Language, education and identity in Africa

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3. Culture

This part of the study explores the first research question: how can we describe current large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa, using the methods and terminology of cross-cultural psychology? Sections 3.1 through 3.3, section 3.5 and the corresponding appendices are based on my unpublished Master Thesis (van Pinxteren, 2018b). This thesis is available temporarily through the Leiden University student repository and after that from the author. Partly because of the temporary nature of the availability of the Master Thesis, parts of that text have been used verbatim in this chapter. An adapted version of section 3.5 is also due to be published separately (see note 32 for further details).
In order to explore the first research question, I will start in section one by discussing my definition of culture and explaining the unit of study. Section two introduces the thinking of cross-cultural psychology in some detail and shows the position I have taken within that field. This is followed in section three by an excursion into other literature on cultural differences and similarities, concentrating on Ghana and Southern Africa. Can this other literature shed light on the topic? The conclusion is that it offers only very limited answers and that therefore it is interesting to explore if cross-cultural psychology can offer new relevant insights. The next three sections then offer some insights, using three different but related lenses: the lens of hierarchical cluster analysis, the lens of cultural dimension scores and lastly, building on the previous section, a comparison between Africa and other continents. The chapter ends with a number of preliminary conclusions and questions for further research.

3.1 Ideas of Culture

In this section, I will explain how I see culture, also in relation to other concepts, such as ethnicity and tribe. I will also define my unit of study.[1]

3.1.1 How I understand culture and ethnicity

Ake (1993: 1) referring to the concept of ethnicity, has already pointed out that it is 'phenomenally problematic in Africa'. Culture and ethnicity

[1] This section is adapted from chapter 2.1 of my Master thesis – see Van Pinxteren (2018b).

are seen as sources of problems for Africa. I think a different perspective is possible, one that sees African cultures as a positive source of inspiration (Ayittey, 2010). But what do I mean when I talk about culture? For me, cultures can be characterized by value systems.[2] In my view, culture can be described in terms of **a value system that serves as common point of reference to a people**.

This means that I look at culture at the level of societies, rather than at the level of individuals.[3] Yet, the two levels are linked: people who are knowledgeable about a particular culture have a certain mental 'map' of what can be considered 'normal' or 'appropriate' in that culture. How this works was well described by Peterson and Barreto (2014) through their cultural expertise and personal values proposition. Of relevance are the 'Social learning of expertise and values principle' and the 'Personal value principle' (p 1135). The first states that socialization strongly supports expertise on culture, but only moderately supports acceptance of specific aspects of that culture. In other words, individuals can be part of a culture without accepting all of it. This is further elaborated in the second principle, which states that individuals vary in their support or rejection of aspects of their society's culture.

It is worthwhile to explore these points a bit further, especially when dealing with an African context. Many authors who write about 'culture' or 'identity' define culture as something that is *shared* by the individuals who are part of this cultural group (see for example Grotenhuis, 2016). This implies that the value systems that are supposed to characterize a specific culture also characterize all individuals that belong to that culture – it is what the word *sharing* seems to suggest. These authors then criticize the term culture as being *essentialist* – assuming that there is something in the 'national culture' of a nation that is so strong that it determines the values of all those who are born into that culture.

The principles described by Peterson and Barreto show that what is shared are not so much the values held by individuals. These can be very different as described by the 'personal value principle': individuals may have personal values that are considerably different from the dominant cultural norm – but they can still identify with that culture. This is because of the 'social learning of expertise and values principle': what is shared are not so much the values in themselves, but the *knowledge about the cultural norm*. The values may not be shared, but the knowledge about these values is. This is what makes my definition

[2] The importance of values as elements of culture was pointed out already in 1935 by Talcott Parsons – see Camic (1991).

[3] See Hofstede (1995) for a fuller discussion of the methodological significance of this distinction.

of culture *non-essentialist*: culture is defined as a common point of reference about which people as individual members of a cultural community share knowledge, but by which they are not determined and to which they do not need to all subscribe. Of course, this concept becomes meaningless if there is no commonality – in order for a culture to be distinct from others, *many* individuals who are part of it will subscribe to and in that sense indeed *share* many if not all the values that are part of that culture. The boundaries between when one can still speak of a common culture, given the variety between individuals, and when this is no longer the case can be fluid – exactly how this works in particular cultures remains to be explored.

For Africa, this means that there could be countries in which different peoples live together each with their own traditions, languages and cultures, but with at the same time a shared knowledge about a dominant or common culture that all can refer to and understand. If that is the case, then the question becomes whether or not there are limitations to such a concept – when do cultural value systems become so divergent that they can no longer be brought together under a common 'national' umbrella, but instead compete with one another? This is an issue that I will seek to explore.

The tradition in which my approach stands has several sources.

Geertz (1973: 44) focuses on cultures as 'recipes for the governing of behavior'. Compared to earlier approaches, this implies a shift in emphasis from concrete behaviour to values as the core elements that define cultures. In this terminology, there is a direct link between the 'recipe' (a culture) and an individual's behaviour – in that way, it is different from my approach. Geertz emphasizes the role of interpretation or 'thick description' as almost the only acceptable way of describing cultures. Even though I appreciate the value of 'thick description', I have two very different objections: first, that it resists scientific generalization (Shankman, 1984; Greenfeld, 2000). Second, that Geertz does not seem to see a role for the self-representation of cultures and for cross-cultural dialogue (Clifford, 1983: 133).

Hofstede (2001) has in a way abbreviated the definition of Geertz, seeing culture as 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'. Again, it is easy to see how such a definition can lead to a misunderstanding, portraying as it does individual minds as being somehow determined by a common culture. My definition is therefore slightly different from that of Hofstede.

These are broad definitions; following them, cultural expression is broader than music, art or literature; it also includes expressions such as language, idiom and gestures.

Vansina (1990), in his ground-breaking 'Paths in the Rainforests', does not use the terms culture, tribe or ethnic group, instead talking about cultural 'traditions'. Vansina argues for the existence and vitality of a single tradition in equatorial Africa (roughly the area now covered by RDCongo and the DRC).[4] One of the characteristics of tradition, as outlined by Vansina, is the 'fundamental continuity of a concrete set of basic cognitive patterns and concepts' (p258). However, a tradition can only function if the peoples who carry them 'have the power of self-determination': 'Given its capacity to accept, reject, or modify innovation, a tradition will not be overwhelmed by another major tradition as long as its carriers still retain enough liberty of choice.' (p259).

Vansina's definition of 'cultural tradition' is, in my view, close to the definitions quoted above and close as well to my own perspective. As pointed out above, my view is different from Vansina, in that I do not think that it is necessary that everybody within a certain cultural area or tradition *shares* the *same* common beliefs and values – but at least everybody will be *aware* of those common beliefs and values, so that they serve as a common point of reference.

In short, then: I primarily see cultures as expressions of the different creative answers that societies have found to the problems confronting humanity. I think it would be a mistake to leave an appreciation of the importance of culture to populists and xenophobes only.

A concept that is related to culture is that of ethnicity or ethnic group. The term ethnic group is itself not clearly defined.[5] Those that do define it generally use one of two approaches. Ake (1993: 2) and others hold to the distinction that ethnicity is descent-based, whereas culture is socially determined. Prah (2008: 67) and others feel that the concept of ethnicity emphasizes cultural distinction. I will use this second approach, thereby equating culture and ethnicity.

A major criticism of the use of ethnicity as a category in African studies is the fact that ethnic designations can be seen, at least in part, as creations of colonial times, influenced by the gaze of foreigners, warped and manipulated to serve the needs of missionaries and

[4] A description of some other major precolonial traditions in Africa is given in Devisse and Vansina (1988).

[5] Thus, for example Venkatasawmy (2015: 26) in his discussion of ethnic conflict in Africa does not go beyond the statement that " 'ethnicity' is an inevitably elusive concept".

colonial administrators.[6] Raynaut (2001: 15), writing about West Africa, says:

"Frequently, West African ethnic groups first identified by colonial administrators (...) exhibit strong cultural and social internal heterogeneities (in terms of language, religion, family organization, etc.). Yet there are sometimes close relations and similarities between ethnic groups labelled as 'different'."

Africans have pointed to this as well. Asiwaju (1985: 3) has already shown how colonial powers sought to separate peoples, in part by giving different names to the same peoples. He also laments the tendency to create

'numerous artificial cover-names for language units which are, in many cases, identifiable as dialects of the same language. This practice has had the effect of exaggerating the picture of cultural diversity in the continent' (p 252/3).

Prah (1998) has echoed and reinforced this criticism, particularly in the area of language diversity; for a further description, see Miles (2014).

To my knowledge though, no alternative knowledge base has been produced: there are no contemporary African-based lists of ethnicities or of cultural areas. My position is that in order to arrive at such an overview, an entirely different approach is needed, one that goes beyond self-designations but is still based on modern African self-perceptions. But how can this be done? How can culture be studied productively in an African setting? From what perspectives, using which methods? Here, I will limit myself to a few basic ideas.

Broadly speaking, I can see three different perspectives from which cultures can be studied: the intra-cultural, the extra-cultural and the cross-cultural. An *intra-cultural* perspective is one where academics basically study and explain their own culture. They may draw in theoretical concepts from abroad, but they use these basically to explain their own culture, possibly in its historical development and in relation to other significant cultures. They do this for an audience that forms part of that same culture. The *extra-cultural* perspective is one in which a culture is studied by somebody who is not from that culture. In cultural anthropology, it is common for a researcher to spend a prolonged period of time immersed in a culture that is not his or her own and in so doing to develop a deep understanding of that culture.[7] The third perspective is the *cross-cultural* perspective, which can be

[6] The study of borders and how they came about is a large domain that is outside the scope of this work. For a recent discussion on West Africa, see Nugent (2019).

[7] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2005: 160) has aptly called anthropology 'the study of the insider by the outsider'.

formed by a dialogue between academics with different cultural positions, take the form of a comparison between two or more cultures or a combination of both. In anthropology, this has been attempted by comparative anthropology, a field of study that tries to collect and compare information on a number of different traits, customs and behaviours from around the world, looking for example at kinship systems. A large database of this kind is being maintained at Yale university, the Human Relations Area Files.[8] However, I feel that a study of underlying values, although itself not without problems, may allow for more meaningful comparisons than a study of customs and behaviours.

Then, there is a perspective for studying culture that at best yields incomplete results: the method of asking people directly how they see their culture. Yet, this method is very common. It basically consists of asking people to directly define what they themselves see as key elements of their culture, sometimes also in relation to other cultural groups that they have some familiarity with. Yet self-assessments as such are misleading, to say the least. Everywhere in the world, people in adjacent villages will claim that they are very different from those on the other side of the hill. Even in a relatively homogeneous country like the Netherlands, people perceive cultural differences.[9] Yet seen from a further distance, they may in fact be part of the same cultural area. Most people lack both the perspective and the vocabulary to have a useful discussion of these issues. As Minkov (2013: 48) points out, if it were different, 'there would be no need for marketing experts, consumer behavior analysts, political scientists, and personality and social psychologists.' No study that relies on self-assessments for describing culture can be trusted.

3.1.2 Nations, nationalities, peoples, ethnic groups, tribes and polities

'**Nation**' as a concept itself has different meanings. One is the meaning of the nation state: an officially recognized independent country. But 'nation' can also refer to a group independent of whether or not it is tied to a particular state. Thus, the UNPO, the Unrepresented People's Organisation, states: 'A Nation or People shall mean a group of human beings which possesses the will to be identified as a nation or people and to determine its common destiny as a nation or people, and is bound to a common heritage which can be historical, racial, ethnic,

[8] https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/ehrafe/, accessed 1 March 2020.
[9] See for example https://mobiliteitsplein.inperson.nl/nieuws/cultuurverschillen-in-nederland.html (retrieved 23 November 2017).

linguistic, cultural, religious or territorial.'[10] Here, the words 'Nation' and 'People' are used interchangeably. Ethiopia has also adopted this usage, explicitly recognizing the rights of its nations, nationalities and peoples in its Constitution. "A 'Nation, Nationality or People' for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory."[11]

In colonial days, ethnic groups were labelled as 'tribes'. Later, these same groups were labelled as 'polities' or 'ethnic groups' – so the labels were changed, but they basically apply to the same groups. Because of these colonial origins and their relevance up to this day, it is useful to examine the concept of 'tribe'. Schapera (1953, reprinted in Schapera and Comaroff, 1991: 30) gives a workable definition of a '**tribe**': 'a tribe is a politically independent unit, with its own chief and territories'. Going by this definition, a 'tribe' is not the same as a cultural unit: indeed, Schapera recognizes that the Tswana form one cultural whole (a people), but that in precolonial times they were divided into independent units – what he then calls tribes. Going by this same definition, then, 'tribes' ceased to exist as soon as territories came under colonial domination.

