

# UNDERSTANDING CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND POLITICS



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# **CONTENT OF THIS PRESENTATION:**

- A short summary of each of the anthropology theories discussed in our class.
- Validities of these theories in our society and culture right now, and examples for each theory
- My personal pick of what theory I would personally embrace and why.
- Information about the anthropologists behind the theories

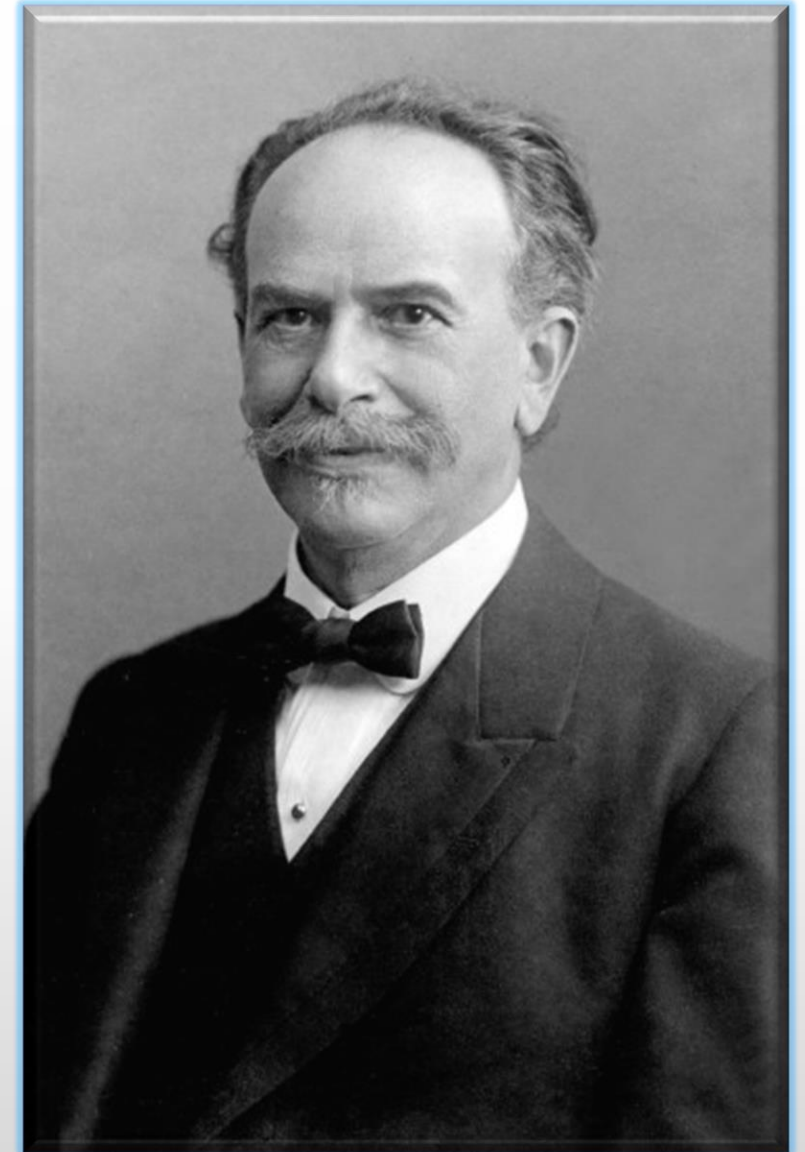
# ANTROPOLOGISTS AND THEIR THEORIES/STUDIES



# 1. FRANZ BOAS

He is a German-American who is widely considered as the "Father of Modern Anthropology" because he is widely considered as one of if not the most influential anthropologist ever.

He is famously the first one to implement and use the scientific method in his study of societies and cultures. He is the one who advocated that the four fields of anthropology (physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archeology, and linguistics) should unite to provide a better and complete picture of what encompasses anthropological research.



# FRANS BOAS: **HISTORICAL PARTICULARISM**

- This theory/study of anthropology revolves around the idea that every culture and everything that encompasses said culture is/was formed from a specific history which has its own trajectory in where it will continuously develop/change.



# VALIDITY OF **HISTORICAL PARTICULARISM** IN OUR SOCIETY AND CULTURE RIGHT NOW

- This theory supports and validates why some cultures are the way they are now and even back then. An example that validates this theory is the American Culture. American has a very long and in some cases very controversial history that has a very diverse culture that are still shown to this day. Its no secret that America in the past was built on controversial topics like colonization, war, and even slavery. Citizens of America have experienced and scene a lot of events that have changed their culture as a nation, which has had a lot of negative and positive impacts to America depending on a citizen's point of view. Multiple aspects of American culture have developed and changed according to the current mindset and taste of the American people. Some people even call these developments as changes that would "Make America Great Again". An example of an aspect of American culture that continuously develops/evolves depending on the American people and current historical/political climate is the food industry. The food industry has always had a deep connection with American culture because of how integrated it is with the daily lives of Americans especially fast food. The fast-food companies would always adapt to the current situation of America like when it is under the shadow of war. Food companies would always find ways to support the military not just by providing meals to them but also enticing people to enlist and serve in the army.

