

World markets analysis essay



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Anthropology tends to show an uneven playing field when it comes to the world free market. Free market is defined as a cultural phenomenon with a set of values and practices. Free market culture assumes that people, given the opportunity, will do what is in their own best interest with a goal of personal gain.

There is also an assumption that markets need to, and will operate best if there is minimal regulation or control. The final belief is that given this opportunity, the marketplace will result in gain for all. There is an understanding and acceptance that free markets can temporarily make things worse for some. For many, this understanding of free market culture is the same as capitalism. Though the result of such free market society is supposed to benefit all of society, the world can appear to be a very uneven place with the “haves” and “have nots”. Anthropology is interested in exploring if the gap is narrowing.

Anthropologists have discussed the idea that there is a “universal humanity” which means that all humans respond to some extent, the same way. If true, free market should ultimately even out the gain across all people. However, anthropologists do not believe in this concept that all humanity has similar motivation for self gain in the same way. The article gives an example of the Trobriand Island people of the South Pacific who trade decorative pieces including necklaces and armbands. These objects can be compared to money and an accrual of quantities of these items is desired. The article also discusses the act of gift giving.

Even the act of giving gifts can be looked at as capitalistic as people generally give gifts in response to or in anticipation of something in return from the other person. " Once given, gifts compel reciprocity, the spirit of the giver being embodied in them, adding moral weight" (Schneider pg 66). The point o these examples is to show that there is not such a broad gap between the " haves" and the " have nots" in terms of a free market or capitalist economy, it is simply a matter of degree. In this article, Schneider examines the uneven distribution of wealth and power across the world.

She points out that even the less powerful and poorer cultures, operate under a degree of free market culture and place a value on attaining wealth through amassing goods, and recognition if not money. Schneider, Jane World Markets: Anthropological Perspectives an article in the book, Exotic No More by Jeremy MacClancy University of Chicago Press 2002.