# 2.3 Areas of inquiry: health, illness and healing

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

**KEY WORDS** disease • illness • sickness • explanatory model • medical pluralism • structural violence • witchcraft

## Objective

Study the area of inquiry **health, illness and healing** 、 : how cultures **classify** illness, how people explain misfortune, and how **power** and inequality shape who gets sick, through ethnographies.

**You must be able to:**

- distinguish disease, illness and sickness
- explain explanatory models of illness
- explain medical pluralism
- explain structural violence with an ethnographic example
- evaluate the role of anthropology in public health

## 1 Key knowledge and worked examples

### ■ Disease, illness, sickness

| term | meaning |
|---|---|
| **disease** | the biological problem, as medicine defines it |
| **illness** | the person's experience of being unwell |
| **sickness** | the social role: how others treat the sick person |

Arthur Kleinman's **explanatory models**: what people believe about the cause, the course and the right treatment of an illness. A doctor's model and a patient's model may differ.

**Medical pluralism** : people use several systems together, e.g. hospital medicine, traditional Chinese medicine and religious healing.



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### ■ Witchcraft and misfortune

E. E. Evans-Pritchard (*Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, 1937): when an old granary collapsed and injured people sitting under it, the Azande knew termites had weakened it, but witchcraft explained **why** it fell on *those* people at *that* moment. Witchcraft answers the question "why me?".

### ■ Structural violence

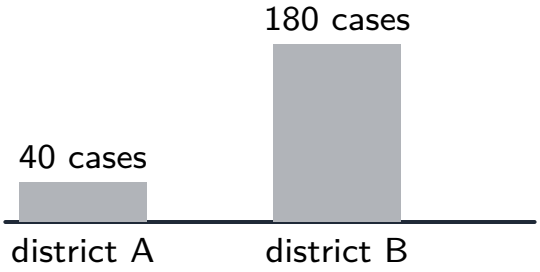
**Paul Farmer** (*AIDS and Accusation*, 1992), on Haiti: the spread of HIV followed poverty, inequality and the history of foreign domination; this is **structural violence** : harm caused by social structures, not by one person.

**Worked example.** In two districts of 100,000 people each, a disease affects 120 people in the richer district and 540 in the poorer one. Rates: $120/100\,000 = 0.12\,\%$ and $540/100\,000 = 0.54\,\%$; the poorer district's rate is $540/120 = 4.5$ times higher. An anthropologist asks how housing, work, access to clinics and stigma produce the gap.

## 2 Practice

**2.1** Distinguish **disease** from **illness**. [2]

**2.2** In two districts of 50,000 people, a disease affects 40 people in district A and 180 in district B. Calculate both rates as percentages, and how many times higher B's rate is. Explain **one** way an anthropologist would study the gap. [3]





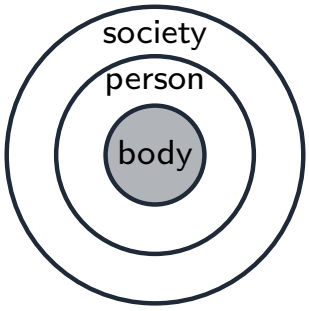

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**2.3** Explain how the Azande use witchcraft to explain the collapsing granary. [4]

**2.4** Explain **structural violence** and evaluate its usefulness, with reference to Farmer's work in Haiti. [6]

## 3 Exam-style questions

**3.1** *(Paper 2 style.)* Evaluate the claim that illness is as much a **social** experience as a **biological** one. Refer to **two** ethnographies. [15]






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