

# DOWNLOAD PDF SOCIETIES; EVOLUTIONARY AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES.

## Chapter 1 : What is Anthropology? » Anthropology » Boston University

*Both an evolutionary and a comparative perspective guides this study of societies. The evolutionary perspective conceives of the human as integral to the organic world, and human society and culture as properly analyzed in the general framework appropriate to the life process.*

Introduction[ edit ] Anthropologists and sociologists often assume that human beings have natural social tendencies and that particular human social behaviours have non- genetic causes and dynamics i. Societies exist in complex social environments i. It is thus inevitable that all societies change. Specific theories of social or cultural evolution often attempt to explain differences between coeval societies by positing that different societies have reached different stages of development. Although such theories typically provide models for understanding the relationship between technologies , social structure or the values of a society, they vary as to the extent to which they describe specific mechanisms of variation and change. These 19th-century unilineal evolution theories claimed that societies start out in a primitive state and gradually become more civilized over time; they equated the culture and technology of Western civilization with progress. Some forms of early sociocultural evolution theories mainly unilineal ones have led to much-criticised theories like social Darwinism and scientific racism , sometimes used in the past[ by whom? Most 19th-century and some 20th-century approaches aimed to provide models for the evolution of humankind as a single entity. However, most 20th-century approaches, such as multilinear evolution , focused on changes specific to individual societies. Moreover, they rejected directional change i. Most archaeologists work within the framework of multilinear evolution. Other contemporary approaches to social change include neoevolutionism , sociobiology , dual inheritance theory , modernisation theory and postindustrial theory. In his seminal book *The Selfish Gene* , Richard Dawkins wrote that "there are some examples of cultural evolution in birds and monkeys, but While expecting humankind to show increasing development, theorists looked for what determined the course of human history. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel " , for example, saw social development as an inevitable process. While earlier authors such as Michel de Montaigne " had discussed how societies change through time, the Scottish Enlightenment of the 18th century proved key in the development of the idea of sociocultural evolution. They understood the changes Scotland was undergoing as involving transition from an agricultural to a mercantile society. In "conjectural histories" , authors such as Adam Ferguson " , John Millar " and Adam Smith " argued that societies all pass through a series of four stages: Auguste Comte " Philosophical concepts of progress , such as that of Hegel, developed as well during this period. Later thinkers such as Comte de Saint-Simon " developed these ideas. These developments took place in a context of wider processes. The first process was colonialism. Although imperial powers settled most differences of opinion with their colonial subjects through force, increased awareness of non-Western peoples raised new questions for European scholars about the nature of society and of culture. Similarly, effective colonial administration required some degree of understanding of other cultures. Emerging theories of sociocultural evolution allowed Europeans to organise their new knowledge in a way that reflected and justified their increasing political and economic domination of others: Modern civilization understood as the Western civilization , appeared the result of steady progress from a state of barbarism, and such a notion was common to many thinkers of the Enlightenment, including Voltaire " The second process was the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism , which together allowed and promoted continual revolutions in the means of production. Emerging theories of sociocultural evolution reflected a belief that the changes in Europe brought by the Industrial Revolution and capitalism were improvements. Industrialisation, combined with the intense political change brought about by the French Revolution of and the U. Constitution , which paved the way for the dominance of democracy , forced European thinkers to reconsider some of their assumptions about how society was organised. Eventually, in the 19th century three major classical theories of social and historical change emerged: These theories had a common factor: Thus, each past event is not only

