

Unit 02 L51 The Anthropology Approach

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- Anthropology
 - Anthropology is the study of the evolution of Homo sapiens, and the impact of human origin, social and cultural upbringings on human cognition and behaviour.
 - It draws and builds upon knowledge from the social science, humanities and the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology, earth science and astronomy).
- Anthropology Approach to Cognition
 - We will discuss the following three aspects of study on cognition.
 - Comparative Cognition
 - Evolutionary Psychology
 - Behavioral Economics
- Comparative Cognition
 - The cross-species study of cognitive ability.
 - Each species has adapted to its ecological niche.
- Animal Memory
 - Object permanence is the ability to know that an object exists even though it cannot be seen.
 - The Hawaiian honeycreeper bird can remember which flowers it has already fed from (Kamil, 1978)
 - The nutcracker bird can store up to 33000 pine nuts in 6000 different sites in the summer and remember them when it comes back in winter and spring.
- Animal Problem Solving
 - Kohler's chimps and insight learning.
 - Transitive inference Involves knowing that if A is bigger than B and B is bigger than C, then A is bigger than C.
 - Squirrel monkeys can deduce which colored box contains a peanut after being trained with different color containers.
- Comparative Neuroscience
 - Involves comparing the brains of different animal species.
 - We must adjust for body size. The cephalization index does this.
 - But factors other than intelligence influence brain size.
- The Cephalization Index
 - Cephalization index proportion of brain size w.r.t. body size.
 - Should ideally consider only the cognitive brain size.
 - Also, not every part of a brain "does" cognition
 - The hindbrain mostly regulates basic physiological function. The cortex, especially the neocortex is the part most closely linked to cognition.