A Socioanalytic Model of Maturity

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This article describes a point of view on maturity that departs from earlier treatments in two ways. First, it rejects the popular assumption from humanistic psychology that maturity is a function of self-actualization and stipulates that maturity is related to certain performance capacities—namely, the ability to form lasting relationships and to achieve one's career goals. Second, the article is based on an explicit model of personality, and the model holds that personality is most productively viewed from the perspective of the actor and of the observer. This means that maturity must also be defined from two perspectives—how people feel about themselves and how others feel about them. The authors briefly review some data bearing on these observations.

   Keywords: Maturity, personality, positive psychology, socioanalytic theory

Personality psychology concerns the nature of human nature—namely, what people are like way down deep. As such, personality seems to be an important topic; certainly nonpsychologists think so. Within academic psychology however, it has an insecure status due at least in part to a lack of consensus among the practitioners concerning an agenda for the field. We have been arguing for years that the personality psychology of the future will combine the best supported ideas of Freud and G. H. Mead. Despite their different emphases, both were avid fans of Charles Darwin, and their interest in evolutionary theory suggests an agenda for personality psychology. In brief, the agenda concerns identifying characteristics that promote or detract from competence and effectiveness because in the long run, such characteristics will be related to reproductive success.

Freud gave us the following three key insights: (a) Human nature is best understood in terms of evolutionary theory; (b) motivation, the key to human nature, can be usefully characterized in terms of a few universal biological themes; and (c) development matters—especially the way we were treated by our primary caretakers in early childhood. Mead also gave us three key insights, namely, (a) human nature is best understood in terms of evolutionary theory; (b) human nature is inherently social, social interaction is a crucial human preoc-

cupation, and role-taking ability is the "g" factor in social interaction; and (c) development matters—especially our experience playing games with our peers in later childhood. We take these points as axiomatic. The perspective on personality that we have been promoting, socioanalytic theory (R. Hogan & Roberts, 2000), attempts to expand on these points in a systematic and empirically defensible way.

It is important to distinguish between personality from the inside—how you regard yourself—and personality from the outside—how others regard you. Both aspects are important, but they are distinct analytical perspectives, and each affords unique insights on personality. Psychoanalysis primarily concerns personality from the inside—it describes the internal psychological dynamics that drive the behavior that others observe. The focus is almost entirely on inner processes, and other people are not very important; Freud referred to them as *objects*. Mead's ideas primarily concern personality from the outside—he suggested that our concern for the way others evaluate us shapes our internal psychological dynamics. Mead was a pragmatist—specifically, he focused on public consequences, not private experience—and we think he had the more valid position here. In your efforts to achieve your life's goals, how you feel about yourself or what you intend by your actions is less important than how you are perceived and evaluated by others. A distinction between the actor's and the observer's view of personality is fundamental, and the degree to which it is ignored leads to great confusion. For example, much of the criticism of the five-factor model (FFM) (Block, 1995) becomes moot if the FFM is seen as a taxonomy of observer descriptions and not as a theory of personality (R. Hogan, 1996; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996).

