
UNIT 1 CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

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Learning Objectives



At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain how personality play significant role in the formation of cultural pattern;
- understand the impact of culture on personality formation; and
- know the impact of both culture and personality on each other in the formation of cultural group.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The culture personality school of thought began principally in the United States in the 1930s. The above school explained relationships between childrearing customs and human behaviours in different societies. The culture personality theory combined elements of psychology, anthropology, and sociology, but principally the theory involved the application of psychoanalytic principles to ethnographic data. This unit deals with different anthropological writings surrounding this theme.

1.2 MEANING AND DETERMINANTS OF CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

The term culture and personality has been used in several senses, both popularly and psychologically. Before going into discussion of theory let us first discuss the meaning and determinants of culture and personality. Culture is a term practically used in everyday life. Anthropological meaning of culture is different from its popular meaning. Defining culture has never been as simple for anthropologists. It is no wonder in anthropology; culture has over 300 definitions of this concept. For the convenience of learners culture herein is used to mean any knowledge that a person/individual has acquired as a member of his/her society. Such knowledge is important because it subsequently influences the shaping of his/her personality. 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. The conceptualisation of culture is by no means a simple matter. One possible way to think about culture is that “culture is to society what memory is to individuals” (Kluckhohn 1954). It includes what has worked in the experience of a society, so that it was worth transmitting to future generations.

The term personality is derived from the Latin word *persona* meaning a mask or character. Personality is a patterned body of habits, traits, attitudes and ideas of an individual as these are organised externally into roles and statuses and as they relate internally to motivation, goals and various aspects of selfhood. It is a term used in routine life as the distinctive way a person thinks, feels and behaves. But in anthropology, the term is used in a different sense. Funder (1997) defined personality as “an individual’s characteristic pattern of thought, emotion, and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms—hidden or not—behind those patterns”. Whereas Ralph Linton (1945) defines personality as the individual’s mental qualities the sum total of his rational faculties, perceptions, ideas, habits and conditional emotional responses. He states that there is a close relation between personality and culture of the society to which the individual belongs. The personality of every individual within the society develops and functions in constant association with its culture. Personality affects culture and culture affects personality. In short he says personality embraces the total organised aggregate of psychological processes and status pertaining to the individual.

There are four main factors or determinants, which affect the personality formation. They are environment, heredity, culture and peculiar experiences. The influence of geographical or physical environment plays very important role to determine the variation in personality construction of members of a group. According to physical environment humans come to form ideas and attitudes where he/she lives in. A close relationship exists between environment, culture and personality. To the extent that the environment determines cultural development and to the extent that culture in turn determines personality. In the 18th century Montesquieu claimed that the bravery of those blessed by a cold climate enables them to maintain their liberties. Great heat weakens courage while cold causes certain vigor of body and mind. The people those who live in mountain as well as deserts areas are usually bold, hard and powerful. Nevertheless physical conditions are more permissive and limiting factors than causative factors. People who live in mountain as well as in deserts areas set the limits within which the personality develops. For example Andaman tribes have different cultural personality than Fiji tribes because of the fact that the above two cultural groups develop in two different geographical environments.

Heredity is another factor which determines the traits of human personality. Some of the similarities in individual/group personality are said to be due to his common heredity. Some set of biological needs and capacities are inherited by human group in every society. These common biological needs and capacities explain some of the similarities in personality of the particular group. For example humankind tends to resemble his/her parents in physical appearance and intelligence. However, human heredity does not mould human personality alone and independently. There is assumption that functioning of human life in human beings there are genes for normal personality traits as well as there are genes for other aspects. Heredity is one of determinants that provides the materials out of which experience will mould the personality. Experience determines the way these materials will be used. Because of his/her heredity an individual may be energetic but

whether he is active on his own belief or on behalf of others is a matter of his training.

