Review article

ANTHROPOLOGY- AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Anthropology is a branch of science that studies human behavior, biology, cultures, communities, and linguistics in the present and past, including past human species. Cultural anthropology explores cultural meaning, including norms and values, while social anthropology studies patterns of behavior. Linguistic anthropology is the study of how language affects social behavior. Biological or physical anthropology is the study of humans' biological development. Archaeological anthropology, also known as 'past anthropology,' is the study of human activities via the examination of physical evidence.

Key Words: Anthropology, Archeology, Cultural anthropology, social anthropology, linguistic, biological anthropology

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INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is the study of the past and present biological and cultural variation within the human species. It is Integrated, scientific, and holistic study of human cultural and biological variation. **Distinctive Way of Studying Humans:** Holistic-Emphasizes the functional relation between parts and the whole. No single aspect of culture can be understood alone. Integration of all that is known about humans and their activities. **Past, Present, Language =Holism= Culture, Genetics, Anatomy.**

Comparative-Anthropology also includes the cross-cultural & relativistic perspective to comparison, Compare patterns of variation, Consideration of similarities & differences.

Field-based- The Cultural Implications of International Migration in the Light of Fieldwork Evidence, Data collection; direct contact.

Evolutionary-Cultural evolution – 19th century, considered an outgrowth of Darwinian evolution. Over time, cultural change occurs as a result of humans adapting to some non-cultural stimulus. Cultural evolution as a theory in anthropology

was developed in the 19th century, and it was an outgrowth of

Darwinian evolution. Cultural evolution presumes that over time, cultural change such as the rise of social inequalities or emergence of agriculture occurs as a result of humans adapting to some non-cultural stimulus, such as climate change or population growth. However, unlike Darwinian evolution, cultural evolution was considered directional, that is, as human populations transform themselves, their culture becomes progressively complex.

SUBFIELDS OF ANTHROPOLOGY- Biological (Physical) Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology, Linguistic Anthropology, Archaeology. Biological and cultural factors influence the world around us. Set of learned behavior and ideas that human beings acquire as members of a society. Humans are biocultural organisms. Triangle of Adaptation= Environment = Biology = Culture.

Biological Anthropology:

Biological anthropology is the subfield of anthropology concerned with humans as a biological species. As such, it is the subfield most closely related to the natural sciences. **Biological anthropology is a study of research to understand both human evolution and modern human variation**. The investigation of human evolution presents one of the most tantalizing areas of anthropological study. Much of the evidence for human origins consists of **fossils**, the **fragmentary remains of bones and living materials** preserved. **The study of human evolution through analysis of fossils is called paleoanthropology**. Paleoanthropologists use a variety of scientific techniques to date, classify, and compare fossilized bones to determine the links between modern humans and their biological ancestors. Paleoanthropologists may work closely with archaeologists when studying ancient tools and activity areas to learn about the behavior of early human ancestors.

Biological anthropology explores human evolution through **primatology**, the study of primates. **Primates** are a **diverse order of mammals** that includes humans, as well as other species such as chimpanzees, gorillas, gibbons, and orangutans that share an evolutionary history and, therefore, have many physical characteristics in common with us. Many primatologists observe nonhuman primates in their natural habitats to ascertain the similarities and differences between these other primates and humans. These observations of living primates provide insight into the behaviors of early human ancestors.

Biological anthropology also focus research on the range of physical variation within and among modern human populations

The study of human variation by measuring physical characteristics—such as body size, variation in blood types, or differences in skin color—or genetic traits. It aims at explaining why such variation occurs, as well as documenting the differences in human populations. Skeletal structure is also the focus of anthropological research.

Human osteology is the particular area of specialization within biological anthropology dealing with the study of the human skeleton. Skeletal remains are crucial in the study of human evolution, pre- historic societies, and individual life histories. For example, osteological studies can determine the

social and gender inequalities, which impact diet and living conditions, traces of which are preserved in an individual's bones. Such studies have wide-ranging applications, from the identification of murder victims from fragmentary skeletal remains to the design of ergonomic airplane cockpits. Biological anthropology also focuses in evaluating how disparate physical characteristics reflect evolutionary adaptations to different environmental conditions, thus shedding light on why human populations vary.