Figure 1 is a schematic summary of our synthesis of Freud and Mead; it also describes what we think are the core elements of a science of personality. A science of personality should evaluate (a) how we see ourselves, which we refer to as our *identity*; (b) how others see us, which we refer to as our *reputation*; (c) the manner in which we interact with others in social roles; and (d) how our identity, reputation, and interaction strategies influence our ability to get along with other people and achieve our career goals. A few features of the model should be highlighted. First, although the perspectives of the actor and observer are distinct, they are also codependent. Sometimes peoples' identities drive their reputations; other times, they change their identities based on feedback regarding their reputations (Caspi & Roberts, 1999). Second, reputations are normally encoded in trait terms, which can be organized using the five-factor model. Third, identity, the way we think of ourselves, is best conceptualized in terms of motives, values, goals, and intentions rather than traits (R. Hogan & Roberts, 2000). Furthermore, three master motives subsume most goals and guide social interaction—namely, a desire for social acceptance and approval; a desire for status, power, and the control of resources; and a desire for predictability and order (cf. R. Hogan & Roberts, 2000). Social interaction is the vehicle for satisfying these needs. Social interaction is conducted in terms of social roles, and most
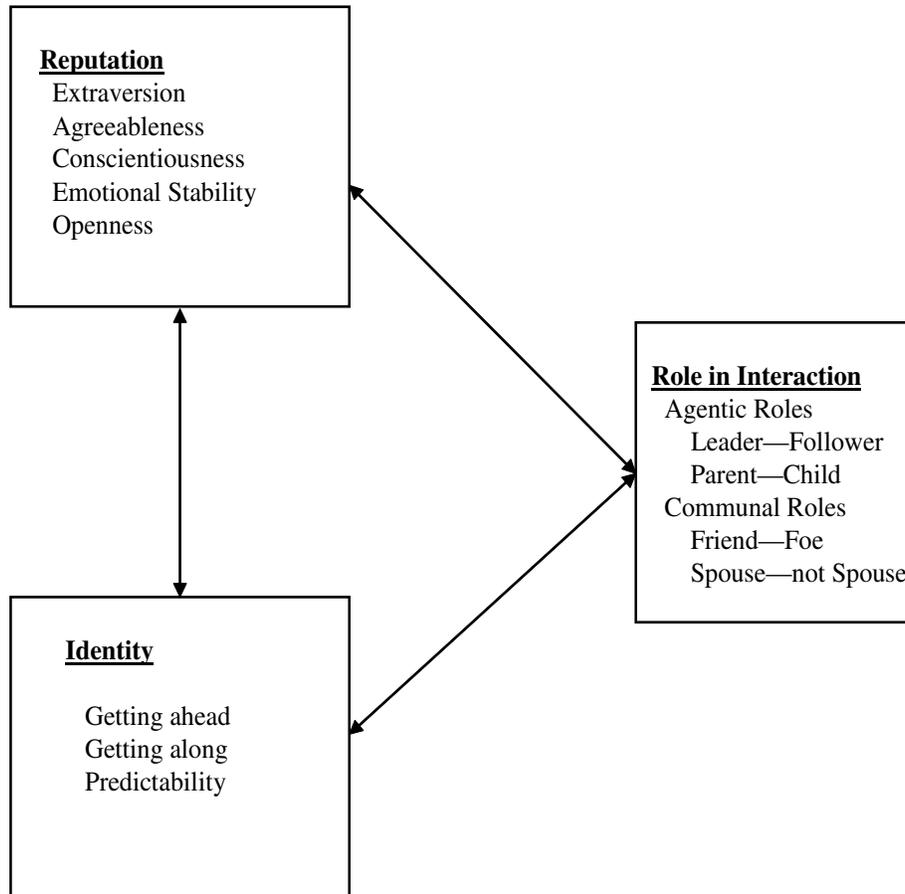
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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Reputation              │
│   Extraversion          │
│   Agreeableness         │
│   Conscientiousness     │
│   Emotional Stability   │
│   Openness              │
│                         │
└─────────────────────────┘

              ┌──────────────────────────┐
              │ Role in Interaction      │
              │   Agentic Roles          │
              │      Leader—Follower     │
              │      Parent—Child        │
              │   Communal Roles         │
              │      Friend—Foe          │
              │      Spouse—not Spouse   │
              └──────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────┐
│     Identity            │
│                         │
│   Getting ahead         │
│   Getting along         │
│   Predictability        │
│                         │
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Figure 1. Core elements of a science of personality.

roles fall into two broad categories called *agentic* (leader-follower, parent-child) and *communal* (friend-foe, spouse-not spouse). Finally, as we will describe in the following, success in achieving life's goals can be predicted using the dimensions of the FFM.

