

Culture and Personality

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Introduction

In order to understand the relationship between culture and personality the two concepts need some clarification. While personality has been defined simply as the distinctive way a person thinks, feels and behaves, defining culture has never been as simple for anthropologists. It is no wonder that we have over 300 definitions of this concept. However, for the convenience of students the word is used here to mean any knowledge that a person has acquired as a member of his/her society. Such knowledge is important because it subsequently influences the shaping of his/her personality. There is indeed a lot of anthropological interest, as is evident from this chapter, in how exactly this influence takes place in various simple societies that anthropologists study. They are particularly interested to understand how a person's enculturation process influences what he/she will become in future in terms of personality traits. It was widely believed that early enculturation in particular has very important bearing on personality development of the child as he/she grows into adulthood. This chapter deals with various anthropological writings surrounding this theme.

Culture and Personality School: 1920 - 1950

Some scholars trace the history of culture and personality studies to 1920s but the most perceptible beginning was noticed in the writings of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). He proposed what is known as 'critical-periods hypothesis' according to which human infants went through a time or stage in which they learnt what they exhibited later in adulthood. This 'early learning – later behaviour' hypothesis stipulated that adult indulgence or permissiveness in a given area of infant learning – and he believed that there were five such areas, viz., oral learning, anal learning, sexual learning, dependency learning, and aggression learning - would heighten the capacity of that area to result in satisfaction in later life and conversely, early life restrictions or frustration would result in conflict, guilt, shame, inability in adult life. This Freudian hypothesis influenced early anthropological research on culture and personality giving birth to what is known as Psychoanalytic Anthropology, and continues to draw the interest of contemporary anthropologists as well.

This field of Anthropology was considered useful by American anthropologists, including Alfred Kroeber, for understanding the national character of the Japanese during the Second World War. Some American anthropologists studied Japanese films, read books on the history and culture of Japan and concluded that the strict toilet training among the Japanese made them aggressive fighter in warfare. Two of the best known studies on national character are Ruth Benedict's *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) on the Japanese national character and Geoffrey Gorer and John Rickman's *The People of Great Russia: A Psychological Study* (1949). Both tried, following the neo-Freudian approach, to link early childrearing practices with adult personality. The interest in understanding national character faded after 1950s.

The contribution of Ruth Benedict (1887-1948) to this field of Anthropology called 'configuralism', called so because she considered cultures as integrated wholes configured differently to be different from all other cultures, is perhaps one of the most significant. She did her fieldwork among the Zuni, Cochiti and Pima tribes of America. In her *Patterns of Culture* (1934/1959) she brings out, through published literature, contrastive personality types between Kwakiutl of the Northeast Coast of North America and the Zuni of the Southwest America. Economically, the former are foragers in a resource-rich environment whereas the latter are agriculturists. According to her the two tribal groups are represented by two contrastive psychological attributes on the basis of which she called the former Dionysian and the latter Apollonian, after the Greek gods of wine and light respectively. She considered the former to be characterized by strife, factionalism, painful ceremonies, etc. whereas the latter were considered to be non-competitive and gentle. These categories were derived from Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1956), a study on the origins of Greek drama. Benedict rejected Freud's notions of cultural evolution as unscientific and ethnocentric, and remained loyal to Wilhelm Dilthey, who believed that the objective of psychology was to understand the inner mind and who proposed existence of different worldviews, which were much like the categories she used to describe the above personality types.

Margaret Mead (1901-1978) also contributed immensely to this field of research by focusing her attention on childhood and adolescence in the Pacific islands. Her celebrated book *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1929/1961), based on nine months' fieldwork, compares Samoan with American adolescent girls. She hypothesized that the stresses related to puberty in girls were culturally and not biologically determined, as her study showed such stresses mainly associated with American adolescents whereas the Samoan adolescents had relatively an easy transition into sexual maturation.

In her book on Samoas, she claims that they are taught early in their life that if they behave well or are quiet and obedient they can have their own way. Arrogance, flippancy and courage are not the qualities emphasized either for boy or girl. The children are expected to get up early, be obedient and cheerful, play with children of their own sex, etc. and the adults are expected to be industrious, skillful, loyal to their relatives, wise, peaceful, serene, gentle, generous, altruistic, etc.

