

Chapter 2

Personality

Research studies which follow the dispositional paradigm work like double-edged swords. While they may help in understanding the dynamics of poverty at the individual level, they can also become the basis for the victimization of the poor through creation of myths about them... the micro and the macro need to find convergence.

R. C. Tripathi (2010, pp. 211/12).

Psychology has long been in a bit of quandary with respect to personality and poverty. On the one hand it is probably best-known for its focus on personality traits, and has invested heavily in the construct as a discipline and as a profession. On the other hand, a great deal of the *rest* of psychology, principally social psychology, warns about the dangers of focusing on traits on their own. Behavior is actually, typically, a function of interactions between people and their environments. Those interactions include of course our social environment, principally other people, but also structures. The main danger then, in focusing too much on personality, is that this type of explanation loses sight of the power of situations. That is a very serious risk for any psychology of poverty reduction. It is tantamount to blaming people for their own poverty—a poverty of *opportunity*. Blaming people wrongly, however unintentionally or by implication, is a recipe for backlash, disengagement, and a mutual loss of confidence between the haves and have-nots in any global or local community.

This chapter is about finding a way for the construct of personality to do more good than harm, with due respect to poverty reduction. It presages the rest of the book, by turning the focus on ‘how’ supposedly abstract psychological ideas can concretely help make a difference, between poverty and prosperity.

Personality means characteristic individual and group differences in traits, motives, and aptitudes. Let us start by affirming that these differences make a difference (!). They can be affected by poverty, and they can reduce poverty itself: Pollution or malnutrition can hamper aptitude for school work; just as motivated teachers can inspire and empower their students. In time, they can each affect *opportunities* (Hunt 2011). Historically, from health and education to clinical

settings, Psychology has focused less on opportunities, and opportunity structures for poverty reduction, than it has on personality in such situations, itself (Baer et al. 2012; Carr and Sloan 2003; Carr and Bandawe 2011). Such a focus on personality is not too surprising perhaps, for a discipline that studies the person, and persons. Yet the lens—like all lenses—is biased.

Bias means distortion and in the case of poverty, the distortions are multiple. A first distortion is sociopolitical. Focusing on personality risks pandering to fundamental attribution errors about “the poor”; for example by deflecting attention from power structures. Bias is also sociocultural, because focusing on personality is not necessarily respectful or user-friendly to traditions of solidarity; community; the collective. A third distortion, or myth, is socioeconomic. Personality neglects that economic activity requires cooperation; competition; and is inherently about human relationships (Carr and Rugimbana 2011). There are thus at least three salient ways in which individualizing and so heavily “psychologizing” poverty can have *mythologized* poverty reduction, into a question of “personality”.

Personality is not the key to poverty reduction. Nor is it anathema. After an historical overview of personality approaches, this chapter reviews new-generation approaches which reveal under what conditions personality *can* be integrated with opportunity structures (bank lending requirements, for example), to help boost poverty reduction (e.g., by enabling business start-up loans). Contingency approaches like these are hard work, because they have to respect local as well as global conditions (Carr 2004).

An Historical Overview

A noted commentator on the psychology of poverty once observed that “Poverty has a most peculiar way of being ‘rediscovered’ about once every generation” (Allen 1970, p. 3). In that spirit, Table 2.1 applies a chronological lens to the study of poverty in psychology. Each of these approaches continues to the present day. Yet each has also waxed and waned to varying degrees during the periods covered in the Table. The chapter briefly traces each approach’s chronological trajectory from then till now. An emphasis throughout is not so much on relevance for understanding poverty on its own, in itself. It is on what the history shows us: Studying poverty in the way we have has largely just reinforced the status quo; even perhaps making poverty levels worse than if we had never been present at all. In other words, becoming *anti-poverty* requires an *extra* step, a different perspective, to be adopted in psychology.

A Culture of Poverty

This concept has had an incalculable impact on how psychologists, and others, have understood poverty. The idea originated from the extensive work of Lewis, a noted anthropologist and distinguished humanist. Lewis observed family life

Table 2.1 A chronology of personality psychology in the study of poverty

Decade	Concept	Process
1950s+	A culture of poverty	Socialization of poor traits, motives, and aptitudes
1960s+	The right stuff	Education, selecting and training volunteers, business entrepreneurs
1970s+	Attributions for poverty	Donor and later recipient cognitive biases
1980s+	Cross-cultural values	Socialization of cultural values like confucian work dynamism
1990s+	Context	Context-specific theory in health, education and work
2000s+	Capability	Matching person and situation to enable opportunity

in Mexico over a period of 15 years. The commitment culminated in his most famous work, “Five families” (Lewis 1959). This featured a day-in-the-life case analysis of five families from mostly lower socio-economic strata in Mexican society. Unusually perhaps for a social anthropological account, the five families are very psychological: “In comparing the five families we find a number of *traits* that cut across rural–urban differences and reflect national and class cultural values” (1959, p.16, emphasis added). The traits in question ranged from deficits, like lowered drive (p.15), to some more positive attributes, like resourcefulness (p.16). According to Lewis therefore, a culture of poverty is socialized and transmitted like any culture from generation-to-generation, for example in families. In this case, it just so happens to create a cycle of poverty, that begins and ends with—personality.

Despite admonitions by Lewis and virtually every other scholar in this tradition since, to keep structure in mind and to attribute the positive as well as negative traits, the literature has repeatedly, albeit inadvertently, accentuated the negative (Mohanty and Misra 2000, p. 24). In the 1960s there was an emphasis on the “poverty of culture” (Lewis 1966, p.25), specifically its negative traits. In the 1970s, a prominent review of the psychology of poverty entitled “psychological factors *in* poverty” (Allen 1970, emphasis added) highlighted a culture of poverty; the socialization of apathy; deleterious effects on mental health; personality correlates of poverty; and, not surprisingly perhaps, a “poverty of psychology” (Pearl 1970). Arguably it seems, these approaches created a static view of poverty which blames the poor and does not envision any room for dynamic self-improvement, if opportunities were created instead (Streeten 1974). “The poor” were metaphorically screwed.

The 1980s and 1990s continued with traits and trait-like motives such as passivity, including the problematic of family dynamics as a dampener on head-start programs for preschool and school-aged children (for critical reviews, Sinha 1990; Evans 2004). A prominent theme straddling both the 1990s and 2000s is that poverty exacerbates depression and anxiety, for example when lack of opportunity depresses cognition and cognitive appraisal (e.g., Amato and Zuo 1992; Baer et al. 2012; Ortigas 2000; Lever et al. 2005). A risk here is that people forget the lack of opportunity bit. Poverty gets equated with poor traits. Mental deficits like

this would start to chime with Lewis' original (1959) "culture of poverty" (Lever 2007, p. 79). Thus even today, when the term "the poor" is used, in writing or in speech, there is a subtle, implicit association with "a" culture of poverty rather than to a *wealth* of cultures, for poverty *reduction*.