We would note three points about the master motives that we believe guide social interaction. First, many, many other writers have proposed more or less the same motives (cf. Bakan, 1966; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996). Second, individual differences in the ability to fulfill these motives will be directly related to repro-ductive success. And third, these motives can only be satisfied vis-`a-vis other peo-ple—other people must grant us acceptance and respect; we cannot simply demand them. Consequently, the two big problems in life involve getting along and getting ahead, doing so is a process of negotiation and problem solving, there are substantial payoffs for getting the solution right, and this must be related in some way to competence, effectiveness, and maturity. Solving these problems is

encouraged by the need for predictability—the more status and acceptance we have, the more predictability we have. Moreover, once people adopt the roles and interpersonal strategies that they believe will lead to status and acceptance, they are reluctant to change them (Roberts & Caspi, in press).

Finally, in Figure 1, please note that the arrows between roles, identity, and reputation point in both directions; this implies that our identities control the roles that we are willing to adopt and how we play them and that our perform-ance and experience in these roles then shape both our identities and reputa-tions. As Mead argued, social roles are the medium through which socialization occurs. For example, our performance in the role of parent prepares our children for the roles of adulthood. Similarly, by accepting the demands of our roles in adulthood—such as provider, friend, and spouse—we become further socialized and perhaps more mature.

A SOCIOANALYTIC MODEL OF MATURITY

Along with Freud and Mead, we believe that development matters and that early experiences influence later behavior. This raises the question of whether there is a desirable outcome for development. And if so, what does it look like? And is that endpoint maturity? The best thinking of the discipline falls into two camps (see Helson & Wink, 1987) represented by Freud and Jung. Jung's view is vastly more influential today. In the tradition of Aristotle, who argued that natu-ral phenomena inevitably move from potentiality to actuality, Jung, Maslow, Rogers, and many other humanistic psychologists define maturity in terms of self-actualization—the full realization of the potentialities that are latent within us. Note that this model focuses entirely on internal dynamics.

Despite the nearly universal acceptance of this view, we have three problems with models of maturity based on self-actualization. First, self-actualization is often a disguise for appalling and transparent selfishness—as for example when Jung told his wife that he was going to visit his mistress so that she could help him develop his female archetype. Second, self-actualization makes no apparent sense in terms of evolutionary theory—namely, what are the reproductive advan-tages of being self-actualized? Third, although personality psychologists have been talking about self-actualization since the 1930s, as of today there are no good psychometric measures of individual differences in self-actualization. Spearman's law holds that if something exists, it exists in some amount and there-fore can be measured. The fact that after at least 70 years there are no accepted measures of self-actualization suggests that the concept is empty.

In contrast with Jung, Freud's view of maturity is performance based, and the defining characteristics are at least in principle observable by others. Freud defined maturity in terms of the capacity to love and to work. This is a step in the right direction because we can observe, measure, and analyze individual differ-ences in these two capacities. Our model of maturity tries to build on this

Freudian insight. Freud's definition of maturity concerns personality from the inside—certain internal transformations make one capable of loving and working. We believe that it is also necessary to define maturity from the outside in terms of the impact one has on others and how they respond. The distinction is important because there are people who believe they are wonderful husbands or wives and are in the middle of wonderful careers, but no one else believes these claims.

Bearing in mind the distinction between the actor's and the observer's view of personality, we think maturity—the hypothetical endpoint of development—should be defined in two ways. From the observer's perspective, maturity concerns the degree to which a person is liked, admired, and respected in his or her community. Generally speaking, people who are liked, admired, and respected share three broad but indispensable characteristics. First, they are rewarding to deal with because they praise, support, and encourage others and they maintain a positive mood. In contrast, unrewarding people criticize, abuse, and demean others, whom they also subject to displays of negative emotion—such as anger, cynicism, and/or depression. Second, well-liked people are consistent, which means that others know what to expect when they deal with them. Well-liked people maintain a steady mood, honor their commitments, respect confidences, and play by the rules. And third, well-liked people contribute something to their groups—as teachers, artists, entertainers, or wise counselors. If we translate these qualities into the terminology of the five-factor model, a mature person from the observer's viewpoint would be agreeable (supportive and warm), emotionally stable (consistent and positive), and conscientious (honoring commitments and playing by the rules).

