Measuring Attitudes Toward the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: An Index of Global Citizenship

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ABSTRACT: Global citizenship has emerged as a key objective of liberal education. Because the status of Indigenous Peoples worldwide is inextricably linked to globalization and imperialism, mainstream culture students’ attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous Peoples can be taken as an index of global citizenship. The items comprising the Measure of Attitudes Toward the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (MATRIP) draw directly from the United Nations’ 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Twenty-three statements about Indigenous Peoples’ rights—as explicated in the UN Declaration—were transformed into Likert-type items measuring five dimensions: Preservation of...

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Introduction

This paper reports the development of a Measure of Attitudes Toward the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (MATRIP). MATRIP is intended to function as an instrument for assessing attitudes of mainstream (i.e., majority, dominant) culture individuals toward economic and social justice for Indigenous Persons. Because the class of “Indigenous Persons” is inherently inter-national in scope (United Nations, 2008), and because the oppressed status of Indigenous Persons is inextricably bound with aspects of social justice and equity, imperialism, and globalization (Stewart-Harawira, 2008), the MATRIP is proposed, in addition, as an apt index of global citizenship. In recent years, global citizenship has emerged as a key objective of liberal education at colleges and universities in the United States and elsewhere (AAC&U, 2013; Stearns, 2009). Because global citizenship is interwoven with attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as we describe below, institutions embracing that objective may find MATRIP to be a useful tool for assessing student outcomes of international education and global learning initiatives (see American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2013).

Definitions of global citizenship vary widely. Some accounts equate global citizenship with opportunities to participate in world commerce as producer and/or consumer: “[a] global citizen, from this perspective, is one who can live and work effectively anywhere in the world…” (Noddings, 2005, p. 2-3). The converse position views global citizenship as the impulse to protect against the ills of exploitative commercialization (Kingwell, 2000). For some authorities, global citizenship is the highest level of cultural identity formation, transcending unidimensional national or ethnic identities (Banks, 2001). For others, global citizenship implies participating in some more-or-less institutionalized cross-national civil or political activity (Falk, 1993). Stripped to its essence, “[i]f someone says, ‘I am a global/world citizen,’ then at the very least she is saying something like: I accept that all human beings matter and that among other duties I have as an individual, I have responsibilities that are cross national.” (Dower, 2008, p. 40).

Social responsibility likewise shows up as one of three core components of global citizenship articulated by Morais and Ogden (2011); the other components are competence and civic engagement. The elements of this aspect of global citizenship, in turn, are an “understand[ing of] the interconnectedness between local behaviors and their global consequences” as these bear on (a) global justice and disparities, (b) global interconnectedness and personal responsibility, and (c) altruism and empathy (p. 448). Contested rights of Indigenous Peoples, such as claims of sovereignty over resource-rich traditional territories, are often at odds with economic privileges of mainstream (i.e.,
dominant) culture citizens (Davis & Wali, 1994). For mainstream culture persons to endorse rights of Indigenous Peoples, therefore, is to meet Morais and Ogden’s (2011) three criteria of global social responsibility: (a) a commitment to reducing disparities in global justice, (b) personal responsibility for mitigating the consequences of globalization, and (c) altruism. Attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous peoples are potentially tied to social altruistic motives often cited as important determinants of prosocial behaviors and attitudes like those reflected in the prototypical “global citizen” (DeGroot & Steg, 2007; Schultz, 2001; Reysen & Katzarka-Miller, 2013). Therefore, an instrument that queries about attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous People is a directly social approach toward measuring global citizenship.

In our conceptualization, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about sustainability are intimately linked to global citizenship and social justice (Tarrant, 2010; Tarrant, Rubin & Stoner, 2013), and ultimately to rights of Indigenous Persons. That is because Indigenous modes of economic development and resource utilization almost always promote sustainability (Howitt, 2002). Sustainability is also intimately bound up with issues of social justice. Social, economic, and public health problems stemming from environmental degradation disproportionately burden peoples of lower socio-economic status (Bullard & Johnson, 2000; Mutz et al., 2001; Langhelle, 2000). For example, neighborhoods where people of lower socio-economic status reside are disproportionately the repository of polluted air and water, and sites for the industrial facilities that produce them (Brooks & Sethi, 1997; Mutz et al., 2001; Cutter, 2006). These issues are especially problematic given that people of lower socio-economic status are less likely to engage in state-driven natural resource management decisions (Lawrence et al., 1997), or possess the political or financial capital needed to effectively protect their rights (Arquette et al., 2002). This scenario of disempowerment and adverse impact is the case in many Indigenous communities and territories where Indigenous Peoples are deprived of access to and jurisdiction over traditional lands and resources (Davis & Wali, 1994), and harmed by the degradation of habitats with which they identify (Berkes, 2012). Moreover, the very definition of Indigenous Person is often linked to a worldview that unites humans with nature (Cunningham & Stanley, 2007; Watene & Yap, 2015; Milfont & Schultz, 2015).

