

Anthropological Explanations of Social Change

HSB 4UI

Chard

1. focus is on cultures-regard these as constantly changing organisms (a whole with interdependent parts)
2. cultures change gradually, not suddenly, unless they are destroyed by another culture
3. Anthropologists tend to see change as caused by a limited number of factors (and try to figure out which is the most significant) such as leadership, shifts in values and norms, technological change, and changes to the environment in a given culture

Anthropologists distinguish between:

Developed Countries 30 industrialized countries exist in the world today

Developing Countries the remaining 180 nations that have little or no industry, where most of the population survives through farming
low incomes and lack of infrastructure (hospitals, transportation links) also exist

- the gap in incomes, education levels and life expectancy between developed and developing nations has increased in the past 50 years
- Anthropologists want to know why this is the case and how aid from developed to developing countries is affecting the situation
- they also want to know if change is always desirable in developing countries

Sources of Cultural Change

1. Invention new products, ideas, social patterns
eg. I-Pod is changing the way we listen to music
2. Discovery finding something previously unknown in a culture
eg. life on Mars
3. Diffusion the spreading of ideas, methods and tools from one culture to another
eg. importing of herbal remedies and acupuncture from East to West has changes how we view medicine (more holistic)

enculturation is the process by which members of a culture learn and internalize shared values, ideas and beliefs

Culture is made up of four interdependent parts. By examining these, we can seek answers to social change:

1. Physical Environment can influence the culture
eg. Canadian winter
2. Level of Technology determines how receptive the culture is to change
eg. crowded highways leads to desire for carpool lanes
3. Social Organization how the culture is organized, how kinship is organized, how labour is divided and allocated
eg. gum in Singapore
4. Systems of Symbols all cultures have symbols
eg. brand names clothes, trendy music, trendy hairstyles