Schapera builds on the earlier work of Van Warmelo (1937, as reprinted in Hammond-Tooke, 1974). Van Warmelo mentions the difficulties in grouping peoples into tribes. However, he also discusses arranging tribes into larger groups, and mentions five such groups for South Africa, of which Sotho (comprising also the Tswana) is one. However, he immediately says that 'It is a misleading over-simplification' (p 58). He mentions that it had been suggested these were all part of a single 'culture province', but does not venture to give an opinion on the matter.

The word 'tribe' has (rightly) become associated with racist thinking (although even today it is not perceived as such in many countries in Africa). Instead, it has become fashionable to use the word '**polity**' – but that amounts to replacing an already imprecise term with one that is even less precise. Wikipedia quotes the definition of Ferguson and Mansbach (1996): 'A polity is any kind of political entity. It is a group of people who are collectively united by a self-reflected cohesive force

[10] Article 6 of the UNPO Covenant, http://unpo.org/section/2/1 accessed 17 July 2017.

[11] Article 39.5 of the Ethiopian Constitution, http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et007en.pdf accessed 17 July 2017.

such as identity, who have a capacity to mobilize resources, and are organized by some form of institutionalized hierarchy.'[12]

What this conceptual imprecision boils down to is that in most cases, the same groups that used to be called tribes in colonial times are currently called polities, nations or ethnic groups, depending on what the author wants to stress. A distinction that might be applied is that both the notions of 'nation' and of 'tribe' imply some form of territoriality – the existence of a bounded 'homeland', whereas ethnicity could be seen as more fluid and not necessarily bound to territory. In any case, ethnicity is usually equated to language and culture – leading to conceptual confusion because, as I have shown, the old tribes, morphed into polities, morphed into ethnic groups cannot be equated to linguistic or cultural units.

There are a number of issues that surface in discourses surrounding ethnicity:

- Ethnicity and 'ethnic cultures' are exploited by social entrepreneurs to gain social and economic advantage, thereby exaggerating some elements of what is there and suppressing others. To the extent that they are successful in this, it itself influences people's self-perceptions.
- Cultures evolve over time, at various speeds, in a process that spans generations. Things do not stay the same. Yet that does not mean that over time, all people will be the same culturally. In that sense, an 'end of culture' is just as unlikely as the 'end of history' that Fukuyama proclaimed in 1992.
- But still, that does not mean that culture as a construct is useless, impossible to study or irrelevant. Even when people see their main identity in gender, religious or professional ways, they do so in cultural ways. The average European feminist is different from the average African or North American feminist and these differences can be explained by cultural differences.

Ake (1993: 5) already remarked: 'Our treatment of ethnicity and ethnic consciousness reflects this tendency to problematize the people and their culture, an error that continues to push Africa deeper into confusion.'

In order to come to a further clarification of my position and a discussion of what this means for research, I will first discuss other approaches to culture, and some related terms.

[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity, retrieved 29 March 2018.

3.1.3 Other concepts of culture

Storey (2001), following Williams (1983), gives three broad definitions of the word 'culture': as a process of aesthetic development; as a way of life; and as the product of intellectual and artistic activity (p 1-2). What these definitions have in common is that all of them reduce culture to a set of products: aesthetic developments, artistic works, ways of life. However, none of these definitions pay attention to what in my view underlies these products and to what makes them specific and different: the underlying outlook on life, the underlying value systems. As Miti (2015: 3) has pointed out, referring to Africa: 'A popular understanding of culture is that it refers to the ways in which a people's ancestors lived. In other words, culture is taken to be part and parcel of a given people's past.' This is a popular understanding of culture that is based on concepts such as those of Storey.

Appadurai (1996) criticizes the use of the word 'culture' as a noun, because he objects to thinking of culture as some sort of object, as a (fixed) thing. Instead, the looks at the 'cultural' as allowing for a description of differences between different categories of people. He proposes to restrict the use of the term 'culture' to 'the subset of (…) differences that has been mobilized to articulate the boundary of difference' and thus to demarcate group identity (p13).

Seeing culture as a marker of difference between groups, based on values but expressed in various ways points to a number of difficulties that need to be addressed.

One of the difficulties as mentioned by Appadurai has to do with the tendency to see cultures as static, somehow genetically determined attributes of people (the primordialist perspective). This fallacy has been criticised from many angles, partly, I suspect, by constructing strawman arguments. As Vansina(1990) has demonstrated for Equatorial Africa, cultures are not static – they are constantly reproduced in complex interactions between local and larger levels and in that process, they also evolve. But because all cultures evolve along lines that are not necessarily or not even primarily convergent, differences between cultures remain as difference – even though the substance of such differences may change as well.

Another difficulty in thinking about culture is related to the tensions between individual values, subcultures and cultures. There is a tendency to confuse and conflate these, but they should not be, as argued above.

Then, there is the issue of hybrid and multiple identities. It is often said that people nowadays are more mobile than ever before, that they are subjected to all kinds of influences via the mass media and the internet

and that this affects their sense of identity and belonging. Blommaert (2013) refers to this as registers: multiple normative orientations, that people have access to and shift between. There is certainly truth in this and yes, it complicates the picture. It is possible for people to learn to use and be comfortable in different cultures and to use different sets of orientations. It is also possible for people to acquire a hybrid mode that allows them to navigate in different cultural contexts, although not in the same manner in each context. Other coping mechanisms are possible as well. However, this still means that those different contexts, registers or cultures are distinguishable from one another. Even though people may be able to navigate between cultures with greater or lesser ease, this is still an acquired skill. It does not change the fact that this world is characterized in part by cultural difference.

The approaches of Appadurai and Hofstede (2001) are different in their basic appreciation: for Appadurai, the mobilization of cultural sentiments and cultural difference spells trouble. His focus is on explaining inter-ethnic violence and he blames 'culturalisms' for playing an instrumental role. For Hofstede, knowledge about cultures and cultural differences is important in order to improve cross-cultural collaboration. My own perspective is closer to that of Hofstede.

3.1.4 Conclusions

When I look at culture, then, I look at larger units or traditions, that may encompass speakers of several languages and any number of polities. As discussed in section 3.1.1, I follow Prah in using cultural or ethnic groups interchangeably. My way of looking at culture is mainly through looking at value systems. I think the definitions of Geertz and Hofstede are related and are related as well to Vansina's way of looking at 'traditions'. However, I use my own definition of culture, describing culture as **a value system that serves as common point of reference to a people**. I have explained that using this definition means that I use a non-essentialist definition, because it says something about what is seen as normal in a cultural area without implying that every individual subscribes to or sees him/herself as bound by that normality; it allows space for an examination of change over time.

I have contrasted this way of looking at culture to the more static artefact-oriented approach of Storey and to the more negative approach of Appadurai. Culture may be tied to nationality or to language – but it need not be. With Vansina, I do not subscribe to the one polity-one language-one culture idea. I have taken issue with the approach that denies the importance of looking at ethnicity and culture. I have suggested that there are several ways in which culture can be

studied. However, I have also argued that using a study of self-assessments of people cannot lead to reliable results. Instead, a different approach is needed: the approach of cross-cultural psychology. This approach is the focus of the next section.

3.2. Cross-cultural psychology

So far, I have outlined my view of culture and related concepts and chosen to study culture using the approach of cross-cultural psychology.[13] According to Kendra, 'Cross-cultural psychology is a branch of psychology that looks at how cultural factors influence human behavior'[14] It was pioneered by the work of Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede[15] and has been used especially in international management all over the world, for example when considering the importance and magnitude of cultural differences. Other uses include preparing people for moving abroad for a period of time. In an African context, there is the example of Gervedink Nijhuis et al (2012), who use the Hofstede dimensions for discussing the difficulties of a joint curriculum development programme in Ghana. Cross-cultural psychology as pioneered by Hofstede is based on survey analysis: on average, there are differences in how people with one cultural background answer certain questions, compared to how people from a different cultural background answer those same questions.
However, within this field there are different approaches; there is no universal agreement and there is also criticism of the field as such. Therefore, I will examine some of those approaches and criticisms in this chapter, before coming to a statement of my position.
The first part of this section contains a brief overview of the three most important approaches used in cross-cultural psychology: that of Hofstede/Minkov, of Schwartz and of Inglehart and Welzel. There are other approaches as well – a full overview is provided in Minkov (2013). I will also pay some attention to the exploratory work of Noorderhaven and Tidjani (2001), given its focus on Africa.
The second half of the section is devoted to a discussion of the immanent and transcendent criticisms that have been made of cross-cultural psychology and its various approaches. At the end, I will clarify my own position.

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[13] This section is adapted from chapter 4 of my Master thesis (Van Pinxteren, 2018b).
[14] https://www.verywell.com/what-is-cross-cultural-psychology-2794903, accessed 16 June 2017.
[15] https://geerthofstede.com/

Common to cross-cultural psychology is the use of various methods of data reduction. Thus, it does not lead to full descriptions of cultures; those have to be obtained through other methods. But they do help us understand and predict what may happen in certain situations. In that sense, as pointed out by Minkov (2013: 5), it can be a major cognitive tool that helps to understand the complex world around us.

Cross-cultural psychology arrives at descriptions of cultures and cultural similarities and differences via the use of value surveys. Instead of asking people directly to define what makes their culture different – something they generally are not able to do – cross-cultural psychology asks questions that people can answer, but typically answer differently in different countries. It is through an analysis and interpretation of these differences that aspects of cultures are described. These aspects, following the wording chosen by Geert Hofstede, the pioneer of the discipline, are usually called 'dimensions'.

For the African situation, there are two such surveys that are relevant. One, smaller in Africa but more explicitly oriented towards values, is the World Values Survey[16]. Started in 1981, it now covers 80 countries on all continents, using a common questionnaire and using nationally representative samples. The other survey, which covers a larger number of African countries but is not specifically focused on values, is the Afrobarometer survey.[17] This survey, started in 2000, also works with nationally representative samples and extends to over 30 African countries. Its motto is: 'Let the people have a say.'

Both surveys allow for disaggregation of the data in various ways, one of them by ethnic and linguistic groups. Even though, as I have argued, the ethnolinguistic distinctions in Africa are heavily influenced by the colonial period, this type of disaggregation can serve as a starting point from which to analyse the emergence or existence of distinct cultural areas in different parts of Africa. These surveys, then, although of course limited by their focus and the questions they ask, can serve as a basis for analysing current self-perceptions of Africans in many parts of the continent. Even though for some countries analyses have been implemented at the ethnolinguistic level in addition to the national level, the body of knowledge on this for Africa is still very limited.

Even the research presented here should be seen as an exploratory 'proof of concept' – more and better research would be needed in order to get a more precise, finely-grained and more complete picture. Yet, I intend to show how this type of research is able to shed new light on cultural similarities and differences in Africa, is useful for policy

[16] http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org
[17] http://www.afrobarometer.org

development and implementation and brings to light patterns that were not visible so clearly before and that are relevant for building the new Africa that so many in and outside of the continent are devoting their energies to.

