

- dom: Mood effects on responsiveness to framing. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25, 76–91.
- Martin, L. L. (1999). I-D compensation theory: Some implications of trying to satisfy immediate-return needs in a delayed-return culture. *Psychological Inquiry*, 10, 195–208.
- Martin, L. L., Abend, T., Sedikides, C., & Green, J. D. (1997). How would I feel if . . . ? Mood as input to a role fulfillment evaluation process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 242–253.
- Martin, L. L., & Davies, B. (1998). Beyond hedonism and associationism: A configural view of the role of affect in evaluation, processing, and self-regulation. *Motivation and Emotion*, 22, 33–51.
- Martin, L. L., Ward, D. W., Achee, J. W., & Wyer, R. S. (1993). Mood as input: People have to interpret the motivational implications of their moods. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 317–326.
- Sanna, L. T., Turley, K. J., & Mark, M. M. (1996). Expected evaluation, goals, and performance. Mood as input. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 323–335.

Understanding Personality Organization Helps Clarify Mood Regulation

John D. Mayer

Department of Psychology
University of New Hampshire

A sad mood, a happy mood, conscious awareness of those moods, and related thoughts are all parts of personality, albeit sometimes transient parts. Those parts often dynamically influence one another. For example, “when a person experiences a sad mood, he or she improves that mood by thinking positive thoughts,” is a dynamic statement. Personality dynamics occur whenever one part of personality influences another part, or influences the outside world (Mayer, 1998).

The three target articles in this issue of *Psychological Inquiry* focus on *homeostatic*, *competing needs*, and *inertial* dynamics of mood regulation (my labels). Larsen’s homeostatic (this issue) dynamic states that a person constantly compares his or her current mood to a personal standard for what one should feel. When a person’s mood diverges from the standard, mood regulation takes place. Tice and Bratslavsky’s (this issue) competing-needs dynamic, on the other hand, emphasizes that as a person regulates a mood, he or she deregulates some other part of the self. For example, a bad mood may be improved by eating something sweet, which in turn may interfere with a diet. Finally, the Erbers’ (this issue) inertial dynamic states that people don’t often regulate their moods at all, or as the Erbers put it, that “moods remain at rest or in motion unless there is a reason to act upon them.”

These three dynamics of mood regulation each capture some truth about personality. If they could be integrated, however, they would provide a broader, more powerful picture of mood regulation within personality. One way to do this, I argue, is to embed these dynamics within a personality structure. Structure refers to the relatively stable, long lasting arrangement of personality parts. Discussing dynamics and structure together helps develop a more complete picture of per-

sonality organization, and mood regulation within it (Mayer, 1995b, 1998).

To see why this is the case, imagine discussing three dynamics of road construction in a city. The homeostatic dynamic might say, “when traffic rises, more roads are built near the urban periphery to maintain traffic rates.” A competing-needs dynamic might state that, “The construction of more roads improves traffic flow but may harm the neighborhoods through which the roads pass,” and finally, an inertial dynamic might say, “City government often ignores traffic congestion unless forced to do something about it.” These three dynamics tell a perfectly adequate story, but that story can be enhanced by seeing the city’s structure. Consider a nighttime aerial photograph of the city. Such a view records the city’s structure through the positions of roads, buildings, and neighborhoods. It reveals the newer, wider roads at the city’s periphery, the poorly placed roads that barricade one part of a neighborhood from another, and the parts of the city in which traffic flow has not been adequately addressed. In the case of city traffic, dynamics and structure are two ways of discussing interlocking phenomena.

The reason we speak rather infrequently of personality structure in relation to dynamics can be explained in several ways. Unlike the case of urban structure, one cannot climb aboard a helicopter and shoot pictures that reveal personality structure. The structure of personality is a scientific abstraction that represents a person’s relatively static mental qualities; the abstract quality of that structure means that it is subject to controversy. Historically, competing personality theories viewed structure in seemingly different ways; this diverted psychologists to the more promising area of empirical research. Although empirical research into the structure of personality is possible, it has been gener-

ally limited to the examination of small groups of traits, rather than addressing the complexities of the total personality. My recent reviews of personality psychology make me hopeful that a general agreement about some aspects of personality structure is now emerging.