An increasingly important area of research within biological anthropology is genetics, the study of the biological "blue- prints" that dictate the inheritance of physical characteristics. Genetic research examines a wide variety of questions. It has, for instance, been important in identifying the genetic sources of some diseases, such as sickle cell anemia, cystic fibrosis, and Tay-Sachs disease. Genetic research has also provided important clues into human origins. Through the study of the genetic makeup of modern humans, biological anthropologists have calculated the genetic distance among modern humans, thus providing a means of inferring rates of evolution and the classifying species on the basis of fragmentary fossil finds.

Cultural Anthropology:

Cultural anthropology is the subfield of anthropology that examines contemporary societies and cultures throughout the world. Cultural anthropologists do research the world over, from tropical rainforests to the Arctic, from remote farming villages to urban centers. The first professional cultural anthropologists focused on non-Western cultures in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands and on the Native American populations in the United States. Today, however, many cultural anthropologists have turned to research on their own societies in order to gain a better understanding of their institutions and cultural values.

Cultural anthropologists (sometimes the terms *sociocultural anthropologist* and *ethnographer* are used interchangeably with *cultural anthropologist*) use a unique research strategy in conducting their fieldwork in different settings.

Atran's broadly interdisciplinary scientific studies on human reasoning processes and cultural management of the environment, and on religion and terrorism, have been featured around the world in science publications, Atran has teamed up with psychologists and political scientists, including Douglas Medin and Robert Axelrod, to experiment extensively on the ways scientists and lay people categorize and reason about nature, on the cognitive and evolutionary psychology of religion, and on the role of sacred values in political and cultural conflict.

Participant observation - cultural anthropologists learn the language and culture of the group being studied by participating in the group's daily activities. Through this intensive participation, they become deeply familiar with the group and can understand and explain the society and culture of the group as insiders. The results of the fieldwork of the cultural anthropologist are written up as an **ethnography** a description of a society. A typical ethnography reports on the environmental setting, economic patterns, social organization, political system, and religious rituals and beliefs of the society under study. This description is based on what anthropologists call *ethnographic data*. The gathering of ethnographic data in a systematic manner is the specific research goal of the cultural anthropologist. Technically, **ethnology** refers to anthropologists who focus on the cross-cultural aspects of the various ethnographic studies done by the cultural anthropologists. Ethnologists analyze the data that are produced by the individual ethnographic studies to produce cross-cultural generalizations about humanity and cultures. Many cultural anthropologists use ethnological methods to compare their research from their own ethno- graphic fieldwork with the research findings from other societies throughout the world.

Linguistic Anthropology:

Linguistics, the study of language, has a long history that dove tails with the discipline of philosophy, but is also one of the integral subfields of anthropology. **Linguistic anthropology** focuses on the relationship between language and culture, how language is used within society, and how the human brain acquires and uses language. Linguistic anthropologists seek to discover the ways in which languages are different from one another, as well as how they are similar. Two wide-ranging areas of research in linguistic anthropology are structural linguistics and historical linguistics.

Structural linguistics explores how language works. Structural linguists compare grammatical patterns or other

linguistic elements to learn how contemporary languages mirror and differ from one another. Structural linguistics has also uncovered some intriguing relationships between language and thought patterns among different groups of people.

Linguistic anthropologists also examine the connections between language and social behavior in different cultures. This specialty is called **sociolinguistics**. Sociolinguists are interested both in how language is used to define social groups and in how belonging to a particular group leads to specialized kinds of language. Another area of research that has interested linguistic anthropologists is historical linguistics. Historical linguistics concentrates on the comparison and classification of different languages to discern the historical links among them. By examining and analyzing grammatical structures and sounds of languages, researchers are able to discover rules for how languages change over time, as well as which languages are related to one another historically. This type of historical linguistic research is particularly useful in tracing the migration routes of various societies through time by offering multiple lines of evidence— archaeological, paleo anthropological, and linguistic. For example, through historical linguistic research, anthropologists have corroborated the Asian origins of the Native American populations.

