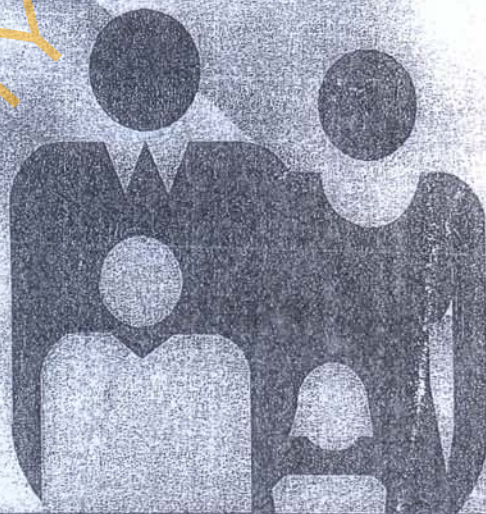


Psychology

PERSPECTIVES IN HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION



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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Personality in Perspective

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THE NATURE OF PERSONALITY

It is often said that there are no two individuals that are exactly alike. We commonly hear that each individual is unique. This uniqueness is what separates one person from the others, even identical twins such as Taiwo and Kehinde. Despite being identical twins, it is a common knowledge that they differ in their individual reactions and relations with the environment. Hence, Taiwo is seen and regarded as a unique individual despite the various features commonly shared with Kehinde. Similarly, we are seen individually as a person that is unique in his or her own right. There are yet no known two individuals that are exactly alike wholesale. The quest for the "what", "why" and "how" about the qualities of individuals provide explanation for personality.

A second year Geography student taking one of her elective courses in Psychology once asked me in class to give the universally known definition of personality according to the psychology dictionary. This student apparently spoke the minds of several others in that class. Furthermore, the student like many of her colleagues might have been frustrated after reading through several texts without an agreed definition that is common to all the authors.

Psychologists that have attempted to define personality found themselves bombarding readers with a plethora of definitions that seem to add to the existing ones. In order to deviate from that pattern, I will restrict myself in this chapter to what the concept of personality means in the African context. Most of

the already known definitions originated from the Western cultures of Europe, America, and Asia. However, this does not imply that the concept of personality is new in Africa. In the pre-colonial era, individuals in African societies were very conscious of how they are seen by others, the impression they make on others, and what separate them from others. This explains why people were always ready to fit into the norms of the society, because some characters were highly abhorred.

Stories were told of how in medieval times, kings and chiefs would observe females in a family and decide to choose one as wife. The question then is; Why would the king or chief choose Amina instead of Fatima in the same family? This shows that they differ in certain respects. In other words, there has always been that knowledge that people differ from one another. To most traditional Africans, such differences could be mysterious. However, the knowledge that differences exist between individuals provide insight as to what personality means in the African perspective. People use it to refer to an individual's social appeal or an individual's most striking characteristics, or to explain people's behaviours. From that point of view, personality can be defined as *the way we are seen by others and the impression we make on them in consistent and relatively enduring manner*. Our personality is reflected in our behaviour and reaction to environmental stimuli.

Personality as a word may not have been used in

pre-colonial African societies. Nevertheless, the concept in traditional terms and language across ethnic groups was common with the people even then. Among Africans, it has always been seen as the pattern of psychological and behavioural characteristics by which one person can be compared and contrasted with other people. For instance, Biodun, more than his elder brother, Kareem, is a man of the people. This means that Biodun is very outgoing and highly sociable unlike his elder brother who is socially evasive. Okeke is always seen ordering people around in shops, at school, and even at parties. This gives the impression that Okeke is quite domineering and bossy. Similarly, Yohana is especially polite to waiters in restaurants and has been like that every time you had dinner with him. It can be inferred by the impression that he is quite polite.

One interesting thing about the nature of personality is that unlike the clothes we wear, personality is like shadow that goes with a person wherever he or she goes. We do not pull it off when going on transfer from one location to another or when leaving home for work. One may be tempted to conclude that the concept is so called because it brings out the person in us. For example, Eze is like every other male student in several ways. It is also true that there could be more than one Eze in the same class. It is possible as well that they have the same complexion, height, religion, and even surname. But the description that readily separates Eze I from Eze II lies in their personality. Therefore, personality shows the psychological structure in an individual that makes him or her a person that can be described.

Despite the variations in definition according to different authors, personality has been seen as an individual's unique and stable pattern of characteristics and behaviours. The common theme that seems to run through most of the definitions is that everyone has a unique and enduring set of psychological tendencies that he or she reveals in the course of interacting with the environment. The concept of personality rests on the assumption that individuals have distinctive qualities that are relatively invariant across situations and over time (Mischell & Shoda, 1995), which separate one person from others (Kalat, 1999).

As it were, the word personality is displayed in

several ways in behaviours, thoughts, and feelings. It is a causal force, which helps to explain an individual's relations to the world. As a psychological concept, it is inextricably tied to the physical body. One way of defining personality is to look at it as certain behavioural mental processes that characterise the individual's interaction with the environment. This is the foundation for personality psychology, which involves the study of what makes a person unique.

Why the word "personality"? Why is it used? Understanding the reason for using the word may give an insight into the meaning of the word. One reason for the usage appears to be the desire to convey a sense of consistency or continuity in one's qualities. There are several kinds of consistencies you might observe and want to imply about someone that may bring the concept of personality to mind. You may observe an individual consistently across situations. For instance, Ngozi talked too much when you first met her, and some other time you met her dominating conversations. You may observe consistency across several situations that are relatively different from each other. It can be seen from each of these situations that the same person is undeniably perceived from one instance to another because the person acts in consistent ways from time to time and from situation to situation. A second reason people have for using the word "personality" is to convey the sense that whatever the person is doing has internal origin (causality). In other words, it personifies who the person is.

APPROACHES TO PERSONALITY

Psychologists have offered several methods of approaching personality. While some have considered grand theories about the nature of personality, others investigated why people with a certain type of personality act the way they do in a specific situation.

The Psychodynamic Approach

The acclaimed father of psychology, Sigmund Freud, was the first among the psychodynamic theorists. The psychodynamic approach relates personality to the interplay of forces that are conflicting within the individual, including those that the individual may consciously recognise. This simply means that people are being pushed and pulled by internal

forces that they do not fully understand.

According to Freud, personality can be understood from two models: the topographic and the structural. The topographic model looks at individual's personality as comprising three domains, namely the conscious, pre-conscious, and unconscious. At the conscious domain, the individual is aware of forces operating that tend to exert influence on his tendency to act in certain ways. In the pre-conscious domain, the forces that determine personality of individuals are latent and are not fully in the knowledge of the individual. Forces within the unconscious domain stimulate most of the individual's daily actions, according to Sigmund Freud. More often than not, the individual is not fully aware of forces within the unconscious domain but they exert much influence on their behaviours. On the other hand, the structural model sees personality as a collection of three structures that are often in conflict with one another. These are the *id*, *ego* and *superego*. The *id* and *superego* are at both extremes of 'must' and 'must not'. Accordingly, the *id* asks for immediate gratification of biological urges, such as sex drive, hunger, and thirst. The *id* has no regard for deferment (want it now). It operates the *pleasure principle*. The *superego* counters these impulses with lists of rules and values internalised from parents, significant others, and religious leaders in catechism classes, Sunday school lessons, or the Koranic school. The *superego* operates the *moral principle*. Sometimes, the *id* produces sexual or other motivations that the *superego* considers repugnant, thus evoking feelings of guilt. For example, "Good children don't do that or children of God don't do that". The *ego*, on the other hand, acts as the mediator. It operates the *rational principle*. Torn between the two forces of *id* and *superego*, the *ego* makes the decision about what to do. It acts to find compromise. According to Freud, we can understand certain people's behaviour by assuming that their *id* is more developed than their *superego* or that their *superego* is more developed than their *id*. Based on Freud's strong belief in sexual motivations, he explained that personality development centres on sexual themes, which influences nearly all aspects of the individual's personality. Psychosexual pleasure is used in a broad sense to mean all strong, pleasant excitement from bodily stimulation.

Freud proposed that individuals even as young children have sexual tendencies. Children respond sexually to stimulation of the mouth, anus, and other sensitive regions of the body. This view was based on his own and his clients' reconstruction of their childhood. He believed that people have a psychosexual energy, which he called *libido* (desire). From the assertion, *libido* is focused in an infant's mouth and flows to other parts of the body, as the child grows older.

According to him, personality develops along the line of five stages of psychosexual development, each with a characteristic sexual focus that leaves its mark on the adult personality. If normal sexual development is frustrated at any stage, part of the *libido* becomes fixated at that stage. That is, it will continue to be preoccupied with the pleasure associated with that stage (Kalat, 1999). The five stages are: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital stages.

The Oral Stage

In the **oral stage**, from birth through the first year or so (Freud was vague about the age limits of each stage), the infant derives intense psychosexual pleasure from stimulation of the mouth, particularly while sucking at the mother's breast. In the later part of the oral stage, the infant begins to bite as well as suck. A person fixated at this stage continues to receive great pleasure from eating, drinking, and smoking and may also have lasting concerns with dependence and independence.

