

## Anthropological Theory

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The Editors encourage all papers explicitly addressing issues of theory within anthropology. They are especially interested in the following, five sorts of submissions. Those dealing: 1. with particular concepts important in theory; 2. arguing particular theories; 3. investigating metatheory; and 4. exploring theorists and traditions; and 5. examining the history of the development of theoretical positions.

There are no strict word limits, for some articles 6,000 might be all they need while other need 10,000 (maximum). But the editors ask that writing be parsimonious, arguments be tight, and anything not clearly within the framing of the argument be eliminated.

**Concepts:** The Editors welcome papers that evaluate concepts. They welcome suggestion of new concepts that contribute to innovative theorizing. Equally, they encourage evaluation of existing concepts. Are they too broad, too narrow, too vague, too ambiguous? Is it possible to make observations bearing upon them?

**Theory:** A distinction might be made between theories and paradigms. Paradigms are broad research traditions composed of numbers of theories. The Editors believe that theory exhibits the following characteristics:

1. **Explicitness:** Certain anthropologists believe that theories may be both implicit and explicit. Implicit theories are those that are suggested for some reason, though not formally expressed, in a text. Because they not actually articulated they are more likely to be subject to vagueness and ambiguity. More robust theories are ones that as unambiguously and clearly as possible state a theory.
2. **Explanation and Understanding:** Theory offers explanation or understanding of different actualities. Anthropological theory seeks explanation and understanding of the human condition.
3. **Statements of relationships between concepts:** Anthropological theories are statements specifying relationships between concepts that explain or provide understanding of occurrences in the human condition. A single concept is not a theory. A gaggle of unrelated concepts is not a theory.

For example, Durhkeim's theory of suicide involved two concepts and one relationship. The concepts were 'integration' and 'deviance'. The relationship between the concepts was an inverse one: The less closely persons were integrated in social groups, the more likely they were to be deviant. Suicide was a form of deviance, and Durhkeim believed he had found evidence the showed people in 19th century France who were less integrated exhibited greater deviance because the committed more suicide.

1. **Generality and abstraction:** The concepts in theories vary in generality and abstraction. The more general and abstract concepts are, the more they are able to explain and/or understand. Theoretical statements, largely arising from observation, that are relative low in generality and abstraction are said to be 'empirical generalizations'; those that are of the highest generality and abstraction are said to be 'theories'; and those inferred from theory are said to be 'hypotheses'.
2. **Validation:** Theoretical statements without a reason to believe them are of little interest. Validation provides a reason for belief. It is the provision of information that what an explanation or understanding says will occur actually occurs.
3. **Theorizing:** Theory formulation involves theorizing of which there are two parts: Formulation of theoretical statements and their validation.

The Editors will be delighted to receive articles that present explicit theoretical statements with some validation that deal with occurrences in the human condition of significance.

**Metatheory:** Metatheory, as the Editors understand it, concerns epistemological analysis of theory. Its subject matter is the nature of anthropological theory and theorizing in order to be able to formulate more robust theory. This means addressing questions like: What is theory? Is scientific theory the better way to investigate the human condition? What are explanation, understanding, objectivity, truth, evidence in the anthropological context? What is the difference between theories and paradigms? What methods are appropriate for anthropological theorizing?

**Theorists and Traditions:** The Editors welcome explorations of particular theorists and research traditions. They are interested arguments concerning their strengths, weaknesses, and significance. They will be especially delighted to learn of theorists and traditions beyond anthropology that are of interest to it.

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