

## Abstract

The cognitive basis of personality can be conceptualized as social intelligence. Social intelligence consists of the set of social concepts and rules that an individual brings to bear so as to construct a reading of a current life task and plan appropriate action. The social intelligence concept repertoire contains concepts about "kinds of persons" and "kinds of situations"; it also includes concepts about oneself and records of autobiographical experience. The rule repertoire contains a set of interpretive rules governing categorization, inference, judgment and fact retrieval, as well as a set of action rules for planning behavior in social contexts. Social intelligence is learned and consequently it may be altered to fit newly emerging life tasks. Implications of this conceptualization for the assessment of individual differences in problem-solving about life tasks are considered.

Social Intelligence:  
The Cognitive Basis of Personality

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The study of personality and the study of problem-solving have much in common. Each social interaction, whether mundane or monumental, presents a problem to be solved--or, rather, an unfolding series of problems. Explicitly or implicitly, the person is asking such questions as: What is going on here? Who are these people, what are they doing, and what do they want of me? What are my own goals, do they conflict with theirs, and if so how do I make a choice between them? How can I achieve the goals I select, and how do I make a choice among the available strategies? What are the consequences for being wrong, and how can I recover from my mistakes? What consequences will my choices have on other people, and what can I do about their reactions? In the social domain, some problems are well defined, in the sense that the information present in the situation is so rich and unambiguous that there is a high degree of social consensus as to how the problem is to be constructed and how it is to be solved. Such "problems" hardly qualify as problems at all. However, most social problems are not very well structured--they permit more than one construal, and there is no single best solution; but like all problems they call for the application of the individual's intellectual resources. From a social-cognitive point of view, personality manifests itself in individual differences in social problem-solving--in the ways in which different people interpret events and plan actions in order to meet both the manifest and hidden tasks of everyday life.

Approaching the study of personality from the perspective of people's problem-solving activities has a long history within the field, from Lewin (1935) and Kelly (1955) to Lazarus (1966) and Mischel (1973). Lewin (1935) emphasized the dynamics of interaction between individual and environment, while Kelly (1955) provided the portrait of the individual as an active construer of events. These positions were sharply different from prevalent theories of human behavior as primarily reactive to internal predispositions or to external contingencies. For both Lewin & Kelly, the individual problem-solver was actively construing events on the basis of prior beliefs and experiences, while simultaneously revising beliefs and shaping behavior to best adapt to events as they evolved. These early "cognitive" theories anticipated to a considerable degree more recent "constructivist" approaches to cognition (e.g., Neisser, 1967, 1976, 1982). Because of this continuity between old and new perspectives on problem-solving activity, it is now possible to translate the ideas of Lewin and Kelly into the language of modern cognitive psychology. In this essay, we use the construct of social intelligence in order to facilitate that translation and, thus, provide a framework for understanding the cognitive basis of personality.

The construct of social intelligence bears a strong family resemblance to recent reconceptualizations of cognitive intelligence (cf. Resnick, 1976; Sternberg, 1977, 1979) and to cognitive behavior therapists' notions of construction competencies (Meichenbaum, 1977; Mischel, 1973) and social problem-solving skills (D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971; McFall, 1982; Spivack, Platt & Shore, 1976). For example, Sternberg's (1979) information-processing framework for intelligence

focuses on individuals' repertoires of problem-encoding and problem-solving skills. Intelligence is not viewed as a unidimensional ability of which some people have a great deal and others less. Rather, intelligence is construed as a collection of cognitive components and meta-components used to solve specific problems; in some contexts an individual will be able to employ her intelligence repertoire easily to arrive at a solution, while in other problem contexts the same individual will have difficulties. Using the intelligence repertoire, that is, "showing intelligence" in any given problem context, is a much a process of encoding the problem as it is one of planning and actually executing a solution. Similarly, cognitive - behavior therapists place as much emphasis on the problems individuals have in "reading" or "appraising" situations, as on individuals' actual behaviors in those situations (Goldfried & Merbaum, 1973; Lazarus, 1966; Meichenbaum, 1977).

The intelligence repertoire is stored in memory as knowledge which the individual draws upon in order to achieve her goals and meet life tasks. Following the usage established in cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence (Anderson, 1981; Hastie & Carlston, 1980; Winograd, 1975), a distinction may be drawn between concept (declarative) and rule (procedural) knowledge. Concept knowledge consists of facts about real and imagined objects and events in the world--in the case of social intelligence, it is knowledge about oneself, other people, and the social situations in which we encounter them. The individual's autobiographical record, or diary of personal experiences (episodic memory), is also part of conceptual knowledge (Tulving, 1972). By contrast, rule knowledge consists of the knowledge

which we employ to categorize percepts, make judgments and inferences, solve problems, and perform various behavioral acts. In the case of social intelligence, these rules include those that we employ to assign people and situations to various categories, form impressions of others and make predictions about their thoughts and actions, make attributions of causal responsibility, determine what needs to be done in particular situations, and plan appropriate actions.

The present analysis of social intelligence begins with the structural elements of personality--the concepts and rules in the social intelligence repertoire. From there we turn to the dynamics of personality, as individuals use these concepts and rules to read situations and plan action. Individual differences in the social intelligence repertoire (and the associated dynamics of solving life tasks) are tied to unique social learning histories. The flexibility of human personality is exemplified in the process, however torturous, of incorporating new concepts and rules into the repertoire. Assessment of individuals' social intelligence repertoires appropriately occurs within the problem-solving contexts of individuals' mundane and monumental life tasks. Comparison between the social intelligence analysis and that of other personological traditions highlights the commitment of this perspective to characterizing how individuals use social intelligence to solve specific life tasks, while simultaneously tailoring their personalities in the face of life experiences.

## The Concept and Rule Repertoire:

## The Structures of Personality

Cognitive personology, and in particular a social intelligence analysis, is now in a position to draw on substantial work in social cognition and cognitive psychology (cf. Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1982; Hastorf & Isen, 1982; Markus & Zajonc, 1983) in presenting a picture of the basic structures of social intelligence. Of course, as with any complex system there are many representational models of the social concept and rule repertoire. We will present one version of a social intelligence repertoire, acknowledging it as one sample from the universe of reasonable models.

Social Concepts: Person, Situation, Self Concepts

One of the basic aspects of social intelligence is the set of social concepts that a person uses to make sense of subjective experience, interpersonal events, and impinging social stimuli. The social concepts are bundles of knowledge about "kinds of people," "kinds of situations" and "kinds of selves." Some common social concepts include: social stereotypes of men and women, Jews and WASPs (e.g., Bem, 1974; Hamilton, 1979); personality types such as achievers and altruists (e.g., Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Friendly & Glucksberg, 1970); and the situations such as blind dates, barmitzvahs, and job interviews, where we typically encounter such individuals (e.g., Cantor, Mischel & Schwartz, 1982a). Similarly, the self concept, rather than being a monolithic, unitary mental representation of one's own personality, more likely may consist of an organized set of self concepts that are specific to particular domains or social contexts (Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1983). An individual may have concepts about: my independent self, my

work self and my Jewish self (e.g., Markus, 1977, 1979; Kihlstrom, 1983; McGuire & McGuire, 1981).