A Simplified Structural Model

One widely accepted, albeit simplified, structural generalization about personality, is that it consists of four partially distinct subsystems: the motivational, emotional, cognitive, and conscious. These four systems correspond to different brain areas, employ different mental mechanisms, perform different mental functions, and operate according to different rules (Hilgard, 1980; MacLean, 1973; Mayer, Chabot, & Carlsmith, 1997). Figure 1 presents an overview of this division. There, a stack of three boxes: motivation (lowest), emotion (middle), and cognition (highest) represent three of these major personality functions. Motives are typically associated with the earliest-evolved brain structures, concern physical or organismic needs, and generate urges that rise until satisfied. Emotions are typically identified with the limbic system, concern relationships with the self and others, and generate specific feelings, each one of which follows its own internal rules for rising, falling, and changing into other feelings (e.g., Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Cognitions are typically identified with the cerebral cortex, concern flexible symbol processing so as to navigate the outside world, and generate thoughts and ideas that are quite plastic in their possible applications. Consciousness is located to the left of Figure 1, indicating that it is potentially interactive (or not) with each of the already described aspects

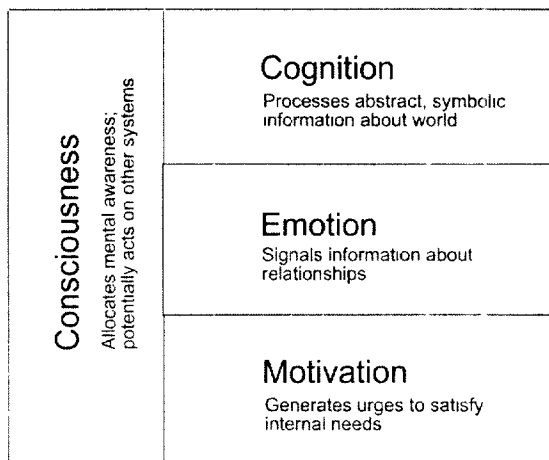


Figure 1. Four classes of personality mechanisms and their processes

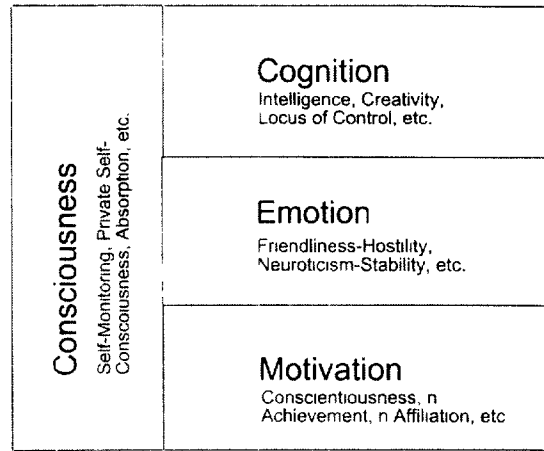


Figure 2. Four classes of personality mechanisms and their related traits

of mind. Consciousness is the most mysterious of the four, having no agreed-upon location, and even having its existence disputed. Its job is to create awareness, and to direct attention to the more important or challenging problems within the stream of personality functioning (Ornstein, 1986). Only some aspects of motivation, emotion, and cognition are accessible to consciousness. The inaccessible portions of these mental activities, along with other inaccessible mental contents, form the various regions of the unconscious.

This structural picture—which is really one of several compatible pictures—is useful for several reasons. For one, these areas of psychological activity are defined enough to organize many central personality traits. This is because traits emerge (or draw their features from) variously: motivations, emotions, cognitions, and consciousness. So there exist such traits as the *need for aggression*, and the *need for sex*, and other motivational traits, as well as traits of *neuroticism*, *friendliness*, and other emotion-based traits, and traits of *intelligence*, and *leveling-sharpening*, and other cognitive traits (Buss & Finn, 1987; Mayer, 1995a). This is summarized in Figure 2. This is not yet a complete picture of structure, because traits also emerge (and draw features from) expert knowledge structures concerning the self and others. It is from such combinations of mental activities (e.g., consciousness) and contents (e.g., models of the self) that more specific traits, such as self-consciousness and self-esteem, emerge

One remaining question is where mood regulation takes place. To the extent that mood regulation is exerted by the person, it is likely associated with one of the more controversial personality parts I and others have termed “agencies.” Agencies act causally on the rest of personality, and include such parts as Freud’s (1923/1960) ego, id, and superego. Other agencies that

potentially involve conscious action but are more compatible with contemporary theory—because they are more narrowly defined—include James’s (1892) *I as knower*, or Jung’s (1953) *conscious ego*. Both refer to the conscious, aware part of the person that understands what (some of) the rest of personality is doing and potentially influences the remainder of personality. In the simplified diagrams of Figure 1, the I as knower would be associated with consciousness.