3.2.1 Cross-cultural psychology: three main approaches

Hofstede/Minkov

The original Hofstede dimensions are based on surveys collected by Hofstede in the 1970s. He originally suggested four dimensions that could describe differences and similarities between cultures. They are[18]:
"Individualism (IDV) is the extent to which people feel independent, as opposed to being interdependent as members of larger wholes.
Individualism does not mean egoism. It means that individual choices and decisions are expected. Collectivism does not mean closeness. It means that one "knows one's place" in life, which is determined socially. With a metaphor from physics, people in an individualistic society are more like atoms flying around in a gas while those in collectivist societies are more like atoms fixed in a crystal.
Power Distance (PDI) is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.
This dimension is thought to date from the advent of agriculture, and with it, of large-scale societies. Until that time, a person would know their group members and leaders personally. This is not possible where tens of thousands and more have to coordinate their lives. Without acceptance of leadership by powerful entities, none of today's societies could run.
Masculinity (MAS) is the extent to which the use of force is endorsed socially.
In a masculine society, men are supposed to be tough. Men are supposed to be from Mars, women from Venus. Winning is important for both genders. Quantity is important and big is beautiful. In a feminine society, the genders are emotionally closer. Competing is not so openly endorsed, and there is sympathy for the underdog.
This is NOT about individuals, but about expected emotional gender roles. Masculine societies are much more openly gendered than feminine societies.
Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. Uncertainty avoidance has nothing to do

[18] Descriptions taken from http://www.geerthofstede.com, accessed 9 May 2017.

with risk avoidance, nor with following rules. It has to do with anxiety and distrust in the face of the unknown, and conversely, with a wish to have fixed habits and rituals, and to know the truth."

Hofstede realized that his findings might be constrained by the questions asked in his surveys. In his later work, he pointed to the Chinese Values Survey, which asked different questions. They led to a fifth dimension, the dimension of Long- versus Short-Term Orientation (LTO) (Hofstede 2001: 351). Later, Michael Minkov, using data from the World Values Survey (WVS), found a dimension that he called *'monumentalism versus flexhumility'* and that was related to LTO. Hofstede and Minkov decided to join forces and came to new LTO scores, using WVS data (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov 2010: 253).

Minkov et al (2018a), using data from a new study undertaken with commercial funding, proposed a new conceptualisation that reflects national differences in high versus low self-regard and self-confidence, being always the same person versus being flexible and adaptable, and liking to help people versus being reluctant to do that. The Short-Term or 'Monumentalist' pole here stands for high self-confidence, being always the same person and being helpful. I have taken this conceptualisation as being the most recent. The name is, in my view, far from clear. Mediacom, the company funding the study, called it 'Fix or Flex'. For the purpose of this study, I will use 'Fix vs Flex' (LTO).

In his analysis of WVS data, Minkov also found indications of a sixth dimension, Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR). 'Indulgence is about the good things in life. In an indulgent culture it is good to be free. Doing what your impulses want you to do, is good. Friends are important and life makes sense. In a restrained culture, the feeling is that life is hard, and duty, not freedom, is the normal state of being.'[18]

Schwartz

Where Hofstede's dimensions were first found in the data and then related to theoretical work by others, Schwartz has taken the opposite approach: he starts with a theoretically ordered model of human values, and then finds confirmation in survey data (Schwartz, 2006).

Schwarz has defined ten values which, in his theory, are universal but ordered differently in different societies.

Inglehart and Welzel

Analysis of WVS data made by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel asserts that there are two major dimensions of cross cultural variation in the world:[19]

‘ 1. Traditional values versus Secular-rational values and
2. Survival values versus Self-expression values.

Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority and traditional family values. People who embrace these values also reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook.
Secular-rational values have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. These societies place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable. (Suicide is not necessarily more common.)
Survival values place emphasis on economic and physical security. It is linked with a relatively ethnocentric outlook and low levels of trust and tolerance.
Self-expression values give high priority to environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality, and rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life.’
The WVS leads to a map of societies along these dimensions.

Noorderhaven and Tidjani

Noorderhaven and Tidjani (2001) have explored the possibility that just like the Chinese Value Survey found additional dimensions, the same might be true for Africa, if one were to use questions developed by African researchers. They found dimensions such as belief in human goodness and importance of traditional wisdom. One dimension they felt might be very important was what they called ‘*jealousy*’, which gave different scores for West and Eastern/Southern African countries (p46). Unfortunately, their exploratory research was not followed up – it would be interesting if this would be done some day.[20]

[19] Taken from http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org, accessed 9 May 2017.
[20] For an overview of some cultural values studies that have been undertaken in Africa, see Bobina and Grachev (2016).

Connections between the different approaches

If one surveys what the proponents of the different approaches write about one another, one comes across numerous references where authors point how what others measure is really part of or closely related to what they measure. Hofstede (2001: 221) points out that three of the Schwartz dimensions (which he calls categories) are related both with one another and with IDV. He also feels that Inglehart's survival versus self-expression values have elements of several of his dimensions (2001: 223). In a way, this is logical, as also explained in the next section. These dimensions are constructs that help describe and understand certain aspects of cultures and it is logical that they would be partially overlapping and contain similarities.

3.2.2 Criticisms of the cultural dimensions approach

Geert Hofstede was a much-cited and prolific author. It is no wonder that the Hofstede model and competing models of describing and comparing cultures using a number of dimensions have been criticized in various ways. A broad distinction can be made between immanent criticisms (basically saying that what was done could be done better if handled differently) and transcendent criticisms (basically saying that what was done should not be done at all). I will mention a number of the most salient criticisms of either type and in doing so try to state my own position.

Immanent criticisms

McSweeney (2002) feels that for most countries, the size of the samples used by Hofstede are too small and cannot be seen as representative of the countries as a whole. This is compounded by the problem that initial respondents were all employees of a specific multinational corporation – IBM. Furthermore, the differences found are attributed by Hofstede to differences between national cultures, not to differences in organisational culture within IBM. Hofstede(2002) defends his choices; according to him, organisational culture is related more to practices, whereas national culture looks at the level of values. McSweeney feels this distinction cannot be clearly made. Hofstede also points out that samples can be small, as long as they are well matched and cover many countries. His results do not describe cultures as such, but they do describe relevant differences and similarities.

McSweeney also points out that only certain questions were asked. To derive a description of culture from such a limited set of questions is of

necessity incomplete. This is also a main argument of Schwartz (1992) against Hofstede's method: he feels that it is necessary first to develop a theory that covers the full spectrum of human values, before trying to categorize national cultures. Hofstede (2001) does not deny that additional dimensions could exist – however, he feels candidates should be backed up by empirical evidence.

Hofstede claims that replications have largely confirmed his findings; but McSweeney points out that there have also been replication studies that did not (fully) replicate his findings. He points to the problem that the same question may have a different meaning in different countries.

A further problem that McSweeney points to is the issue that the original questionnaires were distributed in workplace situations; the assumption that the differences found there apply equally in other situations is, in his view, unfounded.

Smith (2002) and others have argued that cultures and cultural values change constantly and that therefore, descriptions based on research done decades ago have little value today. Hofstede (2002) responds to this by saying that value orientations are formed early in life in most people, are transmitted by parents to their children and that therefore, although they change, the pace of change is relatively slow. Beugelsdijk et al (2015) have shown that although values change, the differences between cultures do not, or less so.

Dahl (2014) feels that Hofstede uses a descriptive and essentialist approach to culture. He sees value in this for describing cultural differences, but feels that it ought to be complemented by what he feels should be a 'dynamic constructivist' approach.

Minkov (2018b) has proposed a major revision of the Hofstede model; in his analysis, PDI forms part of the IDV dimension. He proposes to only keep IDV and his *Monumentalism versus flexhumility* as meaningful dimensions.

Transcendent criticisms

A first type of criticism is the point of view that culture, let alone national culture, is not a useful concept at all. Saint-Jacques (2012: 48) posits: 'A nation or an ethnic group cannot be considered as a single unit.' Anderson (1991) feels nations are 'imagined communities'. Wallerstein (1990) is 'sceptical that we can operationalise the concept of culture (...) in any way that enables us to use it for statements that are more than trivial' (p 34) (both cited in McSweeney, 2002). McSweeney points out that it is only useful to talk about national culture if it actually explains or predicts something, such as educational achievement or levels of corruption. However, he feels that in most if not all cases, non-

cultural (e.g. economic or political) elements may have a greater explanatory power (p 109). Even where cultural factors do play a role, these may be determined by subcultures within nations, rather than by a national culture as such. Hofstede (2002) does not deny this, but maintains that national culture is a legitimate unit of study as well, and often the only one available for comparison.

McSweeney further argues that any questionnaire distributed internationally will produce differences in response patterns. However, it is wrong to assume that these differences point to the existence of different national cultures. This cannot be established through questionnaires alone. Therefore, the fact itself that differences are found does not justify the conclusion that those differences are due to differences in national culture. Hofstede (2001) concedes this point to the extent that questionnaires should not be the only way of measuring cultural differences – however, he maintains that they do yield reliable approximations if matched samples are used.

McSweeney also points out that it might be quite acceptable in societies that individuals switch between different value systems, a point which Hofstede would miss. Even if uniform national cultures would exist – which McSweeney doubts – it is wrong to assume that these cultures could be measured and recorded via narrow sets of questions or that Hofstede has in fact managed such a feat. Smith (2002) makes a slightly different but related point. He suggests that measuring national means might be useful where cultures are relatively homogeneous, but that it might say little in countries or cultures where the differences within a population are very large.

Jackson (2011) criticizes Hofstede's theory for not providing an indication for what action should be taken and for its inability to deal with multi-layered multicultural contexts. He feels that in studying cultures, it is all too easy to overlook power relationships and to ignore interactions between different levels. He therefore calls for an analysis that looks at cultural interfaces at organizational and individual levels, rather than at cultures as distinct entities. Following Flyvbjerg, he criticizes positivist social science in general and calls for a more action-oriented, context-specific type of social science. He calls attention to the need to look at what happens at cross-cultural interfaces and feels this is particularly relevant for Africa. He feels that answers from Hofstede-type questionnaires fail to make sense in such situations. However, Jackson's alternative has not proven itself yet. My position is that even in multicultural contexts (and perhaps especially in such contexts), an instrument that provides a way of describing and discussing the different cultures at play is an important starting point. However, more research into how intercultural competences play a role in multicultural

societies and where the possibilities and limitations of such competences lie would seem useful.

Smelser (1992: 20) holds that a positivistic, objective description of cultural traits is an illusion, as it is always also determined by the viewpoint of the observer of that culture. He also points to the eternal vagueness of the concept. However, he does not go so far as to say that culture cannot or should not be studied at all. Rather, he sees culture as a 'heuristic device' in scientific investigation (p. 23). However, he does feel that 'certain rules for the empirical description of culture' can be developed. Parts of a culture should, he suggests, be disaggregated and treated as variables, rather than as global attributes of a society or group. Hofstede (2001: 2) would in fact seem to agree with this approach, in the sense that he also holds that cultures are indeed constructs, that do not 'exist' in an absolute sense.

Fougère and Moulettes (2007) dig deeper, using a postcolonial perspective. They contend that ''Hofstede discursively constructs a world characterised by a division between a 'developed and modern' side (mostly 'Anglo-Germanic' countries) and a 'traditional and backward' side (the rest)" (p1). Illustrative of their critique is the title of one of the sections in their paper: 'Power Distance: Being modern is being equal' (p 8). Through their critique, they hope 'to open up for an alternative knowledge production that includes rather than excludes and banalises rather than exoticises the other.' (p 16) This critique is relevant: in fact, it holds true for all approaches that aim to map or categorize value patterns across nations. There is no value-free or culturally neutral way of doing these types of comparisons. The best one can hope for is to be open to criticisms and open about one's own background. However, the same is true for almost any other type of work in this area, including qualitative work. Spivak (cited in McLeod, 2010: 222) has come up with the notion of 'strategic essentialism'. As long as the type of knowledge production Fougère and Moulettes call for has not yet gained pride of place, then some strategic – or in Smelser's term, heuristic way of dealing with cultures and their values can still be productive.

Inglehart and Welzel (2005) hold that the WVS shows that all cultures evolve and converge towards greater self-expression and more secular-rational values. Tausch (2015) has re-analysed the WVS data and other data as well and criticizes Inglehart and Welzel as well as Hofstede for their assumptions that the value of religion and spirituality is declining. Tausch confirms a number (but not all) of the Hofstede dimensions and suggests a number of additional dimensions, such as economic permissiveness.