Culture plays a valuable role in personality development. In many countries all over the world, the influence of culture on personality formation can be seen in different cultural groups. According to some anthropologists and sociologists personality is the subjective aspect of culture. They look at personality and culture as two sides of same coin. Spiro had perceived that the development of personality and the acquisition of culture are not different processes but one and the same learning process. He considered Personality as an individual aspect of culture while culture is a collective aspect of personality. In every culture particular type of personality developed. Certain cultural environment sets its participant members off from other human beings operating under different cultural environments. According to Frank culture is a coercive influence dominating the individual and molding his personality by virtue of the ideas, conceptions and beliefs which had brought to bear on him through communal life. The culture furnishes the raw material of out of which the individual makes his life. The social institutions of the particular society affect the personality of the group members. In every society from the moment of birth, the child is treated in such ways which shape his personality. Every culture applies a series of general influences upon the individuals who grow up under it. It can be summed up that culture greatly moulds personality of individual or group. The ideas and behaviour of the individuals are largely the results of cultural background. However, it should not be concluded that culture is a massive dye that shapes all that come under it with an identical pattern. Personality traits differ within culture. Personality is not totally determined by culture even though no personality escapes its influence. It is only one determinant among others.

Last but not the least personality is also determined by another factor, namely situational experiences. In this there are two types of experiences one those that stem from continuous association with one's group, second those that arise suddenly and are not likely to recur. In type one people who interact with the child daily has a major influence on his personality. For example the personality of parents does more to affect a child's personality. The overall process of socialisation; ranging from social rituals to table manners to getting along with others are consciously inculcated in the child by the parents. The child learns everything from his parents' language to behaviour. In the type situational experiences the relationship of the child with the mother, father and siblings affect profoundly the organisation of his drives and emotions, the deeper and subconscious aspects of his personality. In the second type group influence is relatively greater in early childhood. Child's personality moulds by group interaction. Personality may also be inferred by social situations. According to social researchers an individual may show honesty in one situation and not in another. The same is true for other personality traits also. Personality traits tend to be specific responses to particular situations rather than general behaviour patterns. It is a dynamic unity with a creative potential.

The above various determinant factors are responsible for personality formation, development and maintenance. Further than the combined influence of these factors however the relative contribution of each factor to the development of personality varies with the characteristic or personality process involved and perhaps with the individual concerned. However, there is no way yet known to measure the effect of each determinant factor or to state how the factors combine to produce a given result. For example, the behaviour of juvenile delinquent is affected by his heredity

and by his family. But how much is contributed by each factor cannot be measured in exact terms.

The term personality, character and temperament have been used synonymously by many scholars in various disciplines. Many disciplines like biology, psychology, sociology and anthropology have taken keen interest in the study of personality. It is because of the interdisciplinary approach the term personality has been used to denote various meanings. A holistic study of personality can be done only by multidisciplinary approach like biologists deal with physiological characteristics, sociologists can attempt to know with the influence of social environment, Psychologists with mental attributes, whereas anthropologists are concerned with the relationship between culture and personality.

Psychological and anthropological aspect is the final aspect to the study of culture and personality. In this particular aspect we can include cultural background, interest, sentiment, attitudes, values, temperament, impulse, aptitude, and motivation of an individual.

Activity

Try to assess different cultures and their personalities in your area from anthropological perspective.

1.3 CULTURE AND PERSONALITY SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

The culture personality school of thought began principally in the United States in the 1930s. The above school explained relationships between childrearing customs and human behaviours in different societies. The culture personality theory combined elements of psychology, anthropology, and sociology, but principally theory involved the application of psychoanalytic principles to ethnographic data. The school emphasised the cultural moulding of the personality and focused on the development of the individual. Culture-and-personality theorists argued that personality types were created in socialisation, and they placed particular emphasis on child-rearing practices such as feeding, weaning, and toilet training. The pioneers of this school of thought were students of Franz Boas and Kroeber. They include American anthropologists like Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Linton, Kardiner and Cora Du-Bois.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was one of the first psychologists to break the barrier between anthropology and psychology. His best known anthropological work is Totem and Taboo. In his book, Freud provides an insightful description to taboos and their origination; yet his theory on the origin of totems is somewhat speculative. His main work on the origin of totemism, incest taboo, exogamy and the Oedipus complex, is well known, for he argued the existence of a primal horde, the leader of which was the oldest male, who assumed exclusive sexual rights over all females in the group. Frustrated, the sons murdered and ate their father; but overcome by guilt afterwards, the sons decided to obey commands and abstain from sexual intercourse with their mothers and sisters. Selecting a totem animal as a symbolic father substitute, they declared that it must be protected during the year and consumed only on ritual occasions. These ritual totem meals thus reenacted their original deed and reinforced their self-imposed incest prohibitions. Freud thus, concluded that all cultures originate from this sacrificial meal.

