

Anthropology

CSS-2021

Q #03

Define descent group. Briefly describe the different forms of descent group.

Introduction:

Imagine a tapestry woven with threads of heritage, connecting generations across time. This intricate web of relationships form the heart of descent groups, a fascinating concept in the realm of human social structure. Descent groups are like chapters in a story of shared ancestry, binding individuals together through common beliefs about their roots. From patrilineal pathways that honor the strength of male lineage to matrilineal ties that celebrate the nurturing power of the female line, descent group offers a lens into complex choreography of inheritance, identity and belonging within societies.

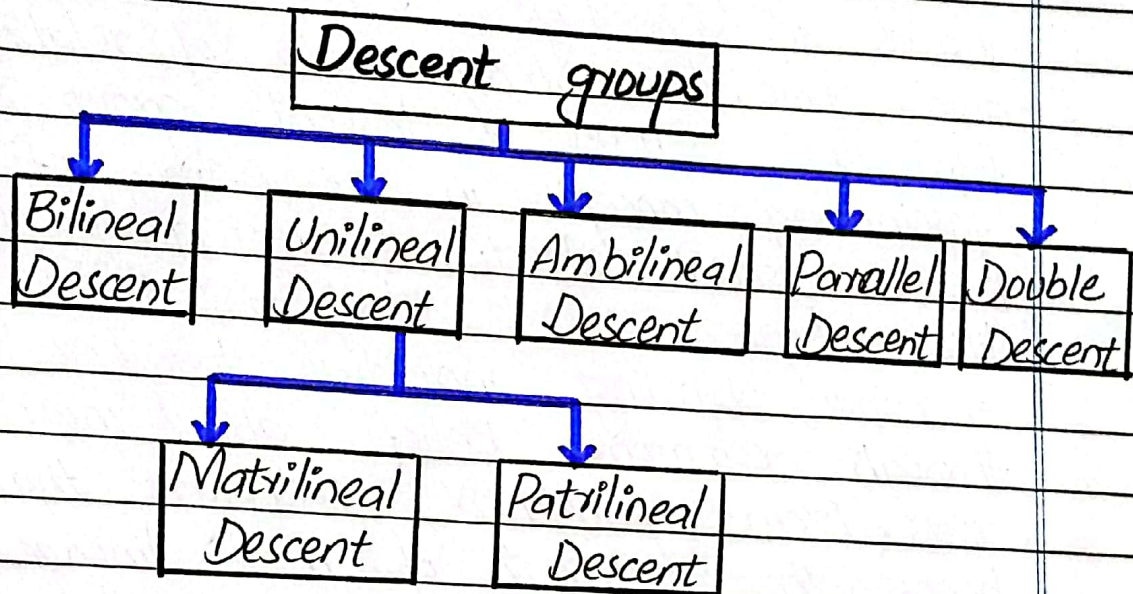
Descent Group:

A descent group is a social unit in which individuals share a common belief in their shared ancestry, typically tracing back to a particular ancestor or ancestress. Descent group play a fundamental role in kinship systems, social organization, inheritance, and

identity within various societies. They serve various social, economic and ritual functions. They are central to anthropological studies of kinship and social organizations.

Types of Descent groups:

Different types of the descent groups are given below:



1- Bilineal Descent:

This descent traced through both sexes: mother and father, sister and brother, daughter and son, and so on. In bilineal descent, males descend through males, females through females. Some of its characters are given below:

a → Descent is traced equally from both parents.

b → Married couples live away from their parents

c → Inheritance is allocated equally between siblings.

d → Dominant in foraging and industrial culture.

Example:

The United state often uses bilateral descent in its legal and social systems, recognizing kinship on both maternal and paternal side.

2- Unilineal Descent:

It is a kinship system where individuals trace their ancestry and inheritance through only one line, either the maternal (matrilineal) or paternal (patrilineal) line, but not both. A brief introduction to the two primary forms of unilineal descent is given as:

a) Matrilineal Descent:

It's A kinship system in which individuals trace their ancestry and inheritance through maternal line. In matrilineal societies, individuals automatically become members of their mother's descent group at birth and remain part of it throughout their lives.

Characteristics:

- a) kinship is traced through the female line, emphasizing the importance of maternal relatives.
- b) Women often have control over land, resources and the products of their labour.

c) Matrilineal descent is found in regions such as the Pacific, Australia and some parts of the Mediterranean coast.

