



# Lecture #5

# Childrearing as a cultural adaptation: Mead & Benedict

Lecture 5

# Culture and Personality

school of thought -

Margaret Mead and Ruth

Benedict

- Interested in the Adult Personality and how it became such

The interest became  
**HOW** different  
cultures produce  
individuals with widely  
divergent behavior



# Main ideas:

- Every culture has a **TYPICAL PERSONALITY**, which is characteristic and distinctive of that culture and which is produced or conditioned by some aspect of that culture.

- typical personalities are perceived of as the the products of **learning**, rather than genetics.
- born with behavior **potentialities** of enormously wide range - led to develop **actual** behavior much narrower range.

Ruth Benedict -

Like Language

EX -

examined the **childhood**  
**experiences** and  
**socialization practices** of  
different groups (many  
Native American)



# the questions they asked:

- If human beings are infinitely malleable, **how** does this molding take place?
- How infant **transformed** into the kind of adult who can function in this particular society?

- How are childhood experiences **related** to adult character?

Approach is from Adult  
personality - how  
determined by childhood  
experience.

- How are children treated that leads them to exhibit personality characteristics **adaptive** to their own society?

# Trying to answer these questions look at:

- Family life
- How children taught and how learn
- Who does the teaching
- What are they taught

# Main idea

- The differential treatment of children results in different adult personalities.
- Childraising → AP (adult personality)

Four examples:

# #1

- **Margret Mead** - “Character Formation in Different Cultures: Bathing Babies in three cultures.”
- Highlights differences in bathing and attachment between mom and child.



Example #2  
Ruth Benedict -  
Hopi Indians



kahopi = the state of being  
“unHopi,” or behaving in a way  
Hopi would consider anti-  
social

# Hopi value: (Apollonian)

- inoffensiveness
- order
- the collective
- restraint
- dignity
- even-tempered
- cooperative

# Hopi approach to child training:

- early training is permissive and severe restraints come later in childhood
- GOAL= cooperation

kachina monsters =  
supernatural beings (adults  
dressed up) that appear and  
frighten Hopi children into  
compliance

**#3**

**EATING  
CHRISTMAS IN  
THE KALAHARI**

**by**

**Richard Lee**



#4



# Reading:

- Tobin, Hsueh, Karasawa Ch. 2 (36 – 71)