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Goldberg's 'IPIP' Big-Five factor markers: Internal consistency and concurrent validation in Scotland

Alan J. Gow *, Martha C. Whiteman, Alison Pattie, Ian J. Deary

*Department of Psychology, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences,
University of Edinburgh, 7 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JZ, Scotland, UK*

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Abstract

Goldberg's (2001) IPIP Big-Five personality factor markers currently lack validating evidence. The structure of the 50-item IPIP was examined in three different adult samples (total $N = 906$), in each case justifying a 5-factor solution, with only minor discrepancies. Age differences were comparable to previous findings using other inventories. One sample ($N = 207$) also completed two further personality measures (the NEO-FFI and the EPQ-R Short Form). Conscientiousness, Extraversion and Emotional Stability/Neuroticism scales of the IPIP were highly correlated with those of the NEO-FFI ($r = 0.69$ to -0.83 , $p < 0.01$). Agreeableness and Intellect/Openness scales correlated less strongly ($r = 0.49$ and 0.59 respectively, $p < 0.01$). Correlations between IPIP and EPQ-R Extraversion and Emotional Stability/Neuroticism were high, at 0.85 and -0.84 respectively. The IPIP scales have good internal consistency and relate strongly to major dimensions of personality assessed by two leading questionnaires.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 131 651 1685.

E-mail address: alan.gow@ed.ac.uk (A.J. Gow).

1. Introduction

Personality assessment is important in a variety of situations, from academic research to clinical settings. Individual differences in human personality are often described as being quite comprehensively described by 5 higher-order factors (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2003), although an increasing body of evidence suggests that additional factors are required to account for important individual variation beyond that assessed within more traditional 5-factor frameworks (Pau-nonen & Jackson, 2000); a recent review of 8 psycholexical studies found support for a 6-factor model across seven languages (Ashton et al., 2004). For the purposes of the current study, however, a 5-factor model is employed due to the general consensus that exists about what those factors are; models with a higher number of factors are not entirely in agreement about what a 6th, 7th or *n*th factor would be.

2. Recent debate and Goldberg's proposal

Goldberg (1999) has argued that scientific progress within the development of personality inventories has been “dismally slow” (p. 7). He attributes this to the fact that most of the broad-bandwidth personality inventories developed are proprietary instruments (such as the NEO PI-R/FFI: Costa & McCrae, 1992), possibly leading to a lack of improvement as researchers require permission from the copyright holders and are charged for each questionnaire used. However, Costa and McCrae (1999) maintain that proprietary instruments are regularly revised (several changes were recently suggested to the short form of the NEO in response to a number of criticisms of the scale (McCrae & Costa, 2004)). However, what may be hampering progress further is a dearth of comparative validity studies, where two or more inventories are evaluated on their ability to predict a criterion variable (Goldberg, 1999). Goldberg therefore proposed an international collaboration to develop an easily available, broad-bandwidth personality inventory. All researchers could freely use the items in the pool, and disseminate their findings to improve these. Items were developed and subsequently presented on an internet website; the items are known collectively as the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP: Goldberg, 2001).

The IPIP contains alternate versions of widely used inventories. For example, an IPIP version of the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) is available. The IPIP-NEO is available as a 50, 100, or full 240-item questionnaire. The associations between the proprietary and IPIP versions have been recorded and are generally encouraging: in the short form of the IPIP-NEO, correlations range from 0.70 to 0.82 (0.85 to 0.92 when corrected for unreliability) with the corresponding NEO PI-R factors (Goldberg, 2001). However, it has been suggested that even such high correlations do not imply that the different versions are truly equivalent (Costa & McCrae, 1999).

3. The IPIP Big-Five factor markers

The IPIP contains not only versions of proprietary scales, but also a number of items known collectively as the Big-Five factor markers (Goldberg, 2001). The starting point for the creation

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