



NINTH EDITION

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Serena Nanda

John Jay College of Criminal Justice,
City University of New York

Richard L. Warms

Texas State University–San Marcos

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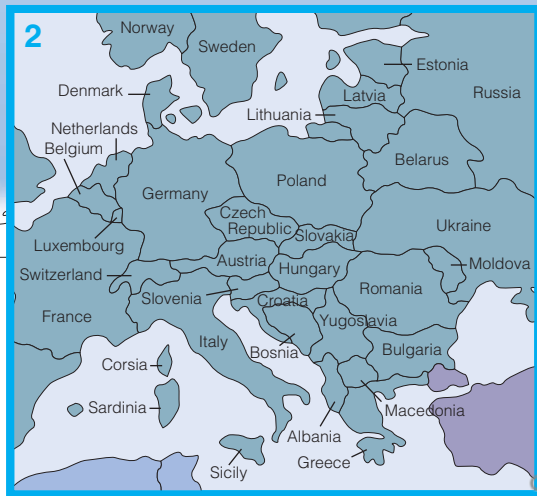
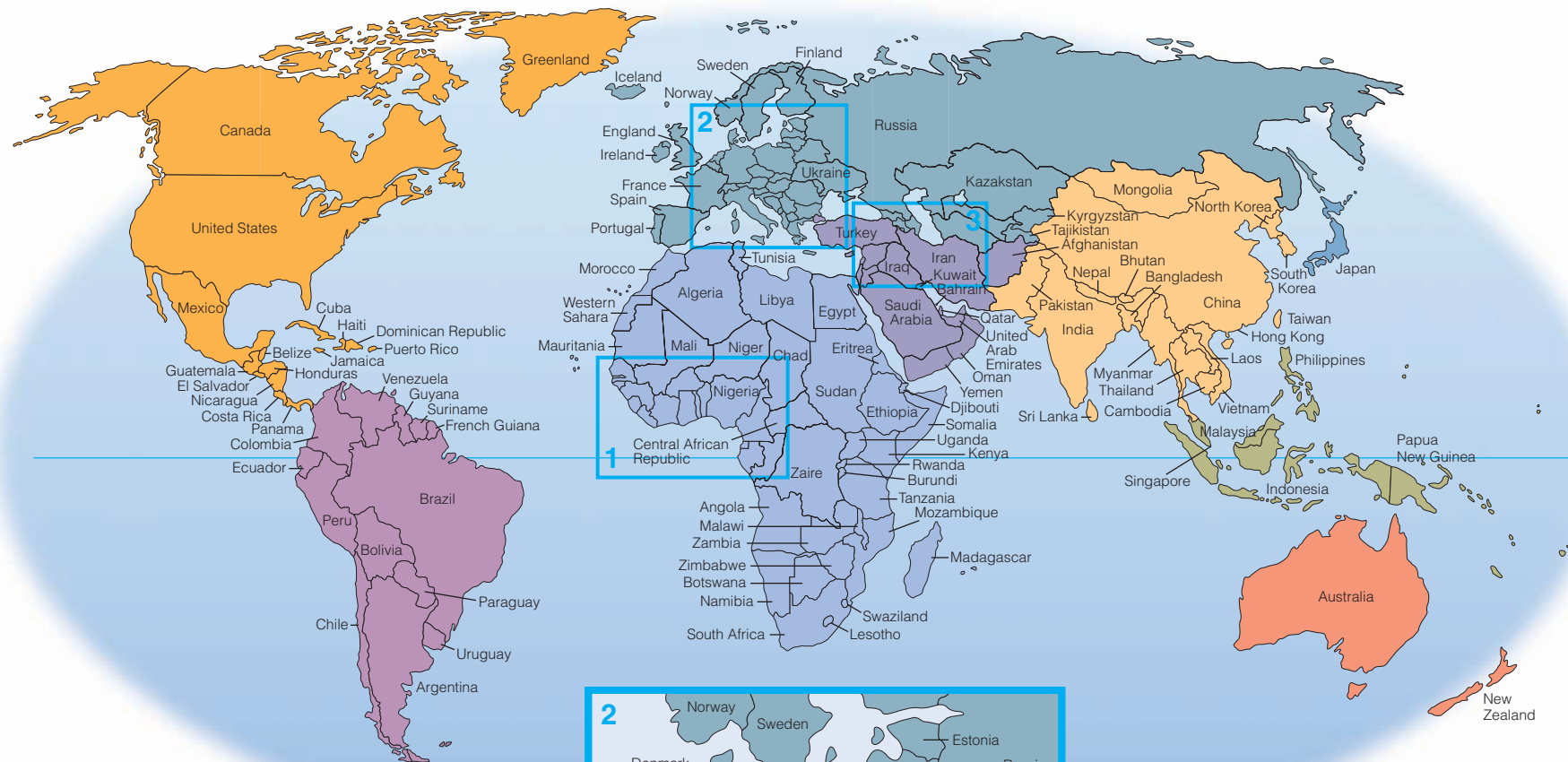
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Cultural Anthropology, Ninth Edition
Serena Nanda and Richard L. Warms

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*To the grandchildren:
Alexander, Adriana, Charlotte, and Kai*
—Serena Nanda

To my wife, Karen Kobylus
—Richard L. Warms

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Preface

Anthropology is the study of all people, in all places and at all times. We are drawn to anthropology as part of the realization that our lives and experiences are limited but human possibilities virtually endless. We are drawn by the almost incredible variability of human society and our desire to experience and understand it. We are drawn by the beauty of other lives, but sometimes by the horror as well. We write *Cultural Anthropology* to transmit some of our sense of wonder and amazement at the endless variety of the world and to show how anthropologists have come to understand and analyze human culture and society. *Cultural Anthropology*, Ninth Edition, is designed to increase students' understanding of the globally interconnected world in which they live, the human past and present, and the unity and diversity that characterize the human species. *Cultural Anthropology* enables students to "make sense" of the behavior and cultures of peoples unlike themselves, as well as gain insight into their own behavior and society. It shows them how anthropology has been applied to think about and sometimes solve critical problems facing different societies.

Cultural Anthropology introduces fundamental concepts, theories, methods, data, and references in ways that are exciting and informative. It is sophisticated enough to provide a firm foundation for students who intend to major in anthropology but also broad enough for those who may take only one or two courses in the subject. The topics included in the text cover the full range of cultural anthropology and are presented in the order most frequently taught in anthropology classrooms. However, the book is designed so that instructors may skip chapters or rearrange them to reflect their own interests and the emphases of their courses.

The main perspective of this book is ethnographic. Ethnography is the fundamental source of the data of anthropology, and the desire to hear about and read ethnography is one of the principal reasons students take anthropology courses. Knowledge of a broad range of ethnographic examples is essential to students. It engages them and encourages them to analyze and question their own culture. Ethnographic examples are used extensively in every chapter of *Cultural Anthropology*. In addition,

each chapter contains one or more multipage ethnographies that provide additional detail on specific cultures. These ethnographic features have been chosen to illuminate cultures, situations, and histories, both past and present, that students will find fascinating and relevant to the challenges they face today.

Additionally, we feel that issues of power, stratification, gender, and ethnicity are central to understanding current-day cultures. These topics are given chapters of their own, but in addition they are integrated in appropriate places throughout the text.

Students often want to know what they can do with anthropology, in what ways the discipline can be applied. We believe that anthropological thinking is a critical component in understanding and solving the dilemmas that face people in many cultures. We further believe that there are applications for all areas of anthropology, in issues such as development economics or health care as well as many other human endeavors. Therefore, rather than presenting a chapter on applied anthropology, each chapter includes one or more illustrations of the application of anthropological thinking. These can be found both in the text and in the boxed features called "Anthropology Makes a Difference." The combined length of these features is at least as great as most chapters on applied anthropology in other textbooks.

Cultural Anthropology describes the major issues and theoretical approaches in anthropology in a balanced manner, drawing analysis, information, and insight from many different perspectives. It takes a broad, optimistic, and enthusiastic approach to the discipline of anthropology. We believe that debates within anthropology are signs of the growth and vitality of the field rather than its demise.

This Ninth Edition of *Cultural Anthropology* continues the collaboration between Serena Nanda and Richard Warms. Warms's specialties in West Africa, anthropological theory, and social anthropology complement Nanda's in India, gender, law, and cultural anthropology. The results have been synergistic. Our experiences, readings, discussions, and debates, as well as feedback from reviewers and professors who have adopted previous editions, have led to the production of a text that reflects the

energy and passion of anthropology. We have revised extensively, rewritten, added many new references, and emphasized what we believe to be the best of current thinking in our field. Writing this book continues to be an exciting intellectual adventure for us, and we believe that working with it will promote students' growth as well.

In addition to its ethnographic focus, the Ninth Edition continues and expands upon many of the successful innovations of earlier editions. We have increased the use of full-color photographs and illustrations to catch the eye and engage the mind. We find that our students are intensely visual. Well-chosen photographs make them think about the text's critical points. All photographs have explanatory captions identifying their source and linking them with the text.

We continue to feature a chapter on evolution covering Darwin's theory of natural selection, distinctive characteristics of primates and their social lives, basic descriptive information about the major species of human ancestors, and material on human variation. It is written in a clear, jargon-free, accessible style. It is not necessary to read this chapter to understand the rest of the book, so instructors who do not normally cover evolution need not assign it.

Also continued is our treatment of theory as a critical component of anthropological thought, in both Chapter 4, "The Idea of Culture," and in the Appendix, "A Brief Historical Guide to Anthropological Theory," which offers concise descriptions of major schools of thought in anthropology from the nineteenth century to the present.



New in This Edition

We have made a number of significant changes and additions to the Ninth Edition, based partly on recent developments in the field of anthropology and partly on the valuable feedback we have received from our adopters and reviewers. Our changes include a significant reorganization of the text. We have eliminated Chapter 6, ("Learning Culture through Life" in earlier editions) and placed its contents in chapters where we think it will prove more useful to instructors. We have reorganized our chapters on social stratification and race and ethnicity to draw attention to the connections between these subjects. In addition, there are meaningful additions and changes to each of our chapters.

- ◆ In Chapter 1 we have streamlined and updated our coverage of race and ethnocentrism as well as added a new box on Applied Anthropology.
- ◆ Chapter 2 now includes information on recent fossil finds, including *Homo floresiensis* the "Hobbit" find.
- ◆ In Chapter 3 you will find a new section on collaborative anthropology.
- ◆ Chapter 4 has been substantially reorganized to make it easier to read. It includes a new section on learning culture as well as expanded coverage of symbolic anthropology and culture change.
- ◆ The "Global Perspective" box about "genderlects" in Chapter 5 has been rewritten to reflect current research. There is new information on the origins of language, communicative competence, and African-American English.
- ◆ Chapter 6 now includes a new "Ethnography" on the U.S. meatpacking industry.
- ◆ In Chapter 7 our coverage of capitalism and inequalities in capitalist society has been increased. The economic organization of chiefdoms receives increased coverage. Our boxed feature on anthropologists in business has been rewritten.
- ◆ Chapter 8 includes a substantial new ethnographic section on the Na of China, which explores whether marriage can truly be considered a human universal.
- ◆ Chapter 9 includes new information on the logic of kinship and its meanings as well as new, easier-to-understand kinship charts and diagrams.
- ◆ Chapter 10 now includes information on rites of initiation as they vary by gender.
- ◆ You will find a new piece on terrorism in Chapter 11.
- ◆ In Chapter 12 there has been substantial revision of the material on the American class system. There are two new ethnographic pieces, one on credit card debt and a second on inequality in China. There is a new "Anthropology Makes a Difference" box on homelessness.
- ◆ Chapter 13 now combines information on race with that on ethnicity.
- ◆ Chapter 14 has been reorganized to make it more thematic. There is a new definition of religion and new boxes on fundamentalism and cargo cults. There's new content on religion and health, Wicca, and the globalization of religion in the United States.
- ◆ In Chapter 15 you will find expanded coverage of Applied Anthropology. There are new ethnographic sections on

Spanish bullfighting and Japanese manga and anime. There is also a new discussion of art and personal identity, focusing on Frida Kahlo, and another about henna painting and Middle Eastern women.

- ◆ Chapter 16 has new information on mercantilism and capitalism. There is a greater emphasis on the transfer of wealth and the creation of the world system. New pieces explore the role of multinational corporations and the Nike boycott. Finally, there is a new ending, looking to the future and the role of anthropology in the world.



Chapter Overview

Each chapter is organized so that the main ideas, secondary ideas, important terms and definitions, and ethnographic material stand out clearly. The entire text has been thoroughly updated reflecting important recent anthropological work.

Chapter 1, “Anthropology and Human Diversity,” focuses on anthropology as a discipline whose subject is human diversity. This chapter introduces the major perspectives of anthropology and the subfields of the discipline. It highlights race as a social construction and the many ways anthropology contributes to a sensitive understanding of human differences. The chapter introduces issues of race, gender, and the nature of cultural interpretation.

Chapter 2, “Human Evolution,” is designed to give introductory students a background in the theory of evolution by natural selection, the physical and social characteristics of primates, and the major groups of fossil human ancestors. The chapter concludes with a section on human variation that highlights the biology of human traits commonly used in “racial” classification.

Chapter 3, “Doing Cultural Anthropology,” considers postmodern as well as more traditional perspectives on ethnography. The chapter begins with historical background, describing the contributions of Boas and Malinowski. It includes a detailed description of a field study in India and a new “Global Perspective” box on ethnographic research. The chapter also explores the impact of a feminist perspective on ethnography, doing ethnography in one’s own culture, the dilemmas of the “native anthropologist,” a section on the cross-cultural survey method, a new section on collaborative ethnography, and expanded coverage of anthropological ethics.

Chapter 4, “The Idea of Culture,” exposes students to a range of theoretical positions in anthropology by examining the ways different anthropologists have understood the idea of culture. In addition to introducing students to the history of theory in anthropology, it demonstrates that different theoretical positions lead anthropologists to ask different sorts of questions and do different sorts of research. We present anthropology as an exciting arena in which different understandings and interpretations jostle for position. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the cultural change mechanisms of innovation and diffusion. A full discussion of culture change and the expansion of capitalism is found in Chapter 16.

Chapter 5, “Language,” provides a solid background for anthropological linguistics. Phonology, morphology, and other elements of linguistics are discussed. There are special highlights on language acquisition and language experiments with apes. A section on sociolinguistics addresses the speech patterns of men and women in American society, linguistic minorities, and cross-cultural communication. Another section explores non-verbal communication. Boxed features explore primate communication, the disappearance of languages, differences in male and female speech in the United States, joking among the Apache, and Ebonics.

Chapter 6, “Making a Living,” brings cultural adaptation into focus. It examines the major human food-getting strategies through five extended ethnographies describing foraging in the Great Australian desert, pastoralism among the Maasai of East Africa, horticulture among the Lua’ of Thailand, peasant agriculture in an Egyptian village, and a new “Ethnography” on industrialism through a description of the meatpacking industry in the American Midwest.

Chapter 7, “Economics,” explores the nature of economic behavior and economic systems in cross-cultural perspective. Special attention is paid to issues of access to resources, the organization of labor, systems of distribution and exchange (including classic examples such as the potlatch and the Kula ring), and reactions to the spread of capitalism. A “Global Perspective” box discusses West African traders in New York City. The “Ethnography” focuses on female pieceworkers in Turkey and explores the relationship between traditional modes of production and a conventional marketplace.

Chapter 8, “Marriage, Family, and Domestic Groups,” focuses on types of family systems, emphasizing the diversity of forms and functions of families, highlighted by a new ethnographic section on the Na of China, as well as by our previous “Ethnography” about the Minangkabau, a matrilineal society of Sumatra. In addition to sections on the functions of marriage, marriage rules, marriage exchanges, and different types of families, we have expanded the “Anthropology Makes a Difference” feature on domestic violence, including “dowry death.” We have also incorporated the ethnographic section on a cross-cultural view of aging into this chapter in our “Global Perspective” feature.

Chapter 9, “Kinship,” introduces the major kinship ideologies and the kinds of social groups formed by kinship. A case study on the process of inheritance in a Korean village emphasizes some of the realities of human behavior as they interact with kin, as contrasted with the cultural ideals of kinship systems. The “Ethnography,” a personalized account of an anthropologist participating in the kinship systems of the United States and India, makes the normally difficult topic of kinship accessible to students.

Chapter 10, “Gender,” brings together a historical perspective on the examination of gender in cultural anthropology with current research on the role of women in hunting societies, the relationship between women and power, changes in women’s roles as a result of European contact, and an examination of the effects of “development” and multinational corporations on women. This chapter emphasizes the construction of gender, using ethnographic data on masculinity in Spain and the construction of the hijra role, an alternative gender role in India. It also includes the material on initiation rites, as this varies by gender, from our previous-edition chapter on Learning Culture. The “Anthropology Makes a Difference” box features female Chinese workers in the global economy, a subject of heightened interest in view of the tremendous expansion of the Chinese economy.

Chapter 11, “Political Organization,” begins with a description of social differentiation in egalitarian, rank, and stratified societies. It goes on to explore the issue of power and social control before turning to a systematic discussion of leadership, social control, and conflict resolution in bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states. We have expanded our “Global Perspective” feature on state boundaries

with a new section on global terrorism. The “Ethnography” on the precolonial Asante highlights the interactions among power, wealth, and the development of the state.