3.2.3 Conclusions; my position

In the above, I have already given pointers to my position. I think the criticism that 'culture' as a concept is unusable, though understandable from the point of view of its conceptual diffuseness, is not good social science. People feel and experience culture and cultural differences and because they do, it is a legitimate topic of investigation. Even if we maintain that people can switch between different cultural identities in our globalizing world, that does not mean that those individual identities or cultural patterns disappear. With Smelser and Hofstede, I think cultures can and should be studied as constructs that say something about social reality. This can never be done in a vacuum – the postcolonial critique of one-sided, 'Anglo-Germanic' discourses should be taken into account. I think, though, that this criticism is more valid for the WVS and for Schwartz than for Hofstede – although his approach is not immune to it either.

The critique that it may be wrong to assume the existence of a 'national' culture especially in multicultural and multi-ethnic countries should also be taken seriously, especially for Africa. It could be that in some countries, something akin to a distinct national culture has in fact emerged. In others, this may not have happened at all, or to a much lesser extent. This makes my research all the more relevant.

Of the three approaches outlined above, my preference is the oldest of these methods, the Hofstede/Minkov approach. This is because it is the only approach that arose from serendipity: the Hofstede dimensions of culture were distilled out of a data set that was not set up with the express purpose of finding such dimensions. In that sense, it is the most bottom-up of existing approaches. It is also in principle open to new contributions: Hofstede has taken on board the contributions from the Chinese Values Survey and from Michael Minkov and is open to further developments in and amendments to his theory, which is grounded in an empirical approach.

The Schwartz approach is a theory-first approach. This has an inherent drawback, in that it is closed to representations of reality that might not fit within the theory. The Inglehart/Welzel approach, in my view, suffers from a heavy ideological bias that sees Northwestern Europe as the apex of civilisation. This is visible most clearly in Welzel (2013). In his view, human emancipation is what everybody wants – and what is most advanced in Europe, but spreading from there to the rest of the world.

Both Minkov (2018) and Inglehart and Welzel seem to favour reducing the data to two dimensions. For the time being, I do not want to go along with this idea. I think it may not offer sufficient differentiation

between cultures and therefore lead to over-simplification and to a tunnel vision that tries to squeeze everything into its approach. A two-dimensional approach also does not take account of the experience of cross-cultural management, which makes good use of more dimensions. With Venkateswaran and Ohja (2019), I do not believe that cross-cultural studies have reached their apex in the work of Hofstede and Minkov. It is very well possible that future research may show up different, additional or fewer dimensions. For the time being, though, I think it is the best we have.

In the following section, I will first give a brief treatment of some of the literature on cultures in Africa, with a focus on Ghana and on Southern Africa – to what extent does the literature tell us something about the emergence of new cultural autonomy that Vansina has predicted? I will show that the literature offers little recourse here. After that, I will present the results of using a cross-cultural approach, using three slightly different but complementary 'lenses'.

3.3 Africa's cultural landscape – an exploratory look

As argued in the previous section, cross-cultural psychology provides a way of discussing perceived differences in culture – defined as a value system that serves as common points of reference to a people – at a level that looks at larger groups of people: the level of a 'cultural tradition', a 'nation' or indeed at the level of 'national culture'. However, one can wonder if cross-cultural psychology is the *only* way for saying something meaningful at this level. In view of the amount of sociological, ethnographic and anthropological literature on Africa, this is a difficult question to answer. In order to explore the topic a little bit, I have looked at some of the literature on (national) culture from Ghana and from South Africa and its immediate neighbours Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini (Swaziland).

Ghana was chosen because it has clear distinctions between North and South, and yet at the same time a long history of interactions between the different peoples that make up present-day Ghana. At the same time, it has a long history of interaction with colonial powers but was also the second country in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence. Thus, it could be a country where the dynamics of cultural change can be seen and where it might be possible to discuss processes leading to (changes in) cultural autonomy and national culture.

South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini were chosen because of the peculiar circumstance that three ethnolinguistic groups each straddle two countries: South Africa and one other country (the Sotho

also live in Lesotho, the Swazi also in Eswatini and the Tswana also in Botswana). Are cultural differences at the national level now more important than those at the ethnolinguistic level? What could that mean for cultural autonomy? These are questions that seem interesting to explore.[21]

3.3.1 Ghana

The anthropological literature concerning Ghana – or at least the selection I read – suffers from a few problems that stand out when trying to analyse cultural similarities and differences. Perhaps the most important of them is that most books and articles discuss a single ethnolinguistic group and that no systematic comparison is undertaken with other groups. What is frequent is that anthropologists take issue with earlier or other anthropologists. Thus, ascertaining who might be closest to the truth becomes a matter of judging who writes more convincingly - attempts at outside validation are lacking.

Another problem I have is that the dialogue between those studied and the student is missing. Toumey (1993: 70) has coined the term of the 'anthropologist as entomologist'. He uses it in the sense of the anthropologist describing his or her objects of study in a dispassionate way. This may be equally unjust both to the anthropologist and to the entomologist. But there is another sense in which the term can be used: the type of anthropology that does not take the trouble to consult those studied on their findings.

Of course, nowadays Ghanaians are quite capable of reading what is being written about them and of reacting. An early example of this can be seen in the work of E.A. Ammah (2016). In this book, there is a review first published in 1941 of a book published in 1940 by British Anthropologist M.J. Field on the Ga people and customs. On p. 111, Ammah directly challenges a number of assertions Field makes about the Ga, for example that their identity is a relatively recent construct and they do not have a paramount chief (and therefore belong to the group of acephalous societies). He also challenges Field's description of many Ga activities being imbued with magic.

This example illustrates the difficulty with trusting the anthropological gaze: the distinction between a hierarchically organized society and one that has a more grassroots organisation is an important cultural distinction, also in the Hofstede model. So which one are we to believe?

[21] This section is based on sections 6.1.6 and 6.2.1 of my Master thesis (Van Pinxteren, 2018b).

The importance of the spiritual is an example of the difficulty of analysing cultural differences and similarities using anthropological literature. In many cultures all over the world, the spiritual domain is an important element of culture and identity. But how to describe and discuss this – does one stress the commonalities, or rather look at the differences? Many anthropologists have a tendency to create separate cosmologies for the cultures they study, thus (perhaps inadvertently) erring on the side of 'intimate specificity' as pointed out by Mamdani (1996:11). Ammah, on the other hand, stresses the practical aspects of some of the rituals and shows how they fulfil functions that are common to most societies, in ways that do not depend to the extent suggested by Field on spiritual notions.

It could be (but there is no way of being certain) that this same problem applies to the work of Müller (2013). She goes to great lengths to explore and explain the religious/spiritual aspects of Asante chieftaincy, using the concept of 'Sunsum', roughly equivalent to soul (of a person, but also of the nation). In a similar vein MacGaffey's 2013 book about the Dagbon gives a history of chieftaincy developments in the Dagbon area. It criticizes earlier anthropology and seeks to explore the spiritual dimension of chieftaincy, asking for more attention to the position of the 'Tindana' earth priests. It shows how the recent scarcity in land has increased conflicts in the region and changed chieftaincy. MacGaffey argues that power in Dagbon society essentially comes through 'Nam', the spiritual power that is created through the rituals. He points out that some of this magic is so dangerous that it is best not talked about. This type of discourse could also be seen as erring on the side of 'intimate specificity'.

MacGaffey shows the similarities in many ways between the Dagbon and neighbouring peoples: the Nanun, Mamprugu and Tallensi.

By contrast, Ghanaian authors, such as Tonah (2016) analyse chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana in terms of conflict theory, without recourse to descriptions of Sunsum or Nam. Likewise, an author like Nugent (2005) argues that the Ewe ethnic identity is a relatively new and fluid phenomenon. In the same volume, Agbedor and Johnson (2005), through an analysis of naming practices, show the commonalities of the Ewe value system.

Müller (2013: 12) does provide an indication that suggests that the Asante (Akan) may be very much on the Fixed side of the Fixed-Flex spectrum: she points to the importance of the Adinkra symbol of the crocodile, which according to her means that one should stick to one's own divine function regardless of the environment .

Nevertheless, taking everything together, the conclusion must be that it is difficult to say much about cultural similarities or differences within Ghana by surveying the literature.

3.3.2 South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini

Southern Africa is one part of Africa that can be characterized by a centuries-old history of dramatic and violent changes. In South Africa, the settler model of colonialism has led to particularly trenchant attempts at social engineering that can be understood as direct attacks on previously existing indigenous cultures. This has been accompanied by massive economic change and upheaval. The entire process has found its apex in 'Apartheid', a unique system of institutionalized racism that has profoundly influenced developments on the entire Southern African subcontinent. It has also led to sustained, sophisticated and diverse forms of resistance.

It is impossible here to give an overview of the literature on South Africa. In order to sketch a general framework, I will make use of the work of Mamdani (1996) and attempt to give a very sketchy characterization of the literature. I will then examine a few aspects of Tswana, Sotho and Swazi culture as evident from the literature.

South Africa: the manipulation of ethnic and racial categories

Mamdani's 'Citizen and Subject' (1996) is interesting, because it discusses the South African experience as part of the broader African experience with colonialism, thereby linking South Africa to the rest of the continent. His central thesis is that in South Africa (but elsewhere in Africa as well), ethnic identity was reproduced and bent to suit the objective of dominating a rural population at minimal cost, using manipulated versions of 'customary' law. Racial identity, on the other hand, was needed in order to separate the 'modern', 'democratic' sector from the dominated and ethnically fragmented sectors of society. Understanding this mechanism, Mamdani argues, is key to building a successful counter-movement. However, following the line of reasoning of Neocosmos (1995: 43), who discusses and critiques the 'Invention of Tradition' school of thought of Hobsbawm and Ranger, this does not mean that ethnic identity is by definition artificial – a point also made by Spear (2003) and by Reid (2011) - or that ethnically-based movements are all anti-democratic.

Historically, anthropology has been very much influenced by the prevailing government needs and intellectual climate, as was shown for example by Gewald (2007) for Rhodesia and Leach (1984) more

generally. Nowhere was this evident more strongly than in South Africa, where a whole strand of Afrikaner anthropology ('Volkekunde') developed that has now been relegated more or less in its entirety to the scrapheap of history.[22] Unfortunately, as Sharp (2002) has shown, the countermovement in anthropology has tended to denigrate the importance of indigenous cultures, in favour of an assimilationist approach that equally seems to miss the mark.

How have attempts to manipulate race and ethnicity, different in rural and in urban areas (but of course not unconnected to each other), as well as attempts at resisting this, influenced present-day perceptions of cultural diversity in South Africa? What has been the influence of the end of Apartheid? Has the Apartheid experience helped to forge a new national identity in South Africa? What has this meant for the cultural identity of groups like the Sotho, Swazi and Tswana, that now live in two different countries? What seems certain is that the autonomy of these cultural traditions, in the sense used by Vansina (1992) must have been seriously compromised. It is difficult to move much beyond that statement on the basis of the existing ethnography, encumbered as it is by the tremendous weight of competing ideologies.

Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini

What is clear from my look at the historical literature on the three countries is that throughout the colonial period, the leaders of these countries were acutely aware of the existential threat that the Boer advance and the expansion of colonial South Africa posed to them. The threat of Boer domination served to unify them, to mobilize their resources, to develop their skills in warfare as well as in diplomacy – and it also drove them in the hands of the British. In order to safeguard even a limited degree of independence, they were forced to make and to accept huge concessions. Thus, large and fertile stretches of land that were once part of the Sotho, Swazi and Tswana polities are currently part of South Africa.[23]

[22] This is probably unfortunate, because there may have been work done that still has analytical value today. One example is Van Warmelo (1937), who discusses the difficulties involved in classifying cultural groups in Southern Africa.

[23] An interesting description of what this meant for one of Botswana's groups is given in Morton (1985).