Best known for his psychoanalysis, Freud saw the trauma of childhood reflected in the neuroses of adults. He established the Oedipus complex as a universal story in which the son, jealous of his father's attentions on his mother, entertains hostility towards the father and develops an erotic attachment to his mother. This desire is felt among all men; yet is buried by repression and then resurfaces in the actions of adulthood. Freud's psychoanalysis was an attempt to uncover the repressed childhood trauma through a series of word associations, dream analysis, and free-flow talking.

His Oedipus complex analysis (in which a son hates his father for his strict authority and is jealous of his sexual prerogatives over the mother, yet loves him for strength and protection) among all societies, was also highly criticised and Malinowski, who tested this hypothesis among the matrilineal Trobriand society (1922), rejected Freud's views on the universality of the Oedipus complex. Franz Boas (1858-1942), though he was not interested in psychology, reacted to Freud's analysis and said that his method was one sided and could do nothing to advance understanding of cultural development. Kroeber (1876-1960) rejected Freud's conjectures by the phrase "bewilderingly fertile imagination". At the same time Kroeber, realised the importance of the psychological dimension of culture, which he felt should not be ignored. This Freudian hypothesis influenced early anthropological research on culture and personality giving birth to what is known as Psychological Anthropology.

The primary aim of the culture and personality school of thought, is to examine the interrelationships between culture and personality. The attempts of this school are to study culture as it is embodied in the character of its members, rather than seeking to analyse culture as it is manifested in material items or social institutions.

1.3.1 Impact of Personality on Culture

Ruth Benedict (1887-1948) a student of Franz Boas, documented in her PhD dissertation the rapidly deteriorating Native American societies, providing the impetus to pursue culture and personality studies. Through her work on the patterning of culture at an individual level, Benedict opened anthropology into a much larger discussion between the disciplines of anthropology and psychology. Idea of "pattern" was already in use before her, but credit goes to her for providing a methodological model for studying human culture in terms of "pattern" rather than social contents. She was of the opinion that life crisis rites are only one of the several ways in which patterns of culture emerge and are reflected in the behaviour of members of a group. All the basic institutions that are a part of the culture, tend to mirror the overall pattern for that culture. This point was successfully highlighted in her book *Patterns of Culture* (1934) which is considered to be a classic work in anthropology.

Ruth Benedict consideration of cultures as integrated wholes where each is configured to be different from all other cultures; is perhaps one of the most significant. She also stressed that a culture is organised around a basic theme, and that all of the various elements of that culture fit together. A culture according to Benedict is analogous to an individual in that it is more or less a consistent pattern of thought and action. Hence, she says any analysis of culture requires a psychological approach. According to her when traits and complexes become related to each other in functional roles, a cultural pattern is formed. Many cultural patterns integrate themselves into a functional whole and form a special design of a whole culture. This special design of whole culture is called configuration of

culture. The integration of culture is on the basis of tendency seen in all aspects of culture. This tendency is called by Benedict "special genius" that brings about integration. She says there are two types of geniuses found in human society i.e. Apollonian and Dionysian. In Apollonian pattern, one will see the existence of peace, discipline and kindness. The Dionysian culture is characterised by a great deal of changes and aggressiveness. These two geniuses mold the personality of the members of their group. The Apollonian personality compels members of the group to behave in one form and the Dionysian personality in the other. This will lead to the formation of special cultural characteristics for the group concerned, thus personality influencing the culture.