Chapters 12 and 13 have been reconstructed, giving us the opportunity to address issues of social stratification in a more contemporary framework.

Chapter 12, now “Stratification: Class and Caste,” has new, expanded coverage of these vital aspects of anthropological theorizing and research. It contains an entirely new section on growing social and economic inequality in China and reemphasizes the growing economic inequalities in the United States, with new material on social class, including a section on the relationship between class and education, and a new ethnography section on credit card debt as it is related to the American class system. Our “Global Perspective” feature emphasizes the growing economic inequalities worldwide and a new “Anthropology Makes a Difference” feature explores homelessness in America and its connection to the culture of the sheltering industry. The second half of the chapter retains our analysis of the changing caste structure in modern India and its relation to social class.

Chapter 13, now titled “Stratification: ‘Race’ and Ethnicity,” begins by exploring theoretical perspectives on race, then turns to the comparison of the racial stratification system between Brazil and the United States. We explore the concept of ethnicity from several theoretical perspectives, moving to an examination of the relationships between ethnicity and the nation-state, showing the ways in which ethnicity is historically situated. The discussion of ethnic conflict is illustrated by an example from the former Yugoslavia. A section explores the relationship between nation-states and indigenous peoples, using an extended ethnographic example of the Saami reindeer herders of Norway. The second half of the chapter explores ethnicity and cultural diversity in the United States, particularly as these relate to immigration, which we highlight by our “Ethnography” on new Chinese immigrants in San Francisco.

Chapter 14, “Religion,” moves from a brief consideration of the functions of religion to a definition of religion that includes stories and myths, symbolism, supernatural beings and powers, rituals, practitioners, and change. It then looks at each of these aspects of religion using examples from different cultures. It includes boxed features on the globalization of religion in the United States, religion and

ecology, religion and population growth, cargo cults, colonialism and ritual, and fundamentalism. An “Ethnography” on the Rastafarians and extensive information on the Ghost Dance religion and Native American Church show the roles of religion in social change and resistance.

Chapter 15, “Creative Expression: Anthropology and the Arts,” has been completely revised to highlight a cross-cultural perspective on the forms and functions of art, exemplified by a greatly expanded section on prehistoric rock art. The theme of the relationship between cultural identity and art is carried through by new ethnographic sections on manga and anime, Japanese forms of popular culture that have also become widespread in the United States and throughout the world. A new section on Frida Kahlo explores the ways in which her art expressed her national and personal identity. To our section on “deep play,” we have added a new ethnographic about Spanish bullfighting, which, like American football and Balinese cockfighting, can only be understood in its cultural context. We have also added a new section on body art, specifically, henna painting as it relates to women’s roles in the Middle East. We also focus on the Middle East as we examine how European Orientalism has been represented in art. In the final section, examining the relation between art and its audiences, through our “Ethnography” on the Toraja of Indonesia, we emphasize how the art of small-scale societies has now become part of a global art market and how local cultural identities change through this process. The “Global Perspective” box features an expanded discussion of world music.

Chapter 16, “Culture Change and the Modern World,” takes a historical perspective, exploring the ways in which the expansion of the power of today’s wealthy nations fundamentally changed cultures throughout the world. Sections on the era of Western exploration, colonialism, economic development, and problems of urbanization, population growth, and instability highlight the speed of change and the inequities of wealth and power. An “Ethnography” on African soldiers drafted into the French colonial army focuses attention on a little-known aspect of the African colonial experience. Additional features include a look at the role of disease in the expansion of European power; the connections between anthropology, foreign aid, and development; the growth of multinational corporations; and the 1990s boycott of Nike.

The Appendix, “A Brief Historical Guide to Anthropological Theory,” provides a concise, historically based introduction to the major schools of anthropological theorizing beginning with nineteenth-century evolutionism. The critical concepts of each theory are briefly summarized and the major thinkers in each school identified. In addition to evolutionism, the Appendix covers early sociological theory, American historical particularism, British functionalism, culture and personality, cultural ecology and neo-evolutionism, neomaterialism, structuralism, cognitive anthropology, socio-biology, anthropology and gender, symbolic and interpretive anthropology, and postmodernism and its critics.



Teaching Features and Study Aids

Each chapter includes outstanding pedagogical features to help students identify, learn, and remember key concepts and data. As befits a text in which ethnographic material holds so central a role, the major features within each chapter are the 20 boxed **Ethnographies**. The “Ethnographies” provide interesting and insightful information designed to engage students and provide a context for thinking about more abstract concepts. **Locator maps** accompany the “Ethnographies.” **Critical thinking questions** at the end of each “Ethnography” tie the section firmly to the material presented in the chapter and open opportunities for discussion of anthropology’s role in the modern world. The ethnographic research cited in many of these boxes includes work from several of Wadsworth’s own case studies.

The “Ethnography” boxes are supplemented by three additional boxed features:

- ♦ **Global Perspective** boxes are found in most chapters of the text. They are designed to provide interesting examples that draw students’ attention to the ways in which all peoples and cultures are interconnected. The “Global Perspective” boxes raise issues that students will find interesting and professors can use to spark classroom discussion.
- ♦ **Anthropology Makes a Difference** boxes provide examples of situations in which anthropology is applied to help address today’s real-world issues.

Examples include discussions of medical anthropology in Chapter 1 and forensic anthropology in Chapter 2, as well as a box on homelessness and the sheltering industry in Chapter 12.

- ◆ **A Closer Look** boxes are found intermittently throughout the book. They provide more in-depth coverage of specific topics that parallel the general concepts discussed in the chapter. Examples include the discussion of “genderlects” in Chapter 5 and religion and ecology in Chapter 14.

Each chapter also has several learning aids to help students understand and retain the chapter’s information:

- ◆ Full-color **opening photos** are placed at the beginning of each chapter.
- ◆ An **outline** at the beginning of each chapter clearly shows the organization of the chapter and the major topics covered.
- ◆ A **running glossary** of key terms is found at the bottom of the pages.
- ◆ **Summaries**, arranged as numbered points at the end of each chapter, recap critical ideas and aid study and review.
- ◆ **Key terms** are listed alphabetically at the end of each chapter, for quick review.
- ◆ **Suggested readings** that are interesting and accessible to the introductory student are listed at the end of each chapter.
- ◆ A **Glossary** at the end of the book defines the major terms and concepts, in alphabetical order for quick access.
- ◆ **References** for every source cited within the text are listed alphabetically at the end of the book.



Supplements for the Ninth Edition

Supplements for Instructors

Instructor’s Manual with Test Bank Written by Karen L. Daar of East Los Angeles and textbook author Richard L. Warme, the Instructor’s Manual offers chapter outlines, behavioral objectives, lecture and classroom suggestions, student assignments, InfoTrac® College Edition exercises and other Internet exercises, and a film/video resources guide for each chapter. Each chapter con-

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as well as links to anthropology websites and information on the latest theories and discoveries in the field.

Anthropology Resource Center This online center offers a wealth of information and useful tools for both instructors and students in all four fields of anthropology. It includes interactive maps, learning modules, video exercises, and breaking news in anthropology. One feature, “A Virtual Tour of Applying Anthropology,” includes an essay, illustrated with video clips, on careers in anthropology, plus information on student internships and graduate programs in applied anthropology. To get started with the Anthropology Resource Center, students are directed to <http://www.thomsonedu.com>, where they can create an account through lpass™.

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Supplements for Students

Study Guide Written by Karen L. Daar of East Los Angeles College and textbook author Richard L. Warms, this Study Guide includes learning objectives, detailed chapter outlines, multiple-choice, true/false, short answer, and essay practice questions, as well as Internet exercises for students to test and apply their knowledge of chapter concepts, terms, and key people.

Readings and Case Studies

Neither Man Nor Woman: The Hijras of India, Second Edition, by Serena Nanda This ethnography is a cultural study conducted by text author Serena Nanda of the hijras of India, a religious community of men who dress and act like women. It focuses on how hijras can be used in the study of gender categories and sexual variation.

Globalization and Change in Fifteen Cultures: Born in One World, Living in Another, edited by George Spindler and Janice E. Stockard In this volume, 15 case study authors write about culture change in today's diverse settings around the world. Each original article provides insight into the dynamics and meanings of change, as well as the effects of globalization at the local level.

Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology, by Gary Ferraro Brief and accessible, this reader edited by Gary Ferraro features articles and excerpts from works that have proved pivotal in the field of cultural anthropology. Topics include culture, language and communication, ecology and economics, issues of culture change, and many more.

Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology, edited by George Spindler and Janice E. Stockard Select from more than 60 classic and contemporary ethnographies representing geographic and topical diversity. Newer case studies focus on culture change and culture continuity, reflecting the globalization of the world.

Case Studies on Contemporary Social Issues, edited by John A. Young Framed around social issues, these new contemporary case studies are globally comparative and represent the cutting-edge work of anthropologists today.



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Anthropology and Human Diversity

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Anthropology in a Changing World

Though the practice has fallen out of favor in recent years, in traditional times Nacireman women participated in masochistic weekly rituals during which they would bake their heads in small ovens for about an hour.
See page 5 for details.

As long as human beings have existed they have faced fundamental problems. Among these are how to feed, clothe, and house themselves, how to determine rights and responsibilities, how to lend meaning to their lives, how to live with each other, and how to deal with those who live differently. Human cultures are the answers people have devised to these basic questions. The goal of **anthropology**—the comparative study of human societies and cultures—is to describe, analyze, and explain different cultures, to show how groups have adapted to their environments and given significance to their lives. Anthropology attempts to comprehend the entire human experience. Through archaeology it reaches from the current day to the distant past. Through primatology, it extends beyond humans to encompass the animals most closely related to us.

Anthropology is comparative in that it attempts to understand similarities and differences among human cultures. Only through the study of humanity in its total variety can we understand who we are as human beings, our potentials and our perils. In an era when people from different cultures are increasingly in contact with each other,

and when most people in the world live in multi-cultural and multiethnic nations, these are important goals.

Anthropologists study our species from its ancestral beginnings several million years ago up to the present. We study human beings as they live in every corner of the earth, in all kinds of physical, political, and social environments. Some anthropologists even try to project how human beings will live in the future, exploring the possibilities of space stations and communities on other planets. This interest in humankind throughout time and in all parts of the world distinguishes anthropology as a scientific and humanistic discipline.

In other academic disciplines, human behavior is usually studied primarily from the point of view of Western society. These scholars consider the behavior of people in the modern industrial nations of Europe and North America to be representative of human nature. Anthropologists insist that human nature is not so easily accessible.

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Ethnography

Body Ritual Among the Nacirema

Anthropologists have become so familiar with the diversity of ways different peoples behave in similar situations that they are not apt to be surprised by even the most exotic customs. In fact, if all of the logically possible combinations of behavior have not been found somewhere in the world, anthropologists are apt to suspect that they must be present in some yet undescribed tribe. . . . In this light, the magical beliefs and practices of the Nacirema present such unusual aspects that it seems desirable to describe them as an example of the extremes to which human behavior can go. The Nacirema are a North American group living in the territory between the Canadian Cree, the Yaqui and Tarahumare of Mexico, and the Carib and Arawak of the Antilles. Little is known of their origin, although tradition states that they came from the east.

Nacirema culture is characterized by a highly developed market economy which has evolved in a rich natural habitat. While much of the people's time is devoted to economic pursuits, a large part of the fruits of these labors and a considerable portion of the day are spent in ritual activity. The focus of this activity is the human body, the appearance and health of which loom as a dominant concern in the ethos of the people. While such a concern is certainly not unusual, its ceremonial aspects and associated philosophy are unique.

The fundamental belief underlying the whole system appears to be that the human body is ugly and that its natural tendency is to debility and disease. Incarcerated in such a body, man's only hope is to avert these characteristics through the use of the powerful influences of ritual and ceremony and every household has one or more shrines devoted to this purpose. The rituals associated with the shrine are not family ceremonies but are private and secret. The rites are normally only discussed with children, and then only during the period when they are being initiated into these mysteries. I was able, however, to establish sufficient rapport with the natives to examine these shrines and to have the rituals described to me.

The focal point of the shrine is a box or chest which is built into the wall. In this chest are kept the

many charms and magical potions without which no native believes he could live. These preparations are secured from a variety of specialized practitioners. The most powerful of these are the medicine men, whose assistance must be rewarded with substantial gifts. However, the medicine men do not provide the curative potions for their clients, but decide what the ingredients should be and then write them down in an ancient and secret language. This writing is understood only by the medicine men and by the herbalists who, for another gift, provide the required charm. The charm is not disposed of after it has served its purpose, but is placed in the charm-box of the household shrine.

Beneath the charm-box is a small font. Each day every member of the family, in succession, enters the shrine room, bows his head before the charm-box, mingles different sorts of holy water in the font, and proceeds with a brief rite of ablution. The holy waters are secured from the Water Temple of the community, where the priests conduct elaborate ceremonies to make the liquid ritually pure.

In the hierarchy of magical practitioners, and below the medicine men in prestige, are specialists whose designation is best translated "holy-mouth-men." The Nacirema have an almost pathological horror of and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them.

The daily body ritual performed by everyone includes a mouth-rite, but in addition, the people seek out a holy-mouth-man once or twice a year. These practitioners have an impressive set of paraphernalia, consisting of a variety of augers, awls, probes, and prods. The use of these objects in the exorcism of the evils of the mouth involves almost unbelievable ritual torture of the client. The holy-mouth-man opens the client's mouth and, using the above mentioned tools, enlarges any holes which decay may have created in the teeth. Magical materials are put into those holes. In the client's view the purpose of these ministrations is



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to arrest decay and to draw friends. The extremely sacred and traditional character of the rite is evident in the fact that the natives return to the holy-mouth-men year after year, despite the fact that their teeth continue to decay.

It is to be hoped that, when a thorough study of the Nacirema is made, there will be careful inquiry into the personality structure of these people. One has but to watch the gleam in the eye of a holy-mouth-man, as he jabs an awl into an exposed nerve, to suspect that a certain amount of sadism is involved. If this can be established, a very interesting pattern emerges, for most of the population shows definite masochistic tendencies. For example, a portion of the daily body ritual performed only by men involves scraping and lacerating the surface of the face with a sharp instrument. Special women's rites are performed only four times during each lunar month, but what they lack in frequency is made up in barbarity. As part of this ceremony, women bake their heads in small ovens for about an hour. The theoretically interesting point is that what seems to be a preponderantly masochistic people have developed sadistic specialists.

The medicine men have an imposing temple, or *latipsoh*, in every community of any size. The more elaborate ceremonies required to treat very sick patients can only be performed at this temple. These ceremonies involve not only the priests who perform miracles, but a permanent group of vestal maidens who move sedately about the temple chambers in distinctive costume and headdress.

The *latipsoh* ceremonies are so harsh that it is phenomenal that a fair proportion of the really sick natives who enter the temple ever recover. Despite this fact, sick adults are not only willing but eager to undergo the protracted ritual purification, if they can afford to do so. No matter how ill the supplicant or how grave the emergency, the guardians of many temples will not admit a client if he cannot give a rich gift to the custodian. Even after one has gained admission and survived the ceremonies, the guardians will not permit the neophyte to leave until he makes still another gift.

The supplicant entering the temple is first stripped of all his or her clothes. Psychological

shock results from the fact that body secrecy is suddenly lost upon entry into the *latipsoh*. A man whose own wife has never seen him in an excretory act suddenly finds himself naked and assisted by a vestal maiden while he performs his natural functions into a sacred vessel. This sort of ceremonial treatment is necessitated by the fact that the excreta are used by a diviner to ascertain the course and nature of the client's sickness. Female clients, on the other hand, find their naked bodies are subjected to the scrutiny, manipulation, and prodding of the medicine men. The fact that these temple ceremonies may not cure, and may even kill the neophyte, in no way decreases the people's faith in the medicine men.

In conclusion, mention must be made of certain practices which have their base in native esthetics but which depend upon the pervasive aversion to the natural body and its functions. There are ritual fasts to make fat people thin and ceremonial feasts to make thin people fat. Still other rites are used to make women's breasts



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Nacirema head oven.

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Ethnography—continued

larger if they are small, and smaller if they are large. General dissatisfaction with breast shape is symbolized in the fact that the ideal form is virtually outside the range of human variation. A few women afflicted with almost inhuman hypermammary development are so idolized that they make a handsome living by simply going from village to village and permitting the natives to stare at them for a fee.

Our review of the ritual life of the Nacirema has certainly shown them to be a magic-ridden people. It is hard to understand how they have managed to exist so long under the burdens which they have imposed upon themselves. But even such exotic customs as these take on real meaning when they are viewed with the insight provided by Malinowski when he wrote: “Looking from far and above, from our high places of safety in the developed civilization, it is easy to see all the crudity and irrelevance of magic. But without its power and guidance early man could not have mastered his practical difficulties as he has done, nor could man have advanced to the higher stages of civilization.”

Critical Thinking Questions

1. It’s not at all clear that the Nacirema see themselves as Horace Miner, the author of

this essay, sees them. But an interpretation that makes no sense to members of the culture being described is not necessarily wrong. Outsiders may be able to perceive essential truths invisible to members of a culture.

Given this, how do anthropologists know if their descriptions and analyses are accurate?

2. The Nacirema raise many critical issues for anthropologists. Miner presents a vivid picture of a culture that will probably strike you as strange and different. Do you feel that he is giving a balanced account, or is he biased? If you think he is biased, what elements of the essay make you feel that way?
3. Many essays in anthropology have political and social implications. By drawing our attention to aspects of other cultures, anthropologists implicitly ask us to examine our own. What do you think the social and political goals of this essay are?

