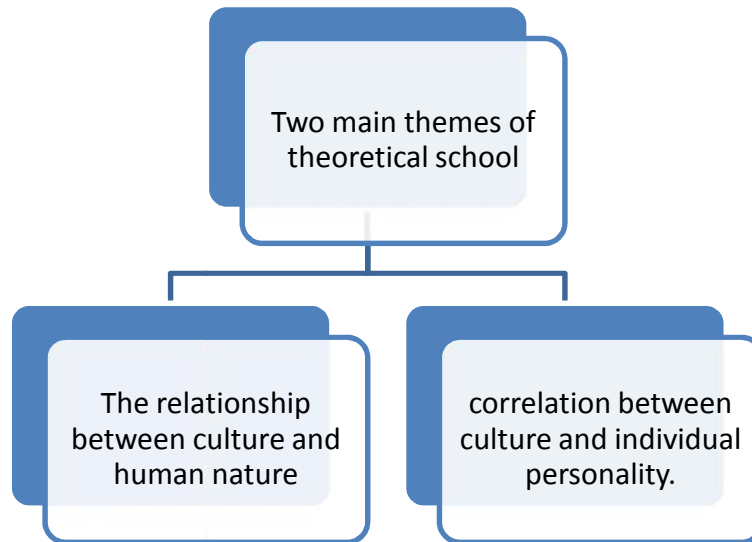


Culture and Personality studies

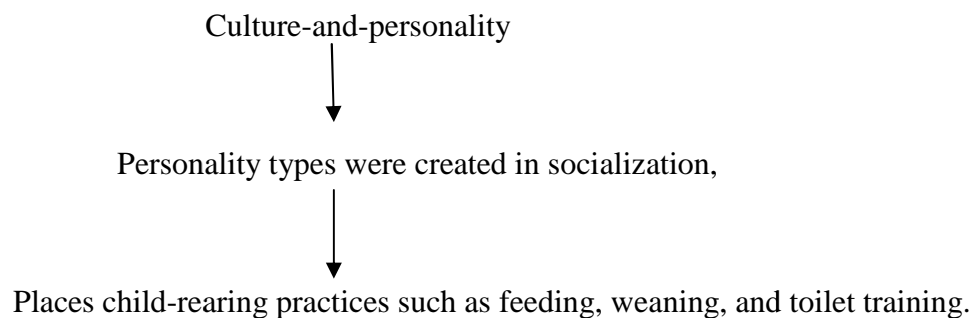
Introduction

'Culture and personality' is the earliest name of the school or thoughts of school. It is important study in psychological anthropology, thus culture and personality studies, also called psychological anthropology. Its beginnings are associated especially with the great American linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir (1884—1939). Sapir was influenced by German Gestalt psychologists, who had argued that perception could be understood only when the thing perceived was viewed not as an assemblage of separate elements, but as an organized pattern (Gestalt). So when one looks, for example, at a landscape painting, one sees it not as flat planes of colour laid against one another, but as a whole — 'a landscape'. This example shows us too why a whole may be more than the sum of its parts and have its own essential properties. In this Gestalt view, meaning was a function of organized patterns, and Sapir applied this idea to his analyses of language and of culture and personality. Sapir was suspicious of the contemporary concept of culture, which he described as 'tidy tables of contents' attached to particular groups of people. In an influential 1934 essay he argued that 'the more fully one tries to understand a culture, the more it seems to take on the characteristics of a personality organization' (1985 [1949]: 594). The study of the development of personality was Sapir's solution to the problems posed by the way that, in anthropological accounts, culture 'can be made to assume the appearance of a closed system of behaviour' (p. 594). But in fact, 'vast reaches of culture ... are discoverable only as the peculiar property of certain individuals' (p. 594). He recommended that to understand 'the complicating patterns and symbolisms of culture', anthropologists should study child development. It is branch of cultural anthropology that seeks to determine the range of personality types extant in a given culture and to discern where, on a continuum from ideal to perverse, the culture places each types. Culture and personality studies apply the methods of psychology to the field of anthropology.

Culture and Personality theory explained relationships between childrearing customs and human behaviours in different societies. Through examination of individual personalities, we can gain an understanding of a culture.