We assume that social concepts, like non-social concepts, are "fuzzy" representations of the characteristic features of category members (cf. Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1983; Smith & Medin, 1981). The mental representation of the social concept may be organized around multiple typical exemplars (e.g., specific individuals--Smith & Medin, 1981) or more abstract prototypes (e.g., lists of characteristic features--Cantor & Mischel, 1979). For example, the concept for "achiever" may be represented by a large list of correlated features (e.g., workaholic, dreams of power, values competition, very verbal) or by a set of descriptions of "achievers I have known." These descriptions, whether represented in abstract prototypes or specific exemplars, include much affect-laden ("hot") social information. The features can represent the goals, emotional reactions, behavioral plans, traits and desires typically associated with that "kind of person" or that "kind of situation."

The individual's repertoire of social concepts is clustered into networks of related concepts. Each network is also hierarchically arranged starting with very general superordinate concepts in that domain and progressively branching into more differentiated subordinate concepts. We suggest that the more abstract concepts are prototype representations and the more specific ones are clusters of typical exemplars of the concept. We assume that concepts are organized within these associative hierarchies according to similarity as defined by the linguistic norms of the culture (i.e., clustering via semantic and affective meaning similarity). For example, within this culture at

least, people widely share the beliefs that talkative people also tend to be adventuresome, that dominant people also tend to be cold, that smart people tend to be friendly, and that when we feel pleasure we also tend to feel contentment (e.g., Norman, 1963; Rosenberg & Sediak, 1972; Russell, 1980; Shweder, 1982; Wiggins, 1979). However, it is also essential to leave room for idiographic variation, reflecting individuals' social learning experiences. As a function of personal experience, a particular individual might associate dominant people with warmth not coldness. That individual might also assume that people who feel pleasure are also feeling guilt rather than contentment. Examples of such idiosyncratic hierarchies have been provided by Rosenberg (1976; Rosenberg & Jones, 1972) based on cluster analyses and multidimensional scalings of a broad sample of 16 students' personal acquaintances; and by Pervin (1976), based on similar methodologies applied to the situations actually encountered by four people in their everyday lives. Within each domain the subjects' conceptual hierarchies were well structured, but they proved to be remarkably different from each other, and from the consensual hierarchies that emerge when rating data are pooled across subjects.

Figures 1 and 2 present examples of social-concept hierarchies that might be obtained from two individuals: Jack may be thought of as a stereotypical masculine male, whose social interactions are oriented around issues of agency and achievement; Jill, by contrast, may be thought of as a stereotypical feminine female, whose social interactions are oriented around issues of communality and caretaking (Bakan, 1966; Bem, 1974; Spence & Heimreich, 1978). In each case, extracts from four different conceptual hierarchies are presented: "types of persons,"

"types of situations," "self-as-different-people," and "self-in-different-situations." The hierarchies should be construed as related to each other: for example, situation concepts contain a wealth of information concerning the types of people to be found in them (Cantor et al., 1982a). The hierarchy of "self-as-different-people" contains "possible selves" projected into the future (Markus, 1983), as well as currently actualized personalities manifested in different situational contexts (Kinlstrom & Cantor, 1983). Each hierarchy is arranged vertically with highly abstract types at the most superordinate level, subtypes at the middle level, and specific exemplars at the lowest level. Horizontal links between hierarchies are not represented, for the sake of clarity. The emotional valence attached to each element is labelled as positive (+), negative (-), or some mix of the two; the valence also varies in potency.

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Jack, as portrayed in Figure 1, divides his acquaintances into two broad categories, achievers (those who accomplish tasks) and facilitators (those who ease the way for other people). Being a well-socialized male, he positively values the achiever role, and he has a very rich, differentiated and highly articulated concept hierarchy, complete with multiple prototypes and exemplars. Similarly, he divides his social world into two broad types of situations, those in which he is active and those in which he is quiet. Not surprisingly, he has a richer hierarchy of the former type than the latter. These hierarchies have multiple links to his self-concept hierarchies, which (not

surprisingly) emphasize achievement rather than facilitation. he doesn't have a very good idea about relaxing situations, except that he doesn't find them very rewarding; nor does he have a very good idea of what he is like as a father, except that he is vaguely similar to his own parents.

Jill, as portrayed in Figure 2, also has a superordinate concept of achiever, but for her the alternate is altruist rather than facilitator. Whereas Jack is very positive about achievers and neutral towards facilitators, Jill is highly positive about altruists and fairly negative toward achievers. Being a well-socialized feminine type, she has developed through social learning and various life experiences a rich, differentiated, and highly articulated concept hierarchy for altruists. Similarly, the social situations which she encounters are organized with emphasis on those where she can behave in accordance with her concepts of herself as an altruist; she has little idea what goes on in the corporate world of her husband. She has a very rich concept of herself as an altruist, but she finds it difficult to think of herself in any other way; she values these altruistic roles highly, and her success in them allows her to think of herself as a productive person--though she clearly defines productivity differently than Jack does.

The intrusion of differential socialization of gender roles results in some of the differences between Jack's and Jill's social concept repertoires (so might, in principle, racial, religious, or class differences in socialization); additional points of variation between repertoires reflect differences in the details of each individual's history of social experience. Individual differences are particularly noteworthy when superficially similar concepts are tagged with different

affective valences--in terms of both a general preference or aversion, and a more discrete affective reaction such as astonished or glad, distressed or afraid (Bower, 1981; Clark & Isen, 1982). Because these evaluative-affective associations are learned through direct and vicarious experience, they--like all other aspects of the social concept repertoire--are more or less specific to the individual and are open to revision in the light of new experiences.

It is positively overwhelming to think about the number of different social concept networks that an individual has abstracted by adulthood--"kinds of persons" alone includes personality types (e.g., Cantor & Mischel, 1979), people in social roles (e.g., Cohen, 1981), people with various political attitudes (e.g., Judd & Kulik, 1980), and so on. It seems that by adulthood individuals possess enormous varieties of specific social concepts. However, these specific concepts may well be organized into a smaller set of basic, superordinate concepts. For example, an evolutionary-life task perspective suggests some very general adaptive tasks which map nicely onto domains also emphasized by motive and trait theorists: the hierarchy task of establishing dominance-submission orderings can be related to power motives and competitive situations; the territoriality task of exploration and establishing control-competence encompasses achievement strivings and work-play situations; the identity task of finding out "who we are" and "with whom we belong" subsumes affiliation motives and social group-affiliation situations (cf. Norman, 1963; Plutchik, 1980; Wiggins, 1979). An additional basic task, that of coping with loss-separation might serve to organize concepts pertaining to emotional

stability and safe-dangerous situations (cf. Erikson, 1950; Vaillant, 1977).