Rights of Indigenous Peoples are codified in the United Nations’ (2008) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – from here forward “Declaration” – adopted by the UN General Assembly in September, 2007 following 20 years of discussion and development (see Barsh, 1996). The Declaration affirms that Indigenous Peoples have suffered historic disenfranchisement and exploitation as a result of conquest and colonialism. It asserts that Indigenous Peoples have inherent rights of domain over traditional lands and to engage in traditional practices such as cultural transmission and worship. Several of the Declaration’s 46 articles pertain to administrative details of UN oversight. Others, however, deal with substantive issues such as demilitarization of traditional Indigenous lands, representation of Indigenous Peoples in legislatures,
reparation payments, autonomous education systems, and control of natural resource allocation.

Because of the expertise and care taken in its development, the comprehensiveness of its provisions, and its nearly universal acceptance (interestingly, the four nations dissenting from the UN vote adopting the Declaration were Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States), the substantive articles of this document are taken as the content domain for a program to develop an instrument to measure attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous Peoples (i.e., the MATRIP). Specifically, we hypothesize that dominant culture citizen attitudes towards the rights of Indigenous Peoples can be measured along five related dimensions corresponding to the major themes of the Declaration: Preservation of Culture, Lands & Resources, Self-Governance, Restitution, and Services & Representation. These dimensions are described in detail in the sections to follow.

**Preservation of Culture**

Cultural transmission is a critical component of group identity maintenance through time and space (Cavalli-Sforza et al., 1982). Therefore, acceptance of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to engage in the traditional practices that facilitate the transmission of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that perpetuate a culture that exists independent of the mainstream is an important component of the MATRIP. In fact, Article 11 of the Declaration states that Indigenous Peoples have the right to “practise and revitalise their cultural traditions…to maintain, protect, and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures…” Article 13 further elucidates these rights stating that Indigenous Peoples have the right to “…transmit to future generations their histories, languages, philosophies, writing systems and literatures.” Collectively, these ideas reflect a right to the preservation of one’s culture through the transmission of traditional forms of knowledge, languages, religious practices, and cultural traditions from one generation to the next. Preservation of Indigenous cultures can be a politically contested concept among stakeholders with competing claims to nationalistic and religious hegemony, and therefore tied to issues of equity and social justice (Jung, 2003).

**Lands & Resources**

Although there is no one accepted definition of indigeneity, many cite a peoples’ interaction with a given territory over time as a moral foundation for the collective rights they are afforded under the Declaration (Kenrick & Lewis, 2004; Sarivaara et al., 2013). Land tenure, and the right to conserve, develop, or otherwise control resources placed under Indigenous jurisdiction is an important component of the Declaration and inextricably bound to the Indigenous identity. For instance, Article 26 of the Declaration states that Indigenous Peoples have the right to “…lands, territories, and resources which they have owned, occupied or otherwise acquired,” and “to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership.” This article, and others, reflects a right to self-determination through the use, management,
and development of resources under the jurisdiction of Indigenous Peoples. Endorsing policies to redress past injustices that expropriated Indigenous Persons’ territory and resources reflects global citizenship.

**Self-Governance**

The right to self-governance is a basic right of Indigenous Peoples. Articles 3, 4, and 5 of the *Declaration* affirm Indigenous People’s rights to self-determination through political process, financial transactions, and the development of autonomous governing institutions. Self-governance, therefore, is a manifestation of the collective right to sovereignty afforded by the *Declaration*. Of course, dominant national governments vary considerably in the degree and manner in which they recognize and support—or continue to suppress—the sovereignty of Indigenous People (Wiessner, 1999).