The Anal Stage

At about 1 to 3 years of age, children enter the **anal stage**. At this time they get psychosexual pleasure from stimulation of the anal sphincter, the muscle that controls bowel movements. The young child is expected to go through toilet training at this stage. A person fixated at this stage goes through life 'holding things back', being orderly, stingy, and stubborn, miserly or may go to the opposite extreme by being so wasteful, messy, and destructive.

The Phallic Stage

Beginning at about age 3, in the **phallic stage**, children begin to play with their genitals, and, according to Freud, become sexually attracted to the

opposite-sex parent. Freud claimed that boys with phallic fixation are afraid of being castrated; girls with such a fixation develop 'penis envy'. These ideas have long been controversial; developmental psychologists almost never observe castration fear or penis envy in children. The effect of such fixation on adult personality could manifest in behaviours characterising sexual deviations.

The Latency Stage

This stage starts from about age 5 or 6 until adolescent. Most children enter a **latent period** in which they suppress their psychosexual interest. At this time, they play mostly with peers of their own sex. The latent period is evidently a product of the culture and is not apparent in certain non-industrialised societies. More attention shift to activities involving elementary schoolwork and playing.

The Genital Stage

Beginning at puberty, young people take a strong sexual interest in other people. This is known as the **genital stage**. According to Freud, anyone who has fixated a great deal of libido in an earlier stage has little libido left for the genital stage. But people who have successfully negotiated the earlier stages can now derive primary satisfaction from sexual intercourse.

EVALUATION OF FREUD'S STAGES OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Freud's theory makes such vague predictions that it is difficult to test (Grunbaum, 1986; Popper, 1986). When it has been tested, the results have been mostly unimpressive or inconclusive. For example, the characteristics of being orderly, stingy, and stubborn, which Freud described as due to anal fixation, do tend to correlate with one another. This suggests that they are part of a single personality type. However, there is no evidence that these attributes actually result from any aspect of toilet training (Fisher & Greenberg, 1977). Undeniably, Freud was a great pioneer in identifying new questions. The validity of his answers is quite controversial. He based his conclusions on inferences he drew from what his patients said and did, and he had no sure way of testing the validity of those inferences.

A growing number of psychologists today contend that Freud imposed theories onto his data instead of drawing conclusions from the data.

It is possible, of course, for a visionary leader to induce correct theories based on weak evidence, and Freud could have been right even if his methods were faulty. How well his theories stand up today depends on who you ask, but the aspects of his theories that attract the fewest arguments are generalities such as the following.

"Our behaviour is moulded by earlier experiences dating back to childhood."

"Every behaviour has multiple causes, and we are unaware of many of them."

"Someone can react strongly to a fairly normal experience because of its symbolic significance to that individual."

"We have a variety of ways of defending ourselves against anxiety."

"Talking about a psychological problem sometimes helps."

Compared to what Freud was trying to accomplish, however, giving him credit for such generalities is 'damning by faint praise'. Freud, though he devised a method to discover the contents of people's unconscious minds through psychoanalysis, such inferences might sometimes be correct but reliability are rarely high.

A major deviation of Freud's theory of personality development with most African cultures lies in the explanation provided in the phallic stage. The conclusion that children tend to hate their parent of same sex and cherish the opposite sex parent due to sexual attraction does not hold waters in Africa. A more encouraging explanation for the attraction could be due to the harsh upbringing provided by parents to same sex children. It is a common knowledge in Nigeria as in many other African societies for fathers to be soft to their daughters. They are, however, harsh to their sons because they expect the male child to be bold and strong. The average man in Africa would not encourage his son to be very gentle and soft. Permissiveness toward the male child by a father is highly discouraged in Africa. It is seen as a way of spoiling the male child who could become fearful and lazy at adulthood. The father trains the male child to be tough and the female to be gentle and soft. On the other hand, the mother

trains the female child to be hardworking, especially with house chores. This sometimes makes the female to see the mother as harsh and always run to the father who would readily pet her. Similarly, the mother pets the male child when scolded or beaten by the father. It is a common saying in Africa that "If you spare the rod, you spoil the child". This expression is mainly referred to the training of the male child. The father would rather pet the female and scold the son than the reverse.

Neo-Freudians

Some psychologists, known as **neo-Freudians**, have remained faithful to parts of Freud's theory while modifying other parts. One of the most influential neo-Freudians was the German physician Karen Horney (1885–1952), who believed that Freud had exaggerated the role of the sex drive in human behaviour and had misunderstood the sexual motivations of women. She believed, for example, that the conflict between a child and his or her parents was a reaction to parental hostility and intimidation, not a manifestation of sexual desires. Horney contended that Freud had slighted the importance of cultural influences on personality and that he neglected to help his patients work out practical solutions to their problems. Still, Horney's views were more a revision than a rejection of Freud's theories. Other theorists, including Carl Jung and Alfred Adler, broke more sharply with Freud. Although some psychologists call Jung and Adler neo-Freudians, the followers of Jung and Adler do not. Each offered a very different, distinctly non-Freudian view of personality.

Carl Jung and the Collective Unconscious

Carl Jung (1875–1961), a Swiss physician, was an early member of Freud's inner circle. Freud regarded Jung as a son, the 'heir apparent' or 'crown prince' of the psychoanalytic movement, until their father-son relationship began to deteriorate (Alexander, 1982). At a point, Freud and Jung agreed to analyse each other's dreams. Freud described one of his dreams, but then refused to provide the personal associations that would enable Jung to interpret it, insisting that, 'I cannot risk my authority'.

Jung was more forthcoming. He described a dream in which he explored the upper stories of a

house, then explored its basement, and finally discovering that the house had a sub-basement, began to explore that. Jung thought the dream referred to his explorations of the mind. The top floor was the conscious mind; the basement was the unconscious; and the sub-basement was still a deeper level of the unconscious, yet to be explored. Freud, however, insisted that the dream referred to Jung's personal experiences and frustrations (Hannah, 1976).

Jung's own theory of personality incorporated some of Freud's ideas but put greater emphasis on people's search for a spiritual meaning in life and on the continuity of human experience, past and present. Jung believed that every person has not only a conscious mind and a 'personal unconscious' (equivalent to Freud's unconscious), but also a collective unconscious. The personal unconscious represents a person's own experience. The **collective unconscious**, which is present at birth, represents the cumulative experience of preceding generations. Because all humans share a common ancestry, all have the same collective unconscious. The collective unconscious contains archetypes, which are vague images that we all inherit from the experiences of our ancestors. As evidenced from this view, Jung pointed out that similar images emerge in the art of cultures throughout the world and that similar themes emerge in various religions, myths, and folklore. Those images and themes also appear in dreams and in the hallucinations of people with severe psychological disorders.

Given that biologists now know of genetics, Jung's ideas are hard to defend. Having an experience does not change one's genes, and even if we did somehow develop genes that represented common human experiences, those genes would certainly vary among people, as other genes do. Jung was quite insistent that the collective unconscious was the same for all people. Jung's alternative to a genetic explanation was that, perhaps, archetypes exist on their own, independent of time, space, and brains. That is a difficult idea even to contemplate, much less test. In short, Jung's views of the collective unconscious and archetypes are vague and mystical, although a much modified version could be developed, which would be scientifically testable (Neher, 1996).

Despite the controversy on the testability of Jung's view of personality, it is common across cultures in Nigeria to describe individuals as exhibiting behaviours similar to their ancestors. Culturally speaking, it is a common belief among the Edo people of Nigeria that there is no character exhibited by an individual that is not inherited from ancestors. Those characters exist without the individual's full awareness. They believe that everybody is a reincarnate of someone that once lived. This view clearly supports Jung's position.

Alfred Adler and Individual Psychology

Alfred Adler (1870–1937), an Austrian physician who, like Jung, had been one of Freud's early associates, broke with Freud because he believed Freud was overemphasising the sex drive and neglecting other, more important influences on personality. They parted company in 1911, with Freud insisting that women experience 'penis envy' and with Adler contending that women were more likely to envy men's status and power. The two were never reconciled.

Adler founded a rival school of thought, which he called individual psychology. To Adler, this term did not mean 'psychology of the individual.' Rather, it meant 'indivisible psychology,' a psychology of the person as a whole rather than a psychology of parts, such as id, ego, and superego. Adler emphasised the importance of conscious, goal-directed behaviour and de-emphasised (though he did not deny) unconscious influences.

Adler's Description of Personality

Several of Adler's early patients were acrobats who had had an arm or a leg damaged by a childhood illness or injury. These people were determined to overcome their disabilities, and they had worked hard to develop the strength and co-ordination they needed to perform as acrobats. Perhaps, Adler surmised, people in general try to overcome their weaknesses and to transform them into strengths (Adler, 1932/1964).

As infants, Adler pointed out, we are small, dependent creatures who strive to overcome our inferiority. People who do not succeed go through life with an inferiority complex, an exaggerated feeling of weakness, inadequacy, and helplessness. Even

those who do manage to overcome their feelings of inferiority persist in their efforts to achieve.

