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Chapter 2: Why Is the Concept of Culture Important?

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. The human condition is distinguished from the condition of other living species by

* a. Culture.

b. Learning.

c. Nature.

d. Openness.

2. Culture is

a. Learned.

b. Shared.

c. Symbolic.

* d. All of the above.

3. "Patterns of learned behavior and ideas that human beings acquire as members of society, together with the material artifacts and structures humans create and use" is an anthropological definition of

a. Symbols.

* b. Culture.

c. Language.

d. Cognition.

4. Those parts of culture that are unconsciously absorbed in the course of daily practical learning are called

a. Cultural basics.

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* b. Habitus.

c. Symbolic.

d. Unaware culture.

5. Which term highlights the ways in which human beings must learn to pattern and adapt their behavior to what is considered appropriate in the society in which they are living?

a. Enculturation.

* b. Socialization.

c. Accommodation.

d. Assimilation.

6. Which term highlights the ways in which human beings must learn to pattern and adapt their ways of thinking and feeling to the ways of thinking and feeling considered appropriate in the culture in which they were born?

* a. Enculturation.

b. Socialization.

c. Accommodation.

d. Assimilation.

7. According to Rick Potts (as mentioned in the text), which of the following is NOT one of the key elements that forms the foundation of culture?

a. Memory.

b. Transmission.

* c. Genetics.

d. Selection.

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8. According to Rick Potts (as mentioned in the text), culture

   a. Represents a sharp break between human beings and other animals.

* b. Demonstrates continuity between the human and animal realms of behavior.

   c. Is less important than genetics in shaping human behavior.

   d. First appeared about 100,000 years ago.

9. To say that culture and the human brain coevolved is to say that

* a. Each provided key features of the environment to which the other needed to adapt.

   b. Genetic changes in human beings are related to language.

   c. Biology is less important to modern human beings than it was in the ancient past.

   d. Human social organization is ancient.

10. The approach that attempts to explain human nature as the product of the dialectical interpenetration of object and environment is called

    a. Dualism.

* b Holism.

    c. Reductionism.

    d. None of the above.

11. Karl Marx and his followers argued that the forces shaping a human being's self-understanding were rooted in

    a. Environmental pressures.

    b. Cultural relations, particularly religion.

* c. Social relations shaped by the mode of economic production.

    d. Genetics and human biology.

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12. According to the text, to argue that what it means to be human is the outcome of experiences human beings undergo over the course of their lives is to argue that

* a. There is no fixed essence to human beings.

b. Human beings are determined by genetic factors.

c. Personality determines human experiences.

d. All human beings share the same universal essence.

13. The claim that human life is shaped by external physical forces like climate or the presence of domesticable animals is called

a. Cultural determinism.

* b. Environmental determinism.

c. Sociohistorical determinism.

d. Interactional determinism.

14. The claim that the ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values that people learn as members of society determine their behavior

a. Is an idealist position.

b. Has been called cultural determinism.

c. Can be understood to imply that "you are what you are conditioned to be."

* d. Is all of the above.

15. The phrase "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" describes the position of

a. Historical materialism.

b. Idealism.

c. Biological determinism.

* d. Holism.

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16. Clifford Geertz, as quoted in the text, observes that human beings raised in isolation would be

    a. Failed apes.

    b. Fully human.

* c. Mental basket cases.

    d. The real animal that is ordinarily hidden under the veneer of culture.

17. To describe parts and wholes as mutually defining, or codetermining, each other is to speak

* a. Holistically.

    b. Reductionistically.

    c. Materialistically.

    d. Deterministically.

18. An approach that views human beings and environments as open systems that modify each other is called

    a. Biological reductionism.

    b. Cultural determinism.

* c. Coevolutionary.

    d. Historical materialism.

19. Hoyt Alverson discovered that U.S. Peace Corps volunteers in Botswana had difficulty with their assignments, in part because

    a. People would always leave them alone.

* b. Actions that meant one thing to them meant something else to their Tswana hosts.

    c. The Tswana were not interested in their projects.

    d. All of the above.

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20. Hoyt Alverson discovered that the Tswana people he talked to in Botswana and the U.S. Peace Corps volunteers he interviewed differed with regard to

a. How work should be done.