Outside the personality domain, and principally in development economics, an alternative image has been unfolding. Beginning in 2000, a series of studies really took quite a different perspective on personality and poverty. In principle they were more aligned with everyday life from the person's own perspective not the social scientist's (Carr 2003a). A landmark study for this change of tack was a study called *Voices of the Poor*. As a research program, it featured over 60,000 people worldwide, living everyday with material hardship and frustrations, who were asked to give *their* perspective on what poverty is, and feels like, for them (Narayan et al. 2000a, b; Narayan and Petesch 2002). From a personal perspective reading some of the words themselves, the contrast with *five families* in these [and related voice-centered studies (e.g., <http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD628.pdf>)] could not be sharper.

The 60,000 stories are not this author's property to appropriate, either ethically or practically in a short chapter like this. The stories themselves belong to the narrators themselves. They are personal, and should be read as closely as possible from the owner's own mouths alone. One exemplar has already been given, in [Chap. 1](#). Accounts like this ooze activity not just passivity; energy not sloth; hope not despair—or depression (Marima et al. 1995). The balance is better than in *five families*. The accounts give voice to how poverty is not 'in' people but rather consists of challenges, and injustices, that people daily face and manage in their environment—from physical and social to political and economic (Mpofu 2010). Whether the differences with *five families* and related works is simply a reflection of changed times, or study lenses; perspective-shifting or a combination of each, we can never tell. What does seem certain however is that focusing on a "culture of poverty", including deficit traits transmitted from family generation-to-generation, may have partly obscured some of the more positive and active roles that personality daily plays in poverty *reduction*.

These roles, it seems, codepend on context. The question then is, how? In development theory as we have seen in [Chap. 1](#), the context for poverty reduction entails restrictions on, versus opportunities for, human "capability" (Sen 1999). Capabilities include personality, for example characteristic levels of drive and determination, but they also reflect the context, for example *rewarding* drive. Capability means having the individual and group freedom to choose how we function—for example by having access to decent health services, education, rewarding work, a clean environment, and so on. Capabilities are also both a means to and an end in poverty reduction. Education for instance both facilitates, and in itself comprises, capability. According to capability theory, and consistent with *Voices of the Poor*, people have inherent agency, to be all that they can be. Poverty is therefore combated by enabling the context, because this leaves individuals and groups free to realize their inherent potential.

Such ideas have found global favor in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (Annan 2000). They focus on *building* opportunity and

freedom in healthcare, education, gender equity, decent work and the environment. Critics have pointed to a need for concrete detail on their everyday implementation in health care, educational, government, and work settings (Easterly 2006). Work settings in turn are where the history of personality psychology proper, in studying poverty, arguably began.

The Right Stuff

From Table 2.1, in the 1960s psychology began a quest for traits that make a difference in prosperity enhancing work, “the right stuff”, from children studying in school to adults employed or self-employed (MacLachlan and Carr 1999). In that quest, at least three major domains of activity have taken center-ground: Academic work and the attainment of school grades; aid work, specifically volunteering; and enterprise growth, by fostering achievement motivation, called need for achievement (*nAch*) in aspiring entrepreneurs.

Education

Much of the debate in this domain has focused on one attribute in particular, “intelligence”. This trait has proved controversial, and arguably socially destructive, over the years, decades and centuries. Much of the debate in turn has hinged on the debate on heredity “versus” environment, and its implications for early interventions to boost “IQ” and thereby scholastic grades, and subsequently life opportunities. In the 1960s, it was proposed that class differences in intelligence had genetic foundations, which limited the potential for early interventions to make a difference (Jensen 1969). In the 1970s, debate with the environmentalists intensified (for a review, Allen 1970). The controversy became cross-cultural, spreading to lower income countries, where it was cogently argued that any differences observed were demonstrably artifacts of the tests; that different definitions of intelligent performance (Serpell 1977). The 1970s and 1980s included empirical evaluations of early intervention “Head-start” programs, in both higher and lower income countries (Sinha 1977; Moghaddam 1990). In the 1990s it became progressively clear that “intervention” programs needed family support, and community resources, for the gains to last (Sinha 1997). Likewise test developers and administrators should align with local expertise about how to make assessments, both of aptitude and school work itself, more socio-culturally, -politically and -economically competent (Zindi 1996).

In the 2000s intelligence is more likely to be seen as having access to the right opportunity structures to realize valued goals, as individuals and as nations (Hunt 2008). Schools, and school work, provide those structures. They literally help to make nations more intelligent; which enables further advancement, and so on

(Hunt 2011). At a more micro level, head-start programs and education in general both make a difference to quality of life and standards of living later in life (Nisbett et al. 2012; van der Berg 2008). The evidence at each level is consistent with Sen's (1999) theory of Capability ([Chap. 1](#)). In line with that theory, much of the effort in poverty reduction is geared toward improving not only educational opportunities per se, but also enabling the foundations to benefit from them, in health, and decent health services. Some cases in point would include de-worming, and iodine supplements during gestation, which have each demonstrated their potential to improve cognitive functioning and development (Banerjee and Duflo 2011). Thus nutrition and education are multipliers for poverty reduction (Hunt 2012).

A key mechanism for health x education to work on poverty reduction is by creating opportunities for decent work, including livable incomes: "Throughout the world it has been found that the probability of finding employment rises with higher levels of education, and that earnings are higher for people with higher levels of education. A better educated household is less likely to be poor.... The impact of education on earnings and thus on poverty works largely through the labor market" (van der Berg 2008, p. 3).

This brings us logically to work roles. Historically, the study of work roles in poverty reduction has focused on poverty-reduction work itself, mainly in expatriate aid; and on poverty-reduction through enterprise development, chiefly through entrepreneurs.

Aid Work Roles

In 1961 the United States (US) Peace Corps organization was formed, and throughout the 1960s a team of clinical psychologists was involved in selecting young US volunteers for the appropriate "personal attributes" (Harris 1973, p. 234). To do so, they used "gross ratings" (p. 244), based on rational "clinical predictive judgment" (pp. 245/6), of aptitude for international aid project work (Harris 1973). Around a decade later, these psychological services were terminated. During the decade, as Harris observed at the time, rates of attrition, from thousands of post-selection training courses and post-training placements, had steadily risen to an unacceptable 56 % (in 1969). As Harris reflects, there is a "high improbability that a marksman, in this case the assessment specialist, aiming at a target in a hazy atmosphere would hit even in the vicinity of the bull's eye, if neither the nature nor the location of the target had ever been adequately described" (Harris 1973, p. 238). An early lesson was thus that situations, here a working operational definition of successful field performance, was needed. This would have enabled any traits that might make a difference (between low and high performance) to be identified beforehand, and thereby used as a mechanism for matching candidates with actual requirements to do the job.