**Restitution**

According to Morais & Ogden (2011), individuals who have embraced the ideals of global citizenship actively seek to end social injustice. In the context of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, meaningful action may include restitution for the harms Indigenous Persons have endured as a result of colonialism and conquest (Stewart-Harawira, 2008). In fact, the *Declaration* affirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be given fair compensation for the loss of traditional lands, subsistence, or well-being that they have experienced as a function of dominant culture social, economic, and development policies. Article 11, for instance, affirms that states must “…provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution…property taken without their free, prior and informed consent…” Acceptance of these rights, therefore, reflects a belief that global injustices should be righted through active changes in policy, a tenet of global citizenship (Morais & Ogden, 2011).

**Services & Representation**

Although the *Declaration* makes clear the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-governance, it also states that all Indigenous Peoples are to be granted the same rights as the citizens of the countries in which they are embedded. This includes citizenship, the right to political representation in national democratic governance, and access to social services. However, Indigenous Peoples often do not possess the same world-view as dominant culture citizens, or have access to social services as a function of geographic isolation, among other constraints. Consequently, the *Declaration* affirms that Indigenous Peoples have the right to obtain these services in a manner that is consistent with their world-view. This includes state-funded yet autonomous educational, political, and economic institutions, and the financial support needed to realize their rights. Therefore, positive attitudes towards the rights of Indigenous Peoples to obtain services and have adequate democratic representation in state government represent a commitment to equality, social justice, altruism, and global citizenship.
Although a number of instruments are available to measure mainstream persons’ prejudice against specific Indigenous Peoples including Australian Aboriginals (Pedersen et. al., 2004), members of Canadian First Nations (Donakowski & Esses, 1996), and Mayans in Guatemala (Ashdown et al., 2011), no extant instrument directly measures attitudes toward rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is one’s stance toward Indigenous rights per se—rather than one’s degree of prejudice against one or another ethnic group—that we argue is most directly aligned with the ideals of global citizenship reflected in the constructs elucidated above.

Accordingly, efforts reported here to construct the MATRIP constitute a first attempt to measure attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous Peoples. A graphical depiction of the hypothesized MATRIP scale is presented in Figure 1. As depicted, the scale measures attitudes on five dimensions corresponding to the rights codified in the Declaration; Preservation of Culture, Lands & Resources, Self-Governance, Restitution, Services & Representation. In this paper we present a preliminary test of the measurement properties of the hypothesized MATRIP scale.

**Figure 1 Hypothesized model of MATRIP scale and parameters estimated**

**Method**

**Recruitment of Study Participants and Data Collection**

To test the dimensionality of the MATRIP scale a questionnaire was administered to a group of undergraduate students at a major public university in the Southeastern United States. After obtaining clearance from the proper Institutional Review Board, participants were recruited from the research pool of introductory courses in communication studies.
The courses were required by a number of majors, and so generally enroll students from diverse majors and levels of undergraduate study. Of the 226 participants from whom valid data were collected, 69.4% identified themselves as female. First-year students constituted 32% of the sample, 40% were sophomores, 17% were juniors, and 7% were seniors. The average self-reported grade point average was 3.48 (sd=0.45) on a scale from 0-4. The questionnaire was administered online using Qualtrics software. After providing informed consent, participants were provided with a definition of Indigenous Peoples drawn from Al Faruque and Begum (2004) in order to frame the study:

When Western nations like England, France, Spain, and Holland colonized much of the non-Western world, native peoples already lived in those lands. Today, the term Indigenous Peoples refers to the descendants of those pre-colonial inhabitants. Indigenous Peoples maintain cultural ties to their ancestors through traditional language or stories or lifestyles or beliefs. They actively identify themselves as members of those historical groups. Examples of Indigenous Peoples include Aboriginal people of Australia, Maori of New Zealand, Quechua of the Andes Mountains in South America, the Inuit of Alaska and Northwestern Canada, and the Cherokee of the Southeastern United States.

