<u>**Anthropology: Studying Human Diversity Notes**</u>

(1/8/16) - *The Celebration of Diversity*

Theory:

- Can move from the particular to the general – **induction** – associated with a **empiricism** (empirical analysis, based on experience/observation). In **induction**, the evidence is the starting point for the development of the theory
- Can also move from the general to the particular – starts with a theory, then goes on to look for evidence to support it. **Deduction**

The social sciences tend to work through theories of induction more than deduction. Our ability to know more about the world and find things about comes from our ability to **classify** and **categorize** the world into distinct objects and relations.

Different languages represent different methods of classification used by different cultures, and all languages have their own specific methods of classification. Classifications do not always translate exactly – for example there are different words for a younger or older sibling in Nepali, where in English there is just 'brother' and 'sister'.
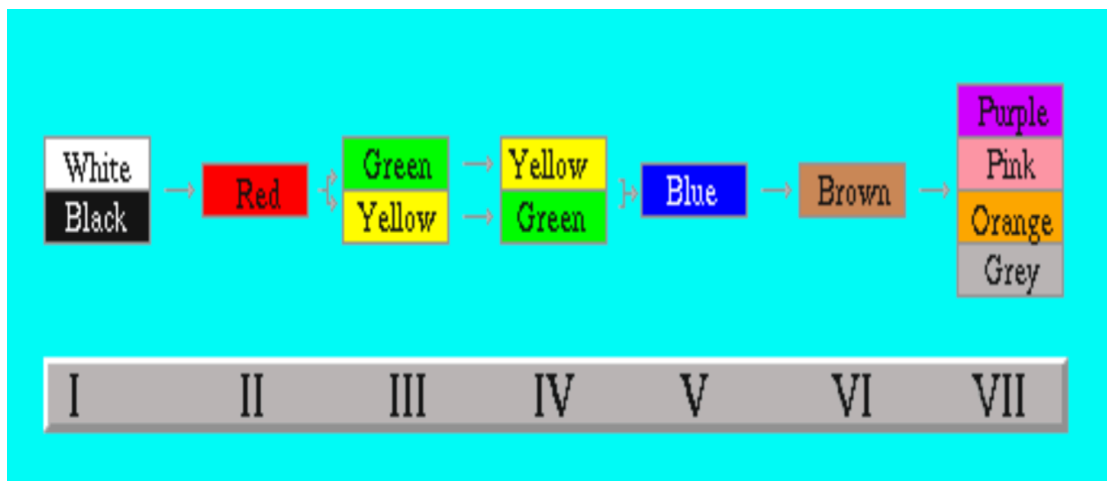
Socially-constructed nature of classification – the different way people see the world and put things into categories.

The divisions that people put between different things are often quite arbitrary (**random**), but classification makes them feel real. E.g. the distinction between the body and the mind.

The world is formed in terms of the ideas constructed by the methods we use to classify stuff.

Berlin & Kay 1969 – *Basic Colour Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*.

Berlin & Kay proposed that the more evolved a language is, the more basic colour terms it would have, as well as the fact that the evolution of colour terms happened chronologically. This means that if a colour term was present in a language, all terms found at previous stages would also be present.

They also found that the sequence of colour terms developed in the same order: all languages had terms for **white** and **black** (dark and light, etc.), then all Stage 2 languages had **red**… all the way until Stage 8 languages such as English which has 11 basic colours.

WHR Rivers – *life/death in the Solomon Islands* – ***tao/mate***

People whose hearts had stopped, were very old and not functioning, or were socio-economically useless, were buried alive as they were seen as 'dead'.

This is similar to the way in which people of Death Row are effectively 'dead' – they have no part in the general social world, they contribute nothing to society, they are simply waiting to die. The same applies to people who are brain dead and kept alive by machines – argument for **euthanasia**.

Classifying material artifacts and people are often similar. Displays in museums do not appear as the objects would appear naturally, they are constructed in a certain way to make us think something about them.

There are also different ways to classify families – e.g. the Navaho Indians had very different family structures to the typical 'nuclear' family of the modern West.

Land boundaries are also classified arbitrarily or politically, which often results in ethnic groups being split up or grouped together – which can cause tensions. E.g. in Africa European colonists divided up areas and created boundaries based on their claims, but ignored the long-running historical boundaries designated by the original inhabitants. This put groups who had been at war for centuries together and called them all 'Ethiopian' or 'Sudanese' and expected them to act as one people.

Food Classification Systems

- Sweet vs. sour vs. savoury
- We are socialized to see certain things as edible or inedible, sweet or savoury, etc., and vary greatly between cultures
- Classification is totally arbitrary – e.g. it is ok to eat dirt and poo until you are a toddler, then it is considered an eating disorder
- This is different in other cultures, for example Ghana is famous for its edible clay, which is sold all over West Africa and even in the U.S. – particularly in Georgia

Society

"When we use the term society, we are talking about how a group of people are related to one another in various institutionalized ways. Society, then is a ***network of relationships***." – **Beattie**

This is just one definition of society – there can never be a fully accurate definition as society is an indefinable concept, it is always changing and has no concrete form or tangibility.

