



Structure of interest in a Caribbean sample: Application of the Personal Globe Inventory ^{☆,☆☆}

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ABSTRACT

The structural validity of the Personal Globe Inventory (PGI, Tracey, 2002) as applied to a Caribbean sample of university students in Jamaica ($N = 103$) and Trinidad ($N = 118$) was examined. The fit of the data to Holland's six-type RIASEC, the PGI eight-type model, and the PGI spherical structure was examined using the randomized test of hypothesized order relations. The results demonstrated that the circular structure (i.e. RIASEC and the eight-type model), unlike the spherical structure, fits the Caribbean data well. No structural differences were found between gender and nationality. Further examination of the cultural perception of prestige in a Caribbean sample is warranted. Overall, the results support the structural validity of the PGI in Caribbean applications.

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1. Introduction

Vocational literature traditionally notes that interests offer valuable information in helping individuals learn about themselves, the world of work, and making occupational and educational decisions (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Holland, 1997). The usefulness of understanding interests, coupled with the advancements that have been made in the United States in developing assessments of vocational interests, has spurred the use of these measures in other cultures. However, there has been a proliferation in literature focusing on the pitfalls of using unexamined measures cross culturally (e.g. Ben-Porath, 1990; Berry, 1989; Buss & Royce, 1975; Irvine & Carroll, 1985; Prediger, 1994; Rounds & Tracey, 1996). The central pitfall is the need to examine the structural validity of the measures, given that item and scale meanings vary wildly across populations (Tracey & Gupta, 2008).

For example, the sociocultural definition of prestige, and in turn the occupations or interests that are deemed prestigious, may be influenced by the class structure of a particular place, which could lead to underlying differences in meaning (Darcy, 2005). Consequently, failure to examine the structural validity of measures may render any mean comparison across cultures irrelevant. Given the importance of examining the structural similarity of measures across cultures prior to any application, the present study seeks to examine the structural validity of the Personal Globe Inventory (PGI, Tracey, 2002) among a sample of Caribbean university students.

A number of models have been proposed to represent the structure of vocational interests: Gati's (1991) hierarchical cluster, Prediger's (1982; Prediger & Vansickle, 1992) two dimensional People/Things and Data/Ideas model, and Holland's RIASEC

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(Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional) interest model (1973, 1985, 1997). The RIASEC model has dominated the vocational psychology and the interest assessment practices for the last 30 years. Despite the empirical support for this model however, a number of cross-cultural studies have reported equivocal results for the RIASEC ordering of types as well as its hexagonal structure (Farh, Leong, & Law, 1998; Haverkamp, Collins, & Hanson, 1994; Leong, Austin, Secaran, & Komarraju, 1998; Yu & Alvi, 1996). Tracey and Rounds (1993) conducted a meta-analysis on 104 published studies and reported that the RIASEC model fit was poorer for non-U.S. samples than U.S. samples. Similar results were found by Tracey and Rounds (1995) for U.S. ethnic minority and International samples. These results raise questions about the cross-cultural applicability of Holland's RIASEC model (Darcy, 2005), thus warranting the development of an improved measure.

Tracey and Rounds (1996) proposed a more general spherical structure of vocational interest. It was later refined and used to create the Personal Globe Inventory (PGI, Tracey, 2002). The PGI measures activity preferences, activity competence beliefs, and occupational preferences. It not only incorporates much of the benefits of the aforementioned instruments but more importantly, it adds greater complexity and flexibility to the assessment of vocational interests. The PGI is designed to capture the spherical structure, represent interest as existing in three dimensions (Things/People, Data/Ideas, and Prestige) and can be interpreted on a number of levels: 18 basic scales, eight octant types, and six RIASEC types. The Things/People, and Data/Ideas dimensions serve as the underlying frame of the RIASEC circular representation (Prediger, 1982; Prediger & Vansickle, 1992; Rounds & Tracey, 1993; Tracey & Rounds, 1993).

Given that the six RIASEC types were found to be arbitrary (Tracey & Rounds, 1995), the PGI offers a more complete representation of interests using an octant model rather than Holland's sextant model. The octant model is comprised of the following scales: Social Facilitating, Managing, Business Detail, Data Processing, Mechanical, Nature/Outdoors, Artistic, and Helping. As part of the PGI's flexibility however, scoring systems and interpretational results are provided for both models. The level of interpretation provided by the PGI report is contingent on the degree of differentiation in a user's perception of his or her vocational interest. This flexibility in the interpretation provided by the PGI may be particularly useful in a Caribbean sample.

In addition to the two dimensions, Things/People, Data/Ideas and the octant and sextant models, the PGI also incorporates a third dimension, prestige. As illustrated in Fig. 1, prestige is incorporated in the construction of the 18 scales that are arranged in the spherical structure. The octant interest circle is depicted at the equator with prestige being the rotational axis, high prestige at the North Pole and low prestige at the South Pole. Support for the spherical structure has been found across different item types (responses to activity liking, competence, and occupational titles), gender, U.S. ethnic groups, and age (Tracey, 2002).

The PGI has been shown to have consistent cross-cultural validity. Darcy (2005) examined the structural validity of a modified version of the PGI in an Irish context and found that the factor structure was consistent with U.S. samples. Additionally, no structural differences were found between gender groups. Tracey, Watanabe, and Schneider (1997) also examined the applicability of the PGI to a sample of Japanese students and found no differences with the U.S. samples' spherical and eight-type model fit but differences were found on the six type model. Seeing that Japan and China were both influenced by Confucian concepts (Hofstede, 1980), Long, Adams, and Tracey (2005) hypothesized similar findings to Tracey et al. (1997). Unlike the Japanese sample though, all three of the PGI models exhibited good fit to the Chinese data.

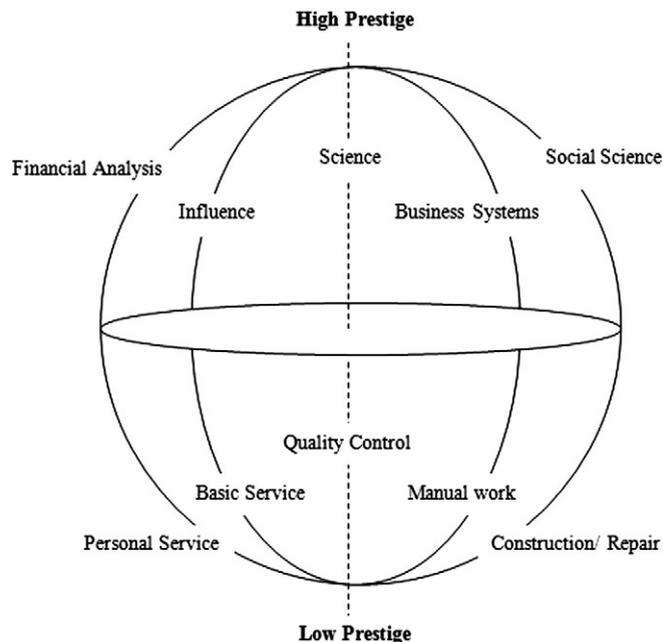


Fig. 1. PGI spherical model depicting high prestige and low prestige interest types.

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