Applying this approach to cross-cultural studies she did her fieldwork among the Zuni, Cochiti and Pima tribes of America. Benedict looked at different societies and described them in terms of their basic personality configurations. Pointing out how these personality types fit in with the overall culture. In her monograph *Patterns of Culture* (1934) she discussed, through literature, contrastive personality types between Zuni of the Southwest America and Kwakiutl of the Northeast Coast of North America. The primary occupations of the two communities are different, the Zuni are foragers in a resource-rich environment whereas the Kwakiutl are agriculturists. She describes Zunis as very cooperative, never excessive in any aspect of their life. The typical Zuni was a person who sought to mingle with the group, and who did not wish to stand out as a superior among the other members of the tribe. Again she went on to point out how this basic personality type was reinforced in other elements of Zuni culture. Child training patterns were designed to suppress individuality. Initiation ceremonies were characterised by a lack of ordeal, and the youths were initiated in a group setting. Marriage was relatively casual. Leadership among the Zuni was ignored whenever possible, and was accepted only with great reluctance. Priests were low key individuals and special positions of power were delegated on a group basis, so that there was a medicine society rather than a single powerful medicine man. Among them death was an occasion for little mourning.

While comparing her study she found cultural configuration of Kwakiutl much different from that of the Zuni. According to cultural pattern Kwakiutl were characterised by a frenzied outlook, excess being the rule rather than the exception. They were ambitious and striving, and individuality was emphasised in every aspect of their life. The ideal man among the community was the one who always attempted to prove his superiority. Child rearing practices reinforced this pattern, emphasising the achievement of the individual over cooperation with the group. In the initiation ceremonies, a boy was expected go out by himself and experience a personal relationship with the supernatural. Marriage entailed tremendous celebration Leadership among this community was characterised by a constant struggle for power, which must be sought by any possible means. Religious positions included that of the shaman, a priest who wielded enormous personal power. Even the death ritual among the Kwakiutl reinforced this overall configuration. A death was a major event, an occasion for elaborate mourning and was not accepted calmly and peacefully as among the Zuni.

She considered the Zuni to be non-competitive, non-aggressive, and gentle etc., whereas the Kwakiutl to be characterised by strife, factionalism, painful ceremonies, etc. On the basis of above characteristics in her view the two tribal communities are represented by to contrastive psychological attributes on the basis of which she describe Zuni as Apollonian and Kwakiutl as, Dionysian after the Greek Gods

of wine and light (i.e. wine as Dionysian and light as Apollonian) respectively. These categories were derived from the work of 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 Wilhel 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. She says it is a pattern that describes the typical member of the society, and to which all members conform to some extent.

During the Second World War the need was felt to understand the national characteristics of Japan and some of the American anthropologists helped in by analysing it through the Japanese films, and books on the history and culture of Japan. They concluded that the strict toilet training among the Japanese made them aggressive fighter in warfare. Ruth Benedict made a significant contribution in developing and then applying the "content analysis method" to study the culture at a distance. This content analysis method was developed by Benedict, when anthropologist could not freely travel to do fieldwork among the indigenous societies during World War II. The U.S. office of War information had asked her to undertake research on occupied or enemy nation. She selected Japan as her first target and wrote the famous work *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) depicting the culture of that nation in a holistic manner, although she never visited Japan. She gathered material for her monograph from historical documents, literature readings of Japanese life and interviews of Japanese immigrants. After going through all these data properly, she analysed and arrived at many significant conclusions about the Japanese society. To study culture at a distance it was first of its kind in the anthropological research. She describes Japanese culture has two methods of child rearing. In Japan during childhood an individual is given full love, freedom, care and cooperation. But when he or she reaches the stage of adolescence, a strict discipline is imposed. He or she is asked to behave in manner which will be pleasant and appealing to elders. She or he as adolescence is not expected to break cultural traditions. In fact the individual has to work according to the instructions provided by the family traditions. This paradox in personality traits of Japanese appears due to different cultural traditions of rearing in two periods, i.e. childhood and adolescence. She compares childrearing practices in Japan to the national flower of Japan Chrysanthemum and the Sword. Chrysanthemum symbolises the socialisation of a child during childhood. At the time of childhood, the Japanese parents take every care of their children to make them blossom like a chrysanthemum flower. When the children are fully blossomed like adolescents, they have to face a tough life. Parents leave them to earn something and lead independent life. As a result of this, children become aggressive and violent. A sword always hangs on their neck, because they do not seek cooperation from the elders.

