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Franz Boas, father of American anthropology Franz Boas and his students developed historical particularism in the early 20th century. This approach states that each society has its own unique historical development and must be understood on the basis of its own specific cultural and environmental context, especially its historical process. Its central premise was that culture was a set of ideas or symbols in common by a group of people who see themselves as a social group (Darnell 2013:399). Historical privateists criticized the theory of 19th-century social evolution as non-scientific and proclaimed themselves free of preconceived ideas. Boas believed that there were universal laws that could be derived from the comparative study of cultures; however, he thought the ethnographic database was still not robust enough for us to identify those laws. To that end, he and his students collected a wealth of cultural data firsthand by performing ethnographic fieldwork. Based on this raw data, they described particular cultures rather than trying to establish general theories that apply to all societies. Historical privateists value fieldwork and history as critical methods of cultural analysis. At the same time, anthropologists at this theoretical school had different views on the importance of individuals in a society. For example, Frantz Boas saw each individual as the basic component of a society. It collected information from individual informants and considered that this data was valuable enough for cultural analysis. On the other hand, Alfred Kroeber did not see individuals as fundamental elements of a society. He believed that a society evolves according to its own internal laws that do not come directly from its individuals. He named this cultural aspect superorganic and stated that a society cannot be explained without considering this impersonal force. Historical particularism was a dominant trend in anthropology during the first half of the 20th century. One of the achievements of historical privateists was that they managed to exclude racism from anthropology. 19th-century evolutionists explained cultural similarities and differences by classifying societies into higher and lower categories. Historical individualists demonstrated that this labelling is based on insufficient evidence and stated that societies cannot be classified by the judgement of value of the investigators. Historical privateists were also responsible for showing the need for intensive long-term fieldwork to produce accurate descriptions of cultures. An important part of doing that was learning the study group. Learn more about anthropologists Lewis Henry Morgan: - Darnell References, Regna. Historical particularism. In Theory in and Cultural Anthropology: An Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, edited by R. Jon McGee and Richard L. Warms, 397-401. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Reference, 2013. Francisconi, Michael J. Theoretical Anthropology. In 21st Century Anthropology: A Reference Handbook, Vol. 1, edited by H. James Bix, 442-452. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Reference, 2010. Frey, Rodney. Historical particularism, as exemplified by Franz Boas (1858-1942). University of Idaho. Retrieved 27 February 2015. . Graber, Robert Bates. Social Evolution. In 21st Century Anthropology: A References Handbook, Vol. 1, edited by H. James Bix, 576-585. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Reference, 2010. Turner, Jonathan. Spencer, Herbert. In the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol. 8, edited by William A. Darity, 57-59. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. Franz Boas: Historical particularism and the franz Boas race concept (1858-1942) relied on historical particularism to guide his thinking of culture. Herbert Spencer and Lewis Morgan, on the other hand, focused on one-line evolutionism. The differences between these opposing views in anthropology are best exemplified in two areas: 1) Historical particularism argues that cultural change is not subject to orthogenetic development, i.e. in a given one-way direction. Culture is malleable. It will progress or digress in any direction that the external environment or culture itself allows. Progression and digression are certainly relative terms when one remembers that our species subsisted perfectly well without civilization for 140,000 years. 2) Historical particularism rejects any kind of uniform structure of culture. Notice, Boas states that we cannot say that the occurrence of the same phenomena is due to the same cause (275). This suggests that cultures around the world can be studied by anthropologists regardless of others. Not all societies have been radically spread and all must necessarily be classified by comparative methods. It's easy to see how Boas' ideas lead to the principle of cultural relativism in anthropology. Today, after Boas, anthropologists are expected to no longer judge or interpret cultures according to their own standards, but by the standards of the cultures they are studying. In Race and Progress, Boas says, as we insist on racial layer stratification, we will pay the penalty in the form of interracial struggle (17). Here we see Boas' ethical concerns. Career and Progress takes an inductive and argumentative stance against many of the assumptions that were being made at the time. Boas felt that attitudes, or even scientific studies, about race were based on Cultural. They were the result of the deduction in which a hypothesis is formed and then data is collected (most likely, in this case, to strengthen the hypothesis). Boas' assumptions to the reader revolve around false notions of inferiority and difference. These are assumptions that lack empirical evidence. In retrospect, an anthropologist can clearly see cases of faulty methodology. Racial differences were taken as factual and accepted without proper scientific