI, the SGDS and the LPS. The findings should be interpreted against the background of the controversial question: what is an acceptable level of reliability (Foster & Parker, 1999)? Although it is generally accepted that a reliability coefficient of more than 0.8 (especially in cases where important decisions have to be taken concerning an individual's future) should be pursued, it is equally true that there are several exceptions to this rule. Personality measures, especially as a result of the broadness and/or complexity of the measured concepts, often yield (much) lower values. A reliability coefficient of as low as 0.5 can still be regarded as useful and was also used as an arbitrary guideline in this study. This guideline is also supported by Owen and Taljaard (1996) of the Institute of Psychological and Edumetric Research (Human Sciences Research Council) in Pretoria who state that in cases where only a mean on an attribute has to be determined across a number of people, a reliability coefficient of this nature can still be useful.

According to the above-mentioned guideline, the reliability of most subscales was low. Five of the eight subscales of the PPI, three of the five of the NEM-30 subscales and both subscales of the LPS were below 0.50. As the subscales could not be used with confidence, it was decided to exclude them from the analysis.

The only instrument that contained a validity scale was the PPI. Lilienfield and Andrews' (1996) application of this Deviant Response (DR) scale was used, where questionnaires with validity scores between 17 and 20 were eliminated. The information is summarised in Table 2.

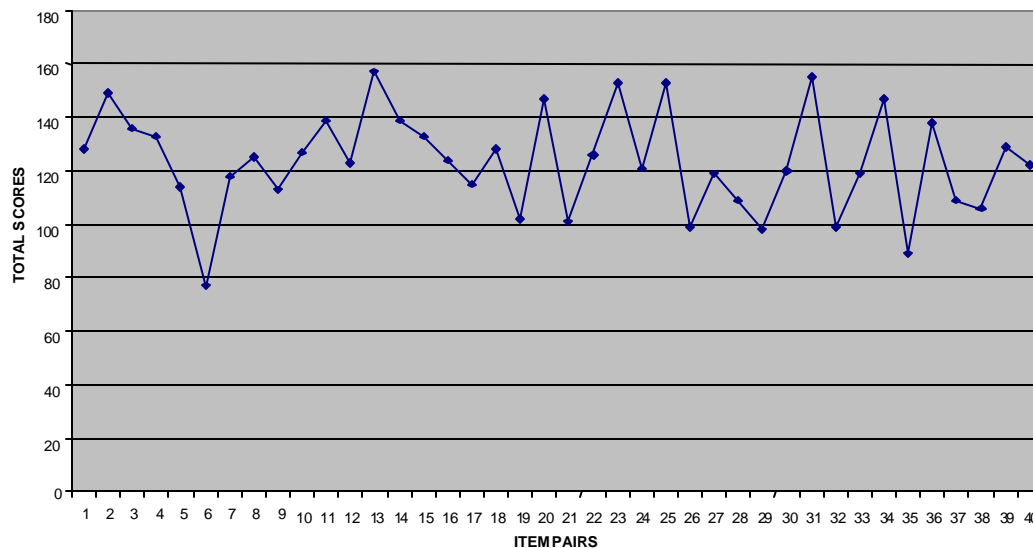
**Table 2. Deviant Response Scale information of the PPI**

<b>Deviant Response Scale (PPI)</b>	
<b>X</b>	21.53
<b>S</b>	3.87
<b>Lowest score</b>	13
<b>Highest score</b>	32
<b>Frequency below 20</b>	30
<b>Frequency above 20</b>	74

