Comparing Food Collectors to Agriculturalists Exercise

Adapted from Teaching eHRAF Exercise 1.21: Exercise III. Food by Carol Ember.
In this exercise, students will compare and contrast social and political dimensions of life between a Native American hunter-gatherer group and an agricultural group.

FOOD COLLECTORS VS AGRICULTURALISTS
EXERCISE DETAILS

TIME: 15-20 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

➤ Worksheet and pen or other materials for recording answers

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this Exercise, students will be able to:

➤ construct effective and efficient search strategies in eHRAF in order to retrieve data relevant to a specific topic/assignment.

➤ observe and analyze relationships between socio-political organization and subsistence methods

➤ gain in team based secondary data collection and analysis techniques
ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTEREST

In the quest to explain human culture, anthropologists have paid a great deal of attention to recent food collector (i.e. hunter-gatherer or forager) societies that exist across the globe.

*In Borneo, a Kenyah hunter testing the bore of a newly made blow pipe. Photo: Charles Hose. Wellcome Images. CC-By-4.0 via Wikimedia Commons*
A major reason for this focus has been the widely held belief that knowledge of hunter-gatherer societies could open a window into understanding early human cultures.

A statue colloquially known as the Venus of Willendorf, likely made by hunter gatherers living near the Danube River. Image by Jbarta CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons
ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

Even a cursory look at the ethnographic record, however, reveals that many foraging cultures have changed substantially over time. So these hunter-gatherer groups are not relics of the past, but rather continue to be participants in the contemporary era.

The Director of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, shaking hands with the indigenous leader of the Kayapo, chief Akiaboro Kayapo, during his visit to the Museo do Indio. 2015. Photo by Fernando Frazao CC BY 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons
Much of what we know about these hunter-gatherers of recent times comes from anthropologists who have lived and worked with hunting and gathering groups.
Some of the best recently known cases are the Mbuti of the Ituri Forest (central Africa)...

Mbuti Encampment near Lobe River with young man carrying animal skin, 2007. PRA CC by 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons.
San of the Kalahari Desert (southern Africa)
Ikpukhuak and his shaman wife Higalik (Ice House) 1913. Photo by GH Wilkins. Public Domain Image via Wikimedia commons.

and the Copper Inuit of Alaska.
ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

All of these hunter-gatherers live in environments that are not conducive to agriculture. But in the past hunter-gatherers lived in more productive regions now occupied by agriculturalists.

*Hadza Adolescents sitting around a fire and talking. 2008. By Kiwi Explorer CC by 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.*
Hunter-gatherers vary in many ways, but cross-cultural research has focused on variations in types of food-getting, contributions to the diet by gender, the degree of nomadism, the frequency of external and internal warfare, and marital residence.

Vietnamese traditional fish trap. By Petr & Bara Ruzicka from Prague, CZ (past) CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons
In this assignment, you will research hunting and gathering societies as well as agricultural societies in Native North America, and use this research to develop your own ideas about the relationships between food production and social structure.

*Local seal hunter showing his skills with a kayak and a harpoon. Kulusuk. Greenland. July 2006. By Ville Miettinen CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons*
ASSIGNMENT PART 1

For the societies below, locate the cultural summaries for each society in eHRAF World Cultures using the Browse Cultures tab. Pay attention to the following sections: Settlements; Land Tenure; Inheritance; and Sociopolitical Organization.

*Use the following table as a guide for entering the data you find.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture Name</th>
<th>Degree of permanence in settlements</th>
<th>Size of settlements</th>
<th>Land Tenure</th>
<th>Inheritance</th>
<th>Political Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackfoot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hopi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chipewyans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copper Inuit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comanche</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iroquois</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tlingit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This Teaching Exercise is provided by the Human Relations Area Files at Yale University in New Haven, CT.
ASSIGNMENT PART 2

Separate these groups based on subsistence system.

Question #1: Are there any very basic patterns that you can identify between groups, subsistence types, and social factors in the table? Explain.
Question #2.

Given the size and comprehensiveness, is this sample best for:

➤ suggesting avenues of further investigation
➤ generating hypothesis
➤ or drawing conclusions?

*Explain your answer.*

Question #3.

How large of a sample size, and how many in the sample size would have to fit the pattern, for you to there was a strong relationship?

Question #4.

Do you think that most exceptions to social patterns have a ‘logical’ and ‘accessible’ explanation? Why or why not?
RESOURCES

Assignment Rubric, Tips, References
# RUBRIC

The following rubric is suggested for evaluating responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Part 1: Data Table</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory (0%)</th>
<th>Needs Improvement (25%)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (75%)</th>
<th>Outstanding (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table for subsistence system and social factors is absent.</td>
<td>Table for subsistence system and social factors is only partially completed.</td>
<td>Table for subsistence system and social factors is almost entirely complete and contains citations.</td>
<td>Table for subsistence system and social factors is almost entirely complete and contains citations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Part 2: Questions 1</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Answers are absent or mostly incomplete</td>
<td>Answers are only partially completed and/or inaccurate</td>
<td>Answers are paritally complete and refer back to table.</td>
<td>Answers are almost entirely complete and refer back to table.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Part 3: Questions 2-4</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major points are not clear.</td>
<td>Commentary on research findings is not comprehensive and /or persuasive.</td>
<td>Evaluation and analysis of research findings is accurate. Major points are stated.</td>
<td>Evaluation and analysis of research findings is accurate and persuasive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific examples are not used.</td>
<td>Major points are addressed, but not well supported.</td>
<td>Responses are adequate and address the question at hand.</td>
<td>Major points are stated clearly and are well supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responses are inadequate or do not address topic or response to the questions</td>
<td>Content is accurate</td>
<td>Responses are excellent and address questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specific examples do not support topic or response to the questions</td>
<td>A specific example from the research is used.</td>
<td>Content is clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Several specific examples from the research are used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FURTHER READING

➤ For more exercises and teaching resources related to human societies past and present, explore Teaching eHRAF.

➤ For more information on Hunter-gatherers check out the Hunter-Gatherer module by Carol Ember in HRAF’s Explaining Human Culture database.

➤ For a more detailed version of this particular exercise with additional questions and activities check out Exercise 1.21: Exercise III. Food by Carol Ember.

➤ Check out the Advanced Search Tutorial for detailed instructions on conducting searches in eHRAF World Cultures.

➤ For information on hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies in the archaeological record, check out eHRAF Archaeology.