Example:-

The **Khasi people** in northeastern **India** follow matrilineal descent, where family and inheritance are traced through the mother's line and husbands often move into their wives' households after marriage.

b) Patrilineal Descent:

It is a kinship system in which individuals trace their ancestry and inheritance through paternal line. In patrilineal societies, individuals automatically become members of their father's descent group at birth and maintain this affiliation throughout their lives.

Characteristics:

- i- Kinship is traced through male line, often leading to the concentration of power, property and social positions in the hands of males.
- ii- Girls are often raised to marry into other patrilineages, emphasizing the transfer of women to other families.

iii- Patrilineal descent is prevalent in regions such as East and South Asia and the Middle East.

C-Agnates and Cognates:

Within patrilineal descent two important terms are used:-

i- Agnates: Members of same patrilineal descent group (those who share a common male ancestor).

ii- Cognates: Kin related through either father (male filiation) or the mother (Female Filiation).

Example:

The **Ashanti people of Ghana** practice patrilineal descent, where lineage, inheritance and family identity are primarily traced through the father's line. Sons inherit and maintain family property, and traditional roles often emphasize male figures in society.

3- Parallel Descent:-

In parallel descent, an individual is a member of both their mother's matrilineal descent group and their father's patrilineal descent group. This system often leads to a division of social roles and resources along gender lines, with certain roles or property passing through the

male line (patrilineal) and others through the female line (matrilineal).

Example:-

An example of a society that practice parallel descent is the **Toda people of Southern India**. Among the Toda, individuals inherit land and property through their fathers (patrilineal) but they also have important social and ceremonial roles tied to mother's lineage (matrilineal).

4- Double Descent:-

Also known as "Bifurcate merging" is a kinship system found in some societies where individuals are members of both their mother's and father's descent group simultaneously. In this system, a person's ancestry is traced through both maternal and paternal lines, and they may belong to two separate but equally significant descent groups. This dual affiliation can have social, economic and ritual implications within the society practicing double descent.

Example:-

An Example of double descent can be found among the **Yako people of Nigeria**. Among the Yako, individuals belong to both their father's

patrilineal descent group and their mothers matrilineal descent group. This system allows for a more balanced distribution of rights, responsibilities and resources between the two sides of an individual's family.

5) Ambilineal / Cognitive descent:-

Cognitive descent groups are flexible, allowing individuals to choose which side of the family to affiliate with for various purposes. It is a principle of descent that does not automatically exclude the children of either sons or daughters.

Example:-

Among the **Kpelle people in Liberia**, cognitive descent permits individuals to switch between patrilineal and matrilineal affiliation for different social and economic reasons.

Some Unique Descent Groups:

6) Clan and lineages

Clan and lineages are larger and more complex descent groups that often consist of multiple branches with a shared genealogical connections. They typically have a common legendary ancestor.

Example:

In many **Native American cultures**, clan and lineages play

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crucial roles in social organizations, religious practices and leadership structure!

7- Hawaiian Kinship:-

Hawaiian Kinship is a unique system that uses generational categories rather than strict descent lines. It groups individuals into broad categories based on age and generations. It is found among the Hawaiian Islanders and is known for its complex web of relationships.

Conclusions:

Descent groups, whether patrilineal, matrilineal, bilateral or cognatic, serves as essential social structures that shape kinship, inheritance and identity in various cultures.

Q#04

Compare and contrast assimilation, integration and marginalization with examples.

Introduction:

Assimilation, integration and marginalization, types of acculturation - the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups, are three distinct processes that describe how

individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds interact and adapt within a large society. Each process has its own implications for cultural identity, social cohesion, and participation in the broader community. In this comparison, there are key characteristics of these processes and provide examples to illustrate their differences and similarities.

Comparing Paths: Assimilation, Integration and Marginalization

Brief Comparison

Integration	Assimilation	Marginalization
- When there is an interest in adopting the behaviours and values of the new culture, while still maintaining the original culture.	- When an individual abandons their original culture and adopts the cultural behaviours and values of their new culture.	When it is not really possible to maintain one's original culture, but because of exclusion or discrimination, it is assimilated into new culture.

i. Integration: A Mosaic of culture

Integration refers to a process where individuals or groups from diverse cultural backgrounds maintain their distinct identities and traditions while

also participating in and contributing to the broader society or culture.

According to Julie Bishop, integration is a celebration of diversity.

“Integration is not just about race, or ethnicity; it's about a diversity of thoughts, experience and background.”

- Carla Hayden

Characteristics:-

- i- Promotes cultural diversity within a society.
- ii- Encourages mutual respect and acceptance of different cultures.
- iii- Allows individuals to maintain their cultural heritage while actively engaging with dominant culture.
- iv- can lead to the enrichment and blending of different cultural elements.