scrutiny. This is undoubtedly due to the extreme ethnocentrism of the early twentieth century. In any case, Franz Boas was a staunch advocate of empirical thinking. He firmly believed that from the data one could obtain a hypothesis, not the other way around. In terms of anthropological studies, its methodology, in turn, creates a more scientific approach to human behavior and culture. It requires first-hand contact with cultural groups and is not based on the top-down methodology. The result of this is that we have to take into account social environments that have a very real existence (14). The crop is malleable and is susceptible to changes in time or space. It must be studied empirically. References McGee, R. & R. Warms. (2007). Anthropological theory: an introductory history. New York: McGraw-Hill Main Points American anthropologist Franz Boas founded Boasian Anthropology: he introduced the idea that culture was what was different between races and ethnicities and, therefore, was what needed to be studied to understand humanity. Boasian anthropology changed the idea of culture, as a whole, from what a person ate, drank, religious views and musical tastes, to the complete mental and physical reactions and activities that characterize the individuals of a social group. Boasian anthropology is known for dividing the discipline of anthropology to include the four subfields of linguistic, biological, archaeological and cultural anthropology, a vision that remains popular in the anthropology departments of many universities today. The most notable and attributed ideas of Boasian anthropology however are cultural relativism, dissemination, historical particularism, and the ethnography of rescue. Cultural relativism The idea that a person's activities or beliefs should be understood in the terms and values of their own culture, not that of another person. 2 Cultural relativism drew attention to the problem of ethnocentrism; which is the belief that one's own culture is more valuable or better than another. 3 Ethnocentrism leads us to make premature judgments about a culture and the people who are part of that culture. Cultural relativism also led to the formation of ethnology. Ethnology is a comparison of cultures using ethnographic data. culture. Ethnology is usually done when anthropologists enter the field - meaning they travel to a country and live with people there to get the best possible taste and experience of their culture. This data resulting from ethnography helps us understand other cultures and how they are similar and different from other cultures. Diffusion vs. The independent dissemination of the invention is the dissemination of an idea from culture to culture and independent invention is where culture forms a new idea on its own without any influence from another culture. Agriculture developed on different continents (the Americas and Asia) at the same time and because there was no transoceanic communication during its formation, we can say that it was an independent invention. However, things like customs or rituals could be transmitted through neighboring tribes through dissemination. Cultural dissemination can occur when tribes or different peoples meet or can occur when one culture enslaves another, which usually results in them having to conform to their cultural beliefs and traditions. For example, when the Gauls were enslaved by ancient Rome they adopted a belief in roman gods and traditions; almost entirely forgetting his horse-god, Epona. Boas considered it necessary to require proof of historical relationship before accepting the theory of dissemination about the theory of independent invention. Historical particularism The term historical particularism refers to the idea that each culture has its own particular and unique history that is not governed by universal laws. This idea is a great component of Boasian anthropology because it is where Boasians put their focus on the study of cultures. Historical particularism developed in contrast to Boas' rejection of Lewis Henry Morgan's idea of an evolutionary path and the use of the comparative method. The evolutionary path used generalities and universal themes to explain cultural similarities, but Boas argued that cultural traits must first be explained in terms of specific cultural contexts and not by a broad reference to general evolutionary trends. Boas and his followers would argue that cultures cannot be compared or subjected to generalities because each culture experienced a different and unique history, even if it led to a similar cultural aspect. The historical particularism and the concept of dissemination mentioned above go hand in hand. Traits that are similar among cultures may have spread through interaction between different cultures. However, while these traits are similar, they will develop different and unique stories of their movement across multiple societies. Rescue ethnography Due to the boasian's interest in the historical context of a culture, rescue ethnography becomes a significant component of the Boasian approach to anthropology. rescue ethnography is believed that all cultures matter and it is important to gather as much information as crops that may become extinct due to assimilation or acculturation. This method of Boasian anthropology was more different when Boas himself was ardently gathering and recording information about Native American cultures that threatened to be lost through assimilation to the expansion of Euro-American cultures. Rescue ethnography attaches great importance to the documentation of a culture, so even when the rituals of culture, beliefs, and customs are no longer practiced it will still be preserved over time. Key Figures Introduction Franz Boas was born on July 9, 1858 in Minden, Westphalia, Germany. Prior to his interest in anthropology, Boas studied geography, mathematics and physics at the Universities of Heidelberg, Kiel and Bonn (Dolentz). Boas later moved away from these studies when he became