

# Socioanalytic Theory[AQ1]

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Concepts without percepts are empty; percepts without concepts are blind.

*Immanuel Kant*

## Introduction

The foregoing quotation reflects the view that theories and facts must evolve together in order for knowledge to develop. Textbooks in industrial–organizational (I–O) psychology and Organizational Behavior (I–O–OB) focus on specific research topics (e.g., motivation and leadership), and offer few conceptual connections between them. But a common theme underlies every topic—the theme is people (or human nature)—human nature underlies all discussions of people at work in organizations. Because personality theory concerns the nature of human nature, it provides a conceptual basis for understanding organizational behavior and occupational performance. This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section summarizes our perspective on personality. The second section outlines our perspective on personality measurement. In the third section, we review the literature regarding the links between personality and occupational performance, personnel selection, and leadership. We close with a discussion of a dreary but unavoidable topic—faking.

## *Socioanalytic Theory*

Like Sigmund Freud (1913), socioanalytic theory assumes that (1) evolutionary theory is important for understanding human nature, (2) people's responses to authority and leadership are pre-programmed, (3) people are largely unaware of the meaning of their actions, and (4) career success depends on gaining some self-awareness. Like G. H. Mead (1934), we assume that (1) the most important events in life occur during social interaction; (2) to take part in social interactions, we must have roles to play; (3) the roles we play shape how we think about ourselves; (4) people are largely unaware of how they play their roles; and (5) career success depends on becoming aware of how one plays one's organizational roles. Like Darwin (1971), we assume that (1) people evolved as group-living animals, (2) people need social acceptance and social status (because both confer reproductive advantages), (3) behaviors that are good for the group (altruism) will be good for the individuals in it,

(4) behaviors that are good for the individual (selfishness) are not often good for the group, and (5) organizational effectiveness is the appropriate standard for evaluating all organizational interventions, and the interventions usually involve trying to align individual and group interests.

In addition, anthropology and sociology point out that religion is a cultural universal, and history points out that religion is the most powerful force in human affairs. This leads us to assume that people have a need to believe in something bigger than themselves.

## Defining Personality

Although I-O psychology rediscovered personality in the early 1990s, one searches that literature in vain for a definition. Typically, personality is defined implicitly in terms of the Five-Factor Model (FFM), but the FFM is a taxonomy of trait terms, not a theory of personality. Personality theory concerns (1) the important ways in which people are all alike (general laws) and (2) the important ways in which they differ (individual differences). Regarding general laws, the three universal features of human groups provide a clue: (1) People evolved as group-living animals—people always live in groups, (2) every group has a status hierarchy—the fundamental dynamic in every group is the individual search for power; and (3) every group has a religion—religion is a cultural universal. Based on this, we conclude that social behavior rests on three powerful and probably unconscious motives: (1) People need attention, acceptance, and approval and find any rejection stressful; (2) people need status and power, and find losing any status stressful; (3) people need structure and meaning, and find any ambiguity and unpredictability in the environment stressful. We refer to these themes as the needs to get along, to get ahead, and to find meaning.

Regarding individual differences, people differ widely in the degree to which they need acceptance, power, and meaning. But more importantly, they differ widely in their ability to acquire these crucial resources. Finally, personality assessment concerns capturing individual differences in peoples' potential for getting along, getting ahead, and finding meaning.

The word personality is defined in two very different ways (MacKinnon, 1944; May, 1932). On the one hand, personality refers to the distinctive impression that a person makes on others—this is the observer's view of personality, about which six points should be noted. First, personality from the observer's view is the same thing as a person's reputation. Second, personality from the observer's view is easy to study using rating forms, Q sorts, or assessment center exercises. Third, the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, a person's reputation is a summary of his/her past behavior; therefore, a person's reputation is the best data source we have for predicting his/her future performance. Fourth, because the FFM is based on factor analytic studies of observer ratings, the FFM concerns the structure of reputation (cf. R. Hogan, 1996). Fifth, although most people attempt to control their reputations (Goffman, 1958), it is hard to do and people's reputations essentially belong to other people—who evaluate their behavior and create their reputations. Finally, a person's reputation is an index of his/her success at getting along and getting ahead.

The second definition of personality concerns the processes inside people that explain their actions and create their reputations. The most important of these internal processes is a person's identity—the actor's view of personality—about which five points should be noted. First, identity is very hard to study because to do so we must rely on other people's inherently unreliable reports about themselves. Second, social interaction is powerfully shaped by actors' identities. Our identities determine the interactions we are willing to enter, the roles we are willing to play, and how we play them (R. Hogan & Roberts, 1999). Third, identities are "personal narratives" that are adopted from role models in a person's culture—family, friends, characters in movies, novels, and TV. Fourth, we have neither an adequate taxonomy of identities nor a measurement base for specifying them. Finally, although personality research for the past 100 years has focused on identity, it has produced very few

reliable generalizations; in contrast, the empirical literature associated with the study of reputation (e.g., the FFM) is substantial and replicable.

Reputation and identity serve different logical functions. We use reputation to *predict* what people are likely to do; we use identity to *explain* why they do it. It is also important to remember that, as observers, we rarely think about other people from their perspective—in terms of their goals and intentions (their identity)—in order to understand them; rather, we think about them from our perspective—in terms of traits, recurring consistencies in their behavior (their reputation)—in order to predict how they will behave.

## Interaction

At a deep and often unconscious level, people are motivated to get along, get ahead, and find meaning, and they accomplish these goals during social interaction rather than private reflection. The most consequential interactions for adults take place at work while pursuing a career. Interactions depend on two components: (1) agendas (“Let’s get together and talk about this issue”); and (2) roles (“I am the client and you are the sales person”). If there is no agenda, then the interaction lacks purpose; if there are no roles, then interaction will collapse because, outside of our roles, we have little to say to one another. In organizations, roles are defined by a person’s job, and agendas are usually dictated by the needs of the organization—or its key players.