What Does the Structural Model Tell Us About Mood Regulation?

This structural diagram, simple though it is, provides us with a beginning structure to understand the dynamics that are proposed in the three target articles of this issue. First of all, the structure itself implies a certain set of dynamics. Consider only a person’s conscious mood regulation (unconscious mood regulation would require a separate treatment). Certain dynamics appear likely given the structure just described. The conscious part must monitor and influence adjoining motivational, emotional, and cognitive concerns. At the same time, multiple lines of research indicate that consciousness is constrained and can only address a certain number of issues from those three areas at one time.

Sometimes conscious regulation is relatively easy because the areas of motivation, emotion, and cognition are synthesized and aligned. This is the case when we say we do something with our *whole selves*. To do something with one’s whole self, means that one is paying attention to it, motivated to do it, loves to do it, and thinks it is right. At the same time, it is clear that there often exist conflicts among the areas (and within them). For example, one may be motivated to see a movie, but feel too sad to go, and think other things are more important. When the areas are disaligned, or in competition, a person must choose from among them.

This general context provides a powerful setting within which to consider the three mood dynamics in this issue of *Psychological Inquiry*. Larsen’s homeostatic dynamic states that people constantly compare their current mood to a mood standard. When a person’s actual mood diverges from the standard, mood regulation takes place. Larsen’s proposal, considered in the broader context developed here, implicitly suggests that homeostatic mechanisms would exist not only for emotion, as he contends, but also for motives and cognitions. Moreover, divergences in any mood thermostat must compete with divergences in motives and cognition. For example, a homeostatic mechanism might monitor the hunger motive, drawing attention to the need to eat as hunger diverges from an ideal level. If one is hungry and sad, the need to eat may attract far more attention than the need to get into

a better mood. As another example involving cognition, say that one can’t balance one’s checkbook and one is sad. The discrepant accounting may take precedence over the discrepant mood, if one has to pay a bill and needs to know if it is possible.

It is for this reason that the Erbers’ inertial dynamic—that people don’t ordinarily manage their moods—does not necessarily conflict with Larsen’s idea of a mood thermostat. Given that the conscious agency is occupied with many diverse tasks it may often appear as if people do not regulate their moods. At the same time, however, people probably do strive toward an ideal mood if they have the opportunity to do so amidst various competing demands.

The same structural model helps illustrate why Tice and Bratslavsky’s dynamic provides another important perspective. In the Tice and Bratslavsky model, fulfill one need, and you may frustrate another. For example, one might wish to regulate one’s eating in the motivational sphere, one’s mood in the emotional sphere, and one’s accuracy at bill paying in the cognitive sphere. The problem is, it is impossible to regulate everything at once, because critical problems involve multiple areas, and sometimes unfold in parallel. Thus, the I as knower must decide where to intervene, sometimes with the suspicion that intervention in a particular place will interfere with other interventions. Eating improves moods and ruins the diet. This is what used to be called an “economic” or “resource” model, because there is only a limited amount of resource to go around (Rapaport, 1960). If you divert all your fire engines to one fire, you may put it out while another fire across town burns out of control.

What Does Personality Organization Tell Us About Mood Regulation?

Why bother with the notion of personality structure? It would have been easy enough to forego any such considerations and to consider the three dynamics proposed by these experts in mood regulation outside any such context. Ignoring structure, however, might lead to the conclusion that the dynamics are in conflict. After all, how can one employ a mood thermostat (Larsen, this issue), when one rarely regulates mood (Erber, this issue)? Alternatively, one could look for the range of application of a given dynamic and say when it applied versus another. There is nothing wrong with such approaches, but they lend the impression that all of personality’s myriad parts effect all of the others to a more-or-less equal degree, in an undifferentiated swamp of cause and effect. Under such conditions, there would exist an infinite number of important dynamics and no way to organize them. Although the “all influences all” sentiment is a plausible scientific position, I do not think it is the best we are capable of.