During the late forties the school flourished with some of the best known studies on national character like 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). The interest in understanding national character though faded after 1950s. Because in their studies the above authors tried, following the neo-Freudian approach, to link early childrearing practices with adult personality.

1.3.2 Impact of Culture on Personality Formation

Margaret Mead (1901-1978) another student of Franz Boas, also investigated the relationship between culture and personality. Her monograph *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1949) established her as one of the leading lady anthropologists of the day. Starting as a configurationalist, Mead also wrote about national character. Hired in World War II by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), Mead researched the national character of England and compared it to that found within the United States. She determined that in each society the norms for interaction between the sexes differed, leading to many misunderstandings between the two otherwise similar cultures.

In her well-known book *Coming of Age in Samoa*, based on nine months intensive 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 were mainly associated with American adolescents whereas the Samoan adolescents had relatively an easy transition into sexual maturation.

While studying Samoa she found that the whole cultural mood in Samoa was much less emotional than that in America. For example, the facts of birth, death and sex were not hidden from Samoan children. Premarital sex was considered natural and did not demand strong emotional involvements and adolescents were not confronted with the necessity of selecting from a variety of often conflicting standards of ethics and values. Adolescence was, thus, not marked by storm and stress in Samoa, but was simply a part of the gradual development of life. The major point of the study was, in Mead's own words (1939) "the documentation, over and over, of the fact that human nature is not rigid and unyielding".

In her study on Samoan, Margaret Mead claims that children are taught early in their life that if they behave well or are quiet and obedient they can have their good way of life. Arrogance, flippancy and courage are not the qualities emphasised 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.

During fieldwork she observed that, little girls move about together and have antagonistic and avoidance relationship with boys. On the other hand, when 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. Criticisms notwithstanding, subsequent studies have lent support to her basic theory that childhood upbringing influences formation of adult personality.

Mead's finding on Samoa was very much supported by Edward Sapir, who realised that the anthropological studies of personality represented entirely a new approach to the understanding of culture. He also argued that the application of psycho-analytic methods, in the study of culture, would add a new dimension to ethnological field work and analysis, he was so much interested in this psycho-analytic method.

After studying the Samoan society, Mead studied the personality formation of the children of New Guinea with special reference to Manus tribe, which was published as *Growing up in New Guinea* (1930). This study is concerned with the kind of enculturation processes by which Manus of New Guinea brought their children up from infancy to childhood and childhood to adulthood. In fact, the book deals with educative role of culture in development of personality of child through different ages of life such as infancy, childhood and adulthood etc.

The third important book of Mead is entitled *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935). In this particular study Mead deals with the impact of culture on personality formation. In this study like Benedict, Mead compared three different cultures, namely Arapesh, Mundugumor and Tschambuli, to test the range of variation of cultural patterns. The study was to understand why societies living in same area differ in their character, personality and temperament and why within the same society, temperaments of male and female differ. From her study she found that in Arapesh, cultural environments are such that both males and females have submissive temperament. In their culture, such personality traits are the matter of great praise and all members in this society follow these cultural traits with great enthusiasm. Among Mundugumor society, both males and females are aggressive. In this society, the personality traits of its members are reflected by such characters as suspiciousness, competition, quarrelsomeness, ego, jealousy, and unkindness. The cultural environment of Mundugumor is such that every member is found to be in struggle, conflict, and competition with each other. These cultural practices have direct bearing upon the personality formation of members of Mundugumor. The cultural traditions of Tschambuli are such that males acquire submissive temperament and females possess aggressive character. It is a matrilineal society dominated by female authority. The submissive character among males and aggressive character among females of their culture are reflected in the personality traits of Tschambuli (Upadhyay and Pandey, 1993).