On the other hand, maturity from the actor's perspective concerns the characteristics inside people that explain why they are liked, admired, and respected. What might these be? Once again, we believe the answer lies in a combination of Freud and Mead. Think for a moment about your colleagues and former students who failed to reach their professional potential. What do they have in common? Reflecting the emphases of Freud and Mead, they probably have two orthogonal attributes in common so that a person may have one, the other, or both. On the one hand, many people are self-critical and stress prone; they fall apart easily and become unable to work because they are paralyzed by anxiety, dread, guilt, and fear. This is the subject matter of psychoanalysis and is the kernel of truth in the otherwise superficial emotional intelligence (EQ) movement that is popular in business psychology today. More important, there is a substantial empirical literature showing that measures of neuroticism predict occupational performance almost as well as measures of cognitive ability (Judge & Bono, in press). Research also shows that measures of neuroticism are related to marital dissatisfaction and divorce (Kelly & Conley, 1985). This, the first internal aspect of maturity—low neuroticism—is related to success in love and work as Freud would argue.

On the other hand, many people seem selfish, self-absorbed, insensitive, rude, and unable to learn from experience. All of these tendencies reflect poor role-taking ability as defined by G. H. Mead. Role-taking ability can be assessed with a California Psychological Inventory-based empathy scale (R. Hogan, 1969). This scale has some very interesting correlates, all in line with the foregoing discussion. First, the scale is uncorrelated with neuroticism—defined in terms of stress proneness, moodiness, and low emotional intelligence. This suggests that Freud and Mead were talking about different phenomena. Second, the scale correlates about .30 with IQ, which means that persons with high scores are seen as bright. Third, the scale is highly correlated with peer ratings for likeability—which is an index of the ability to get along (cf. R. Hogan & Mankin, 1970). Fourth, the scale consistently predicts a wide range of indices of leadership (R. Hogan & Hogan, 2002)—which is an index of the ability to get ahead. In a particularly interesting study, Shipper and Dillard (2000) showed that a measure of role-taking ability distinguished between managers who were successful and managers who were derailing in a large high-tech manufacturing organization. But more important, within the sample of managers who were derailing, a subset of them was able to recover after receiving feedback on their performance. This recovered group had substantially higher scores for role-taking ability than the group who actually derailed.

Role taking as Mead defined it has two components. First, it involves thinking about oneself from the perspective of others. Second, it involves regulating one's behavior based on what one thinks others expect. In this model, persons with high scores on a valid measure of role taking should be both perceptive about others' intentions and socially appropriate in their behavior. Considerable evidence supports these inferences (cf. Gough, 1965; R. Hogan, 1969; Sarbin & Allen, 1968).