According to her fieldwork observation, little girls move about together and have antagonistic and avoidance relationship with boys. However, as they grow up boys and girls

begin to interact during parties and fishing expeditions. As long as a boy and a girl are not committing incest any amorous activities between them, including slipping into the bush together, are considered natural and adults pay little attention to such relationships. As a result, the transition from adolescence to adulthood is smooth and stress-free unlike such transition among the Americans. Hence she concluded that cultural conditioning, not biological changes associated with adolescence, makes it stressful or not. Criticisms notwithstanding, subsequent studies have lent support to her basic theory that childhood upbringing influences formation of adult personality.

Mead further writes that among the Arapesh of northeast New Guinea personality attributes like gentleness and mildness are valued. But among the Munfugumor of the same area men are expected to behave in harsh and violent ways.

The other two early anthropologists who had made significant contribution to this field are Abram Kardiner (1891-1981) and Cora Du Bois (1903-1991). Kardiner formulated his theory of 'basic personality structure', which meant a collection of fundamental personality traits shared by normal members of a society acquired by adapting to a culture. This theory was formulated after reading Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* (1928/1961) in which Freud argues that children's early life experiences determine their later religious life. Like Freud, Kardiner believed that the foundations of personality development were laid in early childhood. He argued that since basic childrearing procedures are common in a society they resulted in some common personality traits among members of a society. He said that the basic personality exists in the context of cultural institutions or patterned ways of doing things in a society. Such institutions are of primary and secondary types. Primary cultural institutions include kinship, childrearing, sexuality and subsistence, which are widely shared by societies. The shared personality traits across the societies are what constitute the basic personality structure. The secondary cultural institutions, on the other hand, include religion, rituals, folkways, norms etc. He compared the Tanala, who were horticulturists with the Betsileo, who were intensive cultivators of wet paddy. According to him, the emphasis on secondary institutions like magic and spirit possession among the latter tribe came from the anxiety that demands of irrigated agriculture produced in their basic personality structure. He further concluded that diversity in personality types in a culture increased with increased social and political complexity.

Incidentally, he did not have the kind of data he needed to prove his theory. To overcome this handicap, Cora Du Bois went to Alor Island in the Dutch East Indies where she collected variety of ethnographic and psychological data. When she returned in 1939 she along with Kardiner analysed the data and arrived at the same conclusions about basic characteristics of Alorese personality. On the basis of this work she proposed 'modal personality' by which she meant the statistically most common personality type. This approach allowed interplay between culture and personality, and provided for variation in personality that exists in any society. This was an improvement upon Kardiner's 'basic personality theory' because of its ability to explain for the variation in personality types within a given culture.

Dependence and Independence Training

Dependence and independence training are two broad types of childrearing practices that subsume most variations found in childrearing practices in simple societies. Dependence training emphasizes on compliance with group norms, and is typically associated with extended or joint families that were once common in India and many parts of the world. Such families are usually large in number to take care of the farmland, livestock, weaving and other subsidiary activities. In such families, it is usually the male head of the family who takes decisions for the entire group and rest of the members are there simply to follow his instructions. Such a situation is not always conducive for the in-marriage spouses. However, dependence training is considered helpful for them in adjusting with such situations. Positively speaking, the children get extended care in the family and also get to learn many household chores early in their lives under the watchful gaze of the senior members. Negatively, certain behaviour that may not be liked by the adults will be discouraged under such training. The individuals in such families are generally subservient to the group. Such training tends to result in adults who are obedient, supportive, noncompetitive, and responsible. They will not wish to do anything that disrupts the group because the very definition of their 'self' comes from the group they belong to.

Independence training, on the other hand, encourages independence, self-reliance and personal achievement. It is generally associated with nuclear families and/or industrial societies. Such training also has both positive and negative aspects. Positively speaking, displays of aggression and sexuality are tolerated under such training if not encouraged actively. Competition is emphasized in classrooms, playgrounds as well as at home. The children soon realize that their success depends less on what they do and more on what other children do. In other words, if one has to be successful others have to be unsuccessful. Regarding its negative aspects, oral gratification of the children is subject to routine and not demand or need of the children, the children receive inadequate attention of the adults and elders, they do not get to learn household tasks till much later age, they do not learn collective responsibility, etc.