As Mead (1934) noted, interactions resemble little games; extending this analogy, one’s career can be seen as a game of games, and some people are more successful at the game than others. These are the individual differences with which socioanalytic theory is concerned, and these differences are formally identical with job performance.

Social and occupational life consists of episodes (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997) or interaction sequences each of which has an agenda and associated roles. But people also have identities that influence the agendas they are willing to follow, the roles they are willing to play, and how they play them. When people enter any interaction at work, they will have some understanding of the agendas (corporate and personal) that underlie the interaction, the roles that the various participants will play, and how they will play them. Everyone has expectations regarding the agenda and the roles. These expectations, along with the individual members’ roles and identities, powerfully determine individual performance during every interaction.

After every interaction, the participants evaluate the performance of the other members. These evaluations ultimately turn into performance appraisals. And on what do these evaluations depend? They primarily reflect the degree to which people are rewarding to deal with. Being rewarding involves (1) helping others advance their agendas, (2) being compliant and attentive, and (3) fitting with the culture of the group. Being rewarding may involve good performance, but more often it has to do with making another person look good; sometimes doing a good job has this effect.

Meanwhile, the constant subtext for these interactions is individual efforts to get along and get ahead, and there are huge differences in peoples’ success in doing this, as evaluated by themselves and others. How can we predict and explain these individual differences, which are more or less related to successful job performance?

## Social Skill and Impression Management

Normal people want to get along and get ahead but some people are better at it than others. What can be done for those who are struggling? People choose their identities in order to maximize their acceptance and status (and minimize their loss). Depending on their identities, they may want to be seen as smart, compliant, honest, creative, or perhaps as menacing and dangerous. Social skill concerns choosing

a smart identity, and then translating it into convincing and effective social behavior; social skill allows people to achieve their interpersonal goals in the same way that hand–eye coordination facilitates their tennis game. Thus, social skill is the same as competent impression management—which involves controlling the impressions that others form of us—which concerns managing our reputations.

Argyle (1969) noted that social skill is demonstrated in the ability to control others by counseling, persuading, and suggesting rather than by ordering, criticizing, and coercing them. Personality and social skill are different in that personality (identity and reputation) is rather stable whereas social skills are, in principle, trainable. Moreover, good social skills can coexist with deeply flawed personalities—where flawed is defined in terms of insecurity, selfishness, strange and irrational goals, and a disposition toward treachery and deceit (Leary, 1995). People can improve their social skill and talent for impression management if: (1) they feel the need to improve; and (2) understand what needs to be improved (understand their reputation).

### A Perspective on Personality Measurement

We have defined personality and described our preferred perspective on the subject. Now, we turn to personality measurement, because most of the empirical literature supporting socioanalytic theory involves measurement-based research. Our views on personality measurement are (1) consistent with our views on personality theory and (2) different from those of the mainstream. It might be useful to outline briefly how our views differ from the mainstream.

Most I-O/OB psychologists think about personality in terms of “trait theory,” a viewpoint introduced by R. B. Cattell (1957), H. J. Eysenck (1960), and Allport (1961)—the modern “father” of trait theory—and supported by the FFM (Wiggins, 1996). But trait theory has some significant shortcomings as a model of personality. First, traits are defined as (1) “neuro-psychic entities” (structures in the brain) and (2) recurring patterns of behavior. This makes no sense—it is like comparing apples with Bruce Springsteen. Behavior patterns are real and can be observed and quantified—that is what the FFM is about. But the neuro-psychic structures assumed to underlie behavior are unknown; no doubt some day we will map the underlying neurological architecture of personality, but that day has yet to arrive.

In addition, trait theory is an intrapsychic model of personality—intrapsychic theories assume that what is important in life is going on inside a person’s mind and other people are just “out there” as objects or distractions. In contrast, socioanalytic theory is an interpersonal model of personality—interpersonal theories assume that what is important in life takes place during social interaction, and that the contents of consciousness reflect the history of a person’s social interactions. That is, how you think about yourself reflects how others have treated you, and that then impacts your future performance. For trait theory, social skill is just another (compound) trait. For interpersonal theory, social skill is crucial for career success; social skill involves being able to read other peoples’ expectations and then acting appropriately vis-à-vis those expectations.

Next, think for a moment about the specifics of the assessment process. Alfred Binet (1903) developed his original test as a method for *predicting* academic performance. When Lewis Terman (Terman & Miles, 1912) translated Binet’s items and called them the Stanford Binet, he thought he had created a method to *measure* intelligence. The historical movement was from an effort to predict outcomes to an effort to measure entities, and that is a radical change. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI; Hathaway & McKinley, 1951) and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI; Gough, 1957), both gold standard personality assessments, were designed to *predict* social behavior. The 16 Personality Factors (PF; Cattell, 1957) and the Neuroticism–Extraversion–Openness (NEO) (Costa & McCrae, 1985) are designed to *measure* traits. The historical movement was from predicting outcomes to measuring traits. The intent of the assessment process shifted from predicting behavior to measuring entities.

Mainstream psychometrics is a version of Platonism—the meaning of scores on, for example the NEO, is defined by reference to entities that exist somewhere else. There are obtained scores—the score of an applicant—and then there are “true scores,” hypothetical entities that exist in a nontemporal, nonspatial universe—and we understand obtained scores by referring them to true scores. This is precisely Platonic metaphysics. We prefer to use Wittgenstein (1945) to understand test scores. Wittgenstein was criticizing Platonism when he said the meaning of something was given by its use. Test scores mean what they predict, not what they refer to. That is, assessment has a job to do, and the job is to predict nontest performance.