Harris (1973) went on to develop a trait-based rating scale for volunteer performance in the field. Some traits were shown to validly discriminate, significantly,

between volunteers who lasted versus those who returned early from working in the Pacific Island nation of Tonga. The right stuff in this context was headed by personality traits, for this context, of perseverance and adaptability, at least by comparison with technical competence and knowledge of subject (p. 242). This was not enough in itself though to assuage the sector's loss of confidence in personality from the earlier failures. Thereafter, much of the research effort shifted away, perhaps prematurely from personality to context per se. Much of the hope was now pinned on cross-cultural training and the provision of social support for overseas workers (Guthrie and Zektick 1967). A central example of the latter was preparing sojourners for commonly shared experiences of "culture shock" (Furnham and Bochner 1986).

In the late 1980s at least one study bucked the trend. It was an impressive longitudinal study of Canadian volunteers in a different range of low-income countries (Kealey 1989). Using a combination of subjective and objective performance data, the study found that performance ratings by Canadian and host counterparts were significantly higher for volunteers with (a) lower security needs and (b) lower upward mobility, and (c) positive expectations and (d) a focus on others rather than self (1989, p. 421). Experience itself was no guarantee of field success. In fact, having a longer résumé was linked to *lower* success at technology transfer to local staff (also in Gow 1991). Kealey (1989) concluded that the difference between these traits and those in Harris (1973, above) are a reminder that 'the right stuff' will vary from country to country, job to job, and generally from context-to-context. Situations always matter. Thus, even an intuitively omnibus trait like tolerance for ambiguity—which one might expect to travel pretty well—only really comes to the fore *if the situation itself is inherently ambiguous* (1989, p. 421).

By the 1990s, focus had shifted to the consequences of this culture shock, especially predicting early return among business professionals working on more business-based "Expatriate Assignments" (Black et al. 1991). This took the spotlight farther away from poverty reduction, toward the bottom-line for multinational rather than nonprofit organizations (Harrison and Shaffer 2005). Nevertheless, the earlier studies in Harris (1973) and Kealey (1989) had indicated that whatever the goal of an assignment, not- or for-profit, measuring the situation is just as important as measuring personality. Specifically, the match or "fit" between them is likely a more salient predictor of performance than either personality or situation alone (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005).

The right stuff must match situational need. Perhaps the most obvious feature of such a fit in poverty reduction work is that it is social; it includes other people and their needs, too. What this logically implies is that before making any selections or placements, one should ask local subject-matter experts directly, what traits, motives and aptitudes are required to do the work of poverty reduction, in the context that only they can know relatively directly, and well. Assuming it is reasonable to suppose that local people are well-positioned (and motivated) to decide what literally works for poverty reduction in their own setting, then we might also be prepared to expect possible *differences* between what local versus international experienced observers predict is the right stuff. As far back as

the mid-1960s for instance, Guthrie and Zektrick (1967) had found that Filipino and expatriate ratings of performance correlated far less than 1.00 (at 0.38, 1967, p. 20). Kealey (1989) also found significant differences between understandings of the requirements for the job of volunteer, although these were not in themselves directly linked in the study to differences in performance.

Differences of understanding like these are important, not only because they suggest differences of opinion about the right stuff, but also because they remind us that the different perspectives themselves are part of the context. In other words, there might be multiple indicators of fit, each with the potential to inform what it takes to do the job effectively and successfully, to reduce poverty. Thus an aid worker, whose personality fitted both international and local perspectives in equal measure, might have incrementally more of the right stuff than anyone else whose fit was with one party, *or* the other—and of course provided the performance requirements for doing the job itself include both local and international expectations and criteria.

The approach of asking both global and local experts about job requirements has been taken in a study recently published within a multi-journal global special issue on psychology and poverty reduction (http://poverty.massey.ac.nz/#global_issue). The research consisted of two studies (Manson and Carr 2011).

In Study I, expatriate and host national subject-matter experts each rated the importance of a list of job-related competencies for mission work. These were gleaned from international studies, so the list was not wholly derived locally. However significant differences emerged between the two groups of subject-matter experts, both of them with wide experience of what the job required, in order to be effective at the job. A central feature of the job was poverty reduction. Specifically, host national experts viewed being able to work with people to be less salient for this type of work than expatriate managers with similar seniority levels did. Planning/organizing, strategy formulation, and communicating/presenting were significantly more salient from local experts' points of view (2011, pp. 471/2).

In a second study, indexes of person-job specification fit were calculated. These entailed comparing self-ratings on competencies by the expatriate mission workers themselves, to those given for importance by the panels, and calculating the difference, overall, for each job incumbent. A measure of fit between what the expatriate *perceived* in general to be required, and what the respective panels also rated as key, was another index of fit that was gauged. For both types of fit, (a) the fit between actual expatriate aptitudes and the twin panels' experience-based priorities, and (b) the fit between expatriate and panels' views of what the right stuff was—the fit with *both* panels significantly predicted work traction for the expatriate worker. Each type of fit made a statistically significant contribution to work-related outcomes. Those outcomes ranged from job satisfaction and work engagement to satisfaction with life (Manson and Carr 2010).

Although these traction scores were not actual performance measures, and should certainly be so in future research, what the findings nonetheless suggest is that fit is a question of perspective in general, and alignment with different

priorities in particular. Indeed for the degree of fit on what is required for the job in general, the fit with local subject matter experts was more predictive than was the fit with the international panel (though not statistically significantly so).

To conclude, this exploratory study discovered more about process than outcome, namely showing ‘how’ fit can be gauged in a global and local sense, and with respect to principles like local ownership. It did not fall into the mindset that one size (of fit) fits all. Instead the approach shows that and how it is theoretically and practically possible for aid workers to be fitted against preobtained job specifications, from *multiple sources*. Those diverse yardsticks ought to respect the views and expertise of multiple stakeholders in general; and local subject-matter-experts in particular. In development policy, the latter pathway is called “Alignment” (Chap. 1). Development activity and antipoverty initiatives, including in research, should in principle and practice respect local perspectives and aspirations (Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005).

