

Research question

1. To assess the Rank-Order and Mean Level personality changes over 10 years, using the TCI (Temperament and Character Inventory) model of personality.
2. To measure whether the level of maturity is associated with the degree and direction of personality change.

“Maturity is a somewhat ambiguous concept that attempts to describe directions and end states of personality development that are psychologically healthier and more fulfilling than lower levels of psychological maturity.” (Josefsson, et al., 2013)

Methods

1997 n = 2104 (40% men, 60% women) – Tested Temperament and Character

2001 n = 2095 (42% men, 58% women) – Tested Temperament and Character

2007 n = 2056 (41% men, 58% women) – Tested Temperament only

Results and Predictions

Character

- Self-Directedness: Increased 0.7 SD by age 35-39. Low Self-Directedness predicts personality change.
- Cooperativeness: Increased 0.4 SD by age 35-39. Low Cooperativeness predicts personality change.
- Self-Transcendence: Decreased 0.7 SD by age 35-39. High Self-Transcendence was the strongest predictor for personality change.

Temperament

- Novelty Seeking: Stable until age 20-29, Decreased 0.4 SD by age 40-44. High Novelty Seeking predicts personality change.
- Harm Avoidance: Stable over time, no directional change.
- Reward Dependence: Decreased 0.2 SD by age 40-44
- Persistence: Increased 0.1-0.2 SD by age 40-44. High Persistence predicts personality change.

Maturity and Psychological Well Being

Temperament traits mostly remain stable over time, while Character traits change. This could be interpreted as although the immature and negative aspects of Temperament traits do not change, the higher levels of Self-Directedness and Cooperativeness make people better at handling their emotions, which could be used as compensation. Both high and low extremes of Temperament traits can be advantageous or disadvantageous depending on the situation, and can thus not be rated individually. However, combinations of Temperament and Character traits are associated with different levels of immaturity and maturity, which can be judge as less or more psychologically healthy. The Character traits of the immature and disorganized personality, low Self-Directedness and Cooperativeness, is typical in individuals with forms of psychopathology according to the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). Whereas the mature and organized personality entails healthy mental functioning. Understanding the development, or the regression, of maturity is thus important for ensuring psychological health and well being.

Causes

The largest personality changes occurred at early adulthood, a stage where different ideas and practices can be experienced, and during which the individual chooses a life path. According

to Bleidorn et al.'s (2013) study, which covered 62 countries, personality maturation during young adulthood is a universal phenomenon. In alignment with the social-investment theory, their research showed that personality is shaped by age-related transitions to adult roles. These new roles come with social expectations, which encourages development towards maturity. There were slight age effects which could be explained by the cultural differences in the timing of the transition. In the contemporary Western world, high Self-Directedness and Cooperativeness is necessary for success. The changing external expectations influences personality through the socialisation effect, pressure from social and cultural norms, and through the selection effect, certain traits are encouraged and rewarded (Josefsson, 2013).

Weaknesses

The article has a lack of justification for their choice of approach. Firstly, it begins by extensively explaining different definitions of maturity, but does not specify which of these concepts the authors accept. Secondly, it provides a satisfying overview of the terminology and previous research of the Psychobiological theory of personality. However, they never argue for why they choose this measurement rather than the Big Five factor model. Finally, a methodological constraint that the authors acknowledge, was that Temperament was tested three times, but Character only two, due to length restrictions. According to previous research, Temperament was assumed to stay stable over time while Character changed with age. From that, it seems more reasonable to test multiple times for Character. The authors never justify their contradictory priorities.

Strengths and Contribution

Despite the lack of clear conceptual standpoint, the authors were the first to ever conduct a longitudinal study of impressive duration and follow up rate. It successfully confirms previous assumptions of Mean Level and Rank-Order personality change, and predicts what initial levels of Temperament and Character traits are associated with specific directional changes. Additionally, by demonstrating that Temperament and Character traits are differently affected by birth year, it justifies treating them as two separate psychological domains. The authors tie their findings to maturity and psychological health, making an important contribution to the research on personality change and well being.

Questions for Discussion

1. Would you define maturity in terms of self-perception and identity, or how you relate to and are perceived by others?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the TCI and the Five Factor Model? What are the advantages and limits of them? Is one better than the other, or are they complementary?
3. How do you interpret the decrease of Self-Transcendence with age?

References

- Bleidorn, W., Klimstra, T. A., Denissen, J. J. A., Rentfrow, P. J., Potter, J. and Gosling, S. D. (2013) Personality Maturation Around the World: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Social-Investment Theory. *Psychological Science*
- Josefsson, K., Jokela, M., Cloninger, C. R., Hintsanen, M., Salo, J., Hintsanen, T., Pulkki-Raback, L., & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, L. (2013). Maturity and change in personality: Developmental trends of temperament and character in adulthood. *Development and Psychopathology*, 25, 713-727