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This article suggests that changes in the earth's climate, whether small, large, sudden, or eventual, can have major impacts on human cultures. Anderson points to the fact that "social unrest is a common response to food shortage" (p. 147), and states that groups of all sizes are affected by climate change. Three main types of climate change are discussed: Short-Term Processes (volcanic eruptions, large meter impacts, El Nino), Intermediate Term Processes (pronounced and extended warming or cooling episodes, fluctuations in solar activity), and Long Term Processes ("the roughly 110,000 year Pleistocene glacial-interglacial cycles") (p. 151).

During the Early Woodland, a decrease in wide spread trade networks, smaller settlement groups, a spread in pottery use and production, and the use of small burial mounds as community ties is noted. Later, during the Middle Woodland period (ca. 300 B.C. to A.D. 400), the large, long distance trade networks re-emerged, burial mound complexes became enormous, and pollen analysis suggests forest clearing to improve farming techniques. The change from the simpler trends in culture of the Early Woodland to the more complex organization of the Middle Woodland could be due to changes in the climate of the Eastern Woodland area of the United States.

Others suggest that the production and use of pottery and the bow and arrow, as well as the domestication of corn, are the cause of these cultural changes, but Anderson provides evidence against these arguments. Several examples are provided to demonstrate where known climatic changes directly correspond with the time of major cultural events as evidenced by tree ring dates, deep sea cores, and glacial cores. For example, "rapid fluctuations in climate were not as common or extreme during [the Middle Woodland period] placing less stress on subsistence systems. If agricultural food production was increasingly important, the reduced variability and more moderate conditions may have allowed for more regular production of surpluses, which would could have helped fuel the monumental construction, ceremony, and exchange observed at this time" (p. 165).

Finally, Anderson emphasizes that correlation of events and changes in climate does not mean cause, but simply that there is a relationship, and that further research must be done in this field.