Source: Horace Miner, “Body Ritual among the Nacirema.” From *The American Anthropologist*, 1956, 58: 503–507.

Human beings everywhere consider their own behavior not only right, but natural. Our ideas about economics, religion, morality, and other areas of social life seem logical and inevitable to us, but others have found different answers. For example, should you give your infant bottled formula or should you breast-feed not only your own child but, like the Efe of Zaire, those of your friends and neighbors as well (Peacock 1991:352)? Is it right that emotional love should precede sexual relations? Or should sexual relations precede love, as is normal for the Mangaian of the Pacific (D. Marshall 1971)? What should we have for lunch: hamburgers and fries, or termites, grasshoppers, and hot maguery worms, all of which are commonly eaten in certain regions of Mexico (Bates 1967:58–59)? In anthropology, concepts of human nature and theo-

ries of human behavior are based on studies of human groups whose goals, values, views of reality, and environmental adaptations are very different from those of industrial Western societies.

Anthropologists bring a holistic approach to understanding and explaining. To say anthropology is **holistic** means that it combines the study of human biology, history, and the learned and shared patterns of human behavior and thought we call culture in order to analyze human groups. Holism separates anthropology from other academic disciplines, which generally focus on one factor—biology, psychology, physiology, or society—to explain human behavior. Anthropology seeks to understand human beings as whole organisms who interact with their environments through a complex interaction of biology and culture.

Because anthropologists use this holistic approach, they are interested in the total range of human activity. Most anthropologists specialize in a single field and a single problem, but together they study the small dramas of daily living as well as spectacular social events. They study the ways in which mothers hold their babies or sons address their fathers. They want to know not only how a group gets its food but also the rules for eating it. Anthropologists are interested in how human societies think about time and space and how they see colors and name them. They are interested in health and illness and the significance of physical variation.

Anthropologists are interested in sex and marriage and in giving birth and dying. They are interested in folklore and fairy tales, political speeches, and everyday conversation. For the anthropologist, great ceremonies and the ordinary rituals of greeting a friend are all worth investigating. When presented out of context, some of the behaviors anthropologists study may seem strange or silly, but every aspect of human behavior can help us understand human life and society.



Specialization in Anthropology

The broad range of anthropological interest has led to specialization of research and teaching. The major divisions of anthropology are cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, archaeology, physical or biological anthropology, and applied anthropology.

Cultural Anthropology

The study of human culture and society is known as cultural anthropology. Anthropologists define **society** as a group of people persisting through time and the social relationships among these people: their statuses and roles. Traditionally, societies are thought of as occupying a specific geographic location, but modern transportation and electronic communication have made specific locales less important. Societies are increasingly looked at from a global rather than a local perspective.

As Chapter 4 will show, culture is an extremely complex phenomenon. **Culture** is the major way in which human beings adapt to their environments and give meaning to their lives. It includes human behavior and ideas that are learned rather than ge-



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Cultural anthropologists describe and analyze current day cultures. Many current studies focus on culture change and the movement of objects and ideas between cultures. Here a Moroccan tribesman gives water to his camel with a disposable plastic bottle.

netically transmitted, as well as the material objects produced by a group of people.

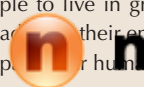
Cultural anthropologists attempt to understand culture through the study of its origins, development, and diversity as it changes through time and among people. They bring many research strategies to this task. They may focus on the search for general principles that underlie all cultures or examine the dynamics of a particular culture. They may explore the ways in which different societies adapt to their environments or how members of other cultures understand the world and their place in it.

holistic/holism In anthropology an approach that considers culture, history, language, and biology essential to a complete understanding of human society.

society A group of people who depend on one another for survival or well-being as well as the relationships among such people, including their status and roles.

culture The learned behaviors and symbols that allow people to live in groups. The primary means by which humans adapt to their environments. The way of life characteristic of a particular human society.

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Cultural anthropology is a complex field with many different subfields. One index of this complexity is the more than 50 different sections and interest groups of the American Anthropological Association; the vast majority of these are concerned with cultural anthropology. Some examples include **political and legal anthropology**, which is concerned with issues of nationalism, citizenship, the state, colonialism, and globalism; **humanistic anthropology**, which is focused on the personal, ethical, and political choices facing humans; and **visual anthropology**, which is the study of visual representation and the media.

Cultural anthropologists are often particularly interested in documenting and understanding the ways in which cultures change. They examine the roles power and coercion play in change, as well as humans' ability to invent new technologies and social forms and modify old ones. Although most cultural anthropologists study current-day cultures, understanding the ways in which societies change also demands a knowledge of their past. As a result, many cultural anthropologists are drawn to **ethno-history**: description of the cultural past based on written records, interviews, and archaeology.

Studies of culture change are important because rapid shifts in society, economy, and technology are basic characteristics of the current world. Understanding the dynamics of change is critical for individuals, governments, and corporations. One goal of cultural anthropology is to be able to contribute productively to public debate about promotion of and reaction to change.

Linguistic Anthropology

Language is the primary means by which people communicate with one another. Although most creatures communicate, human speech is more complex, creative, and is used more extensively than the communication systems of other animals. Language is an essential part of what it means to be human and a basic part of all cultures.

Linguistic anthropology is concerned with understanding language and its relation to culture. Language is a complex symbolic system that people use to communicate and to transmit culture. Thus, language provides critical clues for understanding culture. For example, people generally talk about the people, places, and objects that are important to them. Therefore, the vocabularies of spoken

language may give us clues to important aspects of culture. Knowing the words that people use for things may help us to glimpse how they understand the world.

Language involves much more than simply words. When we speak we perform. If we tell a story, we don't simply recite the words. We emphasize some things. We add inflection that can turn a serious phrase comic or a comic phrase serious. We give our own special tilt to a story, even if we are just reading a book out loud. Linguistic anthropologists are interested in the ways in which people perform language—in the ways they change and modify the meanings of their words.

Languages have histories, and understanding these helps us to figure out the histories of those who spoke them. **Historical linguists** have devoted considerable energy to figuring out the ways in which languages are related to each other. Knowing, for example, the linguistic relationships among various Native American languages gives us insight into the histories and migrations of those who speak them.

Language is an amazing thing we take for granted. When we speak, we use our bodies—our lungs, vocal cords, mouth, tongue, and lips—to produce noise of varying tone and pitch. And, somehow, when we do this, we are able to communicate with each other . . . but only if we speak the same language. If we speak different languages, little or no communication takes place. Linguistic anthropologists want to understand how language is structured, how it is learned, and how communication takes place. Understanding language is a critical task for people interested in technology as well. We live in a world where computers talk to us and listen to us. We will only be able to build machines that use language effectively if we understand how language is structured and used by humans.

Archaeology

Archaeologists add a vital time dimension to our understanding of cultures and how they change. **Archaeology** is the study of past cultures through their material remains.

Many archaeologists study **prehistoric** societies—those for which no written records have been found or no writing systems have been deciphered. However, even when an extensive written record is available, as in the case of the Great Greed of Colonia



Courtesy of Ronald Coley

Archaeologists attempt to reconstruct past cultures by studying their material remains, as in this dig at an early settler cabin in Texas.

America, archaeology can help increase our understanding of the cultures and lifeways of those who came before us.

The archaeologist does not observe human behavior and culture directly but reconstructs them from material remains or artifacts. An **artifact** is any object that has been made, used, or altered by human beings. Artifacts include pottery, tools, garbage, and whatever else a society has left behind. Archaeologists distinguish a subclass of artifacts called features. **Features** are artifacts that cannot easily be moved, such as ruins of buildings, burials, and fire pits.

In the popular media, archaeology is mainly identified with spectacular discoveries of prehistoric and ancient cultures, such as uncovering the tomb of the Egyptian king Tutankhamen, and people often think of archaeologists as collectors of ancient artifacts. But contemporary archaeologists are much more interested in understanding and explaining their finds in terms of what they say about the behavior that produced them than in creating collections. Their principal task is to infer the nature of past cultures based on the patterns of the artifacts left behind. Archaeologists work like detectives, slowly sifting and interpreting evidence.

The context in which things are found, the location of an archaeological site, and the precise position of an artifact within that site are critical to interpretation. In fact, these may be more important than the artifact itself.

cultural anthropology The study of human thought, meaning, and behavior that is learned rather than genetically transmitted, and that is typical of groups of people.

ethnohistory Description of the cultural past based on written records, interviews, and archaeology.

linguistic anthropology A branch of linguistics concerned with understanding language and its relation to culture.

historical linguists Study relationships among languages to better understand the histories and migrations of those who speak them.

archaeology The subdiscipline of anthropology that focuses on the reconstruction of past cultures based on their material remains.

prehistoric Societies for which we have no usable written records.

artifact Any object made or modified by human beings. Generally used to refer to objects made by past cultures.

features Artifacts that cannot easily be moved, such as ruins of buildings, burials, and fire pits.



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There are many different specialties within archaeology. **Urban archaeology** is a good example. Urban archaeologists delve into the recent and distant past of current-day cities. In doing so, they uncover knowledge of the people often left out of the history books, making our understanding of the past far richer than it was. For example, Elizabeth Scott's work at Nina Plantation in Louisiana (2001) adds to our understanding of the lives of slaves and free laborers from the 1820s to the 1890s.

Another important subfield is **cultural resource management**, or CRM. Archaeologists working in CRM are concerned with the protection and management of archaeological, archival, and architectural resources. They are often employed by federal, state, and local agencies to develop and implement plans for the protection and management of such cultural resources.

Physical or Biological Anthropology

The human ability to survive under a broad range of conditions is based primarily on the enormous flexibility of cultural behavior. The capacity for culture, however, is grounded in our biological history and physical makeup. Human adaptation is thus biocultural; that is, it involves both biological and cultural dimensions. Therefore, to understand fully what it is to be human, we need a sense of how the biological aspects of this adaptation came about and how they influence human cultural behavior.

Biological (or **physical**) **anthropology** is the study of humankind from a biological perspective. It focuses primarily on those aspects of humanity that are genetically inherited. Biological anthropology includes numerous subfields, such as skeletal analysis, or osteology; the study of human nutrition; demography, or the statistical study of human populations; epidemiology, or the study of patterns of disease; and primatology.

Biological anthropology is probably best known for the study of human evolution and the biological processes involved in human adaptation. Paleoanthropologists search for the origins of humanity, using the fossil record to trace the history of human evolution. They study the remains of the earliest human forms, as well as those ancestral to humans and related to humans. We explore some of the findings of **paleoanthropology** in Chapter 2.

Another subspecialty of biological anthropology, called **human variation**, is concerned with physiological differences among humans. Anthropologists who study human variation map physiological differences among modern human groups and attempt to explain the sources of this diversity.

Because the human species evolved through a complex feedback system involving both biological and cultural factors, biological anthropologists are also interested in the evolution of culture. Our unique evolutionary history resulted in the development of a biological structure, the human brain, capable of inventing, learning, and using cultural adaptations. Cultural adaptation, in turn, has freed humans from the slow process of biological adaptation: populations can invent new ways of dealing with problems almost immediately, or adopt solutions from other societies. The study of the complex relationship between biological and cultural evolution links biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, and archaeology.

Because early human populations were foragers, biological anthropologists study contemporary foraging societies to augment the fragmentary physical evidence left by early humans. In addition to studying living human groups, biological anthropologists study living nonhuman **primates**, members of the order that includes monkeys, apes, and humans. Primates are studied for the clues that their chemistry, physiology, morphology (physical structure), and behavior provide about our own species. At one time primates were studied mainly in the artificial settings of laboratories and zoos, but now much of the work of biological anthropologists involves studying these animals in the wild. Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey are two well-known anthropologists who studied primates in the wild. Fossey, who died in 1985, worked with gorillas in Rwanda. Goodall works with chimpanzees in Tanzania.

Applied Anthropology

Although anthropology is mainly concerned with basic research—that is, asking the big questions about the origins of our species, the development of culture and civilization, and the functions of human social institutions—anthropologists also put their knowledge to work to solve human problems.

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Applied anthropologists are generally trained in one of the four subdisciplines we have already mentioned. However, they work with governments, corporations, and other organizations to use anthropological research techniques to solve social, political, and economic problems. In this book, we have chosen to highlight some of the work of applied anthropologists. Each chapter includes a box titled “Anthropology Makes a Difference.” There, you will read about some of the ways anthropologists are involved in the practical worlds of business, medicine, public policy, law enforcement, and communication.

Specialists in each of the subfields of anthropology make contributions to applied work. For example, in cultural anthropology, experts in the anthropology of agriculture use their knowledge to help people with reforestation, water management, and agricultural productivity. Cultural anthropologists have been instrumental in many organizations that promote the welfare of tribal and **indigenous peoples** throughout the world. Such organizations include Cultural Survival, founded by anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis; The Center for World

urban archaeology The archaeological investigation of current-day cities.

cultural resource management (CRM) The protection and management of archaeological, archival, and architectural resources.

biological (or physical) anthropology The subdiscipline of anthropology that studies people from a biological perspective, focusing primarily on aspects of humankind that are genetically inherited. It includes osteology, nutrition, demography, epidemiology, and primatology.

paleoanthropology The subdiscipline of anthropology concerned with tracing the evolution of humankind in the fossil record.

human variation The subdiscipline of anthropology concerned with mapping and explaining physical differences among modern human groups.

primate A member of a biological order of mammals that includes human beings, apes, and monkeys as well as prosimians (lemurs, tarsiers, and others).

applied anthropology The application of anthropology to the solution of human problems.

indigenous peoples Groups of people who have occupied a region for a long time and are recognized by other groups as its original (or very ancient) inhabitants. Indigenous peoples are often minorities with little influence in the government of the non-state that controls the land.



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Medical Anthropology

Over the past century important advances in preventing disease and improving health care have been made. Yet the modern medical model has serious limitations in dealing with health issues in different cultures and among different ethnic, racial, and class populations in the United States (Helman 1998/1991). **Medical anthropology** draws upon social, cultural, biological, and linguistic anthropology to better understand those factors that influence health and well-being. It is concerned with the experience of disease as well as its distribution, prevention, and treatment.

Medical anthropologists adapt the holistic and ethnographic approaches of anthropology to the study of both emotional and physical illnesses in complex societies. Modern biomedicine tends to regard diseases as universal entities, regardless of their contexts. Anthropologists have shown, however, that individuals' personalities, life experiences, social classes, family networks, religions, and culturally patterned fears and health beliefs are critical in understanding how they perceive their illnesses and in how they get well.

In the early 1960s, medical schools began hiring anthropologists—mainly in departments of psychiatry, behavioral sciences, community and family medicine, community health, and mental health programs—as did international agencies implementing health and development programs in Third World countries. By the late 1970s, anthropologists were working at the Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization,

U.S. state and municipal health departments, hospitals, private for-profit and not-for-profit health-oriented foundations, research institutes, and similar organizations. More recently, the many challenges to mainstream medicine have provided new openings for medical anthropologists (Schensul 1997).

According to medical anthropologist and activist Stephen Schensul (1997), medical anthropologists do much more than provide broad social, cultural, and political perspectives on health and health-care institutions. They help to bridge the gap between medical service providers and their clientele. They provide a data collection methodology emphasizing participant interaction and interviewing, both within communities served by medical institutions and in those medical institutions themselves. Finally, they use their results to improve medical programs from within, increasing a community's ability to make positive changes in the health programs that serve them.

As Schensul suggests, anthropologists are increasingly analyzing the sites and subcultures of the medical profession itself, illuminating how these both influence and are influenced by larger cultural patterns. Recently, for example, Sharon R. Kaufman (2000) examined the special facilities for the (seemingly) terminally comatose. Her study explored how technology and the medical specialists associated with keeping alive persons in a vegetative state are transforming the concept of the person in American culture.

Indigenous Studies; Survival International; and the Avenir des Peuples des Forêts Tropicales (translated into English as The Future of Tropical Rainforest Peoples) (APFT), an organization devoted to the welfare of indigenous peoples living in the tropical rainforest.

Anthropologists who study legal and criminal justice systems address such problems as drug abuse or racial and ethnic conflict. Alternative forms of conflict resolution, such as mediation, which grew out of anthropological studies of non-Western societies, are now being used in American

courts, as adversarial litigation proves itself unequal to the task of efficiently resolving civil disputes. Psychological and educational anthropologists contribute to the more effective development and implementation of educational and mental-health policies, and medical anthropologists apply their cross-cultural knowledge to improve health care, sanitation, diet, and disease control in a variety of cultural contexts.

Archaeology has numerous applications. Establishing the archaeological record has often enabled native pe

Even more than in physical illness, anthropology has long had an interest in the cultural aspects of emotional disturbance. Jules Henry's brilliant analysis of families with autistic children in *Pathways to Madness* (1973); the collection *Cultural Illness and Health*, edited by Laura Nader and Thomas Maretzki (1973); the pathbreaking holistic study of ghost possession, "The Psychomedical Case History of a Low-Caste Woman of North India," by anthropologists Ruth and Stanley Freed (1985); and the cross-cultural study *Culture and Depression* by Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good (1985) are among the many anthropological contributions to our understanding of mental health and transcultural psychiatry.

