



Cross-cultural generalizability of the Personality and Role Identity Structural Model (PRISM): Implications for trait and cultural psychology



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ABSTRACT

The cross-cultural generalizability of the Personality and Role Identity Structural Model (PRISM; Wood & Roberts, 2006) was tested in the United States, Mexico, Malaysia, China, and Japan. Participants rated their general and role identities, as defined by the PRISM, using Big Five trait adjectives, then rated their personality states (i.e., role experiences) in various roles in multiple daily interactions for 14 days. Structural predictions based on the PRISM were supported in all five cultures. Cultural differences were limited and did not reflect cultural differences in individualism–collectivism, dialecticism, or cultural tightness. The results supported the cross-cultural generalizability of the PRISM and the merits of contextualized trait measures in the prediction of role experiences. Implications for trait and cultural psychology are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Although the person-situation debate continues, there is general consensus that behavior is a function of both traits and situations. Nonetheless, personality psychologists still face the challenge of how best to incorporate situational information into trait models. Wood and Roberts (2006) proposed the Personality and Role Identity Structural Model (PRISM) as one way to do so. Wood and Roberts noted that the construct of roles encompasses many of the expectations, demands, and other psychological meanings associated with situations and proposed that the trait and role constructs can be effectively merged in the concept of role identity. They defined role identity as the traits attributed to oneself within a particular social role. This conception of identity is more specific than typically adopted by identity researchers, who would not, for example, limit the identity concept to self-perceptions of one's traits (McConnell, 2011). Having noted this caveat,

we adopted the terminology used by Wood and Roberts in our cross-cultural test of the generalizability of the PRISM.

In the PRISM, personality is represented hierarchically, with general identities (or traits) at the highest level (e.g., “I am generally extraverted”). These general identities subsume role identities, which represent self-perceptions of narrower, context-specific traits in particular roles (e.g., “I am extraverted with close friends”). In turn, these role identities encompass typical experiences or outcomes such as thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the respective roles. A depiction of the PRISM for the trait of extraversion, incorporating five interpersonal roles, is shown in Fig. 1. The PRISM provides a cogent theoretical framework for investigating important questions about the relationship between traits and situations in different cultures. In the present study, we investigated the generalizability of the PRISM in five diverse cultures. In addition, drawing on cultural psychology perspectives, we examined whether some of the structural relationships proposed in the model differ in systematic ways across cultures. We first describe predictions of the PRISM and current support in U.S. studies. We then discuss potential implications of cultural psychology perspectives for the model.

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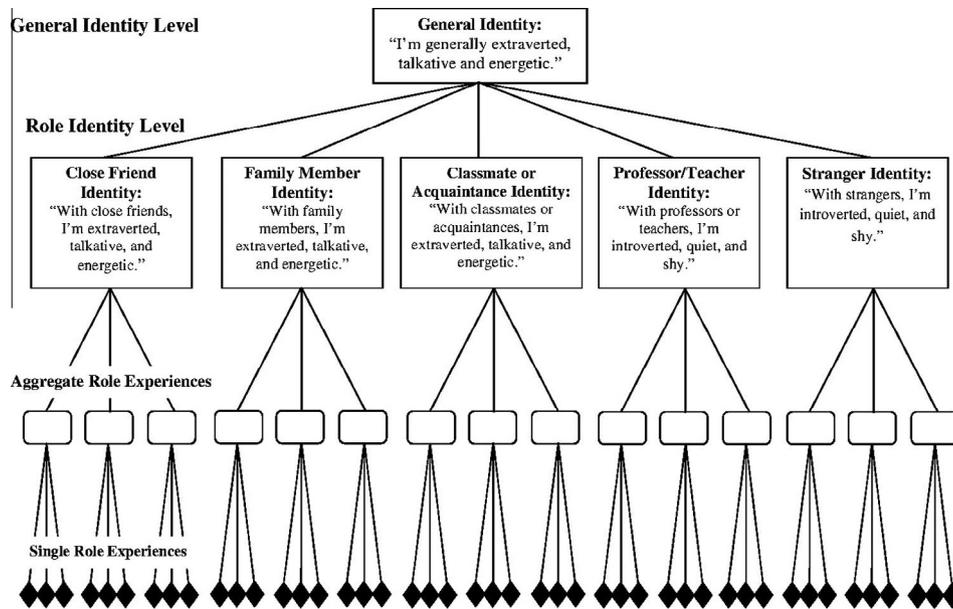


Fig. 1. Personality and Role Identity Structural Model (PRISM), illustrated with extraversion trait terms and five interpersonal roles. Copyright 2006 Wiley. Adapted with permission from Wood, D., & Roberts, B. W. (2006). Cross-sectional and longitudinal tests of the Personality and Role Identity Structural Model (PRISM). *Journal of Personality*, 74, 779–810.