From the above discussion of these three societies Mead reflected that differences in personality types of male and female in the same society or in different societies are due to cultural processes, which differ from one cultural group to another or from one society to another. She concludes by saying that it is a culture influence which moulds the character, temperament and personality of members of the group.

Mead did not confine herself to the study of character, temperament and personality of different cultural groups. She opined that the study of national character can be done by the culture and personality approach. Culture has been developed by human beings and is successively learned by each generation. The learned behaviour is reflected in the character of group of nation. Thus, the study of national character has historical depth of traditions, continuity and change as various dimensions. In her study *Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America* (1942), she deals with the national character of America. She did not find difference in the personality of a baby in America as compared to Japan and Russia. Thus, the early personality was similar. They gradually start differing as the growth follows and family education and school education become effective.

Activity

What influence has your cultural background had on you? Explain in your own words

1.3.3 Impact of Culture on Personality and Vice-versa

The other early anthropologists who had made significant contribution to this field are Ralph Linton (1893-1953), Abram Kardiner (1891-1981), and Cora Du Bois (1903-1991). The three authors regard culture and personality as interdependent and complementary to each other. They tried to correlate the type of cultural patterns with the type of individual personalities obtained in that society. They firmly believed that as a consequence of continuous contact with a particular type of cultural pattern, similar types of personalities emerge. Linton was a co-founder of the basic personality structure theory with Kardiner. He sought to establish a basic personality for each culture. After studying the cultural behaviour of different societies Ralph Linton (1945) noted three types of culture viz;

- 1) real culture (actual behaviour)
- 2) Ideal culture (Philosophical and traditional culture)
- 3) Culture construct (what is written on cultural elements etc.)

Real culture is the sum total of behaviour of the members of the society, which are learned and shared in particular situations. A real culture pattern represents a limited range of behaviour within which the response of the members of a society to a particular situation will normally be form. Thus various individuals can behave differently but still in accordance with a real culture pattern.

Ideal culture pattern is formed by philosophical traditions. In this, some traits of culture are regarded as ideals.

Linton stated that there is a difference between the way of life of people and what we study and write about. Both are different dimensions of culture. The former is reality and the latter our understanding of the same. If the former is called culture the latter can be called culture construct. It is an abstraction from the reality which is the actual human behaviour.

While studying different aspects of culture and personality, he suggested some more concepts viz., basic personality, status personality, social inventor etc. regarding basic culture he argued that in a society all the individuals undergo a similar type of socialisation, custom, traditions etc., and therefore, individuals acquire a common set of habits, which may be called a basic personality of the society. He suggested that in a society there are certain individuals, who are granted some special privileges, which lead to form a status personality. Considering social inventor, he argued that in a society some individuals do not follow the old traditional rules and customs of the society, but they try to imitate some other norms, behaviour or mode of living or make certain new discoveries, which are laid down on the society in course of time, and he called such individuals as social inventors. He also discussed (1936) about different types of role, played by an individual in the society. The term role, according to Linton refers to the rules for behaviour appropriate to a given status or social position. This classical definition of role, given by Linton, has been useful in functional analysis within a synchronic frame work. However, he prescribed some criterias to the characteristics as person needs to become eligible for a particular social role. He identified two kinds of status, viz., ascribed and achieved status. According to him ascribed roles usually come by birth. For instance roles based on age, sex, kinship, and caste etc., are ascribed status. Whereas he says some efforts must be made to qualify for an achieved status. For example occupational roles, especially leadership, doctor, engineer, lawyer etc are achieved status.

Abram Kardiner (1891-1981) a student of Sigmund Freud by profession was a psychoanalyst. He along with Ralph Linton argued, that while culture and personality were similarly integrated, a specific casual relationship existed between them.