In keeping with this interest, as well as newer, more critical anthropological approaches (see Scheper-Hughes 1994), the socialization and training of psychiatric practitioners has been the subject of anthropological scrutiny. In *Of Two Minds: The Growing Disorder in American Psychiatry*, anthropologist Tanya Luhmann (2000) illuminates the socialization of doctors who specialize in psychiatry in the United States. The major question that shapes psychiatric training is whether mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, depression, and personality disorders are a matter of biological dysfunction best treated pharmacologically, or whether they are the product of psychosocial factors such as family dynamics and early childhood experiences, and thus best treated by psychotherapy. Anthropolo-

gists emphasize the interaction of biology, social relationships, and culture. Thus, for them, the dichotomy implied by this question seems misdirected. Lurhmann found that psychiatric training continues to take this either/or approach and that a psychiatric resident has to decide which camp he or she is in by the second year of residency. Once that decision is made, it has enormous implications for the perception and treatment of emotional disturbance, not only within the psychiatric profession, but in the larger culture of the United States as well. As Lurhmann points out, the socialization and training of doctors does not occur in a political or economic vacuum. The aggressive marketing by Smith Kline & French of the antipsychotic drug Thorazine in 1954 helped to foster the biomedical approach to mental illness. Since then, managed health care companies, in their efforts to control costs, have severely cut back on psychotherapeutic treatment for the mentally ill, further reinforcing the biomedical approach.



You can find additional information about medical anthropology at the websites of the Society for Medical Anthropology (<http://www.cudenver.edu/sma>) and the Medical Anthropology Web (<http://www.medanth.com>).

that historically belonged to them. Work in archaeology is often basic to understanding the history of groups that left little record. Excavations such as that done at the African-American burial ground in New York City (Harrington 1993) give us insight into the living conditions of groups not well represented in the written record. Such knowledge is frequently fundamental to cultural identity. Beyond this, archaeology has often produced technical applications. For example, in the Negev Desert in Israel, in Peru, and in other locations, archaeological study of ancient peoples has yielded information

about irrigation design and raised-field systems that allowed modern people to make more effective use of the environment and raise agricultural yields (Downum and Price 1999).

Biological anthropologists shed light on some of the major diseases of the modern industrial world. They compare our diet and lifestyle with those of

medical anthropology The study of illness and health across cultures. The application an ethnographic and holistic perspective to the provision of health care services.



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Anthropology Makes a Difference

About “Makes a Difference”

Each chapter in this text has one or more “Anthropology Makes a Difference” boxes. In them, you’ll find interesting information about the application of anthropological thinking and anthropological data to the problems and concerns of people around the world. Much of this information details ways that anthropologists have helped to solve specific problems and describes different careers in anthropology. Surveys show that more than 60 percent of those who earn doctorates in anthropology find their careers outside of the academy (Nolan 2003). In 2003, for example, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes193091.htm>), the U.S. federal government had more than 1,000 positions specifically designated for anthropologists. In addition to these, many anthropologists worked in positions that carried other official designations. Aid agencies, charities, and health care providers all hire anthropologists. Private industry has become a major consumer of anthropological talent. More than two dozen anthropologists work for the technology consulting

firm Sapient. Anthropologists can also be found working at Microsoft, Intel, Kodak, Whirlpool, AT&T, Hallmark, General Motors, and many other large corporations. They have been instrumental in developing many consumer products. For example, you might not think anthropology when you eat Go-Gurt® (a popular brand of yogurt packaged in a tube), but this product was developed as a result of ethnographic research by anthropologist Susan Squires, an anthropologist working for General Mills.

Although it is true that there are many careers in anthropology, it is our conviction that applied anthropology is more than just people earning their living with the skills they gained through training in anthropology. Perhaps the most important aspect of anthropology (and the primary justification for its existence) is the way an anthropological perspective demands that we open our eyes and experience the world in new ways. In a sense, anthropology is like teaching fish the meaning of water. How could a fish understand water? Water is all a fish knows; and it knows it so well

prehistoric and contemporary foraging peoples who suffer less from heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes (Eaton and Konner 1989). **Forensic anthropologists** use their knowledge of human skeletal biology to discover information about the victims of crimes, aiding in law enforcement and judicial proceedings.

These examples only hint at the many different subjects and methods of anthropology. The comparative and holistic perspective of anthropology emphasizes connections between human culture and the environment as well as the links among different elements of culture. The anthropological perspective often demonstrates the complexity of human problems and the difficulty of their solution. Because politicians and the public generally want quick fixes, anthropological knowledge is not applied as widely as it could be. Indeed, perhaps

the major contribution of anthropology has been in significantly affecting how people think about themselves and others.



What We Learn from Anthropology: Understanding Human Differences

A major contribution of anthropology is to demonstrate the importance of culture, or learned behavior, in human societies. Anthropology enables us to look more critically at popular ideas about human nature; indeed, the anthropological perspective challenges the notion that there is such a thing as a single, stable, scientifically observable human nature. Anthropology shows that what is consid-



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it cannot distinguish it from the nature of life and reality itself. Similarly, all humans live in cultures and our experiences are normally bounded by our cultures. We often mistake the realities and truths of our culture for reality and truth itself, thinking that the ways we understand and do things are the only appropriate ways of understanding and doing. The fish only understands the meaning of water when it's removed from the water (usually with fatal consequences). If anthropology is not exactly about removing people from their culture, it is, in a sense, the conscious attempt to allow people to see beyond its bounds. Through learning about other cultures, we become increasingly aware of the variety of different understandings present in the world and of the social dynamics that underlie culture. This promotes an awareness of the meanings and dynamics of our own culture and, if we're fortunate, allows us to look at the problems that confront us with a fresh vision.

Applied anthropology doesn't just mean that you get paid to use your anthropological training. All of us do applied anthropology when we bring

anthropological understandings and insight to bear on problems of poverty, education, war, and peace. We don't apply anthropology only when we write a report. We apply anthropology when we go to the voting booth and to the grocery store, when we discuss issues with our friends and, if we're religious, when we pray. Anthropology provides no simple answers. There is no correct anthropological way to vote, shop, or pray. However, anthropology does inform our decisions about these things. Our attempt to understand other cultures and our own lets us look on these things with new eyes.

So, in the "Anthropology Makes a Difference" boxes, you will find interesting ways that people have made careers of anthropology and used it to help others. However, you'll also find examples of the ways in which anthropology contributes to our understanding of the world. Ultimately, our lives are more about the ways in which we exemplify the meanings and values that we hold than about how we make our living. For some, anthropology is a career, but it informs the lives of all who study it seriously.

ered natural in one culture is not necessarily considered natural in all cultures. In fact, the very notions of natural, unnatural, and supernatural may be absent in other cultures or have different meanings than in American culture.

Ethnocentrism

When we look at those who are different from ourselves, we are often in the position of a deaf man who sees a bunch of people with fiddles and drums, jumping around every which way, and thinks they are crazy. He cannot hear the music, so he doesn't see that they are dancing (Myerhoff 1978). Similarly, a person who does not hear the music of another culture cannot make sense of its dance. In other words, if we assume that the understandings, patterns, and rules of other cultures are the same as

our own, then the actions of other people may seem incomprehensible. One of the most important contributions of anthropology is its ability to open our ears to the music and meaning in other cultures. It challenges and corrects our ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism is the notion that one's own culture is superior to any other. It is the idea that other cultures should be measured by the degree to which they live up to our cultural standards. We are ethnocentric when we view other cultures

forensic anthropology The application of biological anthropology to the identification of skeletalized or badly decomposed human remains.

ethnocentrism Judging other cultures from the perspective of one's own culture. The notion that one's own culture is more beautiful, rational, and nearer to perfection than any other.



Global Perspective

“Stone Age” Tribes

Introductory anthropology students often imagine that anthropologists go off to study groups that are wholly unaffected by the modern world and uncontaminated by its practices. For better or for worse, this is not the case: there have been no such groups for a long time. Members of industrialized cultures had reached virtually every group of people in the world by the time of World War I.

Two exceptions are interesting to note. In the 1930s, the Leahy brothers, Australian gold prospectors, made contact with the peoples of Highland New Guinea. They provided a fascinating pictorial account of this encounter (Connolly and Anderson 1987). In the early 1970s, anthropologists and journalists hailed the discovery of the gentle Tasaday, a “Stone Age” tribe living in the Philippines. However, it is now widely suspected that the Tasaday were a hoax (Berreman 1990; Headland 1992).

Today, anthropologists are apt to find that the people they work with wear T-shirts with the names of American cities or professional sports teams and drink Coca-Cola. They get their news from the radio, including independent stations and stations operated by their own country or by the United States, Britain, France, and Germany. They often know more about what is going on in the world than the anthropologists themselves.

A widely publicized example of such global interconnection happened in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy. In May 2002, Masai villagers from Enoosaen in Southeastern Kenya gave a gift of 14 head of cattle to the people of the United States. The gift was gratefully accepted by acting ambassador William Brentick. Enoosaen is a long way from urban centers, even by Kenyan standards: more than two hours over rough track from Masai Mara game preserve. However, the gift of cattle is only part of the story.

The people of Enoosaen may well have heard about the attack before May. According to a *Los Angeles Times* article, many of them wear Gap clothing and Nike shoes, and some carry cell

phones and use an Internet café in another town. However, the attacks evidently did not make much impression on them until a fellow villager, Kimeli Naiyomah, returned home for a visit. Naiyomah had better knowledge of the events of 9/11 than other villagers because he was a premed student at Stanford University. Kimeli Naiyomah is unusual. Few people from tribal areas of the world get to attend prestigious American universities. However, even in very remote locations, it is common to meet people who have traveled themselves or who have relatives living in the United States, or in Western Europe.

We are connected more closely to those around the globe than we often believe. And the implication of that is that no one today is truly isolated from world events. No one lives in the Stone Age.



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In the contemporary world economy, cultural icons diffuse to places far from their original source. T-shirts carrying internationally recognized images are found distant from the cultures that create them. In this picture, a young man from Central Africa wears a shirt with a picture of Princess Di.

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Ethnocentrism is the notion that one's own culture is superior to any other.

through the narrow lens of our own culture or social position.

The American tourist who, presented with a handful of Mexican pesos, asks “How much is this in real money?” is being ethnocentric—but there is nothing uniquely American about ethnocentrism. People all over the world tend to see things from their own culturally patterned point of view, through their own cultural filters. They tend to value what they have been taught to value and to see the meaning of life in terms of their own culturally defined purposes. For example, when the people living in Highland New Guinea first saw European outsiders in the 1930s, they believed that the Europeans were the ghosts of their ancestors. It was the only way that these people could initially make sense of what they were seeing (Connolly and Anderson 1987).

Although most peoples are ethnocentric, the ethnocentrism of Western societies has had greater consequences than that of smaller, less technologically advanced, and more geographically isolated peoples. The historical circumstances that led to the spread of Western culture have given its members a strong belief in its rightness and superiority. Westerners have been in a position to impose their beliefs and practices on other peoples because of their wealth and their superior military technology. It may matter little, for example, to the average Frenchman if the Dogon (an ethnic group in Mali) believe that their way of life and beliefs are superior. The Dogon

have little ability to affect events in France. However, it mattered a great deal to the Dogon that the French believed that their way of life and beliefs were superior. The French colonized Mali and imposed their beliefs and institutions on its people.

Although ethnocentrism gets in the way of understanding, some ethnocentrism seems necessary as a kind of glue to hold a society together. A group's belief in the superiority of its own way of life binds its members together and helps them to perpetuate their values. When a culture loses value for its people, they may experience **anomie**, a condition where social and moral norms are absent or confused. This results in great emotional stress and culture members may even lose interest in living. Such people may be rapidly absorbed by other groups and their culture lost.

To the extent that ethnocentrism prevents building bridges between cultures, however, it is maladaptive. When one culture is motivated by ethnocentrism to trespass on another, the harm done can be enormous. It is but a short step from this kind of ethnocentrism to **racism**—beliefs,

anomie A situation where social or moral norms are confused or entirely absent; often caused by rapid social change.

racism The belief that some human populations are superior to others because of inherited, genetically transmitted characteristics.



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actions, and patterns of social organization that exclude individuals and groups from the equal exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The transformation from ethnocentrism to racism underlies much of the structural inequality that characterizes modern history.

Human Biological Diversity

Anthropology contributes to our understanding of genetically transmitted differences among human groups; it also helps us understand differences that result from learning. Compared with other closely related species, the human species shows extremely low levels of morphological (skeletal) and serological (blood type) diversity.

However, one of the important outcomes of human evolution is the wide variation in human form. Some people are short, others are tall; skin color covers a spectrum from very dark to very light; some people have slight builds, others are husky.

The degree to which humans vary is even more startling when less obvious differences, such as blood type and other biochemical traits, are taken into account. Moreover, this biological diversity follows geographic patterns, with people from the same region tending to share more traits with each other than they do with people from distant lands. Some of these variations are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

The Cultural Construction of Race

A particularly salient aspect of culture in the United States is the assumption that the range of human diversity is best understood as a small number of biologically separate races. Over the past two centuries, scientists have struggled to create a consistent system to identify and classify these races. It may come as a surprise to learn that despite hundreds of years of labor by enormously creative and intelligent researchers, no agreed upon, consistent system of racial classification has ever been developed. Furthermore, other cultures construct racial categories differently than Americans (see Chapter 13 for an example).

Anthropology in the United States has always been concerned with questions of race. At the turn of the century, Franz Boas, one of the founders of modern American anthropology, argued passionately for **biopsychological equality**—the notion that although individuals differ, all human beings have equal capacity for culture. Before World War II, however, many physical anthropologists attempted to create systems to divide humanity into races and rank them. Today most anthropologists agree that there is no way of doing this and that race, as a biological characteristic of humans, does not exist (Shanklin 1994, American Anthropological Association 1998).

In biological terms, no group of humans has ever been isolated for long enough to make it very different from others. Thus, anthropologists understand systems of racial classification as reflecting social patterning rather than biological reality. Prejudice and racism are certainly realities, but they are not rooted in biological differences between people (Kilker 1993; L. Reynolds 1992). Human beings are truly all members of a single race.

The notion that races are not biological categories might seem unusual, and it is worth a brief detour to explore the problems with the notion

of biological race. These problems are many, but three are especially important: the arbitrary selection of traits used to define races; the inability to adequately describe within-species variation through the use of racial categories; and the repeated independent evolution of so-called racial characteristics in populations with no genetic relationship.

Each human being is a collection of thousands of characteristics such as skin color, blood type, tolerance to lactose (milk sugar), tooth shape, and so on. Variations in these traits result from both genetic and environmental factors as well as interactions between the two. There is no way to weight the importance of any trait in determining racial classification—no reason, for example, why blood type should be intrinsically more or less important than lactose tolerance, skin color, or hair shape. However, schemes of racial classification select a very small number of traits and ignore others. Such systems typically assume that the traits they have selected have a very strong genetic basis and that these traits are more significant than others, which they ignore. The problem with such schemes is that they identify races that are simply the result of the particular traits the researchers have chosen. In other words, if different traits were chosen, different races would result. Jared Diamond (1994) notes that identifying a race on the basis of lactose tolerance is as valid as basing a racial group on any other trait. However, if we did so, we would group Norwegians, Arabs, North Indians, and some Africans into one race, while excluding other peoples.

It is no accident that the characteristics the members of many cultural groups, including Americans, choose as racial markers are traits such as skin color, eye shape, nose shape, and hair texture. These traits are not chosen for their biological importance but because they are easily visible. Thus, they make it relatively easy to immediately assign individuals to races. Using blood types, lactose intolerance, or dry versus wet earwax to determine race would be as good (or bad) as other means of defining racial groups, but because such traits are not easily seen, they would be socially useless.

Variation within socially constructed races also presents enormous problems. Obvious and obscure physical differences between members of the same so-called race are enormous, typically exceeding differences between average members of racial groups. In fact, studies using biological measures



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Ota Benga, a pygmy, was brought to the United States for the Africa exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. He was briefly exhibited at the monkey house in the Bronx Zoo in New York. The implication of the exhibit was that people such as Ota Benga were more similar to chimpanzees than to white Americans. Such exhibitions reinforced the mistaken notion that Africans were biologically inferior to Europeans.

make it clear that individual differences between people are much greater than racial differences. In other words, measured genetically, you are about as different from another person of your race as you are from another person of a different race.

To illustrate the importance of variation within races, imagine lining up all the students on your campus according to the color of their skin. Assuming the student population is large enough, all skin tones, from the very light people at one end of the line to the very dark people at the other, would be represented. The vast majority of people would fall in between the extremes. At what point would white become black? Are people who stand close to each other in the line necessarily more closely related than those who stand farther apart? In fact, there is no way to tell who is related to whom by looking at the line.

Finally, the traits that are typically used to define races have arisen repeatedly and independently throughout the world and are the result of common

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biopsychological equality The notion that all human groups
have the same biological and mental capabilities.



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forms of evolution. Most theories of race assume that people who share similar racial characteristics share similar origins. The fact that traits arise recurrently, however, means that this assumption is faulty: people who share similar traits are not necessarily more closely related to each other than to people of other races.

