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Personality and Individual Differences 25 (1998) 1111–1131

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PERSONALITY AND  
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

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# The Eysenckian personality structure: a ‘Giant Three’ or ‘Big Five’ model in Hong Kong?

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Revised 6 June 1997

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## Abstract

In the last decade, the area of personality measurement has been dominated by three major systems: the Eysenckian Giant Three, the Cattellian sixteen factors and the Big Five. While many of the Cattellian second-stratum factors have been shown to fit the Big Five system, can the factors measured by the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire also be described by the five-factor model? The study reported in this article was designed to determine whether the dimensions measured by a revised Chinese version of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire would, in a Hong Kong population, replicate the Giant Three or the Big Five and whether there is evidence to support the suggested dual nature of the Extraversion dimension and the Lie scale in this Cantonese-speaking group. A four-factor solution indicated that the data did not support the notion of a Giant Three model plus a Lie scale and lacks clarity. A five-factor solution produced factors that can clearly be labelled Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Sociability, Excitement-Seeking and Agreeableness. Sociability, focusing on meeting people and Excitement-Seeking, which consists of Impulsivity and Liveliness, derive from items in Eysenck’s Extraversion dimension. The Openness factor of the Big Five system is absent in this population. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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## 1. Introduction

In personality psychology, theorists and especially researchers using personality assessment, encounter difficulties and confusion when they face the existing bewildering array of personality factors or scales. While some factors in different systems have the same name, the concepts measured are often not the same; on the other hand, some factors with different names share the same item content.

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“Taxonomy is always a contentious issue because the world does not come to us in neat little packages” (Gould, 1981).

In the widely-used Occupational Personality Questionnaire (Saville et al., 1984), there are 30 factors, while only three factors are emphasized in the well-established Eysenckian personality questionnaires. Eysenck (1991) suggested some taxonomic paradigms were needed to co-ordinate research work, the three major systems being the Cattellian personality factors, the Big Five of Goldberg, Costa and McCrae and the Eysenckian three-factor system. Later, Eysenck remarked that only two major systems have survived the psychometric holocaust, namely the Giant Three and the Big Five (Eysenck, 1994).

The Cattellian system is a much vaunted one and is still widely used in industrial settings, but its factor structure has proven difficult to replicate (Kline and Barrett, 1983). These authors also concluded from their review that the Eysenckian three-factor model was the most adequate representation of personality structure. However, Kline and Lapham (1991) came to believe that the Big Five provided probably the best account of ratings in personality. In view of the accumulated evidence, McCrae (1992) surmised that many personality psychologists had recently adopted the Big Five model. In the lexical approach using natural language terms, the legacy of Galton, Thurstone and Cattell has crystallized in the hands of contemporary researchers into agreement on the Big Five factors with only Cattell and Eysenck holding out on the precise number (Goldberg, 1993).

Eysenck (1990, 1992a) was not persuaded that the five-factor model best represented the basic dimensions of personality and argued that his three-factor model accounts for the more important dimensions of personality. He also stated that there was no homological network or theoretical underpinning for the Big Five. Although Costa and McCrae (1992b) concurred with Eysenck in the need for a paradigm, they reiterated their view that at the developing point of this fruitful science, what was needed was a systematic method of description which must precede, rather than follow, personality theory.

### *1.1. Big five model*

In the last decade, there has been a remarkable convergence of view concerning the structure of the personality sphere. Among personality psychologists from a variety of different perspectives, there is a rapidly growing consensus that the domain of individual differences can be measured by five robust, basic and broad factors (Digman, 1989; Goldberg, 1990; McCrae, 1992). This so-called Big Five model has been generated from research in both the lexical approach and the questionnaires approach. From analyses of the natural language terms, the model can be traced historically back to the works of Klages (1932), Baumgarten (1933), Allport and Odbert (1936), Cattell (1943) and (John, 1990).

Although investigators use slightly different terms for the Big Five factors, there is general consensus regarding the first four factors: I. Extraversion (E), II: Neuroticism (N), III: Agreeableness (A) and IV: Conscientiousness (C). The fifth factor was labelled ‘Culture’ by Norman (1963), as ‘Intellect’ by Goldberg (1990) and as ‘Openness to Experience’ (O) by Costa and McCrae (1985). However, most personality psychologists now agreed that Culture was not an appropriate name for the factor (Borkenau and Ostendorf, 1990) and that Intellect was misleading because it

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