Both dependence and independence trainings have merits and demerits for a society. Whereas most societies emphasize on one of the two broad types of training, certain societies like hunting and gathering societies have elements of both. In such societies, children receive a lot of adult attention as well as much longer oral gratification. At the same time, there is low pressure for group compliance and high premium on competition, which make individuals more supportive of each other than in western societies. They emphasize on personal achievement and independence without pushing the adults into some kind of social isolation. They grow into

socially responsible adults despite permissive childhood, which is alleged to have produced irresponsible adults in western societies. How exactly do hunting and gathering societies combine the merits of both dependence and independence trainings may be seen below from the case study of the Mbuti, the hunting and gathering tribe living in Zaire's Ituri forest.

A Mbuti child is breast-fed for three years and is given every freedom and he/she grows. Whether male or female, a child learns to trust both his parents. In the second year of the child, the father formally introduces solid food to his child, which is ritually handed over to him by his wife. At about three years, the child ventures out of the main camp and into the *bopi* which may be roughly translated as a playground. This is basically a smaller camp near the main camp and set near a river. There he/she discovers the other children from the main camp and realizes the importance of age and the unimportance of sex and kinship. A *bopi* is the children's own space and they can drive away, taunt, or ridicule any adult who ventures into this space. But they are also taught responsibilities early in life by lighting the hunting fire – a very important task for the survival of the group as a whole - before the hunting party sets out each day.

Lighting of the hunting fire is perhaps one of the most obvious rituals among the Mbutis for whom rituals are otherwise quite informal. Children take the fire from their *bopi*, where they always lit their own fire with embers from their own family hearths, and set off in the direction towards which the hunting party should go that morning. They would decide about the direction by discussion on the previous night. At some distance from their *bopi*, they would light fire at the base of a tree and cover it with leaves to produce a lot of smoke. As the hunting party passed through this place, some would just pass by while others would act as if they are catching the smoke and rubbing it against their body. A few would even stop until they would be enveloped by the smoke. The smoke is believed to have powers to invoke the spirits of the forest and passing through the smoke would enable them to fill themselves with such spirits and would result in successful hunt. The hunt would not take place if there were no fire lit by the children, the pure people, for the hunters would not be able to light the fire by themselves because the fire was pure whereas they were impure. They became impure by the act of hunting and taking the lives of animals. Hunting was a sin they set out to commit every day in order that they survived.

This not only indicates the Mbuti conception of sin, but also indicates how important the responsibility of the children is, both ritually and economically. They become part of the Mbuti social structure early in their life by virtue of their purity, and they are pure by virtue of being born of the forest. Even the older Mbutis, who have stopped hunting and who have attained the age of death and reunion with the forest, are considered purer than the youths whose hands are 'contaminated' by the daily killings. Being close to the children in degree of purity they too have some sacred responsibilities and remain integral part of their social structure.

As the children play in *bopi*, it is said that they actually have no games, except perhaps climbing young trees and jumping off them before the trees bent enough to touch the ground. Most children would be able to do it together, letting off the trees to spring back to normal position, unless one rare child missed the timing and got sprung back with the tree or thrown away by the tree he or she has climbed on.

Among other pastimes, the Mbuti children learn the rules of hunting and gathering. It was normal for adults to mock hunting in front of the children or with the children. They also played 'house' where every child did different things – kind of division of labour - related to house making, which they actually did when they became adults. And in all such games they played there was no distinction made between male and female children. All children of the same age and belonging to the same *bopi*, would share everything equally regardless of who was a boy and who a girl.

Such gender equality continued till they attained the age of puberty after which they left their *bopi* and returned to the main camp. Generally, when a girl experienced menarche, the whole camp celebrated the *elima* festival. A special house called *elima* house was built where the menstruating girl went to stay with her close friends. The male youths waited outside for them to come out, usually in the afternoon, for the *elima* singing. Girls sang first and the boys replied. Boys from neighbouring territories also came for participating in this festival. The *elima* girl also dragged in the girls from other territories on this occasion so that there were plenty of youths for flirtations and courtship.

But *elima* is considered to be more than a ritual of puberty or a group initiation into adulthood. This is also an occasion to give public recognition to the opposition between male and female, the potential conflict between the two sexes. This is most powerfully symbolized by a ritual rather than a game in which the men on one side and women on the other pull a rope. This apparent tug of war is not a game because the aim of either side is not to win. If the women are winning one of the women leaves the rope and joins the men, also assuming deep male voice and caricaturing manhood. Similarly, as the men win, one of the men leaves the rope and joins the women faking like a woman as well as ridiculing womanhood. When finally every one has changed sides and enacted as a member of opposite sex, they let go of the rope and burst into laughter, falling on the ground and rolling over the mud. Neither side wins, as the men and women are equalized by this ritual.