According to Adler, everyone has a natural **striving for superiority**, a desire to seek personal excellence and fulfilment. Each person creates a **style of life**, or master plan for achieving a sense of superiority. That style of life may be directed toward success in business, sports, politics, or another competitive activity. It may also be directed toward 'success' of a different sort: for example, someone who withdraws from life may gain a sense of accomplishment or superiority from being uncommonly self-sacrificing. Someone who constantly complains about real or imagined illnesses or disabilities may, by demanding help from friends and family, win a measure of control or superiority over them. Someone may commit crimes to savour the attention that they bring.

Adler recognised that people are not always aware of their own style of life and the assumptions behind it, and may fail to realise that the real motive behind a word or action is to manipulate others. They may engage in self-defeating behaviour because they have not admitted to themselves what their goals really are. Adler tried to determine people's real motives. For example, he would ask someone who complained of a backache, 'How would your life be different if you could get rid of your backache?' Those who said they would become more active were presumably suffering from real ailments that they were trying to overcome. Those who said they could not imagine how their life would change, or said only that they would get less sympathy from others, were presumably suffering from psychologically caused ailments or, at least, were exaggerating their discomfort.

ADLER'S VIEW OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

Any personality based on a selfish style of life is unhealthy (Adler, 1964). People's need for one another requires that they develop a social interest, a sense of solidarity and identification with other people. People with a strong social interest strive for superiority in a way that contributes to the welfare of the whole human race, not just to their own welfare. They want to cooperate with other people, not to compete. In equating mental health with a strong

social interest, Adler saw mental health as a positive state, not just the absence of impairments.

In Adler's view, people with psychological disorders are not suffering from an 'illness'; rather, they have set immature goals, are following a faulty style of life, and show little social interest. They are striving for superiority in ways that are useless to themselves and to others. For example, one of Adler's patients was a man who lived in conflict with his wife because he was constantly trying to impress her and dominate her. When discussing his problems, the man revealed that he had been very slow to mature physically and had not reached puberty until he was 17 years old. Other teenagers had ignored him and had treated him like a child. He was now a physically normal adult, but he was overcompensating for those years of feeling inferior by trying to seem bigger and more important than he really was.

Adler tried to get patients to understand their own style of life and to correct the faulty assumptions on which they had based their lives. He urged them to strengthen their social interest and to strive for superiority in ways that would benefit both themselves and others. This view of personality may be an explanation for cultism in Nigeria. People who join cults might be striving to overcome their feeling of inferiority in their environment.

Adler's Legacy

Adler's influence on psychology exceeds his fame. His concept of the 'inferiority complex' has become part of the common culture. He was the first to talk about mental health as a positive state rather than as merely the absence of impairment. Many later forms of therapy drew upon Adler's innovations, especially his emphasis on the assumptions underlying a patient's behaviour. Humanistic psychologists followed Adler by urging people to take responsibility for their own behaviour and for modifying their style of life.

Freud, Jung, and Adler lived and worked in an earlier era that was apparently more conducive to building major theories of how personality fits together. It is easy to fault these theorists for jumping to conclusions and for their other shortcomings. Still, one should admire the scope of what they were trying to accomplish and the influence that they had on later

investigators. Previously, personality was entirely in the realm of philosophers and novelists. The grand theory builders made personality a topic for research and progress.

The Trait Approach

Whereas psychodynamic theorists try to explain the underlying basis for personality, many contemporary researchers concentrate on simple description of the differences among personalities. The point of the trait approach to personality is that people have consistent personality characteristics that can be measured and studied. If you try to describe someone you know, you will almost certainly list some personality traits, such as 'she's friendly, honest, has a good sense of humour, but sometimes gets too upset by criticism'. Psychologists try to make these descriptions more accurate and systematic. It would be helpful, for example, to specify how friendly or honest this person is, compared to others, or to specify in which situations he or she is friendly or honest.

Let's start with this example: Some people match their gender stereotypes rather closely, being either very 'masculine' men or very 'feminine' women. According to the usual or stereotypical meanings of the terms, masculinity includes ambitiousness, self-assertiveness, and an interest in sports. Femininity includes an enjoyment of children, an enjoyment of beautifying the house and garden, and a tendency to be sympathetic to and understanding of other people.

We could, therefore, identify masculinity and femininity as personality traits. One of the tasks for researchers, then, is to determine whether these are really just two ends of a single continuum (just as outgoingness is the opposite of isolation), or whether they are separate dimensions. Sandra Bem (1974) proposes that it is possible to be high in both masculinity and femininity, or flexible enough to switch between masculinity and femininity depending on the situation. She defines this trait as androgyny (from the Greek roots *andr*, meaning 'man' and *gyne*, meaning 'woman'). According to Bem, androgynous people are not limited by one stereotype or the other and can combine masculine strengths, such as ambition with feminine strengths, such as sympathy for the needs of others.

In the original scoring system, you would be

considered androgynous if you checked about the same number of masculine items as feminine items. However, one way to be equal in both categories is to be very low in both. It is hard to see any advantage in being unassertive, unambitious, indifferent to children, unsympathetic to other people, and low in all the other masculine and feminine characteristics. Consequently, most investigators now define androgyny as a personality that is high in both masculinity and femininity.

Consider a second example of personality traits: Do you think that your successes and failures depend mostly on your own efforts or mostly on circumstances beyond your control? Presumably, we all agree that both are important, but people differ in how much they emphasise one or the other. People who believe they are largely in control of their lives are said to have an internal locus of control. Those who believe they are controlled mostly by external forces are said to have an external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). In Nigeria, people with this trait readily attribute events around them to the gods or ancestral intervention.

Generally, people with an internal locus of control like to choose tasks where they believe they can control the outcome, and then they persist at these tasks. At the end, they take the credit for their successes and the blame for their failures. People with an external locus of control are more likely to feel helpless (Lefcourt, 1976).

Androgyny and locus of control are just two personality traits; obviously, we could define and measure a great many more. We describe the sizes of objects in terms of three dimensions of space (length, width, and height) and one dimension of time. How many dimensions would we need to describe people's personalities? This question shall be explored later in this chapter.

The Learning Approach

How does someone develop a personality trait, such as androgyny or locus of control? Genetics and other biological factors no doubt exert some influence, but specific behaviours must be learned. Indeed, some psychologists have argued that the whole concept of general personality traits is vastly overrated, and that most of our personality is learned on a situation-by-situation basis (Mischel, 1973, 1981). For example,

you might consider yourself honest because you would always return a lost wallet to its owner and because you would never cheat on your income taxes; nevertheless, you may find yourself telling each of your dating partners, 'You are the only one I have ever loved'. So how useful is it to say that you are an honest person or even that you are 'more honest than 80% of other people'? It might be more useful to describe specific behaviours, such as honesty about returning a lost wallet or dishonesty toward romantic partners, or conscientiousness in particular situations, or friendliness in particular situations (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Presumably, these specific behaviours are learned. The Social Learning approach describes some ways in which we learn our personality. We learn much by imitation or by vicarious reinforcement and punishment. That is, we copy behaviours that we know led to success for other people but avoid behaviours that led to failure for others.

Let's illustrate this idea by applying this approach to masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. One major part of those traits is gender, the pattern of behaviour that each person is expected to follow because of being male or female. A gender role is the psychological aspect of being male or female, as opposed to sex, which is the biological aspect. We know that gender role is at least partly learned, because certain aspects of it vary strikingly among cultures. For example, some cultures define cooking as 'women's work' and others define it as 'men's work'. Men wear their hair short in some cultures and long in others.

When we say that children learn their gender role, we do not necessarily mean that anyone teaches it to them deliberately or intentionally. For example, most adults do not tell boys that they are supposed to fight with one another, and adults usually do what they can to stop the fighting. Nevertheless, little boys tend to be bossy and aggressive, especially when they think no adults are watching (Powlishta & Maccoby, 1990). Some of that aggressiveness probably arises from biological tendencies, but boys may have also learned some of it by following adults' examples. Boys tend to imitate men, and girls tend to imitate women. In one experiment, children watched adults choose between an apple and a banana. If all the men chose, say, the apple and all the women chose the banana, the boys who were

watching wanted an apple and the girls wanted a banana (Perry & Bussey, 1979). The choice of fruit is, in itself, trivial, but the study shows the potential for influence on more important behaviours.

Perhaps, even more importantly, children learn gender roles from other children. Children have a 'playground culture' of their own; each cohort teaches the slightly younger set what is expected of them, and in many ways the peer group has a stronger influence than parents do (Harris, 1995). Even parents who try to raise their sons and daughters to be non-sexist find that their children come back from the playground with strong prejudices about what boys do and what girls do. In Africa, these attitudes are learnt from peers and older members of the society when they discuss. Children learn a lot from adult discussions even when they do not take part in such discussions.

In short, the learning approach focuses on more specific behaviours than does the trait approach, and attempts to relate specific behaviours to specific experiences. Some of these are the person's own experiences with those of others whom the person has imitated. Learning occurs in the attempt to imitate qualities that are admired and found encouraging in others, which now become a common disposition by individuals, especially in social settings.

