Principles of Anthropological Approach

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What is Anthropology

• Science that studying the diverse aspects of human beings in terms of
  – social life,
  – its processes and causes,
  – Interrelations of its elements
  – Its relations with phenomena being studied by other disciplines
What is Anthropology

• Culture ➔ central concept in anthropology
• Culture: systems of beliefs, values, norms of behavior found in all societies; they are more or less coherent, systematic and rational within their own context
Concept of culture

• Complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor 1871)
• The pattern of life within community, the regularly recurring activities and material and social arrangements characteristics of a particular group (Goodenough)
• Mental equipment used by members of the society in the orientation process, transaction, meetings, formulating ideas, grouping, and interpretation of real social behavior in the community (Goodenough)
Concept of culture

• Consisting of ideas and critical assumptions that owned by a society that determines or affects communication, justification, and the behavior of its members (Sathe)
• A system of symbolic meanings that serves to communicate the meaning of one's thoughts into the minds of others (Geertz)
• Objects, actions, or events in the world that can be seen, felt, and understood and meaningful to the members of a society (Keesing)
Culture Vs. Individual

• Culture is collective behavior
• Related to any action or behavior that is ideally governed and shaped by knowledge, beliefs, values, and norms, and conceived together by the members of the community in its efforts to "survive" or precisely controlled environment (physical and social)
Anthropology

• studies:
  – Human biology
  – Ecology
  – Economics
  – Politics
  – Religion
  – Social and cultural relations
Stream of thought

• To study the cultural differences among societies.

• Dealt with the struggle to explain the antiquity of humans and the artifacts left from these ancient lives.

• The investigation of the biological origins of humans and other species.
Approaches of Anthropology
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.
  – No better culture
  – Best understood as a whole systems
Cultural relativism

• refers to the idea that each culture has developed its own ways of solving the problems of how to live together;
  – how to obtain the essentials of life, such as food and shelter;
  – how to explain phenomena; and so on.
• No one way is viewed as better or worse; they are just different.
Bolivian peasants used very fine clay in a drink believed to be good for digestion and stomach ailments. Health workers succeeded in discouraging this practice in some communities because “eating dirt” seemed like a bad thing. The health workers then found themselves faced with increased caries and other symptoms of calcium deficiency. Upon analysis, the clay was found to be a key source of calcium for these communities. We use clay in our culture, but we color it pink or give it a mint flavor and put it in a bottle with a fancy label.
Ethnocentrism

• evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture.
• seeing your own culture as best.
• In the context of cross-cultural understanding, poses a barrier if people approach a culture with the attitude that it is inferior.
Ethnocentrism and Chauvanism

• Chauvanism:
  – (pejorative) Unwarranted bias, favoritism, or devotion to one's own particular group, cause, or idea.
  – Excessive patriotism, eagerness for national superiority; jingoism.
Stereotyping

• any thought about specific types of individuals or certain ways of behaving, which is widely adopted, intended to represent the entire group of those individuals or behaviors as a whole
  – LGBT and HIV/AIDS
  – Women and depression
  – Elderly and memory loss
the challenges

• What if a behavior is “wrong” from an epidemiologic perspective?
• How does one distinguish between dangerous behaviors and behaviors that are merely different and therefore seem odd?
  - using an HIV-contaminated needle,
  - swimming in a river with snails known to carry schistosomiasis,
  - ingesting a powder with lead in it as part of a healing ritual
Cultural relativism

• Holistic studies of communities (ethnography)
  – Interrelationships of physical environment, principal activities, economics, religion, kinship and marriage. Etc.

• Western Civilization is also a culture or combinations of many cultures → A as product of western world, A has its own way to see the world (need to communicate its concepts and methods into the language of other disciplines)
Cultural relativism

• Local populations, not the outsiders, are the experts on their own sociocultural environment – A is students of others (emic perspective)
• Moral obligation to take culture and foreign culture seriously including their social organization and values (cross-culture) – deals with intervention (not seeing communities as empty vessels”)
Cross culture

• Usually to develop local intervention
  – Respecting, attending to and addressing local perceptions, interests, and way of life
  – Listening and sympathetic understanding
  – Helping to serve local interest
  – Moral grounds for routinely making local concerns as a primary criterion in public health decision making
Anthropologists as students of others

• What knowledge is relevant in new cultural settings (emic perspective)
  – Tools or instruments are developed on the basis of their understandings on culture and society
  – Needs to spend times to understand other culture
  – Participatory to the culture/community they studied is essentials
  – Immersive fieldwork
What is Medical Anthropology

• Focuses on the relationships of society, culture, and biology; as well as on sickness and healing

• It is included in the component of social and cultural anthropology
  – AAA sees medical anthropology as a new stream in applied anthropology
What is medical anthropology?