Finally, what are people doing when they endorse items on a personality questionnaire? Trait theory says people are providing “self-reports.” The hypothesis is that people compare the content of an item (“I read 10 books per year”) with the content of their memory, then respond to the item accordingly. The problem is that memory is not like a videotape that can be replayed; rather, people invent their memories to be consistent with their “personal narratives,” which means self-report theory cannot be true, in principle. In contrast, we think that, when people endorse items, they are providing “self-presentations”; they are using the items to tell other people how they want to be regarding. Item endorsements are self-presentations in the same way that answers to questions during an interview are self-presentations. Socioanalytic theory has the virtue of being able to account for its own data base—it leads to a consistent theory of item responses.

## Personality and Job Performance

Observers use trait terms to describe and evaluate other people, and peoples’ reputations are encoded in trait words. Trait words evaluate the potential contribution of a person to the success of the groups to which the person belongs—tribe, family, combat-unit, or work team. Trait terms are the units of reputation and they can be organized in terms of the FFM (Wiggins, 1996). [AQ2]

Socioanalytic theory argues that people evolved as group-living animals, and trait words are used to evaluate a person’s potential contribution to his/her group (R. Hogan, 1996). The emotional stability dimension of the FFM concerns how well a person will perform under pressure and how volatile he or she is on a day-to-day basis. The extraversion dimension concerns leadership potential. The openness dimension concerns the degree to which a person can solve technical problems confronting the group. The agreeableness dimension concerns a person’s contributions to group morale. The conscientiousness dimension concerns trustworthiness and integrity.

A large number of personality measures are now available that are based on the FFM. As noted above, these questionnaires are typically called *self-report measures*, and users assume that respondents report on their “true” thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. In contrast, we assume that item endorsements are self-presentations that reflect a person’s identity (or personal narrative). People use items on personality questionnaires to express their desired reputation, because people are motivated to convince others to accept these idealized views. In addition, socioanalytic theory argues that self-presentations are not necessarily or even routinely conscious because, over time, self-presentation tends to become automatic role behavior.

Most measures of personality based on the FFM assume that the five factors are independent. However, Digman (1997) factor analyzed personality data from nine samples of children, adolescents, and adults and found, in every sample, two higher order factors. The first was defined by agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. The second was defined by openness and extraversion. Digman (1997) interpreted the first factor as successful socialization—which parallels the basic getting along motive; he interpreted the second factor as personal growth and self-enhancement, which parallels the basic getting ahead motive. This suggests the operation of two broad, mainly unconscious motives: maintaining popularity and achieving status in groups.

### Defining Job Performance

In the workplace, social behavior is structured by “situations,” which researchers rarely define. Building on Argyle (1976), socioanalytic theory defines situations in terms of the required ingredients for social interaction: goals, rules, environmental settings, roles, and agendas (R. Hogan & Roberts, 1999). These ingredients are inputs from the external environment. Formal roles include supervisor, subordinate, peer, and so on. Informal roles may include friend, rival, new comer, and so on. Agendas concern the purposes for an interaction. There are public and private agendas. Private agendas concern the personal pursuit of status and acceptance. Public agendas in the workplace can be classified in terms of the six Holland (1973) categories. People can get together and fix something (realistic theme), analyze something (investigative theme), create or design something (artistic theme), help someone (social theme), persuade and manipulate someone (enterprising theme), or regulate something (conventional theme). Individuals use these public agendas to advance their private agendas.

Peoples’ behavior is controlled simultaneously by their identities and situational factors. Their identities influence (1) the roles they are willing to play, (2) how they play them, (3) the agendas they are willing to follow, or (4) the agendas they try to avoid. A person’s identity is related to the reputation he/she is trying to establish, especially at work.

People at work are judged to be rewarding depending on the degree to which they support the identity another person wants to project. Thus, a subordinate who complies with the requests of his/her supervisor and respects her/his status, will be seen as rewarding because the subordinate helps the supervisor look good. Supervisors rarely think about subordinates in terms of the subordinate’s goals, fears, and aspirations; rather, supervisors think about subordinates in terms of how rewarding they are to deal with—defined in terms of protecting, supporting, and enhancing supervisor’s identity. The same is true for peers at the workplace. The low degree of self-other agreement for personality trait ratings in the workplace (cf. Connelly & Ones, 2010) suggests that actors and observers think about one another in different terms; actors think about themselves in terms of their personal narratives (identities); observers evaluate them in terms of the degree to which they are good team players, good service providers, and so on. The more an actor protects, supports, and enhances an observer’s identity, the better the actor is evaluated.

People exchange views on how rewarding others are to deal with and create reputations for those people in the workplace:

Reputation is a perceptual identity formed from the collective perceptions of others, which is reflective of the complex combination of salient personal characteristics and accomplishments, demonstrated behavior, and intended images presented over some period of time as observed directly and/or reported from secondary sources, which reduces ambiguity about expected future behavior.

*Zinko, Ferris, Blass, & Laird, 2007, p. 165*

Consequences of a positive reputation at work include: *elbowroom*—more discretion to act; *power*—others will defer to one’s judgment; *improved job performance*—more discretion and power makes it easier to get things done; *enhanced job performance ratings*; and *better compensation*. Other long-term consequences of a positive reputation include *career success* and *enhanced subjective well-being* (Zinko et al., 2007).

Our reputation-based view of job performance ratings is consistent with the findings of a general factor in ratings of job performance:

Before assigning ratings, each rater forms an overall impression of the merits or standing of each rater. This overall impression in part overlaps the overall impressions of other raters and in part is

unique to that one rater. The part of the overall impression that is in common with other raters is not halo; that part is considered true variance.

*Viswesvaran, Schmidt, & Ones, 2005, p. 109*

Viswesvaran et al. (2005) found in a meta-analysis that, after controlling for random response error, transient error, leniency or stringency effects, and halo error, a general factor in job performance ratings accounted for 60% of the total variance in ratings for interpersonal competence, administrative competence, quality, productivity, effort, job knowledge, leadership, acceptance of authority, and communication competence.