Humanistic Psychology

Another general perspective on personality is the humanistic psychology, which deals with consciousness, values, and abstract beliefs, including spiritual experiences and the beliefs that people live by and die for. According to humanistic psychologists, personality depends on what people believe and how they perceive the world. If you believe that a particular experience was highly meaningful, then it was highly meaningful. A psychologist can understand your behaviour only by asking you for your own evaluations and interpretations of the events in your life. In theology, a humanist glorifies humans, generally denying or at least giving little attention to a 'Supreme Being'. The term "humanistic psychologist" implies nothing about a person's religious beliefs.

Humanistic psychology emerged in the 1950s and 1960s as a protest against both behaviourism and psychoanalysis, which were the dominant view-

points in psychology at that time (Berlyne, 1981). Behaviourists and psychoanalysts often emphasise the less noble, or at least morally neutral, aspects of people's thoughts and actions, whereas humanistic psychologists see people as essentially good and striving toward perfection. Also, behaviourism and psychoanalysis, despite their many differences, are both rooted in determinism (the belief that every behaviour has a cause) and in reductionism (the attempt to explain behaviour in terms of its component elements). Humanistic psychologists reject these attempts to explain behaviour in terms of its parts or causes. They claim that people make deliberate, conscious decisions about what to do with their lives. People can decide to devote themselves to a great cause, to sacrifice their own well-being, and to risk their lives. To the humanistic psychologist, it is fruitless to ascribe such behaviour to past rewards and punishments or to unconscious thought processes. Rather, they are means of attaining great experiences that are fulfilling for the individual.

Humanistic psychologists generally study the special experiences of a given individual, as opposed to seeking means or medians for large representative groups. For example, humanistic psychologists study growth experiences — the moments that people identify as points of transition, when they may say, 'Aha! Now I have become an adult,' or 'Now I have truly committed my life to this goal' (Frick, 1983). They also study peak experiences, moments in which a person feels truly fulfilled and contented. Some people report that they 'feel at one with the universe' when they hear 'thrilling' music, or take part in an emotional religious ceremony, or achieve a great accomplishment.

Carl Rogers and the Goal of Self-Actualisation

Carl Rogers, an American psychologist, studied theology before turning to psychology, and the influence of those early studies is apparent in his view of human nature. Rogers became probably the most influential humanistic psychologist.

According to Rogers (1980), human nature is basically good. People have a natural drive toward self-actualisation, which means the achievement of one's full potential. According to Rogers, it is as natural for people to strive for excellence as it is for

a plant to grow. The drive for self-actualisation is the basic drive behind the development of personality. Rogers' concept of self-actualisation is similar to Adler's concept of striving for superiority. Adler was a forerunner of humanistic psychology.

Children evaluate themselves and their actions, beginning at an early age. They learn that what they do is sometimes good and sometimes bad. They develop a self-concept, an image of what they really are, and an ideal self and image of what they would like to be. Rogers measured a person's self-concept and ideal self by handing the person a stack of cards containing statements such as 'I am honest' and 'I am suspicious of others'. The person would then sort the statements into piles representing True of me and Not true of me, or arranging them in a continuum from Most true of me to Least true of me. This method is known as a Q-sort. Then Rogers would provide an identical stack of cards and ask the person to sort them into two piles: True of my ideal self and Not true of my ideal self. In this manner, he could determine whether someone's self-concept was similar to his or her ideal self; people who perceive a great discrepancy between the two generally experience distress. Humanistic psychologists try to help people overcome this distress, either by improving their self-concept or by changing their ideal self.

To promote human welfare, Rogers maintained that people should relate to one another with unconditional positive regard, a relationship that Thomas Harris (1967) describes with the phrase, 'I'm OK-You're OK.' Unconditional positive regard is the complete, unqualified acceptance of another person as he or she is, much like the love of a parent for a child. If someone expresses anger, or even a desire to kill, the listener should accept that as an understandable feeling, even while discouraging the person from taking certain possible actions. The listener must convey the message that the other person is inherently good, even though certain actions might be bad. This view resembles the Christian admonition to 'Hate the sin but love the sinner.' The alternative is conditional positive regard, the attitude that 'I shall like only if ...'. People who are treated this way may feel restrained about opening themselves to new ideas or behaviours, for fear of losing someone else's esteem.

Abraham Maslow and the Self-Actualisation Personality

Abraham Maslow, another of the founders of humanistic psychology, proposed that people have a hierarchy of needs, an idea we considered earlier. The highest of those needs is self-actualisation, the fulfilment of a person's potential. What kind of person achieves self-actualisation, and what is the result of achieving it? Maslow (1971) seeks to describe the self-actualisation personality. He complains that psychologists concentrate on disordered personalities, thus reflecting the medical view that health is merely the absence of disease. This seems to assume that all personality is either 'normal' or 'abnormal' (undesirable). Maslow insists that personality could differ from the normal in positive and desirable ways.

To determine the characteristics of the self-actualised personality, Maslow made a list of people who, in his opinion had achieved their full potentials. His list included people he knew personally as well as figures from history. He then sought to discover what these people had in common.

According to Maslow, people with a self-actualised personality show the following characteristics:

An accurate perception of reality. They perceive the world as it is, not as they would like it to be. They are willing to accept uncertainty and ambiguity when necessary.

Independence, creativity, and spontaneity. They follow their own impulses.

Acceptance of themselves and others: They treat people with unconditional positive regard.

A problem-centred outlook, rather than a self-centred outlook: They think about how best to solve a problem, not how to make themselves look good. They also concentrate on significant problems, such as philosophical or political issues, not just the petty issues of getting through the day.

Enjoyment of life: They are open to positive experiences, including 'peak experiences.' Self-actualised personality also includes good sense of humour.

Critics have attacked Maslow's description, on the grounds that because it is based on his own choice of subjects, it may simply reflect the characteristics

that he himself admired. In any case, Maslow paved the way for other attempts to define a healthy personality as something more than personality without disorder.

In Search of Human Nature

You have no doubt heard the parable of the blind people describing an elephant: One feels the tusks and says an elephant is like a smooth rock; another feels the tail and says an elephant can emerge only from the combination of narratives. Similarly, a full description of personality emerges from a combination of research approaches. Saying that people have personality traits does not necessarily conflict with saying that personality is learned, or that it has unconscious influences (the psychodynamic), or that it is largely under conscious control (the humanistic approach).

However, although these approaches are not necessarily in conflict, their advocates are not necessarily in full agreement either. Various personality theorists have sharply different views of human nature, and much is at stake. The challenge for personality researchers is to take such global questions about human nature and try to convert them into scientifically testable hypotheses.

African Practices and Personality Development

There are certain cultural practices in most parts of Africa that help to shape the characters of individuals from childhood. For instance, in most African societies male and female children are reared differently. While male children are trained to be tough and domineering, assertive, competitive, self-reliant, and willing to take risks, their female counterparts are trained to be submissive, affectionate, dependent, cheerful, compassionate, loyal, and sympathetic (Attah, 2004). Such practices prepare individuals for sex-roles later in life as adults. In Nigeria, for example, it is common to find parents rebuking a male child beaten by his mate at school, or while playing with peers. Such a child is always reminded that if he must be a man he should not cry because men do not cry. In some cases, such a child could be beaten by the parents or elder sibling for not living up to male expectation. The female child or sister on the other hand, is often reminded that she

must not act as if she is a male child. She is not expected to fight even when offended or slapped by peer (male or female). Rather, she should report to parents instead of retaliating. When children go out to play, the female child is expected to come back home much earlier than her male siblings.

Among the Edo and Delta peoples of southern Nigeria, male children are taught not to fret or shiver while being spoken to. They are taught to be very bold. This could provide a possible explanation for the aggressive behaviours readily observed among people from that part of the country. The Hausa-Fulani of northern Nigeria has a practice that also promotes toughness in their males. From childhood, the male child is taught to withstand pain. Endurance is a highly cherished quality among the men. Ability to endure and resist pain is a major determinant in marrying a wife among the Hausa-Fulani. For instance, male suitors are invited for flogging (physical beating). The flogging continues until one of the suitors is able to endure more than the others. Therefore, the traditional male individual is trained to be tough in view of the marriage task ahead during adulthood. It is also typical of Nigerians especially from the southern parts to buy male children toys depicting toughness and violence such as guns and sharp objects. Female children on the other hand, are usually bought baby dolls, plastic cooking utensils and flowers, depicting nurturance. All these are cultural practices that separate Nigeria from the Western societies.

Apart from rearing practice that shapes male and female personality differently, parents also shape children's personality through eating. For example, it is a common practice in most homes for children to eat food without touching the meat while eating. They are only given meat at the end of meals. A child that cut from the meat when eating is scolded or spanked in some cases except with the permission of an adult or parent eating with him or her. The reason for this is that children are being trained to defer gratification, which they are expected to carry to adulthood. By learning to eat without touching the meat, the individual can grow up to be highly disciplined. Such an individual has a tendency to exercise restraint by not taking something within his or her reach without permission. Such practices are common among Africans. These practices help in no small measure

toward personality development of the African reared in Africa.

Personality Assessment

Individuals engage in one form of personality assessment or another from time to time. Assessment of personality is not limited to literate members of the society. Everybody carries out assessment directly or indirectly, whether skilled or not. However, the degree of bias is a major difference that separates the skilled from the unskilled assessor.