To conclude this section, it must be stressed that both independent and dependent trainings are not inherently good or bad. Both have positive and negative aspects and both are suitable for certain societal situations. What kind of training we impart to our children often depends on our times and places, or in other words, a given set of values the parents uphold. But how the children end up behaving when they grow into adulthood is not always what the parents have expected them to behave like. There can always be surprises, both pleasant and unpleasant, awaiting every parent at every stage of his or her life. The adults might not show compliance with the system even with the best of dependent training during their childhood and a child brought up in the most independent manner may well turn out later to be one of the most compliant with the system.

Group Personality

Group personality, or cultural personality if you like, is sometimes likened to stereotyping but they are not exactly same because the latter ignores the individual variation in personality traits within a society. While members of a particular culture may be seen to be sharing certain common personality traits, and hence giving credence to the existence of cultural personality,

every individual has something distinctive about his or her personality due to some unique experiences he or she would have had as a member of a society. As long as we recognize the individual variation in personality traits within a culture we can talk about group personality. We shall discuss under this subject modal personality, national character and abnormal personality.

Modal Personality. This is defined as the personality typical of a culturally bounded population, as indicated by the central tendency of a defined frequency distribution. Thus, this is a statistical concept and seeks to overcome the biases of earlier, allegedly impressionistic, studies on personality types such as the one by Ruth Benedict.

Data on modal personality are gathered through psychological tests, which include Rorschach, or “ink-blot” test, and the TAT (or Thematic Apperception Test). TAT consists of pictures that the respondents are asked to explain or describe. Such tests are also combined with observation of frequency of certain behaviours, collection of life histories and dreams, and analysis of oral literature.

While the methodology of modal personality research has a lot of strengths it is sometimes too complex to be carried out in field situations. It is not always easy to carry out all the necessary tests, observations, etc. and at the same time have adequate sample for statistical treatment of the same. It is also not certain that any set of tests developed for modal personality studies are appropriate for all cultures. Further TAT pictures may reflect the biases of the researchers’ own cultural backgrounds besides the problem of having to negotiate the communication barriers between researchers and speech communities studied by them. Finally, a community may have a very different concept of say anger, aggression, gentility and shame, from those of the researchers or other communities.

National Character. We often assign certain specific personality attributes to people like the French, English, Japanese, and the Chinese. Such attributes are generally based on stereotypes. Thus one wonders if stereotypes about national character have any basis. There was a time when some anthropologists like Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Geoffrey Gorer believed that personality attributes have a basis. With this belief they developed a technique called “cultures at a distance” and studied national cultures through books, newspapers, photographs, films, etc. They tried to construct national character by investigating childhood memories and cultural attitudes, and by examining graphic materials on certain recurring themes and values shared by majority of the people belonging to modern nations. They also had a clear focus on childrearing practices as potential source for future personality structures.

One such widely known study was on the Japanese, done during the Second World War with the aim of understanding the aggressiveness and brutality of the Japanese in wars and gentleness in family life. Under the influence of Freud, Gorer hypothesized that severe toilet-training practices in childhood was responsible for accumulation of repressed rage in Japanese adults, which got an outlet in their brutality in war. After the Second World War was over, it was however found that the harsh toilet-training among Japanese children was a myth. Nor were all Japanese brutal and sadistic in war. His study showed the danger of generalizing on national character on the basis of limited evidence and using individual psychology to understand complex social phenomena. It is also possible that their generalizations were influenced by their

own war-time hostility with the Japanese. Further, the people belonging to a single nation may differ very significantly in matters of occupation and social status and may actually have very little in common.

Despite such limitations, Francis Hsu (1979) argues that there is a renewed relevance for national character studies for it is still important to understand what motivates the leaders and civil servants of modern nations to work the way they do. He further says that each nation has certain core values and related personality characteristics and by way of example says that the Chinese value kin ties, cooperation, and mutual dependence. The self is subordinate to the family as well as the kin group. They neither promote self-reliance nor consider it a matter of pride.

The western nations, on the other hand, are known to promote individualism to the extreme. Individuals are both encouraged and pressurized to excel right from childhood. Competition and merit are emphasized that gives the western youth his/her “drivenness”. While drivenness pushes individuals to excel in particular fields it is increasingly suspected to be the cause of widespread marital instability and the obsession for pets in western societies.