Basic concept domains derived from primitive adaptive tasks are posited at only the most abstract level of analysis. The specific form that the concept repertoire takes will be derived from the ways in which those abstract tasks are played out in the specific cultural and individual life context. But these abstract task-concept domains may provide a potential point of departure for comparisons between individuals' social intelligence repertoires within a shared cultural context. Returning to the contrast between the sample concept networks of Jack and Jill, these networks are quite different in specifics, but cemented in the similar higher-order distinction between achievement-territoriality and affiliation-identity task domains. Within these basic domains tremendous variation occurs in the content and organization (derived from personal experiences) of the specific exemplar concepts. Moreover, Jack and Jill, as do all individuals, have different areas of social concept expertise and ignorance--therein lies another major source of individual cognitive variation. Jack is an expert about "achievers" and "work situations"--he has articulated many concepts in those domains, developed rich prototypes for the concepts and known many prototypical exemplars. Jill is relatively unconcerned with "achievers" but quite the expert about "altruistic volunteers" and "volunteer organizations"; her prototypes are well-articulated for those concepts. The social concept networks of individuals reflect their social learning histories not only in the content, affective associations and organization of the social concepts, but also in the degree of articulation of different concept domains. Individuals

articulate concepts in domains highlighted by their particular social learning experiences, over the life course, with family, in educational institutions, organizations, subcultures (see Veroff, 1983). The contrast presented above between the domains of expertise and ignorance of Jack and Jill at midlife might well, then, reflect the traditional gender socialization of Americans in the 1950's in the achievement-affiliation domains (Spence & Helmreich, 1978).

The most salient and affect-laden part of the social concept repertoire is likely to involve the self concepts. We assume that the self concepts are concepts of similar structure as the other social concepts (cf. Kihstrom & Cantor, 1983; Markus & Smith, 1981). These concepts represent the features of the "self" as different "kinds of persons" and "in different situations." Perhaps the "self as X" is represented first as an exemplar in the different persons and situations hierarchies. Then gradually, as a particular domain (e.g., self-as-parent) or context (e.g., self with client) becomes central, well-articulated and important to the "self," the individual articulates a self-concept and enters it in one of the self hierarchies. The self-concept hierarchies most likely hold the concepts which are most reflective of individual social learning histories. By the same token, individuals' cognitive selves hold the key to much of what is unique about their social interaction patterns (Kelly, 1955). The features in the self-prototypes and exemplars directly store information about present selves (patterns of preferences, abilities, goals, emotions, plans, actions), "past selves" willingly discarded as opportunities for personality change arise (e.g., going to college, getting married, entering psychotherapy, losing weight, becoming a parent), and "possible

selves" (Markus, 1983) that the person is striving or hoping to realize in the future.

The self-concept hierarchies are linked with the other social concept networks; together these knowledge structures function as a vast reservoir of idiographically and nomothetically organized, highly "charged" social intelligence. The differences in social intelligence of Jack and Jill are characterized by more than just the content, organization, and areas of articulation of their social concepts. These two individuals differ with respect to areas of integration between self and person-situation hierarchies. Jack's self concepts are well-integrated (interconnected) with his other well-articulated social concepts in the domains of achievement, work, professionalism. By contrast, he has less integration (and less embellishment) between the self and person-situation networks with respect to the domain of parenting and virtually no self-relevance for the concept of "volunteers." Again, Jill's intelligence repertoire looks integrated and articulated in quite different domains (parenting, volunteerism) than is true of Jack's repertoire. These interconnections between self and social concepts specify the individual's preferences or motives across domains. Jack, by virtue of his highly articulated and integrated concepts in the achievement domain, is likely to see quickly the achievement potential in situations and apply his concepts and rules to plan relevant behavior (cf. Atkinson, 1981).

#### Social Events: Autobiographical Memory

The self-concept system is also connected to autobiographical memory, another basic building block of social intelligence--the organized store of event memories involving the self either directly or

vicariously (cf. Bower & Gilligan, 1979; Kihlstrom, 1981; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1983). The autobiographical record (again, probably organized as a network) keeps track of episodes involving the self and preserves concrete information about the context, the order of events, subjective experience and outcomes associated with each event. These episodic networks are probably organized more according to principles of spatial and temporal contiguity than semantic or affective similarity (Kihlstrom & Evans, 1979; Mandler, 1979). However, such a network could certainly encompass hierarchical organization based on temporal epoch. For example, Jack's autobiographical memory would begin in childhood, with the first few years generally obscured by infantile amnesia (Kihlstrom & Harackiewicz, 1982; White & Pillemer, 1979), progressing through elementary and secondary school, college and law school, military service, and job; within these general epochs are more narrowly defined ones, such as second grade and freshman year, marriage right after graduation, basic training and (of course) officer candidate school, entry-level position in the firm, first and second promotions, as well as innumerable specific events. Jill's autobiographical memory will seem structurally similar to Jack's through college, but differ thereafter: marriage, a postgraduate job putting her husband through law school, first child, second child, third child; her autobiographical memory may include the events in the lives of her spouse and children, while Jack may not have a clear, organized representation of the lives of his wife and daughter.

Figures 3 and 4 show portions of Jack's and Jill's autobiographical memories for a selected recent week. Jack's memories emphasize his job, especially his preparation for and performance at a big meeting with a



new client, and de-emphasize his experiences at home with his family. Jill's memories emphasize her activities at home and de-emphasize her part-time job as a docent at a local art museum. The autobiographical record keeps track not only of the event itself, but also of the individual's subjective impression of success and failure, and affective reactions; these features also serve to mark out what is important from what is trivial. It is probably largely from such records that particular approach-avoidance tendencies become associated with specific self, person, and situation concepts.

The evaluative associations to events recorded in autobiographical memory can serve as the basis for future planning: Jack knows he can take on another client because he was so successful with this one, and because he knows that his family will adjust to his career; Jill will refuse a full-time position at the museum because she recalls many past occasions when she had to arrive late or leave early in order to attend a school play or care for a sick child. These records of past successes and failures are linked, positively or negatively, to Jack's and Jill's self, person, and situation concepts. In this way, plans, goals, and preferences are built up from specific social learning experiences.

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The ongoing autobiographical record also provides for unity and coherence in the social concept repertoire. When Jack's "parent" self is activated, he can still remember what he did in his "professional" self. Jill-at-the-art-museum is aware of having shifted from her "parent" self and her memories of recent events at home help her to keep

track of her other life activities. These autobiographical memories also contain affective-evaluative associations to the remembered events. The affective-evaluative tags, when integrated across many events, provide the experiential basis for self-esteem: Jack and Jill can feel equally good about themselves because they have equal amounts of positive experiences in domains that are important to them.

#### Social Rules: Reading Situations and Planning Behavior

The final component of social intelligence consists of a repertoire of rules: interpretive rules used to read situations and action rules used to plan behavior in those situations. The individual always uses these rules in coordination with the concept repertoire. Frequently, an individual isn't aware of having this "knowledge," or if the person does infer its existence, there is no direct awareness of when it is applied, and no control over its application (Kihlstrom, 1983). The implicit use of interpretive rules and concepts is commonplace in reading situations; in order to plan behavior, individuals may be more explicit in their use of action rules and consciously think about relevant self concepts, prior experiences and social concepts. But in familiar life situations, even action rules and concepts often become "second nature," automatically run-off to plan appropriate behavior. Conversely, through interpersonal exchanges or in therapy, some of our most habitual interpretive rules and concepts may surface and receive explicit attention in reading situations.