## FRANS BOAS: **CULTURAL RELATIVISM**



- This theory/study of anthropology involves the ideology that every person or groups of people all have equal standing when it comes to the development of their own respective cultures. This study also states that the perception of differences between cultures by people only exist because of social, historical, and more prominently across the world geological differences which all can give the public a perception of "differences" between their own culture and someone else's.

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## 2. **ALFRED KROEBER**

He is known as a cultural anthropologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who helped determine the importance of the connections between archaeology and culture because his primary aim is to completely understand how culture works especially in relation to others.

His career significantly helped in the development of professionalized anthropology especially in the United States. He believed that completely understanding explains cultural patterns and elements that even transcended some cultures.



# ALFRED KROEBER: **SUPERORGANIC CULTURE**

- This theory/study of anthropology tackles the idea that human behavior has very little impact on the development of a culture even though culture plays a big role in determining the human behaviors of the people that reside in said culture.



# VALIDITY OF **SUPERORGANIC CULTURE** IN OUR SOCIETY AND CULTURE RIGHT NOW

- A very noticeable and obvious example that validates this theory is the culture of our own nation the Philippines. Since the Philippines is a nation surrounded by water and it has 7,641 islands, its people have a lot of varying and unique cultures which more often than not determine a lot of characteristics the people in said culture encompass. Cultures in provinces like Pampanga and Ilocos have their own native language, beliefs, traditions, and even food specialties, which enables themselves to express their own personalities and specific culture specially towards people with other cultures. However, all of their own personal quirks, preferences, talents, and characteristics as a person do not in any way affect/determine how their culture develops as a whole.

### 3. LEWIS HENRY MORGAN

He was a well-known American ethnologist and is considered as a principle founder of scientific anthropology which helped build the foundations of anthropology. One of his well-known contributions is his Theory of Cultural Evolution which resulted to being one of the first scientific studies that tackles the origin and evolution of man. He also emphasized the importance of technological evolution and other factors towards social evolution.



# LEWIS HENRY MORGAN: **SOCIAL EVOLUTION**

- This theory/study of anthropology revolves around the ideology that society and everything that encompasses said society like the culture will always change, develop, and evolve. This study specifically states that there are three stages of social evolution: first is savagery, second is barbarism, and then finally is civilization. Different societies and cultures may evolve at different times but according to this study said societies and cultures will eventually evolve.



# VALIDITY OF **SOCIAL EVOLUTION** IN OUR SOCIETY AND CULTURE RIGHT NOW

- A culture that prominently validates and shows what this theory encompasses is Japanese culture. Japanese culture has made very big developments and innovations in different sectors of its culture especially since the start of the 20th century. Japanese culture back then was very famous and somewhat infamous for having culture that made it hard for the Japanese people to sustain themselves. Widespread poverty and economic crashes were every common among Japanese culture back in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the Japanese people were also infamously one of the few countries who had significant beneficial changes and innovations during the world war 2 era in where there economic standing changed from being a dirt-poor country into being one of the most powerful countries at that time. Ever since the start of the 20th century the Japanese economy evolved to being one of the world's most lucrative economies while still maintaining specific cultures in their society. All aspects of Japanese culture have all evolved and improved compared to what Japanese culture was in the past which have made Japan of the most influential 1st world countries of Asia.

## 4. RUTH BENEDICT

She was considered as a pioneer when it comes to igniting the personality diversity and movement inside anthropology. She is a American anthropologist who became a leading specialist in her field who is best known for her Theory "Patterns of Theory" which express her strong belief in cultural revivalism.

She wanted to tell everyone that it was wrong to disrespect and completely disregard cultures, beliefs, and values just because its different from one's own.



## RUTH BENEDICT: **PATTERN OF CULTURE**

- This theory/study of anthropology tackles the ideology that culture has a certain foundation it is built upon depending on the history, which in turn has dominant and prominent characteristics that are shown depending on the situation/time.