1.1. PRISM predictions and support

1.1.1. Model predictions

Wood and Roberts (2006) discussed implications of the PRISM and the evidence that would support the model. Hypotheses based on the PRISM and corresponding cultural psychology predictions are summarized in Table 1. Wood and Roberts (2006) did not address the cultural universality of the PRISM. However, the evidence of universal and heritable traits (Jang, McCrae, Angleitner, Riemann, & Livesley, 1998; McCrae & Allik, 2002) suggests that the PRISM predictions should hold in all cultures, as stated for each hypothesis on the left side of Table 1. First, the model implies that researchers should find mean differences in the trait ratings associated with different role identities and these differences should be consistent with the demands and expectations of the respective roles (Hypothesis 1). For example, we might expect higher levels of extraversion with friends than with co-workers (Heller, Ferris,

Brown, & Watson, 2009; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997; Wood & Roberts, 2006) and higher levels of conscientiousness in worker roles than with family members (Donahue & Harary, 1998). Second, consistent with the proposal that role identities are largely translations of past role experiences into trait terms (Wood, 2007), we should also expect parallel mean differences across roles in the pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (e.g., personality states) that comprise role experiences (Hypothesis 2).

Third, the model predicts that general and role identities are moderately correlated (Hypothesis 3). These correlations (e.g., general conscientiousness vs. conscientiousness with friends, parents, or professors) could reflect a bottom-up process whereby individuals aggregate their distinct role identities to formulate their general identity (Wood & Roberts, 2006). Alternatively, some trait perspectives suggest a top-down causal link from general identities to role identities (Heller et al., 2009; Wood, 2007). Fourth,

Table 1
PRISM hypotheses and corresponding cultural psychology predictions.

PRISM hypotheses	Cultural psychology prediction
1. In all cultures, there are significant mean differences in trait ratings associated with different role identities (i.e., role effects) and these differences are consistent with the demands and expectations of the respective roles	Role differences in trait ratings (i.e., role identities) are larger in dialectical (vs. non-dialectical), collectivistic (vs. individualistic), and/or tight (vs. loose) cultures
2. In all cultures, there are significant mean differences in personality states associated with different role experiences and these differences are consistent with the demands and expectations of the respective roles	Role differences in personality states (i.e., role experiences) are larger in dialectical (vs. non-dialectical), collectivistic (vs. individualistic), and/or tight (vs. loose) cultures
3. In all cultures, general identities are moderately related to specific role identities associated with the same trait	General identities will be less strongly related to role identities in dialectical (vs. non-dialectical), collectivistic (vs. individualistic), and/or tight (vs. loose) cultures
4. In all cultures, moderate correlations will be observed between role identities for the same trait, but these correlations will be smaller than the general vs. role-identity correlations for the corresponding trait	The correlations between role identities for the same trait will be lower in dialectical (vs. non-dialectical), collectivistic (vs. individualistic), and/or tight (vs. loose) cultures
5. In all cultures, correlations between different role identities for a given trait will be substantially reduced after controlling for the corresponding general identity	The reduction in role identity correlations after controlling for the corresponding general identity will be smaller in dialectical (vs. non-dialectical), collectivistic (vs. individualistic), and/or tight (vs. loose) cultures
6. In all cultures, general identities will predict role experiences (i.e., personality states), but role experiences will be better predicted by the corresponding role identities	General identities will predict role experiences less well in dialectical (vs. non-dialectical), collectivistic (vs. individualistic), and/or tight (vs. loose) cultures, but role identities will predict role experiences equally well across cultures
7. In all cultures, the relationships between general identities and role experiences will be mediated by the corresponding role identities	Role identities will more fully mediate the relationships between general identities and role experiences in dialectical (vs. non-dialectical), collectivistic (vs. individualistic), and/or tight (vs. loose) cultures

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