Abnormal Personality. While modal personality may be considered as normal personality those who do not share this could perhaps be considered as having abnormal personality. For instance, the individual whom the Dobuans in New Guinea considered neurotic and thoroughly disoriented was actually a man who was naturally friendly and a pleasant fellow who did not want to overthrow his fellows or to punish them. He worked tirelessly for everyone who commanded him. The villagers treated him kindly, did not ridicule him, but at the same time considered his behaviour to be outside the boundaries of a normal behaviour. Similarly, among the Plains Indians, a man capable of communicating with supernatural spirits wear a woman’s attire and behaviour and lived differently from other men. Yet such a man is sought out as a curer, matchmaker, companion of warriors because of the spiritual power he has.

While certain behaviour like committing suicide and schizophrenia may be considered abnormal in every culture, most abnormal behaviour is culture-specific, as it is up to a particular culture to define what is normal and what abnormal behaviour is. Thus the distinction between normal and abnormal personalities makes sense or has relevance only within the boundaries of a particular culture. What is abnormal is essentially what is not approved by the society. Hence the same behaviour may be labeled as normal once approved by the society. The madman is not dangerous if the society encourages aggressiveness, but the same madman is dangerous if the society upholds the value of passivity and trust. Hence what is abnormal is what is not in social conformity.

Ethnographic Studies on Culture and Personality

There are a number of ethnographic studies that show how differences in socialization process in different cultures result in different personality types. Of such studies the ones on Kaska and Aymara cultures are most notable and hence presented here in some detail.

Kaska. John J. Honigman, his wife and two children lived among the Kaska in northwestern Canada in 1944 and 1945. To reach this 200 persons Kaska village they had to trek

50 miles. The Kaskas supplemented their cash income from trading in mink, marten, lynx and fox furs with some hunting and fishing. They spent their winters living in tents pitched near the trading post, where they fished, repaired tools and gossiped. With the onset of winter they moved in small groups to river-side settlements. As the winter approached they set iron traps in a 50 mile circle and traveled with sleds and dogs wearing snow shoes. They hunted spruce hens, grouse, moose, and caribou to supplement their camp diet of flour, beans and bacons.

Kaska children were born with the help of one elderly woman to assist the delivery. The mid-wife gave bath to the newborn in warm water and wrapped him tightly in a blanket with his hands straight on his sides. After a week or so they are carried in packs made of moose skin so that their mothers could be mobile. They are rarely fondled or caressed by their mothers while feeding them from the breast or bottle. After about six months they are removed from skin pack and are carried by their mothers on their back and tied with the help of a blanket or shawl. They wear thick diapers till about the time they begin to walk. They are very well attended by their mothers failing which they get the attention of a wide range of relatives barring their father who remains aloof and distant from his children both physically and emotionally.

A Kaska infant is weaned at about two years of age and his lessons on urinating and defecating outside the house begins. He/she is expected to complete these lessons by the age of three or four failing which the parents may be a little harsh on them on such habits. This is also the age when he/she tends to get closer to their father than their mother. They are discouraged to shout, to be unruly, and to exhibit aggression and disobedience. They learn such behaviours by imitating their adults. They are rarely explained by adults about what they do, allowing the children the opportunity to develop their intelligence and independence.

According to Honigman, this kind of upbringing produces highly self-confident and capable adults. The Kaska adults have strong individualism, high personal responsibility, and fierce unwillingness to submit to any external authority. Honigman notes that only such qualities can insure their survival in extremely cold environment posing constant threat to the life of individuals through starvation. But he also notes a darker aspect of such upbringing, which is characterized by self-directed violent outbursts by drunken men and women.

Aymara. The Aymaras are native Americans living in Andes mountains of Peru and Bolivia. They number about one million with most of them living near Lake Titicaca, a 3200 square-mile lake at 12,508 feet above sea level in the border of southern Peru and western Bolivia. Most of them subsist on herding and farming, supplemented with wage labouring.

Historically, they were dominated and exploited by the Inca rulers who extracted tributes from them in the form of human labour. When they were later conquered by the Spanish the latter introduced cash-and-crop tribute system based on the powers of the landlord who claimed title to traditional Aymara farmlands. In addition to this the old system of extracting free labour continued, and subjected many Aymaras into slavery in Spanish farmlands or mines. It is estimated that about 8 million native Americans, mostly Aymaras, died out of the brutal treatment of landlords and miners in about 200 years of Spanish colonialism.