interested in anthropology. He then began his work with the Kwakiutl Indians of Northern Vancouver and British Columbia, Canada (Dolentz). In studying this indigenous group, Boas introduced the theory of cultural relativism, which is the idea that all people have developed cultures equally. This theory also has the belief that differences between peoples were the result of historical, social and geographical conditions (Dolentz). Franz Boas is considered the founder of American and modern anthropology. It included the expansion of sociocultural anthropology, linguistics, physical anthropology and archaeology in his works. He was a firm believer in fieldwork on office work. Boas brought the idea that cultural traits should be explained in specific cultural contexts rather than a broad reference to evolutionary trends. He said: Art and the characteristic style of a people can only be understood by studying their productions as a whole. The basic approach to Boas' work was that culture should be understood from detailed studies of specific cultures. Throughout his work, Boas influenced many students. Some of his most memorable students include: Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, Edward Sapir and Margaret Mead. Contributions, Achievements, Life Story Franz Boas received his doctorate at the age of twenty-three, in 1881, at the University of Kiel. Then he spent a year in the German army. After the armed forces, Boas studied language and culture with Native Americans, mostly Kwakiutl. His first expedition was a German expedition to the Arctic to study the Inuit in 1883. Soon after, he went to spend a year on Deffin Island in the Canadian Arctic, which led him to realize that he wants to study what determines human behavior. In 1887 Boas moved to New York, where he became the assistant officer of Science. That year was also and became a citizen of the United States. In 1888 he worked for the British Association for Science (BAAS) on the Northwest Coast. In 1889 he became a professor at Clark University. Then, in 1892, he joined the Chicago World's Fair. In 1895 Boas was appointed a member of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) where he obtained his first permanent position and was no longer concerned about finance. In 1896 he was hired as professor of physical anthropology at Columbia College. In 1899 he was promoted from professor to professor at Columbia College. In 1900 Boas was elected a member of the National Academy of Sciences. He then helped establish the American Association of Anthropology. He founded the International Journal of American Linguistics soon after. He also helped establish an archaeological field school in Mexico. Boas wrote six books and more than 700 articles in his life. A couple of his most notable books are Race, Language and Culture, and Race and Progress. He made important contributions to the study of language. In 1911 Boas showed that traits that were believed to be fixed were actually modified by the environment, through a study on cranial form. Many of his studies had to do with race. He concluded that biological differences between breeds are small. He helped establish the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Boas argued that due to intermarriage marriage and mating, there were no biologically pure breeds and that the mixture of breeds had no harmful consequences. Variations between individuals within races were greater than the differences between races. Boas' view on Anthropology is that anthropology should provide an analysis of a unique culture describing its form, the individual's dynamic reactions to culture and culture to the individual. This view clearly influenced Mead and Benedict as students. Boas argued that customs and you think are not the target of the investigation. He tried to learn why they exist, how they exist and the story behind them. His research focused more on differences between societies, rather than similarities. His research showed that biology did not determine culture, biology could be changed by the environment. Overview of key texts The main text of Boasian anthropology is Race, Language and Culture written by Franz Boas. This book was published in 1940, and speaks mainly about the search for similarities in cultures around the world. Race, language and culture is not a typical book, but rather a collection of Boas research articles. In the book Boas reveals several of the key principles that govern the laws of Boasian anthropology. Cultural relativism is the idea that all people have developed equally. Boas suggests that even though cultures are more technological or militaristic, each culture has developed to the fullest This is because according to Boas each culture is regulated by a different set of laws that are particular to that individual culture. Boas' concept of dissemination, the idea that societies borrow cultural trends from other societies they have observed, is also prevalent within their writing. The book also illustrates another of Boas's original ideas, the ethnography of rescue. The idea that absolutely everything should be observed when trying to learn about a culture. Small things can end up showing a lot about a culture, and all the things a culture has to offer must be taken into account to form a clear picture of culture. Franz Boas' race, language and culture contains very important amounts of Boas research, and is the prominent source used in Boasian anthropology. The objectives of anthropological research In this section of race, language and culture Franz Boas discusses the purposes of anthropological research. Perhaps we can better define our goal as an attempt to understand the steps by which man has become what is biologically, psychologically and culturally. Boas insists that all three factors must be taken into account to form a clear image of a civilization. Boas claims that anthropologists must act as paleontologists do to uncover human remains to understand our history. This, of