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A Global World

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Key Points

1. Anthropologists have made use of a variety of theoretical perspectives to explain the relationship between the West and the rest of the world. During the Cold War, anthropologists debated the relative merits of **modernization theory** and **dependency theory**. Later, they were influenced by **world-system theory**, which divided the territories controlled by capitalism into **core**, **periphery**, and **semi-periphery** and argued that the relationships between these regions had been established during the years when capitalism was first introduced outside Europe. The end of the Cold War and the fall of communism led to a crisis in Marxian thought, and many of the tenets of modernization theory were revived in **neoliberal** economic theory, which promised to bring prosperity to any nation-state that could find its niche in the globalizing capitalist market.

2. **Globalization** is understood and evaluated differently by different observers, but most anthropologists agree that the effects of globalization are uneven. In a globalizing world, people, technology, wealth, images, and ideologies are de-territorialized. Some groups in some parts of the world benefit from global flows, contacts, and exchanges, whereas others are bypassed entirely.

3. Anthropologists and others disagree about whether these global processes are systemic or not, or whether they are only the latest in a series of expansions and contractions that can be traced back to the rise of the first commercial civilizations several thousand years ago. But none of these overall schemas can, by itself, account for the historically specific local details of the effects of global forces in local settings, which is what most anthropologists aim to document and analyze.

4. **Visual anthropology** or **digital anthropology** serves as both witness and motivator to activism. While the technology has become more sophisticated a heightened sense of concern over the recording of participants through various devices and the forms that participant permission would take. Research ethics boards have developed six categories of ethical issues for visual research that provide guidance for visual research methods.

5. The flows unleashed by globalization have undermined the ability of nation-states to police their boundaries effectively, suggesting that conventional ideas about nation-states require revision. Contemporary migrants across national borders have developed a variety of transborder identities. Some become involved in **long-distance nationalism** that leads to the emergence of **transborder states** claiming emigrants as **transborder citizens** of their ancestral homelands, even if they are **legal citizens** of another state. Some transborder citizenries call for the establishment of fully fledged **transnational nation-states**.

6. The contrasts between formal and **substantive citizenship** suggest that conventional notions of citizenship are breaking down in the context of globalization. Diaspora communities of elite Chinese families have developed a strategy of **flexible citizenship** that allows them to both circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes by investing, working, and settling their families in different sites. For these elite Chinese, the concept of nationalism has lost its meaning, and they seem to subscribe instead to a **post-national ethos** in which their only true loyalty is to the family business.

7. Discussions of **human rights** have intensified as global flows juxtapose and, at least implicitly, challenge different understandings of what it means to be human or what kinds of rights people may be entitled to under radically changed conditions of everyday life. But different participants in this discourse have different ideas about the relationship that human rights and culture have with one another. As talk about human rights becomes incorporated into local cultural discussions, the notion is transformed to make sense in local contexts. Sometimes, "culture" may be used as a scapegoat for a government unwilling to extend certain rights to its citizens.

8. Some arguments about human rights include the right to one's culture. But most international human rights documents only protect individual human rights, not group rights. And even those who seek to protect their individual rights are supposed to appeal to the governments of their own nation-states to enforce rights defended in international documents. Many activists, and others, view this factor as a serious contradiction in human rights discourse that undermines its effectiveness.

9. Some anthropologists argue that a "culture of human rights" has emerged in recent years that is based on certain ideas about human beings, their needs, and their abilities that originated in the West. Some consider this culture of human rights to be the culture of a globalizing world that emphasizes individual rights over duties or needs and that proposes only technical rather than ethical solutions to human suffering. Anthropologists disagree about the value of such a culture of human rights in contemporary circumstances.

10. Groups and individuals who assert that their human rights have been violated regularly take their cases to courts of law. But because human rights law only recognizes certain kinds of rights violations, groups with grievances must tailor those grievances to fit the violations that human rights law recognizes. Groups that enter into the human rights process are entering into ethically ambiguous territory that is both enabling and constraining.