19th Century Western World

1. Post-enlightenment
2. Industrial Revolution

3. Market economy, Capitalism
4. Colonialism – to fuel the engine of Capitalism
5. Darwinism, theory of evolution – seen as **heresy** by the church, looked at the development of animal species over time as well as accounting for the differences between people **– Social Darwinism**

Emile Durkheim

Primitive Classification – **Durkheim & Mauss, 1903.**

Comparative study of modern vs. pre-industrial societies, what are the differences and similarities. Asked the question – **what keeps society together?** Durkheim found that society kept itself together, that society is something outside of us that existed before the individual, but that it is also something inside of us. Also believed that people embodied **social facts** – all things that people do and the reasons they do them, all institutions, beliefs, practices, laws, statuses in society, etc.

It is not just the physical world we share, but the shared beliefs and **collective conscience** that keeps society together and brings people together. E.g. people go to university because it is a socially accepted and encouraged activity, but the university itself would not be there without the students.

"Society, as objective and external fact, confronts us especially in the form of coercion. Its institutions pattern our actions and shape our expectations… it was there before we were born and it will be there after we are dead… in sum, society is the walls of our imprisonment in history." – **Peter Berger, 1963**

The Division of Labour in Society – **Durkheim, 1893**.

What holds people together in society? **Divisions of labour** and types of **cohesion**:

- **Mechanical Solidarity** – low division of labour, strong collective consciousness – people are divided into self-sufficient family/social units which do not have to rely on outside influences. Society is dominant over the individual – most people perform similar jobs and believe similar things.
- **Organic Solidarity** – high division of labour, much more diverse and specialised range of groups, strong individual consciousness. What holds society together is **functional integration** – the reliance on other people for survival as people perform specialised jobs. E.g. one person bakes, another fixes cars, another teaches – none can be self-sufficient without the work of the others. **Organic** relates to the idea that each specialised group was a **vital organ** in the **body of society**.

The division of society by types of solidarity represents an **evolutionary model**, as society evolved from **mechanical** to **organic** solidarity – start with a low division of labour, move to a high division – some societies have evolved to **organic solidarity**, but some have not.

To study the roots of industrial society, anthropologists study pre-modern societies in Africa and Asia to try and understand how we got to the point we are at today.

The study of society is the study of how people relate in various institutional ways – from a **structural functionalist point of view**.

Culture

"A convenient term to describe the sum of learned knowledge and skills – including religion and language – that distinguishes one community from another and which, subject to the vagaries of innovation and change, passes on in a recognizable form from generation to generation." – **Lewis**, *Social Anthropology in Perspective*

"what is learned, for the things one needs to know in order to meet the standards of others." **Goodenough**

The key term in both definitions is **learned** – culture is not something a person is born with, it is taught through socialization and observation. E.g. our behaviour as Australians is dictated by laws, by surveillance, etc. – nanny state, people have little actual freedom.

Different communities which teach their children to see the world in different ways are trying to make sense of the society they live in. Culture develops from the learned, intellectual aspects of life, which society represents the institutional rules that govern how people behave. People don't think about these rules and regulations, they simply think what they do is normal. When people diverge from these cultural and societal norms, they are seen as **deviant** and **weird/wrong**. For example, someone eating soup with a fork would be considered strange.

On a larger scale, people often judge other cultural groups based on our own criteria, where the rules and norms in their culture are completely different. This is known as **ethnocentrism**, and is particularly a problem when people from Western cultures observe people outside of Europe/America. For this reason, anthropologists try to observe cultures only within their own norms, rather than the norms of the observers.

Franz Boas

- Founder of American anthropological study
- Plural cultures – looking at cultures on a micro scale to understand them better
- Four Field approach
- Human diversity – unique identities
- Each culture is unique and merits a detailed description for its own sake, rather than for the purpose of looking at human evolution on a macro scale
- Represents the idea of **Cultural Relativism** – *the principle that an individual person's beliefs and activities should be understood by others in terms of **that individual's own culture**, rather than the culture of those observing the individual –* **taking on an *emic* perspective**.
- **Each culture is equal**, none is inferior or superior – they are just different. Understood cultures by working inductively, observing cultures in **their** world.

- Forerunner of anti-racism, advocated evaluating communities in terms of their own norms and standards rather than trying to fit them in to a Western schematic

Clash of cultures means **human diversity is at odds with the idea of universal human rights** – what is considered taboo or immoral in one culture may be fine in another – e.g. female genital mutilation