What I argue instead is that personality dynamics don't take place in a vacuum and can be better understood in the context of personality organization. Understanding structure is useful because it provides one powerful way of integrating diverse appearing dynamics. First of all, structural conceptions force us to view personality in a more holistic fashion. Viewing specific, individual personality dynamics such as a homeostatic mood dynamic in a more complete structure raises issues of whether parallel dynamics are also operating. If there exists a homeostatic mood mechanism, shouldn't we also expect parallel motivational and cognitive homeostatic mechanisms? Structural models not only suggest such parallel mechanisms, but also raise the question of how they would operate together. Structure thus both suggests sets of dynamics, as well as metalevel dynamics that mediate amidst the original sets of dynamics. In the present case, the metadynamic that "consciousness is limited" helps explain how a homeostatic and an inertial dynamic operate at the same time. Although not specifically illustrated here, structure can also indicate areas of personality that do not interact very much (Mayer, Chabot, & Carlsmith, 1997).

Summary and Conclusion

My point in this commentary was twofold. First, I wanted to address the compelling and interesting work done by these researchers in the area of mood regulation. I wanted to integrate three diverse, apparently unrelated models of emotion regulation into a more unified model. I did this by suggesting a simple structural model of personality, and then relating these dynamics to that model. This exercise illustrated that the mood dynamics discussed here are plausible, important, and yet, like many other dynamics being studied today, can be enriched by understanding their position in a wider personality context. Looking at the wider context suggests that seeming discrepancies or inconsistencies in viewing mood dynamics are a consequence of an incomplete understanding of personality organization. When mood regulation is embedded within a more complete (albeit still simplified) version of personality organization, those regulatory proposals make far more sense. Mood discrepancies will be allocated attention to the degree that other portions of personality are operating within tolerable limits. In addition, conscious invest-

ment in improving mood may detract from other motives and thoughts, and so involvement in such regulation will not always take place. This integration was made possible by using an elementary structural model of personality. My more general point is that we can and need to construct scientifically valid models of personality, its parts, its organization, and its development. Such models help us better understand all our research findings.

Notes

Marc A. Brackett and Zorana Ivcevic read and made suggestions on an earlier draft of this commentary, for which I am grateful.

John D. Mayer, Department of Psychology, Conant Hall, 10 Library Way, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824. E-mail: jack.mayer@unh.edu

References

- Buss, A. H., & Finn, S. E. (1987). Classification of personality traits. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 432-444.
- Freud, S. (1960). *The ego and the id*. (J. Strachey, Trans. & J. Riviere, Ed.) New York: Norton. (Original work published 1923)
- Hilgard, E. R. (1980). The trilogy of mind: Cognition, affection, and conation. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 16, 107-117.
- James, W. (1892). *Psychology: Briefer course*. New York: Holt.
- Jung, C. G. (1953). The relations between the ego and the unconscious. In C. G. Jung (Ed.), *Two essays on analytical psychology* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans., pp. 136-253). Cleveland, OH: World. (Original work published 1945)
- MacLean, P. D. (1973). *A triune concept of the brain and behaviour*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Mayer, J. D. (1995a). A framework for the classification of personality components. *Journal of Personality*, 63, 819-877.
- Mayer, J. D. (1995b). The system-topics framework and the structural arrangement of systems within and around personality. *Journal of Personality*, 63, 459-493.
- Mayer, J. D. (1998). A systems framework for the field of personality psychology. *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, 118-144.
- Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (1999). Emotional intelligence meets traditional standards for an intelligence. *Intelligence*, 27, 267-298.
- Mayer, J. D., Chabot, H. F., & Carlsmith, K. (1997). Conation, affect, and cognition in personality. In G. Matthews (Ed.), *Cognitive science perspectives on personality and emotion* (pp. 31-63). Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.
- Ornstein, R. (1986). *The psychology of consciousness* (3rd ed.). New York: Viking Penguin.
- Rapaport, D. (1960). The structure of psychoanalytic theory: A systematizing attempt. *Psychological Issues*, 2 (2, Monograph 6), pp. 1-158.