The interpretive rules are involved in perception, memory, categorization, causal attribution, judgment, and inference in both social and nonsocial domains. We label most of these rules implicit because the individual is rarely cognizant of them or able to articulate

them verbally. Nevertheless, their existence and operation can be inferred from observation of lawful patterns of performance in various cognitive tasks. In the social domain, the interpretive rules allow us to categorize ourselves, people, and situations (Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Cantor et al., 1982a; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1983); interpret global arousal reactions and behaviors as indicative of specific emotions and preferences (Bem, 1972; Mandler, 1975; Schachter & Singer, 1962); integrate various items of information in order to form a summary impression (Anderson, 1974); infer underlying dispositions from observations of behavior and its consequences (Jones & Davis, 1965); make attributions about the causes of events (Kelley, 1967, 1972; Weiner et al., 1972); encode and retrieve information about others (Hastie, 1980, 1981); make inferences, judgments, and predictions about the future (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Taylor & Fiske, 1978); and test hypotheses (Snyder, 1980; Swann & Read, 1981).

A very large portion of research on social cognition is devoted to explicating these rules. So, for example, we know that causal attributions are determined by information concerning the consistency of the actor's behavior toward the target across a wide variety of contexts; the distinctiveness of the actor's behavior toward the target, compared to other targets; and the consensus among other actors with respect to the target. We also know that to judge the likeability of people, individuals "compute" the average likeability ratings associated with the target's various attributes, considering as well initial biases toward that person. In the course of this research, investigators have also uncovered systematic departures from or shortcuts around these rules. So, for example, the fundamental attribution error leads us to

attribute a person's behavior to internal dispositions rather than situational demands or constraints. People frequently misattribute the causal antecedents of their arousal states. In making judgments, people tend to be inordinately influenced by their initial impressions, and by the ease with which examples or evidence come to mind. When we test hypotheses, we seek confirmatory rather than disconfirmatory data, and when confronted with information that is incongruent with our expectations, we try to rationalize it in terms of our prior impressions. In a self-flattering manner, we attribute our successes to ability, and our failures to effort, difficulty, or chance.

The interpretive rules are used with the social concept repertoire to read social situations. And again, there will be differences in the content of the rules and concepts brought to bear by individuals in reading a situation. In the face of a failure experience, for example, some individuals are experts at using those self-protective attribution rules; other individuals are quick to make ability attributions, judging themselves as insufficiently talented after a failure performance (Dweck & Goetz, 1978). Returning to our contrast between Jack and Jill: Jack may have become an expert at retrospective ego defensive attributions about his intermittent "failures" in the work setting; he uses defensive attribution rules in coordination with concepts about work and the work setting that center around successful, positive achievement experiences. Jill, by contrast, may have finely-sharpened rules of self-blame acquired from years of taking responsibility for problems as a parent and volunteer worker. She "knows" that children are not to be blamed, that she sometimes doesn't work hard enough in helping others, that success requires persistence. Neither Jack nor Jill is likely to be

explicitly aware of the particular form that their attribution expertise or bias takes.

The other rules in the repertoire are the action rules of social exchange (cf. Athay & Darley, 1981; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), self-presentational strategies (cf. Jones & Pittman, 1982) and social scripts (cf. Abelson, 1976), self-regulation (cf. Mischel, 1974, 1983), strategies for handling feeling states and emotional reactions (cf. Lazarus, Kanner & Folkman, 1980; Leventhal, 1983), social role-taking and communication (cf. Higgins, 1981). These action rules form the basis of the individual's plans for responding to current and anticipated events. For example, an individual may have a rule for ingratiation (Jones & Pittman, 1982); accordingly, in order to get people to like her, that individual conforms to others' expectations. Jill might well have articulated that action rule. Similarly, a principle of competition in social exchange may be represented in the action rules repertoire. Jack may have articulated a rivalry rule: Try at all times to minimize the outcome of a rival competitor. Jack may also have action rules to mask his intense emotional reactions of anger, jealousy, grief or hurt: He prefers to let out anger gradually or even in a "passive-aggressive" fashion, rather than lose control in an explosion. A decision-making script might go as follows: Whenever I make a decision I first imagine the worst outcome possible so as to avoid extreme disappointment. Both Jack and Jill might have that rule in the repertoire, though they each may associate different behavioral plans with that rule. Jack, reading a situation as even remotely likely to lead to failure may invoke a self-handicapping strategy of withdrawing effort so that the cause of any failure isn't unambiguously

associated with insufficient ability (Jones & Pittman, 1982). For Jill, by contrast, the potential for failure may activate her "try one's hardest" rule in an attempt not to let anyone else down or to disappoint them.

The action rules repertoire of a given individual may be fairly large, larger than that individual's interpretive rules repertoire. There also are very direct links represented in the individual's social intelligence repertoire between specific action rules and relevant self concepts, social concepts, and autobiographical records. Jill uses her ingratiation action rule in coordination with the relevant self-concept of altruist; there also is a direct link to the self-with-family concept, a very accessible memory of ingratiating a friend and a well-articulated concept of intimidators (who like to be ingratiated). Unlike the interpretive rules, the action rules are coordinated with specific concepts in the individual's repertoire. Consider Jack with his "worst case" analysis decision-making rule. In a situation which he has "read" as requiring a choice, Jack will rather automatically draw on his image as a smart person for whom failure attributable to lack of personal ability must be avoided at all costs; he will plan his performance accordingly. Similarly, Jack's rules for the regulation of emotion--especially those rules used when he feels quite upset--are intimately linked to his self-concept as a leader and to childhood memories of feeling humiliated after losing control of his emotions. Action rules represent the behavioral plans and goals that best match a person's concepts, as well as his expectancies derived from specific autobiographical memories.

## Utilization of Social Intelligence:

## The Dynamics of Personality

When confronted with the problems posed by specific social situations, people use their social intelligence repertoires to read the meaning of the situation and plan action in accordance with their interpretations. When the situation is one that is relatively unfamiliar to the individual, this "effort after meaning" (Bartlett, 1932) is deliberate, voluntary, and can be explicitly articulated by her. When the situation is one that is relatively familiar to the individual, and especially if the problems that it poses have been satisfactorily solved in the past, this interpretive and planning activity can run off almost automatically. In the latter case, however, social behavior is not by any means "mindless," in the sense of being devoid of cognitive activity (e.g., Langer, 1978; see Cantor, Mischel, & Schwartz, 1982b; Miller & Cantor, 1982).<sup>1</sup> Whether the situation is familiar or strange, the individual constructs his reading by accessing information from his networks of social concepts pertaining to people and situations, self-concepts, autobiographical memories, rules for processing social information, and for planning action.

In the course of utilizing their repertoires of social intelligence, people make use of information supplied by the social environment as well as information generated by inference from knowledge and experience stored in memory. However, it should be clear that people do not take account of all the data that are available to them in constructing a reading of the situation and planning appropriate action. At the most elementary level, the capacity of the cognitive system (Miller, 1956) places some constraints on the number of items of

information that can be held in active memory at any one time. Thus, the person is forced to attend to only a small sample of relevant data. But it would not be correct to say that this sample is some random, unbiased portion of the whole. Rather, the process of sampling the universe of available information is guided, and biased, by several sets of factors.