Archaeology:

Archaeology, the branch of anthropology that examines the material traces of past societies, informs us about the culture of those societies—the shared way of life of a group of people that includes their values, beliefs, and norms. **Artifacts**, the material products of former societies, provide clues to the past. Some archaeological sites reveal spectacular jewelry like that found by the film character Indiana Jones or in the treasures of a pharaoh's tomb. Most artifacts, however, are not so spectacular. Despite the popular image of archaeology as an adventurous, even romantic pursuit, it usually consists of methodical, time- consuming, and—sometimes—somewhat tedious research. Archaeologists often spend hours sorting through ancient trash piles, to discover how members of past societies ate their meals, what tools they used, and what beliefs gave meaning to their lives. They collect and analyze the broken fragments of pottery, stone, glass, and other materials. It may take years to fully complete the study of an archaeological excavation. Unlike fictional archaeologists, who experience glorified adventures, real-world archaeologists thrive on the challenges of scientific research that enlarge our understanding of the past. While excavation, or "scientific digging," and fieldwork remain the key means of gathering archaeological data, a host of new techniques are available to help archaeologists locate and study archaeological sites. One innovative approach commonly used in archaeology employs GIS (geographic information systems), a tool that is also increasingly used by geologists, geographers, and other scientists. Archaeologists can integrate satellite data to plot the locations of ancient settlements, transportation routes, and even the distribution of individual objects, allowing them to study the patterns and changes

Archaeologists have examined sites the world over, from ancient campsites to modern landfills. Some archaeologists investigate past societies whose history is primarily told by the archaeological record. Known as prehistoric archaeologists, they study the artifacts of groups such as the ancient inhabitants of Europe and the first human settlers of the Americas. Because these researchers have no written documents or oral traditions to help interpret the sites they examine and the artifacts they recover, the archaeological record provides the primary source of information for their interpretations of the past. Historical archaeologists, on the other hand, draw on documentary records and oral traditions to investigate the societies of the more recent past. Some historical archaeologists have probed the remains of plantations in the southern United States to gain an understanding of the lifestyles of enslaved Africans and slave owners during the nineteenth century. Other archaeologists, called classical archaeologists, con- duct research on ancient civilizations such as in Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Ethno archaeologists study the material artifacts of the past along with the observation of modern peoples who have knowledge of the use and symbolic meaning of those artifacts.

There are many more areas of specialization within archaeology that reflect the geographic area, topic, or time period on which the archaeologist works.

Applied Anthropology:

The four subfields of anthropology (biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology) are well established. However, anthropologists also recognize a fifth subfield. **Applied anthropology** is the

use of anthropological data from the other subfields to address modern problems and concerns, ranging from interventions in the treatment of disease to the management of cultural resources, and assisting the police in murder investigations. Anthropologists have played an increasing role in creating government policies and legislation, the planning of development projects, and the implementation of marketing strategies. Although anthropologists are typically trained in one of the major subfields, an increasing number find employment outside of universities and museums. Although many anthropologists see at least some aspects of their work as applied, it is the application of anthropological data that is the central part of some researchers' careers. Indeed, approximately half of the people with doctorates in anthropology currently find careers outside of academic institutions

Conclusion:

Anthropology is the study of how humans have been different biologically, physically, socially, and culturally over time and space. *It i*s a broad, diverse field of study that is usually divided into multiple subfields of study and research that specialize in different areas. Archaeology is a major subfield of anthropology. It involves the study of human culture by recovering artifacts of past peoples. Cultural anthropology is the study of humanity's different cultures. This subfield can overlap with archaeology and often involves information discovered from it. But where archaeology is usually concerned with cultures of the past, Physical or biological anthropology, focuses on how humans have physically and biological.

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