Personality

Rather than studying fragments of people, personality psychologists strive to give an integrative and comprehensive account of people. In this way, it seeks to bring together the contributions of developmental, social, cognitive and biological psychology into an understanding of whole persons. This is due to

Current status of personality research

- Mayer's 'system approach': we can look at psychology as an 'organised functional unit' → everything needs to be taken into account to account for personality. However, he has failed to explicitly demonstrate how all the different functional units INTERACT!

- McAdams' 'personality triad' (structure/hierarchy) takes into account:

    1. Dispositional traits
        o OCEAN (openness to experience; conscientiousness; extraversion/introversion; agreeableness; neuroticism)
        o Limitation: it is nomothetic, there doesn't tell you anything about the personal identify of a person – "psychology of the stranger" (McAdams)

    2. Characteristic adaptions
        o Personal goals, motives and abilities
        o Defense mechanisms and coping strategies
        o Values and beliefs
        o Attachment and relationship styles
        o Limitation: still doesn't address who we are as an individual identity. Like dispositional traits, only tells us what/how a person is likely to act, be interested in, etc.

    3. Narrative identity as 'life story'
        o Stories are central to identity throughout life
        o Through stories, we provide an explanation of how the self of yesterday became the self of today and will become the anticipated self of tomorrow, i.e. stories connect past, present and future.
        o Provides sense of unity and purpose
        o Effectiveness: unlike dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations, narratives are idiographic. Therefore, they give us a sense of identity.
        o Is there such thing as a modern personality? I.e. can personalities be outdated? McAdams implies that modern personality is very self-focused, as we seek to project/express ourselves into every aspect of the world and life, e.g. Youtube videos, selfies, people stress themselves as important persons → narcissism? This was unimaginable 50+ years ago.
        o However, it is important to note that projecting/expressing identity may not necessarily be central to *every* culture around the world.

What is social psychology?
People differentiation in accordance to situational factors. Therefore, social psychology is the scientific study of the feelings, thoughts, behaviours and reactions of individuals in social situations.

Why study social psychology? We think we know people, but we don't! We overly rely on shortcuts (heuristics) in making judgments (e.g. stereotyping). Essentially, our insight into the reasons is often limited.

Where do research questions come from?
- Testing a theory, curiosity
- Testing techniques
- Demonstrating a phenomenon (e.g. coffee = warmer personality).

Steps in the research process
1. Research question
2. Generate hypotheses (specific, directional predictions)
3. Operationalisation
4. Design experiment/correlational study
5. Collect data
6. Analyse data
7. Draw appropriate conclusions

The experimental approach – typically involve a comparison of a treatment and a control group; generally allows us to infer causality.

- Between-subjects designs – random allocation
- Within-subjects (aka repeated measures) designs – random allocation, advantage = using fewer subjects, disadvantage = because you're using the same subjects, there is contamination, i.e. they know what's going on.
- Factorial designs: random allocation, these are between or within subject designs with more than one factor, e.g. rape and alcohol.
- Quasi-experimental designs - seem like experiments, but they don't have random allocation to conditions. This limits our ability to impute causality. But they allow us to investigate conditions that might be impossible to manipulate in experiments (e.g., life threatening danger, stress = magical thinking).

The correlational approach DOES NOT measure causality!
- No random allocation
- Tests relationship
- Cause precedes effect