Mood. Transient emotional states may selectively direct attention to features of the social environment, and selectively activate concepts and personal memories, that are affectively congruent with the person's prevalent subjective or interpersonal mood states (e.g., Bower, 1981; Clark & Isen, 1982). As a guest at a dinner party, Jack may read the situation as an achievement task (just as he reads most situations). This reading may be reinforced because he set a personal best in a marathon run earlier that day, or successfully concluded a business deal earlier in the week. Unintentionally, Jack focuses selectively on "good" experiences from his past: he remembers prior parties in which he was the center of attention and praised, rather than those in which he was snubbed. Not surprisingly, he perceives this party as a time to "shine" and overwhelm the guests with his abilities and wit. On the other hand, Jill may enter the same situation in low spirits: she has recently come into conflict with her teenage daughter over issues related to schoolwork and adolescent sexuality, and their relationship--until recently warm and intimate--now seems strained to the breaking point. As the table conversation turns to the merits and demerits of nuclear power plants, and people begin to take sides and defend their positions forcefully, she gets extremely nervous. Whereas Jack would debate vigorously, Jill tries very hard to soften the conflict and

reconcile--or at least silence--opposing points of view. Though Jill isn't quite sure of the reasons for her increasing anxiety at the table, she does know that this is not just a friendly exercise of one-upmanship with no lasting consequences. A person in a good mood, with heightened confidence and self-esteem, can enjoy a certain amount of give-and-take. A person in a bad mood, full of self-doubt and feelings of failure, will "overreact" to the smallest and most lighthearted critical remark.

Expertise. Another very powerful selection device influencing interpretation and planning has to do with the individual's own areas of social expertise and ignorance. Expertise in a particular domain is represented by the presence of a highly articulated, organized, and integrated set of concepts and rules relevant to that domain. With such an elaborate repertoire of social intelligence, it will be easy for new experiences to make contact with prior knowledge; therefore, reading a situation in a particular way, and planning a particular course of action, will seem "natural." Even in a neutral mood, Jill might have arrived at a reading of the dinner party in which she could help others and facilitate positive social interactions. She will instinctively know how to avoid embarrassing silences and to pass the hors d'oeuvres; to lend a hand in the kitchen when things get hectic between courses; to make sure that all the shared interests of the guests are revealed; and to help clear the table after dinner is over. None of this would occur to Jack. Even on an off night, he will be exquisitely sensitive, and responsive, to any opening for self-promotion. Unless his host is also his boss, he will volunteer to make the martinis and carve the duck; he will go out of his way to comment favorably on his boss's wife's dress, and to express surprise that she feels the need to patronize the local

Jane Fonda exercise salon; he will quote a columnist from the Times or the Wall Street Journal; and when the intern from the local business school offers a suggestion, Jack will remind those present that he expressed a similar idea some months ago. In the language of another tradition in personality research (Atkinson, 1981; McClelland, 1951), Jill will be quickly aroused to project her affiliation or intimacy motives on the dinner party situation, while those projected by Jack will have more to do with achievement and power. But we are not required to posit the presence and activity of such unidimensional motives or tendencies. Rather, we emphasize the individual's repertoire of multifaceted concepts, personal memories, and rules that lead one person to read a situation one way, and someone else in another manner entirely.

Environmental structure. In addition to attributes of the person such as mood and expertise, various features of the physical and interpersonal structure of situations will also make particular readings salient, and inhibit others. Even with his good mood and expertise at self-promotion, Jack may shy away from reading the dinner party as an achievement task if the company presents the strong possibility of intimidation, failure, and humiliation; or if he happens to be seated between two people whom he has no desire to impress. And if the party is at a restaurant or a country club (with little opportunity to help), or the guests are already interpersonally responsive, Jill may not see the need to help out. There is no reason for Jill to exercise her dominant goals, and for Jack they are positively maladaptive. The responsiveness of the individual's readings and plans to both obvious and subtle features of the situational context differentiates the

cognitive point of view from those which attribute the individual's behavior to his pan-situational dispositions or motives. Similar person-by-situation interactions have been discussed within both the trait and motive traditions, of course (e.g., Atkinson & Birch, 1978; Magnusson & Endler, 1977). The present approach goes further, though, in attempting to describe the cognitive structures and processes that often facilitate, but sometimes inhibit, individuals' responsiveness to cues and events in a situation.

The concepts and rules which mediate social interactions deserve the name "intelligence" to the extent that they are optional, flexible, and modifiable rather than obligatory, stereotyped and immutable. In other words, intelligent social beings should be able to update their situation readings and action plans in response to feedback concerning the accuracy and consequences of their thoughts and actions (Kelley, 1979; Bruner, 1983). Unfortunately, several properties of social intelligence serve to impair this dynamic updating process.

First, some features of the cognitive system itself make it very difficult for individuals to update or change their readings of social situations. In the process of integrating available information to form a summary judgment, it turns out that individuals do not give equal weight to all environmental cues. In particular, there appears to be a primacy effect in that the final product is inordinately influenced by the earliest information to be received (Anderson, 1974; Jones & Goethals, 1972). So, Jack is likely to be inordinately swayed in his impressions of guests by their initial reactions to his "brilliant insights" and name-dropping efforts. Another manifestation of this tendency is the anchoring and adjustment heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman,

1974). In some situations, the judgmental process begins with some initial estimate, in the form of a hypothesis or informed guess, which the person must revise following further deliberation. As it happens, these subsequent adjustments typically do not depart far from the initial anchor-point. The problem is compounded by a particular bias in hypothesis-testing towards data which tend to confirm the judge's hypothesis (Snyder, 1980; Swann & Read, 1981; Wason & Johnson-Laird, 1972). When confronted with new information that bears on a hypothesis, people are prone to selectively attend to, and selectively recall from memory, facts that are consistent rather than inconsistent with the hypothesis; moreover, when forced to deal with disconfirmatory information, they tend to discount it and devalue it in a variety of ways. Finally, if allowed to interact with the people who are the objects of our hypotheses, we are likely to treat them in such a manner as to elicit behavior from them which is consistent with our first impressions (Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978; Snyder, 1981). When Jack treats one guest as "special" and another guest as "hopeless," not surprisingly the former encourages Jack's self-promotion activity and the latter shows remarkably little pleasure at Jack's latest success story. These confirmatory biases are sometimes subtle, sometimes powerful, but they cause problems principally because they operate nonconsciously.

In fact, much of the repertoire of social intelligence-- particularly those aspects which are classifiable as rule knowledge--is implicit or unconscious (Anderson, 1980; Kihlstrom, 1983). Because the person is unaware of the existence of these rules, and the manner in which they operate to guide social cognition and behavior, he is effectively prevented from reflecting on them and altering them; in this

case, the person runs the risk of using rules uncritically or "mindlessly" (Chanowitz & Langer, 1980). However, mindlessness is not an inevitable feature of social intelligence. These rules can be uncovered in the course of social interactions. Suppose that Jack found some dinner party guests increasingly unresponsive to his aggressive interaction style. He might, by chance, remark upon this annoyance and "learn" from Jill that he has a tendency to read dinner parties as arenas for personal achievement; she might also explain that his self-promotion activities are not uniformly appreciated. By becoming indirectly aware of these rules in this manner, the person acquires knowledge (actually, metaknowledge) about his well-worn rules and thereby comes into a position to alter the rules themselves. Recent models of the acquisition of cognitive skills (e.g., Anderson, 1981, 1982; Newell, 1980) argue that all rules are initially accessible to phenomenal awareness; over an extended period of practice, these rules become dissociated from awareness. If a person becomes aware of a rule and its lack of utility, a new rule can be acquired to reduce the impact of the old one (it is unclear whether a rule, once acquired, can be truly lost from the repertoire). Jack, now self-consciously aware that he comes across as too self-promoting, may at least try to be more responsive to the other guests. After all, Jack is certainly not intentionally insulting guests; he desires nothing more than to be liked and respected. But even in this "mindful" state, Jack will not find it easy to turn from his domain of expertise--self-promotion--and embrace a pattern of reciprocal, give-and-take at parties. The "natural" tendency is to fall back on well-worn rules and concepts.