For these countries, the struggle to retain cultural autonomy and the way in which culture has helped to adapt to changes can be seen most clearly in the work of Gulbrandsen (2012).[24]

In his book, Gulbrandsen contrasts the relative success of Botswana as a nation state with the difficulties experienced by many other African nation states and seeks to find an explanation. He feels Botswana's success should be understood as the result of the interplay between Western (global) forces and indigenous structures of power. He points to the importance of 'symbolic conceptions and hierarchies of authority rooted in indigenous polities'. (p 1) In my terminology, therefore, he looks at the importance of Tswana culture, although Gulbrandsen does not to use that term and does not share my understanding of it. In my view, the 'social', as mentioned in the title of the book, should be seen as shorthand for 'symbolic conceptions', 'rooted in indigenous polities' – in my words, then, the book tries to explain the success of Botswana out of the interplay between worldwide developments and the autonomous reaction of Tswana culture.

In the analysis of Gulbrandsen, the key to the success of Botswana as a state lies in the fact that immediately before and after independence, traditional and modern elites came together in a 'grand coalition', based on an 'obsession with the accumulation of cattle' (p 111). It is because this coalition was in place that the state was able to deal productively with the later wealth that came from diamond mining, in contrast with the situation in other diamond-rich African countries.

This analysis, in my view, is too easy. Are the Tswana the only ones in Africa that are interested in accumulation of cattle? Of course not – there are many cattle-based polities in Africa. What, then, makes the case of Botswana so unique? Gulbrandsen points to a unique combination of historical and geographical circumstances that allowed the 'grand coalition' to form and to profit from them. In my view, geographical and historical circumstances have created opportunities all over the continent at different points in time, but the explanation of why elites in Botswana were able to take them and others not must be related to its continued cultural autonomy, an autonomy that was broken almost everywhere else.

I see evidence of this in Gulbrandsen's analysis of the countervailing forces in Botswana. Gulbrandsen shows how the 'grand coalition' led to a great increase in wealth for elite sections of society, at the same time increasing inequalities in the country. This inequality leads to resistance, a resistance that is possibly capable of undermining the

[24] I am grateful to Prof Gulbrandsen for commenting on an earlier version of this text. However, the discussion of his work shows my reading of his work – others who read it may come to different conclusions.

state. Here, Gulbrandsen uses the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, and calls attention to threats to the state that can occur outside of the state, with 'war machine'-like potentialities, in the form of 'assemblages of power of a rhizome type that are antihierarchical, deterritorializing and operating in highly unpredictable ways from the point of view of the state' (p17). The example he gives is the series of events following the tragic murder of Segametsi in 1994. This girl is alleged to have been murdered in order to use her body parts to magically give additional strength to already powerful people in the community. The outrage created by this, seen by Gulbrandsen as the emergence of a class consciousness, was the start of popular opposition to the continuing enrichment of the elites and their growing corruption. He explains the role played by indigenous notions of occult practices in light of the specific cosmologies of power among the Tswana and the Sotho-speakers in general (p 292/308).

What makes the Botswana case specific, then, is more than the fact that people in Botswana are interested in cattle accumulation. The specificity of the Botswana case lies in its relative cultural homogeneity: in Botswana, state formation that is rooted in indigenous conceptions of authority is possible because these conceptions are known to a large majority of the people living in Botswana. Likewise, resistance to this authority can also be rooted in indigenous conceptions, for the same reason, the relative cultural homogeneity of the country. Gulbrandsen alludes to the cultural homogeneity in Botswana when he discusses the attitudes in the country towards egalitarianism (in my terms, Power Distance). He points to the cultural unity of Botswana in this respect, in that none of the communities in the country subscribe to radical egalitarianism, 'the San-speaking peoples being an obvious exception' (p284).

It is interesting to compare the approach of Gulbrandsen with that of Eldredge (2007) on Lesotho. Both stories relate the struggle of the peoples of Botswana and Lesotho to retain a maximum of independence and to ward off the danger of being incorporated into the Union of South Africa. However, Gulbrandsen's approach is broader than that of Eldredge, looking among others at the cultural and spiritual side of things (the 'social'). Eldredge takes a more limited historical approach, focusing on the diplomatic efforts of the Sotho leadership and on the power struggles that went on in SeSotho society and between the SeSotho and the British – the discourse of power. Thus, on p 151, Eldridge mentions that chief Letsienyana 'set up housekeeping with a woman ineligible to become his wife', without elaborating (it is explained in Machobane (1990)).

One of the elements of the Tswana tradition, as Gulbrandsen points out, is the extensive use of public debate and consultation through the kgotla assemblies. Leaders in the Tswana tradition, should follow the oft-quoted maxim that the kgosi (king) is the king by virtue of the people (p 196). The colonial period has not been able to destroy the kgotla system.

In sum, then, Botswana society is by no means free of conflict and change. However, by and large, it has been able to keep its autonomy (in the sense meant by Vansina) intact. Because of this, it has been able to make use of the opportunities that presented themselves. In terms of explaining Botswana's success, its cultural integrity can be seen as a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for success.

The comparison of the literature on Botswana with that on Lesotho and Eswatini brings to light a number of similarities, but differences as well. In all three countries, it has been possible to keep a degree of cultural autonomy intact. Eldredge (2007), Machobane (1990) and Gillis (1999) all describe how the British tried in various ways and with various degrees of success to impose their own model of governance on these communities (the famous Lugard-style 'indirect rule'). All these attempts were met with tenacious resistance and the authors demonstrate how cultural autonomy has been kept (although they do not use that term). Nevertheless, Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini were of course affected by the tremendous changes over the period, including the loss of land and the impact of developments in South Africa. The effects of these changes were not the same in the three countries. Thus, Botswana is now a republic; Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with a ceremonial function for the monarch; Eswatini is a monarchy with considerable powers for the king and the royal family.

As Eldredge (2007: 12) says, 'Part of the project of colonizers was to destabilize African cultural systems, to undermine them, and to replace them.' For Lesotho, she shows the centrality of African initiatives and agency in trying to preserve indigenous SeSotho culture, values and institutions. Machobane (1990) shows this in greater detail for the SeSotho legal system, where he discusses the origins, changes to and uses made of the Lerotholi code, an codification of the indigenous legal system. The SeSotho were united in their defence of their autonomy and tried to resist the imposition by the British of a system that sought to give chiefs ever greater authoritarian powers. However, in other respects, they were divided among themselves and there were also major divisions between the ruling families and ordinary people; the convergence of interests that was evident in Botswana never really took place in Lesotho.

Gillis (1999: 4) points to some of the differences between Swazi culture and other cultures in the area. One of these is that the wide consultation process that was part of Sotho culture was not part of Swazi and Zulu traditions in the same way. In the case of the Swazi, this may in part explain the tendency for an oligarchy to develop, centred on the royal Dlamini family, that could lose touch with the wider population. As a comment in the Times of Swaziland puts it: 'The underlining factors behind all these crises can be traced back to bad leadership, corruption and mismanagement, which has kept Swaziland into perpetual underdevelopment in spite of all the efforts to give the country a breath of development.'[25] Nevertheless, as Gillis stresses, the Swazis place great value on their independence, which is tied in their minds to the King and the royal house.

It is difficult to draw very precise conclusions from the literature in terms that are relevant for my cross-cultural psychology approach. However, it seems logical to assume, as Malan (1985: 33) already pointed out, that the cultural unity of the SeSotho, Swazi and Tswana has been broken. It has been preserved in Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini. The Sotho-Tswana, who once were part of one cultural tradition, were fragmented. It could be, though, that they have still preserved some common cultural features. One difference between the Sotho and Tswana one the one hand and the Swazi on the other that has been pointed out is the tradition of popular consultation through the Kgotla system that is part of the Sotho-Tswana tradition, but not of that of Eswatini. Does that mean, for example, that Power Distance is lower in Botswana and Lesotho than in Eswatini?

For South Africa, a new cultural identity must have emerged after the loss of cultural autonomies that existed earlier. How can this be characterized? Are there still differences between different groups of Black South Africans? These are some of the questions that the next sections will seek to explore, using the approach of cross-cultural psychology.

3.3.3 Conclusions

From the literature, it is impossible to give an answer to the question whether or not and if so, to what extent a recognizable national culture has formed in a country like Ghana. The picture that emerges from the literature on South Africa is that it is at least likely that the different experiences in South Africa and neighbouring Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini must have had some effects on the cultures in those countries.

[25] Times of Swaziland, 12 March 2018, p 19.

However, it is difficult to say anything more about them. Thus, important questions on cultural and national identity remain unanswered in the current literature. The challenging question then becomes: is it possible to say something meaningful using the approach of cross-cultural psychology? That is what the following sections will seek to explore.

3.4 Hierarchical cluster analysis[26]

The first lens that cross-cultural psychology provides for looking at the relevance (or otherwise) of national culture is inspired by Minkov and Hofstede (2012). Their hypothesis was that if national culture were important, then a cluster analysis by in-country region would lead to regions clustering together on a national basis; if, on the other hand, national culture were not important, then regions would not cluster together to form meaningful national clusters. They developed their argument by using World Values Survey data from 299 in-country regions from 28 countries in East and Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Anglo world.

For Sub-Saharan Africa, Minkov and Hofstede examined seven countries, together representing 64 administrative regions. They found that 58 of the 64 African regions, or more than 90%, clustered together with the other regions of their nation, forming homogeneous national clusters (p 148). This led them to conclude that national culture is a meaningful concept, even in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This section starts by discussing the specific approach chosen by Minkov and Hofstede and its limitations and difficulties. It continues by suggesting an extended and complementary approach, based on ethnolinguistic groups (instead of administrative regions) and on a different, much more comprehensive dataset (the Afrobarometer survey). The methods section presents how this is done. The study then presents the results of a cluster analysis that is based on this alternative approach and contrasts the results with those obtained by Minkov and Hofstede. The section ends with a discussion and some recommendations for further research.

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[26] This section is an adapted and somewhat shortened version of: Pinxteren, B. van (2020a). National Culture and Africa Revisited: Ethnolinguistic Group Data From 35 African Countries. *Cross-Cultural Research*, *54*(1), 73 - 91. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397119835783. I am grateful to the two anonymous reviewers and the one anonymous assessor for their comments.

3.4.1 The Minkov/Hofstede approach, its limitations and difficulties

The basic reasoning used by Minkov and Hofstede is sound: if disaggregated data on subnational units coalesce at the national level, then clearly this national level must have some meaning. On the other hand, if disaggregated data does not show coherence at the national level, then the concept of national culture may be an artificial one. Hofstede et al (2010) have taken a similar approach by looking at the level of individual states in Brazil. There, they find that sub-national differences in Brazil aggregate into five regional cultural clusters within Brazil.

However, from the methodological point of view, the approach Minkov and Hofstede have taken is not entirely convincing. My main doubt is about the validity of taking in-country regions as the basic unit of study. Administrative regions have been designated in historical and political processes in ways that are very different from country to country. Administrative regions may or may not conform to cultural or ethnolinguistic areas as they existed in precolonial times. Thus, Minkov and Hofstede use 12 regions for a small and homogeneous country like Rwanda, but 5 regions for a large and diverse country like Ethiopia. In some countries, regions may be formed in such a way as to split up, rather than unite ethnic groups. In those cases, it should come as no surprise that the regional averages are not very different from the national averages. If country A has two ethnic groups that are spread equally over two administrative regions, then the score for each region will be the same as the national score, no matter how different the two ethnic groups may be in reality. In some countries, this way of forming regions may have been employed, in others not. This obviously has the potential of hiding real within-country cultural differences from sight.

Minkov and Hofstede find that three out of the 13 regions from Burkina Faso and three out of the 9 regions from Zambia do not cluster neatly with the other regions from those countries. This therefore begs the question – what picture would emerge if more countries were included and if one were to look at the ethnolinguistic level? This is what has been done in this study.

3.4.2 Method

Minkov and Hofstede relied on the World Values Survey for their data, meaning that they could only get information on seven countries. A much larger dataset is available on Africa in the Afrobarometer

survey.[27] This is a representative survey that has been carried out at regular intervals since 1999. The research in this study is based on round 6 of the survey, which was implemented in 2014 and 2015. It included 35 African countries, of which 30 are Sub-Saharan.