## Personality and Job Performance

Meta-analysis is a method for evaluating the relationships among psychometric constructs. In personnel psychology, a common version of meta-analysis is called validity generalization (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004). The correlation between personality scores and job performance criteria in any single study is taken as one data point, and that correlation is assumed to be attenuated by several statistical artifacts. To compensate, meta-analysis researchers collect as many studies as are available on the relationship between a construct (e.g., a personality dimension) and job performance. The correlations in these studies are combined and then corrected for statistical artifacts (e.g., sampling error depending on sample size, range restriction, and measurement error in the personality and job performance scores). Researchers believe that these corrected results provide the best estimate of the “true” relationship between the construct and the job performance criteria.

Barrick, Mount, and Judge (2001) synthesized 15 meta-analytic studies of the relationship between personality scale scores and overall job performance ratings provided by supervisors. They organized the various personality measures using the FFM. Scores on measures of conscientiousness and emotional stability generally predicted overall job performance, and scores for measures of extraversion, openness, and agreeableness did not generally predict overall job performance (see Table 4.1).

J. Hogan and Holland (2003) also used meta-analysis to evaluate the links between personality and job performance. However, in order to avoid the confusion caused by trying to combine results from different personality measures, they only used data based on the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI; R. Hogan & Hogan, 1995). The HPI scale for emotional stability is called *Adjustment*. The HPI breaks extraversion into *Ambition* and *Sociability*. The HPI breaks openness into *Inquisitive*—which reflects creativity—and *Learning Approach* which reflects academic achievement orientation. The HPI *Interpersonal Sensitivity* assesses (roughly) agreeableness, and the HPI *Prudence* scale assesses conscientiousness.

J. Hogan and Holland (2003) followed Campbell's (1990) recommendations and aligned predictors with criteria. Thus, rather than using ratings for overall job performance as a criterion, each scale was evaluated against content relevant criteria. For example, Adjustment was aligned with ratings for “*Manages people, crisis, and stress*,” Ambition was aligned with ratings for “*Exhibits leadership*,” Inquisitive with “*Seems market savvy*,” Learning Approach with “*Possesses job knowledge*,” Interpersonal Sensitivity with “*Exhibits capacity to compromise*,” and Prudence with “*Stays organized*.” J. Hogan and Holland (2003, p. 105) report that median correlations between the criterion ratings ranged from .47 to .72 with an average of .60. As previously noted, Viswesvaran et al. (2005, p. 116) found a mean correlation of  $r = .58$  between criterion categories of supervisory ratings. These findings suggest a convergence between dimension-specific and generalized performance evaluations.

With the exception of HPI Sociability, every HPI scale positively predicted its appropriate performance dimension (cf. Table 4.1). The true-score estimates of the Ambition-performance,

Table 4.1 Personality and Job Performance: Summary of Meta-Analytic Results

| FFM Dimension   | <i>k</i> | <i>N</i> | $r_{obs}$ | $\rho$ |
|---|----------|----------|-----------|--------|
| Emotional stability                                   |          |          |           |        |
| SR (Barrick, Mount, & Judge 2001)                     | 224      | 38,817   | .06       | .12*   |
| SR HPI— <i>Adjustment</i> (Hogan & Holland, 2003)     | 24       | 2,573    | .25       | .43*   |
| OR (Connelly & Ones, 2010)                            | 7        | 1,190    | .14       | .37*   |
| Extraversion  |          |          |           |        |
| SR (Barrick et al., 2001)                             | 222      | 39,432   | .06       | .12    |
| SR HPI— <i>Ambition</i> (Hogan & Holland, 2003)       | 28       | 3,698    | .20       | .35*   |
| OR (Connelly & Ones, 2010)                            | 6        | 1,135    | .08       | .18*   |
| Openness  |          |          |           |        |
| SR (Barrick et al., 2001)                             | 143      | 23,225   | .03       | .05    |
| SR HPI— <i>Inquisitive</i> (Hogan & Holland, 2003)    | 7        | 1,190    | .20       | .34*   |
| SR HPI— <i>Learning Style</i> (Hogan & Holland, 2003) | 9        | 1,366    | .15       | .25*   |
| OR (Connelly & Ones, 2010)                            | 6        | 1,135    | .18       | .45*   |
| Agreeableness   |          |          |           |        |
| SR (Barrick et al., 2001)                             | 206      | 36,210   | .06       | .13    |
| SR HPI— <i>IP Sensitivity</i> (Hogan & Holland, 2003) | 18       | 2,500    | .18       | .34*   |
| OR (Connelly & Ones, 2010)                            | 7        | 1,190    | .13       | .31*   |
| Conscientiousness                                     |          |          |           |        |
| SR (Barrick et al., 2001)                             | 239      | 48,100   | .12       | .23*   |
| SR HPI— <i>Prudence</i> (Hogan & Holland, 2003)       | 26       | 3,379    | .22       | .36*   |
| OR (Connelly & Ones, 2010)                            | 7        | 1,190    | .23       | .55*   |

Note: FFM: Five-Factor Model of Personality; *k*: number of samples; *N*: total sample size;  $r_{obs}$ : sample size corrected mean observed correlation;  $\rho$ : true-score validity, correcting for unreliability in the predictor and criterion and for range restriction; however, Connelly and Ones (2010, p. 1112) did not correct for range restrictions in the criteria; SR: self-ratings of personality items; OR: other-ratings of personality items; \*90% credibility interval does not include zero (transportability; Kemery, Mossholder, & Ross, 1987).

