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Anthropology short notes

Structuralism (Lévi-Strauss and E. Leach)

UPSC Civil Services (Main) Examination · Anthropology Paper 1 · Anthropology GS 1 (Paper I)

(d) Structuralism (Lévi-Strauss and E. Leach)

Short notes by official syllabus heading.

Revision notes for the Anthropology optional. Confirm thinkers and examples against standard texts and recent papers.

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/archives/anthropology-notes/paper-1/structuralism-levi-strauss/>

Structuralism**Definition**

The discipline has evolved from a "**Science of Man**" focused on the "primitive" to a global, reflexive discipline that addresses contemporary issues like Digital Anthropology, Medical Anthropology, and AI technology. As society changes, anthropology continues to adapt, fulfilling its role as a holistic framework for understanding human diversity and survival.

Thinkers

Historical Particularism: Franz Boas (the "**Father of American Anthropology**") rejected universal laws, arguing that each culture has a unique history. He introduced the Four-Field Approach (Biological, Archaeological, Linguistic, and Cultural) to gather comprehensive empirical data.: The Golden Age of Fieldwork: Functionalism. Bio-cultural Functionalism: Bronislaw Malinowski pioneered Participant Observation, arguing that culture exists solely to satisfy biological and psychological needs. Structural Functionalism: A.R. Radcliffe-Brown applied an "**Organic Analogy**," viewing society as a system where institutions function like organs to maintain the stability of the social structure.: Structural and Psychological Turns. Structuralism: Claude Lévi-Strauss argued that human thought is patterned through binary oppositions (e.g., **Nature vs. Culture**) and that culture, like language, is a mental construct. Culture and Personality: Scholars like Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead explored the relationship between culture and individual psychology, arguing that adult personality is a product of cultural training and socialization.: Mid-20th Century Revivals: Neo-Evolutionism and Materialism.

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Example / case study

Prader-Willi Syndrome occurs if a specific segment of Chromosome 15 is deleted from the paternal side, while Angelman Syndrome results if the same segment is deleted from the maternal side.

Thinkers

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Definition

Considered cultural truth, not history.

Thinkers

Bronislaw Malinowski - participant observation; culture exists to satisfy biological and psychological needs. Freud: Repressed desires. RITUAL Formal, repetitive, symbolic acts.

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