In those terms, what the mission study begins to suggest, at the everyday level, is that macro-level policy principles, designed to help grand plans for poverty reduction, may actually have operational value in practice, at a mezzanine or meso-level in the everyday workplace (Carr and Bandawe 2011). As such, they start to look like one concrete response to the critical call for translation of the Millennium Development Goals, at the everyday level of aid and development projects (Stewart and Fukuda-Parr 2012). They commence translating grand plan into workplace decision making, and people management (Easterly 2006). Although the methodology has room for improvement and the study is highly exploratory, it nonetheless offers an illustration of ‘how’ personality psychology, if combined with situational awareness, may in future contribute more toward actual poverty reduction, namely through better poverty reduction work.

That lesson about person \times situation combination is reinforced, and expanded, when we consider the history of studying the right stuff for enterprise development, and thus entrepreneurial capability.

Enterprise Development

Perhaps the best-known and most audacious of all personality approaches to human development can be found in the work of McClelland (1961). In particular, this 1961 book called *The Achieving Society* attributed much of the right stuff, for economic development, to *nAch*. The concept of *nAch* is classically defined as seeking success “in competition with a standard of excellence” (McClelland et al. 1971, p. 95). McClelland believed that *nAch* could be learned, including as it did the setting of challenging but attainable personal goals, and the seeking of continuous feedback on one’s progress toward them. *The Achieving Society* was also however an evidence-based volume—it linked *nAch* to a wide range of human behaviors. They ranged from social and global mobility (Chap. 8) to business and enterprise development. It was the focus on enterprise development however, that

most directly captured people's imagination at the time, and which most closely embodies the kind of "right stuff" approach to poverty reduction.

As the definition of *nAch* shows quite clearly, *nAch* embodies competitiveness in an individualistic sense. In another book, *Motivating Economic Achievement*, McClelland et al. (1969) described how they ran USAID-funded training programs for would-be entrepreneurs, based on the 1961 volume, for example in India. The goal was to elevate *nAch* levels to a point where business success would follow, for those individuals. Two years before and after the training, development was assessed using an "index of entrepreneurial behavior or business activity" (McClelland 1987, p. 559). This was comprised from capital investments, monthly business income, profits, activity levels, and number of employees. Comparisons were also made against matched controls, who did not receive any training. Using these indicators, the index increased over time, suggesting that *nAch* could be some of the right stuff for business development, and personal success. This personal success was not gained at the expense of neighbors (Chap. 1). For example, "one man created a trucking company, and it got fresh vegetables to market that had simply spoiled previously" (ibid 1987, p. 562).

In the medium-term, some interesting moderators of these apparent effects emerged (McClelland 1987).

First, not everyone prospered on the above indicators, suggesting a role for other individual differences, and individuals' own circumstances. The latter included "opportunity to change their behavior" (1987, p. 559), defined by whether the person ran their company or merely managed it for someone else. Those who were not in charge did not benefit significantly from the training when compared to controls, indicating that "a change in motivational intent is unlikely to lead to a change in actual behavior unless the opportunity is present" (ibid, p. 559).

Second, personality variables that were measured did not differentiate between those who benefited versus did not benefit from the training, for example on "Submissive conflict avoidance" (ibid, p. 563). According to McClelland, "Since the men had been taught the scoring system for *n Achievement* it was not possible to determine directly... whether their achievement motivation [itself] had increased" (ibid, p. 559, parenthesis added). Among the successful trainees, 50 % reported continuing to observe the intuitively partly *non-Ach* tradition of "Rahukal" (stopping work for a period during the day), whereas the proportion who did so among the unsuccessful trainees was only 20 % (ibid, p. 563, a difference that would have a Fisher Exact Probability of occurring by chance alone of less than 0.0001). Thus alignment and contextual Fit was important.

Third, and relatedly perhaps, those who did benefit from training were those who managed *not* to develop a desire to be recognized as an individual success. These less successful trainees scored higher over time on another of McClelland's motivational needs, need for power or *nPower*. "In other words, it looks as if the achievement motivation training had led to an increased desire to have impact or to be recognized as a success for some men... [which did not] improve business performance" (ibid, p. 564). In many countries, social norms often favor

modesty and humility over self-promotion, including in the workplace (Carr and MacLachlan 1997). Thus individuals who big note themselves, and try to win influence, may end up by failing to impress or advance at all.

Summing up, *nAch* in itself was only part of the story. Other variables, in particular in the social cultural and political context, mattered too. There appear to have been a number of salient moderators from the organization and the community. A prime example is norms that favor humility and modesty. These kinds of norms plainly *interacted* with the training to help shape what did, and did not happen following the training itself. So the right stuff, once again, is significantly moderated by context.

Partly as a result of the apparent lack of generality in single traits like *nAch*, research in the 1990s moved away from the personality of entrepreneurs to entrepreneurial business (Cromie 2000). Post 2000, the pendulum has swung back again, partly perhaps because of an international revival in personality theory, toward the right stuff for entrepreneurs (Baum and Locke 2004). Studies today include wider constellations of traits beyond *nAch*, e.g., aptitudes like working memory capacity (Baron and Ward 2004); and opportunity identification (Baron 2006). These co-exist alongside motives like *nAch* (Rauch and Frese 2007). Frese et al. (2002) in particular, have explored the value of a multi-trait “Entrepreneurial Orientation” (EO) in lower income contexts.

Reflecting the preponderance of smaller businesses in low-income settings (Banerjee and Duflo 2008), Frese et al. have focused more on micro- than medium-sized enterprises. They have devised culturally appropriate interviewing methods in Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Vietnam. Traits that seem to link together under EO comprise achievement orientation, learning orientation, autonomy, competitiveness, innovativeness, risk-taking, personal initiative (Krauss et al. 2005), and planning (Hiemstra et al. 2006; Frese et al. 2007). Importantly, the empirical studies have included the moderating impact of environmental constraints, such as having access to credit (de Mel et al. 2008b), on the degree to which the right stuff entrepreneurially can realistically make a difference (Easterly 2006). Although the studies are largely cross-sectional, they have also emphasized the potential for EO to lead in time to greater prosperity and to be helped along in time by it (ibid, p. 339). Reciprocity like this is theoretically one hallmark of capability (Sen 1999).

At the level of micro-enterprises, it may be presumptuous to assume that everyone is motivated to grow their business, rather than keep providing for one’s family (Ivory 2003). Some critics have argued that the micro-enterprise movement may be over-“assuming that the poor will take care of it all”, despite the material constraints against them (Banerjee and Duflo 2008, p. 340). That would amount to just another stereotype; another instance of a fundamental attribution error (Chap. 2). After all, there are likely to be wide individual differences—and diversity generally—in the motivation for starting a micro-enterprise. Presumably, the diversity can produce at least equally diverse outcomes across differing opportunity structures. Individual success, making lots of money, growing a business beyond basic needs, is not necessary everybody’s either personal or familial goal.