Prudence-performance, and Learning Approach-performance relationships fell within the confidence intervals for these dimensions as reported by Barrick et al. (2001), suggesting the relationships were about the same size. However, the estimates of the Adjustment-performance, Inquisitive-performance, and Interpersonal Sensitivity-performance relationships fell outside of the confidence intervals for these dimensions as reported in the Barrick et al.'s (2001) study, indicating that these relationships were significantly higher in the study by J. Hogan and Holland (2003).

Connelly and Ones (2010) conducted a meta-analytic study of the links between observer ratings of actors' personalities (a measure of reputation) and rated job performance. The various personality rating instruments were classified according to the FFM (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism). In essence, they aligned reputation assessments of personality with reputation assessments of overall job performance (see also Oh, Wang, & Mount, 2011). All reputation-ratings of the FFM-dimensions positively predicted overall job performance (cf. Table 4.1). Observer ratings for openness and conscientiousness had higher true-score correlations with overall rated job performance than scale scores for Inquisitive (HPI) and Prudence (HPI) with the specific performance criteria. In the cases of openness and Inquisitive, the confidence intervals were not overlapping, indicating that the correlation between observer ratings and overall performance was higher than the correlation between scale scores and specific performance.

We can now ask how well does personality assessment predict job performance compared to other assessment procedures? Schmidt and Hunter (1998) document the validity of the best-known predictors of job performance. They report that general mental ability is the best single predictor of overall job performance ( $\rho = .51$ ; for a more accurate estimate, see Schmidt, Shaffer, & Oh, 2008). Work sample tests ( $\rho = .54$ ; for an alternative estimate, see Roth, Bobko, & McFarland, 2005) and structured employment interviews ( $\rho = .51$ ) are the best procedure-predictors of job performance. However, observer ratings of conscientiousness slightly outperform these predictors (true-score correlations  $\rho = .55$ ; for operational validity estimates, see Oh et al., 2011). Validity coefficients for other popular predictor procedures, such as reference checks ( $\rho = .26$ ), biographical data measures ( $\rho = .35$ ), assessment center performance ( $\rho = .37$ ), unstructured employment interview ( $\rho = .38$ ), and integrity tests ( $\rho = .41$ ), are in the same range as validities for the HPI scales ( $.25 \leq \rho \leq .43$ ). However, unlike work sample tests, personality measures do not require specific job knowledge, the standardization of the assessment process does not melt away like structured interviews (interview creep), personality measures are far more cost-effective than assessment centers, and personality measures show incremental validity when combined with measures of general mental ability (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). In sum, well-constructed personality measures predict job performance as well as any other procedure, and, in fact, outperform most other predictors.

### Social Skill

The key elements of socioanalytic theory are identity and reputation. Identity refers to how a person wants to be seen by others. Reputation refers to how other people perceive and evaluate that person. Identities reflect people's desired reputations or idealized self-narratives. Individuals behave so as to convince others that their idealized views are true. Some people are better at this than others—that is, their social behavior is more persuasive and effective. R. Hogan and Shelton (1998) suggest that the ability to translate one's identity into one's desired reputation is moderated by social skill. They defined social skill as competent impression management, which involves controlling the impressions that others form of oneself. Social skill translates identity into reputation.

An important facet of social skill is called empathy, the ability accurately to take the perspective of others (R. Hogan, 1969). Mills and Hogan (1978) found that the magnitude of the discrepancy between self- and other-ratings of personality traits correlated  $r = -.87$  with a person's score on R. Hogan's (1969) empathy scale. This supports the claim that social skill mediates the congruence between identity and reputation. Successful impression management also depends on selecting the appropriate audience, apt timing, sensitivity to others' emotional cues, the correct language-style, and sending the appropriate nonverbal cues. Empirical research supports the idea that socially skilled individuals more quickly identify and attend to the emotional cues in others and choose appropriate facial expressions, hand gestures, body postures, voice textures, and other paralinguistic cues (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Momm, Blickle, & Liu, 2010).

The political skill construct (Ferris et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007) refers to social skill at the workplace. Social skill at the workplace combines social understanding with the ability to adjust behavior to the demands of situations in ways that inspire trust, confidence, and support, appear genuine, and effectively influence others. In three studies, Witt and Ferris (2003) demonstrated that the interaction of social skill and self-ratings of conscientiousness predicted supervisors' ratings of contextual and sales performance. Among employees with high social skill, self-ratings of conscientiousness positively predicted supervisory performance ratings. Blickle et al. (2008) found that the agreeableness by social skill interaction predicted job performance ratings by supervisors, peers, and subordinates. Among employees with high social skill, self-ratings of agreeableness positively predicted performance ratings by others. Meurs, Perrewé, and Ferris (2011) reported that social skill and self-ratings of sincerity (a facet of honesty-humility; Ashton & Lee, 2005) predicted supervisors'

ratings of employee task performance; for employees with high social skill, self-ratings of sincerity predicted supervisor's ratings of task performance.

Blickle, Ferris, et al. (2011) gathered employees' self-ratings of their desires to get along and get ahead, and supervisors' ratings of overall job performance. For both the getting ahead by social skill and the getting along by social skill interaction, they found support for predictions derived from socioanalytic theory. Among employees with high social skill self-ratings, the motives to get ahead and to get along positively predicted supervisors' performance ratings.

Early career employees can use modesty as a self-presentation strategy: "By slightly understating one's positive characteristics one can manage one's image in an adroit fashion that increases liking, preserves high levels of perceived competence, and does no damage to attributions of honesty" (Cialdini & De Nicholas, 1989, p. 626). Blickle, Diekmann, Schneider, Kalthöfer, and Summers (2012) found, in a predictive study over a 3-year period with 141 early career employees, that social skill positively moderated the relationship between employees' modesty self-presentations and career success (attained position and career satisfaction). For employees with high social skill, modesty self-presentation positively predicted higher attained position and career satisfaction after 3 years (see Figure 4.1).