It is often imagined, for example, that all black people are descendants of a group of central Africans and all white people are descendants of a group who lived in the Caucasus Mountains. In fact, this is biological nonsense. To illustrate this point, consider people from the Central African Republic, New Guinea, and France. People from the Central African Republic and New Guinea (off the coast of Australia in Melanesia) are both likely to have dark skin, similar hair texture, and share other features. People from France are likely to have light skin and have hair texture and other features that look quite different from Africans and New Guineans. From this, one might conclude that Central Africans and New Guineans are more closely related to each other than either is to the French. This is incorrect. Molecular genetic data tells us that Africans and Melanesians show a great deal of genetic divergence. Europeans are more closely related to both Africans and New Guineans than either is to the other (Templeton 1998:640).

The notion that perceived differences between social groups are caused by racial inheritance has no biological validity and must be dismissed. People who wish to argue that racial groups have differing biologically based abilities must first show that such groups are biologically distinct. This has not been done and is probably impossible to do.

One of the most important things we can learn by studying anthropology is that although racism is an important social fact, the big differences among human groups are the result of culture, not biological inheritance or race. All human beings belong to the same species, and the biological features essential to human life are common to us all. A human being from any part of the world can learn the cultural and behavioral patterns of any group she or he is born into. Adaptation through culture and the potential for cultural richness and creativity are part of a universal human heritage and override any physical variation among human groups. Issues of race and racism are treated in numerous places in this book. You will find critical information about race on pages 51–54 in Chapter 2, and a

more detailed analysis of racism on pages 343–348 in Chapter 13.



Anthropological Approaches to Culture

In their quest to understand culture, anthropologists have devised critical research and analysis tools. In this section we examine some of the most important ones: cultural relativism, and emic and etic approaches to culture. We also explore some recent trends in anthropological analysis.

Anthropology and Cultural Relativism

Anthropology helps us understand peoples whose ways of life are different from our own but with whom we share a common human destiny. However, we can never understand a people's behavior if we insist on judging it first. **Cultural relativism** is the notion that a people's values and customs must be understood in terms of the culture of which they are a part. Cultural relativists maintain that, for the sake of scientific accuracy, anthropologists must suspend judgment in order to understand the logic and dynamics of other cultures. Researchers who view the actions of other people simply in terms of the degree to which they correspond to the observers' notions of right and wrong systematically distort the cultures they study.

Cultural relativism is a fundamental research tool of anthropology. It is distinct from moral relativism—the notion that because no universal standard of behavior exists, people should not judge behaviors as good or evil. Anthropological methods may require researchers to suspend judgment but not to dispense with it entirely. Anthropologists are not usually moral relativists and are not required to approve of all cultural practices. However, it is possible to understand other cultures without approving of them. Anthropologists insist that every culture has a logic that makes sense to its own members. It is our job to understand that logic, even if we do not approve of it or wish that culture for ourselves.

Using the anthropological technique of cultural relativism helps us to see that our own culture is only one design for living among the many in the history of humankind. We can learn to see the history of our own culture as one design among many, and to see the history of other cultures as designs that are not under a

particular set of historical circumstances. It is not the inevitable end result of human social evolution. Understanding this provides a much needed corrective for ethnocentrism.

From its beginnings, anthropology held out a dual promise: contributing to the understanding of human diversity, and providing a cultural critique of our own society (Marcus and Fischer 1986). By becoming aware of cultural alternatives, we are better able to see ourselves as others see us and to use that knowledge to make constructive changes in our own society. Through looking at the “other,” we come to understand ourselves.

Emic and Etic Approaches to Culture

Virtually all anthropologists subscribe to the notion of cultural relativism, but they take a variety of perspectives in their attempt to understand culture. Anthropological descriptions of culture are often characterized as either *emic* or *etic*, terms drawn from the study of language. Anthropologists using the **emic perspective** seek to understand how cultures look from the inside and what one must know in order to think and act as a native. To this end, they analyze cultures using concepts and distinctions that are meaningful to the members of the culture they are studying. The aim of emic research is to enable cultural outsiders to gain a sense of what it might be like to be a member of the culture. One test of emic data is that cultural insiders must find it meaningful.

Anthropologists using an **etic perspective** seek to derive principles or rules that explain the behavior of members of a culture and can be used to compare one culture with another. The methods of analysis, concepts, and distinctions used by etic anthropologists may not be part of the native’s cultural awareness, or may even be in conflict with it. However, the aim of etic research is to generate useful scientific theories. It is by this criterion, which may lie outside the native’s ability to judge, that etic research is tested.

The debate over whether the emic or etic perspective is more appropriate for the goals of anthropological research is ongoing. However, these arguments often overlook the complementary relationship between the two perspectives. Emic and etic analyses answer different questions about the nature of culture. Furthermore, the attempt to see another

culture from the inside (the emic perspective) helps develop our ability to look at our own culture from the outside (an etic perspective). Anthropology, like good poetry, makes the strange familiar and the familiar strange (Spiro 1995).

Anthropology in a Changing World

From the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century, when anthropology was developing as a field of study, much of the world was colonized by powerful nations. These nations often held ethnic minorities and traditional societies as subjugated populations within their own borders. It was frequently among these colonized and oppressed peoples that anthropologists worked. For example, British and French anthropologists worked among colonized people in Africa. American anthropologists often worked with Native American populations or Pacific Islanders in areas under U.S. control.

Doing anthropological research under such conditions had several implications. First, communities had little control over whether or not to accept an anthropologist. If the government assigned anthropologists to a village, the residents had to accept them. Second, anthropologists did not have to be responsive to the political or economic needs of the people among whom they worked. Finally, very few of the people among whom anthropologists worked either knew how to read European languages or had access to the libraries and bookstores where anthropological works were available. This meant that anthropologists had little fear their work could be contradicted by those about whom they wrote. Although anthropologists during these times frequently did outstanding research, the conditions under which they worked inevitably affected their descriptions of society.

cultural relativism The notion that a culture should not be judged or evaluated according to the values of another culture. They must be analyzed with reference to their own histories and culture traits understood in terms of the cultural whole.

emic (perspective) Examining society using concepts, categories, and distinctions that are meaningful to members of that culture.

etic (perspective) Examining society using concepts, categories, and rules derived from science; an outsider’s perspective, which produces analyses that members of the society
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 died may not find it meaningful.



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After World War II, international conditions began to change. Most colonies held by Western powers gained their independence in the 1960s. Political liberties were longer in coming in areas held by the Soviet Union, but by the close of the twentieth century the vast majority of people lived in independent nations. Furthermore, education in Western languages has become increasingly available, and communication by radio, television, telephone, and the Internet has become ubiquitous.

The effects on anthropology have been profound. In order to work, anthropologists must now negotiate with independent governments. Community members have much more say in deciding whether to accept anthropologists. Anthropologists can often be certain that at least some of the people they work with will hear about or read about the results of their research. Additionally, anthropologists now come from many of the communities that anthropologists have traditionally studied. These individuals, as well as many others, raise hard questions about the nature of the discipline (Yanagisako and Delaney 1994; Rosaldo 1993; Said 1993; Marcus 1992; di Leonardo 1991; Hooks 1989; Clifford and Marcus 1986). They challenge the accuracy of past anthropological reporting and raise doubts about the ability of anthropologists to accurately describe cultures. They urge us to consider exactly whose story gets told and why.

Issues such as these present interesting theoretical challenges to anthropology. But they are also very important because anthropological research often has political implications. As contemporary social groups, whether nations or smaller units within nations, search for identity and autonomy, cultural representations become important resources, and traditions once taken for granted become the subject of heightened political consciousness. People want their cultures to be represented to the outside world in ways acceptable to them and are holding anthropologists responsible for the political impact of their work.

Anthropologists have responded to these challenges in a variety of ways. For example, anthropol-

ogists have become much more explicit about the exact conditions under which their data were collected. They increasingly present their work using multiple viewpoints, trying to tell the story of a culture from the perspective not only of the detached social scientist, but also of men, women, and children of the society under study. Additionally, many have become politically active, fighting for the rights of oppressed minorities and traditional peoples throughout the world.

The challenges to anthropology and the discipline's response to them have caused enormous controversy. Some theorists insist that anthropology must be committed and engaged. They argue that it is the duty of anthropologists to defend the rights of the oppressed and present the views of those who have not previously been heard. Others argue that such political engagement distorts anthropological research and that anthropologists should be concerned with gathering data as objectively as possible and using it to increase our theoretical knowledge of the underlying dynamics of human society (see D'Andrade, Scheper-Hughes, et al. 1995 for a good example of this debate).

We firmly believe that anthropology benefits from lively discussion of its role and meaning. The participation of anthropologists from many backgrounds, as well as members of the communities anthropologists study, makes the discipline richer and the debate more useful. As Chapter 4 shows, no single understanding of culture commands the devotion of all anthropologists or ever has. Many anthropologists believe that our studies should become more reflective on issues of politics, history, and context (R. Lee 1992). Others insist on a commitment to generating theories that transcend these same factors. Regardless of these differences, anthropologists are dedicated to understanding the nature of human diversity and similarity; and to exploring the context, depth, origins, and, occasionally, the poetry of human experience. Most anthropologists hope that, with the help of such understanding, we will leave the world a better place than we found it.



Summary

1. Anthropology is a comparative study of humankind. Anthropologists study human beings in

2. Anthropology is holistic. Anthropologists study the entire range of human social, political, economic, and religious behavior, as well as the relationships among the different aspects of human behavior.
3. Anthropology focuses on what is typical within a human group, rather than on differences among individuals.
4. The aim of anthropology is to describe human groups and discover and explain the similarities and differences among them.
5. Anthropology is divided into subfields. These are cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, archaeology, biological (or physical) anthropology, and applied anthropology.
6. Cultural anthropology focuses on the learned and shared ways of behaving typical of a particular human group. Anthropologists also study culture in general and attempt to discover and explain patterns of cultural development that apply to the whole of humankind.
7. Linguistic anthropology examines the history, structure, and variation of human language.
8. Archaeologists study societies that existed in the past by focusing on their material remains.
9. Biological anthropologists study humankind from a biological perspective, focusing on evolution, human variation, skeletal analysis, primatology, as well as other facets of human biology.
10. Applied anthropologists are trained in one of the other subfields. They use anthropological research techniques to solve social, political, and economic problems for governments and other organizations.
11. Medical anthropology is one example of applied anthropology. Medical anthropologists apply their ethnographic and holistic perspective to those who receive health care and to the subcultures of health care professionals.
12. Anthropology stresses the importance of culture in human adaptation. It asserts that critical differences among individuals are cultural rather than biological.
13. Anthropology reduces ethnocentrism, or looking at and judging other people through the narrow perspective of one's own culture.
14. Anthropology demonstrates that race is not a valid scientific category, but rather a social and cultural construct.
15. Anthropology introduces the concept of cultural relativism, the idea that cultures must be understood on their own terms, as the products of their own histories, rather than judged by comparison with each other or with our own culture.
16. By taking the outsider's view of our own society and culture, we can understand it more objectively and perhaps use this understanding to make more rational changes in our own lives.
17. Anthropology can present both emic and etic views of culture. The emic perspective in anthropology focuses on the meaning that a culture's practices have for its members. The etic perspective tries to determine the causes and consequences of particular cultural patterns that may be beyond the awareness of members of the culture being studied.
18. In the last several decades, the people whose cultures have traditionally been studied by anthropologists have increasingly challenged and contributed to the theories and practices of anthropology. This has resulted in a richer, better-informed anthropology.



Key Terms

anomie
anthropology
applied anthropology
archaeology

artifact
biological (or physical)
anthropology
biopsychological equality

cultural anthropology
cultural relativism
cultural resource

culture
emic (perspective)
ethnocentrism
ethnohistory



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etic (perspective) features	holistic/holism human variation	medical anthropology paleoanthropology	racism society
forensic anthropology historical linguists	indigenous peoples linguistic anthropology	prehistoric primate	urban archaeology



Suggested Readings

- Anderson, Barbara G. 1999. *Around the World in 30 Years: Life as a Cultural Anthropologist*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. Anderson describes her experiences as an anthropologist in 10 cultures, including the United States, France, Thailand, Japan, Russia, and Corsica. In each chapter she highlights principles of anthropology, as well as describing both the successes and failures of life as an anthropologist in the field.
- DeVita, Philip R., and James D. Armstrong. 1993. *Distant Mirrors: America as a Foreign Culture*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. An entertaining series of articles with a serious message: how U.S. culture looks to foreign anthropologists. This book gives the United States a chance to “see ourselves as others see us.”
- Gould, Stephen Jay. 1982. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: Norton. A brilliant and important book that attacks the theories of biological determinism in a well-argued and carefully documented manner.
- Grindal, Bruce, and Frank Salamone (Eds.). 1995. *Bridges to Humanity: Narratives on Anthropology and Friendship*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.
- A collection of 14 essays by anthropologists who explore the process of anthropological research and the often very personal meaning it has for them. This book explores the ways that anthropology changes our understanding of others and of ourselves.
- Malik, Kenan. 1996. *The Meaning of Race*. New York: New York University Press. A provocative and stimulating discussion of the development of the idea of race in the history and culture of Western society. Malik focuses specific attention on recent events, particularly the end of the Cold War.
- Shanklin, Eugenia. 1994. *Anthropology and Race*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. A brief and highly readable review of the history of the idea of race. The book emphasizes the inability of scientists to find a consistent biological basis for race.
- Spradley, James, and David W. McCurdy (Eds.). 2000. *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. A classic but frequently updated collection of readings that covers a broad range of topics, demonstrating both anthropological principles and theoretical approaches.



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Human Evolution



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Researcher Dian Fossey (1932-1985) was a pioneer in observing primate behavior in the wild. Understanding primate behavior helps teach us about the place of humans in the natural world.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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Human Variation

In 1924, South African paleontologist Raymond Dart was getting ready for a wedding when he received a box containing the fossilized skull of a primate. Almost 3 months of careful chipping away at the stone revealed the face of an ancient “child.” Dart called the child his “Taungs Baby” (after the place it was found) but gave it the scientific name *Australopithecus africanus*. Though few people believed Dart at the time, he had found an authentic early hominin. His discovery was critical because it showed that human ancestors had lived in Africa and that their upright posture developed before their large brains.

For more details, see page 40.

Jn its broadest sense, evolution is merely change. Biological evolution, however, is something a bit more specific. According to biologist Douglas Futuyama (1986), biological evolution is change in the properties of populations of organisms that transcend the lifetime of a single individual. It is only populations, not individuals, that evolve. This is because for a biological change to be evolutionary, it must be inheritable via the genetic material from one generation to the next. As individuals, we cannot evolve by learning or any other social process because these do not affect the genes that determine our physical traits. **Evolution** is the way we understand the biological history of humanity. We use the term to encompass both small changes, such as the frequency of a particular gene in a population, and large changes, such as the history of life on earth.

Speculation about human history and the natural world plays an important role in most societies. For example, the notion that human beings

came from earlier life forms was well developed among ancient European philosophers. In the sixth century BCE, the Greek thinker Anaximander of Miletus speculated that humans arose from fish. A century later, his disciple, Xenophanes of Colophon, used evidence of fossil fish from numerous places around the Mediterranean to support Anaximander’s theory.

We are often asked why, in a text on cultural anthropology, there should be an extensive chapter on human evolution, normally a part of biological anthropology. We include it because although modern human behavior is almost totally learned and cultural, it rests on a biological base. It is expressed in the brains and bodies of actual human beings. These brains and bodies were shaped by the process

evolution | The change in the properties of populations of organisms that occur over time



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of evolution. Thus, evolution has shaped our behavior, our capacity for culture, and the nature of that culture. For example, we have highly accurate depth perception, hands with opposable thumbs, and the ability to manipulate objects with great precision. These features, which developed over the course of evolution, are absolutely fundamental to the making of tools and thus the cultural behavior of modern humans. Members of all cultures are adept tool users. Humans make tools ranging from fishhooks and spears to microprocessors and satellites. The use of such tools is basic to human life and helps to shape the patterns of subsistence, learning, and communication within society. Without tools, human culture would be vastly different, if it existed at all. Other fundamental aspects of human culture also rest on a biological basis. These include our use of language, our habitual two-legged stance, the range of foods that are edible and inedible, our need to reproduce, and many others.

Although human cultures are vastly different, human bodies and brains are all very similar. All human beings share a common evolutionary heritage. We became who we are biologically under specific historical and environmental conditions. Understanding our evolutionary history is vital to cultural anthropologists because it tells us about the physical, material base upon which all culture is built, and thus informs us about the things that all humans have in common. As we learn about evolution, we gain insight into what it means to be human, the ties that bind us to one another, and our relationship to the nonhuman world.

Darwin and Natural Selection

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scientists in Europe and North America proposed many different theories of evolution. It was Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by **natural selection**, however, that proved the most convincing scientific explanation of the variety and history of life on earth.

The Theory of Natural Selection

Darwin's notion of natural selection is both powerful and elegant. It is a relatively simple set of ideas with profound consequences. Because it is based on things that are easily observable, such as variation



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Charles Darwin as a young man. Darwin's theory of natural selection revolutionized evolutionary thought because it accurately showed how evolution occurred.

among members of a species, most of its elements are easy to verify and extremely difficult to refute. As a result, Darwin's theory has been highly durable.

Darwin began by pointing out the great variety of nature. He observed that no two living things, even those of the same species, are quite alike.

As later scientists have discovered, variation among members of a species comes from many sources. All living things are subject to **mutations**, or random changes in genetic material. These are the ultimate source of all variation.

Sexual reproduction and the movement of individuals and groups from place to place (or **gene flow**) results in the mixing of genetic material and also creates new variations.