On a business note, one longitudinal field experiment has found that micro-enterprise restart-up funds, in the wake of a Tsunami, allowed businesses to regenerate successfully, compared to lagged control groups (de Mel et al. 2008a). In addition, microenterprises that rebounded most sharply were those whose owners tended to score higher, in this particular context, on basic tests of individual aptitude (such as memory for digit span). In addition to capability and motivation, ability matters too. As McKenzie (2012) also notes, tests always require careful evaluation (MacLachlan and Carr 1999). In particular they have to be based on using culturally competent constructs, individual items, and overall methods of assessment (<http://www.intestcom.org/Guidelines/Adapting+Tests.php>; van der Vijver and Tanzer 2004). Cultural competency in tests ultimately means that the test items have face-validity to test-takers, the end-users in which contextual competence rests (MacLachlan et al. 1995). Such tests may eventually help to further align opportunity structures, for business expansion, with locally valued goals.

The work above has mostly focused on micro- rather than medium-sized enterprises. So-called Small to Medium Enterprises (for SMEs) are one step (or two) up from these, in terms of economies-of-scale. According to Klinger at Harvard's Entrepreneurial Finance Lab (EFL) medium enterprises are a "missing middle" in poverty reduction (Klinger 2011). They typically fall between better-served micro-enterprises (like credit networks, Chap. 3) and macro-groups like corporations, which have far easier access to capital markets. In 2010, the G20 offered a prize to the model that best served the needs of formal, SME development. An EFL program won the competition. What were its ingredients, from a human factors point of view?

The international EFL team focused first of all on need: Banks who might want to lend to prospective "SMEntrepreneurs" do not have the capability (meaning assessment protocols) to decide who is a good risk, versus who is not. As a result, they often opt for caution and do not fund anyone. As a result, many micro-entrepreneurs, who would like to grow their business beyond the informal sector, and transition into a more formal SME, and most importantly could successfully do so, are locked out of the market. In economic parlance this would-be capability denied, while in psychometric jargon it creates many "false negatives", namely entrepreneurs who would otherwise be very successful (Ke-young 2003, p. 17).

A potential solution to this "missing middle" (falling between micro-credit and large business organizations) has included using psychometrics, specifically low-cost, culturally competent, ethical, and practicable personality measures (http://www.efinlab.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8). Examples of the constructs tested, and found to have empirical linkages to enterprise acumen, include motivational drive, intelligence, and the importance that individuals characteristically place on these for being a success—what is called in psychometric jargon, locus of control (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeMRRXxxEMU>). Incorporating these and a range of behavioral indicators such as credit history, Klinger, and his team have developed a 30 min screening protocol that banks can use to help boost their information and confidence in the potential lender, and aspiring businessperson, and possibly lend them the all-important bridging investment funds.

Do the measures, and the protocol comprised from them, predict loan repayments versus defaults, business performance and job creation, for applicants who have been funded under the old system? It turns out that they do. For example, compared to not using the protocol at all they have been found to reduce default rates by 25–40 % (YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeMRRXxxEMU>, September 29, 2012). Utility like this has boosted bank confidence in the rubric, and the lender applicants, and extended their largesse accordingly. Moreover, which traits predict which criterion variable (defaults, business performance, etc.) varies with location, type of business, prevailing economic conditions, etc. (Klinger 2011). This is a crucial point. It chimes with other material we have positively evaluated already, about the right stuff. Process trumps content, in this respect. That process indicates that the right stuff is a contextualized combination of personality and situation, a capability.

In the case of this particular EFL program, what is happening now is that it is being rolled out across Africa and Latin America, where it is enabling access to funding for more and more entrepreneurs. Vivid and engaging personal case narratives of how lives can be changed can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NdP24N6r3k&feature=channel_video_title.

Classically, popularly and stereotypically, psychometric testing has often been used to screen people *out*. In this program however, it is enabling them to be screened *in*. An arguable figure-ground reversal in the ethos of testing is enabling capability, which is widely seen as the means of and reflection of poverty reduction. It is achieving that kind of capacity-building, and capability development, by fostering labor-market, formal economy, and in general societal *inclusion* (Maynard and Feldman 2011).

One very important contextual factor is the extent to which local communities value seeking success in competition with a standard that is individual as distinct from social, i.e., group-centered. In remote Northern Australia for example, the Office of Aboriginal Development, in its attempts to enable enterprise development, has focused not on personality but on helping communities to navigate the red tape involved in start-up applications—and letting traditional entrepreneurial aptitudes and agency do the rest (Ivory 2003). As Ivory observes, this kind of approach is more aligned with, and respectful of, ancient traditions of trade between Aboriginal communities and with neighboring nations and countries. That is partly why, Ivory argues, the program has proved to be successful. In the self-same vein of alignment, most of the Indigenous entrepreneurs see community and social development as a primary object of their enterprise, not as purely commercial goals. Hence social achievement is a perfectly sound, highly suited and adaptable, foundation for poverty reduction.

Social achievement is increasingly recognized in other, equally global guises. In particular, since 2003, interest in social entrepreneurship generally has grown exponentially around the globe (Bornstein 2004; Weerawardena and Mort 2006). The distinction between for-versus not-for-profit, could be a significant moderator of links between EO and poverty reduction. A further, major nascent field is the person psychology of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR, Chap. 3). This topic

includes the “neurological traits”, designated by physiological substrates, of CSR decision-making (Zollo 2010). According to Zollo (2010), there may be physiological indicators of when a manager is making a genuinely responsible decision, in the context of specific but recurring ethical and environmental dilemmas.

Linking many of these ideas together is not only the importance of “personhood”, and thus personality, but also the context in which they are literally situated. Personality psychology may not have contributed much at all to poverty reduction in the past, at least according to some critics. Today however, its potential to do good is clearer. Giving up on a sacred cow that personality on its own might not be the right stuff, is actually a blessing in disguise. Capabilities essentially stem from *combinations* of person-and-situation, situation-and-person. Enabling them to develop—i.e., poverty to reduce—can be achieved. It is a question of process before content. In aid work, the process of fitting a person to a role, and vice versa, can be started by first asking local and international subject-matter experts to *exchange perspectives* on what it (the job, and even the organization mission) entails. In that process the job specification itself could improve, along with person-job and -organization fit. In business development, personality assessments can be fitted to the needs of lending agencies that in many cases simply need more information to help them reduce risk, build confidence, and enable trust. The end-result of a more modern right stuff approach enables the inclusion and decent work that many, today, equate with poverty reduction.