According to a number of cultural anthropologists who have worked on Aymara culture, Aymara infants are born at home with the help of a woman's husband, mother or mother-in-law. At the time of delivery the mother's sisters and sisters-in-law may also be present. When a child is born he is given bath and swaddled tightly keeping only the head free. They believe that swaddling helps the babies to keep themselves warm, grow their limbs, have sound sleep, and prevent them from crying. The tight swaddling is removed at about 4 years and they are covered with some loose warm clothes only. When the child is three to seven days old a ritual takes place amidst relatives where special meal is cooked and a play is put up by teenage relatives to, so to say, amuse the mother and other relatives present on the occasion. The usual themes for such plays are sexual intercourse between improbable partners and adultery.

Aymara children are breast-fed for about two years. At about this age, adults start feeding them with milk diet, mashed bread, potatoes, etc. The weaning takes place suddenly if the mother gets pregnant again. Toilet and modesty training begin at this age and is imposed strictly by the time they are about four years of age. Special attention is paid to the children as they used to die frequently due to communicable diseases.

An Aymara child assumes formal membership of his community after two public rituals. He is first named and baptized into the Catholic faith. Then he undergoes a hair-cutting ceremony. Their names are based on Catholic Church calendar. The children are expected to be quiet, polite, controlled, humble and hardworking, and the parents are supposed to be loving, protective and helpful in teaching their children how to work. They start to accompany their elder brothers or sisters in herding activities at about four years of age. When they grow older and more reliable they may be asked to herd on their own, which may be at about 10 years of age. They usually start with smaller animals like sheep and graduate into herding cows and donkeys as they grow more responsible.

Herding is rarely done alone, yet it is a job that takes them away from home early in the morning and returning late in the evening. At about six years of age, children also take care of their younger brothers and sisters, help in agricultural works, cook, or carry water and firewood along with their elder sibs or parents to keep their company, as they supposedly feel scared to stay alone the whole day. They also learn from their various stories they hear from their parents that death can come to them from various sources like magical spells, spirits, frights, etc. Thus they learn early how to protect themselves from such invisible but potential causes of their death.

Aymara children learn to adjust with an environment in which they see drunken fights between parents and relatives on day to day basis. The adults are addicted to chewing cocoa, which can lead to emotional dullness, apathy, indifference, low will power, etc. due to cocaine content in it. The children are also exposed to other threats to their lives like unhygienic houses to live, inadequate clothes and insufficient diet. Hence, they often experience hunger and ill-health after weaning takes place.

This does not mean that adults do not value their children and their schooling. But the Aymara adults are normally highly anxious, fearful and unhappy individuals. They are also described as quarrelsome, cruel, malicious, mistrustful, violent, etc. They are further noted to be submissive as well as practical in dealing with others. Such personality characteristics of Aymara

adults are contested by other scholars who noted that their adults also joke and laugh, demonstrate deep affection, and are open and friendly with strangers. Such a change in the depiction of their personality traits could be due to the fact that those who have described them in positive terms are studies conducted about two decades later than the ones which found them bearing a lot of negative personality characteristics.

It is both interesting and useful to refer here to a research done by Ralph Bolton among the Qolla, an Aymara-speaking Andes people. His research shows that their aggression, treachery, hostility and violence were as a result of low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia, which was the result of high altitude and poor diet. His findings show how the relationships between culture and personality could be mediated by biological conditions.

Culture and Personality Research after 1950s

Culture and personality research after 1950s is characterized, among others, by a comparison of several societies and improvement in data quality. For instance, one such coordinated research project on child-rearing practices dispatched six teams to northern India, Mexico, Okinawa, the Philippines, New England, and East Africa. The teams used common field guide and research techniques. They studied about 50 to 100 families in each culture, observing as well as interviewing them about nurturing, self-reliance, responsibility, achievement-orientation, dominance, obedience, aggression, sociability, etc. and rated the societies on the basis of psychological tones of child rearing, which were then linked with certain cultural traits like presence or absence of warfare (Whiting 1963).