Isolation can play an important role as well. Imagine that a small number of individuals are separated from a larger population. By chance, some members of the small group have a characteristic relatively rare in the larger population—say, a sixth finger on their right hand. The descendants of this small, isolated group will have an unusually large percentage of individuals with six fingers, compared with the larger population from which they were separated. This process is known as **genetic drift**.

Darwin went on to observe that most creatures, human and nonhuman, did not survive long enough to have offspring. They fell victim to predators, contracted diseases, or perished through some defect in their biological makeup. Though it is apparent to us that very few animals survive to reproductive age, with the advent of modern medicine we are used to the idea that most human children will survive. However, before the development of sanitation in the nineteenth century and antibiotics in the twentieth century, vast numbers of children died very young. For example, more than 40 percent of all deaths in London between 1813 and 1820 were children under 10 years old (Robertson 1827). Even today, in the world's poor nations, large numbers of children die before they reach the age of 5. In 2003, for example, more than 20 percent of children died before the age of 5 in 11 African nations. Around the world, more than 10 percent died in 45 nations (World Bank 2005).

In the human deaths just mentioned, the main culprits are surely poverty and lack of access to basics such as clean water, sanitation, and medical care. However, Darwin argued that, in most cases, those creatures that survived did so for some reason. That is to say, their survival was not a random occurrence. There was something about them that favored it. Perhaps they blended well with a background and so were more difficult for predators to see, or they had a bit more resistance to a disease. Perhaps their shape made them a bit more efficient at getting food, or their digestive system a bit better at processing the food they did find. (See Figure 2.1.)

Darwin was profoundly affected by the economic and social philosophy of his era, particularly the works of Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus. These philosophers both had emphasized the role of competition in human social life. In the 1770s, Smith had argued that competition among firms increased their productivity and led to social betterment. A quarter century later, Malthus wrote that because human population levels rose much faster than agricultural production, struggles over resources were inevitable. Darwin, synthesizing these two positions, gave competition and struggle prominent roles in his theory. He argued that life involved constant struggle. Creatures competed with many others for food and with members of their own species for mates. Those who had traits that suited them well to their environment tended to win this struggle for nutrition and reproduction.



Figure 2.1
Beak variations in Darwin's Galapagos finches. Darwin found many different species of finch on the Galapagos, each with a beak specialized for a particular type of food.

natural selection The mechanism of evolutionary change; changes in traits of living organisms that occur over time as a result of differences in reproductive success among individuals.

mutation A random change in genetic material; the ultimate source of all biological variation.

gene flow Mixing of genetic material that results from the movement of individuals and groups from place to place.

genetic drift Changes in the frequencies of specific traits caused by random factors.



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Thus, Darwin combined the struggle-for-food element of Malthus's work with the notion drawn from Adam Smith that competition leads to betterment.

Darwin further argued that those who won this struggle for survival were able, in some way, to pass some of the traits that led to their success to their offspring. Thus, each subsequent generation would include more and more individuals with these traits and fewer without. Darwin reasoned that, over the course of millions of years, this process could give rise to new species and all of the tremendous variation of the natural world.

Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection is sometimes referred to as "survival of the fittest," but this phrase was coined by the social theorist Herbert Spencer (1864), not by Darwin himself. Although Darwin approved of Spencer's phrase, it is misleading for modern readers. When Spencer spoke of fitness, he thought of wealth, power, and physical strength. But when Darwin spoke of fitness, he meant reproductive success: creatures better adapted to their environment tend to succeed in the struggle for food and mates, passing on their traits, whereas those less well adapted tend to disappear. Modern readers tend to understand fitness the way Spencer did, equating it with strength or intellect. So, it sounds as if Darwin's theory actually says the strong and smart survive. But this is incorrect. Strength and intelligence do not necessarily guarantee reproductive success. They are not important for all creatures or environments. Consider the tree sloth, the famous South American tree-dwelling mammal. Sloths are neither particularly strong nor intelligent, yet their continually growing teeth, multichambered stomachs, protective coloring, and habit of sleeping most of the day and night adapt them well to their tropical forest environment. Alternatively, consider crustaceans. It's hard to imagine what advantage a barnacle might gain from increased intelligence.

Darwin understood evolution by natural selection as a slow, steady, continuous process, and there is evidence that, in many cases, evolution does operate in this way. In the 1970s, Niles Eldridge and Stephen Jay Gould proposed an alternative model of evolution called punctuated equilibrium (1972). Eldridge and Gould agreed with the basic Darwinian mechanism of natural selection. However, they argued that species tend to remain stable for long periods and then, through mutation and natural selection, change quite suddenly. Much of the fossil

record, especially for large species, supports punctuated equilibrium.

Evolution, Politics, and Religion

Darwin's theory of evolution is highly controversial, particularly in the United States. It is extremely important to point out, however, that virtually all of the debate about evolution is religious and political rather than scientific. The majority of the world's religions have stories about the ways in which animals and humans came to live on the earth. Evolution challenges a literal reading of these stories, and for this reason it has been strongly resisted by leaders and congregations in some religions. Not all religious people argue against evolution though. The Catholic Church, for example, declared that evolution was compatible with Christian teachings in 1950, half a century ago. Pope John Paul II repeated and expanded this position in 1996. Many theologians in a great variety of religions agree that evolution is consistent with the teachings of their tradition. In official publications and conference proceedings, the United Presbyterian Church, the Episcopal Church, the Unitarian Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Central Council of American Rabbis have all supported evolution and opposed the teaching of "scientific" creationism in public schools (Lieberman and Kirk 1996).

Whether the religious agree or not, Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection has withstood more than 140 years of intensive scientific scrutiny. Today there is no meaningful scientific challenge to evolutionary theory. In fact, evolution has become part of the basic framework of all biological sciences. Just as it is impossible to imagine a science of physics without the theory of gravity, so too modern biology, biochemistry, and many other fields of scientific endeavor are grounded in evolution and all but unthinkable without it.

Although scientists who study biology overwhelmingly agree on the basic principles of evolution and natural selection, there are disputes among them. Scholars argue about the speed of evolution and the precise conditions under which it occurs. There is much discussion about the historic relationships of plants and animals and how they should be classified. Scientists debate the appropriate evolutionary place of specific fossil human ancestors. It is important to understand, however, that all of this debate takes place within the context of

evolution. All sides in these arguments agree with the basic principles of natural selection, though they may differ about the specific applications.



Humans and Our Nearest Relatives

When people think about human evolution, they generally associate the idea with the notion that human beings evolved from apes or monkeys. But this is incorrect. Rather, modern-day humans and modern-day gorillas and chimpanzees evolved from common ancestors. The distinction is critical. Not only is it biologically inaccurate to say that humans evolved from apes or monkeys, but it also leads to a misunderstanding of evolution.

Saying that humans evolved from gorillas or chimpanzees suggests that humans are more evolved than these animals. However, no creature can be any more evolved than another. We can only imagine that we are more evolved if we believe that intellect or ability to alter the environment is the most important criterion of evolution. However, that is an extremely human-centered way of looking at biology. We could as easily say that producing the greatest number of related species or the greatest number of individuals is the best measure of evolution. If we were to take these criteria seriously, it would be clear that insects are far more “evolved” than humans. For example, there are believed to be more than 8,000 species of ants, comprising countless individuals. By contrast, there is only a single species of humans, comprising a mere 6 billion individuals.

Our Shared Ancestor and Common Characteristics

Given that humans and our nearest relatives evolved from a common ancestor, the next question we should ask is what that ancestor was. The question is not easily answered: although there are some recent finds that are good candidates for the ancestral fossil (for example Moya-Sola 2004), no agreed upon common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees or humans and gorillas has been found. However, fossils that we have found and information gained from biochemical dating techniques tell us a good deal about the creature even though we have not yet found it.

Biological anthropologists use the fossil record and a variety of techniques based on the study of DNA, blood protein, blood-clotting agents, and immunology to try and determine when the animals that were the common ancestors of humans and other primate species lived. Evidence from a variety of sources yields similar dates. It shows that the creatures that became humans and apes split from those that gave rise to the monkeys of Europe, Africa, and Asia between 25 and 20 million years ago. We last had a common ancestor with the great apes (orangutans, chimpanzees, and gorillas) around 13 million years ago. Human ancestors diverged from the ancestors of chimpanzees around 7 million years ago (Begun 2004; Brunet et al. 2002; Sibley and Ahlquist 1987; Sibley, Comstock, and Ahlquist 1990; Spuhler 1989; Templeton 1985, 1986; Marks, Schmidt, and Sarich 1988; Holmquist, Miyamoto, and Goodman 1988; Pilbeam 1996).

All primates originated as tree-dwelling mammals, and many of our commonalities come from this **arboreal** ancestry. To survive in the three-dimensional world of trees, primates needed grasping hands and feet that could be used to climb and hold. This meant that hands and feet often had fully opposable thumbs. To live in trees, primates developed very acute eyesight; most see in great detail and in color. Additionally, tree dwellers need very accurate depth perception. Misjudging the precise location of an object, such as a branch or a piece of fruit, can easily lead to a fall and death. In primates, accurate depth perception comes from stereoscopic vision. Primates have eyes that face forward, near the front of their heads. The field of vision of each eye overlaps the other. The result is that we, and other primates, see objects close to us from two slightly different angles at once. Our brains use the **parallax**, the slight difference in the images produced by each eye, to accurately compute the distance to the object. Reliance on hand-eye coordination developed along with the expansion of the areas of the brain involved in vision, motor skills, and the integration of the two.

Life in the trees also involved reductions in some sensory capacities. For example, terrestrial mammals generally have a highly developed sense of

arboreal Tree-dwelling.

Created with parallax The slight difference in the image of an object seen from different vantage points.



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Global Perspective

Disappearing Primates

Learning about primates is basic to understanding human evolution. Knowing how creatures are both like us and different from us helps us comprehend what it means to be a human being. Unfortunately, throughout the world, primates are increasingly endangered. Although no species of primate has become extinct in the past century, many are on the verge of disappearing today. The World Conservation Union identifies about 15 percent of the approximately 620 primate species as either endangered or critically endangered. This means that many of these species will disappear in the coming decades unless people take active steps to preserve them.

One key factor threatening primate populations is destruction of habitat. The tropical forests where most primates live are threatened by expanding human populations and commercial exploitation. As human populations expand, people bring new lands into cultivation, destroying primate habitat as they do so. International demand for hardwoods and tropical produce also encourage the felling of forests and the establishment of agricultural plantations. In some areas, the combination of population increase and commercial demand has resulted in the destruction of more than 90 percent of the original habitat for some primates.

Primates face other problems, too. Political turmoil can have horrific effects on animal populations and is of fundamental concern. A good example is the fate of the wildlife in the central African nations of Rwanda and Congo. These nations are home to many primate species, including some of the only remaining groups of mountain gorillas. They are also plagued by civil war, economic turmoil, and genocide. As farming and market systems collapse, populations desperate to survive turn to hunting primates and other animals for food. People desperate for

a little cash are willing to sell any animal body parts that might be used as medicine or to provide souvenirs to wealthy outsiders. Thus, the fate of wildlife is linked to that of humans. As long as people are desperately poor and live in nations in turmoil, wildlife will be threatened. Protecting endangered species in these areas must involve more than simply constructing preserves. Viable, politically and economically secure lifestyles must be found for the human as well as the animal populations.



Many groups are involved in attempting to protect the lives and habitats of endangered primates. Some of these are Conservation International (<http://www.conservation.org>), the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (<http://www.gorillafund.org>), Primate Conservation, Inc. (<http://www.primat.org>), and the World Wildlife Fund (<http://www.worldwildlife.org>).



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This orangutan from Sumatra has been trapped by local people and is being held in a rattan cage prior to being sold.

smell. Both predators and prey rely heavily on smell to detect each other. In the trees, smell plays a much weaker role. Most scent molecules are heavy and tend to accumulate at ground level. Further,

breezes make scent a less dependable indicator of direction than it is on the ground. As a result, primates have a reduced sense of smell compared with that of many other mammals.

Primate Social Life

Primates, particularly apes and humans, have a larger brain compared to their body weight than do other animals, and many have extremely complicated social lives. Although human social life clearly differs greatly from that of our closest ape relations, there are some similarities as well. By examining the characteristics of primate social lives, we may be able to find basic patterns shared by all primates, including humans. We may also learn the ways in which humans are fundamentally different from our primate relations.

Almost all primates live in social groups, and these are arranged in several different ways. Gorillas live in groups consisting of a single adult male and numerous adult females and their offspring. Chimpanzees, on the other hand, live in groups that include several adult males and several adult females and their offspring. Gibbons, as well as several species of monkey, live in monogamous pairs, and some monkeys from Central and South America live in groupings with one female and two males (Jolly 1985).

The core of primate societies is the bond between mothers and their infant offspring. With the possible exception of elephants, the mother-infant bond is stronger among primates than any other animals. Infants spend most of their time in very close contact with their mother and travel by clinging to their mother's belly. In many primate species, if a mother dies, the offspring will be adopted by other adult females. Often an adopter is a family member of the deceased mother, and

grandmothers may play an important role in parenting (Fairbanks 1988).

The intense bonding between mother and offspring is an ideal ground for teaching and learning. Primates have an enormous ability and need to learn. Young primates learn initially by imitating their mother's actions. In this way, they discover where to find food and water as well as which other animals are dangerous and which can be approached safely.

As primates grow older, play becomes central to their interaction with their age-mates, and they may spend most of their waking hours playing. Most play is intense, repetitive, and physical. By playing, primates refine their physical skills, explore their world, and practice solving problems. It is important to understand that primates are motivated to learn because much of learning, like play, is highly pleasurable for them (Fagan 1993).

In most primate societies, both males and females develop dominance hierarchies; that is, they are ranked as superior or inferior to one another. These hierarchies exist both within and between genders. Although such hierarchies, particularly among males, are created and maintained by shows of aggression, anthropologists believe that overall they serve to limit the amount of aggression within societies; once the hierarchy is established, lower-ranking individuals are less likely to challenge those with more status than might otherwise be the case.

The critical benefit of high rank is greater access to food, sex, and other resources. There is also evidence that high-ranking individuals reproduce



Grooming is an essential element of social behavior in many primate species, as among these longtail macaques.



One of the most important behavior patterns among humans and nonhuman primates, like gorillas, is the intensely close bond between mothers and their infants.

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more frequently than those of low rank. However, this is controversial. Although it is true that high-ranking males are frequently seen having sex, both by anthropologists and by members of their own species, there is evidence that low-ranking males also have frequent sex—they just do it covertly. Thus, even though high-ranking males have better reproductive chances, those of lower rank are not always effectively prevented from fathering offspring (Constable, Ashley, Goodall, and Pusey 2001).

Among most primates, dominance hierarchies result from a great many individual encounters. Thus, though the presence of a hierarchy prevents constant conflict, rankings are not absolutely fixed. Aggression among animals does occur, and patterns of dominance within the group may change. Furthermore, it is important to note that rank may be context specific. That is, a low-ranking female might give way to higher rank in competition for food but will defend her baby against all others, regardless of rank.

In addition to displays of aggression, primates have many means of reconciliation. One of the best known, grooming, is common among members of the same sex as well as members of different sexes. Inferior-rank animals groom their superiors, and friends groom friends. Among chimpanzees, baboons, and others, friends may hug, pat each other, or hold hands. A variety of other behaviors, including lip smacking and male–male mounting behaviors, are used to establish, reestablish, or maintain friendly relations between individuals and cohesion within the group.

Tool Use among Primates

The use of tools is fairly common among non-human animals. Many different animals build nests; some, like sea otters, use rocks, twigs, or leaves to get at their prey. However, these capacities seem qualitatively different from the extremely complex and varied tool use among humans.

Nonhuman primates also use tools, but in ways that seem different both from the behavior of animals such as sea otters and from humans.

Jane Goodall recorded the first tool use among nonhuman primates in 1960 (Goodall 1971). Since then, many additional discoveries have been made. Monkeys use sticks and branches to threaten others or defend themselves when they are threatened. Some Japanese macaques wash their food, use water to separate grains of wheat from sand, and play with rocks (Strier 2000; Huffman and Quiatt 1986; Jurmain et al. 1997). However, the most sophisticated tool use is found among chimpanzees and bonobos. For example, Mercader, Panger, and Boesch (2002) reported that chimpanzees in Ivory Coast used hammer stones to break nuts and that stone piles and stone chips left by this process bear great similarity to the remains of early hominin tools found by archaeologists. Two particularly well-documented examples of chimpanzee and bonobo tool use are termite fishing and the use of leaf sponges.

Termite fishing involves the use of a stick or blade of grass. After carefully selecting a stick, chimpanzees modify it by stripping off leaves and any other material that might interfere with the task at hand. They place the stick in a termite mound, wait until the termites begin to feed on it, then withdraw it to eat the termites. Chimps make leaf sponges by taking leaves, chewing them, and then using the resulting wad of material to soak up water from tree hollows and other places difficult for them to access. They also use leaves to clean their fur and pick their teeth. Both termite fishing and the use of leaf sponges are complex actions requiring foresight and planning. It is interesting that among all primates who use tools, it is females who first develop tool-using skills. Further, females generally become more adept at tool use than males (Strier 2000).

Among chimpanzees, behaviors such as termite fishing and leaf chewing do not appear throughout the entire species. Rather, some groups do them and others do not. This implies that such practices are learned behavior passed along as part of the knowledge of the social group, very much like human culture. In fact, Whiten and colleagues (1999) found almost 40 different behavior patterns, including tool usage, grooming, and courtship behaviors, that are present in some chimp communities but absent in others.