Attributions for Poverty

A different pathway toward the same goal was taken in poverty research during the 1970s. From Table 2.1, the 1970s in this field were arguably characterized by a turn toward attributions about poverty’s causes (Furnham 2003). The approach entailed surveying how segments of the general public, by-and-large already quite prosperous, explained the causes of poverty, not prosperity (Furnham 1983, 2003). A founding and lasting influence in the research genre is Feagin (1972). Feagin surveyed US citizens and abstracted three broad types of attribution: Individualistic, e.g., attributing poverty to lack of intelligence or laziness in the poor themselves; situational, e.g., poor government; and fatalistic, e.g., luck, which is arguably a sub-type of the situational category. Whichever, subsequent research focused on the first two of these dimensions in people’s everything thinking (Furnham 2003).

According to Furnham’s (2003) review, in the 1970s the research field established a trend of comparing levels of personality versus situational attributions across demographic categories, like for instance age, education, occupation and income (e.g., Feather 1974, in Australia; Singh and Vasudeva 1977, in India). At this stage the field was largely descriptive rather than detecting clear patterns. During the 1980s the field progressed to asking “why” people’s attributions differed (e.g., Furnham 1982a, b, c; and Pandey et al. 1982; to Guimond et al. 1989). By the 1990s, Harper et al. (1990) were beginning to change the focus taken in the survey questions themselves. Up until then, most studies had focused on

attributions for poverty domestically (Hine and Montiel 1999). Now they were asking specifically about attributions for poverty in the “Third World” (Harper 1991). This kind of research marks at least two sea changes: (1) from national to international, i.e., local to global community (Chap. 1); and (2) focusing on the most extreme poverty within it (like the MDGs).

Harper et al. chief measure, the “Causes of ‘Third World’ Poverty Questionnaire” (CTWPQ) divided situational factors into nature, government corruption, and economic exploitation, with a relatively pure dispositional, personality-like factor being called “Blame the Poor” (Harper 1991). Man-made climate change aside, these factors appear to range from relatively situational through to relatively dispositional, i.e., based on personality.

Evidence from the CTWPQ reflects one of the consistencies in the field as a whole. People who tend to live farther from poverty, whether through lower class occupations, salaries or education relative to their national neighbors in any kind of economy, or by living in wealthier rather than poorer countries, tend on the average to attribute poverty more to dispositional factors—personality—in the poor themselves rather than to situations. This may reflect some ego self-defensiveness, perhaps. People who experience poverty more directly tend to favor, on the average, more situational accounts (Carr 1996; Lott 2002). A study in Malaŵi, for example, found that Malaŵian marketplace shoppers blamed situational factors significantly more than their counterparts who lived in the generally wealthier country Australia (Campbell et al. 2001). A more recent review has found the same trend over several studies (Bolitho et al. 2007). Bolitho et al. review added another situational factor to the CTWPQ structure—attributing poverty to “war”, a factor supported empirically in other settings (Panadero and Vázquez 2008).

This research quantum is broadly consistent with attribution theory in general, and theories of attribution *biases* in particular (Table 2.1). Fundamental attribution bias occurs when individual traits are over-emphasized at the expense of situations (Ross 1977). When deciphering the world, people are drawn more to people than things, but see only thin slices of their behavior. This is quite adaptive, and helps with processing information complexity, but is not always socially accurate. They may also be socialized to use “personality” as an explanation for every-day experiences, especially of others. “Actor-Observer differences” (Jones and Nisbett 1971) occur when outsiders (observers) over emphasize traits compared to people who experience poverty more directly (actors). The idea that people at the privileged end of the inequality are more likely to blame the poor for poverty itself is broadly consistent with the latest thinking and research on actor-observer differences (Malle 2006).

Additional “Self-serving” and “Ultimate” attribution errors entail respectively blaming individuals or groups for their own “poor” circumstances, while taking credit for personal or in-group “success”. Ultimate attribution errors happen when out-groups over-attribute deprivation to an over-homogenized out-group, and excuse themselves from blame (Pettigrew 1979). They are again, in effect, a means of rationalizing social inequality (Williamson 1974). A nice example from contemporary economics perhaps is the current “EU debt crisis”, and in particular the structural adjustment program being imposed, on Greece, by groups in the governments of relatively wealthy economies,

like Germany. Predictably perhaps, directives from the government in Germany appear (to some) to have blamed the governments of Greece. Meanwhile the Greek people may see the problem elsewhere, say in poor economic policies.

As an ensemble, the multiple facets of Donor Bias may constitute the fabric of a culture of *wealth* (Carr et al. 1998). This idea would imply that there is a role in trying to *sensitize* wealthier nations to the problems of less prosperous ones, including more comprehensive information about “the real causes and consequences of world poverty and injustice” (Mehryar 1984, p. 166, emphasis added). Aid advertisements, for example, could focus less on using pathetic imagery, which risks rebounding on global confidence, and self-confidence levels (Carr and Atkins 2003). They could highlight largely situational (at least from the point of view of victims) causes of poverty, such as natural disasters. These are crucial because they have been linked respectively to enhanced donation intentions (Cheung and Chan 2000; Zucker and Weiner 1993), actual donations (Campbell et al. 2001), and anti-poverty activism (Hine and Montiel 1999).

Since 2000, some field experiments have tested this idea by simulating and manipulating aid agency websites, which of course are widely used for fund-raising purposes. In one of the studies, information in verbal and visual mode was incrementally added to sympathy-arousing images of people living with poverty (Fox and Carr 2000). As more situational information about the causes of poverty was added to the site appeal, it helped to counterbalance any donor bias—to a point where donation intentions increased significantly. Studies in this genre go some way to counteracting the risk that attribution research itself can inadvertently help to foster the very biases should be helping to reduce (by priming donor bias itself, Harper 2003). Harper has argued that critically examining decision making by aid agency campaign *managers* might help offset the risk of bias still further. So too can expanding on the context, to include not only poverty but also poverty alleviation. Thus a recent study using mock aid agency websites has shown that depicting both crisis and crisis-response, by an aid organization, can generate more trust in the appeal, and the organization behind it, than do photographs of a crisis, or response, on its own (Burt and Dunham 2009).

The common point here is that presenting both person and situation, i.e., context sides of the story are integral to maximizing poverty reduction. When poverty is seen as much as possible through the eyes of those who face it on a daily basis, attribution biases may be sufficiently corrected to produce a “Storms Reversal” (Storms 1973). Storms is famous in social psychology for demonstrating that people shown videotapes of themselves may make more dispositional attributions for their own behavior compared to when they were explaining their own actions directly, i.e., as actors. As observers therefore, they made more dispositional attributions than they did as actors.