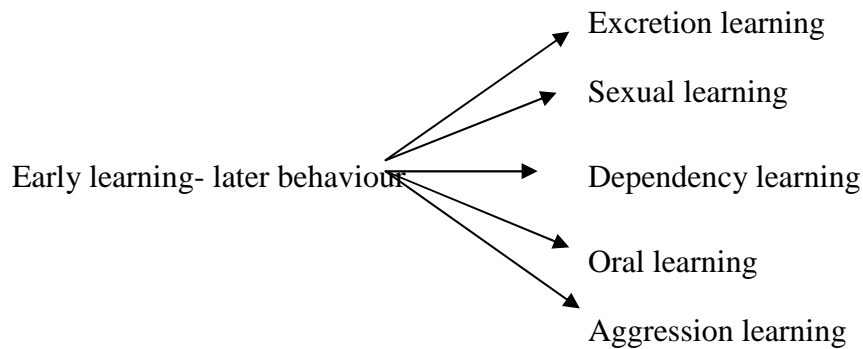


Development in the study of socialization arose principally in the United States in the 1930s. There are many theories that combined elements of psychology, anthropology, and sociology. The elements principally involved the application of psychoanalytic principles to ethnographic material. According to Freudian theory, it emphasized the cultural moulding of the personality and focused on the development of the individual.



Culture and Personality School: 1920 – 1950

The history of culture and personality studies to 1920s is beginning and 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 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. The perspective is best demonstrated in the work of anthropologists such as Gregory Bateson, Ruth Benedict, Geoffrey Gorer, and Margaret Mead. Margaret Mead has become the main tenet of the School: that different cultures (or societies) produce different personality types as a result of different socialization practices.

Abram Kardiner (1891-1981)

American- born physician and psychiatrist Abram Kardiner went to Vienna on 1920's in order to undertake year psychoanalysis with Freud. In 1939, Kardiner and Linton published *'the individual and society'*. In *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (1945), Abram Kardiner looked at the way in which personality types are present in cultural patterns. Kardiner and his colleagues argued that religion and politics are screens on to which the basic personality-orientation of a society is projected.

In 'Anthropology and the Abnormal' (Journal of General Psychology, 1934), Kardiner also influence the culture and personality school. He introduced the idea of "basic personality structure", in this members of a certain culture share several fundamental personality traits. Thus this idea called as culture's basic personality structure. He was inspired by the work of Sigmund Freud. Kardiner concept was based on primary institutions (like child rearing practices). After developing the basic personality structure approach, Kardiner argued, along with Ralph Linton, that while culture and personality were similarly integrated, a specific causal relationship existed between them. He and Linton criticized the configurationalist approach as being too broad and vague. Instead, he put forth his own theory- the basic personality structure. After his approach, he distinguished between primary institutions (those which produce the basic personality structure) and secondary institutions (those which are the product of basic personality itself).

Examples of primary institutions are those things which are a product of adaptation within an

environment, such as housing, family types, descent types, etc. Secondary institutions, on the other hand, include social organization technology, and child training practices; these are manifested through religion and other social practices.

Primary institution	Secondary institutions
It shapes the basic personality structure of society.	Secondary institutions are produced in the process of shaping the basic personality structure.
It can be conflict with one another, leading to shared, unconscious conflicts and anxieties.	It helps the members of a society to deal with the conflicts and anxieties.
Child rearing practices, toilet training etc.	Ritual or folk tales conflicts

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 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.

Cora-du-Bois (1903- 1991)

Cora Dubois was born in New York City. She earned her M.A. degree in Columbia University and attended the University of Berkeley for her Ph. D degree. She was influenced collaborator Abram Kardiner in cross-cultural diagnosis and the psychoanalytic study of culture. She wrote the book entitled *The People of Alor* (1944). In this social-psychological study, she advanced the concept of modal personality structure. Cora Dubois stated that individual variation within a culture exists, and each culture shares the development of a particular type which might not exist in its individuals. In 1945, Cora Dubois, Abram Kardiner and Ralph Linton co-authored the book, the *Psychological Frontiers of Society* which consisted of careful descriptions and interpretations of three cultures (the Comanche culture, the Alorese culture, and the culture of an American rural community).

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.

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 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.

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 Alor 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 Alor people emerged from this many-sided investigation. Alor 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 Alor people during infancy and early childhood, up to the age of six or so. At the root of much of Alor 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