

The Culture Wheel

A Graphic Organizer for Cultural Studies

This is a simple and quick way to organize common traits that cultures share. Most anthropologists will divide cultures into two main groups: complex and simple. Simple cultures tend to have less technology and used to be called “primitive.” Although different on the surface because of their many variations – complex cultures still have the same basic traits as simple cultures.

Common elements:

1. Economics – The way they make their living
 - a. Technology, tools, machines and skills
 - b. Forms of money
 - c. Division of labor
2. Religion and beliefs – attitudes towards the unknown
 - a. mystical beliefs and superstitions
 - b. recognized/organized religions
 - c. religious practices
 - d. myths and legends
3. Social institutions – systems of organization and control
 - a. family and marital organization
 - b. child rearing
 - c. rites of passage
 - d. educational systems
 - e. means of conflict resolution (laws, customs, war)
4. Art – means of expression
 - a. music, drama, dance, paintings, sculpture
 - b. architecture
 - c. folklore
5. Language – means of communication
 - a. verbal
 - b. non-verbal
6. Basic necessities - food, clothing, and shelter
 - a. types and taboos
 - b. types of production
 - c. animal use
 - d. clothing types and adornment
 - e. shelter ideology
 - f. transportation
7. Recreation – use of leisure time
 - a. types of games (purpose of games?)
 - b. leisure ideologies
8. Government and authority
 - a. who governs
 - b. how are people governed

Culture:

Economics

Beliefs

Institutions

Arts

Language

Necessities

Recreation

Government