Using this dataset obviously has the advantage of providing a much larger coverage than the seven African countries included in the World Values Survey. The disadvantage is that the Afrobarometer's primary focus is on attitudes towards democracy and governance, not directly on the values that determine national culture. However, cultural differences 'shine through' in just about any batch of questions asked in different countries. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Inglehart and Welzel (2005), political attitudes are related to culture. Therefore, between and within-country differences in response to Afrobarometer questions also provide insights into cultural differences and similarities.

However, using the Afrobarometer survey for this type of analysis is not entirely straightforward, because of differences in the purpose of the questions and differences in the questions asked themselves. For this study, an approach was chosen that is related as closely as possible to the original Minkov/Hofstede study. In order to distinguish ethnolinguistic groups, two Afrobarometer questions were used: in most cases, Q87: 'What is your ethnic community, cultural group or tribe?'[28] However, in some cases Q2 was (also) used: 'Which language is your home language?' For Algeria and Morocco, Berber-speakers were analysed as a separate group. For Burundi, Cape Verde, Egypt, São Tomé and Principé, Sudan, Eswatini and Tunisia no ethnolinguistic splits could be made on the basis of these two questions. For South Africa, Q102 (race) was taken into account as well. For coloureds and whites, Q102 was combined with Q2, giving separate data for Afrikaans- and English-speaking whites and coloureds. Hofstede (2001: 463) recommends a sample size of at least 20 and preferably 50 per group. In order to include as many groups as possible and for pragmatic reasons, I have taken a minimum sample size of 39 as the cut-off point for including ethnolinguistic groups in the analysis.

Neither the WVS nor the Afrobarometer makes any claims about the samples being representative at the ethnolinguistic group level and in fact, they are not – it is not a requirement in the sampling protocol. Therefore, some form of correction was necessary in order to ensure a fair comparison of like with like.

At the ethnolinguistic group level, it is possible to control for gender, age, education, income level, urban/rural as well as for other variables.

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[27] http://www.afrobarometer.org

[28] http://afrobarometer.org/data/merged-round-6-codebook-36-countries-2016 retrieved 13 February 2018.

However, increasing the number of such variables has its disadvantages: it introduces an upward pressure on the minimum sample size that is needed for every ethnolinguistic group; it also increases the number of weights applied in individual cases. Weighing factors introduce a certain level of artificiality to the data, because it means that certain groups are made more important than in the actual data, others less important. Another issue is that, of course, real differences may exist within countries for example in the education levels of specific ethnolinguistic groups. Compensating for that could mean that perceived differences on the ground, although perhaps partly due to differences for example in educational level, are glossed over. In addition, differences such as in educational level might themselves be related to differences in value systems between ethnolinguistic groups.

For these reasons, I have chosen to introduce weighing factors only for two variables: age (below thirty and thirty and above)[29] and gender. I have split all ethnolinguistic group samples into four subgroups: men under 30, men 30 and above, women under 30, women 30 and above. I have weighed the data from each subgroup in such a way that the composition in terms of age and gender corresponds to the national average in the sample. Because of demographic differences within South Africa, weights were determined not based on the national sample, but based on the 'Blacks', 'Whites' and 'Coloureds' as separate groups.

In their study, Minkov and Hofstede did not use all World Values Survey questions. Using a trial and error approach, they arrived at a set of 26 value-based questions. They contain a number of questions on what parents think children should be taught, questions derived from the theory of cultural dimensions as developed by Schwartz (2012) and six personal values. These questions are not asked or not asked in the same way in the Afrobarometer survey. However, in spite of the differences in survey questions, some questions do address underlying value orientations in different ways. In order to determine which questions would be the most relevant for my research, I made use of the recent cultural dimension scores that were published by Beugelsdijk and Welzel (2018), based on a combination of European and World Values Survey data from different rounds. Beugelsdijk and Welzel have attempted to synthesize the Hofstede/Minkov dimensions and those of Inglehart and Welzel into a three-dimensional model. In their work, they

[29] It would also have been thinkable to choose a different cut-off point or to make a split over several categories. This cut-off point splits the samples from most countries reasonably well and was therefore chosen for pragmatic reasons.

publish scores on thirteen African countries that have also been included in the Afrobarometer survey. Therefore, there are 13 common cases: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In total, they have published scores for 16 African countries. Like Hofstede and Minkov, Beugelsdijk and Welzel work with a scale that runs from zero to 100. They show greatest cultural similarity among the countries from Sub-Saharan Africa on their 'collectivism-individualism' dimension: the range is 18 points. The range is considerably greater on their 'duty-joy' dimension: 50 points. On their third dimension, 'distrust-trust' the range is 30 points. From their work, then, it seems that there is considerable cultural diversity within Sub-Saharan Africa, although the pattern is not the same for every dimension.

In order to arrive at a cluster analysis based on the Afrobarometer survey, the first step was to select a longlist of 43 questions that at face value seem they might be related to one of these three dimensions. Comparison of the scores for the 13 countries that are included in the Beugelsdijk/Welzel data led to a shorter list of 32 questions that show at least a weak correlation (Pearson $r > |0.3|$) with one or several of the Beugelsdijk/Welzel dimensions. These, then, are questions that have some relation to cultural differences.

For a cluster analysis, all variables need to have a value. Missing values were estimated by taking values from countries assumed to be comparable (details are given in table A3 of the appendix for this chapter). A hierarchical clustering analysis was performed, using the same method as that used by Minkov and Hofstede: the average linkage (between-groups) method, using the Pearson correlation distance measure with *z*-score standardization by variable.

3.4.3 Results

Minkov and Hofstede initially requested a number of solutions equal to their number of countries (7). I did the same, requesting 35 clusters. In cases where regions of more than one nation appeared in one and the same cluster, Hofstede and Minkov relied on the dendrograms supplied by the cluster tool to identify subclusters that correspond to nations. I have followed the same strategy. (Because of its size, the full dendrogram has been included in the appendix for this section.)

Some African countries are known to be almost or entirely monolingual, in spite of the ethnic differentiations that the Afrobarometer survey uses for these countries. One would expect that groups from these countries cluster together. They do:

- Botswana has nine ethnolinguistic groups; together, they form one cluster, with no other members.

- Lesotho has seven ethnolinguistic groups that together form one subcluster.
- Madagascar has six ethnolinguistic groups that together form one subcluster.
- Mauritius has four ethnolinguistic groups that together form one cluster, with no other members.

One would also expect to see some similarity among the Arab countries. Indeed, the analysis puts Algeria, Egypt and Morocco in the same cluster. However, Tunisia and Sudan are in different clusters.
The situation for Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, South Africa and Eswatini is summarized in the tables below. The information for all 35 countries can be found in the appendix for this section.

Country	**Country code**	**Number of groups**	**Cluster number(s)**	**Largest number of groups in one cluster:**
Botswana	BW	9	13	9
Eswatini	SZ	1	6a	1
Ghana	GH	5	25b, 30a	4
Lesotho	LS	7	16b	7
South Africa	ZA	13	7a, 12b, 12d	8

Table 1: Selected countries, number of ethnolinguistic groups, cluster membership

By cluster, the situation is as in table 2.[30] (Sub)clusters that group an entire country have been marked in **bold**; countries that entirely fall into one (sub)cluster are in **bold** as well.

Cluster	**Subcluster**	**Groups**
6	**6a**	**Eswatini**
7	7a	South Africa: **"**Coloured" Afrikaans, "Coloured" English, Indian, Pedi
12	12b	South Africa: Shangaan, Sotho, Swazi, Tswana, Venda, "White" Afrikaans, "White" English, Xhosa
	12d	South Africa: Zulu
13		**Botswana:** Karanga, Kgalagadi, Kgatla, Kwena, Mmirwa, Ngwaketse, Ngwato, Tswana, Tswapong

[30] Note that the Afrobarometer group designations do not imply any judgement by the author on their appropriateness or otherwise.

16	**16b**	**Lesotho:** Letebele, Mofokeng, Mohlakoana, Mokoena, Mosiea, Motaung, Motloung
25	25b	Ghana: Dagaba
30	30a	Ghana: Akan, Dagomba, Ewe, Ga

Table 2: Ethnolinguistic group clusters, selected countries

It is also possible to give a direct comparison of the results with those obtained by Minkov and Hofstede. Minkov and Hofstede used 7 countries, of which five are also in the Afrobarometer dataset: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, South Africa and Zambia.
For Burkina Faso, they had 13 regions, of which ten fell into one cluster. In my analysis, there are three ethnolinguistic groups, falling into one cluster. For Ghana, they had ten regions, all falling into one cluster. I have five ethnolinguistic groups; four of them fall into the same cluster. For Mali, they had six regions, all falling into one cluster. I have seven ethnolinguistic groups, of which four fall into one cluster. For Zambia, they had nine regions, of which six fell into one cluster. I have four groups, all in different clusters. For South Africa, they had nine regions, all falling into the same cluster. In my analysis, there are 13 ethnolinguistic groups, divided into three clusters. Of these, eight fall into one cluster and four into another. The comparison is summarized in table 3 below.

Country	**Admin. regions**	**Number in same cluster**	**Ethnolinguistic groups**	**Number in same cluster**
Burkina Faso	13	10	3	3
Ghana	10	10	5	4
Mali	6	6	7	4
South Africa	9	9	13	8
Zambia	9	6	4	1
Total	47	41 (87%)	32	20 (63%)

Table 3: Comparing administrative region-based clusters with ethnolinguistic group-based clusters

Looking only at these five countries, my results, using a different dataset and a different unit of analysis, are roughly similar to those of Minkov and Hofstede, although they show a greater differentiation. This difference becomes more pronounced if we examine the extended set of countries that is in the Afrobarometer dataset.

There are 26 countries in the Afrobarometer dataset that are in Sub-Saharan Africa and for which data from different ethnolinguistic groups are available. There is data on 187 ethnolinguistic groups from these countries. Out of these, 126 or 67.4% cluster together with other ethnolinguistic groups of their country, forming homogeneous national clusters – as compared to a figure of 90.6% found by Minkov and Hofstede (p 148). Besides those countries that are dominated by one ethnolinguistic group (Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar) there are seven other countries of which all ethnolinguistic groups fall into the same (sub)cluster. Note that this might not be the whole story: in all of those countries there could be smaller ethnolinguistic communities that show a different cultural profile but who have not been sufficiently sampled in the Afrobarometer survey.

This means that there are 16 countries from which not all ethnolinguistic groups cluster together at the national level. In five, the majority fall into one (sub)cluster, with only one or two ethnolinguistic groups that seem to be an exception. This leaves eleven countries with considerable in-country cultural diversity.

What this means is that there is not one common pattern that applies across Africa. There are not even regional patterns. For many countries, there is support in this study for the conclusion by Minkov and Hofstede that national culture is a relevant concept and worth studying, even in ethnolinguistically diverse countries such as those found in Africa. However, the present study also shows that there is a significant number of countries in which ethnolinguistic groups do not cluster at the national level. This also means that statements about Africa in general are meaningless here. The subset of countries chosen for the Minkov/Hofstede study is not representative of Africa as a whole, nor can this be assumed for the much larger Afrobarometer subset.

This study has shown that for some countries in Africa, it is now possible to use data on national culture. In others, it is not. Every country and ethnolinguistic group will have to be examined on its own merits. However, the survey approach that is common in cross-cultural psychology does help to produce meaningful data on ethnolinguistic groups in Africa, just as it does in other parts of the world.

3.4.4 Discussion and conclusions

The analysis presented here shows that at least for some countries, the ethnolinguistic group distinctions from the colonial times seem to have lost some of their relevance, because no matter how large their differences may be, they are not visible in a cluster analysis that compares them with ethnolinguistic groups from other countries. The analysis also shows that in some countries, considerable cultural

differences remain, whereas in others, something approaching a national culture seems to be emerging. This is in fact in line with Vansina's predictions.

It is good, though, to be aware of the limitations of the approach chosen here.

Cluster analysis is a data reduction technique. It is a good tool for preparing broad estimates, but not for detailed analysis. It does not lead to full descriptions of cultures; those have to be obtained through other methods. But this approach can help to make sense of the cultural landscape of a larger area. In that sense, as pointed out by Minkov (2013: 5), it can be a cognitive tool that helps to understand the complex world around us. However, there are a number of further steps that could be taken to lead to a more precise image.