The final difficulty for altering maladaptive procedures is caused by the feelings of "naturalness" that come with expertise. People are likely to favor reading situations in terms of those domains in which they have a rich and highly integrated body of knowledge--if only because such interpretations suggest coping responses that are well within the person's behavioral repertoire (Bandura, 1977). Accordingly, although Jack may wish to be less self-promoting in social interactions, given his expertise and experiences, it will be hard for him to avoid interpreting situations as arenas for achievement activity. This reading, in turn, will easily generate an abundance of plans for accomplishing achievement goals: Jack will "naturally" gravitate towards a target for self-promotion. Of course, in accordance with the self-fulfilling prophecy, this other individual may become increasingly vulnerable to Jack's activities as the evening wears on. The interaction will appear successful, and this success, if that is what it is, may entice Jack into persisting in his self-promotion endeavors--all too often, and painfully, to the point where they once again become unproductive or humiliating. The point is that these readings and plans "work" for individuals such as Jack, in that they are congruent with their self-concepts and easy to perform. However, in the long run, such activity is bound to cause problems because it is not negotiated with the interests of others in the situation. The first step in changing these procedures, then, may be to begin to see ourselves as others see us--and to entertain the possibility that things could be different. Then comes the long, arduous process of developing new expertise or expertise in a new domain.

## Social Intelligence in Life Task Contexts:

### The Assessment of Personality

At a theoretical level, we have argued that people use their social intelligence repertoires to read situations and plan actions, and that individual differences in social behavior are determined largely by individual differences in the concepts, autobiographical memories, and rules that constitute that repertoire. At a practical level, it is incumbent on a personality theorist to indicate how these cognitive features of personality can be assessed. Such an assessment technology lies at the center of Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory, in the form of the Role-Construct Repertory Test. Other technologies can be derived from procedures familiar to the laboratory study of cognition (Kihlstrom & Nasby, 1980). For example, McArthur's (1972) procedure for studying the covariation model of causal attribution (Kelley, 1967) can be employed to reveal individual differences in the tendency to ascribe causal power to the actor, target, context, etc. (Abramson & Metalski, 1981); and Anderson's (1974) procedure for studying information integration can be employed to reveal individual differences in the weights assigned to various items of information, proneness to primacy effects, and the like (Ostrom & Davis, 1979).

These kinds of methodologies are capable of revealing certain aspects of the social intelligence repertoire at a highly abstract level; but the fate of the trait concept suggests that such highly generalized information is not necessarily likely to be useful in understanding (much less predicting) individual differences manifest in specific interactional contexts. If so, then the assessment of the social intelligence repertoire is probably best carried out within the

context of a specific life task which the individual is encountering now. The goal of assessment is to provide a profile of the intelligence used by the individual in the course of working on a life task. Unlike some approaches that begin with an attribute of personality--a trait or a motive or a concept or a rule--and search for its manifestations across a wide variety of situations, this approach begins with a situation--a particular life task--and looks for the attributes of personality that emerge within that context.

### Choosing Life Tasks

The problems which an individual must solve through the application of social intelligence can be conceptualized at any of a number of different levels. At the most concrete, there are narrow domains such as hosting a dinner party, having a date for Saturday night, and complaining to a superior at work. At the most abstract, people appear to be striving to achieve a satisfactory position with respect to such dimensions as competence, affiliation, and dominance. In principle, any of these levels could serve as the focus for assessing social intelligence. In practice, however, it would seem most appropriate to focus on problems residing at an intermediate level of abstraction, such as selecting a career, choosing a mate, planning a family, or coping with retirement. At the most subordinate level, there are too many situational constraints, and the behavior may run off almost automatically. At the most superordinate level, the mix of goals which characterizes most social interactions, and which requires the individual to make comparisons and choices, is lost. If a person reflects on the way in which he operates in the affiliative domain in general, he may focus on physical attractiveness and reciprocal liking;



if asked about strategies for a Saturday night date, he may focus on the choice between an expensive restaurant and tickets to the theatre. When reflecting on the choice of spouse, however, he will necessarily have to consider whether they will be constantly engaged in power struggles, the impact of her career on his, as well as how much they seem to enjoy each other's company. An intermediate level seems to organize a number of different concrete problems under a common rubric, at the same time as it mixes, and forces a choice among, various proportions of superordinate life tasks.

Once a life task has been selected as the focus of assessment, the next problem is to find appropriate individuals in whom social intelligence can be assessed. Obviously, social intelligence can be assessed in anyone. But arguably the knowledge brought to bear on a specific life task can only be assessed in an individual who is actually facing this task--in individuals who are choosing a mate, planning a family, bucking for promotion, or facing retirement. In part, this proposal is dictated by a concern for ecological validity. An individual who is confronted by the prospect of imminent retirement will find the assessment context personally involving, self-relevant, and affectively charged. Tuned into the problem, and desirous of finding a solution, the person will then be motivated to actively employ the variety of concepts, personal memories, and rules in her social intelligence repertoire in order to work on the task. By contrast, a college undergraduate asked to contemplate retirement will most likely give the investigator the intellectual equivalent of a shrug of the shoulder. In addition to concerns of ecological validity, there is also another reason for choosing subjects who are currently working on a life

task: such subject selection will permit longitudinal follow-up studies to determine how the cognitive activity of problem-solving is translated into actual behavior, whether it leads to success or failure, and how the individual uses social intelligence to respond to these consequences.

#### Social Intelligence Profiles

The assessment procedure proposed here is to construct a profile of task-relevant social intelligence for an individual in the context of a salient personal life task. The profile characterizes the person's task-relevant social intelligence on a number of dimensions. Expertise is related to the richness and variety in descriptions of situations, events, actions relevant to the life task. Consensuality refers to the degree of agreement between the individual's perception of those task-relevant situations, events, actions, and group perceptions. Integration is measured in terms of the match between the individual's self-descriptions and her descriptions of people, action, events characteristic in the task-relevant situations. Evaluative tone is reflected in the positive-negative tone of an individual's descriptions of himself in task-relevant situations. These features of the social intelligence profile form the basis for predictions about the "ease" or "difficulty" which the individual will have in working on the life task at hand, the ways in which that person will choose to work on that task, and the likely reactions on the part of others to those efforts. Behavioral measures of ease or difficulty with a task include verbal reports of satisfaction and conflict, as well as observable actions such as lifestyle choices and plans for life changes. The profile also

provides guidelines for working with an individual in the development of new task-relevant expertise.