11. Debates about children's rights in Thailand show that it is both possible to accommodate the universal discourse of human rights to local conditions and that no single model of the relationship between rights and culture will fit all cases. Struggles over human rights, along with struggles over global citizenship, can be seen as the prime struggles of our time.

12. The discourse of **cultural imperialism** tried to explain the spread of Western cultural forms outside the West. But anthropologists reject cultural imperialism as an explanation because it denies agency to non-Western peoples, because it assumes that cultural forms never move "from the rest to the West," and because it ignores flows of cultural forms that bypass the West entirely. Thus anthropologists prefer to speak about borrowing-with-modification, domestication, indigenization, or customization of practices or objects imported from elsewhere. Many anthropologists describe these processes as examples of **cultural hybridization** or hybridity.

13. Talk of cultural hybridization has been criticized because the very attempt to talk about cultural mixtures assumes that "pure" cultures existed prior to mixing. Others object to discussions of cultural hybridization that fail to recognize that its effects are experienced differently by those with power and those without power. Cultural hybridization is unobjectionable when actors perceive it to be under their own control but is resisted when they see it threatening their moral integrity.

14. Some anthropologists are working to devise ways of coping with the uncertainties and insecurities of globalization. Some would like to revive the notion of **cosmopolitanism** originally associated with Western elite forms of cultural hybridization and rework it in order to be able to speak about alternative or discrepant cosmopolitanisms that reflect the experiences of those who have been the victims of modernity. The ideal end result would be a critical cosmopolitanism capable of negotiating new understandings of human rights and global citizenship in ways that can dismantle barriers of gender and race that are the historical legacies of colonialism.

Key Terms

Core In world-system theory, the nations specializing in banking, finance, and highly skilled industrial production.

Cosmopolitanism Being at ease in more than one cultural setting.

Cultural hybridization Cultural mixing that produces a new cultural form.

Cultural imperialism The idea that some cultures dominate other cultures and that cultural domination by one culture leads inevitably to the destruction of subordinated cultures and their replacement by the culture of those in power.

Dependency theory A theory that argues that the success of "independent" capitalist nations has required the failure of "dependent" colonies or nations whose economies have been distorted to serve the needs of dominant capitalist outsiders.

Diaspora Migrant populations with a shared identity who live in a variety of different locales around the world; a form of transborder identity that does not focus on nation-building.

Flexible citizenship The strategies and effects employed by managers, technocrats, and professionals who regularly move across state boundaries and who seek both to circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes.

Globalization Reshaping of local conditions by powerful global forces on an ever-intensifying scale.

Human rights A set of rights that should be accorded to all human beings everywhere in the world.

Indigenization The process of bringing something foreign under the control of local people, or of adapting something foreign to serve local purposes.

Legal citizenship The rights and obligations of citizenship accorded by the laws of a state.

Long-distance nationalists Members of a diaspora who begin to organize in support of nationalist struggles in their homeland or to agitate for a state of their own.

Modernization theory A theory that argues that the social change occurring in non-Western societies under colonial rule was a necessary and inevitable prelude to higher levels of social development that had been reached by the more "modern" nations.

Multiculturalism Living permanently in settings surrounded by people with cultural backgrounds different from your own and struggling to define the degree to which the cultural beliefs and practices of different groups should or should not be accorded respect and recognition by the wider society.

Neoliberalism A political perspective that promotes individual freedom, open markets, and free trade while opposing strong state involvement in personal and economic affairs.

Periphery In world-system theory, those exploited former colonies that supply the core with cheap food and raw materials.

Post-national ethos An attitude toward the world in which people submit to the governmentality of the capitalist market while trying to evade the governmentality of nation-states.

Semi-periphery In world-system theory, states that have played peripheral roles in the past but that now have sufficient industrial capacity and other resources to possibly achieve core status in the future.

Substantive citizenship The actions people take, regardless of their legal citizenship status, to assert their membership in a state and to bring about political changes that will improve their lives.

