

## Greenberger Psychosocial Maturity Model: A Brief Review

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**ABSTRACT:** This brief review focuses on the Greenberger Psychosocial Maturity Model. Greenberger and Sørensen (1974) have observed that except at the college level, assessment of the school experience has focused almost exclusively on academic achievement. Schools below the college level traditionally have been preoccupied with only one outcome of education: growth in measurable cognitive skills. While there is at present a growing recognition of the school's actual and potential role in promoting personal and social growth, a convincing model of nonacademic objectives is lacking, as is a tool for assessing children's progress toward nonacademic objectives. Greenberger and Sørensen construct a model of psychosocial maturity which specifies measurable attitudes and dispositions. Adolescent development is hindered by the separation of young people from adults and from the life of the community beyond the school. Opportunities must be made for adolescents to take responsible roles in their communities as part of their education. Theoretical models of psychosocial maturity have been proposed by many psychologists. The scientists' approach to measuring psychosocial maturity is based on a model advanced in the 1990s, which suggested that during adolescence and early adulthood, three aspects of psychosocial maturity develop: (1) Temperance: The ability to control impulses, including aggressive impulses, (2) Perspective: The ability to consider other points of view, including those that take into account longer term consequences or that take the vantage point of others, and (3) Responsibility: The ability to take personal responsibility for one's behavior and resist the coercive influences of others. This brief review discusses these issues. The conclusion drawn from this brief review can be used as input for a quantitative study with a larger sample of maturity models. Propositions that can guide such a quantitative research can build on the basis of the findings presented in this review.

**Key words:** Greenberger, Psychosocial Maturity Model

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### INTRODUCTION

Greenberger and Sørensen (1974) have observed that except at the college level, assessment of the school experience has focused almost exclusively on academic achievement. Serious widespread concern for the impact of the school experience on children's personal and social growth awaits both a compelling formulation of "nonacademic" development and the creation of (psychometric) devices that permit its assessment (Greenberger and Sørensen, 1975). An interdisciplinary model of psychosocial development, based on the concept of psychosocial maturity, has been described by Greenberger and Sørensen (1974). Briefly, the model attempts to integrate goals of socialization (i.e., attributes of individuals required to make a society function smoothly) with goals of development (i.e., attributes which represent the optimal growth of the individual in his own right). Thus, the concept of psychosocial maturity is concerned with the survival of both the person and the society. The model proposes that psychosocial maturity is reflected in three general capacities, which

correspond to three general demands made by all societies on individuals. They are:

- (1) The capacity to function effectively on one's own, or individual adequacy.
- (2) The capacity to interact adequately with others, or interpersonal adequacy.
- (3) The capacity to contribute to social cohesion, or social adequacy.

That is, in all societies "socialized" and "developed" individuals should have the following:

- (1) Should be self-sufficient in some degree and take responsibility for their own survival.
- (2) Should be able to relate to others in stable and predictable ways.
- (3) Should be able to meet threats to the integrity of the social group with efforts to restore social solidarity.

In different societies, the specific attributes which serve as indicators of these general capacities may vary considerably. For this society, it has been argued that the nine attributes listed and described briefly in the Table below are indicators of the three general capacities of mature individuals.

The major purpose of the Greenberger et al.'s study was to report on the development of a Psychosocial Maturity Inventory based on the integrative concept of psychosocial maturity. With a view toward the eventual usefulness of these scales for research purposes, the objective of their study has been to devise scales that are manageable in length as well as acceptable in psychometric properties. A second purpose of the study was to test the theoretical relationships specified by their model of psychosocial maturity against empirical data concerning the relationships among subscales (Greenberger et al., 1975).

Hamilton et al. (1993) studied the use of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory in evaluations of Youth Conservation Corps Programs. Although work experience has been widely recommended as beneficial to adolescent development, there is little empirical support for this recommendation. Adolescent development is hindered by the separation of young people from adults and from the life of the community beyond the school. Opportunities must be made for adolescents to take responsible roles in their communities as part of their education.

Camps and Moralis-Vives (2013) determined the relative importance of psychological maturity, indirect aggression, and the personality traits in predicting academic achievement in adolescents. The results showed that intelligence and impulsivity are important predictors of academic performance. As far as psychological maturity was concerned, only the work orientation component was related to academic performance. However, indirect aggression was not related to academic performance (Camps and Moralis-Vives, 2013).

### **Models of Psychosocial Maturity**

Theoretical models of psychosocial maturity have been proposed by many psychologists (Greenberger et al., 1974). The scientists' approach to measuring psychosocial maturity is based on a model advanced in the 1990s (Steinberg and Cauffman, 1996), which suggested that during adolescence and early adulthood, three aspects of psychosocial maturity develop:

(1) Temperance: The ability to control impulses, including aggressive impulses.

(2) Perspective: The ability to consider other points of view, including those that take into account longer term consequences or that take the vantage point of others.

(3) Responsibility: The ability to take personal responsibility for one's behavior and resist the coercive influences of others (Steinberg, et al., 2015).