As earlier mentioned in the chapter, traditional Africans do have profiles of neighbours. It is such a profile that informs the impression people hold about others. For instance, Mr. Igbo is seen as friendly and warm, whereas his brother, Egbe, is arrogant and proud. Again, Bankole is regarded by many as too domineering, while his twin brother is very accommodating. None of these individuals has been subjected to any standard form of personality assessment using any of the known instruments or techniques. Yet, a set of characters have been ascribed to explain their tendency to act in certain ways especially in social settings. The description with certain qualities informs the impressions people have about one another. In other words, they are described based on cursory assessment by others who may not have knowledge of psychological principles guiding personality testing.

In contemporary times, however, psychologists carry out personality assessment by using three common techniques. These are: Observation, Standardised tests, and Projective techniques. Depending on the reason and focus of assessment, the trained assessor uses one or a combination of the techniques to achieve his or her goal.

Standardised Personality Tests

To devise a psychological test that not only appears to work but also actually does work, there is the need to follow some elaborate procedures to design the test carefully and to determine its reliability and validity.

Psychologists have developed a great variety of standardised personality tests. A standardised test is one that is administered according to specified rules and whose scores are interpreted in a prescribed fashion. One important step for standardising a test

is to determine the distribution of scores for a large number of people. We need to know the mean score and the range of scores for people in general and for various special populations, such as severely depressed people. Given such information, it becomes possible to determine whether a given individual's score on the test is within the normal range or whether it is more typical of people with a particular disorder.

Most of the tests published in popular magazines have never been standardised. A magazine may herald an article: 'Test Yourself: How Good Is Your Marriage?' or 'Test Yourself: How Well Do You Control the Stress in Your Life?' After you take the test and compare your answers to the scoring key, the article may tell you that 'if your score is greater than 80, you are doing very well ... if it is below 20; you need to work on improving yourself!' Unless the magazine states otherwise, you can safely assume that the author pulled the scoring norms out of thin air and never even bothered to make sure that the test items were clear and unambiguous.

Over the years, psychologists have developed an enormous variety of tests to measure both normal and abnormal personality. A great deal of research focused on trying to standardise their interpretation and measure their reliability and validity. Attempt is made here to examine a few prominent examples and explore some creative possibilities for future personality measurement.

Self-Report Measures of Personality

If someone wanted to assess your personality, one possible approach would be to carry out an extensive interview with you in order to determine the most important events of your childhood, your social relationships, and your successes and failures. Obviously, such a technique would be extraordinarily costly in time and effort. Just as physicians draw only a small sample of your blood to test it, psychologists can utilise self-report measures that ask people about a relatively small sample of their behaviour. This sampling of self-report data is then used to infer the presence of particular personality characteristics (Conoley & Impara, 1997).

One of the best examples of a self-report measure, and the most frequently used personality test, is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality

Inventory-2 (MMPI-2). The original MMPI was devised empirically, that is, by trial and error (Hathaway & McKinley, 1940). The authors developed hundreds of true-false questions that they thought might be useful for identifying personality dimensions. They put these questions to people who were known to be suffering from depression, paranoia, and other psychological disorders and to a group of hospital visitors, who were assumed to be psychologically normal. The researchers selected those items that most of the people in a given clinical group answered differently from most of the normal people. Their assumption was that if you answer many questions just as depressed people usually answer them, you are probably depressed too. Although the original purpose of the measure was to differentiate people with specific sorts of psychological difficulties from those without disturbances, it has been found to predict a variety of other behaviours. For instance, MMPI scores have been shown to be good predictors of whether college students will marry within ten years and whether they will get an advanced degree. Police departments use the test to measure whether police officers are prone to use their weapons. Psychologists in the former Soviet Union even administered a modified form of the MMPI to their cosmonauts and Olympic athletes (Dworkin & Widom, 1977; Holden, 1986; Hathaway & McKinley, 1989; Greene, 1991; Butcher, 1995; Duckworth & Anderson, 1995).

The MMPI had 10 scales — for reporting a depression score, a paranoia score, a schizophrenia score, and others. Later, other researchers found that they could use MMPI items to measure other dimensions of personality as well (Helmes & Reddon, 1993). The test itself consists of a series of 567 items to which a person responds 'True', 'False', or 'Cannot say'. The questions cover a variety of issues, ranging from mood ('I feel useless at times') to opinions ('People should try to understand their dreams') to physical and psychological health ('I am bothered by an upset stomach several times a week' and 'I have strange and peculiar thoughts').

There are no right or wrong answers, of course. Instead, interpretation of results rest on the pattern of responses. The test yields scores on ten separate scales, plus three scales meant to measure the validity of the respondent's answers. For example,

there is a 'lie scale' that indicates when people are falsifying their responses in order to present themselves more favourably (through items such as 'I can't remember ever having a bad night's sleep') (Butcher, *et. al.*, 1990; Graham, 1990; Bagby, Buis, & Nicholson, 1995).

How did the authors of the MMPI determine what specific patterns of responses indicate? The procedure they used is typical of personality test construction — a process known as test standardisation. To devise the test, groups of psychiatric patients with a specific diagnosis, such as depression or schizophrenia, were asked to complete a large number of items. The test authors then determined which items best-differentiated members of these groups from a comparison group of normal participants, and these specific items were included in the final version of the test. By systematically carrying out this procedure on groups with different diagnoses, the test authors were able to devise a number of subscales that identified different forms of abnormal behaviour.

When the MMPI is used for the purposes for which it was devised (identification of personality disorders), it does a reasonably good job. However, like other personality tests, it presents the opportunity for abuse. For instance, employers who use it as a screening tool for job applicants may interpret the results improperly, relying too heavily on the results of individual scales instead of taking into account the overall patterns of results, which require skilled interpretation. Furthermore, critics point out that the individual scale overlap, making their interpretation difficult. In sum, although the MMPI remains the most widely used personality test and has been translated into more than 100 different languages, it must be used with caution (Graham, 1990; Helmes & Reddon, 1993; Greene & Clopton, 1994).

It is not surprising then that the MMPI was described as one of the most widely used personality tests based on simple pencil-and-paper responses (Plotrowski & Keller, 1989). In Nigeria, too, the scale has been adapted and used in reasonable measure (Brener, 1998).

In using the MMPI, most people with scores above a certain level on the depression scale are, in fact, depressed. Some of the items on the MMPI made

sense theoretically; some did not. For example, some items on the depression scale asked about feelings of helplessness or worthlessness, which are important parts of depression. But two other items were, 'I attend religious services frequently' and 'Occasionally I tease animals'. If you answered False to either of those items, you would get one point on the depression scale. These items were included simply because more depressed people than non-depressed people answered False to these items. Why they did is not obvious. Perhaps depressed people do not tease animals just because they do hardly anything just for fun.

The MMPI was standardised in the 1940s. As time passed, the meaning of certain items, or at least of certain answers, changed.

At the time, the word 'important' meant about the same thing as 'famous' and people who called themselves important were thought to have an inflated view of themselves. Today, we are more likely to say that every person is important.

What about this item?

I like to play drop the handkerchief. T F

Drop the Handkerchief, a game similar to Tag, dropped out of popularity in the 1950s among Americans. Most people born since then have never even heard of the game, much less played it. Similarly, the game is not known or popular among Africans just like 'Teasing animals'. These are contents of the MMPI that meant different things to people in Nigeria, for instance. Without a revision of the items, the scale may not be able to tap the aspects of personality it intend to assess.

To bring the MMPI up to date, a group of psychologists rephrased some of the items, eliminated some, and added new ones to deal with drug abuse, suicidal ideas, Type A personality, and other issues that did not concern psychologists in the 1940s (Butcher, Graham, Williams & Ben-Porath, 1990). Then, they tried out the new MMPI-2 on 2,600 people selected to resemble the current mix of age, sex, race, and education in the United States. In other words, the psychologists restandardised the personality test from time to time. They also developed a new form, the MMPI-A, intended for use with adolescents. The various 10 clinical scales of the MMPI 1-2 have 32 to 78 items each, scattered at least a few points on each scale; a score above a

certain level indicates a probable difficulty.

The Generalisability of the MMPI

Your personality is such an integral part of who you are. Is it really possible for one test to measure personality for all kinds of people? In particular, is the MMPI (MMPI-2 or MMPI-A) a fair measure of personality for people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds? However, some of the items were designed for American and other Western societies. An example is the item that asks about 'teasing animals'. Such an item makes no serious meaning to the average Nigerian. It becomes difficult, therefore, to answer. In general, the means and ranges on each scale are about the same for many ethnic groups in the Western societies the MMPI have been used (Negy, Leal-Puente, Trainor, & Carlson, 1997). A few small differences in scores do occur, but they could reflect either real differences in personality or differences in interpreting what certain questions mean. Consequently, psychologists use the same norms for all groups, but they are slightly more cautious about interpreting the scores of racial minorities, rural dwellers, especially those people who are most impoverished and least educated (Gynther, 1989). In Nigeria, the scale has been standardised for the Yoruba population by Brener (1997).