* b. The meaning of being alone.

c. Walking through fields with crops still in them.

d. How anger should be expressed.

21. The opinion that one's own way of life is natural or correct and the only true way of being fully human is called

a. Cultural relativism.

b. Cultural determinism.

* c. Ethnocentrism.

d. Egocentrism.

22. Understanding another culture sympathetically enough so that it appears to be a coherent and meaningful design for living is called

a. Interactionism.

* b. Relativism.

c. Holism.

d. All of the above.

23. Genocide is

* a. The attempt to exterminate an entire people.

b. Denying that another culture has an independent identity.

c. The attempt to keep a group of people from living according to their own cultural patterns.

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d. A symbolic act that denies the legitimacy of another group.

24. Cultural relativism

a. Requires us to abandon every value our own culture has taught us.

b. Makes it possible for us to prove the way a people's culture makes them do things whether they like it or not.

* c. Requires us to take many things into account before we form opinions about other cultural practices.

d. Frees us from having to face choices between alternatives whose "rightness" and "wrongness" is less than clear-cut.

25. Which of the following is an example of ritual cutting associated with initiating girls and boys into adulthood?

a. Clitoridectomy.

b. Infibulation.

c. Circumcision.

* d. All of the above.

26. Women who are trying to eliminate female genital cutting from their own African societies are often not happy when American outsiders like Mary Daly and Alice Walker denounce the practice as a human rights abuse. Why?

a. When outsiders publicly condemn traditional rituals like clitoridectomy and infibulation, they may do more harm than good.

b. Outsiders' condemnations of female genital cutting sound too much like the ethnocentric, reductionist critiques of "barbaric" African customs that Europeans once used to justify colonial conquest.

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c. Western women who want to help eliminate female genital cutting are likely to be more effective if they pay close attention to what African women who are directly affected by the practice have to say about its meaning in their lives.

* d. All of the above are true.

27. When immigrants and refugees from Africa bring traditions of female genital cutting to places like the United States and the European Union, what has been the consequence?

a. Growing awareness has led to public condemnation of the practice.

b. Laws have been passed that criminalize female genital cutting in 15 African states and 10 industrialized nations, including the United States.

c. Immigrant or refugee mothers in the United States who seek to have their daughters ritually cut have been stigmatized in the media as "mutilators" or "child abusers."

* d. All of the above are true.

28. When the anthropologist Janice Boddy carried out fieldwork in northern Sudan, what did she learn about genital cutting?

a. Only girls were subjected to genital cutting.

* b. Female circumcision is required to make it possible for a girl to use her fertility.

c. Female circumcision is required for a girl to become a woman.

d. Females undergoing genital cutting in the village where she lived rarely suffered physically as a result of the procedure.

29. Janice Boddy learned that to infibulate a female body in Hofriyat meant

a. To renew and protect its fertility after giving birth.

b. To make it clean and smooth and pure.

c. To deemphasize a woman's sexuality and turn women into "mothers of men."

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* d. All of the above.

30. Which of the following objects in the village of Hofriyat were associated with the infibulated female body?

a. Waterbirds.

b. Ostrich eggshells.

c. Tinned foods.

* d. All of the above.

31. In Hofriyat, the ability of an object to retain moisture is likened to its ability to retain fertility, likening a woman's infibulated body to

a. A dried, egg-shape gourd with seeds that rattle inside it.

b. The squat, round pottery jar with a tiny opening at the top that is used to prepare the family's staple food.

c. The house and all enclosed areas of the village.

* d. All of the above.

32. What did Boddy's field research teach her about the meanings associated with infibulation in Hofriyat?

a. Men and women in Hofriyat have been unable to resist cultural pressure in favor of infibulation.

* b. The meanings associated with female infibulation are reinforced by so many different aspects of everyday life that girls come to consider the operation a profoundly necessary and justifiable procedure.

c. A less radical form of the operation was promoted after 1969, but never gained acceptance among villagers.

d. All of the above.

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33. Which of the following is NOT an assumption of cultural determinism regarding human nature and human society?

a. Cultures have clear boundaries.

b. Every culture offers people only one way to interpret their experience.

* c. Every set of cultural practices contains fundamental contradictions.

d. Human beings are passively molded by culture.

