



Theory and Evidence in Cultural Anthropology

Chapter 3

Anthropological Theory

- Hypothesis:
 - (Ember)...predictions of what might be found.
 - ...things or quantities that vary.
 - ...an *empirically testable statement* of relation between two or more variables.
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Anthropological Theory

- Operational Definition
 - How would you operationally define the statement (Ember) -... (Whiting) societies with a low protein diet would have a long postpartum sex taboo.
 - Amount of protein in the diet (Text pg.39)
 - Length of postpartum sex taboo
 - Chagnon Article -
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Anthropological Theory

- Theory:
 - ...explanations of laws and statistical associations.
 - ...a comprehensive explanation of observed relationships between variables.
 - Levels of Theories-
 - Grand, Local, Middle Range
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Anthropological Theories (Grand)

- Evolutionism
 - Diffusionism
 - American Historicism
 - Functionalism
 - Structural Functionalism
 - Psychological Anthropology
 - Neoevolutionism
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Anthropological Theories

- French Structuralism
 - Ethnoscience
 - Cultural Materialism
 - Interpretive Anthropology
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Evolutionism

- Edward B. Taylor & Lewis Henry Morgan:
 - ...all societies pass through a series of stages.
 - Edward B. Taylor- Posited that all cultures evolve from simple to more complex forms.
 - **Savagery**
 - **Barbarism**
 - **Civilization**
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Evolutionism

- Lewis Henry Morgan:
 - **Lower savagery**- Earliest forms of humanity subsisting on fruits and nuts.
 - **Middle savagery**- Discovery of fishing technology and use of fire.
 - **Upper savagery**-Invention of the bow and arrow.
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Evolutionism

- Lewis Henry Morgan:
 - **Lower barbarism**- Began with the art of pottery making.
 - **Middle barbarism**- Began with the domestication of plants and animals (OW), and irrigation cultivation in the New World.
 - **Upper barbarism**- Smelting of iron/iron tools.
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Evolutionism

- Lewis Henry Morgan:
 - **Civilization**- Began with the invention of the phonetic alphabet and writing.
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Diffusionism

- Grafton Elliot Smith/W.J. Perry:
 - **English School-**
 - ...held that all culture traits found anywhere in the world were first invented in Egypt and subsequently spread to other parts of the world.
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Diffusionism

- Fritz Graebner/Wilhelm Schmidt:
 - **German School-**
 - ...suggested that a small number of different cultural complexes called culture circles, (Kulturkreise), had served as sources of cultural diffusion.
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Methods in Research

- **Preparing for fieldwork:**
 - Obtain funding
 - Social Science Research Council
 - National Science Foundation (Scientific Merit)
 - Health Precaution
 - Inoculation against major diseases in host country.
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Methods in Research

- Permission/clearance from host government (Visa)
 - Not be an embarrassment, politically sensitive
 - Language Proficiency
 - Should learn language (when possible) before leaving
 - Personal Business/Details
 - Insurance policy, home, family
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Data Gathering Techniques

- Participant Observation-
 - (The technique which is used most extensively in Anthropology)
 - ...living among the people being studied- observing, questioning, and taking part in the important events of the group.
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Participant Observation

- Problems with Participant Observation:
 - The very nature of participant observation precludes a large sample size.
 - Hard to code and categorize. (HRAF)
 - Problems in recording.
 - The Obtrusive Effect- you thrust yourself into the culture-change what is taking place.
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Types of Data Gathered

- **Census Taking:**
 - Population, age, sex, marital status, household composition, age/sex relationships
 - **Mapping:**
 - Locate people, material culture, (villages, fields, pasture, livestock), environmental features, (rivers, lakes, mountains)
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Types of Data Gathered

- **Document Analysis:**
 - Public records, news papers, diaries, missionaries, scientific publications.
 - **Genealogies:**
 - Writing down relatives of informants, kinship relationships, how they are referred to, addressed and treated.
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Types of Data Gathered

- *Photographic Data:*
 - **Proxemic Analysis-**
 - ...how people in different cultures distance themselves from one another in normal interaction.
 - **Event Analysis-**
 - ...documenting an event as it takes place.
(Fight, puberty rite, cooking, marriage, etc)
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Narrative Ethnography

- Recent trend in ethnographic fieldwork-
 - ***Narrative Ethnography-***
 - ...focuses on the interaction between the anthropologist and the informants.
 - Into The Heart – Kenneth Good
 - Spirit Of The Rainforest – Mark Ritchie
 - Savages – Joe Kane
 - Tales Of A Shaman's Apprentice – Mark Plotkin
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