We argued earlier that the more employees support the identities of their supervisors, the better they will be evaluated. However, success in the work environment depends not only on projecting images that influence raters, but also on behaving consistently across raters. Blickle, Ferris, et al. (2011) found, in a multi-source, multi-study investigation of job performance ratings, that employees with good social skills effectively enhanced their reputations among different supervisors and peers—they used their networking skills and appropriate influence tactics to create favorable images with others. Social skill consistently predicted job performance ratings across multiple assessors. Thus, in the workplace, social skill enables individuals to create a common, positive reputation across raters.

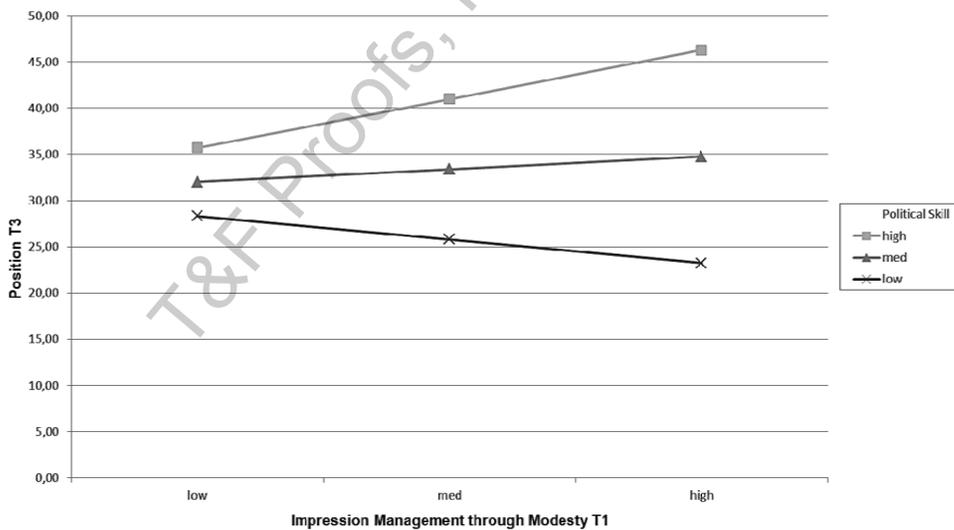


Figure 4.1 Interaction of Impression Management Through Modesty and Social Skill on Hierarchical Position (Blickle, Diekmann, Schneider, Kalthöfer, & Summers, 2012).

Note: N = 141 early career employees, T1: wave one; T3: wave after 3 years. Social skill at the workplace was measured by the Political Skill Inventory (PSI; Ferris et al., 2005). Position (0,00 = at the bottom of the organization, 50 = middle level of the organization).

## Moderated Versus Unitary Self-Presentation

Socioanalytic theory assumes that people will be careful about their self-presentations during consequential interactions—that is, during employment interviews, public speeches, and conversations with superiors. However, when people are socializing with family and friends in casual circumstances, they can be more relaxed about how they present themselves (cf. Kaiser & Hogan, 2006)—they can afford to let down their “guard.” Not surprisingly, people describe themselves differently when in family roles (e.g., daughter and son) than when in work roles (e.g., job applicant, coworker, and supervisor). Therefore, peoples’ self-descriptions in casual or informal roles should not predict supervisors’ ratings of their performance at work, but self-descriptions in work-related roles should (as usual) predict supervisory job performance ratings. Blickle, Momm, Schneider, Gansen, and Kramer (2009) tested this hypothesis in a sample of 192 job incumbents. The incumbents rated themselves on the dimensions of the FFM, and supervisors rated their task performance, leadership, and contextual performance. The researchers combined self-ratings of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness into a single score reflecting the desire to get along, and combined the self-ratings for extraversion and openness into a single score reflecting the desire to get ahead. The participants were randomly assigned to two experimental groups. In the job application condition, participants were asked to describe themselves as if they were applying for an attractive job. In the family condition, participants were asked to respond as honestly as possible. In the job application condition, self-ratings for getting ahead predicted ratings for task performance and leadership ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ) and self-ratings for getting along predicted ratings for contextual performance ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ). Self-ratings in the family condition were uncorrelated with supervisors’ ratings of job performance. The moral is clear: just being yourself is the path to career disaster.

To summarize, empirical findings strongly support the view that social skill moderates the relationship between peoples’ desired identity (personal narrative) and their actual reputation in the workplace. Social skill explains between 2% and 6% of additional variance in job performance ratings. Social skill also predicts being perceived as both rewarding and consistent across rater interactions. Additionally, over time, employees with good social skills have better careers—providing they choose appropriate identities.

## Personality and Career Success

Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, and Goldberg (2007) evaluated the links between personality and income, occupational prestige, and occupational stability, and concluded that “. . . personality traits predict all of the work-related outcomes”; and that “. . . the modal effect size of personality traits was comparable with the effect of childhood SES and IQ on similar outcomes” (p. 333). In the best of the studies that they review, Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, and Barrick (1999) compiled a sample of 354 people from longitudinal research conducted at the Institute for Human Development at UC Berkeley in the 1950s. In this sample, they found that personality and IQ assessed in childhood each correlated about .50 with occupational status in adulthood, and the multiple correlation was .64. Similarly, Sutin, Costa, Miech, and Eaton (2009), in a longitudinal sample of 731 adults, report that (low) neuroticism and (high) conscientiousness measured concurrently predicted income, and extraversion predicted increased salary across 10 years. Consistent with this, Viinikainen, Kokko, Pulkkinen, and Pehkonen (2010) report significant correlations between neuroticism and conscientiousness assessed at age 8 and salary and employability at age 42.

## Personality and Leadership

Sociologists and historians often argue that leadership is the function of certain organizational and historical circumstances, but we prefer to think of leadership in terms of individual differences,

where some people have more talent for leadership than others. Socioanalytic theory suggests that life is about getting along and getting ahead, some people will be better at the game of life than others, and they should arrive in positions of leadership. In principle, we should be able to identify them in advance.

