

HUM203  
Introduction to Social Anthropology Lecture Notes

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# Chapter 1

## What is Anthropology

Anthropology is the study of humankind everywhere throughout time, stemming from Anthro (human) + logos (science of). In a world where most people live in multicultural and multiethnic states, importance of anthropology has increased.

Anthropology asks questions like:

1. Why are humans and cultures similar? (such as most cultures having marriage rituals)
2. Why are humans and cultures different? (such as differences between these rituals)
3. How does societies and cultures change, evolve and adopt.

### 1.1 Fields of Anthropology

Anthropology looks at the human experience in a broad manner, encompassing different systems of humanity with its psychological, cultural, social, biological and physical aspects. It is divided into fields such as:

- Cultural Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Linguistic Anthropology
- Biological Anthropology

#### 1.1.1 Physical (Biological) Anthropology

The systemic study of humans as biological organisms.

**Primatology**

Study of non-human primates. From lemurs to gorillas. They study these animals in the wild and in captivity. Primatologists analyse how animals spend their time, how they behave.

Primatologists are concerned about extinction.

**Paleoanthropology**

Study of human evolution, including hominids.

**Contemporary Human Genetic Field**

They study the contemporary human genetics and biological makeup across different cultures and population groups.

**1.1.2 Archaeology**

The study of past human cultures through their material remains. It has two different subfields, pre-historic and historic archeologists. Divided by the time the writing started. The pre-historical archeologists generally define themselves with broad geographic zones.

Archeology may also be subdivided with respect to the specific field they research, such as industrial archeology or such as underwater archeology.

**1.1.3 Linguistic Anthropology**

The study of human languages, they look at their structure, history and relation to social and cultural contexts, as well its contemporary change. Language is the primary way humans communicate with each other, forming a basis of human cultures.

**1.1.4 Cultural Anthropology**

The study of customary patterns, thought and feelings, it focus on humans as culture-producing and culture-reproducing creatures. Cultural anthropologists spent time in the culture they research as field work, called *Participant Observation*(<sup>?</sup><sup>\*</sup>).

## Chapter 2

# Anthropological Approaches - October 26, 2020

### 2.1 Anthropological Perspectives

Anthropology is differentiated from other fields by its perspectives.

#### 2.1.1 Holistic Perspective

Holistic approach involves the analysis of biological environmental, psychological, economic, historical, social and cultural conditions of humanity. The holistic perspective, fundamentally states that all aspects of culture can only be understood together. The holistic perspective says one must look for interconnections.

#### 2.1.2 Comparative Perspective

Valid hypotheses and theories about humanity be tested with information from a wide range of cultures. This all-encompassing approach also guard against **culture-bound** theories.

#### 2.1.3 Relativistic Perspective

The notation that one should not judge the behaviour of other peoples using their own culture.

**Ethnocentrism** is the belief that the moral standards manners, attitudes, and so forth of ones own culture are superior to those of other cultures.

**Cultural relativism** means that no culture, taken as a whole, is inherently superior or inferior to any other.

Cultural relativism is differentiated to **methodological relativism** versus **moral/absolute relativism**. Moral relativism implies that there are no absolute, universal standards by which to evaluate actions in terms such as right and wrong or good and bad.

Methodological Relativism is a methodological principle that refers to an outlook that is essential for maximum objectivity and understanding when studying a people whose way of life differs from their own.

## Chapter 3

# Culture - November 9, 2020

### 3.1 the Concept of Culture

Concept of culture arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a concept, Culture was defined as a complex whole that passed not biologically.

Culture does not need to be taught consciously. It is a learned and shared ideas and behaviour. It is made, artificial. Culture is the predominant feature differentiating human from each other.

**Enculturation** Transmission of the cultural knowledge to the next generation.

**Culture Shock** is the psychological disorientation experienced when attempting to operate in a radically different cultural environment.

Complex societies tend to contain *sub-cultural groups*. These subcultural groups are considered subsets of the wider culture, retaining certain features from the national culture, but differ in some other ways. These societies consisting of numerous subcultures are called *pluralistic societies*.

Cultures differ in two predominant ways. *the ways of thinking* and *the ways of behaviour*. Thinking is their perception of the world, what is going on inside their head, while behaviour is the way they commonly act.

**Cultural Knowledge** All the information the children learn and adults apply, this is socially learned during **enculturation**.

### 3.2 Cultural Knowledge

**Norm** Certain standards of behaviour people tend to follow and others judge their peers on. When someone does not follow norm repeatedly,

they will receive a negative reaction.

**Values** People's beliefs about the way of life that is desirable for themselves and their society. They affect the motivations of people. They may originate from family, religion or numerous other sources.

**Symbols** An object or action with conventional meanings.

**Constructions** The way a culture divides the reality into categories. Different cultures may define food differently.

**Worldviews** The way people interpret events, reality, their own image.

Culture provides the knowledge to adapt to the natural environment. It acts as the basis for human social life. It provides readily established norms, values, etc. It provides mental concepts and acts as a lens on how one perceives the world.

### 3.3 Language and Culture

Linguistic Anthropologists investigate the connection between language and culture. Human ability to speak started with the evolution of a gene called FOXP2.

Evolution of language allowed the domination of the homo family as it allowed a higher ability to adapt.

Culture is largely considered hard to understand without understanding a culture's language first.

Cultural contexts affect language, it is called the *Cultural Emphasis of Knowledge*. This concept explains why some familiar words do not exist in some languages but exist in others.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that the language of a culture influences the view of reality. [Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is considered defunct in modern times, but it did give us the *Arrival* (short story and movie), so I say it's worth it.] It states that the *linguistic difference is the reason for cultural difference*. [Which is, like, absurd, Aztecs didn't sacrifice people because chicken and human sounded the same in Aztec language.]