Anthropologists study integration to examine how societies manage diversity and promote inclusivity while respecting cultural differences.

Example:-

Canada is often cited as a country that promotes integration. In Canada, multiculturalism, is an official policy, which means that people from various cultural backgrounds are encouraged to maintain their

unique identities while participating fully in Canadian society. This approach has led to ~~maintain~~ a mosaic of diverse cultures co-existing within the country.

ii- Assimilation: The Melting Pot Idea

Assimilation is a process in which individuals or groups from a minority culture adopt the values, norms, and practice of dominant culture to the extent that they become indistinguishable from dominant group. As there is a famous saying:-

"When in Rome, do as Romans do."

Actually, Assimilation is the acceptance of the unacceptable.

Anthropologists often study assimilation to understand how it **affects** cultural identity, social cohesion, and power dynamics within a society.

-Characteristics:-

i- Typically involves the loss or weakening of the minority culture's distinct identity.

ii- Can lead to cultural homogenization

iii- Often driven by pressure or incentives to conform to the dominant culture.

iv- May result in social mobility and

economic opportunities for those who assimilate.

Example:-

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many **European** immigrants to the **United States** went through the process of assimilation. They learned English, adopted American customs, and eventually became part of the mainstream American culture, often leaving behind many aspects of their original cultural identities.

iii-Marginalization: The Fringe of Society

Marginalization occurs when individuals or groups are pushed to the fringes of society, denied access to resources, opportunities and full participation in the dominant culture, often as a result of discrimination or exclusion.

It is a negative aspect of society and caused by many reasons.

"No-one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate and if they can learn

to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite".

- Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela's ... this saying is a hope for a Just society without any discrimination.

Anthropologists analyze marginalization to understand the **consequences** of social inequality, discrimination and power imbalances within a society.

Characteristics:-

- i- Often results from power imbalance and unequal access to resources.
- ii- Can lead to social, economic, and political disadvantages for marginalized groups.
- iii- May result in preservation of the marginalized group's distinct identity, but often in a context of discrimination and limited opportunities.

Example:-

The Roma population in Europe and Dalits in India have historically been marginalized due to their caste status. They have faced social exclusion, discrimination;

and limited access to education and economic opportunities. Anthropologists have studied this phenomenon to highlight the impact of caste based marginalization.

In Simple Words, Assimilation and Integration

both involve the interaction of different cultures, but they differ in the degree of cultural preservation. Assimilation typically implies a more complete adoption of dominant culture, while integration allows for cultural retention.

Marginalization, on the other hand, is a process of exclusion and disadvantage, often resulting from unequal power dynamics and discrimination. It can occur even when individuals or groups resist assimilation or integration.

Conclusion:-

Assimilation, Integration, and marginalization represent different ways in which individuals or groups interact with dominant cultures. These processes have profound social and cultural implications and are often influenced by historical, political, and economic factors.

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Q #2

What are the four fields of anthropology and how are they related to each other?

Introduction:

Anthropology, the study of humanity in all its dimensions, is divided into four interconnected subfields: cultural, archaeological, linguistic and biological. These subfields offer a holistic understanding of humanity. Cultural and linguistic anthropologists explore contemporary societies and the connection between culture and language. Archaeologists uncover our historical past, and biological anthropologists study human evolution and genetics. These fields collaborate to provide a comprehensive perspective on the complex human experience across time and cultures.

Anthropology:-

The word "anthropology" comes from the Greek **Anthropos** meaning human and **logia** meaning study. So, Anthropology is the study of people everywhere - today, yesterday,

and long ago. Anthropologists study people from every angle.

Fields and Branches of Anthropology:

The fields / Branches of Anthropology are given as:

1- Cultural Anthropology	2- Physical Anthropology
3- Applied Anthropology	
4- Linguistic Anthropology	5- Archaeology

1- Cultural Anthropology:

Cultural Anthropology is the study of human cultures all around the world.

MJ Herskovits in his book 'Man and his work' 1955, point out that cultural anthropology studies the way, devised way to cope with natural settings and social milieu and how bodies of customs are retained and handed over from one generation to the next.

Culture includes behaviour and ideas,

and includes topics like clothing, food, housing, marriage and families, political structure, economics, religion, art and much more. Anthropologists in this field examine the customs, beliefs, behaviours and social structures of different cultures around the world.