• Cultural construction of illness and suffering, illness experience, medical knowledge and healing practices
• Study of the body and lifecycle from childhood to old age
• Critique of production of biomedical knowledge and power relations
Cultural aspects

• Beliefs, perceptions, and knowledge about illness (onset, etiology, transmission, treatment, etc)
• Concepts of health and illness
• Concepts of hot and cold food in relation to illness and sickness
• Norms, rules, moral, etc. which have function to solve human problems
Cultural Aspects in Health-care Seeking

- When there is illness there is cure
- Moral efforts to regain health (including back and forth to many medical practitioners and facilities as well as to alternative medicines)
- People would try every suggestion
- Failing to follow the suggestion would cause the blaming of the neighbors to the family and relatives of the sick person (social pressures)
Perception of Health and Disease

• Based on medical system
• Based on etiology of the disease (causes)
  – Natural: illness caused by imbalance nature
  – Personality: illness as reflection of punishment/sin; a sign of weakness
  – Social/Agent: illness as an effect of social rupture; illness as sent by enemy/agent
Explanatory model

sector and sub-sector in health care system

Perception on:
• Etiology
• Onset
• Pathophysiology
• Severity
• Sick role
• Treatment availability
Social and cultural influence

• Stigma: TB is God-given and incurable – delay and non-compliance for treatment
  – Sin committed by the people and ancestors
  – Karma

• Less socializing and used separate eating utensil

• Marriage arrangement could be canceled because of TB infection
Social and cultural aspects

• Culture determines
  – who is vulnerable to illness
  – Who agrees to become patients – (actually seek professional treatment)
  – What and who causes illness

• Culture affect decisions about a patient’s treatment and who makes decisions

• Cultural differences create problems in communication, rapport, physical examinations, treatment, compliance, follow up, etc.
Anthropological methods

- Participant observation/ethnography
- Focus groups/semi-structured interviews: ‘qualitative methods’
- Rapid participatory methods
- Newer methods: use of camera, videos
- Importance of stories: link between anthropology and medicine
- By the nature of their work, GPs already have many anthropological skills
Foundation of Knowledge and Practice: inductive (shaped by field experience)

- Ecological/evolutionary theory: physical environment and human adaptations to it are the principal determinant of sickness and healing → unilinear and multilinear evolution

- Cultural theory: cultural systems of beliefs, values and norms are basic determinants of sickness and healings (functionalism, structuralism, symbolic interactionism, etc.)
Foundation (cont’d): Political economy theory

• The economic organization and relationships of power are the principal forces determining human sickness and health → critical medical anthropology

• Structural/conflict theory, materialism, socialism, capitalism, communism, etc. → economic factors may constrain health-promoting human action
Central themes of medical anthropology

• Illness versus disease (Eisenberg 1977)
• ‘Lay’ explanatory models (Kleinman):
  ‘idiosyncratic and changeable, and heavily influences by both personality and cultural factors. They are partly conscious and partly outside of awareness and are characterised by vagueness, multiplicity of meanings, frequent changes, and lack of sharp boundaries between ideas and experience’
Public health/medical discourse

- Highly cultural and reality-shaping
- Medical jargon and effect on patients; how patient experience is ‘re-packaged’ in clinical letters
- Example: debate around organ donation and ethnic minorities (Giorana & Cooper 2011)
Critical medical anthropology

• ‘Social suffering’ (Kleinman et al 1997) and the impact of inequalities/poverty and racism on bodies and lives
• Health as a human right
• Cultural and economic politics of communities & how these affect individuals
Psychiatry and medical anthropology

• How are ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’ defined in different cultural settings?
• How does mental disorder present differently?
• Are diagnostic criteria applicable globally?
• How is psychiatric knowledge/practice culturally constructed?
• Why is mental illness diagnosed more among Afro-Caribbeans in the U.K.?
• ‘Culture-bound’ syndromes?
Anthropology’s engagement with public/international health

• Arose from repeated failures of health programmes & wish to engage on particular issues (e.g. safe motherhood, condom promotion, diarrhoeal disease, vaccine uptake)

• Anthropologist as ‘cultural consultant’/critic of cultural naivete in design and piloting of health promotion campaigns
THANK YOU