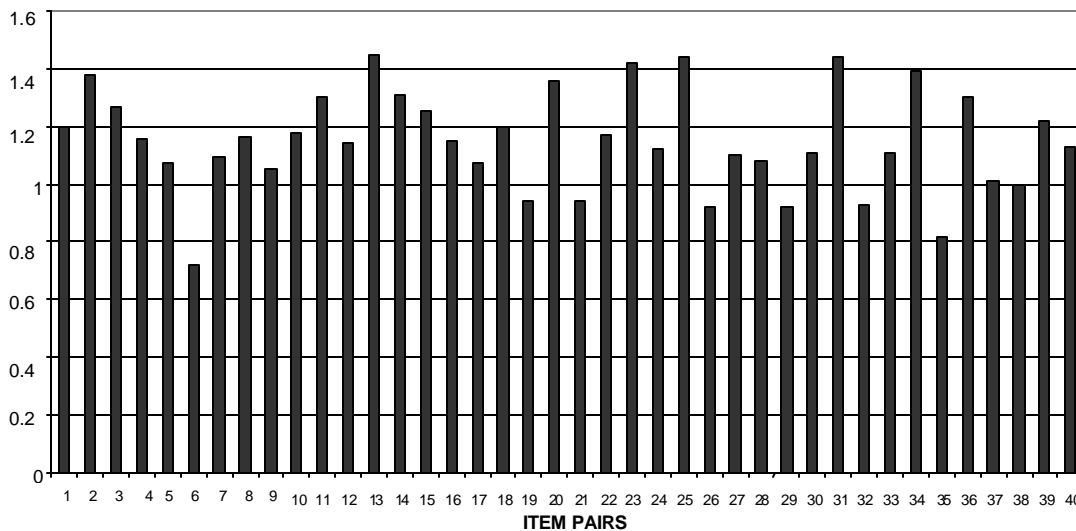
From Table 2 it is clear that the mean score for the DR scale in this study falls within the range used as cut-off scores for previous studies (see Lilienfield & Andrews, 1996). As a result, a significant number of questionnaires were rejected as invalid.

In order to calculate the total and average were calculated. The results appear in Diagram 1 and 2 respectively.

**Diagram 1. Total VRIN scores of the PPI**



**Diagram 2. Average VRIN scores of the PPI**



The high total and average VRIN scores are both conspicuous and alarming. For example, the mean scores on VRIN in American samples have generally been around 26-28, which translates to an average score of about 0,6 – 0,7 per VRIN item pair (Scott Lilienfeld, personal communication, 1 November 2004). It's clear from the histogram that the average VRIN scores in the present sample were significant higher (in fact, all VRIN items, save for Item 6 are above 0,8. The participants were answering quite similar items very differently. Possible explanations for this finding will be discussed later.

As the SGDS specifically focuses on students' antisocial behaviour as such, it was decided to investigate the relationship between the SGDS and the total scores generated by the other three measuring instruments of psychopathy. This was done by using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, calculated in the SAS computer programme (SAS Institute, 1985). This procedure was applied to the total sample scores. Results appear in Table 3.

**Table 3. Correlations for the total scores between the SGDS and other measures utilized in the study**

Other measures	Student General Deviance Scale
PPI	0,436**
NEM	-0,239
LPS	0,342**

\*\*  $p < = 0,01$

From Table 3 it is evident that the correlation between the SGDS and the total scores on the PPI ( $p = 0.0006$ ) and the total score on the LPS ( $p = 0.0028$ ) is significant at the 1% level of significance. Both correlations are positive, which implies that when an individual scored high on the SGDS, he/she also tended to obtain a high total score on the PPI and LPS. This is a meaningful finding as it indicates that, although the low reliability coefficients of some of the subscales of the PPI, NEM-30 and the LPS constitute a significant negative, it still seems that the inter-test reliability concerning the measured construct is satisfactory. In this regard it is also noteworthy that the NEM-30 correlates negatively with the SGDS, as

expectations were that individuals who scored high on antisocial acts would obtain low scores on emotional distress (S.O. Lilienfeld, personal communication, 28 July, 2003).

The mean scores on all four measures are reported in Table 4.

**Table 4. Averages on total scores**

Predictor variable	N	X	s
PPI – Total	77	384.84	25.60
NEM-30 – Total	66	44.45	5.15
SGDS – Total	85	42.28	7.84
LPS – Total	93	63.76	7.43

It was unfortunate that the findings could not be compared with another South African group, a procedure which could have revealed interesting results. This was impossible, of course, as no other comparable research of this kind has ever been done in South Africa.