The Evolution of Humans

Human beings and our nearest ape relations have been following separate courses of evolution for the past 5 to 8 million years. In this time, our species has developed in systematic ways. Our early ancestors were relatively few in number and geographically confined to Africa. In 1999, the world's population topped 6 billion, and humans lived on every continent. The history of human evolution is thus a narrative of movement. In order for this movement to take place, humans have had to adapt to living in many different climates and ecosystems. Our early ancestors did not depend heavily on tools, and their cultures left few material remains. They were certainly able to learn, and depended on this for their survival. However, the range of their learning was probably small. Today, our ability to learn is vastly greater than that of our early ancestors. To live in many different ecosystems, humans had to innovate, applying our learning in new and original ways, adapting by changing our behavior. The spread of humans and our ancestors reflects our gradual acquisition of increasingly sophisticated, learned, cultural behavior.

Naming Names

Human ancestors, like those of other species, are generally referred to by their scientific names. All human ancestors, as well as current-day humans, are members of the biological family *Hominidae*. Within this family, individual ancestors are known by the names of their genus and species. A **genus** is a group of similar species.

Among living creatures, a relatively simple guideline is used to determine if similar animals are members of the same or different **species**. If a male and female are capable of producing fertile offspring, they are members of the same species. If they can

termite fishing The learned use of twigs or blades of grass to extract termites from their mounds characteristic of some groups of chimpanzees.

genus In biological classification, a group of similar species.

species In biological classification, a group of organisms whose members are similar to one another and are able to reproduce with one another but not with members of other



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A Closer Look

There's Evidence!

Reconstructions of the evolutionary history of human beings are based on data. But how do anthropologists find the data, and how do they figure out when human ancestors lived?

Many of the data used to build our theories of human evolution are found in the form of fossils. Fossils may be of a great many different kinds. Sometimes they are bones; sometimes they are impressions left by bones (or, in the case of fossil footprints, by behavior). On occasion, even fossil imprints of hair, skin, and soft tissues may be found.

Fossilization of any kind is a rare event, and not all things fossilize equally well. In general, the larger and harder something is, the longer it takes to decay, and hence the greater chance it will become fossilized. Teeth are the hardest part of the body, and hence the most easily fossilized. Skulls and leg bones are large and thus found more frequently than smaller bones such as ribs. Soft tissue parts of the body, such as skin and internal organs, decay very rapidly and are rarely found.

Finding fossils involves luck, skill, and the use of careful, scientific methodology. Finding a fossil-

bearing site is often extremely difficult. Anthropologists know that certain geological formations are much more likely to bear fossils than others, and they use techniques such as aerial and ground-based surveys, satellite imagery, and radar to try to locate fossils within these regions. However, luck and chance also play a large role. Experienced fossil hunters can sometimes go for many years without a major find.

Once a fossil-bearing site is found, excavation proceeds in a highly controlled manner. The area is extensively photographed and precisely mapped. Researchers usually divide it into a grid and systematically examine each section. The positions of fossils or artifacts are carefully recorded. Each item to be removed is given a number, and extensive notes are made about it. Soil is carefully analyzed for the remains of any fossilized plant or animal material that could provide clues about the ancient environment. To be sure that nothing is missed, dirt removed from the site is passed through wire screens.

One critical aspect of analyzing finds is determining their dates. Dating is a complex and

produce no offspring at all, or if the offspring are infertile, they are members of different species. For example, horses and donkeys are similar, but their offspring, mules, are infertile. Therefore, we must say they are members of different species. With extinct creatures, such as our fossil ancestors, no such test can be performed. Therefore, determining species membership is much more speculative.

Most human ancestors and modern-day people fall into two genera (the plural of genus): *Australopithecus* and *Homo*. In the past decade there have been several exciting discoveries of extremely ancient human relatives. Some anthropologists argue that these represent new genera, but their precise place in the evolution of humanity is still debated. Modern people, *Homo sapiens*, are members of the genus *Homo*. *Australopithecus* and *Homo* each include numerous species. (See Figure 2.2.)

The Earliest Human Ancestors

From an anatomical perspective, the critical thing that differentiates humans and our ancestors from modern-day apes and their ancestors is bipedal stance and locomotion. Unlike any other primate, humans and our ancestors habitually walk on two legs. Although chimpanzees, gorillas, and some other primates are capable of walking or running on two legs for short distances, their habitual stance is on all fours. **Bipedalism** involved substantial anatomical changes (see Figure 2.3). Skulls and pelvises of bipeds are shaped differently from those of animals that walk on all fours. In addition, the feet of human ancestors are specialized for walking, whereas their hands are generalized for a wide variety of tasks. When anthropologists are able to find fossils of these bones, bipedalism is easily inferred.

highly technical procedure. Many different dating techniques are available. These include potassium/argon (K/Ar) dating, carbon 14 (C14) dating, thermoluminescence, and paleomagnetic dating. Each technique has advantages and disadvantages. C14, for example, probably the best-known dating technique, is only useful for dating organic material less than 40,000 years old.

Many of the critical finds in human evolution have been dated using the K/Ar method. Potassium 40 (K40), a radioactive form of potassium, decays into argon at a steady, predictable rate. The heat of volcanic eruptions drives all argon (Ar) from rock or ash. Afterward, the only new source of argon is K40. Thus, measuring the amount of Ar in volcanic rock or ash tells investigators when these materials erupted from volcanoes and provides a reliable date for the fossils found in such material.

It is important to note that dating techniques such as K/Ar provide date ranges rather than precise calendar dates. Dates are generally specified as plus or minus a certain number of years. For very ancient finds, these date ranges can be quite large.

Thus, we are not able to determine the exact year an ancient ancestor lived. But, using K/Ar, we can reliably know the date range for many fossils.



Don Johanson/Institute of Human Origins/Courtesy of National Museum of Ethiopia

As fragments of a hominid find are collected, each location where a piece is discovered is marked with a flag. Here, Yoel Rak of Tel Aviv University and the Institute of Human Origins flags the precise location of each fragment of the *Australopithecus afarensis* cranium discovered at Hadar in 1992.

Among human ancestors, bipedalism appeared far earlier in the fossil record than increased brain size or the use of stone tools. In fact, bipedalism played a critical role in the development of these features of humanity. Bipedal locomotion freed the hands, allowing our ancestors to carry things for long distances and make tools. Further, creatures standing on two legs have a wider view of their surroundings and can walk efficiently for long distances.

In addition to bipedalism, particular aspects of tooth number, size, shape, and enamel are critical in tracing human ancestry. The specific qualities of teeth are important because different species have different dental characteristics and can be identified on that basis. Further, teeth are the hardest parts of the body and, for that reason, are the most frequently preserved. Hence, they are the most commonly found fossils.

The earliest evidence currently available for a creature generally considered ancestral to humans is a fossil skull between 6 and 7 million years old found in the summer of 2002. The fossil, far older than any previously known, was discovered by a team headed by Michael Brunet of the University of Poitiers in France. It is unusual not only in its age, but because it was found in Chad, 1500 miles west of Africa's Great Rift Valley, where almost all other extremely ancient human ancestor fossils have been found. The scientific name of the new fossil is *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, but it is also called Toumaï, a local name meaning "hope of life" (Brunet et al. 2002; Vignaud et al. 2002). Other

bipedalism Walking on two feet, a distinctive characteristic of humans and our ancestors.

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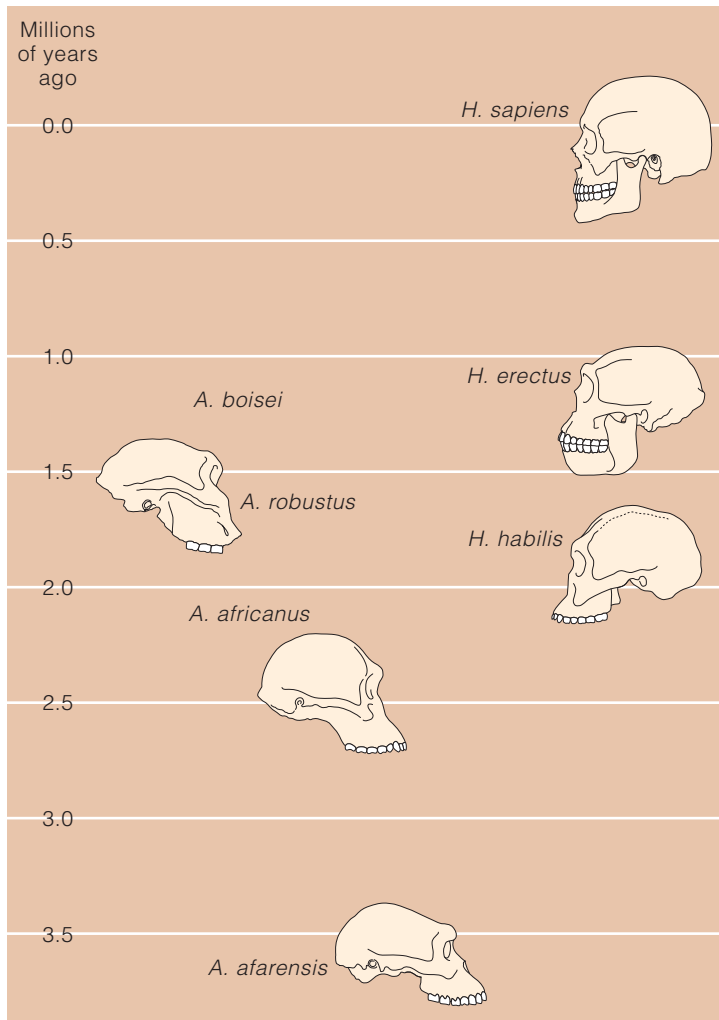


Figure 2.2
A plausible view of early human evolution. A. stands for *Australopithecus*, H. for *Homo*.

finds of very early fossils include a single jawbone, found near Lothagam, Kenya, dated to approximately 5.5 million years ago. Several additional bone fragments found at Mabaget and Tabarin, also in Kenya, date from between 5 and 5.1 million years ago.

The earliest, most substantial evidence for human ancestors comes from the Awash River in northeastern Ethiopia. In the early and mid-1990s, teams of anthropologists led by Tim White of the University of California discovered the remains of more than 40 individuals who lived approximately 4.4 million years ago. They named these creatures *Ardipithecus ramidus* (White, Suwa, and Asfaw 1995). These ancestors had large jaws and small brains compared with modern humans. Many of their teeth and other aspects of their jaw shape were sim-

ilar to those of modern-day chimpanzees. Despite this, evidence from their pelvic bones, skulls, and forelimbs indicate that they were bipedal. Reconstructions of the environment they lived in shows a flat plain covered with open woodland and dense forests. This reinforces the notion that bipedalism first evolved in wooded areas rather than on grassy plains as many anthropologists had earlier believed (Wolde-Gabriel, White, and Suwa 1994) and suggests that these ancestors may have spent much of their time living in the trees.

The Australopithecines

Perhaps the best known and best described of the early hominid fossils are the australopithecines. Beginning with the discovery of Taung

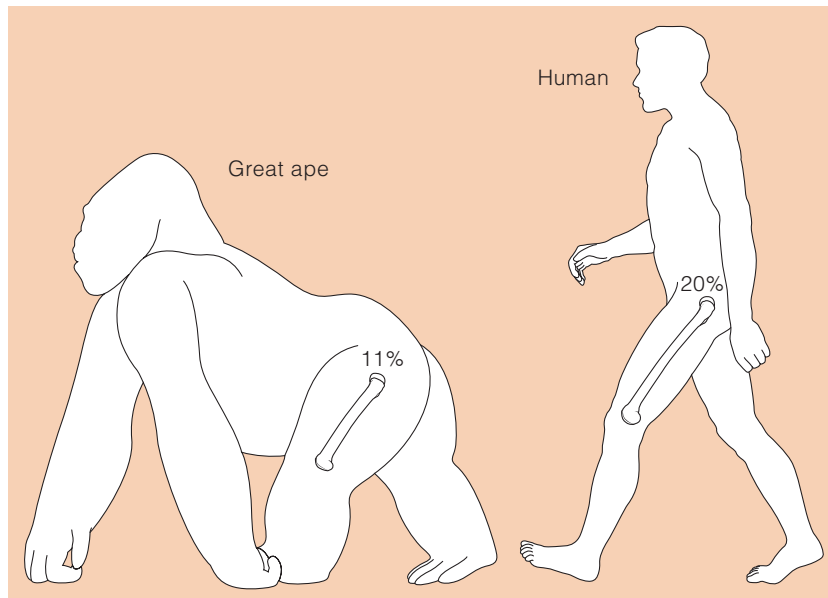


Figure 2.3
Bipedalism, walking habitually on two legs, is a characteristic of all human ancestors. Bipedalism involves the lengthening of the lower limbs. The thigh accounts for 20 percent of human body height but only 11 percent of the body height of a gorilla.

Child” in 1924 (described in the “Ethnography” section in this chapter), more than 10,000 individual australopithecine fossil bones have been found, comprising several hundred individuals. The earliest australopithecine fossils are from northern Kenya and are between 3.9 and 4.2 million years old. The most recent, from South Africa, are only about 1 million years old. Although **australopithecines** are found only in Africa, they were a diverse and complex group of creatures.

The oldest australopithecine fossils were discovered in 1995 by Meave Leakey (see “Ethnography,” page 40, for details about the Leakey family). Additional early australopithecine finds include the remains of 23 individuals found at Laetoli in northern Tanzania, and a collection of more than 6000 specimens representing at least 40 individuals found at Hadar in the Afar region of Ethiopia.

Two of these finds are among the most famous in the history of anthropology. In 1974, at Hadar, a team led by Donald Johanson found an australopithecine skeleton they dubbed “Lucy.” “Lucy” is unusually complete; more than 40 percent of her bones are present. With such a full skeleton, anthropologists were able to answer many questions about the way australopithecines looked, stood, and moved. The second remarkable discovery was made by Mary Leakey, at Laetoli in Tanzania. In a well-preserved 3.5-million-year-old bed of volcanic ash she and her team found two footprint trails clearly made by aus-

tralopithecines. One of the trails was made by two individuals who were probably walking together. The second trail was made by three individuals; two of these were walking together and the third, a smaller individual, was walking in the footprints left by the larger of the first two.

This plethora of fossil finds reveals a great deal about the australopithecines and their lifestyles. These australopithecines are referred to as “gracile” since they are generally small, light, and slender. They are a varied group, standing between 3.5 and 5 feet tall and weighing between 65 and 100 pounds (McHenry 1992). Their brains, at between 400 and 500 cubic centimeters, were only about one-third the size of modern human brains. Their faces protruded, and they had relatively large and slightly overlapping canine teeth. Although their hips and lower limbs were a bit different from those of modern people, they were fully bipedal.

The “gracile” australopithecines lived in a variety of arid and semiarid grasslands, bushlands, and forest environments in eastern and southern Africa. Because the remains of numerous individuals are commonly found together, they were probably social animals living in small groups. Although they

australopithecines Members of an early hominid genus found in Africa and characterized by bipedal locomotion and small brain size.



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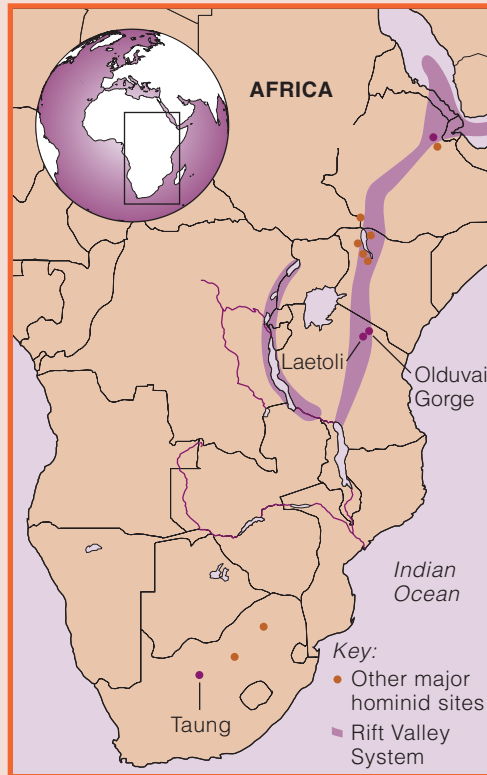
Ethnography

Fossil Hunters

Raymond A. Dart (1893–1988) was the discoverer of “Taungs Child,” the first *Australopithecus* skull to be identified. Dart was born in Australia and studied medicine at the University of Queensland and the University of Sydney. He enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps and served during World War I. After the war, he went to London, where he studied under the famous anatomist, anthropologist, and Egyptologist Grafton Eliot Smith. When a professorship at the newly created University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, became available, he quickly accepted it and moved there.

Living in what was then an academic backwater, Dart was isolated and frequently depressed. He taught anatomy, but partly to pursue the interest in anthropology he had acquired under Eliot Smith’s tutelage, and perhaps partly to relieve his boredom, he began to develop a fossil collection for the university. One of the main ways he did this was to ask his students to bring in any fossils they found or had around the house. He offered a significant financial reward to whoever found the best fossil.