Detection of Deception on Standardized Tests

Suppose you were taking the MMPI or another personality test and you wanted to make yourself look mentally healthier than you really are. Could you lie on the test? Yes. Could anyone catch you in your lies? Probably.

The designers of the MMPI and the MMPI-2 included in their test certain items designed to identify people who consistently tell lies (Woychyshyn, McElheran, & Romney, 1992). For example, consider the items 'I like every person I have ever met' and 'Occasionally I get angry at someone'. If you answer True to the first question and False to the second, you are either a saint or a liar. The test authors, convinced that there are more liars than saints, and would give you one point for each of these answers on a special 'lie scale'. You could get too many points on the lie scale. Strangely enough, some people lie on the test to try to make themselves

look bad. The test has some special items to detect that kind of faking also.

A similar method is used to detect deception on other types of tests. For example, many employees ask job applicants to fill out a questionnaire that asks them how much experience they have had with certain job-related skills. What is to prevent eager applicants from exaggerating or even lying about their experience? To find out whether applicants are lying, some employers include among the authentic items a few bogus items referring to non-existent tasks. According to the results of one study, almost half of all job applicants claimed to have experience with one or more non-existent tasks (Anderson, Warner, & Spencer, 1984). Moreover, applicants who claimed a great deal of experience with non-existent tasks also overstated their abilities on real tasks. An employer can use answers on bogus items as a correction factor. The more skill an applicant claims to have on a non-existent task, the more the employer will discount that applicant's claims of skill on real tasks. This is similar to frequent alteration in age by most applicants in Nigeria. It is not out of place to find a 40-year old applying for a job that specified 28 years as the maximum age required. One way of detecting liars under this circumstance is to look at their first and second school leaving certificates. For instance, it is not possible for an applicant to have completed primary school at age 4 or 5 years. Sometimes, some could be found lying when their age of entry into University is 10 years as against their reported age.

Uses of the MMPI

The MMPI is useful to psychologists who want to measure personality for research purposes. It is also useful to clinical psychologists who want to learn something about a client before beginning therapy or who want an independent measure of how much a client's personality has changed during the course of therapy (McReynolds, 1985).

How informative are the results to the client who actually takes the MMPI test? In some cases, the results point out a problem to which the person had paid little attention. In other cases, however, the results do little more than restate the obvious.

For example, suppose you gave the following answers:

I doubt that I will ever be successful	True
I am glad that I am alive.	False
I have thoughts about suicide	True
I am helpless to control the important events in my life	True

A psychologist analyses your answer sheet and tells you, 'Your results show indications of depression'. Yes, of course; you already knew that. In such a case as this, the results can be useful — not just for telling you that you are depressed, (which you already knew), but for measuring how depressed you are at this moment (a basis for comparison of future results).

The 16-PF Test

The 16-PF Test is another widely used standardised personality test. The term 'PF' stands for personality factors. The test measures 16 factors, or traits, of personality. Unlike the MMPI, which was intended primarily to identify abnormal personalities, the 16-PF test was devised to assess various aspects of normal personality. Cattell (1965) uses factor analysis to identify the traits that contribute most significantly to personality. Psychologists used factor analysis to identify major traits; Cattell found 35 and then narrowed them to 16 using same technique. He then developed a test to measure each of those traits. Because of the large number of factors, the results of his test apply to a rather wide range of behaviours (Krug, 1978).

Although the 16-PF test was originally designed to assess normal personality, it does enable clinicians to identify various abnormalities, such as schizophrenia, depression, and alcoholism. Each disorder is associated with a characteristic personality profile. As with any test, this test should be used cautiously, especially with people from different cultural backgrounds. Psychologists have translated this test into other languages, but something is often lost in translation. One study found that Mexican-Americans taking the 16-PF in Spanish had substantially different personality profiles than did Mexican-Americans taking supposedly the same test in English (Whitworth & Perry, 1990). However, the 16-PF has not been widely used or reported in Nigeria and most parts of Africa. This situation also applies to The Big Five personality test developed by

McCrae & Costa (1996). Though the test has been regarded as measuring a broad range of individuals' personality characteristics across societies (McCrae & Costa, 1996), African cultural settings were not taken into consideration when the authors were developing the test. Objective as the Big Five personality test might seem, its application in Nigeria requires proper adaptation.

Nevertheless, Psychologists in Nigeria have started constructing tests to assess personality in various settings. This became necessary to ensure cultural relevance of personality tests used in Nigeria. For example, Oyefeso & Adanljo (1987), and Ekore (2001). These Nigerian tests developers adopt same procedures used by their counterparts in Western societies where the MMPI and others originated from. The strength of the Nigerian tests lies mainly in the cultural consideration for test contents and context. As observed earlier on, some items in the MMPI do not really make much sense in their contents and context when looked at from an African perspective. This is not surprising because African cultural background was not considered when the authors were developing the tests. The inadequacy in foreign (imported) tests is gradually challenging psychologists in Nigeria to explore the area of test development to meet local demand.

Projective Techniques

The standardised tests described above and similar personality tests are easy to score and easy to handle statistically, but they restrict how a person can respond to a question. They do not give room for probing to uncover certain aspects of the testee that could be relevant in providing more information for a better description of the personality. To overcome this shortcoming, psychologists devise other means of asking open-ended questions that permit an unlimited range of responses.

People find it scary when simply asked to 'tell me about yourself'. It rarely evokes much information. In fact, most people find such invitations threatening. Many people are not fully honest even with themselves, much less with a psychologist they have just met. Many people find it easier to discuss their problems in the abstract than in the first person. For instance, they might say, 'I have a friend with this problem. Let me tell you my friend's problem and ask

what my friend should do'. They then describe their own problem. By so doing, they are 'projecting' their problem onto someone else, in Freud's sense of the word — attributing their own characteristics to someone else.

Rather than discouraging projection, psychologists often make use of it. Projective techniques are designed to encourage people to project their personality characteristics onto ambiguous stimuli. This strategy helps people to reveal themselves more fully than they normally would to a stranger, or even to themselves. If you were shown a shape of an ambiguous object (such as that of an inkblot) and asked what it represented, you might not think that your impressions would mean very much. But to a psychoanalytic theoretician, your responses to such an ambiguous figure would provide valuable clues to the state of your unconscious, and ultimately to your general personality characteristics.

The ambiguous stimuli used in projective personality tests require a person to describe it or tell a story about it. The responses are then considered to be 'projections' of what the person is like.

The Rorschach Inkblots

The Rorschach Inkblots, a projective test based on people's interpretations of ten ambiguous inkblots, is probably the most famous projective technique of personality. It was created by Hermann Rorschach, a Swiss psychiatrist, who was interested in art and the occult. He read a book of poems by Justinus Kerner, a mystic writer, who had made a series of random inkblots and wrote a poem about each one. Kerner believed that anything that happens at random reveals the influence of occult, supernatural forces (Kalat, 1999).

Rorschach made his own inkblots but put them to a different use. He was familiar with a word-association test then in use where a person was given a word and was asked to say the first word that came to mind. Combining this approach with his inkblots, Rorschach showed people an inkblot and then asked them to say whatever came to mind (Pichot, 1984).

The test consists of showing a series of symmetrical stimuli to people who are then asked what the figures represent to them. Their responses are recorded, and through a complex set of clinical



In the Rorschach Inkblot Test, people look at a pattern similar to this one and say what it looks like to them. The underlying theory is that, in an ambiguous situation, anything that someone does and says will reveal the individual's personality.

Judgements on the part of the examiner, people are classified into different personality types. For instance, respondents who see a bear in one inkblot are thought to have a strong degree of emotional control, according to the rules developed by Rorschach (Hurt, Reznikoff, & Clarkin, 1995; Misra et al, 1997; Meloy, et. al., 1997).

After testing a series of inkblots on his patients, Rorschach was impressed that their interpretations of the blots differed from his own. Originally, he had worked with a larger number, but the publisher insisted on cutting the number to 10 to save printing costs. The continuous usage of the blots by psychiatrists and psychologists gradually developed the Rorschach inkblot into projective technique as it is known today.

The Rorschach Inkblot Technique consists of 10 cards. Five are black and white; five are in colour. A psychologist administering this procedure hands you a card and asks, 'What might this be?' The instructions are intentionally vague. The assumption is that everything done by an individual in an ambiguous or ill-defined situation will reveal something significant about him or her more than in clearly defined situation. The psychologist may keep a record of

almost everything you do, including what you say you see, where and how you hold the cards, the length of any pauses between your responses, and so forth during assessment under this technique.

Sometimes people's answers reveal much, either immediately or in response to a psychologist's probes. Ordinarily, psychologists using the standardised test(s) might not be able to go beyond the contents of the test. Doing so would negate the very essence of objectivity that standardised tests enjoy. That would mean different psychologists asking different questions. That alteration could hinder the reliability and validity of objective tests as they were.