To develop a broad comparative perspective, it was decided, nonetheless, to compare the present study's averages and standard deviations on the LPS's two subscales (primary and secondary psychopathy) with those of an American study (McHoskey, Worzel & Szyarto, 1998), as it was the only measuring instrument on which all appropriate data necessary for comparison could be found. The information appears in Table 5.

**Table 5. Comparisons of primary and secondary psychopathy scores**

LPS constructs	Present study			McHoskey et al.			<i>t</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>
	N	X	s	N	X	s		
Primary	100	40,37	5,08	99	36,7	11,1	3,01**	0,45
Secondary	100	23,19	3,68	99	25,3	5,8	-3,06**	0,44

\*  $p \leq 0,05$  (two-sided  $t > 1,96$ )

\*\*  $p \leq 0,01$  (two-sided  $t > 2,58$ )



From Table 5 it is clear that the means for both subscales differ significantly on the 1% level of significance. For primary psychopathy, the South African sample had significantly higher means than the American sample, while the reverse was true for secondary psychopathy. The calculated Cohen  $d$ -values indicate that this result constitutes a medium effect size. As discussed later, this result should be interpreted with caution due to the different cultural backgrounds of participants.

## Discussion

Although the reliability coefficients of most of the subscales were low, the total reliability of the measures was acceptable. However, there are indications that the validity of the instruments in the multicultural South African context could be questioned. The PPI and the LPS correlated significantly with the SGDS, while an expected negative correlation between the NEM-30 and the SGDS was found. The comparison of the LSP subscales for the Basotho students and an American sample revealed significant differences.

It seems that the following variables in particular could have played a role in these somewhat unsatisfactory results:

One of the most probable explanations for the findings lies in the translation of the questionnaires. When low reliability coefficients were obtained, regardless of the fact that the necessary translation procedures were followed, it was decided to use a random sample of 15 Sesotho-speaking students to translate selected items from the measuring instruments used. Their responses confirmed the complexity of translating test items that measure these psychological constructs. It also became clear that simply explaining and describing certain Western concepts that did not exist in the Basotho culture, was neither adequate nor appropriate. Certain questions and their nuances were still interpreted from a different cultural background, and at times, misinterpreted or misunderstood (Arce-Ferrer & Ketterer, 2003).

In this regard Owen (1992) rightly points out that the language use of some ethnic groups in South Africa is characterised by a tendency to provide elaborate descriptions rather than exact definitions of concepts. Variations in experience,

ideas, beliefs, customs and values are reflected in people's use of language (cf. Tseng, 2003), and these may consequently colour a person's interpretation of stimuli. This was also found to be the case when the responses of the Basotho students were compared with those of Afrikaans-speaking students in a similar study in progress (also at the University of the Free State). A few examples of items where the two groups differed significantly on the SGDS illustrate this:

- Item 16: *I swipe someone else's lecture notes.*

The finding that Sesotho-speaking students were more guilty of this, took on a different meaning during the afore-mentioned "after study" when a significant number of the randomly selected students interpreted this question as the exchange of lecture notes, without necessarily assigning a negative connotation.

- Item 18: *I am careful to return borrowed goods.*

The Afrikaans-speaking students were significantly more inclined to return borrowed goods than Sesotho-speaking students. The more collective nature of Basotho should, however, be taken into account when interpreting this difference (cf. Venter, 2004). It is widely accepted that, in general and due to their more communal and "sharing" value system, black Africans find it more acceptable to borrow goods and keep these for a relatively long time. This contrasts with the more individualistic and Eurocentric culture of white Africans.

- Item 19: *I have two or more sexual relationships at one time.*

The finding that significantly more Basotho students are, in terms of Western norms, "promiscuous" than Afrikaans-speaking students could be explained by findings (see Thom, Louw, Van Eden & Ferns, 1998) that black South African youths tend to engage in sexual activity at an earlier and also have more sexual partners than their white counterparts. The fact that Afrikaans-speaking South Africans are known for their more conservative value system (where sexual activity is measured against strict Calvinistic values) probably also played a role.

An additional variable that could have contaminated the results is the fact that students were assessed in their home language on concepts that they were probably more familiar with in their language of education, namely English. This notion is supported by Foxcroft (2002) who states that assessment in the language of instruction may be more valid and even more ethical than otherwise.

