

Final Project Part A

ATH 101

Student Name

SNHU

## **I. Defining Anthropology**

Anthropology is the study of humans and their non-human primate relatives across the world and through time. Anthropology is divided into four subfields, each with its own unique focus on an aspect of the human condition. An archaeologist, for example, excavates and examines artifacts created and used by people in the past in order to learn about culture and behavior of people in the past. A fifth, unofficial subfield is applied or practicing anthropology. While each subfield considers different aspects of the human condition, the field of anthropology is holistic. A holistic perspective means that human aspects, such as culture or language, cannot be viewed separately from the whole and looks for the interconnections that contribute to an individual's or a group's behavior.

## **II. Anthropological Perspective**

An anthropological perspective can be useful in any study but particularly useful during a crisis. Anthropology considers various aspects that include the environmental, historical, and cultural ramifications of a crisis.

### **A. Global Cultural Crises**

An anthropological perspective can be useful during a global crisis, such as terrorism or refugees from war, because it can help us understand the perspectives and needs of all parties involved in the situation. For example, anthropologists conducted ethnographic work to try to better understand the terrorist mindset after terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015. Their research results helped governmental organizations better target their law enforcement efforts and helped the public to understand that not all people who identify as Muslim support terrorist ideals (Reardon, 2015).

### **B. Biological Crises**

An anthropological perspective would be useful in a biological crisis such as a disease epidemic or biological terrorism because anthropologists can offer broad comparative perspectives on human biological responses and adaptations to disease. For example, anthropologist Sharon DeWitte has studied skeletons from the 1300s to try to determine how the presence or absence of the plague affected the biological aspects of populations (University of South Carolina, 2012). Although this crisis occurred in the distant past, understanding how diseases affected past populations will help us understand disease patterns in the present. Another example includes how forensic anthropologists have helped authorities match skeletons to names from times of conflict (Zucchino, 2011).

### **C. Environmental Crises**

An anthropological perspective can be useful in relation to environmental crises, such as floods, droughts, or famines. They may be able to determine patterns that can predict disasters or conduct research on how historical populations dealt with similar issues (Ember, Ember, & Peregrine, 2015). They can also help to uncover aspects of a situation that are not obvious on the surface. For example, according to Dirks (1993), while drought may in part cause a famine, a group not having food to eat may be linked to trade or rights to land use.

## **III. Historical Perspective**

A. Anthropology is an important discipline in the social sciences and to science in general. An important contribution of anthropology that has legitimized the field is the understanding that there is no biological basis for race. Franz Boas argued in the early twentieth century that many attributes scientists contributed to biological race were instead cultural or social traits (Ember, Ember, & Peregrine, 2015). Modern biological anthropologists have proven genetically and biologically that categorizing people into races according to their appearances, as

society does, is not realistic or accurate. As DeSilva (2016) notes, there is only one race associated with our species: the human race.

B. Individuals are a product of their cultural past but can also be impacted by the cultural present. Culture is constantly changing, and cultures may change from one generation to another. For example, in the past married women in the United States usually did not go to college or enter the workforce, but instead had children and worked within the home. Today, some married women still observe this past model of having children and working within the home however, many married women go to college or work full-time outside the home. Additionally, many married women do not have children.

C. Individuals are a product of their familial past. In families, parents pass down traditions to their children through enculturation. Religious traditions, ethnic traditions, language, celebrations, and appropriate social behaviors are concepts children learn from their parents. For example, while Christmas is a widely celebrated holiday, individual families will have their own, unique traditions for celebrating the holiday within their American home. Some American families may have large dinners with extended family or friends and exchange presents, while Christian American families may read from the Bible or attend church and some American families may not observe the Christmas holiday at all.

D. Individuals are a product of their regional pasts to some extent. Every region within the United States has certain cultural values and norms that are unique to that region. Even if someone moves away from their region of birth at some point in their lives, they will carry some of the values and norms they were raised with wherever they go. For example, many people who are raised in rural areas may value quiet, wide-open spaces, and a slower pace of life. This makes it hard – sometimes impossible – for them to successfully adapt to living in a city where it can be

noisy, fast-paced, and individuals can feel very 'small' due to high infrastructure and population density.

## References

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