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ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЕ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ
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Учебно-методическое пособие для вузов

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

PART II

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UNIT 1

WARM UP

Read the title of the article. What do you think the article is about?

READING

Skim through the text fairly quickly and tell the audience its main idea.

Cultural Anthropology

Feminist Anthropology

One of the most important branches of sociocultural anthropology is feminist anthropology. Feminist anthropologists challenge the discipline to examine the androcentric bias in its approach to the study of humans in all four of the sub-disciplines. For example, Margaret Ehrenberg focuses on male bias in biological anthropology and archaeology and argues that the role of women is minimized in accounts of human evolution. Marlene Zuk critiques the ways in which gender is inferred from animal behavior, Margaret Conkey challenges the assumptions about gender in prehistory, and Agnes Estioko-Griffin and P. Bion Griffin present evidence of "woman the hunter" from their fieldwork among Agata male and female hunters. Catherine Lutz questions the way theory itself is gendered. Rayna Rapp looks at the role of women in relation to the state, and Virginia Lockwood discusses how gender ideology affects women who are often the victims of development.

Law and Society

Another important branch of sociocultural anthropology is the area of law and society, sometimes called political anthropology. Sally Falk Moore describes this approach as one that

inquires into the context of enforceable norms: social, political, economic, and intellectual. This includes, but goes farther than, what Western governments and courts define as law. In anthropology, while the "socio-legal" includes formal juridical institutions and their social surroundings, it also encompasses law-like activities and processes of establishing order in many other social domains, formal and informal, official and unofficial, in our own society and in others (2005: 1).

Anthropologists who study legal issues in a particular place ask questions about power, such as "who makes the rules, who can undo them, how are they normalized and enforced, and how are they morally justified" (2005: 2). These questions were first asked in egalitarian societies where legal institutions, such as courts and police, were absent, and anthropologists tried to understand what prevented total chaos. Other questions are now being asked in relation to the

Anthropology, as any discipline, deals with problems and questions, which is what any career or profession does. People in management must address the problem of how to structure relationships among staff; people in government must address problems involved in designing public policy initiatives, such as reducing juvenile crime. Someone in a medical field may face the problem of how to educate the young regarding sexually transmitted disease, while someone employed in the tourist industry must address the problem of how to minimize the negative consequences of tourism for local populations. The solution to all of these and other problems can benefit from an anthropological perspective, because all involve ways that people give meaning to their experiences. Throughout the remaining chapters of this book, we will examine different examples of how anthropological perspectives can be applied to careers outside of academia.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered several questions, some having to do with the problem of how to understand ways of life that are different from our own and others how to better understand our own lives. Why do human beings differ in what they believe and how they behave? One answer is that human beings, unlike other animals (or, at least, to a greater extent than other animals), create their own worlds and ascribe meanings to objects, persons, behaviours, emotions, and events, meanings that together constitute a culture. As Clifford Geertz suggests, human beings are compelled to create meanings if only to instill some sense of order in their lives.

The judgments we make about the beliefs and behaviors of other people create a dilemma. If, on the one hand, we assume the meanings that others give to their experiences are wrong, silly, or absurd simply because they are different from ours, we are committing the ethnocentric fallacy. Ethnocentrism is intellectually awkward because it allows everyone to believe that their views are correct, and the views of others are wrong. This would make any kind of inter-cultural understanding virtually impossible. If, on the other hand, we conclude that the beliefs and behaviors of others can be judged only in the context of their cultures, we are confronted with the relativistic fallacy, which implies that any belief or behaviour is acceptable, provided it makes sense to the people of the society in which it occurs. This places us in a moral dilemma because we must then accept virtually any belief or behavior.

Whether it is possible to set aside the meanings we ascribe to experience and see the world through the eyes of others is another question. Anthropologists conclude that the understandings they reach of other cultures can be at best limited. Furthermore, in many ways, the ethnographic method transforms the fieldworker into a "marginal" person, an outsider who knows only something of what it is to be an insider.