34. The text explains that to argue that "their culture made them do it" is to take a position that is

* a. Too simplistic.

b. Culturally relativistic.

c. Ethnocentric.

d. Environmentally deterministic.

35. The anthropological definition of cultural relativism requires that we make an effort to ____ the practices of other cultures.

a. Approve.

b. Excuse.

c. Judge.

* d. Understand.

36. When human beings exercise at least some control over their own behavior, they are said to be

* a. Agents.

b. Cultural.

c. Holistic.

d. Reductionists.

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37. When anthropologists distinguished between *Culture* and *cultures*, they were distinguishing between _____ and _____.

a. Different traditions of learned behavior; the ability to learn and create sets of behaviors and ideas.

* b. A defining attribute of human beings; ways of life of specific groups of people.

c. The fine arts; local traditions of human beings.

d. The genetic programming that sets humans apart from other animals; the ways in which that programming works in specific places.

38. The text quotes Michel-Rolph Trouillot, who claims that as the social sciences were becoming established at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, anthropology was assigned the "savage slot." What does he mean by that?

a. Early anthropologists were difficult to deal with in universities.

b. It is a metaphor for the way the categories of the social sciences were set up to cover the different categories of peoples and topics scholars thought relevant at the time.

c. Anthropologists became the experts on the societies that were being colonized by European countries and the United States.

* d. Both b and c.

39. According to the anthropologist Eric Luke Lassiter, does the fact that Kiowas are Christians today show that federal officials and missionaries succeeded in their policies of Western cultural imperialism?

a. Yes, because the Christianizing of the Kiowa is the story of how one set of beliefs replaced another one wholesale.

b. Yes, because the U.S. government put an end to the Kiowa Sun Dance, the centerpiece of Kiowa ceremonies.

c. Yes, because missionaries arrived as the buffalo were disappearing and Kiowa people were being confined to reservations.

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* d. None of the above are correct.

40. According to the anthropologist Eric Luke Lassiter, which of the following statements accurately describes how the Kiowa people dealt with Christianity?

a. The Kiowa "kiowanized" Christianity.

b. Kiowa Christian hymns, sung in the Kiowa language, are as much Kiowa (if not more) as they are Christian.

c. Some Kiowa Christians insist that Christianity is not the same as "the white man's way."

* d. All of the above are true.

41. Perhaps the most profound lesson we can learn from the Kiowa experience of Christianity is

* a. The way in which Kiowa Christians have been able to transform what began as an exercise in cultural imperialism into a reaffirmation of traditional Kiowa values challenges the presumption that "authentic cultures" never change.

b. Christian missionaries and the U.S. Army effectively destroyed traditional Kiowa spirituality.

c. An indigenous society cannot remain authentic if its members abandon their traditional religious practices by converting to a different religion.

d. Kiowa conversion to Christianity hastened the demise of the Kiowa language.

42. Critics identify problems with several assumptions of the traditional plural concept of culture in anthropology. Which of the following is NOT one of those problems?

a. Group members uncritically accept the differences between themselves and other groups.

b. Group members end up having to live according to "their" culture and cannot change it.

c. Group members who challenge traditional ways of doing things are accused of being "traitors" to their group.

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* d. All of the above are problems that are identified.

43. By the end of the twentieth century, some anthropologists became concerned that the plural use of culture

    a. Is liberating.

* b. Can be oppressive.

    c. Takes account of the importance of learning in human beings.

    d. Makes it possible to compare cultures.

Essay Questions

44. Give an actual or invented example of ethnocentrism and discuss the range of possible perspectives on the practice in question that might be held by members and outsiders of the society where it is found.

45. "Our dependence on culture is total. Without it, we cannot survive as biological organisms." Discuss.

46. The goal of cultural relativism is understanding. However, to understand does not mean to condone. How would an anthropologist, from a relativistic point of view, explain a cultural practice like genocide (for example, the Nazis' attempt to exterminate the Jews)?

47. There has been an enormous amount of discussion in recent years concerning the source (and importance) of behavioral differences distinguishing men from women in our own and other cultures. Choose two of the perspectives on human nature discussed in your text and describe the way each perspective would explain particular differences between men and women.

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48. What does it mean to “write against culture”? Discuss the issues involved in this debate.

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