

Margaret her writings
and also educated
them



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Margaret Mead was a sociology scholar, an eminent anthropologist, a scientist and a great author on anthropology, sociology, religion and ancient society's issues. She was an intelligent woman and used both knowledge and action to achieve her goals. She was also involved in politics and helped many presidents in formulating policies in ecological and nutrition matters. As a politician she served as an ambassador, without a portfolio, to many presidents in the areas of ecology and nutrition something that gave her the title, " Mother of the World" in 1969.

Her works are still used in learning by students and also for understanding various issues that characterize the world today. She was born in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, to a religious family and both of her parents were sociologists. She was dropped out DePauw University in 1919 after one year of studying and then joined Barnard College where she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1923. She did her masters at Columbia University with the help of Professor Franz Boas and Dr. Ruth Benedict and later received her PhD from the same university in 1929. She was married three times; once to a fellow student, then to an anthropologist, Reo Fortune, who divorced her because she could not give birth to children then. Her third marriage to Gregory Bateson an anthropologist was the best according to her, and their daughter, Mary Catherine Bateson also decided to follow in their footsteps and became an anthropologist.

She closely worked with her husband and even went to Bali for field work with him, they were married for fifteen years then divorced and when questioned about this she said that was her best marriage and that, " American women are good mothers, but they make poor wives" (Lapsley

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1999). She defended women rights in her writings and also educated them on child rearing and many other family issues. She filmed the life of her daughter since childhood and observing her grow assisted in writing many of her publications. She was also recognized as a national and an international leader and at a time the president of the following major associations: American Anthropological Association, Anthropological Film Institute, Scientists Institute for Public Information, Society for Applied Anthropology and the American Association for Advancement of Science. Mead lectured at the New School and Columbia University 1954 to 1978, and she was the chair of the department of social sciences at Fordham University's and founded founding their anthropology department in 1968.

She also worked during the World War II as an executive secretary of the committee on food habits of the National Research Council and during this time she wrote she pamphlets for the Office of War Information. Mead is one of the major contributors in the sociology discipline she has done a lot of research and wrote about families, children and the male and female gender. Her works have been used in understanding problems and issues that face families and also gave an insight on how to solve them. She also has made it possible for sociologists to understand societies and how they influence an individual's life, not forgetting also her commitment to find solutions to the global social issues facing the world so as to make it a better place for people to live in. Her greatest works that made her known were the most controversial books " Coming of Age in Samoa" and " Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies". In the first book Mead wanted to understand

adolescence and determine whether it is the same for all individuals worldwide.

Her goal was to answer the question “ Are the disturbances which vex our adolescents due to the nature of adolescence itself or to the civilization? Under different conditions does adolescence present a different picture?” (Caton 1990). In her survey, she went to Samoa in a village of 600 people where she interview 68 adolescents between 9 and 20 years. She found out that adolescence for them was a peaceful change with no emotional or psychological misery, apprehension, or disorder as it happens in the United States. She also realized that the Samoa girls were better child raisers than Americans.

When she published the book, many westerners were offended by the findings and claimed them to be false; with others even going to an extent of going back to Samoa for more research and claim that some of her informants say that they were forced to give false answers. Her colleague, Franz Boas, defended the book and said that “ courtesy, modesty, good manners, conformity to definite ethical standards are universal, but what constitutes courtesy, modesty, very good manners, and definite ethical standards is not universal. It is instructive to know that standards differ in the most unexpected ways” (Caton 1990). The other book “ Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies” was about three societies in which she studied the nature of women and men.

One of the societies was Chambri, (Tchambuli) in Papua New Guinea where women are dominant that men The men ‘ primped’ and spent their time

decorating themselves while the women worked, did all the chores and were the leaders of the society without causing any problems completely opposite of what was happening in America then. In the other society Melanesia males were dominant and also some few women who mostly were witches hence making both genders equal and similar in temperament. The other community Arapesh was different; both genders were nonviolent and avoided war although sometimes they went into war with other communities when necessary. The society share land, brought up their children together and relationships among relatives were good. She therefore concluded that temperaments were communally instilled into people and they were not personal. Mead continued writing and some of her major works were: *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World*, after observing the behaviors of people in the South Pacific and the East Indies.

She said “ we know of no culture that has said, articulately, that there is no difference between men and women except in the way they contribute to the creation of the next generation.” Her other books include: *An Anthropologist at work* (1959), which was about her friend and colleague Ruth Benedict, The memoirs *Blackberry winter* (1972), and *A rap on race* (1971). Controversies have risen concerning her relationship with Benedict because some people have claimed that she was bisexual and her daughter confirmed that by saying that their relationship was a little sexually due to the letters they wrote to each other. In her life Mead did not state her sexual orientation although she had mentioned in her writings that an individual can decide to change it later in life. She died of cancer in 1978 and she was buried at Trinity Episcopal Church in Buckingham, Pennsylvania. Her greatest legacy is

the Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded by the former President, Jimmy Carter. “ Margaret Mead was both a student of civilization and an exemplary of it.

To a public of millions, she brought the central insight of cultural anthropology: that varying cultural patterns express an underlying human unity. She mastered her discipline, but she also transcended it. Intrepid, independent, plain spoken, fearless, she remains a model for the young and a teacher from whom all may learn.” (Bateson 1984).

Reference list

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