If we translate role-taking ability into the lexicon of the five-factor model, it seems to be a combination of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and intellectance. On this aspect of maturity, several early luminaries of personality psychology got it right. Allport (1961) noted that maturity involves tolerance, a capacity to develop and maintain close relationships, and self-insight. He described the mature person as resilient, unselfish, and able to laugh at himself or herself. Measures of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and intellectance also predict job performance (J. Hogan & Holland, 2003; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991), and if the willingness to accept influence is part of agreeableness, then these measures also predict marital stability (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). As Shoben (1957) proposed, measures of conscientiousness predict career success (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999) and marital stability (Roberts & Bogg, in press; Tucker, Schwartz, Clark, & Friedman, 1999). Measures of intellectance predict training performance and thus the ability to learn from experience. Thus, maturity from the actor's perspective—agreeableness, conscientiousness, and intellectance—is related to success in love and work.
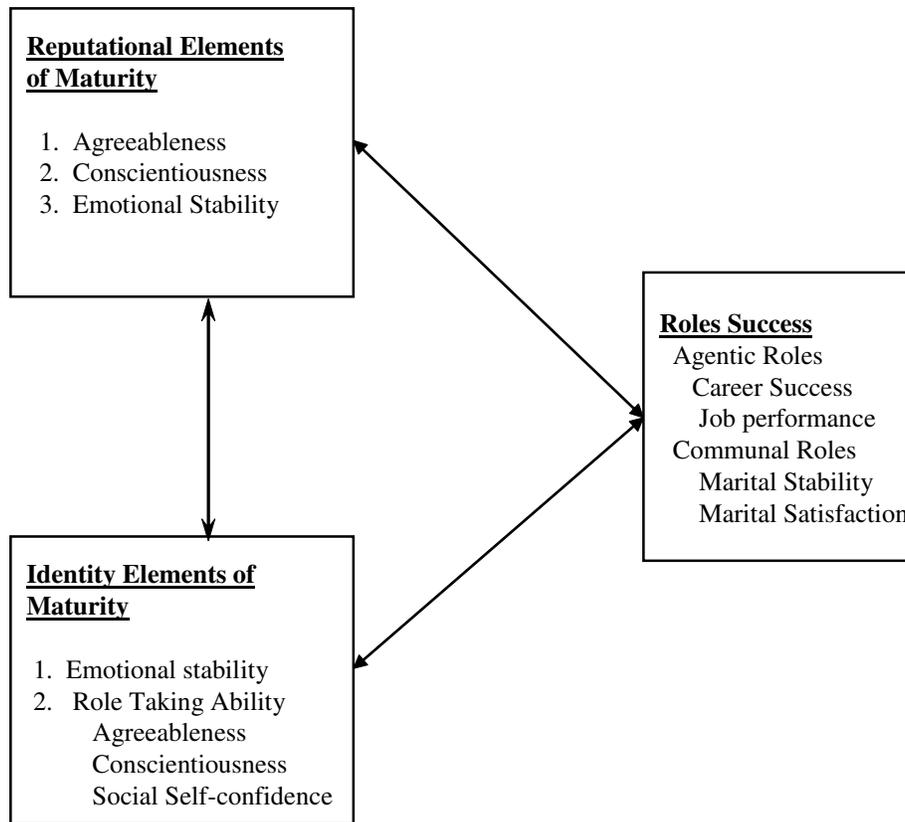
Figure 2. Socioanalytic model of maturity.

Figure 2 integrates our discussion of maturity with the schematic model provided in Figure 1. Maturity from the inside is reflected in greater adjustment and role-taking ability. This translates into higher agreeableness, conscientiousness, intellectance, and emotional stability. Similarly, maturity from the outside is reflected in a reputation for being agreeable, conscientious, and emotionally stable. There is striking overlap in the definition of maturity from the inside and maturity from the outside; nonetheless, we are reluctant to equate the actor and observers' forms of maturity. For example, some people may see themselves as neurotic, but others may perceive them as calm and stable. Finally, fulfillment of the master motives of getting along, getting ahead, and achieving predictability are positively associated with maturity. Success in certain roles—occupational performance, marital success—seems to depend on greater maturity (e.g., Judge & Bono, in press; Kelly & Conley, 1985). In turn, success in these areas may promote greater maturity (e.g., Roberts, 1997; Roberts & Chapman, 2000). Furthermore, people with the psychological profile of greater maturity tend to be more consistent over time (Roberts, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2001).

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Most theories of personality define maturity in individual terms—mature people have high self-esteem, are self-actualized, are at peace with themselves, and so on. These individualistic definitions ignore a person's impact on or responsibility to others. We believe that maturity must be defined simultaneously from the perspective of a person and his or her social group. Maturity depends on balancing one's egoistic and altruistic impulses and one's self-critical and self-accepting tendencies. Mature people are both comfortable with themselves and open to critical feedback; they are both actively engaged in helping others and reasonable about advancing their own self-interest. A sign of maturity therefore is the degree to which an individual is integrated into his or her society without at the same time losing a sense of whom he or she is vis-`a-vis others. A commitment to social causes and the welfare of others is necessary to overcome egocentrism; a critical distance from those causes is necessary to not become a true believer. Similarly, a measure of maturity is the degree to which a person is self-accepting while at the same time realizing that he or she is not perfect. Within the context of overall self-approval, a mature person will listen carefully to negative feedback from others—including spouses, children, students, and employees—especially others with less status than oneself.