Next, using a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, participants were asked the degree to which they endorsed 23 statements about rights of Indigenous Peoples. The statements were drawn from the substantive articles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2008). Survey items measuring each of the five dimensions are presented in Table 1 (see Table 1 in Appendices). Attitudes toward Indigenous People’s rights to Preservation of Culture were assessed with six items including “Indigenous People should have the right to maintain their own customs and traditions.” The dimension Lands & Resources was measured with four items including “Indigenous Peoples should have the right to use, develop, and control the lands and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or use.” Attitudes towards the rights of Indigenous People to Self-Governance were assessed with four items including “Indigenous Peoples should have the right to self-govern and to develop their own laws.” Restitution was operationalized with four items including “Indigenous Peoples should receive just and fair compensation when deprived of their traditional means of subsistence.” Last, the dimension Services & Representation was operationalized using five items including “Indigenous Peoples should have a guaranteed minimum number of seats in the political system.” Item means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2 (see Table 2 in Appendices).

**Analysis and Results**

We used confirmatory factor analysis to test the hypothesized structure of the MATRIP scale. All analysis was done in STATA version 12 (StataCorp, 2011) using the
full information maximum likelihood estimator (Enders & Bandalos, 2001). Results for the test of the measurement model provide marginal support for the initial hypothesis – $\chi^2 = 365.8$, $p = 0.000$, $df = 220$; RMSEA $= .054$; CFI $= .897$; NNFI $= .881$ based on well-accepted criteria (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Modeling results, including fully standardized factor loadings ($\lambda$) and standard errors ($SE$), are presented in Table 2. Given that this analysis represents the first effort to develop a scale to measure attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous Peoples, we proceeded to refine the model beyond this confirmation of our initial hypothesis.

Two items (X3 and X6) measuring Preservation of Culture displayed standardized factor loadings below the commonly accepted threshold of .4 (Beauducel & Wittmann, 2005). These two items were dropped from the analysis and the model re-estimated, yielding a marginal improvement in model fit – $\chi^2 = 294.6$, $df = 179$, $p = 0.000$; RMSEA $= .054$; CFI $= .913$; NNFI $= .898$. After examining the modification indices, two additional post-hoc model modifications were undertaken. First, the item X15, originally hypothesized as a measure of Restitution, showed high levels of cross loading (e.g., significantly loading on more than one dimension) and was removed from the model. Second, the items X13 and X14 measuring Lands & Resources were highly correlated, and upon inspection very similarly worded. Consequently, we allowed the error terms for these items to co-vary. Following these modifications, we re-estimated the model, finding the data to be an adequate fit – $\chi^2 = 205.8$, $p = 0.000$, $df = 145$; RMSEA $= .045$; CFI $= .942$; NNFI $= .931$. Results for the final model are presented in Table 2. The internal consistencies of the dimensions in this final model were for the most part adequate by conventional standards (Nunally and Bernstein, 1994) and presented in Table 2.

Discussion

Attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous Peoples involve one’s sense of responsibility for others who may be geographically remote, as well as remote in terms of cultural identity, relative to mainstream persons. These attitudes thus constitute a meaningful index of global citizenship (Morais & Ogden, 2011). The MATRIP was developed to measure those attitudes using content from the United Nations’ (2008) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that the hypothesized five-dimension scale was an adequate fit for the data after minor modifications, supporting our hypothesis that the MATRIP is a sound instrument with which to measure attitudes towards the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and thus an effective proxy for global citizenship.

Certainly the present enterprise of developing the MATRIP is subject to limitations. Tests of the scale’s measurement properties are based on a single sample of North American college students. It remains for future research to determine if these findings can be replicated in other national and cultural settings. For example, Indigenous Maori in New Zealand arguably enjoy greater political power and cultural influence than do Native
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American Indians in the U.S. (Maaka & Fleras, 2000). How do the status differences among Indigenous Peoples affect MATRIP structure and scores for mainstream peoples living in those nations? For instance, item means across all dimensions of the MATRIP were relatively low in this study. Mean scores might be significantly higher among respondents from countries like Canada or New Zealand, countries that arguably engage in more intense public education about sustaining Indigenous cultures. By the same token, it remains for the MATRIP to be administered and validated with participants of varying ages and educational backgrounds. In any event, instrument validation is best regarded as an ongoing process, rather than a static label applied to a set of items (Sussman & Robertson, 1986).