# VALIDITY OF **PATTERNS OF CULTURE** IN OUR SOCIETY AND CULTURE RIGHT NOW

- A very distinct and popular example that validates this theory is the numerous amounts of cultures that reside in the countries of the African continent which is also the second largest and the second most populated continent in the whole world. Every single nation and province in Africa have their own personal cultures and traditions that have all stemmed from different periods/eras in the history of Africa. However, even though the countries/tribes in Africa all have unique cultures when studied closely they have many similarities. All of the cultures in Africa in some way or another have the same morals, respect for people whom are old, love for their own culture, and even share unique characteristics with the art they produce. Now with the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa as a whole have all integrated some outside cultures as well into their daily lives like foreign languages for global competitiveness (especially English) and even foreign technological influences can be seen in their economy. The technological influences are also very well integrated into their culture like using modern technology to make documentaries about Africa's history. Western culture has also had a very big influence in the pop culture of Africa especially towards the entertainment industry of Africa. All of these integrations stem from very close relationships formed from the history of interactions of different areas of the globe especially western countries like America.

## 5. **BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI**

He was an anthropologist who influenced different aspects of anthropology like the discipline with long lasting benefits. His writings on social theories, field researches and other aspects of anthropology helped shaped the ideologies behind anthropology today. He also liked spending time and living with people whom he was studying which in turn helped him write better studies like his collections of articles and ethnographies that are still the most extensive collection of ethnography to this day.





# BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI: **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

- This theory/study of anthropology involves the ideology that in order to have and acquire accurate information about cultures and the people that reside in said cultures anthropologists and other researchers need to allocate large amounts of effort and time around what they want to research. Anthropologists need to spend time with the people in the culture they want to learn more about for them find out the information like people's daily lives and struggles are in every community. Basically, attempting to fit in to a culture they previously knew nothing about by actually having boots on the ground.

# VALIDITY OF **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION** IN OUR SOCIETY AND CULTURE RIGHT NOW

- A specific example that shows the ideology behind this theory/study is when foreign soldiers support and give aid to foreign countries/communities in a time of war. Countries like the USA usually send military personal to countries/communities to evaluate what they are lacking in like food, what they need help with in rebuilding, and what they want from the military like protection from any harmful forces. Military personal usually spend long amounts of time with people to not only protect them but to also know the people's sentiment towards them and to any militant forces especially when the military is in a foreign country in where they may not necessarily understand each other or feel welcomed by the natives.

## 6. **MARGARET MEAD**

She was a commonly known famous anthropologist of the 20th century whom was best known for her integral studies. One of her proposed theories is that children best learn while watching adults where they eventually learn their behaviors and habits. This theory of hers is called the Theory of Imprinting. She is also regarded as the first woman of science and one of the most well-known women in America. She advanced her work by using avenues like films, photographs, and mind testing. She also pioneered studies on topics like adolescence, gender, childhoods, and she is considered as a founding figure in personal and culture studies which helped what Anthropology is today.



## MARGARET MEAD: **SEXUAL REVOLUTION**

- This theory/study of anthropology revolves around the ideology that people should not be limited/constricted to the conceptions and "social norms" of their gender identity and sexual roles.

# VALIDITY OF “**SEXUAL REVOLUTION**” IN OUR SOCIETY AND CULTURE RIGHT NOW

- A very recent and controversial example that shows the ideology of this theory is when people identify themselves as “non-binary”. Recently a very popular singer named Sam Smith came out and announced to the public as “non-binary” meaning that he identifies as neither male or female even though he was born as a male. According to Sam Smith being “non-binary” enables him to have confidence. The public however had varying opinions about his announcement with some even saying that being “non-binary” does not make any sense whatsoever.

WHICH ONE OF THIS THEORIES WOULD I PERSONALLY  
EMBRACE? AND WHY?



# **SUPERORGANIC CULTURE**

BY: ALFRED KROEBER

## **PART 1:**

- I think that all these theories have a very important foothold in the very essence of Anthropology and of how we should look at certain things like culture that make us human, but personally I would embrace Alfred Kroeber's theory of Superorganic Culture more than the other theories. According to Kroeber's theory, culture plays a role in determining individual behaviors of humans but it has a very little impact on the development of their culture as whole. I wholeheartedly agree that culture plays a big part in shaping and determining the behaviors of the people inside said culture. I think that people are easily shaped by what's around them, which sometimes acts as a good and bad thing. One of detrimental things that make humans from different countries/areas unique from each other is the culture that inhabits said countries/areas.

# **SUPERORGANIC CULTURE**

## **BY: ALFRED KROEBER**

### **PART 2:**

- I also agree that the personal behaviors and personalities of the people inside a certain culture has very little impact on the development of the culture that they reside in, because every person has his/her own way of expanding, developing, enriching, educating, and even changing his/her own personal behavior but culture is something that encompasses large groups of people/communities. I believe that culture and human behavior can be observed objectively separately for they are different enough that they can stand on their own. Culture and human behavior can/are connected in their own respective ways but they can also be dissected and separated enough for people to better understand them both. Culture encompasses large amounts of people like nations meanwhile human behavior is more of a personal and singular aspect of Anthropology that most of the time develops alone or separately from culture.

# SOURCES:

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