Transborder citizenry A group made up of citizens of a country who continue to live in the homeland plus the people who have emigrated from the country and their descendants, regardless of their current citizenship.

Transborder state A form of state in which it is claimed that those people who left the country and their descendants remain part of their ancestral state, even if they are citizens of another state.

Transnational nation-states Nation-states in which the relationships between citizens and their states extend to wherever citizens reside.

Visual anthropology The anthropological contribution to visual culture of ethnographic photography, film, and digital media representations of cultural data.

World-system theory A theory that argues that, from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, European capitalism began to incorporate other regions and peoples into a world system whose parts were linked economically but not politically.

Review Questions

1. How is globalization changing the way anthropologists work?

2. Are global flows undermining nation-states?

3. Consider the differences and similarities between globalization and colonialism. Is globalization simply colonialism in a new form?

4. Do you agree with the authors' claims about cultural imperialism, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism? Do all people experience globalization in the same way?

5. Hybridity is a far more complex concept than the textbook is able to discuss. Consider various aspects of Canadian culture and traditions and how hybridity is involved in many of these.

6. What is the distinction between "rights to culture" and "rights as culture"? Why do some anthropologists argue that the appeal for international human rights is fundamentally ethnocentric?

7. What steps can be taken to protect the privacy of the subjects of visual anthropology?

8. Is transborder citizenry something we find in Canada?

9. Do you think Canada does a good job of welcoming and integrating workers who migrate here for temporary jobs?

10. Is Canada's policy of multiculturalism still valid in the modern era?

11. Do you think Canadians indigenize aspects of American culture?

12. Is it likely that Canada's First Nations are caught between modernization and dependency?

Additional Resources

Films

- *Mayan Voices: American Lives.* Directed by Olivia Carrescia. First Run/Icarus Films. 1994.

  In the 1970s and 80s, thousands of Mayan Indians fled political violence in Guatemala. *Mayan Voices* looks at the Mayan Indian communities who settled in the United States and how they are coping with the challenges of social change and the scars of their history.
  http://icarusfilms.com/cat97/k-o/mayan_vo.html

- *Since the Company Came.* Directed by Russell Hawkins. First Run/Icarus Films. 2001.

  The Haporai people of the Solomon Islands face immense social, cultural, and ecological changes when a logging company starts harvesting on their tribal lands.
  http://icarusfilms.com/if-since

Annotated Video Links

- Coca Globalization
  A visual presentation on the globalization of Coca-Cola that references Robert Foster's book "Coca Globalization: Following Soft Drinks From New York to New Guinea"
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUzql4U5t8E

- A Short History of Globalization
  This short video looks at earlier forms of globalization, from archaic globalization to the Silk Road and the Columbian Exchange and examines how they differ from the form of globalization that is currently experienced in the modern world.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D63_Ps4UN-I

- The Future of Visual Anthropology: An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube
  This video highlights current theory and visual ethnography and differences among participants in film. Reviews social media tools currently used in anthropological research.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gD-Pjzz7LfU

- Cultural Imperialism
  A short segment that features the discussion about the rewriting of African history as a form of cultural imperialism.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yp-nfBKoSkU

Websites

- "First Nations on View: Canadian Museums and Hybrid Representations of Culture." Susan Ashley. 2005. *Intersections Conference Journal: Hybrid Entities.*

  This paper explores the colonial history of museums and how First Nations groups in Canada are challenging the traditional forms of the museum and creating hybrid forms.
  http://www.yorku.ca/etopia/docs/conference/Ashley.pdf

- Partners in Health

  Partners in Health is a non-profit organization working to deliver community-based health care in poor communities around the world. Their model aims to alleviate the root causes of disease through education and by fighting poverty.
  http://www.pih.org/

A Critical Look
By Roberta Robin Dods

Diaspora and Identity

If we consider culture as a performance art, we can see why it must be that culture is in a constant state of change. The performance is by nature unscripted and unbounded, shaped not only by what the performers bring to the performance—their knowledge, experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and so on—but also by the context in which it takes place. Changing the context changes the performance.