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chronologically, but causally tied to present and future events. The theories postulated that by recreating the sequence of those events, sociology could discover the "laws" of history. Unilinear evolution While sociocultural evolutionists agree that an evolution-like process leads to social progress, classical social evolutionists have developed many different theories, known as theories of unilinear evolution. Sociocultural evolutionism became the prevailing theory of early sociocultural anthropology and social commentary, and is associated with scholars like Auguste Comte, Edward Burnett Tylor, Lewis Henry Morgan, Benjamin Kidd, L. Hobhouse and Herbert Spencer. Sociocultural evolutionism attempted to formalise social thinking along scientific lines, with the added influence from the biological theory of evolution. If organisms could develop over time according to discernible, deterministic laws, then it seemed reasonable that societies could as well. Human society was compared to a biological organism, and social science equivalents of concepts like variation, natural selection, and inheritance were introduced as factors resulting in the progress of societies. As early as the late 18th century, the Marquis de Condorcet " listed ten stages, or "epochs", each advancing the rights of man and perfecting the human race. At that time, anthropology was rising as a new scientific discipline, separating from the traditional views of "primitive" cultures that was usually based on religious views. Spencer also developed and published his theories several years earlier than Darwin. They agree that the process of societal growth can be divided into certain stages, have[ clarification needed ] their beginning and eventual end, and that this growth is in fact social progress: Thus progressivism became one of the basic ideas underlying the theory of sociocultural evolutionism. Authors such as Edward L. Morgan " and other thinkers of the gilded age all developed theories of social evolutionism as a result of their exposure to Spencer as well as to Darwin. Morgan, an anthropologist whose ideas have had much impact on sociology, differentiated between three eras: Morgan viewed technological progress as a force behind social progress, and held that any social change "in social institutions, organizations or ideologies" has its beginnings in technological change. He believed that societies were at different stages of cultural development and that the purpose of anthropology was to reconstruct the evolution of culture, from primitive beginnings to the modern state. Tylor in England and Lewis Henry Morgan in the United States worked with data from indigenous people, who they claimed represented earlier stages of cultural evolution that gave insight into the process and progression of evolution of culture. Morgan would later[ when? Tylor and Morgan elaborated the theory of unilinear evolution, specifying criteria for categorising cultures according to their standing within a fixed system of growth of humanity as a whole and examining the modes and mechanisms of this growth. Theirs was often a concern with culture in general, not with individual cultures. Their analysis of cross-cultural data was based on three assumptions: These 19th-century ethnologists used these principles primarily to explain differences in religious beliefs and kinship terminologies among various societies. Ward, who was also a botanist and a paleontologist, believed that the law of evolution functioned much differently in human societies than it did in the plant and animal kingdoms, and theorized that the "law of nature" had been superseded by the "law of the mind". While Spencer believed that competition and "survival of the fittest" benefited human society and sociocultural evolution, Ward regarded competition as a destructive force, pointing out that all human institutions, traditions and laws were tools invented by the mind of man and that that mind designed them, like all tools, to "meet and checkmate" the unrestrained competition of natural forces. He believed that the evolutionary processes have four stages: First comes cosmogenesis, creation and evolution of the world. Then, when life arises, there is biogenesis.

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## Chapter 2 : Societies: evolutionary and comparative perspectives. by Talcott Parsons

*Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives [Talcott Parsons, Alex Inkeles] on calendrierdelascience.com*  
\*FREE\* shipping on qualifying offers. This is the first of a two-volume study of societies that pursues and expands upon comparative problems and methods pioneered by Max Weber in order to apply and further develop the general theory of action.

This article needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. Neoevolutionism is concerned with long-term, directional, evolutionary social change and with the regular patterns of development that may be seen in unrelated, widely-separated cultures. It developed extensively in the period after the Second World War and was incorporated [ by whom? Neoevolutionary theories are based on empirical evidence from fields such as archaeology , paleontology , and historiography. While the 19th-century cultural evolutionism explained how culture develops by describing general principles of its evolutionary process, it was dismissed by historical particularism as unscientific in the early 20th century. Neoevolutionary thinkers brought back evolutionary ideas and developed them, with the result that they became acceptable to contemporary anthropology. Neoevolutionism discards many ideas of classical social evolutionism , notably the emphasis on social progress , so dominant in previous sociological evolution-related theories. Neoevolutionism discards the determinism argument and introduces probability , arguing that accidents and free will have much impact on the process of social evolution. It also supports counterfactual history [ citation needed ] asking "what if? Neoevolutionism stresses the importance of empirical evidence. While 19th-century social evolutionism used value judgments and assumptions when interpreting data, neoevolutionism relies on measurable information for analyzing the process of cultural evolution. Important thinkers for neoevolutionism include: He became one of the first sociologists to claim that the evolution of society is not necessarily going in the right direction, that the social progress is not perfect it can even be called a regress as the newer, more evolved societies are obtained only after paying high costs, resulting in decreasing satisfaction of individuals making up that society. White , author of *The Evolution of Culture: The Development of Civilization to the Fall of Rome* Publication of this book rekindled interest in evolution among sociologists and anthropologists. White attempted to construct a theory explaining the entire history of humanity. The most important factor in his theory is technology: Social systems are determined by technological systems , wrote White in his book, echoing the earlier theory of Lewis Henry Morgan. As a measure of societal advance he proposed measuring the energy consumption of a given society thus his theory is known as the energy theory of cultural evolution. White introduced a formula: This theory resembles the later theory of the Kardashev scale proposed in the s by the Russian astrophysicist Nikolai Kardashev . White differentiates five stages of human development: In the first, people use energy of their own muscles. In the second, they use energy of domesticated animals. In the third, they use the energy of plants White refers to the agricultural revolution here. In the fourth, they learn to use the energy of natural resources: In the fifth, they harness nuclear energy. Julian Steward , author of *Theory of Culture Change*: He questioned the possibility of forming a single social theory encompassing the entire evolution of humanity, however he argued that anthropologists are not limited to descriptions of specific, existing cultures. He believed it possible to develop theories analysing typical, common culture, representative of specific eras or regions. As the decisive factors determining the development of given culture he pointed to technology and economics, and noted secondary factors such as like political systems, ideologies and religion. All those factors push the evolution of a given society in several directions at the same time, hence the multilinearity of his theory of evolution. Marshall Sahlins , author of *Evolution and Culture* He divided the evolution of societies into "general" and "specific" evolution, seeing general evolution as the tendency of cultural and social systems to increase in complexity, organisation and adaptiveness to their environment. However, as the various cultures are not isolated, there is interaction and a diffusion of their