course, fits into the biological aspect of Boas' definition. Boas suggests that not only should we find ancient artifacts and skeletons, but we must also observe life in today's cultures because this shows how cultures have changed overtime. Contrary to popular stereotypes and beliefs, Boas states that no phenotype has a genetic advantage over another. It supports this claim by demonstrating that a genetic line may have specific adaptations, but the entire population as a whole has a wide variety of physiological attributes. Each and every population has some members that are physiologically different from their other members. Experimental psychological studies, according to Boas can only be carried out in living races. However, Boas states that inferences can be made about past cultures by collecting historical data. Nevertheless, psychological information will be limited without a living culture to observe. Boas closes this section by stating that many of our lines of behavior are not innately human impulses, but are learned rather through culture. The Boas Ethnology Goals continue with a discussion on the field of anthropology called Ethnology. Boas defines this field as the study of human history (especially human history through the means of topics such as language, the study of culture and the study of body form. The use of these Boas techniques states that the purpose of Ethnology is critical analysis of the characteristics of each people. Calling numerous observation, both his and his contemporaries, Boas argues the importance of ethnology when looking at a group of people. For example, he mentions the discovery of the Caribbean language in Brazil to show the importance of language and the effect this discovery had on how anthropologists looked at these people. He continues to talk about how ethnology is linked to the history of culture and its inseparability. In arguing this, he states: To understand and organism it is not enough to study it as a stable form, but it must be compared with all its ascenders and descendants. In short, this section of Boas' book emphasizes the importance of looking at a group of people from multiple perspectives and on the timeline rather than looking at them from a limited understanding perspective at any given time. The Geography Study The next topic Boas discusses is geography. First he talks about how relatively new a disciplinary geography is, citing how European ships would not abandon the well-known sea routes because they feared the unknown. He continues to talk about how integral geography is to understanding a society because the land and climate in which it lives and around it plays an important role in the development of that society. Based on this, he theorizes that historians and naturalists can gather on common ground in this field. Boas then ends this section by discussing the cosmography that defines as its source in man's personal feeling towards the world, towards the phenomena that surround him. To this end, Boas continually emphasizes the importance of geography in the analysis of a people. Franz Boas' greatest criticism was that although he defined the role of culture in the development of societies, it did not have a good source of viable evidence to support the importance of culture and the properties of that culture. Although his critics agreed that his discovery of the importance of culture was an important addition to the field, they were not convinced that he would use enough evidence to justify that conclusion. Critiques of Salvage Ethnography Salvage ethnography refers to Boas' attempt to document the traditions of people approaching the extinction of their cultures. Boas was very concerned about the preservation of the cultures of past peoples that some critics of his anthropological work were uneasy about the methods he took. They were concerned that with Boas' search for evidence of past cultures, today's culture did not receive the necessary attention. They feared that current cultural practices would be ignored and would change before it had been able to be recorded due to the additional focus on the ancient culture of an area. Nature Vs. Encouraging One Boasian Anthropology's criticism is that in the debate of nutrition against nature leaned much more on the parenting side often regardless of the biological aspect that takes place within people in societies. He believed that culture and behaviors are taught and learned within a society that shapes people much more than their biology. He is criticized for ruling out the genetic makeup in his experiments by looking only at how the social environment affects a group of individuals. Cultural Determinism An ethnographer named Derek Freeman was strongly against Boasian Theory and tried to prove Boas badly by attacking Margaret Mead's book Coming of Age in Samoa (1928) after his death. Freeman wrote Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropology Myth (1986), as well as The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead: A Historical Analysis of her Samoan Research (1999), which both discussed how Mead was deceived in her research mainly because she wanted to please Boas. He claims that he had research into prejudice and that he did not know enough about Samoan culture to say that they were a peaceful and nonviolent society. Freeman, while directly attacking Mead, is also attacking Boas for putting too much pressure on his students to produce the results he wanted to help test cultural relativism as the much strongest argument about biology. Boas was trying to show that biology didn't matter as much as the environment, largely to end racism, trying to prove race as a social construct rather than a biological one. Because his opinions and objectives were so fixed, he was often criticized for setting his goals first by doing some of his experiments sesorated and not as scientifically subjective as they should have been. Been.

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