When people leave their homeland to re-establish themselves in a new place, they bring with them elements of their culture. Once they reach their destination, however, they must adapt what they have brought with them to their new context. For immigrants to Canada, this new context is often a major city made up of people from many different cultural backgrounds. In many cases, the most comfortable place for immigrants to settle is in ethnic enclaves where they can be close to people whose cultural backgrounds are similar to their own and who are likewise negotiating a hybridized cultural identity in a new homeland. As they draw on experiences from their old and new worlds, these people develop complex cultural identities based on their uniquely transnational world views.

Anthropologist Nicholas Harney has made some general observations on migrants' experiences with diaspora and identity:

> First, the experience of dispersal is to more than one place. Second, there is active communication, both institutional and kin, between different locations within the diaspora and also with the homeland. Third, a collective sentiment of groupness is cultivated and distinct from the host society. Fourth, there is a collective memory about the past, real or imagined. Fifth, diasporas are also disciplined, structured, and influenced by their location within the political, bureaucratic, and cultural sphere of a host society which may adopt strategies for managing diversity. (2002: 44)

These features remain central and salient regardless of the origins or destinations of migrants.

In his field research, Harney has taken a more specific look at how processes of identity formation operate among Italian Canadians living in Toronto. As he observes, "Italian immigrants and their descendants negotiate identity in locally specific circumstances . . . within the context of state-sponsored multiculturalism in Canada and multiple diasporic discourses linking peoples in Italy and Canada" (43). Central to this identity is the family as the "pragmatic transnational link" (Levin 2002: 8). For example, in the home, family members generally speak Italian, but with English words and phrases incorporated into the discussion. Such language environments not only maintain Italian-ness, they mark regional dialectical differences of the homeland.

Family dinners also contribute to identity formation. In Italian Canadian households, dinners often feature regional dishes from the homeland. Food of *home* is more than nutrition. It is a

metaphor for identity, and it marks boundaries of distinctiveness within and between culture areas. Food touches us on so many levels—smell, taste, visual appeal. It becomes "embodied forms of memory" (Holtzman 2006: 361)—memories of family meals and special occasions, memories of other times and places.

As Harney observes, modern technologies make it easier for immigrants to stay in touch with people "back home" and to learn about cultural developments in the homeland:

> In an accelerated fashion, Italian immigrants and their children can interact with and expend emotional energy on ties with their "homeland" in every sphere of social life. Magazines arrive from regions of origin in Italy, and hometown websites seek out rite-of--passage life histories, photographs, and social activities of co-villagers dispersed around the world. (2002: 48)

These sorts of close connections help Italian Canadians feel connected to their homeland despite the great physical distance that separates them from it.

In many cases, migrants leave their homeland for better opportunities elsewhere. In some cases, these opportunities materialize into success and security; in others, the result is disappointment. Either way, immigrants often imagine an "idealized return" to the homeland (Levin 2002). In the past, this return often remained imagined, but the relative ease of international travel today has made it a possibility for many. Indeed, "travel allows frequent and well-timed returns, for example, on ritual occasions marking life-cycle events and to socialize children in the homeland, which express relationships more concretely than does verbal or written contact alone" (Levin 2002: 4). While these sorts of brief visits can be refreshing and identity affirming, more permanent migrations back to the homeland can be difficult.

In her recent travels to a northern Italian city, Roberta Robin Dods met an elderly woman who had returned to the region after having lived in Ottawa for 45 years. This woman was a widow without children, now living with relatives "back home" in Italy. Yet her return was not what she had hoped it would be. She was lonely, living with a family she barely knew and missing her Italian Canadian friends in Ottawa. Here was a painful reversal—a woman seeing herself as foreign in her country of origin. "Home" remained elsewhere, in the place where she had made a life with her husband even while she maintained the almost mythic idea of "back home." Her story of Canada

had the nostalgia often found in immigrants' "back home" memories. Her life was book-ended by two places, each calling to her through their defining metaphors of identity.