PSYC20009: Personality & Social Psychology

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- Minimal change observed for other traits

Not a consistent pattern from study to study

Some suggestions that genetics may play a role on mean-level changes

↳ **Environmental influences**

Cross-cultural

McCrae et al. (1999):

- Age-trait associations in 7363 people from Germany, Italy, Portugal, Croatia, South Korea compared to US
- Personality differences generally matched patterns of mean-level change in the US (except N)

Chopik & Kitayama (2018):

- Mean-level change in the US (N = 6259) and Japan (N = 1021)
- 9 year prospective study
- Changes in A, O, E, and N were similar between countries
- C had contrasting trajectories ⟶ peak in US earlier compared to Japan

Terracciano (2015):

Review of cross-cultural studies of mean-level change

- Wide range of cultures/nations, including one study comparing 62 nations
- Overall conclusion ⟶ pattern of mean-level personality development similar across cultures

Suggests **cross-cultural generality** of mean-level personality change

Cross-species comparisons

King, Weiss, & Sisco (2008):

- Mean-level personality change in Chimpanzees (N = 202) in US zoos
- O, E & N decreased over time
- A increased
- C increased (but not significantly)

Similar pattern to humans ⟶ suggests **cross-species generality** of mean-level personality change

Evolved 'maturation process'?

Major life transitions

Transition to work

Roberts (1997):

- late 1950s, ~100 women followed up to ~20 years (early 20s-40s)
- Greater participation in the workforce associated with **increases** in 'agency' (part of E)

Transition to work experiences potentially contributes toward typical mean level changes

But this could also be an **environmental selection** effect (women increasing in E more likely to join workforce)

4. **Effects of situations on individual personality change**
    - The role of unique experiences
    - E.g. more/less positive experiences of transitioning to work

5. **Situation perception**
    - Where traits shape appraisals of a situation, and thus an individual's experience of that situation
    - E.g. agreeableness → opportunities to cooperate
    - E.g. openness/intellect → intellectually engaging

Situation Perception: The "DIAMONDS" model

Rauthmann et al. (2014):

- Comprehensive taxonomy for describing the structure of **perceived situations**
- Like a "Big Five" for how people experience situations

Duty: A job needs to be done	**P**ositivity: Situation is potentially enjoyable
Intellect: Situation includes intellectual or cognitive stimuli	**N**egativity: Situation is potentially anxiety-inducing
Adversity: Someone is being criticised	**D**eception: It is possible to deceive someone
Mating: Situation includes stimuli that could be construed sexually	**S**ociality: Close personal relationships are present

↳ **Situation Perception**

Jonason & Rauthmann (2020):

- Participants (N = 237) presented with identical pictures of three scenarios: Bar, Classroom, & Office
- **Big 5** predicted **perceptions** of all situations (DIAMONDS):
    - E.g. extraversion → positivity, social
    - E.g. neuroticism → negativity, adversity, deception

Sherman et al. (2015):

- Compared effects of traits and perceived situations on daily-life behaviour (N = 210, 1 week ESM)
- Similar effects for personality traits and perceived situations (DIAMONDS)
- Stronger effects for **individual perceptions of situations** vs how the situation was perceived on average (aggregate) → better predicted our behaviour

↳ **Situation Selection**

Carnahan & McFarland (2007):

- Recruited participants across six US universities using a near-identical advertisement to the **Stanford Prison Experiment**
- Control group recruited using the same advertisement **without "prison life"**

Where does the self come from?

We construct and know ourselves via **different sources** and **processes**

Personal Construction of the Self (Intrapersonal/Intrapsychic Processes)	Social Construction of the Self (Interpersonal Processes)
• Self-perception • Introspection	• Social comparison • Social feedback

INTRAPERSONAL (personal construction)

Self-perception

Self-perception Theory (Bem, 1972)

- People infer self-knowledge by **observing their own behaviours**
- Draw conclusions about what that says about one's own personality and self

This is most likely to occur when self-knowledge is **limited** or **ambiguous** and for behaviours that they have **freely chosen**

- If people **don't** have a good **situational** explanation, they infer a **self-related explanation**

Introspection

Introspection: Looking **inward** at the contents of consciousness (thoughts and feelings)

- Reasonable route to **self-understanding**
- **Richer** and **more private** than behaviour
- When processing deeply, it can **improve accuracy of self-knowledge**
- When introspection reveals that one meets one's standards, **positive feelings can result**
- It can increase **self-consistency in behaviour** → more likely to act in accordance with one's **values**

INTERPERSONAL (social construction)

Social Comparison

Social comparison: process of comparing oneself to others

- **Social comparison theory**: self-knowledge comes from comparing one's own traits, abilities, attitudes, emotions… to those of others (Festinger, 1954)
  - Especially under conditions of uncertainty
  - Not necessarily always competitive, comparison with a normative standard
- **Target matters**
  - E.g. gold olympic winner happiest, bronze winner happier than silver winner due to comparison to the gold winner
  - E.g. Buzz Aldrin resented Neil Armstrong for being the first person on the moon, even though he set foot on the moon too

Results:

- Participants in the 'prison life' group vs control group differed on multiple personality traits
    - Higher aggression, authoritarianism, machiavellianism, narcissism, and social dominance
    - Lower empathy and altruism

Matz & Harari (2020):

Teasing apart the effects of situations (on trait expression) vs effects of traits (on situation selection)

- 3x two-week experience sampling studies (total N = 2,350)
- Assessed B5 traits **prior** to each study, and personality **states** 4x per day
- Assessed situations (places visited) 4x per day
    - Participants chose from 12 places to describe current situation (e.g. bar/party, café/restaurant, home)

Do the places people visit predict behaviour (personality states)?

Do personality traits predict the places people visit (selection effect)?

- Places visited predicted personality states
- Personality traits predicted places visited
- After controlling for traits, places visited rarely/modestly predicted personality states

Summary

- The person-situation debate has come full circle…
    - *B = f (P, E)* (Lewin, 1936)
    - Situationism (Mischel, 1968)
    - Interactionism (1970s onward)
    - Person-situation transactions (today)

Situationism argued that personality traits were **weak predictors** and behavior varied across **situations**.
Later research showed traits do predict behaviour, especially when behaviour is measured across multiple occasions (**principle of aggregation**).
People vary across situations, but also show **cross-situational** and **long-term consistency** related to personality traits.
This led to **interactionism**: personality and situations interact to shape behaviour.
Situational Strength: strong situations can reduce trait effects, while weak situations allow personality to influence behaviour more.
Other interactionist views suggest situations can activate traits, afford certain behaviours, and be selected or shaped by personality.
Overall: behaviour is best understood as a result of person x situation interactions, rather than one or the either alone.

Week 7: Perceiving the Self and Others