To evaluate the links between personality and leadership, one needs scores for individual leaders on the FFM, and quantitative indices of performance in leadership roles (for more coverage of personality and leadership see Chapter 34, this volume). The more of this sort of data we can find, the better we can make the evaluation. In the best study yet published on this topic, Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (2002) aggregated the results of 222 correlations contained in 73 studies of personality and leadership performance. Their sample contained more than 25,000 managers from every level in organizations across every industry sector. They report that four of the five dimensions of the FFM were significantly correlated with leadership performance, with adjustment/emotional stability as the best predictor (.33), and agreeableness/interpersonal sensitivity as the weakest predictor (.07). In this study, conscientiousness/prudence, extraversion, and openness each had significant correlations with leadership (.29, .27, and .21, respectively), and the multiple correlation between personality and leadership was .53. We also acknowledge that leadership is more a function of personality in some contexts than in others. Nonetheless, for people who believe in data, this study definitively seals the argument—personality predicts leadership performance across all organizational levels and industry sectors, and does so more powerfully than any known alternative.

## Faking

The data are quite clear: well-constructed measures of personality predict occupational performance at every level of the status hierarchy, and do so as well or better than measures of cognitive ability. Because personality measures are blind to the gender and ethnicity of job applicants, personality assessment would seem to be an optimal method for personnel selection. However, despite the documented validity and the practical usefulness of personality measures for personnel selection, the conventional wisdom in I-O/OB psychology is that personality measures can be “faked” and this fact substantially impugns their utility (cf. Scott & Reynolds, 2010; Chapters 1, 13, 16, and 24; for more coverage of this issue, see Chapter 12, this volume).

Beginning with Kelly, Miles, and Terman (1936), an enormous and complex literature has developed on the faking issue—see Hough and Furnham (2003) for a thoughtful review. This literature leads to four generalizations. First, when instructed, *some* people can change their personality scores as compared with their scores when not so instructed. Second, the actual base rate of faking in the job application process is minimal. Third, faking seems not to affect criterion-related validity. And fourth, in the long history of faking research, there has rarely been a study that used a research design that was fully appropriate to the problem. The existing research consists of: (1) laboratory studies, artificial conditions, and student research participants; (2) between-subjects designs with no retest data to evaluate change; and (3) studies mixing real-world and artificial instructions to create honest versus faking conditions. What is needed is data from real job applicants, in a repeated measures design, where applicants have an incentive to improve their scores on the second occasion.

J. Hogan, Barrett, and Hogan (2007) conducted the appropriate study. A sample of 266,582 adults applied for a customer service job with a very large U.S. employer in the transportation industry. The selection battery included the HPI (R. Hogan & Hogan, 1995). A substantial percentage of the applicants were denied employment. Six months later, 5,266 persons from the original sample reapplied for the job and again completed the HPI. So a sample of 5,266 people completed the HPI at

T1, was denied employment, and then completed the HPI at T2. It seems reasonable to assume that these people were motivated to improve their scores at T2, so as to get the job. By comparing their scores at T1 with their scores at T2, we can evaluate the degree to which people change their scores by faking. The authors used a five-scale scoring key to be able to discuss the HPI results in terms of the standard FFM.

For the Emotional Stability scale, 3.1% of the applicants changed their scores in the negative direction (got worse) beyond the 95% confidence interval (CI); 4.3% changed their scores in the positive direction (got better) beyond the 95% CI. For the Extraversion scale, 5.4% changed their scores in the negative direction, and 5.2% changed their scores in the positive direction. For the Openness scale, 3% of the applicants changed their scores in the negative direction, while 3.6% changed their scores in the positive direction. For the Agreeableness scale, 3.3% of applicants changed their scores in the negative direction, and 1.7% changed their scores in the positive direction. For the Conscientiousness scale, 3.5% of the applicants changed their scores in the negative direction, and 3.2% changed their scores in the positive direction.

On average, across the five scales, 3.7% of the applicants' scores got worse, and 3.6% of their scores improved. Averaged across the five scales, the scores for 92.7% of the applicants stayed the same from T1 to T2. Of the 7.3% whose scores changed between T1 and T2, the scores were equally likely to go down or up. These data provide no evidence whatsoever for faking on the part of real job applicants, where faking means systematically improving one's score from T1 to T2. But even more interesting, it is possible to predict in advance whose scores will go down or up. Embedded in the HPI are short measures of Social Skill and Socially Desirable responding. The data showed quite clearly that across all five HPI dimensions, applicants with higher scores for Social Skill and Social Desirability tended to increase their scores at T2, whereas applicants with lower scores for Social Skill and Social Desirability tended to lower their scores across all five HPI dimensions at T2.

It is useful to review once more the two competing models of item response theory: (1) self-report theory and (2) impression management theory. Self-report theory is based on two assumptions. The first is that, prior to responding to an item, people play back their memory videotape to review what is true about them ("I read 10 books per year"). The second assumption is that when people endorse items, they try to provide factual accounts of how an item matches their memory tape. Faking involves providing inaccurate reports about the match between an item and the memory. There are two problems with this theory. First, memory researchers from Bartlett (1937) to the present argue that memories are not factual, they are self-serving reconstructions. Second, social communication is not typically about accurately reporting on the world; mostly communication is about controlling others (Dunbar, 2004). Self-report theory is inconsistent with modern memory research and modern thinking about the function of communication—both of which suggest that people construct their memories and use communication to project an image.