A logical corollary of this aspect of classic Storms’ reversal is that changes of perspective can work in the other direction. Showing an audience more of what it is like to be actually facing poverty as an actor rather than mere observers. According to theory and research, such camera-induced changes can use visual orientation to psychologically reposition the viewer, called “perspective taking”, from a distant victim-blaming observer to closer, more situational attributing and to that extent potentially more supportive empathic actor (Malle 2006, p. 908).

Hearing Voices (of the poor) may achieve a similar result, and affect on donations. Beyond private charitable donations, attributions about poverty may also apply to the contributions that the populaces of wealthier nations are willing to make to the budgets of multilateral organizations. These as we know fund many aid and development initiatives, including the Millennium Development Goals (Fransman and Lecomte 2004). Furthermore, attribution biases may also be primed, and fanned, by negative media images, among potential foreign direct investors. This might sap some of their will to invest in lower income countries, by undermining investor confidence and the creation of new jobs that are important to sustainable growth (Carr and Bandawe 2011).

In the 2010s, the attribution approach is becoming more pointed, focused and pertinent. Researchers are asking not for attributions about poverty, but for their attributions about poverty *reduction*, both as observers (Burt 2012) and as actors (Baguma and Furnham 2012). These more sharply focused approaches can highlight actor-observer differences between what works for people on the ground, using first-hand experience, and what donors may merely *think* may actually work. Closing *that* particular gap, and showing people how it was done in the ads themselves, may enable aid organizations to become more accountable to their donors, and more importantly aligned to their primary stakeholders, end-users on the ground, in low-income settings (Chap. 8).

Cross-Cultural Values

A major stimulus for cross-cultural psychology was the publication of a landmark paper during the decade we have just briefly visited, by Gergen (1973). Gergen had argued that much of psychology is “history”, meaning subject to variation and reversal over time and place, specifically national culture. This argument had several repercussions for poverty research. First it helped to create a “crisis” of confidence in the discipline’s own capacity to cope with global challenges, which arguably hit rock bottom during the 1980s (Gergen 1982; Sinha and Holtzman 1984). Second it also partly stimulated cross-cultural comparisons. Its chief methodology entailed surveying cultural values in different countries, abstracting their core dimensions through data-reduction techniques like factor analysis, and comparing them against each other to categorize cross-country differences (Hofstede 1980a). From Table 2.1, the comparisons were often pitched at charting differences, between countries, in terms of values. Values of course are motivators. To that extent, it was only a matter of time perhaps before linkages were drawn, again, between (1) country motives and (2) economic growth, at a country level.

With its survey items aggregated to a country level, the cross-cultural approach is quite macro. Indeed it is called an “ecological” approach because countries are part of a global ecology. Ecological approaches in turn go further back. Two decades earlier, McClelland (above, 1961) had counted the relative frequencies of *nAch* in samples of the myths, fables and literatures, from a wide variety of cultures and

civilizations in history, as well as contextually appropriate indicators of economic activity (such as trading activities, coal imports and electricity production). Across these contemporary societies, McClelland found a correlation of +0.43 between (1) *nAch* and (2) economic growth, with a time-lag between (1) and (2) of five decades. His analysis also found a declining level of *nAch* from 1900 to 1960, and predicted a steady decline in US fortunes up until 2010, and possibly beyond. Subsequently, this *nAch* approach to poverty reduction has waned, in part through criticism about the content validity of its dependent measure, electricity consumption (Lewis 1991).

A highly influential study of cross-cultural values was conducted by Hofstede (1980a, b, 2001). Factor analysis was used to explore the factor structure of a values survey administered to over 100, 000 employees of a major multinational firm worldwide. Four main factors emerged: individualism-collectivism; power distance (belief in hierarchy versus equality); uncertainty avoidance (rule-boundedness); and “masculinity-femininity” (akin to acquisitiveness and materialism versus valuing human relationships). Hofstede himself linked *nAch* to a combination of low uncertainty-avoidance (tolerance for risk) combined with “a concern with performance (equivalent to strong Masculinity)” (Hofstede 1980b, p. 55). However he also argued that *nAch* itself was culture-bound, to relative values like high individualism and low uncertainty avoidance, for instance.

Subsequent studies have focused on teachers as conduits of a culture’s values (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987). They found related factors (for a review, Carr 2004). An additional factor was added to these by a study of tertiary teachers and students (The Chinese Culture Connection 1987). Confucian Work Dynamism is one particular combination of Confucian work-related values, emphasizing forward planning over traditional wisdom, rather than the converse relation. This factor tends to be known today as prospective versus retrospective orientation (Carr 2004). A time orientation motive, when combined with Hofstede’s four main factors it has been likened to form a “big five” of cultural values, at a country level (Hofstede 2001).

In the latter half of the 1980s, country scores on these factors were correlated with indicators of economic growth, for example per capita “Gross National Product” (GNP, Hofstede and Bond 1988). This was a wider and possibly more acceptable measure of growth than the narrower version used by McClelland (1961), and criticized in Lewis (1991). Hofstede and Bond (1988) found on the one hand that individualism-collectivism tended to trail economic development chronologically, rather than preceding it over a four-year period (the database in Hofstede (1980a) was collected over this time period). Findings like this (for a more recent example, Gouveia and Ros 2000) suggest that focusing on the self may be more of a by-product of increased one’s material wealth and prosperity, than vice versa (1988, p. 14). A later analysis suggests that the linkage could in fact be curvilinear, with individualism rising again toward the margins of deprivation (Sotelo and Gimeno 2003). Even using a linear model, Confucian Work Dynamism nonetheless correlated with economic growth from 1965 to 1984, at +0.070 (The Chinese Culture Connection 1987, p. 155). The connection was partly attributed to the devastation experienced by the high-scoring countries such as Japan post World War II, which focused attention on the need to plan for a future (Hofstede and Bond 1988,

p. 17). Inferred in this conclusion is that collectively *valuing* five-year plans (called today “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers”, or “PRSPs”, Chap. 8), at a national, ecological level, may help to enable poverty reduction.

During the 1990s, links between values and prosperity began to be explored further down the macro–micro hierarchy, at group and individual difference levels (e.g., Schneider 1988; Triandis et al. 1990). This brings us squarely to personality, rather than personal values aggregated to a country level. At this time, the possibility was suggested, for instance, that strong collectivist norms help to buffer against the “culture of poverty”, but also bring “less economic development... and low affluence, invention and achievement” (1990, p. 1019). This is arguably another put-down for traditional collectivist values. Hofstede himself cautioned against generalizing from one level (countries) to others (2001), like small groups and individuals. Nonetheless even quite recently, “the trend in cross-cultural research has been to adapt Hofstede’s (1980a) values for research on individual behavior and attitudes, in spite of his objections” (Kirkman et al. 2006).