One step that would make sense would be to include a survey instrument that is more specifically designed to measure cultural differences and similarities in the Afrobarometer survey. One such instrument is the Values Survey Module,[31] as described by Hofstede and Minkov.

Another step would be to re-examine the ethnolinguistic categories used in the Afrobarometer survey. For some countries, such as Lesotho, one wonders what the value is of keeping in these questions. For others, it might be possible to reduce the number of ethnolinguistic groups. In all cases, it would be useful to take steps to ensure a better level of representativity at the ethnolinguistic group level.

A last step, easier said than done, would of course be to extend the coverage of the Afrobarometer survey to the maximum number of countries.

In any case, important cultural differences in Africa remain and it is important to create new knowledge on what these differences are and on where the main distinctions lie. Without such knowledge, attempts to build stronger pan-African collaborations or stronger grassroots-based democratic structures will remain founded on quicksand.

In the next section, an attempt will be made to examine these issues in a bit more detail, by looking at individual cultural dimension scores.

[31] See http://geerthofstede.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/VSM-2013-English-2013-08-25.pdf. Note that there have been several editions of the Values Survey Module (VSM).

3.5 Dimension scores[32]

In the previous section, we took an initial look at cultural differences and similarities in Africa by employing the technique of hierarchical cluster analysis. I used essentially the same method as Hofstede Minkov did in 2012, but with several improvements. These included using the more recent Beugelsdijk/Welzel data as the benchmark for the analysis and looking at ethnolinguistic groups, rather than in-country administrative divisions. Using this approach, it was possible to demonstrate how indeed, national cultures seem to be developing in some African countries, but not in others. The traditional ethnic group distinctions seem to have lost their meaning in some countries, but not everywhere.

This section looks at the same problem in a bit more detail, attempting to tease out information on ethnolinguistic group differences on several of the Hofstede/Minkov dimensions, again by a re-analysis of Afrobarometer data. I have attempted to do this for the three dimensions proposed by Beugelsdijk and Welzel, but was not able to do this in a way that yielded reliable data. However, I have also looked at the original Hofstede/Minkov dimensions and their scores, and there I was able to find corresponding information in the Afrobarometer data set. This yields dimension scores for over 200 ethnolinguistic groups in 35 African countries.[33]

3.5.1 Method

As was pointed out in the previous section, the original Minkov/Hofstede scores cover only a few African countries. In order to increase this coverage, I sought to extend the data, by looking for corresponding information in Afrobarometer data for those countries that have been sampled by both surveys. The process by which new data can be linked to existing Hofstede/Minkov scores was described as 'anchoring' by Hofstede (2001: 464). Because the aim of the exercise was to achieve an optimum correlation between an existing and a new data set, traditional forms of factor analysis were not considered appropriate.

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[32] An adapted version of this section will be published as 'Cultural Autonomy and Cultural Dimensions in Africa
– as evidenced from the Afrobarometer Survey' in: *Méthod(e)s, African Review of Social Science Methodology (01/2021 - forthcoming).*

[33] A different approach that nevertheless follows the same general idea is the research undertaken for different regions in Europe by Kaasa et al (2014); they base themselves on the European social survey.

Factor analysis is a computer-aided data reduction technique through which latent variables in a data set are suggested, that then should correspond in some way to a theory-based interpretation that the researcher gives of the data. In this case, the approach had to be different: the latent variable (the Hofstede/Minkov dimension) is taken as a given and variables in the new data set are sought that correlate in larger or smaller measure with these dimensions. They are then given different weights (somewhat comparable to factor analysis), with a view to maximising the correlation. More information is given in appendix 3.5-b.

However, before any of this can be done, it is important to first get a data set with as large a number of overlapping countries or groups as possible. For the Afrobarometer data and the published Hofstede/Minkov data, that is not directly possible: the number of overlapping countries is not more than a handful, and that only for the dimension of IVR. Therefore, an indirect approach was necessary, using the World Values Survey as intermediary step. World Values Survey data are appropriate, because there are between 31 and 47 counties for which both World Values Survey data and Hofstede/Minkov scores are available.

This led to a four step – approach, detailed in appendix 3.5-b. As a result, I was able to obtain individual scores on four out of the six Hofstede/Minkov dimensions that correlate with already known data for countries and ethnolinguistic groups at correlations of between .87 and .91, $p < 0.001$. These dimensions are fixed versus flexible (or LTO), Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV); and the Power Distance Index (PDI).

In order to distinguish ethnolinguistic groups the same method was used as that employed in the previous section.

3.5.2 Key results and conclusions

In section 3.3.3, I concluded that from the literature, it is impossible to give an answer to the question whether or not and if so, to what extent a recognizable national culture has formed in a country like Ghana. The picture that emerges from the literature on South Africa and some of its neighbours is that it is at least likely that the different experiences in South Africa and neighbouring Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini must have had some effects on the cultures in those countries. However, it is difficult to say anything more about them. Thus, important questions on cultural and national identity remain unanswered in the current literature. I posed a challenging question to myself: is it possible to say something meaningful using the approach of cross-cultural psychology? It is now possible to answer that question.

Do the data suggest cultural differences between the SeSotho of Lesotho and those of South Africa? Are the Tswana of Botswana now culturally different from those in South Africa? Is a national identity emerging, at least among the black South African population? Table 4 below provides at least the start of an answer.

	Sotho-SA	Lesotho		Tswana-SA	Botswana		SA-Black (combined)
'Fix vs Flex'	77	94		51	49		75
IVR	33	-1		29	28		38
IDV	64	58		55	66		58
PDI	88	69		78	71		86

Table 4 – Dimension scores of cross-border ethnolinguistic groups, Southern Africa

From the table, the picture emerges that the SeSotho of Lesotho and the Tswana of Botswana are no longer culturally the same; they score differently on 'Fix vs Flex' (LTO) and on Indulgence versus Restraint, and less so on individualism.

The South African groups show similarity on the Indulgence, Individualism and Power Distance dimensions and on these dimensions, their scores are in-line with the overall Black population of South Africa. On the 'Fix vs Flex' dimension, the Tswana seem to be an exception, scoring closer to the Botswana average than to the South African average.

Further analysis shows that the South African Swazi also score in-line with the overall Black South African scores. On the whole, I interpret this as tentative support for the idea that in South Africa, a new cultural tradition is emerging, as predicted by Vansina. This is a shared new identity, even though black South Africans speak several different languages.

Is something similar happening in Ghana? The data in table 5 below give the first clue.

	Fix vs Flex (LTO)	IVR	IDV	PDI
Ghana	106	72	87	89
Ghana-Akan	108	84	89	90
Ghana-Dagaba	101	58	86	74
Ghana-Dagomba	98	39	84	86
Ghana-Ewe	114	79	94	70
Ghana-Frafra	91	37	71	77
Ghana-Ga	100	77	90	86
Ghana-Gonja	75	44	82	86
Ghana-Kusaal	77	72	85	65
Largest difference	*33*	*47*	*23*	*25*

Table 5 – Dimension scores, Ghana

It is clear from this data that Ghana is a country with considerable cultural diversity. On all four dimensions, the differences within Ghana are noticeable. However, that may not be the complete story, as is clear from table 6, which shows only the largest ethnolinguistic groups.

	Fix vs Flex (LTO)	IVR	IDV	PDI
Ghana	106	72	87	89
Ghana-Akan	108	84	89	90
Ghana-Dagomba	98	39	84	86
Ghana-Ewe	114	79	94	70
Ghana-Ga	100	77	90	86
Largest difference	*16*	*45*	*10*	*20*

Table 6 – Dimension scores, largest ethnolinguistic groups, Ghana

In Ghana, the Akan make up nearly half of the total population. The four largest ethnic groups together make up more than 85% of the population. Within these groups, the differences are much smaller, with the exception of the Indulgence versus Restraint dimension.
This picture is similar to the result of the hierarchical cluster analysis, as shown below (taken from the full dendrogram in the appendix for chapter 3.4).

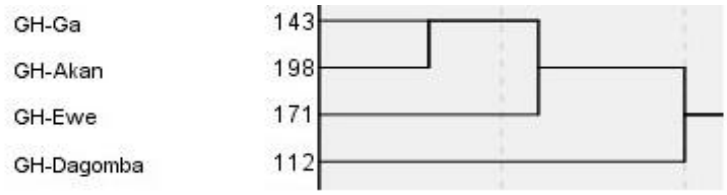


Figure 1 – Hierarchical clusters, largest ethnolinguistic groups, Ghana

What this suggests is that even in a diverse country such a Ghana, a value system (in other words: a national culture) may be developing that serves as common point of reference to all Ghanaians. This value system may be similar to the value system of the Akan, but not quite the same. It could also be that the ways in which people from different ethnolinguistic groups relate to that value system will be different; however, they will share a common understanding and knowledge of the common 'Ghanaian' value system. Put in a different way: people from minority ethnolinguistic groups in Ghana are likely to have considerable intercultural communication skills, allowing them to navigate and switch between the dominant, 'national' way of doing and judging things and the way of doing and judging things within their own ethnolinguistic group.

In comparison, internal differences are much more pronounced in other countries. Thus, in Kenya, on each of the four dimensions, there are large differences between the ethnolinguistic groups, of a size between 26 and 58 points on a 100-point scale. Without further research it is difficult to say much more on this topic, but it could be that for some countries, there is no common point of reference – people may have the intercultural skills to know about other cultures, but it could be that there is no acceptance of any framework that serves as a common point of reference for all ethnolinguistic groups. In those countries, it will not be possible to speak of a 'national culture'.

On the other hand, the Acholi and Lango of Uganda show relative similarity to one another and to the Luo of Kenya; all three groups speak a similar language and they seem to have been able to maintain their cultural integrity, in spite of being divided over two countries.

	Uganda-Acholi	Uganda-Lango	Kenya-Luo	*Largest difference*
'Fix vs Flex'	69	73	81	*12*
IVR	30	23	37	*14*
IDV	74	75	67	*8*
PDI	68	71	78	*10*

Table 7 – Dimension scores, Acholi/Lango/Luo

This seems to show that the process as predicted by Vansina may be happening, but it is by no means even across Africa and it also does not mean that in all cases, it leads to the emergence of coherent national cultures.
In keeping with some of the opinions on Pan Africanism outlined in chapter 1.2, it is perhaps interesting to point out that this same procedure could also be used for WVS countries in other parts of the world. I have done this for the USA, giving results as listed below:

	Fix vs Flex (LTO)	**IVR**	**IDV**	**PDI**
USA	72	83	18	52
USA-'Black'	83	86	29	71
USA-'White'	68	82	13	52
USA-'Hispanic'	83	91	41	52
Largest difference	15	9	**28**	19

Table 8 – Dimension scores, USA

In the US, sadly, cultural differences are aligned to differences in skin pigmentation. It is interesting to note that where in many African countries the largest in-country differences are seen on the Indulgence versus Restraint dimension; this seems to be different in the USA.
This research can be seen as a 'proof of concept': it shows that insights from cross-cultural psychology can be used to make useful statements about African cultures in the same way as it is being done in other parts of the world.
More research into this would be extremely useful, for a number of reasons:

- It would throw more light on where and how in Africa new cultures are developing: is this process even across Africa?

Where is it linked to national borders, where is it not? What are the differences and similarities between different countries?

- What may be cultural issues to consider when considering decisions about where to invest and where, for example, to establish regional offices?
- What are the things to look out for when developing business or other partnerships within Africa and between African countries? What are the do's and don'ts? There is currently a large knowledge gap in this area.

Such research could be done in a more direct way: more reliable results could be obtained if the detour via the World Values Survey wouldn't be needed. Therefore, again, it would be good to include a (version of) Hofstede's Values Survey Module[34] in a next Afrobarometer round. This would allow a more direct calculation of scores and better comparability with already-published scores.

It would also be good to re-examine the ethnolinguistic and language categories used in the Afrobarometer survey. The current list clearly goes back to the colonial period and compares apples with oranges – for example, for a small country like Lesotho, many groups are distinguished with very small differences in scores. For large groups like the Akan of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire or the Yoruba of Nigeria and Benin, no smaller units are distinguished – but for the Shona of Zimbabwe, there are. It would be good if these inconsistent and colonially-based categories would be replaced by a smaller set of cultural designations. At the same time, this would make it easier to ensure some form of representativity of sampling also at the ethnolinguistic group level.