An individual's "readings" of task-relevant situations and his plans for action in those situations provide the basic data in this assessment process. Self-report methods used in research on person perception (cf. Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1982), the perception of situations (cf. Magnusson, 1980), and the self-concept (cf. Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1983) provide the basis for quantitative analysis of these data. There are many different techniques which could be used in the construction of a task-relevant social intelligence profile. In order to illustrate the profile construction process we will use a sample of those techniques in the following fictitious example. The assessment context will be that of a group of people in the mid-sixties, similar on many demographic variables: college-educated, upper-middle class, predominantly white and in relatively good physical health. Most important, these are individuals (or spouses of individuals) all of whom currently are coping with a similar major life task: retirement.

The first step in the analysis is designed to provide a list of life tasks shared by the participants. For this purpose, each individual is asked to briefly describe the main life tasks which she perceives to be confronting her at this time period. These life task lists are then coded for agreement amongst cohort members and a set of consensual life task descriptions developed (e.g., Cantor, Mischel & Schwartz, 1982a). In the present example, the following three life tasks might well emerge as consensual tasks: (1) being productive (without my job); (2) shaping a satisfying role with my grown children

(and their families); (3) getting enjoyment from leisure time activities. Each of these three tasks must then be considered in turn.

The next step is to find the set of situations which each individual interprets as relevant to each task. That is, participants are asked to consider all of the life situations--both familiar and rare events--which occur in their life context and which may be relevant to that particular life task (Pervin, 1976). These task-relevant situations might not be ones which the participant herself frequently encounters or seeks out. These are situations which could occur in that person's current life and which he sees as relevant to the life task under consideration. In the retirement cohort, one person might list twelve such activities, some of them hobbies and others life maintenance chores, but all situations associated with the "productivity" task. Let us assume that Jack and Jill have aged and become members of the retiree cohort. Jill would most likely provide such a list of productivity situations. Another retiree, perhaps even Jack, might struggle to think of six situations associated with productivity; and three of those situations might involve return trips to his old work context or odd jobs taken after retirement.

These task-situation lists provide the first indices of task-relevant expertise and of the consensuality of task-relevant knowledge. For example, the task-relevant expertise of each individual can be measured in terms of the number of situations listed for that task. The consensuality of task-relevant knowledge is reflected in the frequency with which the individual lists situations which are also listed by many other cohort members. In this example, Jill's profile would be

"stronger" on these dimensions than would Jack's productivity task profile.

Next, the participants work with their own list of situations generated for a life task. So, Jill considers the twelve situations which she listed for the productivity task. For each of the twelve situations on her list, Jill provides a description of the type of person whom she feels is best-suited to that situation-task (Bem & Funder, 1978; Cantor, 1980; Cantor et al., 1982a). Each description includes the feelings, thoughts, action, appearance, traits of the "prototypic person for that situation" (Cantor et al., 1982a).

At this point, the profile for each participant consists of one description of the prototypic person for each task-relevant situation. In order to collapse this information, a matrix can be constructed for each participant which contains all of the descriptors from his prototypic-person lists arrayed vertically down a page and all of the task-relevant situations arrayed horizontally across the page. The participant can then rate the relevance of each person descriptor for each situation (Pervin, 1976; Rosenberg, 1976). This procedure results in a single descriptor x situation matrix for each life task and participant.

Many different measures of expertise can be gathered from this matrix. Measures of the richness and of the distinctiveness of the participant's person-situation concepts can easily be derived.

Expertise involves not only knowing a great deal about how to behave in each situation, but also knowing that different situations may require different behaviors. Jack, for example, is likely to have many descriptors which he rates as true of his three work-related situations.

However, he may also try to generalize these work-relevant behaviors to the non-work situations in his productivity matrix. His productivity expertise is still too focused around the work arena to be of much use in other situations. In order to see this "ignorance" in Jack's productivity profile, it might be useful to include another measure of expertise: Jack's matrix can be coded for the number of action rules which he sees as viable in each situation. Again, it is likely that Jack would quite simply not know how to be productive in non-work situations. Expertise and ignorance can emerge in many forms in a social intelligence profile.

In the final stage of construction of the social intelligence profile, the participant imagines herself in each of those task-relevant situations. Working with the descriptor x situation matrix, the individual rates the extent to which each descriptor would be characteristic of her behavior in each situation. Integration in the profile can be measured as the degree of correspondence between the descriptor x situation matrix for the "prototypic person" and the matrix for the "self." This comparison may reveal that there are some situations in which the individual sees a number of actions as self-relevant and other situations in which many of the actions seen as reasonable for "others" are not seen as possible for the "self." Integration, like expertise, will come in many forms: Jill's profile would be likely to show integration across all of her productivity situations. Jack, by contrast, would most likely see himself as similar to the prototypic person in work-related situations and more discrepant from the prototypic ideal in the three non-work situations in his productivity matrix. The evaluative tone in Jill's and Jack's

productivity profiles would also be likely to differ. Jill's matrix of self-in-productivity-situations would probably reflect a tone of moderate positiveness across all of the situations. Jack's matrix is more likely to be uneven in evaluative tone, dependent upon the exact nature of the situation (i.e., work or non-work situations).

Each stage in the profile construction process reveals another aspect of the individual's multi-faceted social intelligence for a life task. As we noted earlier, there are a variety of different methods that can be used at each stage in the process. For example, in order to document expertise for a life task, individuals can be asked to form visual images of the activity typically observed in each task-relevant situation. The speed of image formation, as well as the richness and distinctiveness of image content, are good measures of expertise (e.g., Cantor et al., 1982a; Goldfried et al., 1983). The consensuality of task-relevant intelligence can be observed in the following procedure: participants who are all facing a similar life task can be asked to rate the similarity between each pair of situations from a set of task-relevant situations. The match of an individual's perceptions to the group perceptions can then be measured with an individual differences multidimensional scaling algorithm (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). Similarly, methods developed in the self-concept literature (see Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984, for a review) can be used to demonstrate integration between an individual's self and social concepts. For example, individuals who are "schematic" (Markus, 1977) in a concept domain associated with a life task are most likely to have well-integrated self and social concepts in that domain (Markus & Smith, 1981). Integration can also be measured in terms of the number of actions which an

individual can imagine himself performing in a task-relevant situation, especially when those actions form a common "script" for behavior in that situation (e.g., Abelson, 1981). Data for the evaluation dimension of the social intelligence profile may be gathered from reports of autobiographical memory (Kihlstrom & Harackiewicz, 1982; Linton, 1978). Individuals have quite vivid recollections of the positive and negative connotations of past events; these personal memories may be quite relevant to current life tasks (Robinson, 1976).

#### Adaptive and Maladaptive Life Task Profiles

The analysis of social intelligence profiles inevitably raises a discussion of the qualities that make social intelligence functional or dysfunctional, adaptive or maladaptive for a particular life task. We suggest that progress in solving a life task and satisfaction with the solution depend upon the expertise, integration, evaluative tone, and consensuality in the task-relevant social intelligence profile. This prediction derives from several lines of thought: If a person does not have sufficient expertise about task-relevant situations and behaviors, then the task will remain a mystery. However, the expertise alone will not suffice. Little progress will be made if the individual cannot imagine himself actually behaving as is required in those situations (integration). And, if evaluative associations with the task-relevant situations are negative, then no amount of expertise will help provide a solution. Jack would quite simply disdain any contact with volunteer organizations to fulfill his productivity task after a forced retirement.