In response to the configurationalist approach Kardinar, along with Linton developed the concept “basic personality type” in his book, *Psychological Frontiers of Society* (1945). The theory basic personality type is a collection of fundamental personality traits shared by normal members of a society acquired by adapting to a culture. The above theory was formulated after reading Freud’s *The Future of an Illusion* (1928/1961) in which he argues that children’s early life experiences determine their later religious life. Similar to Freud, Kardiner understood that the foundations of personality development were laid in early stage of childhood. Further Kardiner 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 particular cultural institutions or patterned ways of doing things in a society. Such social 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. Between primary and secondary institutions, he poses the basic personality structure. According to him, childhood plays significant role in the formation of basic personality structure. Thus, the basic personality type expresses itself in the group’s ideologies, in emotional and cognitive orientation to life and death. He compared two communities 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. From his study he concluded that diversity in personality types in a culture increased with increased social and political complexity.

Following the Basic Personality Construct of Kardiner, Cora Du Bois also formulated a similar construct which she named ‘Modal Personality’ involving a more statistical concept. Here, the basic personality is expressed in the most frequent type of patterned individual behaviour observed in a society. Du Bois (1903-) was heavily influenced by the work of Abram Kardiner and Ralph Linton. Her experience as an ethnographer and psychologist provided a valuable link in the chain of thought of the culture and personality school. Du Bois modified Kardiner and Linton’s notion of basic personality structure with her modal personality theory. She assumed that a certain personality structure occurs most frequently within a society, but that it is not necessarily common to all members of that society. Modal personality defined as the personality typical of a culturally bounded population, as indicated by the central tendency of a defined frequency distribution.

To develop the concept of modal personality Kardiner gathered data through psychological tests, which include **projective tests** 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. The above tests combined with observation of frequency of certain behaviours, collection of life histories and dreams, and analysis of oral literature.

Incidentally, Kardiner 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.

She published the findings of her research on Alor in the year (1945) under the title *The People of Alora: A Social Psychological Study of East Indian Island*. For her research purpose, she spent almost eighteen months on the island of Alor, in eastern Indonesia. Her experiments were of three kinds:

- 1) She collected information on child-rearing;
- 2) She collected eight biographies, each with dream material; and
- 3) She administered a broad range of projective tests –the Rorschach test to thirty-seven subjects, a word-association test to thirty-six subjects, and a drawing test to fifty-five children.

Du Bois broke new ground when she asked specialists in various fields to assess and interpret her projective materials independently. These authorities were given no background briefing on Alorese culture or attitudes; neither were they permitted to see Du Bois' general ethnographies notes or interpretations. Abraham Kardiner was given the life histories, Emil Oberholzer the Rorschachs and Trude Schmidt-Waehner the children's drawings. Working with only these materials, each prepared an evaluation. The effectiveness of the test procedure employed by Du Bois, and her success in eliminating her own emotional or cultural biases, were confirmed by the work of these independent authorities. To a remarkable degree, their findings concurred with hers.

A rather unfavourable modal personality for the Alorese emerged from this many-sided investigation. Alorese of both sexes are described by Du Bois and her colleagues as suspicious and antagonistic, prone to violent and emotional outbursts, often of a jealous nature. They tend to be uninterested in the world around them, slovenly in workmanship, and lacking an interest in goals. Kardiner drew attention to the absence of idealised parental figures in the life stories. Oberholzer noted the lack of capacity for sustained creative effort, indicated by his reading of the Rorschach scores. Schmidt-Waehner identified a lack of imagination and a strong sense of loneliness in the children's drawings.

Turning to the possible causative influences, Du Bois and her co-researchers focused on the experiences of the Alorese during infancy and early childhood, up to the age of six or so. At the root of much of Alorese personality development, they suggested, is the division of labour in that society. Women are the major food suppliers, working daily in the family gardens, while men occupy themselves with commercial affairs, usually the trading of pigs, gongs and kettledrums. Within about two weeks after giving birth, the mother returns to her outdoor work, leaving the infant with the father, a grandparent, or an older sibling. She deprives the newborn child of the comfort of a maternal presence and of breast-feeding for most of the day. The infant thus experiences oral frustration and resultant anxiety. At the same time, the baby suffers bewildering switches in attention, from loving and petting to neglect and bad-tempered rejection. Thus, maternal neglect is viewed as being largely responsible for the Alorese personality.

