

Significant Social/Anthropological terms/paradigms

by Jack Omelak

European Anthropology-created a distinct separation between "social ethnography" and physical anthropology. This occurred as a result of the "common history" of Europe, whereas in America the focus of anthropology focused on the study of a different humanity (Indigenous groups of Americans).

American Anthropology-A four-field approach consisting of Linguistics, Archaeology, Physical Anthropology, and Socio-cultural anthropology.

Theory-An argument either supporting or disclaiming an idea based on assumptions, methods, and evidence.

Diachronic- A broad and overarching idea, a grand theory influenced by previous ideologies/theories, or events that occur within differing tempos. E.g. Evolution, diffusionism.

Synchronic- Smaller theories or events that occur in the same time frame, usually leading to a grand theory. E.g. Shrinking ice caps, warming ocean temperatures and increased local erosion became the diachronic Global Warming Theory.

Modernist movement- Began in the late 19th century at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. During that time a commonly held belief that primitive groups would become more complex and successful if they adopted modern production modes.

Production modes- The ways in which a community or group of people sustain themselves. E.g farming, pastoralization, subsistence.

Post-modernist movement- Anthropologists began to claim that "primitive" subsistence/hunter gatherer societies were just as complex as modern societies, and that others did not understand the complexities embedded in cultural norms.

Cultural norms- Actions, behaviors, or thoughts that are defined by a group or community socially acceptable.

Alterity- A fascination or fetishism of the extreme or bizarre aspects of culture. E.g. Margaret Mead's conclusions in the publication of Coming of Age in Samoa where she declared that the women of Samoa were overly sexually promiscuous beginning at a young age. Although the information was given by Samoan women, many years later the same contributors stated they felt obligated to offer sensational information.

Worldview-theoretical perspective- All of an individual's experiences and upbringing that shape the way they relate in society or understand things/ideas. E.g. A scientist who frames their understandings

of indigenous groups through their field of study and upbringing. See Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Cosmology- An academic distinction for cultures or societies whose ideas or understandings of their place in the universe are "untainted" by western thought, or influences. E.g. "Traditional" thought, "primitive" cultures.

Paradigm- A theoretical perspective or analytical framework of a situation or event that is developed and shaped by western academic institutions.

Cognitive Imperialism- When an individual modifies their behaviors, speech, thoughts to conform to the boundaries of an exchange of information between individuals. These boundaries are influenced by many effects, but most often by the difference in social status between the individual's interacting. E.g. When pulled over by the cops, a person acts differently.