Consider the process of child rearing. Small children act in ways that reflect their real desires and urges. Socialization primarily involves training children to delay or hide their real desires and to behave in ways that are consistent with the norms of adult behavior. For self-report theory, socialization involves training children to fake. For impression management theory, socialization involves training children in the appropriate forms of self-expression. Items on well-constructed personality measures sample ordinary socialized adult behavior. Most adults know the rules of conduct and respond to the items in terms of social norms rather than in terms of their real desires. Criminals and other rebels respond in ways that are closer to their real desires—in ways that are consistent with their typical behavior. Our point is that it is nearly impossible to distinguish faking from socialized behavior, which means it is hard to know what it means to say that some people fake when they respond to items on a personality measure.

Socioanalytic theory interprets item responses in terms of impression management; people use the items on a personality measure to tell others how they want to be regarded. This, then, suggests an alternative way to understand faking in the assessment process:

Deception is a conscious, deliberate deviation from typical forms of self-presentation, a deviation that acquaintances would describe as uncharacteristic behavior. This view of deception contrasts with the view that deception involves acting in a way that is inconsistent with a single “true self” hidden inside of us.

*Johnson & Hogan, 2006, p. 211*

When individuals try to act in deceptive ways in everyday life (e.g., introverts try to act like extraverts) their natural tendencies “leak through” and observers readily detect them . . . Only good actors can make atypical performances seem convincing . . .

*Johnson & Hogan, 2006, pp. 210–211*

It is also worth noting that it is possible to test empirically the claims of self-report and impression management item response theory, and empirical research has not been kind to self-report theory. For example, self-report theory predicts that the scores of people with high scores on a measure of honesty will be more consistent than persons with low scores. Impression management theory predicts that the scores of persons with high scores for social skill will be more consistent than persons with low scores. Johnson and Hogan (2006)[AQ3] tested these predictions in three separate samples; he found overwhelming support for impression management theory and no support for self-report theory.

In a related study, Ones, Viswesvaran, and Reiss (1996), based on a large meta-analysis, report that tendencies to respond in a social desirable manner do not attenuate the criterion-related validity of personality scales—that is, socially desirable responding does not affect the links between personality measures and job performance. In addition, social desirability does not mediate the relationship between self-ratings of personality and job performance. In addition, scores on measures of social desirability do not predict job performance ratings. Socially desirable responding, a hypothesized form of distorting “self-reports,” has no empirical consequences.

Finally, Johnson and Hogan (2006, pp. 220–222) report on a study using six unlikely virtue scales. Each scale corresponded to one of six scales on the HPI (R. Hogan, 1986). The following is an unlikely virtue item for the Inquisitive scale: “*In my own way, I am an intellectual giant,*” and the following is for the Adjustment scale: “*I have no psychological problems whatsoever.*” Students completed the HPI and the unlikely virtue scales. In addition, two people who knew each student rated that student on the six HPI dimensions. Most students endorsed unlikely virtue items proportional to their scores on the HPI scales. Thus, each unlikely virtue scale was most highly correlated with its corresponding HPI scale and with the peer ratings for the same dimension. This implies that although, the students sometimes exaggerated by endorsing specific unlikely virtue items, their exaggerated self-presentations were consistent with their rated reputations. Thus, endorsing unlikely virtue items provides information that predicts job performance because the endorsements are consistent with the respondents’ typical self-presentations; the exaggerations are deviations that acquaintances still describe as characteristic of the person.

The J. Hogan et al.’s (2007) study makes a simple claim. When people complete a well-validated personality measure as part of a job application, are denied employment, reapply later, and take the measure a second time, their scores will not change significantly. It is reasonable to assume that the applicants will try to improve their scores on the second occasion. The J. Hogan et al.’s (2007) data show that when (or if) they try, they are unable to improve their scores. The study shows that the faking issue is a red

herring. Hogan, Hogan, and Roberts (1996) reviewed the faking literature and concluded that the data clearly show that faking does not adversely affect the validity of personality measures for employment decision (for an opposing viewpoint, see Tett & Christiansen, 2007). Hogan et al. also concluded that the critics of personality measurement will not be persuaded by data.

## Summary and Conclusion

This chapter outlines the key issues associated with socioanalytic theory—a model of personality that attempts to combine the best insights of psychoanalysis, symbolic interactionism, and evolutionary psychology to analyze career success. In brief, we assume that, at a deep and perhaps unconscious level, people need social acceptance, status, and structure and meaning—because these resources enhance fitness and well-being. People primarily acquire these resources during social interaction over the course of their careers. The units of analysis for socioanalytic theory are identity, reputation, and social skill. Identity is the part a person wants to play in the game of life; reputation reflects that person's success in the game; social skill translates identity into reputation.

Personality assessment is the methodological base supporting socioanalytic theory. We briefly review the literature linking personality with occupational performance and conclude that the results are consistent with our major claims. We end with a brief review of the faking literature, which reveals faking to be a bogus issue, both logically and empirically. Whatever shortcomings socioanalytic theory may have as an account of occupational performance, it has logical and empirical advantages over trait theory.

### Practitioner's Window

Socioanalytic theory assumes that the three big problems in life concern gaining social acceptance (or avoiding rejection), gaining status, power, and the control of resources (or avoiding losing them), and finding meaning and purpose for one's life. People pursue these resources (acceptance, status, and meaning) at work in the course of their careers. The model also assumes that there are individual differences in peoples' ability to do this, the differences primarily concern social skill, and the differences can be assessed or measured. The model has three obvious implications for practitioners.

- First, measures of social skill can be used for selection purposes, to predict supervisors' ratings of on the job performance. Supervisors prefer employees with better social skills over employees with better technical skills but poor social skills.
- Second, employability (the ability to find and retain employment) can be enhanced with social skill training.
- Third, employee engagement is a function of the degree to which employees find opportunities to gain acceptance, status, and meaning from their jobs. This means that managers should treat their subordinates with respect, evaluate them fairly, and provide them with credible accounts of how their work fits in with the larger goals of the organization. That managers do not do this routinely explains the high levels of employee alienation routinely discovered in climate surveys.

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