Our view of maturity corresponds to an ideal citizen of a Greek city state during the time of Plato and Aristotle; such persons were expected to develop their skills and seek excellence but always within the context of what was good for their community as a whole. They were expected to balance personal pride against their duties as citizens. In contrast to the prevailing individualism of modern psychology, which defines maturity in a social vacuum, we believe the concept of maturity must take into account the relationship between the individual and his or her society.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER ASSESSMENT

The first implication of our view of maturity should be no surprise to a field that has long assessed vocational maturity in the forms of vocational identity and using a diffuse interest profile to assess psychological maturity (e.g., Super & Thompson, 1979). The dimensions of personality that are associated with maturity are found on most omnibus personality inventories. Therefore, it is easy to determine the relative maturity of a person's identity. People who develop maturity at a younger age will typically make smoother transitions into the world of work, have fewer problems with supervisors and coworkers, and be more successful in terms of their occupational status and earnings (e.g., Judge et al., 1999). Conversely, people who lack one or more of the characteristics that define maturity may confront more problems in their careers both in the initial transition and

in the establishment of an occupational track record. The job of the counseling psychologist then would be to anticipate these problems and provide a course of action, part of which we will describe in the following.

The second recommendation is to help clients understand that how they are seen by others is important and has significant implications for their occupational well-being. Letters of recommendation, references, and personal remarks made about potential employees not only describe a person's mental capacity to perform at work, they also contain blatant indices of a person's maturity. Inappropriate actions that are catalogued by teachers, peers, and coworkers are codified into a reputation that may then prevent persons from getting into their desired school or job. A reputation is a terrible thing to waste.

The third recommendation reflects something intrinsic to the notion of maturity: Change happens. Maturity entails movement toward some ideal endpoint or endpoints such as those described earlier. The key question from a developmental perspective is when that point is reached. Recent longitudinal research sheds some significant light on this topic. In young adulthood (e.g., age 18 to 30), some individuals change as much as half of a standard deviation on personality traits related to our definition of psychological maturity, for example, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability (Roberts et al., 2001; Robins, Fraley, Roberts, & Trzesniewski, 2001). Therefore, personality characteristics are not necessarily destiny (although they can cause significant problems if left unevaluated and unmodified). This opens a new area of intervention and inquiry for counseling and career psychologists: How to make people more mature? There is limited but provocative evidence that clinical interventions using existing therapeutic models change the qualities that we believe are part of psychological maturity (Piedmont, 2001). Counseling psychologists are in a position both to evaluate psychological maturity and to intervene when it is lacking.

SUMMARY

We can summarize our argument in terms of four points. First, Freud and G. H. Mead offered important insights regarding personality and maturity. Freud defined maturity in terms of the capacity to love and to work and argued that increasing levels of self-acceptance and self-control make this possible. Mead defined maturity in terms of the ability to interact with a wide range of people and to be socially appropriate without being supervised; increasing levels of role taking make this possible. Second, maturity should be defined from both the observers' and the actor's perspective. From the actor's perspective, maturity involves (a) self-acceptance, which we interpret as not being guilty, anxious, and moody, and (b) being attentive and responsive to others' needs, expectations, and feelings. Third, from the observer's perspective, maturity concerns having a good reputation, which involves being liked and respected. Liking and respect depend on being rewarding to deal with—being predictable, responsible, and emotion-

ally stable—and being a resource for the community. Fourth, consistent with our view that the most important problems in life involve getting along and getting ahead, our measures of neuroticism (reverse scored) and role-taking ability predict occupational and marital success. Persons with low scores on measures of neuroticism are described in certain characteristic ways—they seem even tempered, dependable, attentive, and socially appropriate. Persons with high scores on measures of role-taking ability are also described in certain characteristic ways—namely, as warm, friendly, understanding, insightful, and socially appropriate (cf. R. Hogan, 1969). In addition, they are more consistent and predictable; thus, they have the capacity to develop and maintain relationships and to be productive in their careers. We are aware that many famous artists, scientists, and entrepreneurs—who by definition had successful careers—were also exploitative, self-centered, and indifferent to others' expectations. As a result, history judges them ambivalently.

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