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qualities. This leads cultures to deviate from the general evolution and develop in their specific, unique ways specific evolution. In his *Power and Prestige and Human Societies*: He views technological progress as the most basic factor in the evolution of societies and cultures. Unlike White, who defined technology as the ability to create and utilise energy , Lenski focuses on information –its amount and uses. The more information and knowledge especially allowing the shaping of natural environments a given society has, the more advanced it is. He distinguished four stages of human development, based on the advances in the history of communication. In the first stage, information is passed by genes. In the second, when humans gain sentience , they can learn and pass information on by experience. In the third, humans start using signs and develop logic. In the fourth, they can invent symbols , and develop language and writing. Advances in the technology of communication translate into advances in the economic and political systems , the distribution of goods , social inequality and other[ which? He also differentiates societies based on their level of technology, communication and economy:

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## Chapter 3 : Sociocultural evolution - Wikipedia

*Talcott Parsons (and Edward Shills) were major inspirations for the work of Geert Hofstede. If you want to get a good basis for moving into modern research on cultural differences I highly recommend reading Parsons.*

Are you as interested as I am in knowing how, when, and where human life arose, what the first human societies and languages were like, why cultures have evolved along diverse but often remarkably convergent pathways, why distinctions of rank came into being, and how small bands and villages gave way to chiefdoms and chiefdoms to mighty states and empires? But what is anthropology? Study of Humankind The word anthropology itself tells the basic story. Nothing human is alien to anthropology. Indeed, of the many disciplines that study our species, *Homo sapiens*, only anthropology seeks to understand the whole panorama—in geographic space and evolutionary time—of human existence. Though easy to define, anthropology is difficult to describe. Its subject matter is both exotic e. And its focus is both sweeping the evolution of language and microscopic the use-wear of obsidian tools. Anthropologists may study ancient Mayan hieroglyphics, the music of African Pygmies, and the corporate culture of a U. But always, the common goal links these vastly different projects: We are curious about ourselves and about other people, the living as well as the dead, here and around the globe. We ask anthropological questions: Do all societies have marriage customs? As a species, are human beings innately violent or peaceful? Did the earliest humans have light or dark skins? When did people first begin speaking a language? How related are humans, monkeys and chimpanzees? Such questions are part of a folk anthropology practiced in school yards, office buildings, and neighborhood cafes. But if we are all amateur anthropologists, what do the professionals study? As a discipline, anthropology begins with a simple yet powerful idea: Any detail of our behavior can be understood better when it is seen against the backdrop of the full range of human behavior. This, the comparative method, attempts to explain similarities and differences among people holistically, in the context of humanity as a whole. Anthropology seeks to uncover principles of behavior that apply to all human communities. To an anthropologist, diversity itself—seen in body shapes and sizes, customs, clothing, speech, religion, and worldview—provides a frame of reference for understanding any single aspect of life in any given community. To illustrate, imagine having our entire lives in a world of red. Our food, our clothing, our car—even the street we live on—everything around us a different shade of red. We [anthropologists] have been the first to insist on a number of things: Most important, we were the first to insist that we see the lives of others through lenses of our own grinding and that they look back on ours through ones of their own. Culture represents the entire database of knowledge, values, and traditional ways of viewing the world, which have been transmitted from one generation ahead to the next—nongenetically, apart from DNA—through words, concepts, and symbols. Cultural anthropologists study humans through a descriptive lens called the ethnographic method, based on participant observation in tandem with face-to-face interviews, normally conducted in the native tongue. Ethnographers compare what they see and hear themselves with the observations and findings of studies conducted in other societies. Originally, anthropologists pieced together a complete way of life for a culture, viewed as a whole. Today, the more likely focus is on a narrower aspect of cultural life, such as economics, politics, religion, or art. Cultural anthropologists seek to understand the internal logic of another society. It helps outsiders make sense of behaviors that, like face painting or scarification, may seem bizarre or senseless. We can turn the principle around and see our everyday surroundings in a new light, with the same sense of wonder and discovery anthropologists experience when studying life in a Brazilian rain-forest tribe. Though many picture cultural anthropologists thousands of miles from home residing in thatched huts amid wicker fences, growing numbers now study U. Linguistic Anthropology One aspect of culture holds a special fascination for most anthropologists: The organization of systems of sound into language has enabled *Homo sapiens* to transcend the limits of individual memory. Speech is the most efficient medium of communication since DNA for transmitting information across