### **Measuring Psychosocial Maturity**

Psychosocial maturity consists of three separate components: temperance, perspective, and responsibility (Steinberg and Cauffman, 1996). Each of these components was indexed by two different measures (Steinberg, et al., 2015). For more detail on the psychometric properties of the measures, see Monahan and colleagues (2009). Temperance: The measures were self-reported impulse control and suppression of aggression, both of which are subscales of the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory (Weinberger and Schwartz, 1990).

Perspective: The measures were self-reported consideration of others and future orientation (Cauffman and Woolard, 1999). Responsibility: The measures were self-reported personal responsibility from the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory (Greenberger et al., 1974), and resistance to peer influence (Steinberg and Monahan, 2007). In addition to examining each indicator of psychosocial maturity independently, the researchers also standardized each measure across the age distribution and then calculated the average to create a global measure of psychosocial maturity.

### **DISCUSSION**

The educational community has expressed growing interest over the past several years in the assessment of children's personal and social development. The construction of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory is pertinent to this objective. A strength of the inventory is its derivation from an explicit model of maturity which integrates desired end products of socialization with goals of human development.

With a few exceptions, the nine subscales of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory have adequate internal consistency at all grade levels in the range cited above. The degree of homogeneity within scales

makes them appropriate for use in studying (or comparing) groups of individuals, but not for analysis or diagnosis at the level of the single individual. Validity evidence to date is promising, particularly concerning the subscales representing Individual and Social Adequacy. A theoretical model of psychosocial maturity was discussed in an earlier paper (Greenberger and Sørensen, 1974) and is outlined below. This model has been empirically tested in the studies described by Greenberger and Sørensen (1975).

Evidence from the inter-correlations among the nine subscales and from the factor analyses of items and scales supports the use of the unifying construct of Psychosocial Maturity to describe the nine attributes that the subscales assess. At the same time, evidence from both the validity studies and the factor analyses supports the distinctiveness and meaningfulness of the Individual and Social Adequacy dimensions of the model.

There is evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between maturity and educational attainment: those students with fewer educational aspirations tend to be less mature (Greenberger, 1982). Therefore, psychological maturity may lead to greater interest in academic content and learning, as well as higher aspirations in life.

Moreover, according to Galambos et al. (2005) there is a relationship between cognitive ability and psychological maturity. They found that psychological maturity is related to a higher crystallized intelligence and better performance on some executive tasks. Taking into account that crystallized intelligence depends on learning processes, psychological maturity and academic performance are expected to be related. The very few studies on this issue suggest that this is the case (Steinberg et al., 1989; Oh-Hwang, 1994). However, these studies do not assess intelligence, so other studies need to be made to determine whether this result can be explained simply by the relationship that psychological maturity and academic performance have with intelligence.

Camps and Morales-Vives (2013) define psychological maturity as the ability to take on obligations, to make responsible decisions that take into account one's own characteristics and needs, and to accept the consequences of one's own actions. This definition refers specifically to the individual

adjustment proposed by Greenberger et al. (Greenberger, 1984; Greenberger and Sørensen, 1973) within their model of psychosocial maturity, which is divided into three components: Work Orientation, Self-Reliance, and Identity. Work Orientation is defined as the individual's willingness to fulfill his or her own obligations (for example, adolescents start their homework and do not stop until they finish). Self-Reliance is defined as a person's willingness to take the initiative, without allowing others to exercise excessive control. And finally, Identity is defined as the adolescent's knowledge of him or herself (Camps and Morales-Vives, 2013).

### **A Model of Psychosocial Maturity**

- Individual adequacy
- Self-reliance
- Absence of excessive need for social validation
- Sense of control
- Initiative
- Identity
- Clarity of self-concept
- Consideration of life goals
- Self-esteem
- Internalized values
- Work orientation
- Standards of competence
- Pleasure in work
- General work skills
- Interpersonal adequacy
- Communication skills
- Ability to encode messages
- Ability to decode messages
- Empathy
- Enlightened trust
- Rational dependence
- Rejection of simplistic views of human nature
- Awareness of constraints on trustworthiness
- Knowledge of major roles
- Role-appropriate behavior
- Management of role conflict
- Social adequacy
- Social commitment
- Feelings of community
- Willingness to work for social goals
- Readiness to form alliances
- Interest in long-term social goals
- Openness to sociopolitical change

- General openness to change
- Recognition of costs of status quo
- Recognition of costs of change
- Tolerance of individual and cultural differences
- Willingness to interact with people who differ from the norm
- Sensitivity to the rights of people who differ from the norm
- Awareness of costs and benefits of tolerance

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

While there is at present a growing recognition of the school's actual and potential role in promoting personal and social growth, a convincing model of nonacademic objectives is lacking, as is a tool for assessing children's progress toward nonacademic objectives. The conclusion drawn from this brief review can be used as input for a quantitative study with a larger sample of maturity models. Propositions that can guide such a quantitative research can build on the basis of the findings presented in this review.

### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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