There are many sub-fields in cultural Anthropology, and here's just a few examples:-

- i-** Legal Anthropology: The study of law in the culture.
- ii-** Business Anthropology: Applying anthropology to business.
- iii-** Environmental Anthropology: The study of humans and the environment.
- iv-** Medical Anthropology: The study of health and illness.

2. Biological or Physical Anthropology:-

It is the study of human body. Biological anthropology examines the biological aspects of human evolution and variation.

Paul Broca defines ^{biological} anthropology as "the science of whose objective is the study of humanity considered as a whole in its parts and in relationship to the

rest of the nature."

Biological anthropologists investigate questions related to human origins, the development of this species and the biological diversity of humans. It includes:

i- Paleoanthropology: Studying human biological evolution by fossils.

ii- Human Variation and adaptation: Studying physical differences among humans and how humans have adapted to their environment.

iii- Forensic Anthropology: Studying human remains (human bones).

iv- Primatology: Studying the category of primates, since ^{we} as humans are primates. Other primates include chimpanzees and gorillas.

3. Archaeology:

The word archaeology is derived from two Greek words 'Arkaios' means 'ancient' and 'logos' means study. So, it is the study of human activities in the past. It is the study of what human left behind, through excavation (digging things up).

Archaeology involves the study of past human societies and cultures through the analysis of material remains such as artifacts, structures and fossils. Archaeologists excavate and analyze physical evidences to reconstruct the lifestyles, technologies and social structures of ancient civilizations. It helps to understand human history and development of societies overtime. It includes:-

i- Prehistoric Archaeology: Constitutes 99% of human history. studies the past of people who don't have writings.

ii- Historic Archaeology: Studying the past of people who do have writing.

iii- Underwater Archaeology: Where archaeologists excavate things under water, like shipwrecks.

4- Anthropological Linguistics:-

It is the study of human language. This includes verbal and non-verbal communication.

Linguistic anthropology focuses on the study of human language and its role in cultural and society.

Linguistic anthropologists investigate how language is used to communicate,

convey meaning and shape social interactions. They also explore the relationship between language and identity, as well as how languages **evolve and change** over time.

Some examples of things linguistics involves are:-

i-Semantic: the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences.

ii-Syntax: the structure of phrase and sentence.

iii-Morphology: Word formation

iv- Phonology: The sound of language.

v- Language acquisition: learning a language.

vi- language variation: Varieties of a language.

5. Applied Anthropology:

It is the 5th field of Anthropology. Applied anthropology uses these 4 fields of Anthropology to **Solve Real-World problems.**

For example, a corporate anthropologist works with a company, doing market research to find out what consumers like and dislike.

→ Interaction between Anthropological Subfields:-

Anthropology is a multifaceted discipline that seeks to comprehensively understand the complexities of human

experience. The sub-fields of anthropology operate in tandem, often overlapping and enriching each other's research. These interconnections highlight the holistic nature of anthropology inquiry and how each subfield contributes to a more profound understanding of humanity.

i- Biological Anthropology and Archaeology-

Biological anthropologists and archaeologists collaborate to uncover evidence of ancient human population.

For instance, the excavation of **hominid fossils** and the analysis of ancient **DNA** provides critical insight into human evolution. Researchers have used DNA extracted from **ancient Remains** to trace migration patterns of humans, shedding light on how our species spread across the globe.

ii- Cultural Anthropology and Biological Anthropology-

The interplay between culture and biology is a rich area of exploration.

For instance, cultural practices such as **Diet** and **Subsistent strategy** can significantly impact

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human biology. cultural anthropologists might study the **dietary habits** of a community, while biological anthropologists can analyze the **physiological effects** of these diets on individuals, helping to understand the intricate relationships between culture and health.

iii-linguistic Anthropology and Archaeology:-

linguistic anthropologists and archaeologists collaborate to decipher the languages of ancient civilization through inscriptions, manuscripts and oral traditions. These linguistic insights provide essential context for interpreting archaeological finds.

For instance, the decipherment of ancient **Mayan hieroglyphs** has illuminated the history, politics and culture of Maya civilizations, showcasing the synergy between linguistic and archaeological research.

iv. Cultural Anthropology and linguistic Anthropology:-

Cultural and linguistic anthropologists often work together

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to understand the role of language in culture. By examining how languages encode cultural concepts and worldviews, they uncover how language shapes human thought and behaviour. **For instance,** the study of **kinship terms** and **naming practices** in a society can ~~be~~ reveal underlying cultural values and social structure.

Conclusions-

The four fields of anthropology provide complementary perspectives on the human experience, and their interconnections contribute to a holistic understanding of our species, encompassing both our cultural and biological dimensions.