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generations. They are fully and firmly formed; they have movement. But they cannot talk. That is the proper thing they lack. So I want you to give them speech. He gave them also the wisdom and the power to reproduce and multiply. They study prehistoric links between different societies, and explore the use and meaning of verbal concepts with which humans communicate and reason. Linguistic anthropologists seek to explain the very nature of language itself, including hidden connections among language, brain, and behavior. Language is the hallmark of our species. It is upon language that human culture itself depends. Linguistic anthropologists, of course, are not the only ones who study historical dimensions of culture. They also need information about what came before. But how can they trace the long-ago prehistory, reaching far back into the millennia, of societies that left no written record? Archaeology Fortunately, the human record is written not only in alphabets and books, but is preserved in other kinds of material remains—in cave paintings, pictographs, discarded stone tools, earthenware vessels, religious figurines, abandoned baskets—which is to say, in tattered shreds and patches of ancient societies. Archaeologists interpret this often fragmentary but fascinating record to reassemble long-ago cultures and forgotten ways of life. Archaeologists, long interested in the classical societies of Greece, Rome, and Egypt, have extended their studies in two directions—backward some 3 million years to the bones and stone tools of our protohuman ancestors, and forward to the reconstruction of lifeways and communities of 19th-century America. Biological Anthropology But human history begins in a different place further back in time. It starts about 8 million years ago, when a population of apelike creatures from eastern Africa turned onto a unique evolutionary road. To fully understand humankind we must learn more about its place in the natural habitat of living things. Biological or physical anthropology looks at *Homo sapiens* as a genus and species, tracing their biological origins, evolutionary development, and genetic diversity. Biological anthropologists study the biocultural prehistory of *Homo* to understand human nature and, ultimately, the evolution of the brain and nervous system itself. These, then, are the four main branches that make anthropology whole: Anthropology asks a most difficult and most important question: What does it mean to be human? Each of the four fields of American anthropology has its own skills, theories, and databases of special knowledge. Most anthropologists, therefore, pursue careers in only one of the four subdisciplines. Anthropologists may specialize in two or more geographic areas of the world, such as Oceania, Latin America, and Africa, for reasons of comparison. More than U. Because the subject matter of anthropology is so broad, an undergraduate major or concentration can be part of a broad liberal arts background for men and women interested in medicine, government, business, and law. There are more nonacademic career opportunities available to PhD anthropologists, currently, than there are jobs in the academy itself. Increasingly, PhD students begin their training with academic as well as nonacademic careers in mind, and seek admission to programs that include applied-anthropology courses. Academic Work Setting Academic settings include departments of anthropology, nonanthropology departments e. Nonacademic Work Setting In recent years, many anthropologists have chosen to utilize their specialized training in a variety of nonacademic careers. Cultural and linguistic anthropologists work in federal, state, and local government, international agencies, healthcare centers, nonprofit associations, research institutes, and marketing firms as research directors, science analysts, and program officers. Biological anthropologists work in biomedical research, human engineering, private genetics laboratories, and pharmaceutical firms. Archaeologists work off campus in environmental projects, human-impact assessment, and resource management. At present there is no discernible limit for PhD anthropologists targeting the nonacademic realm for employment. Today, half of new doctorates find professional jobs off campus. Additional information on careers in anthropology is available from AAA. This article was written by David Givens, and appears courtesy of the American Anthropological Association. Its purposes are to encourage research, promote the public understanding of anthropology, and foster the use of anthropological information in addressing human problems. Anyone with a professional or scholarly interest in anthropology is invited to join. For further details, please contact AAA at [www.aaa.org](http://www.aaa.org).

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