Activity

Using the different aspects of culture, list as many specific examples as you can how different aspects of culture influence personality development and maintenance.

After 1950s Culture and personality research disseminated among others, by a comparison of several societies' quality of data is improved in the school of thought. For example, one such coordinated research project on child-rearing practices conducted by six teams in different parts of the world like northern India, Mexico, Okinawa, the Philippines, New England, and East Africa. In all the parts the research teams used common field guide and research techniques. They studied about 50 to 100 families randomly in each culture, observing as well as interviewing them about nurturing, self-reliance, responsibility, achievement-orientation, dominance, obedience, aggression, sociability, etc. and ranked 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).

In (1965) Walter Goldschmidt conducted a research project to understand cultural, psychological, and ecological variation among four African groups, vis., the Hehe, Kamba, Pokot, and Sebei. Among the four communities occupation was different, some herded, some cultivated, and others did both. On the other hand 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 evaluate 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 outcome of the above project is 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.

1.4 CRITICISMS OF CULTURE AND PERSONALITY THEORY

Despite criticisms of their work from various quarters studies of Benedict and Mead are best known and widely read, particularly in introductory courses in Anthropology. The following are the major criticism against the culture and personality school. Both Benedict and Mead assumed culture as given and determining personality but neither of them demonstrated how it happened. They completely disregarded historical analysis. Because Benedict 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. Benedict has been criticised on her studies because of her strong belief that cultures have logical constancy. She has been criticised for saying that Pueblo in her study they did take alcohol during her

fieldwork and they still do. She has been criticised for her statement like ignoring aspects of cooperation among Kwakiutl and strife, suicide and alcoholism among the Zuni cultures. Applying individual personality attributes to characterise whole cultures was also considered to be risky, as was later found from national character studies. Derek Freeman strongly criticised whose findings are completely contradictory to those of Meads. In her Samoan study she found the girls carefree about sexual experimentation whereas Freeman found a strict virginity complex among them. During their studies Mead noticed a free male-female relationship, while he found male-female hostility. The differences occur in their studies because their fieldwork was conducted in different Samoan villages at the time-gap of 15 years.

Prior to Freeman, Marvin Harris has criticised Mead for being too generalised about the emotions of Samoan girls. In her defense she emphasised on the significance of providing clarification rather than demonstration of facts particularly about intangible and psychological aspects of human behaviour.

Morris Opler criticised this configurationalist approach stating that there are not only two bases of cultural integration but many. Thus, this approach is very narrow.

Even in small societies Kardiner's basic personality structure could not explain the variation in personality traits for this reason he has been criticised. Later on the weakness of the theory was taken care of by Du Bois' in modal personality theory.

1.5 SUMMARY

Culture and Personality, sometimes also known as Psychological Anthropology, investigates the role of culture in forming personality in an "ecocultural framework," and considers problems of individual adjustments to demands of culture.

The theory was influenced by and neo-Freudian psychology, which emphasised the primacy of infantile and early childhood experience in shaping the personality. Following the development of this school, many anthropologists attempted to study the national characters (representative personality types) across cultures. In so doing, anthropologists have employed the psychological concepts such as conditioned stimuli and responses, drives, rewards, punishments, conflicts, dreams, ego systems, id impulses, attitudes, values, cognitive orientations, ideas, etc.

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Anthropological Theories-II Sample Questions

- 1) What are the basic principles on which the school of Culture and Personality is based?
- 2) Critically discuss Ruth Benedict's book, 'The Patterns of Culture'.
- 3) What do you understand by National Character? Give examples of studies done on this concept.
- 4) What is basic personality and modal personality? Discuss.
- 5) What are the major points on which the culture and personality school has been criticised?