It is probable that there are some commonalities between African cultures and that those commonalities are different from those between, for example, European cultures. At the same time, Africa is not a cultural whole, in the same way that Asia or Europe are not culturally homogeneous. On the other hand, the trope that Africa is an area of almost endless cultural diversity is also not true (Prah 2008: 71). As outlined in this paper, more research in this area is useful for a variety of reasons and it is possible, using the Afrobarometer mechanism. A first step in that direction will be taken in the next section.

[34] https://geerthofstede.com/research-and-vsm/vsm-2013/

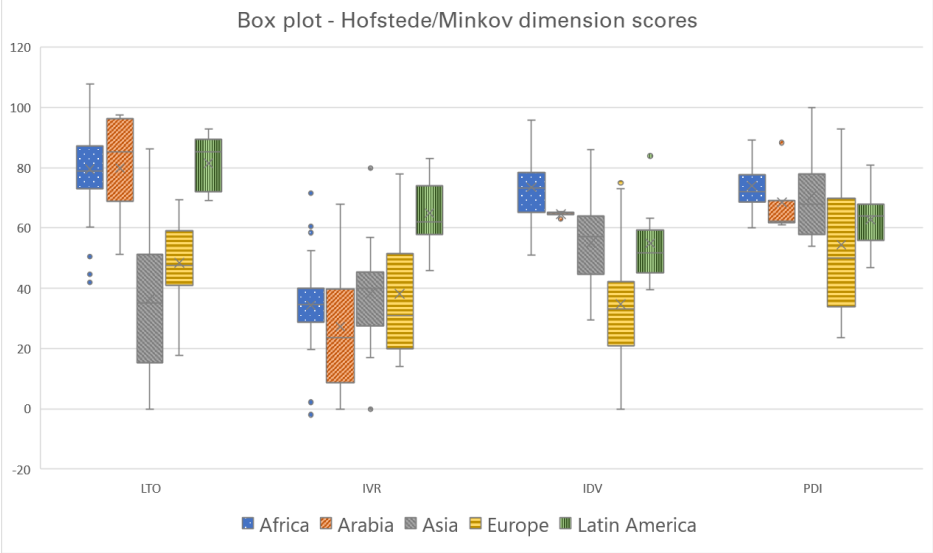
3.6 Africa in the World

The work presented in previous sections has led to new Hofstede/Minkov scores on a large number of African countries. For the first time, then, it becomes possible to use this approach to look a bit more precisely at the question of whether there is such a thing as a common African cultural identity. Is there one for Europe, for Asia, for Latin America? This is certainly a common perception. But how can it be described? Can the cultural dimensions approach be useful here? I think it can, by making a comparison between the range of dimension scores per continent. I have explored this for Africa,[35] the Arab region, Asia, Europe[36] and Latin America.[37] The data used are the national scores, using the Afrobarometer data where they are available, WVS data where there are no Afrobarometer data, Minkov data where available for IDV and LTO (recalculated to a scale between zero and 100) and Hofstede data in the remaining cases. These data sets are strongly correlated, but not identical.[38] Still, I think they are useful for discerning overall patterns, as the box plot below shows. The boxes show the 2nd and 3rd quartile, the 'whiskers' the 1st and 4th and the dots are outlier values. The inclusive median method has been used.

The plot confirms the often-repeated assertion that Africa as a whole is collectivist (high score on IDV) and that by contrast, Europe is individualist. However, note that some countries in Europe are as collectivist as some of the African countries. The plot also confirms that Asian countries are the most 'flexible' in their norms (a low LTO score), although the range is very wide. On indulgence versus restraint, most continents score similar. What is noticeable there is the large spread in values that exist on all continents, with the exception of Latin America, which scores markedly more indulgent. The Arab region seems to be the most restrained, although here, too there is a large spread. Power distance is related to the individualism/collectivism dimension. Here, Africa scores highest, although scores overlap with those of

[35] Sub-Saharan Africa, including Cabo Verde, Madagascar and Mauritius.
[36] For Russia and Turkey, I have taken the capital cities (Moscow and Ankara) in determining in which continent to put them – Europe and Asia, respectively.
[37] Including Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago.
[38] A full list of the scores used and their sources is given in the appendix for this section.

Asian countries; Europe scores lowest. Note, however, the considerable overlap between all continents on this dimension.



Graph 1 – Box plot, Hofstede/Minkov dimension scores

The box plot shows, then, that there are indeed certain commonalities when comparing Africa with other parts of the world and it could be that cosmopolitan people who have lived on several continents perceive a common African identity, in the same way that Europeans perceive this.[39] However, this should not obscure the fact that exceptions to the standard are common and that the diversity within Africa is at least as large as the diversity that exists in most other continents. Another caveat is that the data shows national averages. As Minkov and Hofstede (2012) have shown, this has a meaning for most countries. However, as I have shown in section 3.5, this is likely not to be the case in at least a number of African countries. There are some countries in Africa that are home to very different peoples, with very different value systems that serve as common points of reference to those peoples. In that sense, for those countries, knowing the national averages may have limited meaning at best.

It is interesting here to compare these results with the work of Munene, Schwartz and Smith (2000). Using the Schwartz cultural dimensions

[39] There are many attempts to describe such perceptions in the literature. See for example Etounga-Manguelle (2000) for an attempt using some Hofstede dimensions. These attempts are generally not research-based.

framework, they compared the values of teachers and students in a number of Western European countries with teachers and students in a (small) number of African countries. In order to do this, they first construct an image of what are supposedly common African values, paraphrasing the work of Onwuejeogwu. They then interpret them using the Schwartz framework, and find that African culture emphasizes embeddedness and a 'status-differentiated organization of social groups', opposed to egalitarianism (p342). They immediately make a link to development: 'when these modes of work relations are maintained in the context of a market economy, they seriously interfere with productivity.' (ibid) The authors then go and look for such commonalities in the African countries they have sampled – and find them. They do this not by providing scores on any of the Schwartz dimensions, but by comparing how countries rank within the 54 countries for which they have data. Thus, we do not know whether or not two countries that rank closely together actually also score closely together, or indeed whether the reverse is true.

On a superficial level, the findings of Munene, Schwartz and Smith are not so different from mine: indeed, for most observers coming from Europe, most African countries will seem to score higher on Power Distance and on Collectivism. However, by taking such a Eurocentric view they lose sight in fact both of the diversity that exists within Africa and of the diversity that exists within Europe. Thus, they confirm a stereotypical image of 'Africa as a country' even when their data does show differences within Africa. In their conclusions, the authors shy away from the idea that Africa's slow pace of development is related to its common cultural problems – even though they cite a number of authors who do suggest this. The problem posed by competing world views and different value systems *within* Africa and inhibitions to the development of various culturally autonomous traditions is totally invisible to them.

A decolonial vision, inspired by Pan Africanism should also be Africa-centered in the sense that it takes Africa and its cultural areas as the starting point. The comparative data presented here should be taken to show, in the first place, Africa's internal diversity, a diversity that is in fact as least as high as the diversity that is found in other continents. That being said, the data also provide evidence for a common point of reference that can be taken to be an 'African culture' that many Africans will understand and be able to relate to even though, on the individual as well as on the ethnolinguistic level they may perceive themselves as being quite different from that common culture.

3.7 Conclusions

The purpose of this part of the study was to answer the first research question: how can we describe current large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa, using the methods and terminology of cross-cultural psychology? In order to do that, I started by giving a definition of culture, as **a value system that serves as common point of reference to a people**. I then went on to discuss that definition by comparing it to several other definitions or ideas of culture that exist in the literature and explained its meaning in relation to concepts such as nations, peoples and ethnic groups. I then outlined the approach of cultural psychology, discussing the various schools of thought within the field and the criticism to which it has been subjected. In so doing, I also clarified my position as following the dominant Hofstede/Minkov frame of reference, although conscious of the problems associated with it.

After a brief survey of the literature on Ghana and on Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini and South Africa, I came to the conclusion that describing larger-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa is not very well possible based on that literature. Thus, it is not possible for example to say whether or not national cultures have developed in Ghana or in the countries of Southern Africa mentioned above. Yet, this type of knowledge is important to understand the development of these societies since the colonial period, among other things to assess the potential or otherwise for national democratic debate and consensus-building. The approach of cross-cultural psychology might be able to offer new insights.

I then sought to come to such insights using three related but different lenses. In section four, I used an approach developed by Minkov and Hofstede (2012), the technique of hierarchical cluster analysis. That analysis has shown that the conventional way of describing cultural differences, by describing differences between ethnolinguistic groups as designated in colonial times, has lost its meaning, at least in some countries. It may come as no surprise that in countries like Botswana, Lesotho and Madagascar all ethnolinguistic groups cluster together. However, this is also the case for countries like Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal. In total, this holds for ten out of the 26 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa for which survey data were available. The hierarchical cluster analysis shows that there is not one common pattern that applies across Africa – there are not even regional patterns. In some countries, a national culture seems to be developing; in others, such as for example Kenya or Tanzania, considerable cultural differences remain. I pointed out that cluster analysis is a data reduction technique that can be useful for mapping the cultural landscape of a larger area,

but it also has its limitations, especially when it comes to describing individual groups.

For the second lens, I tried to become a bit more precise, by attempting to derive scores for a number of individual dimensions for ethnolinguistic groups in Africa. The method used was based on the idea of 'anchoring' data sets to one another, as suggested by Hofstede. Using this method, I was able to obtain approximate scores on over 200 ethnolinguistic groups from 35 African countries for four of the six Hofstede/Minkov dimensions: Fixed versus Flexible (or LTO), Indulgence versus Restraint, Individualism versus Collectivism and Power Distance. I was unable to do that for the remaining dimensions of Masculinity versus Femininity and Uncertainty Avoidance. The results confirm, with greater detail and precision, the conclusions from the cluster analysis.

The analysis has shown the dynamic and diverse nature of Africa and of African cultures. In Lesotho and South Africa, the cultural unity that was assumed to exist among the Sotho, no matter in which country they live, no longer seems to exist. The South African Sotho are more like other South Africans than they are to the people of Lesotho. The same is true for the Tswana in South Africa and Botswana and also for the Swazi of Eswatini and South Africa. So I found tentative support for the idea that in those Southern African countries, new identities are emerging. For a country like Ghana, a similar process might be happening. The four largest ethnolinguistic groups in that country, together making up more than 85% of the population, score relatively similar to one another, except for the Indulgence versus Restraint dimension.

In other countries, by contrast, differences are more pronounced. The Acholi and Lango of Uganda show relative similarity to one another and to the Luo of Kenya. Linguistically, these groups are related. So here, it seems that national borders are culturally less relevant than for example in Southern Africa.

All in all, the study demonstrates that the widespread practice of equating ethnolinguistic units with cultural units is in general no longer tenable: for some areas, this might give reasonable approximations; for others, it does not.

The data generated in section five (the second lens of dimension scores per ethnolinguistic group) made it possible to provide a comparison with other world regions in section six, using much more data from Africa than hitherto available. This comparison shows two main things. On the one hand, it shows that the African continent, like the other major world areas, does have some commonalities. It confirms the idea that Africa on average is collectivist and that Europe, by contrast, is

individualist. However, it also shows that within Africa, as in other continents, there is considerable internal cultural diversity. Thus, the most individualist country in Africa is more individualist than the most collectivist country in Europe. There are other differences of this nature as well. Africa as a whole, for example has a 'high' score on power distance. However, the highest-scoring European country scores higher than the highest-scoring African country.

All in all, these three lenses show that it is possible to describe large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa using the approach of cross-cultural psychology and this chapter has made a start with giving such descriptions. However, I could not go much beyond a 'proof of concept', pointing the way to the need for much more research. I will return to that in chapter seven.

In chapter one, I pointed to the work of key theoreticians such as Vansina and Prah. Vansina predicted the emergence of several neo-African traditions, and my research seems to show the first signs of that process. Prah pointed to the key role of language and education in that process. This is then the matter to which I will turn next.