The quest for values right stuff goes on. How predictive have cultural values actually been, over the longer-term? Unfortunately, the record is not that good. First of all historically, *nAch* failed to explain economic growth from 1950 to 1977, although the measures themselves may not have been too reliable (Lewis 1991). Second, and in a different critical vein, valuing 5 or 10 year plans, as in Confucian Dynamism, may end up being seriously challenged by regional or global economic crises. The world has seen this happen in 1997/1998 (the so-called “Asian” economic crisis, which hit certain “Confucian Work Dynamic” countries badly), and again in 2008–2012 (which as I write is playing out for many countries, groups and individuals, in Europe, America and beyond).

A recent review of the literature on poverty and aid argues that poverty reduction may have more to do with sociopolitical and socio-economic forces, than with “culture” per se (MacLachlan et al. 2010). Class trumps culture. Resonating with Marxist views, this is a critique of poverty research that might in principle apply throughout Fig. 1.2, from the culture of poverty onwards (Lewis 1959). To the extent that this point is acceptable and reasonable, perhaps it is time to “stop hiding behind culture... stop blaming things on culture, a *cultural attribution error*” (MacLachlan et al. 2010, p. 57, emphasis added). A broader point is being made in this chapter, however. It is that one personality size does not fit all. At individual, group and country level, cultural values *interact* with each other, and with socioeconomic and sociopolitical structures. That is the particular realization which characterizes the next phase in personality approaches to poverty reduction.

Context

In Table 2.1, the 1990s are characterized by a figure-ground reversal, from universal traits to social context. In particular, the literature began to emphasize the potential value in studying contexts in three major domains of everyday life:

Health; education; and work. Interestingly, these same contexts also figure prominently in the Millennium Development Goals. They too stress building capabilities in basic health, education, and decent work (Annan 2000).

In health for example, combating the effects of malnutrition on individual cognitive development may require nutritional interventions for both child and caregiver (Engle 1996). One war child may be over-assimilated into war, the next under-socialized by any group, with each requiring a different, context-tailored form of child-care service (Ager 1996). In education there were strong arguments for developing culturally, economically and politically competent tests of achievement and aptitude (Zindi 1996), literacy (Wagner 1996) and positive social development, including resilient and adaptive, traditional family structures (Nsamenang 1996). In social and organizational contexts, there were calls for greater respect to be paid to levels of analyses that range from individuals to organizations and communities (MacLachlan 1996; Munro 1996; Sánchez 1996).

Toward the end of the 1990s, a meta-review of the trends toward context likened the shifts of focus to shifts within Psychology itself (Carr and MacLachlan 1998a). From Table 2.1, during the 1960s its focus on personality had stayed relatively preoccupied, implicitly perhaps, with assimilation. After all, this was a time when the right stuff (as we have seen) was inherently individualistic. By comparison later, according to the later review, there was more emphasis on “positive aspects of cultural attributes” (1998a, p. 13). Nevertheless the emphasis remained focused more on “what-we-are-not”, including deficits in individual, group and cross-cultural traits, rather than on “what we are” (Sinha 1984, p. 173). A third stage also emerged during the 1990s. This was arguably more balanced. It was neither conformist nor anticonformist. It was concerned with reorienting psychology, toward utilizing whatever *works*, for local people, in their particular niche (Díaz-Guerrero 1990; Carr and MacLachlan 1998a).

Broadly speaking, that trend is what the rest of this book aims to articulate and hopefully help to develop. Table 2.2 may begin to suggest why. It shows how thinking in psychology has been dominated by personality, first tuning partly into and then completely away from aid and development policy, and until recently never finding a complete rapprochement, or even partial resonance, with other

Table 2.2 Comparative historical foci in Psychology versus Aid and Development

Decade	Psychology	Aid and development ^a	Match
1950s+	Family dynamics	Infrastructure	Low
1960s+	Selecting volunteers and training entrepreneurs	Social and technical assistance (aid workers)	Medium
1970s+	Public perceptions	Social considerations, e.g., gender equality	Low
1980s+	Cross-cultural values	Structural adjustment programs	Low
1990s+	Health, education, work	Governance	Medium
2000s+	Capability	Capability	High

^aSource Adapted, updated and compiled from Hjertholm and White (2000, p. 81) and Aid-Watch (2011)

schools of thought. What Table 2.2 also indicates has happened today, however, is a fresh opportunity: Psychology in general, and global community psychology in particular, is in a position to harmonize and align with wider communities of thought and practice. That opportunity arises principally through the touchstone of *Capability*.

Summary

Historically, personality has dominated psychology's approach to poverty reduction. Reflecting its own cultural, economic, and political origins, psychology has highlighted family traits (Lewis 1959), work traits (Harris 1973; McClelland 1961), community traits (Allen 1970), and cultural traits (Sinha and Holtzman 1984). Biases like these have led to much self-castigation, loss of professional confidence (Murray 1998), and not a little stereotyping from outside the profession, about psychology's own capabilities vis-à-vis poverty reduction (Berry et al. 2011). Since the 1990s however, a balance between arrogance on the one hand and self-doubt on the other has progressively been struck. We have moved from personality to context (Carr and MacLachlan 1998a) and more latterly toward context-person fit (Carr and Sloan 2003). A prime and leading example of this idea in this chapter is person-*opportunity* fit, for example when recruiting and selecting would-be entrepreneurs and development workers.

In the 2000s, personality psychologists can help to fit aid workers to local expectations; connect entrepreneurs to funders; and help to balance multimedia portrayals. Linking these together is both the process and the substance of *Capability*: Enabling the situation to enable the person; who enables the situation; and so on (Sen 1999). From Table 2.1, virtuous circles in which the environment enables the person, and the person the environment, are the very stuff of poverty reduction. They are a foundation stone for this book.

As we move through subsequent chapters in this book, the voice of context will grow stronger. However, we will not lose sight of personality, and especially fit. Person-context fit appears in community approaches to poverty reduction, for example by enabling self-efficacy and -confidence (Chap. 4). It is central when considering motives for global mobility, for example through so-called "mobile personalities" (Chap. 9). In that sense, personality does make a difference, and is still with us. For the moment however, the key point to carry into the new chapters is that poverty, operationally defined vis-à-vis capability, is reduced by enabling opportunity structures, for individuals and groups alike.



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