One way we describe and interpret the meanings other people find in their experiences is to consider a culture as a text inscribed with symbols whose meaning can be deciphered. We can examine virtually any cultural activity this

way and find in it a portion of the overall view of the world of a people. If we approach our own culture in the same way we approach other cultures, we should gain a better understanding of the meanings we give objects, persons, and events. If we objectify our own beliefs and behavior in the same way we objectify the beliefs and behaviors of others, our own culture should become more exotic, while the cultures of others become less strange, shocking, or bizarre.

And finally we examined what anthropologists do both in universities and outside of academia.

Read the article again and write its abstract.

FOLLOW UP

Write an essay (about 200 words) about cultural anthropology using additional sources.

UNIT 2

WARM UP

Read the title of the article. What do you think is the meaning of progress and development?

READING

Skim through the text fairly quickly and tell the audience its main idea.

The Meaning of Progress and Development

Globalization and Cultural Diversity

The destruction of small egalitarian cultures has, in recent years, accelerated, largely because of what is termed "globalization," the expansion into virtually all areas of the world of a culture that assumes that economic trade is the source of all well-being. For example, in their efforts to pay off debts accumulated over the past three decades, countries have been forced to encourage the export of goods and commodities to gain cash to repay these debts. One of the consequences is to reduce support for small-scale agriculturists or peasant farmers. For example, when Mexico entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada, it precipitated a revolt in the State of Chiapas by peasant farmers (the Zapatistas) whose livelihood would be destroyed by the agreement. The agreement forced Mexico to allow large-scale corn farmers in the United States to sell their product in Mexico at a price lower than that of the peasants.

Small-scale Mexican farmers may have been able to compete, but their situation was worsened more by the Mexican government's repeal of a portion of their constitution that allowed peasant farmers access to land on which to grow their crops. Part of the problem was that more land was needed by large-scale cattle ranchers to produce beef to sell to U.S. consumers. As anthropologist James D. Nations pointed out, the peasant farmer was faced with a choice of moving to a city to sell Popsicles from a push-cart, working for a cattelman punching cows, or rebelling against a situation that seems to have him trapped.

Often the same economic forces that are undermining the foundations of traditional cultures are also promoting environmental destruction. A case in point is that of the Guarani of Paraguay. There are about 15,000 Guarani. For centuries their lives centred on the rain forest where they lived by gathering tree crops, growing food crops, raising animals, hunting, and fishing. The first European governor of the area described them in 1541 as "the richest people of all the land and province both for agriculture and stock raising." They quickly entered into trade with Europeans, mostly by gathering and selling a caffeine-bearing plant called *yerba mate*. These trade arrangements did not greatly affect Guarani life, since they would gather and sell *yerba mate* only when they needed some Western trade item, such as a metal pot. Consequently Guarani culture was able to sustain itself and thrive. Just as importantly, the Guarani system of forest exploitation sustained the rain forest by adapting their use to the ecosystem rather than trying to change it. Then in the 1970s, due largely to international trade arrangements, both the Guarani and the rain forest began to decline.

In the 1970s, Paraguay, as most developing countries, enjoyed an economic boom fuelled largely by loans from the World Bank and other international lending agencies. Increasing agricultural production in crops such as soy, wheat, and cotton and in cattle raising also fuelled the boom. This "economic miracle" was accomplished by bringing new areas of land under cultivation; this involved cutting down the forests, selling the timber, and converting the rain forest into farm land or pasture. The rate of rain forest destruction was enormous. From 1970 to 1976 Paraguayan rain forests were reduced from 6.8 to 4.2 million hectares. Half the rain forest was cut by 1984, and an additional 5 percent a year is being cut. At this rate the entire Paraguayan rain forest will be gone by the year 2020.

The culture of the Guarani is one other casualty of "economic development." Not only was their livelihood destroyed, but new roads built into the rain forest brought with them thousands of new settlers eager to stake out a claim to some portion of the forest, clear it of trees, and grow cash crops. Unfortunately rain forest soil quickly loses its nutrients once the forest canopy that protected it is cut. Furthermore, all the animals and plants that Guarani depended on for subsistence are also destroyed. The result has been the displacement of Guarani - into squatter settlements in the towns and cities or along the roads built into the rain forests. The wages that they can make working for farmers or in other odd jobs are inadequate to support families, illness and disease have increased, and suicide rates in the past 10 years have more than tripled.