

Cultural Anthropology

9th Edition

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Chapter 1

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Anthropology and Human Diversity

Chapter Outline

- Specialization on Anthropology
- What We Learn from Anthropology:
Understanding Human Differences
- Anthropological Approaches to Culture

Goals of Anthropology

- Describe, analyze and explain different cultures.
- Show how groups adapted to their environments and gave meaning to their lives.
- Comprehend the entire human experience.

Holistic Approach

- Considers cultures, history, language and biology essential to a complete understanding of society.
- Separates anthropology from other disciplines, which focus on one factor, biology, psychology, physiology, or society, to explain human behavior.
- Anthropology seeks to understand human beings as whole organisms who adapt to their environments through a complex interaction of biology and culture.

Areas of Specialization

- Cultural Anthropology
- Linguistic Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Physical Anthropology
- Applied Anthropology

Cultural Anthropology

- The study of human behavior that is learned rather than genetically transmitted, and that is typical of groups of people.
- **Society** is the set of social relationships among people within a given geographical area.
- **Culture** is the learned behaviors and symbols that allow people to live in groups.

Examples of Cultural Anthropology

- Political and legal anthropology - concerned with issues of nationalism, citizenship, the state, colonialism, and globalism.
- Humanistic anthropology - focused on the personal, ethical, and political choices facing humans.
- Visual anthropology - the study of visual representation and the media.

Linguistic Anthropology

- Focus on understanding language and it's relation to culture.
 - Development of language
 - Variation of languages.
 - Relationship of language to culture.
 - How languages are learned.
- Historical linguists study how languages are related to each other.

Archaeology

- Study of past cultures through their material remains.
- **Prehistoric** societies are those with no usable written records.
 - **Artifact** - A material remain of a past culture.
 - Archaeologists interpret artifact's function by precise position in which it was found.
 - **Features** are artifacts that cannot easily be moved, such as ruins of buildings, burials, and fire pits.

Question

- Examples of artifacts include all **except** which one of the following?
 - a) holiday wreath
 - b) stone axe
 - c) rock painting
 - d) wild raspberries
 - e) tortilla

Answer: d

- Examples of artifacts include holiday wreath, stone axe, rock painting and tortilla. **Wild raspberries are not artifacts.**

Archaeology: Specialties

- **Urban archaeology**
Archaeological investigation of current-day cities.
- **Cultural resource management**
Protection and management of archeological, archival, and architectural resources.

Physical Anthropology

Study humans from a biological perspective.

- **Paleoanthropology:** Biological processes of human adaptation.
- **Human variation:** Physiological differences among modern humans.
- **Primatology:** Study of apes for clues about the human species.

Applied Anthropology

- Analyze social, political and economic problems and develop solutions.
- Example: Cultural anthropologists have been instrumental in promoting the welfare of tribal and indigenous peoples.

Indigenous People

- Groups of people who have occupied a region for a long time and are recognized by other groups as original (or very ancient) inhabitants.
 - They are often minorities with little influence in the government of the nation-state that controls their land.

Medical Anthropology

- Draws upon social, cultural, biological, and linguistic anthropology to better understand those factors that influence health and well-being.
- It is concerned with the experience of disease as well as its distribution, prevention, and treatment.

Forensic Anthropology

- Study and identification of skeletized or badly decomposed human remains.

Question

- A museum exhibit of an early one-room school in the Midwestern U.S. is being planned. Which subfield(s) of anthropology would be likely to carry out the research and interpretation of surveyor's maps, diaries, textbooks, journals, and other historic artifacts, as well as excavation of the original site?
 - a) paleontologist and archaeologist
 - b) archaeologist
 - c) cultural anthropologist and archaeologist
 - d) forensic anthropologist and cultural anthropologist
 - e) biological anthropologist

Answer: b

- A museum exhibit of an early one-room school in the Midwestern U.S. is being planned. An **archaeologist** would be likely to carry out the research and interpretation of surveyor's maps, diaries, textbooks, journals, and other historic artifacts, as well as excavation of the original site?

Ethnocentrism

- Belief that one's culture is better than all other cultures.
- Measures other cultures by the degree to which they live up to one's own cultural standards.

Ethnocentrism

- When a culture loses value for its people, they may experience **anomie**, a condition where social and moral norms are absent or confused.
- Racism is the belief that some human populations are superior to others because of inherited, genetically transmitted characteristics.

Question

- Some positive aspects of the tendency for members of societies to be ethnocentric would include which one of the following?
 - a) Ethnocentrism often supports existing social inequality, especially in multicultural societies.
 - b) Ethnocentrism may reinforce group solidarity and helps perpetuate cultural values.
 - c) Ethnocentrism is often associated with racism.
 - d) Ethnocentrism in technologically advanced societies reinforces people's ideas about their own superiority and often, military strength.

Answer: b

- Some positive aspects of the tendency for members of societies to be ethnocentric would include: **Ethnocentrism may reinforce group solidarity and helps perpetuate cultural values.**

Biological Diversity

- Wide diversity in human shapes and colors, low levels of skeletal and blood type diversity.
- People from the same region tend to share more traits than they do with people from distant lands.
- Biopsychological Equality - The fact that all human groups have the same biological and mental capabilities.

Racial Classification

- Race is socially constructed.
- No group of humans is biologically different from another.
- Humans have an equal capacity for culture.

Racism

- The idea that characteristics are caused by racial inheritance.
- Differences among human groups are the result of culture.
- Humans belong to the same species with the same features essential to life.

Racialism

- Ideology that claims there are biologically fixed races with different moral, intellectual, and physical characteristics that determine individual aptitudes and that such races can be ranked on a single hierarchy.

Cultural Relativism

- Understanding values and customs in terms of the culture of which they are a part.

Emic and Etic Views of Culture

- Emic: Describes the organization and meaning a culture's practices have for its members.
- Etic: Tries to determine the causes of particular cultural patterns that may be beyond the awareness of the culture being studied.

Quick Quiz



1. Which of the following does **not** characterize the anthropological approach to the study of human societies and their cultural traditions?
 - a) culturally relativistic
 - b) Holistic
 - c) Ethnocentric
 - d) Comparative
 - e) consideration of evolutionary and historical context

Answer: c

- The **ethnocentric** approach does **not** characterize the anthropological approach to the study of human societies and their cultural traditions.

2. Which of the following is **not** a topic with which present-day biological (physical) anthropologists are engaged?
- a) primate physiology, morphology, and behavior
 - b) human variation
 - c) interaction between biological and cultural factors in evolution
 - d) establishing fixed categories of "race"
 - e) human origins

Answer: d

- **Establishing fixed categories of "race"** is not a topic with which present-day biological (physical) anthropologists are engaged.

3. The study of how people explain the causes of ill health, along with the meanings they attach to it, is an important part of the subspecialty known as
 - a) biological anthropology.
 - b) medical anthropology.
 - c) paleoanthropology.
 - d) forensic anthropology.
 - e) Cultural Resource Management (CRM).

Answer: b

- The study of how people explain the causes of ill health, along with the meanings they attach to it, is an important part of the subspecialty known as **medical anthropology**.