Two years later Walter Goldschmidt (1965) organized a project to understand cultural, psychological, and ecological variation among four African groups, viz., the Hehe, Kamba, Pokot, and Sebei. In each of the four groups, some herded, some cultivated, and others did both. Robert Edgerton, the researcher, gathered psychological data from eight different communities with one pastoral and one agricultural for each. He drew a sample of at least 30 adults from each sex and community and interviewed 505 persons. In order to assess the personality differences among the communities, he analysed responses to questions, inkblot plates and colour slides. It was thus based on statistical data with objective parameters unlike the earlier (pre-1950s) culture and personality researches based mostly on impressions.

The results of this project were as follows. Kambas had male dominance, fear of poverty and restrained emotions; Hehe were aggressive, formal, mistrusting, and secretive; and other personality traits marked Pokot and Sebei. The latter two groups valued both sons and daughters and prophets; the former two valued just sons, land, and wealth. Economic backgrounds were also found to have important influence on personality: agriculturists consulted sorcerers, took group decisions, valued hard work, were hostile and suspicious, and were able to control their emotions and impulses whereas the pastoralists were individualistic, did not value hard work, were direct, open and realistic.

Criticisms of Culture and Personality Theory

Both Benedict and Mead are widely read, particularly in introductory courses in Anthropology, despite criticisms of their work from various quarters. One of the main criticisms against them is that they assumed culture as given and determining personality but neither of them demonstrated how it happened. The other major criticism against the culture and personality school of Benedict is its total disregard for historical analysis. This is surprising in view of her Boasian background because Franz Boas has been known for his historical particularism. While she believed that each society had a wide range of cultural options to choose from she did not explain why a society chooses one and not the others. Critics have also alleged that she distorted her data because of her strong belief that cultures have logical constancy. Unlike what she claimed in her Pueblo study they did take alcohol during her fieldwork and they still do. She has also been criticized for stereotyping Kwakiutl and Zuni cultures and ignoring aspects of cooperation among the former and strife, suicide and alcoholism among the Zuni. Her use of individual personality attributes to characterize whole cultures was also considered to be risky, as was later found from national character studies.

Kardiner has been criticized because his basic personality structure could not explain the variation in personality traits even in small societies, a weakness which was taken care of by Du Bois' modal personality theory.

Mead has perhaps been most vehemently criticized by Derek Freeman whose findings are completely contradictory to those of her. If she found the Samoan girls carefree about sexual experimentation Freeman found a strict virginity complex among them. If she noticed a free male-female relationship, he found male-female hostility. The differences between the two anthropologists are generally alluded to their personal biases, their fieldwork in different Samoan villages, and the time-gap of 15 years between their studies.

Much earlier than Freeman, Marvin Harris has criticized her for being too impressionistic about the emotions of Samoan girls. While defending herself she emphasized on the importance of providing illumination rather than demonstration of facts particularly about intangible and psychological aspects of human behaviour.

Conclusions

Despite the decline in anthropological interest in culture and personality studies national character continues to draw popular interest. In any effort to understand human personality and its variation the significance of culture as an important contributor to that can never be ignored. It may not ever be possible to show causal relationship between culture and personality yet it seems likely that this field may survive in future, what with continued interest in national characters in popular discourses and media.

Despite a lot of criticisms leveled against Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, it is one of the classics any student of anthropology is advised to read carefully. The book is an important lesson for the western civilization to rethink their values and practices. The book also made anthropology a lot more popular than it perhaps was until then. Also despite many limitations of the culture and personality school it must be commended for drawing our attention to the relativity of human behaviour and its contribution to undermining ethnocentrism. This school

must also be credited for establishing beyond any doubt that each culture is different and such differences are associated with personality differences as well.

More recently, instead of abandoning the stand of this school anthropologists have sought other sources of such personality differences in, for instance, altered states of consciousness employed by religious practitioners or the cognitive processes the people belonging to particular cultures undergo. And in doing so, anthropologists have received great help from linguistic categories as representations of mental reality. There is also an increasing interest in combining the psychoanalytical theories with biological, environmental and social theories to better understand the cultural dynamics. The study of childrearing practices – a seminal contribution of the culture and personality school – has emerged as a viable field of anthropological study in itself. This field has embraced the areas of biological maturation, interpersonal relations, group formation, etc. and includes the areas of informal education as well. Similarly, the old interest in abnormal personality has given rise to a viable field of research in mental health and illness as part of medical anthropological research. Thus, although culture and personality research in itself has waned after 1950s it has given birth to several significant fields of anthropological research today.

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