Evaluation of the Rorschach: Granted that people's answers on the test often contain a wealth of personal information, the key issue is whether psychologists can accurately interpret that information. In the 1950s and 1960s, certain psychologists made exaggerated claims, even calling the technique 'an X-ray of the mind'. Those claims provoked equally enthusiastic criticism. The trouble is partly that the Rorschach technique provides unstructured answers that must be interpreted by a psychologist who, in many cases, has preconceived notions about the client's problems.

For example, one depressed man replied as follows to one blot: 'It looks like a bat that has been squashed on the pavement under the heel of a giant's boot' (Dawis, 1994). Psychologist Robyn Dawis initially thought that this response illustrated the great power of the Rorschach technique: The client was expressing a sense of being overwhelmed and crushed by powers beyond his control. However, after further contemplation, Dawis realised that he had already known the client was depressed, so he interpreted the response accordingly. If a client with a history of violence had made the same response, the therapist would have focused on the aggressive nature of the giant's foot stomp. If the client had been prone to hallucinations or to paranoia, the psychologist would have made still other interpretations. That is, Rorschach interpretations depend on the psychologist's expectations at least as much as they do on what the client actually says.

A person's responses to the Rorschach test can be used in either of two ways, as a projective technique or as an objectively scored test. The more

traditional method of using it as a projective technique focuses on the content, such as themes of violence or depression. Used in this manner, the test faces the problem just described: The interpretations depend heavily on the therapist's expectations. Nevertheless, defenders of the technique reply that they use it only as a way of starting a conversation and getting clients talk more freely about topics they might be reluctant to discuss (Aronow, Reznikoff, & Moreland, 1995). Used in that way, the Rorschach technique is beyond criticism, but its limitations are clear.

When the Rorschach technique is used as an objectively scored test, a psychologist counts particular kinds of responses and compares the results to the norms for the population. Thus, the test is now more reliable than it once was. There is, however, a difference between reliability and validity. Although interpretations of test responses are now reasonably reliable (repeatable), their validity is less certain.

Researchers have reported reasonably good results when using Rorschach technique responses to predict how well a client will respond in psychotherapy (Meyer & Handler, 1997). The test is also reasonably valid for identifying schizophrenia and for determining that someone has a psychological problem, without necessarily identifying the problem (Vincent & Harman, 1991). However, critics charge that what the test does tell us, we could learn more easily or with greater certainty by other means (Wood, Nezworski, & Stejskal, 1996). In short, the Rorschach test can be useful as a conversation starter and maybe as a supplement to other means of assessment, but it should not be the sole basis for making confident judgement about someone. Many psychologists have serious qualms when their colleagues use the test results to recommend that someone be committed to a mental hospital, or to recommend for or against a prisoner's parole (Dawis, 1994).

Tests with stimuli as ambiguous as the Rorschach inkblot require unusual skill and care in their interpretation — too much, in many critics' estimation. The inkblot test, in particular, has been criticised for requiring too much inference on the part of the examiner, and attempts to standardise scoring have frequently failed. Furthermore, many critics complain that the Rorschach inkblot does not provide much valid information about underlying personality traits.

In fact, some researchers suggest that the test is more useful for permitting a clinical psychologist to get to know a test-taker in the context of therapy than for gathering much reliable information about the test-taker's personality. Despite such problems, findings suggest that their reliability and validity are high enough to provide useful inferences about personality (Piotrowski & Keller, 1989; Dawes, 1994; Wood, Nezworski, & Stejskal, 1996; Weiner, 1996; Bornstein, 1996).

The Thematic Apperception Test

The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) consists of pictures. The subject is asked to make up a story for each picture, describing what is happening, what events led up to the scene, and what will happen in the future. The stories are then used to draw inferences about the writer's personality characteristics (Bellak, 1993; Cramer, 1996).

The test was devised by Christiana Morgan and Henry Murray as a means of measuring people's needs; it was revised and published by Murray (1943) and later revised by others. There are 31 pictures in all; no more than 20 are used with a given individual. Same pictures are used for anyone being assessed. The pictures are all somewhat ambiguous except one (which is blank). They provide a better-defined stimulus than does the Rorschach inkblot.

People who take the TAT are expected to identify with the people shown in the pictures. For this reason, men are given pictures showing mostly men, and women are given pictures showing mostly women. People usually tell stories that relate to recent events and concerns in their own lives, possibly including concerns that they would be reluctant to talk about openly. For example, one young man told a story. This young man had entered divinity school, mainly to please his parents, but was quite unhappy there. He was wrestling with a secret desire to 'escape' to a new life with greater worldly pleasures. In his story, he described someone doing what he really wanted to do but would not openly admit.

The TAT is often used in a clinical setting to induce clients to speak freely about their problems. It is also used for research purposes. An investigator might measure someone's 'need for achievement' by counting all the stories that he or she tells about achievement. The same could be done for aggression,

passivity, control of outside events, or dominance. The investigator could then use these findings to study the forces that strengthen or weaken various needs.

When different psychologists examine the same TAT replies, they generally agree, more or less, on their interpretations. Most studies find a correlation of about 0.85 between different raters' interpretations — known as the inter-rater reliability (Cramer, 1996). When a given individual takes the TAT at two different times, months apart, the test-retest reliability is generally lower, usually less than 0.5 and sometimes much less than that (Cramer, 1996). That instability may not be a fault of the test, however, the test indicates people's needs and motivations, which do change over time. As it is with the Rorschach inkblot test, critics saw the TAT as too ambiguous and require unusual skill and care in its interpretation.

Less Successful Projective Techniques

Based on the theory that your personality affects everything you do, some psychologists (and others) have tried analysing people's handwriting. For example, perhaps people who dot their i's with a dash — are especially energetic, or perhaps people who draw large loops above the line — as in *allow* — are highly idealistic. Carefully collected data, however, show only random relationships between handwriting and personality (Tett & Palmer, 1997).

Another projective technique is to offer children dolls and invite them to act out a story. The dolls might be chosen, for example, to represent two parents and a child. The idea is that a child who is unable or unwilling to describe physical or sexual abuse might act out a story in which the adults abuse the child. The problem is with the interpretation of the results: Suppose a child acts out sexual contact between two dolls. Should we surmise that an adult has sexually molested the child? Maybe not; the child may have discovered sex play with other children or may have watched late-night cable-television shows. This form of doll play tells nothing for certain about the child's own experiences (Ceci, 1995; Koocher, *et. al.*, 1995).

Prospects for New Personality Tests

Each of the current popular personality tests has limitations, but some psychologists are experi-

menting with creating new techniques. One approach that a few researchers have tried is the emotional Stroop test. Recall the Stroop effect: People are biased to look at a display of a kind and interpret the colour after reading the words. In the emotional Stroop test, a person examines a list of words, some of which relate to a possible source of worry or concern to the person, and tries to say the colour of the ink of each word.

As a rule, people who are known to have an anxiety about snakes have an extra-long delay in reading the colour of snake-related words — venom, rattler, fangs, slither, bite, and cobra. Similarly, people worried about their health have long delays on the disease-related words; people concerned about success and failure have delays on words like loser and jobless. Therefore, it is possible to measure people's delays in stating the ink colour for a variety of words and from these results infer each person's main worries or concerns (Williams, Mathews, & Macleod, 1996). Researchers are just beginning to explore the potential uses of this method.

Uses and Misuses of Personality Tests

Before any drug company can market a new drug in Nigeria, National Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC) requires that it be carefully tested. If NAFDAC finds the drug safe and effective, it approves the drug for certain purposes, with a warning label that lists precautions, such as an advisory that pregnant women should not take it. After the drug is approved, however, NAFDAC cannot prevent a physician from prescribing it for an unapproved purpose and cannot keep it out of the hands of people who should be taking it.

Personality tests are a little like drugs. They ought to be used with great caution and only for the purposes for which they have demonstrable usefulness. They are, at a minimum, helpful to psychologists as an interviewing technique, to help 'break the ice' and get a good conversation started. Tests can also be useful as an aid in personality assessment by a psychologist. Note the expression 'as an aid,' not 'as a sufficient method of personality assessment'. For example, suppose someone has an MMPI personality profile that resembles the profile typical for schizophrenia. Identifying schizophrenia or any other unusual condition is a signal-

detection problem, as we discussed earlier — a problem of reporting a stimulus when it is present without falsely reporting it when it is absent. Suppose further that a particular personality profile on the MMPI-2 is characteristic of 95% of people with schizophrenia and only 5% of other people. 5% of the normal population is a larger group than 95% of the schizophrenic population. Thus, if we labelled as 'schizophrenic' everyone with a high score, we would be wrong more often than right. Someone who seems 'representative' of people in a rare category does not necessarily belong to that category. Therefore, a conscientious psychologist will look for other evidence beyond the test score before drawing a firm conclusion. The same, of course, should be said of any test, including IQ tests.

Some employers use personality tests to screen job applicants, selecting only those who have the 'right' personality. The underlying idea is correct; what makes a good worker is at least as much a matter of personality as it is intelligence. A good worker is conscientious, cooperative with other workers, calm under pressure, persistent about achieving goals, responsive to the client's needs, and so forth — all personality traits. The difficulty is not that personality is unimportant but that many personality tests do not measure the right factors (Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996). For example, a personality test that claims to measure an 'aggressive' personality may not measure the kind of aggressiveness that is presumably useful in a sales job. For ethical, legal, and practical reasons, employers should use a personality test only when they have clear evidence that the results help them to select among job applicants more accurately than they could without the test.