Future research on attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous Peoples might examine how they correlate with other measures of global citizenship and social value orientation (e.g., Merrill, Brascamp & Brascamp, 2012; Morais & Ogden, 2011; DeGrot & Steg, 2007; Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). Demographic factors may also be related to MATRIP dimensions, and therefore, warrant future consideration. Political orientation, knowledge of Indigenous cultures, and social prejudice, for instance, may account for variation in MATRIP dimensions. The dimensions of the MATRIP tap diverse attitudes towards the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, antecedent attitudes and beliefs may vary between dimensions. For instance, some dominant culture individuals may endorse Indigenous rights to self-governance while opposing restitution payments. Variation in the relevant antecedent variables that predict MATRIP dimensions may shed light on areas for instructional reform.

More importantly, educational institutions can examine whether MATRIP scores are modifiable by means of the kinds of experiences that have been shown to enhance other measures of global citizenship. Study abroad can be one such experience, but not all study abroad is equally efficacious (Tarrant, Rubin & Stoner, 2013). It will be of particular interest to determine whether study abroad that includes constructive contact with Indigenous Peoples (Rubin and Lannutti, 2001) will prove to have a salubrious effect on mainstream students (while of course conforming to ethical principles for reciprocal benefits to Indigenous communities that must be honored in such exchanges; see Wells et al., 2011). Consistent with much research on education abroad, it is most likely that students who experience contact with Indigenous Peoples, and who also engage in structured reflection about that contact (Whitney & Clayton, 2011), will manifest the greatest growth on the MATRIP. Pending further validation of the psychometric properties of the MATRIP scale, therefore, we recommend that educational institutions adopt MATRIP as a way of assaying student growth in global citizenship attitudes following constructive contact with cultural others.
Conclusion

Finding solutions to the social and environmental challenges of the 21st Century requires a populace that is informed of the role that they play in a larger society. This society is global in scope, encompassing the natural world and the diversity of humans therein. Recognizing the rights of all people to be free of discrimination and injustice is one step toward realizing this ideal. Given that Indigenous Peoples have been subjected to oppression and discrimination through globalization, and that the Indigenous identity is tied with a world-view inclusive of nature, dominant culture citizen attitudes toward the rights of Indigenous Peoples are an important social metric of global citizenship and sustainability. Therefore, the MATRIP may be useful for educational programs hoping to engender the ideals of global citizenship and social justice in their students.
References


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## Appendices

### Table 1 MATRIP dimensions and Items

**Preservation of Culture**

- **X1:** Indigenous People should have the right to maintain their own distinctive customs and traditions within mainstream society
- **X2:** Indigenous People should be able to decide who is and who is not a member of their tribe
- **X3:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to control all intellectual property rights concerning their culture and traditions
- **X4:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to use their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices
- **X5:** Indigenous People should have the right to maintain their own customs and traditions
- **X6:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to prohibit others from visiting their sacred sites

**Lands & Resources**

- **X7:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to prevent any military activity taking place on their lands
- **X8:** Indigenous Peoples should be able to protect or develop the natural resources on their lands as they wish
- **X9:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to use, develop, and control the lands and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or use
- **X10:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to maintain a distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned, or otherwise occupied and used, lands

**Self-Governance**

- **X11:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to develop their own health, housing, and other economic and social programs and to administer them through their own institutions
- **X12:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to establish their own legislatures to make rules affecting them
- **X13:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to self-govern and to develop their own laws
- **X14:** Indigenous Peoples should have the right to decide their own laws

**Restitution**

- **X15:** Indigenous Peoples should be fully recognized under past treaties
- **X16:** Indigenous Peoples should be provided fair compensation for lands and resources that their ancestors traditionally owned or used and which have been taken away without their prior consent
- **X17:** Indigenous Peoples should receive just and fair compensation when derived of their traditional means of subsistence
- **X18:** Indigenous Peoples should receive payment from the state for property that was taken away from their ancestors without full consent

**Services & Representation**

- **X19:** Indigenous Peoples should be provided financial assistance to help them obtain their rights
- **X20:** Indigenous Peoples should receive special legislation to improve their economic and social conditions
- **X21:** Indigenous Peoples should have public/tax-sponsored media outlets (such as television and radio) in their native language
- **X22:** Indigenous Peoples should have public/tax-funded educational programs to combat prejudice against them
- **X23:** Indigenous Peoples should have a guaranteed minimum number of seats in the political system
Table 2 Results of measurement model testing, standardized factor loadings reported.

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p≤.10*, p≤.05**, p≤.001***; α = cronbach’s alpha; c.r = composite reliability