The fact that the Basotho participants were “caught” between two languages could have impacted on the results. This, however, encapsulates more than language: blacks, and especially black students, find themselves in different and shifting positions along the continuum of lesser and greater levels of Westernization (Shuttleworth-Jordan, 1996). It is clear that the difference between home language and language of education in gaining an understanding of Western concepts should be thoroughly investigated in multicultural assessment. This is even more relevant in countries such as South Africa where there is an additional overlap between First World and Third World subcultures. One research methodology for example, which could be investigated in this regard, is to do a repeated measures study. Half of the participants would take these measures in English first, and then in translated form; the order would be reversed for the other half.

Another possible factor that could have compromised the results was the uncontrolled environment in which questionnaires were completed. Our allowing students to complete the questionnaires in their own time meant that the process could have been executed with a lack of the necessary focus and thoroughness. In addition, the above-mentioned fact that the participants were financially compensated could have dominated the motives of some, contaminating the reliability with which the questions were answered. In fact, taking the high VRIN scores of the PPI into account, this factor definitely cannot be ignored.

Although this is not always possible, a more controlled environment for the administration of the questionnaires could eliminate various extraneous variables. Adjustments in this regard could involve the administration of questionnaires during lecture periods for which time has already been allocated, as opposed to expecting students to create additional time for completion. Furthermore, instead of financial rewards for participation, perhaps researchers could have allocated course credit for

a research-related subject. The ideal, however, is to secure participation in such a study on a completely voluntary basis where subjects' motivation is true interest and the reward is valuable experience.

Another factor which further complicated the impact of culture is the fact that none of the measuring instruments used had a "not applicable" category to accommodate the investigation of culturally inappropriate items. An example is Item 24 from the SGDS (*When I'm driving, I give cyclists as much room as possible*). By far the majority of Basotho students do not own vehicles due to financial difficulties stemming from their mostly disadvantaged backgrounds. This means that they could have been "forced" into making a specific choice. It is well known that such a situation could influence the reliability of the responses.

Against the afore-mentioned background, care should be taken to interpret the scores of the Basotho students as necessarily indicative of higher psychopathology and specifically psychopathy. In this regard, differences in scores may reflect cultural differences in desirability of certain behaviours included in the item contents (Cheung & Cheung, 2003), rather than psychopathology. Different professional concepts and classification practices used in different cultures, in combination with socially acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours, could also explain, at least partially, the differences in diagnostic distributions found in different countries (cf. Tseng, 2003).

The present findings add to the academically controversial and politically sensitive debate in South Africa on the development of psychometric measures standardised and normed for each population group according to language. If culture, of which language forms an important and integral part, is such an important variable as generally accepted, it is highly unlikely that one standard measure would be appropriate for the assessment of personality traits, and therefore also of psychopathy, across cultures. A core question arising from the afore-mentioned is therefore the following: Would separate and distinctive measures have to be developed for each specific culture, since each culture encapsulates such a large variety of "unique" variables? Or should the concepts rather be re-invented to adapt to each culture? For example, Shuttleworth-Jordan (1996) suggests that existing tests should be modified and standardised for use with urbanised black populations,

rather than developing new tests with limited international relevance. She warns against “reinventing the wheel” (p. 102).

The fact that the translations were done by three professional adults could have led to the translations being “out of touch” with a group of non-professional youths. It could be worthwhile for future researchers in this field to incorporate one or more non-participant individuals from the group to be studied to assist with, or comment on the translations. Even more so, due to the complexity of cross-cultural assessment, it is advisable that researchers from the culture being assessed as well as from outside of the culture collaborate to generate studies that are aimed at eliminating cultural bias as far as possible.

The findings of the present study could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, they could be viewed as adding to “the growing body of scepticism that queries whether measuring instruments can ever be totally equivalent when used in cross-cultural comparisons” (Byrne & Watkins, 2003, p. 155). Or they could be seen as creating a monumental challenge for cross-cultural research and assessment. After all, regardless of the psychometric problems, South Africans will have to be assessed.

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