Trying to Measure Personality

As you have been reading about personality tests, you may have objected that no test could adequately describe the factors that make you the unique individual that you are. You are right. Just try to imagine how long it would take to measure everything that is worth knowing about your personality. After all, even family members who have known you all your life are sometimes surprised by what you say and do.

The goals of personality testing are more modest

— just to measure a few aspects that are useful for certain purposes. But we need to remember what these purposes are and determine how well (or poorly) various tests can achieve them. Within their proper place, tests can be useful. The problems arise when people try to draw strong conclusions from weak data.

Uniqueness of individuals in Personality Assessment

The focus of any personality assessment is determining what makes individuals to be special. Everyone is a unique being in his or her own right. Our needs and tendencies differ from one another in some degrees.

'You have a need for other people to like and admire you.'

'You have a tendency to be critical of yourself.'

'You have a great deal of unused potential that you have not turned to your advantage.'

'Although you have some personality weaknesses, you are generally able to compensate for them.'

'Relating to members of the opposite sex has presented problems to you.'

'While you appear to be disciplined and self-controlled to others, you tend to be anxious and insecure inside.'

'At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing.'

'You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.'

'You do not accept others' statements without satisfactory proof.'

'You have found it unwise to be frank in revealing yourself to others.'

If you think these statements provide a surprisingly accurate account of your personality, you are not alone. Many young adults think that the descriptions are tailored to suit them. In fact, the statements are intentionally designed to be so vague as to be applicable to just about anyone (Forer, 1949; Russo, 1981).

The ease with which we can agree with such imprecise statements underscores the difficulty in

coming up with accurate and meaningful assessments of people's personalities (Johnson, *et al.*, 1985; Prince & Guastello, 1990). Just as trait theorists were faced with the problem of determining the most critical and important traits, psychologists interested in assessing personality must be able to define the most meaningful ways of discriminating between one person's personality and another's. To do this, they use psychological tests, which are standard measures devised to assess behaviours objectively. Such tests are used by psychologists to help people make decisions about their lives and understand more about themselves. They are also employed by researchers interested in the causes and consequences of personality (Matarazzo, 1992; Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 1997; Aiken, 1997).

Like intelligence assessments, all psychological tests must have high degree of reliability and validity. Reliability, you may recall, refers to the measurement consistency of a test. If a test is reliable, it yields the same result each time it is administered to a given person or group. In contrast, unreliable tests give different results each time they are administered.

Tests also must be valid in order to draw meaningful conclusions. Tests have validity when they actually measure what they are designed to measure. If a test is constructed to measure sociability, for instance, we need to know that it actually measures sociability and not some other trait.

Finally, psychological tests are based on norms, standards of test performance that permit the comparison of one person's score on the test to the scores of others who have taken the same test. For example, a norm permits test-takers to know that they have scored in the top 10% of those who have taken the test. Basically, norms are established by administering a particular test to a large number of people and determining the typical scores. It is then possible to compare a single person's score to the scores of the group, providing a comparative measure of test performance against the performance of others who have taken the test. The establishment of appropriate norms is not a simple endeavour. For instance, the specific group that is employed to determine norms for a test has a profound effect on how an individual's performance is evaluated. However, the process of establishing norms can take on political overtones. The passions

of politics may confront the objectivity of science when test norms are established, at least in the realm of tests that are meant to predict future job performance. In fact, a national controversy has developed around the question of whether different norms should be established for members of various societies and ethnic groups (Brown, 1994).

A typical case, is the U.S. government's 50-year-old General Aptitude Test Battery, a test that measures a broad range of abilities from eye-hand coordination to reading proficiency. The problem that sparked the controversy is that African-Americans and Hispanics tend to score lower on the test, on average, than members of other groups. The lower scores are often due to a lack of prior relevant experience and job opportunities as a result of prejudice and discrimination.

To promote the employment of minority racial groups, the government developed a separate set of norms for African-Americans and Hispanics. Rather than using the pool of all people who took the test, the scores of other African-American and Hispanic applicants were compared only to the scores of other African-Americans and Hispanics. Consequently, a Hispanic who scored in the top 20 percent of the Hispanics taking the test was considered to have performed equivalently to a White job applicant who scored in the top 20 percent of the Whites who took the test, even though the absolute score of the Hispanic might be lower than that of the White applicant.

Critics of the adjusted norming system suggest that such a procedure is riddled with problems. According to them, not only is such a system unfair to White job applicants, but it fans the flames of racial bigotry. The practice was challenged legally, and with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1991, race norming on the General Aptitude Test Battery was discontinued.

However, proponents of race norming continue to argue that norming procedures, which take race into account, are an affirmative action tool that simply permits minority job-seekers to be placed on an equal footing with White job-seekers. Furthermore, a panel of the American National Academy of Sciences concurred with the practice of adjusting test norms. It suggested that the unadjusted test norms are not terribly useful in predicting job performance, and that they would tend to screen out otherwise-

qualified minority group members.

Job testing is not the only area in which issues arise regarding norms and the meaning of test scores. As earlier mentioned, when we discussed racial differences in IQ scores, the issue of how to treat racial differences in test scores is both controversial and divisive. Clearly, race norming raises profound and intense feelings that may come into conflict with scientific objectivity; and the controversy is far from over (American Psychological Association, 1993; Gottfredson, 1994; Sackett & Wilk, 1994; Greenlaw & Jensen, 1996).

The issue of establishing norms for tests is further complicated by the existence of a wide array of personality measures and approaches to assessment. Let's consider some of these measures, which have a variety of characteristics and purposes.

Assessing Behaviour by Observation

If you were a psychologist subscribing to a learning approach to personality, you would be likely to object to the indirect nature of projective tests. Instead, you would be more apt to use behavioural assessment, which are direct measures of an individual's behaviour used to describe characteristics indicative of personality. As with observational research, behavioural assessment may be carried out naturally by observing people in their own settings; in the workplace, at home, or in school. In other cases, behavioural assessment occurs in the laboratory, under controlled conditions in which a psychologist sets up a situation and observes an individual's behaviour.

Regardless of the setting in which behaviour is observed, an effort is made to ensure that behavioural assessment is carried out objectively, quantifying behaviour as much as possible. For example, an observer might record the number of social contact a person initiates, the number of questions asked, or the number of aggressive acts. Another method is to measure duration of events: the duration of a temper tantrum in a child, the length of a conversation, the amount of time spent working, or the time spent in cooperative behaviour.

Behavioural assessment is particularly appropriate for observing and eventually remedying specific behavioural difficulties, such as increasing socialisation in shy children. It provides a means of

assessing the specific nature and incidence of a problem and subsequently allows psychologists to determine whether intervention techniques have been successful.

Behavioural assessment techniques based on learning theories of personality have also made important contributions to the treatment of certain kinds of psychological difficulties. Indeed, the knowledge of normal personality provided by the theories earlier discussed has led to significant advances in the understanding and treatment of both physical and psychological disorders.

CONCLUSION

Wanted: Creative people with 'kinetic energy,' 'emotional maturity,' and the ability to 'deal with large numbers of people in a fairly chaotic situation with a great zeal to deliver'. 'Such an individual must be good at managing interpersonal relationships'.

Although this job description may seem most appropriate for certain jobs, in actuality it is part of common advertorials found in National Newspapers for management-related jobs in Nigeria. To find people with such qualities, agencies involved in Selection and Placement have come to rely on developed battery of personality measures for job applicants to complete. In Nigeria, most of these organisations rely on foreign designed personality tests to help determine who gets hired. This has raised a lot of questions concerning the validity and reliability of the foreign tests imported into Nigeria. But in more developed societies like the United States of America, organisations develop their own tests to serve the purpose of determining who gets hired (Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996).

Individuals too, have come to depend on personality testing to gain awareness of certain behaviours requiring attention in their lives. Many organisations also administer a battery of personality tests that purport to steer people toward a career for which their personality is particularly suited. Before relying too heavily on the results of such personality testing, either in the role of potential employee, employer, or consumer of testing services, you should keep several points in mind:

1. Understanding what the test purports to measure. Standard personality measures are accompanied by information that

discusses how the test was developed, to whom it is most applicable, and how the results should be interpreted. If possible, you should read the accompanying literature; it will help you understand the meaning of any results.

2. No decision should be based solely on the results of any one test. Test results should be interpreted in the context of other information: academic records, social interests, and the home and community activities. Without these data, individual scores are relatively uninformative at best and may even be harmful.
3. Tests are not infallible. The results may be in error; the test may be unreliable or invalid. You may, for example, have had a 'bad day' when you took the test, or the person scoring and interpreting the test may have made a mistake. You should not place undue stock in the results of the single administration of any test.

In sum, it is important to keep in mind the complexity of human behaviour-particularly your own. No one test can provide an understanding of the intricacies of someone's personality without considering a good deal more information than can be provided in a single testing session. This is necessary to minimise the bias in describing individual's qualities that are relatively enduring and separates him or her from others especially in social situations.

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