The solutions provided by an individual's task-relevant repertoire must also be consensually well-validated in order to prove fruitful. If

the social intelligence that an individual brings to bear in reading situations and planning action is not sufficiently negotiated with her social environment, then new problems will be created. It is not adaptive or "intelligent" to contribute one's own delusions in an effort to solve a life task. Suppose, for example, that Jill persists, even after her children have grown and established families of their own, in expecting to see her children quite frequently, participate in all important decisions and remain a "best friend" to each child. She does present a profile characterized by expertise, integration and positive evaluations. But Jill's plan for this life task is not negotiated with the reality of her changing life context or correspondent with the plans of her family. Consequently, her approach is likely to create more problems than it solves.

One of the unique features of a social intelligence analysis is that it raises questions about adaptive and maladaptive aspects of personality in familiar, non-clinical contexts. Of course, it is equally important to note that the features of a social intelligence profile that appear maladaptive for one person may be quite functional for another person in another life task context. There is no "best" or "right" social intelligence that can be specified in the abstract, without consideration of the person-life task context. Jack's compartmentalized social intelligence, focused as it is so heavily in achievement-work domains, results in painful barriers to life satisfaction after retirement. But Jean, the college age daughter of Jack and Jill, is blocked in her attempts to find a satisfying college major precisely because she wants to fulfill all of her varying needs and goals. Jean wants a lucrative career, but one that will not force

her to violate her self-concepts of altruism, aesthetic sophistication, and perhaps motherhood. In her present life task context, it may be just as dysfunctional for Jean to be "spread so thin" in her goals as it is problematic for her father in his later years to be so narrowly focused. As Molly Haskell comments in questioning the utility of a "superwoman" self-concept:

It's difficult enough for men to achieve both distinction and a balanced life--and their orientation toward work is so conditioned as to be natural... But for women, whose ties to life are mysterious and longstanding, such a choice must be profoundly wrenching. Women have traditionally been on the side of life, missionaries on behalf of civilization, culture, the complete existence... While men have been encouraged to compartmentalize, women's lives have been streams into which everything feeds and sloshes together: laundry, breakfast, lovers, safety pins, Christmas presents, psychoanalysis, plants, poetry and editorials.

(Hers, New York Times, March 4, 1982, our italics).

Of course, as Jean focuses or centralizes her intelligence repertoire in the face of her currently salient achievement tasks, her motherhood and affiliation life tasks may become more, not less, difficult to solve. There truly is no perfect intelligence repertoire; the content and organization of the concepts and rules must change to meet each new life task.

The contrast between the utility of a social intelligence repertoire in solving one life task and the problems it causes in another task is of great interest to us. This contrast captures a very crucial element of the present conceptualization--no individual can be said in the abstract to have social intelligence or not, or to be more socially intelligent than another individual. The contrast to traditional personality theories is fourfold: First, unlike trait or motive conceptualizations social intelligence is not a unidimensional

entity along which individuals can be arrayed or rank ordered. Second, one individual cannot be said to have or not have social intelligence for a life task--everyone brings social intelligence to bear in solving a life task. Third, the utility of the individual's social intelligence repertoire cannot be evaluated in the abstract, independent of the particular life task--be it mundane or monumental--which the repertoire is being used to solve. The same repertoire may make it "easy" for an individual to solve one task and "difficult" to solve another life task. And, fourth, the actual content of social intelligence changes over the life cycle as individuals learn new concepts and rules and face new tasks. Social intelligence is multidimensional, dynamic and used to solve life tasks in specific contexts, while simultaneously being reshaped and tailored to fit new tasks in new contexts.

#### Social Intelligence and Personality

Personologists have always been concerned with the distinctive patterns of thought, behavior, and experience that characterize the individual's unique adjustment to his or her life situation (cf. Allport, 1937; Guilford, 1959; Murray, 1938). In order to comprehensively characterize personality, it is important to attend to features of the individual's life adjustment that change, as well as to enduring styles of adaptation. We feel that such a comprehensive approach has not characterized the two dominant traditions in personality research--the trait and behavioral approaches. In characterizing enduring differences in individuals' reactions to similar events, the trait tradition has deemphasized the discriminativeness and situation-specificity of an individual's behavior. By contrast, the

behaviorists have stressed learning and change, as adaptation to situational contingencies, at the expense of enduring individual differences. In so doing, both traditions have built a picture of a rather passive, reactive individual; in one portrait the individual reacts primarily to internal predispositions, while in the other portrait the reaction is primarily to external contingencies. In our view, these portraits place insufficient emphasis on the active, constructive nature of human cognition. Interestingly, the trait and behavioral positions have recently converged in stressing cognitive processes and cognitions as mediating variables in the generation of behavior (see, for example, Atkinson [1981], Bandura [1977], and Bem & Funder [1978] on the role of expectancies, values, perceptions in the behavior generation process). However, still, insufficient emphasis is placed on the person flexibly adapting to an evolving situation and that situation being given meaning, in turn, by the person (see Lewin, 1935; Kelly, 1955; and, more recently, Mischel, 1973). The aim of a social intelligence analysis is to explicate the dynamic and the stable characteristics of individuals' interactions with their everchanging social environments.

In this essay, we have argued that individual differences in social behavior are determined largely by individual differences in social intelligence. Social intelligence consists of the social concepts and rules that an individual brings to bear in problem-solving about both mundane and monumental life tasks. The dynamics of social intelligence involve the application of social concepts and rules in order to read situations and plan action. These social concepts and rules are acquired through the mechanisms of cognitive development in general and

social learning in particular. The social intelligence repertoires of different individuals will overlap with regard to certain concepts and rules emphasized by the culture-at-large during socialization and yet differ because many other concepts and rules are acquired through the individual's unique social learning history. Accordingly, in solving some life tasks people's readings of the situation and action plans may be quite similar, while in problem-solving on other life tasks there may be substantial individual differences. Individuals develop characteristic ways of problem-solving about specific life tasks; these favorite situation readings and preferred action plans reflect the relatively unique collection of concepts and rules in the social intelligence repertoire. But it is important to remember that a person's social intelligence repertoire also changes in the face of new learning and experiences. After all, the social intelligence analysis is based on learning theory and a commitment to change as much as to stability. The cognitive basis of personality is reasonably labelled as "intelligence" to the extent that people can learn more adaptive concepts and rules in order to solve new life tasks. Cognitive-behavior links are most likely to be understood across a long period as the individual explicitly and implicitly works with and on her social intelligence.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>The term "mindlessness" can be construed, mistakenly, to imply the absence of cognitive activity. A more appropriate construal refers to activity which is engaged in uncritically, without conscious reflection.

## Figure Captions

Figure 1. Simplified networks from Jack's social intelligence concept repertoire. Concepts are associatively linked within each network. In the same manner, concepts within each network are associatively linked with concepts in the other networks.

Figure 2. Simplified networks from Jill's social intelligence concept repertoire.

Figure 3. Portions of Jack's autobiographical record for last week.

Figure 4. Portions of Jill's autobiographical record for last week.





