

Association for Research in Personality: the home for psychological generalists

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I am honored to be elected President of the Association for Research in Personality. These are exciting times for those of us who study personality and I believe that ARP can play an important role in the development of the field. Brian Little, the editor of *P*, has asked me to comment briefly on what I do and where I see ARP going.

“I am a personality psychologist, I study personality and individual differences in affect, behavior, cognition, and motivation as they are affected by biological causes and environmental events.” That is the answer I give when people ask me what I do. I do not say that I am a cognitive-psychologist, a social-psychologist, a neuro-psychologist, a behavior geneticist, a psychometrician or a methodologist, for although I do those various hyphenated parts of psychology, by saying I study personality and individual differences, I have said I do all of those things. I believe that is true for all of us in ARP. We study personality and individual differences. We study individual patterns of coherence over time and space in what people feel, think, want, need, and do. We study how people are the same and we also study why people differ. We focus on the psychology of the individual. We focus on the psychology of individuality and of individual differences. We study personality.

To me, the study of personality is the last refuge for the generalist in psychology. This is why I love to attend small and intimate meetings such as ARP to learn about the breadth of the field. Personality researchers need to integrate affective, cognitive, genetic, neuro, and social psychological approaches to the study of the individual and of individual differences. We do not limit ourselves to human personality, but include studies of personality in non-humans (Vazire et al., 2007). We examine consistencies and changes from infancy to old age (Block, 2002). We integrate the two methodological disciplines of experimental and correlational techniques into a coherent program of research (Cronbach, 1957; Eysenck, 1997; Revelle and Oehleberg, 2008).

Our field is not new for a concern with how to understand and predict the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of others is of evolutionary importance for all social species. As a

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science, we are still addressing research problems introduced at least 3300 years ago. The first published concern with experimental methodology and individual differences in ability and affect is described in the Hebrew Bible in the story of Gideon (Judges 6, 7). In a few brief paragraphs we are told about the convincing power of a within-subject cross-over interaction as well as the use of a sequential assessment battery that measured motivation and affect. Roughly 800-1000 years later Theophrastus asked a fundamental question of personality theory that is still of central concern to us 2400 years later:

Often before now have I applied my thoughts to the puzzling question – one, probably, which will puzzle me for ever – why it is that, while all Greece lies under the same sky and all the Greeks are educated alike, it has befallen us to have characters so variously constituted.

This is, of course, the fundamental question that will be addressed in the keynote address by Eric Turkheimer at the Albuquerque ARP conference and that was discussed at last year's meeting by Colin DeYoung. Theophrastus was a taxonomist both of plants and of people, and it is possible to organize the characters of Theophrastus in a manner similar to the work of last year's Jack Block Award winner, Lew Goldberg (Goldberg, 1990) (see Lew's address in the first issue of *P*). Although Lew gave credit to Gordon Allport for lexical analysis, Sir Francis Galton used Roget's *Thesaurus* to estimate 1000 words expressive of character (Galton, 1884) 50 years before Allport.

The work of Bob Hogan on leadership effectiveness (Hogan, 2007, 1994; Hogan et al., 1990; Padilla et al., 2007) addresses the same questions discussed by Plato in the *Republic*. Plato was concerned with how to choose honest and effective leaders. He used concepts that we would now refer to as anxiety, impulsivity, and intelligence. He was also concerned with what Bob calls the “dark side” of leadership.

Biological models of personality have also been with us for more than two millennia, with the work of Galen and Hippocrates on a biological basis for temperamental differences (Stelmack and Stalikas, 1991) seen today in the research of Turhan Canli and his colleagues (Canli, 2006; Lesch and Canli, 2006) as well as those of us concerned with the implications for personality theory of Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (Corr, 2007; Revelle, 2007).

As one would hope, our research methods have progressed a long way since Gideon's cross-over design. Since the last ARP meeting we have seen the publication of a superb *Handbook of Personality Research* (Robins et al., 2007) which includes chapters on a wide range of correlational, experimental, and longitudinal methods. The introduction of research collaboratories such as the International Personality Item Pool ipip.ori.org (Goldberg et al., 2006), open source statistical software systems such as R (R Development Core Team, 2007) (see also <http://personality-project.org/r>), and web based data collection Fraley (2004) will have profound effects on the way we do research. The ability to collect within-subject data over multiple times allows us to examine the within-person structure of emotions (Rafaeli et al., 2007) and of behavior (Fleeson, 2004).

We all know that the study of personality is important but this was made clear to others in the recent article in *Perspectives in Psychological Science* by Brent Roberts and colleagues (Roberts et al., 2007). In a meta analysis of longitudinal studies, Brent and his colleagues show that both cognitive and non-cognitive personality variables predict important life outcomes such as mortality, divorce, and occupational attainment.

In addition to members of the academic community, personality theory and research are of interest to the general public. A somewhat out of date web page of mine, the Personality-Project <http://personality-project.org>, receives about 3-6,000 unique visitors per day and an online test page that gives feedback on “Big 5” scores that I use to give analyze subsets of the IPIP items adds more than 100 new participants per day (<http://test.personality-project.org>).

ARP, EAPP, ISSID and JSPP

The Association for Research in Personality is one of several organizations dedicated to the study of personality. Others include the European Association for Personality Psychology (EAPP), the International Society for the Study of Individual Differences (ISSID), and the Japanese Society for Personality Psychology (JSPP). Although ARP and JSPP have annual meetings, EAPP and ISSID meet biennially.

The next meeting of EAPP (also known as the European Conference on Personality or ECP) will be this July in Tartu, Estonia (see <http://www.ecp14.ee/>). A number of ARP members will be giving papers there (including David Funder and David Watson) and two of us (Lee Anna Clark and I) will be giving short courses before the meeting. Lee Anna will lead a workshop on the Schedule for Nonadaptive and Adaptive Personality (SNAP) and I will be giving a workshop on psychometrics using R. Two years ago, after the ECP meeting in Athens, Dan Ozer led a similar workshop on multi-level modeling.

The most recent ISSID meeting was last summer in Giessen, Germany and the next meeting will be in July, 2009 in Chicago (<http://issid.org>). Substantial numbers of ISSID members from Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Poland, Sweden, the UK, and the USA come to the meetings. A consistent core group of ARP members tend to go to ECP and ISSID meetings and I encourage more of us to attend. To introduce ISSID to more Americans, the boards of ARP and ISSID are working on arrangements to have an overlapping meeting of ARP and ISSID at the Chicago meeting in 2009. Those of us who attend ECP and/or ISSID find the meetings to be exhilarating opportunities to learn about the breadth of our field. I will have more information about the overlapping ARP/ISSID meeting in the next newsletter.

I look forward to seeing many of you next month in Albuquerque.

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