In early summer 1924, his only female student, Josephine Salmons, brought him the fossil skull of a baboon that had been found by a family friend in a mine at Taungs in Botswana (then called Bechuanaland). While she did not win the prize (Dart had awarded it to another student earlier), Dart was thrilled by the fossil because, up to that point, no primate fossils had been discovered in Africa south of the Sahara. Dart rushed to see a friend who had connections at the Taungs mines and learned that the



mine manager, A. E. Spires, had a collection of fossils in his office.

When Spires learned of Dart’s interest, he had the fossils sent to him. They arrived during a wedding held at Dart’s house for which he was to be the best man. Dart, dressing for the wedding, was unable to restrain himself. He tore off his fancy dress collar and ran out to take possession of the boxes of fossils. The first box yielded nothing very interesting, but when Dart opened the second box:

. . . A thrill of excitement shot through me. On the very top of the rock heap was what was undoubtedly . . . the mold of the interior of [a] skull. Had it been only the fossilized brain cast of any species

of ape it would have ranked as a great discovery, for such a thing had never before been reported. But I knew at a glance that what lay in my hands was no ordinary anthropoidal brain. Here in lime-consolidated sand was the [fossil] of a brain three times as large as that of a baboon and considerably bigger than that of any adult chimpanzee (1996 [orig 1959]:42).

It took Dart 73 days, chipping away at the rock with a small hammer and his wife’s knitting needles to expose the full fossil. He wrote that when he could view the fossil from the front he could see that:

The creature which had contained this massive brain was no giant anthropoid such as a gorilla. What emerged was a baby’s face, an infant with a full set of milk teeth and its first permanent molars just in the process of erupting.

I doubt if there was any parent prouder of his offspring than I was of my “Taungs baby” on that Christmas of 1924 (1996 [orig 1959]:44).

Dart's discovery came to be called "Taungs Child" (today, Taung Child is the more common usage). He gave it the scientific name *Australopithecus africanus* and claimed (correctly) that it was a human ancestor. His assertion, however, was met with ridicule by his colleagues in Europe, particularly his old mentor Grafton Eliot Smith. Smith, and most of the others, were deeply committed to the authenticity of the Piltdown Man fossils, which looked nothing like Taungs Child. Piltdown Man had been "found" by Charles Dawson between 1908 and 1912. It seemed to be half ape and half human and was widely regarded as the "missing link." Piltdown proved to be a fraud, and Dart lived to see his discovery vindicated.

Not all of Dart's theories fared so well. He had found holes in the brain cases of some of the primate fossils he and his students uncovered. He proposed that these had been made by the australopithecines who were killer apes preying on baboons and other animals. More recent research has shown that the holes were made by hyenas and that australopithecines were most likely omnivorous scavengers.

Mary Leakey (1913–1996) was perhaps the greatest single fossil hunter of the twentieth century. Among her numerous finds were the 1959 discovery of the australopithecine fossil "Zinjanthropus" and the "Laetoli footprints," the fossilized footprints of two or three ancient hominids, probably *Australopithecus africanus*.

Mary Leakey was the daughter of the popular British landscape artist Erskine Nicol. She spent much of her childhood in the Dordogne in France, a region particularly rich in human prehistory. From an early age, Leakey was fascinated by these archaeological treasures. Leakey was precocious, but she was a rebellious student and was expelled from two Catholic schools. She audited courses in archaeology and geology at the University of London, but, although later in life she was to receive many honorary degrees, she never earned a university diploma.

In 1933, friends introduced her to Louis Leakey. He was the son of missionaries and had grown up in Kenya. He studied at Cambridge University and

by 1930 had a Ph.D. Despite the fact that he was married, with a child and a pregnant wife, Louis and Mary began an affair. In 1935, he returned to Africa, taking Mary with him (and leaving his wife in England). In 1936, his first wife sued him for divorce, and later that year he married Mary. Mary and Louis eventually had three children. Of these, Richard and his wife, Meave, have become extremely important fossil hunters.

Louis had hoped for a job in England, but the scandal surrounding his divorce and remarriage, as well as some controversy over his fossil finds, made this impossible. From the mid-1930s until the late 1950s, Louis and Mary searched East Africa for human ancestor fossils with little success. Although Mary found the first fossil skull of an extinct primate called *Proconsul*, as well as many tools and sites, a truly big find eluded them.

On July 17, 1959, the Leakeys were waiting for their friends Armand and Michaela Denis to arrive. The Denises were naturalists who, along with their cameraman Des Bartlett, made popular nature films for British television. The Leakeys had agreed to let them film their Olduvai excavations and had paused in their research to allow them time to come to the site. Louis was sick in bed, and Mary decided to take her two dogs for a walk over to a site they were not actively working, which Louis had named for his first wife. Mary Leakey later wrote:

There was indeed plenty of material lying on the eroded surface. . . . But one scrap of bone that caught and held my eye was not lying loose on the surface but projecting from beneath. It seemed to be part of a skull. . . . It had a hominid look, but the bones seemed enormously thick—too thick, surely. I carefully brushed away a little of the deposit, and then I could see parts of two large teeth in place in the upper jaw. They *were* hominid. It was a hominid skull, apparently *in situ*, and there was a lot of it there. I rushed back to camp to tell Louis, who leaped out of bed, and then we were soon back at the site looking at my find together (Leakey and Leakey 1996:47–48/1984).

What Mary had found was *Zinjanthropus*.

Needless to say, when the Leakeys' naturalist friends and their cameraman arrived, it was the



Ethnography—continued

excavation of *Zinjanthropus* that they filmed. *Zinjanthropus* was important for two reasons: it was the first australopithecine found outside of South Africa, and it provided strong indication that not all australopithecines were directly ancestral to modern humans. Finding *Zinjanthropus* also made the Leakeys' careers. Whereas before they had struggled along in obscurity with very limited funds, they soon found themselves international celebrities and the recipients of many grants. From the early 1960s to the early 1980s, Mary and Louis (who died in 1972) ran large and very successful projects at Olduvai and other African locations. Mary later wrote:

The reason why “Zinj” was so important to us was that he captured the public imagination. . . . If we had not had Des Bartlett and his film camera on the spot to record the discovery and excavation of the skull, this might have been much harder to achieve. Zinj made good television, and so a very wide public had the vicarious excitement of “being there when he was dug up” (Leakey and Leakey 1984/1996:48).

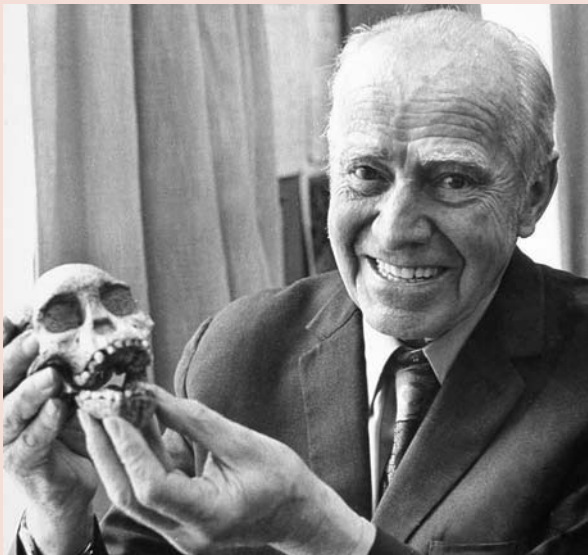
Louis Leakey had the academic credentials, and he was a charismatic speaker with an eagle eye for outstanding publicity opportunities. Thus, until his death, he was the public face of their

projects. However, it was Mary and their children who actually made most of the fossil finds. Mary's relationship with Louis was problematic; he had frequent affairs with other women and the couple grew apart. Looking back on their lives, it is clear that Mary was not only the better fossil finder but, despite her lack of an earned degree, her meticulous work and caution probably made her the better scientist as well.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. All anthropological research happens in a theoretical context, a political context, and a social context. Why do you think the Leakeys' fossil finds were immediately hailed as important, but Raymond Dart's gained credibility only slowly?
2. Why is fossil evidence important in understanding human ancestry?
3. How do anthropologists know that the fossils they find are indeed those of human ancestors?

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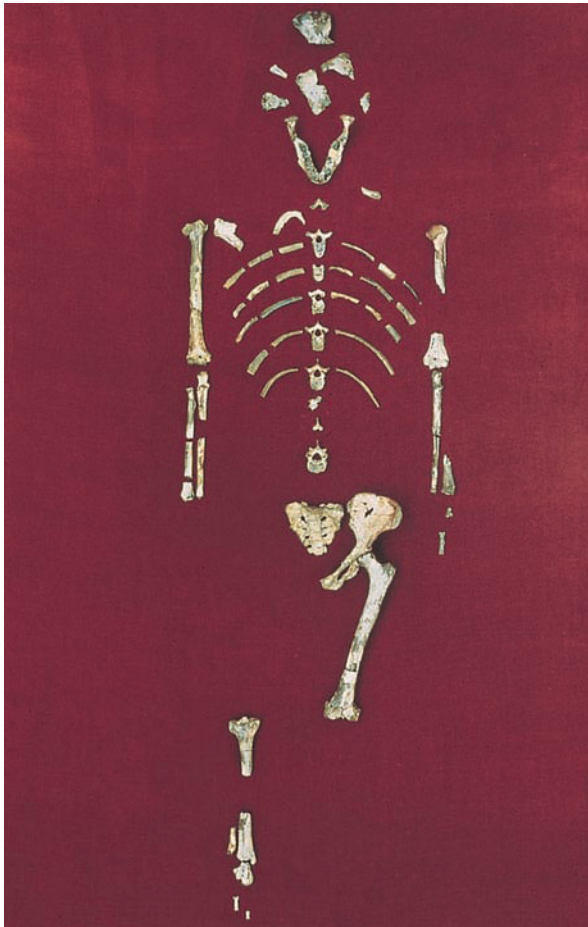
Raymond Dart with Taung Child.

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Institute of Human Origins/Courtesy of National Museum of Ethiopia

"Lucy," an unusually complete *Australopithecus* skeleton, was discovered at Hadar, Ethiopia, in 1974.

may have used tools made of wood or bone, none have survived, and there are no stone tools associated with australopithecine remains. The absence of stone tools, combined with australopithecines' relatively small size and lack of claws or very large canine teeth, strongly suggests they were **omnivores**, eating fruit and vegetable foods, insects, and small animals. They probably scavenged for remains left by larger predators, but it is unlikely that they hunted large animals.

About 2.5 million years ago, global weather turned cooler, and this seems to have resulted in the evolution of several new hominid species. One group of these new animals is called the "robust" australopithecines, though they are sometimes known by the older name *Paranthropus*. The "robust" australopithecines tended to be slightly larger than the "graciles," but the ranges of both height

and weight clearly overlap. More important, "robust" australopithecines had much heavier skulls, reinforced with bony ridges and substantially larger teeth and jaws. Such factors strongly suggest that these creatures were adapted for chewing heavy, coarse material. They were probably vegetarian. "Robust" australopithecines lived in Africa until about 1 million years ago and do not seem to be ancestral to modern humans.

Homo Habilis and Homo Rudolfensis

At roughly the same time that some "gracile" australopithecines were evolving into "robust," others gave rise to a new genus, *Homo*. Between 2.3 and 2.5 million years ago, the earliest members of this group, **Homo habilis** and *Homo rudolfensis*, emerged. Although there are important technical differences between *habilis* and *rudolfensis*, they are generally quite similar. Most fossil finds of this era belong to *habilis*, and in this section we will focus on them.

Several physical features distinguish *Homo habilis* from the australopithecines. Perhaps most important, *habilis*, like all members of *Homo*, had brains that were quite large compared with the size of their bodies. Beyond that, their teeth were smaller than australopithecine teeth, their skulls were higher, and their faces protruded less. Their legs tended to be longer (probably resulting in an increase in walking speed), whereas arms tended to be shorter.

One thing that clearly distinguishes *habilis* is the presence of stone tools; *habilis* clearly learned to work stone into a variety of useful shapes. The stone tools made by *habilis* are called **Oldowan tools**. New discoveries suggest that toolmaking appeared quite early; *habilis* were making fairly sophisticated sets of tools as early as 2.3 million years ago (Steele 1999). Toolmaking was clearly a critical factor in human evolution. Human ancestors had relatively small teeth; but, by using tools, they could match the biting and chewing abilities of much larger,

omnivore An animal that eats both plant and animal foods.

Homo habilis A species of early human found in Africa. *Homo habilis* were present between 2.5 and 1.8 million years ago.

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Oldowan tools: Stone tools made by *Homo habilis*.

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more powerful animals. Thus, using tools led to improvements in nutrition, which in turn favored those individuals and groups best able to make and use tools.

The habitat of *habilis* was grassland with far fewer trees than were available to the earlier “gracile” australopithecines. Their dentition suggests that they were omnivores, competing with members of other species for both plant and animal foods. The fact that Oldowan tools are designed for cutting and bashing rather than hunting strongly suggests that *habilis* rarely killed large animals. Like their australopithecine predecessors, they probably hunted small animals and scavenged the remains of larger ones. Stone rings found at Olduvai Gorge in Northern Tanzania indicate that *habilis* probably built shelters for protection from predators and cold weather.

The earliest remains of *habilis* are from eastern and southern Africa, and it had been believed that the species was limited entirely to Africa. However, new finds cast doubt on this position (Huang et al. 1995; Swisher et al. 1994). A variety of fossils from Indonesia and China are more than 1.8 million years old, and Oldowan-style tools found in Pakistan and France have dates of between 1.6 and 2 million years ago. A new skull, discovered 50 miles southwest of the Georgian capital Tbilisi, is 1.75 million years old (Abesalum et al. 2002). If it is true that *habilis* spread out of Africa, some of our understand-

ing of them will need revision. Such geographic dispersion would suggest that *habilis* was more adaptable, and more dependent on culture, than was previously thought.

Homo Erectus

The earliest *Homo erectus* fossils come from northern Kenya and are about 1.8 million years old. *Homo erectus* fossils show some substantial changes from the earlier *Homo habilis*. One of the most important changes is in body size. *Erectus* were substantially larger than *habilis* and many were roughly the same size as modern-day people. For example, the 1.6-million-year-old skeleton of a 12-year-old *erectus* boy was found in the mid-1980s, at Lake Turkana in Kenya. It is estimated that, had the boy grown to maturity, he would have been at least 6 feet tall. ***Homo erectus*** brain size increased along with body size. The average brain volume for *erectus* is about 1000 cubic centimeters. Some had brain sizes of up to 1250 cubic centimeters, placing them within the range of modern humans.

Erectus was substantially more “robust” than *habilis*. Not only is the *erectus* skull larger, its bones are heavier. There is a heavy ridge of bone above the eyes, and the cranial bone is thick. The thick bones and heavy reinforcing features suggest very strong jaw muscles compared to modern humans, *erectus*.

Dubois, believing he had found the oldest human ancestor who walked upright, named his discovery *erectus*.

One reason *erectus* was found before the fossils of earlier bipedal species was that its geographic spread was much greater than that of any earlier hominid. Although some evidence of *habilis* remains has been discovered outside of Africa, clearly *erectus* inhabited much of Africa, Europe, and Asia. Major *erectus* finds have been made in eastern, northern, and southern Africa, Spain, the Middle East, China, and Indonesia.

From this wide geographic dispersal, we know that *erectus* was able to adapt to life in a great variety of different ecological and climatic settings. Since much of the era of *erectus* occurred during the Ice Ages, climatic variation was probably even greater than today. In order to thrive in many different habitats, *erectus* developed an increasingly sophisticated and complex culture.

One important window on *erectus* culture is provided by human and animal remains and artifacts found at Zhoukoudian, near Beijing, in China. Anthropologists, working in this area since the 1920s, have recovered remains from more than 40 individuals, as well as more than 100,000 artifacts. Zhoukoudian was inhabited between about 450,000 and 230,000 years ago. Its inhabitants made choppers, scrapers, points, and awls from stone. They also used deer antlers for tools, and possibly skulls for “drinking bowls” (Jia and Weiwen 1990). There are also the remains of fires. In some places, the ash layers are more than 18 feet deep. But, though most anthropologists agree that *erectus* was capable of controlling and using fire, it is not known whether they were able to make it.

Homo erectus almost certainly lived by hunting, scavenging, and gathering. Remains in Spain show that human ancestors were capable of hunting and butchering elephants half a million years ago. Remains of deer and wild horses have been found at Zhoukoudian. However, many of the bones at *erectus* sites show the marks of carnivore teeth as well as cut marks from tools. This strongly suggests that much of the meat consumed by *erectus* was scavenged. Debris at many other sites show that *erectus*

skulls appear squat. In modern humans, the maximum width of the skull is above the ears, but in *erectus* the skull’s widest point is below the ears.

The name *erectus* might seem to suggest that this species was the first human ancestor to walk upright, but as we have seen, this is not the case. Bipedalism is ancient in human ancestry; all of our ancestors, back to the australopithecines, walked on two legs. However, there is a reason this particular fossil is called *erectus*. Because the finder of a new fossil species has the right to name it, the names of the different species reflect the history of discovery. The first *erectus* fossils were found by the Dutch army surgeon Eugene Dubois in the 1890s, years before any of the australopithecines were discovered.

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Homo erectus A species of early human found in Africa, Asia, and Europe. *Homo erectus* were present between 1.8 million and about 300,000 years ago.



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also ate a wide variety of wild fruits, vegetables, tubers, and eggs.

Winters at many *erectus* sites were very cold, so it is likely that *erectus* made clothing of animal skins. Although no such clothing has survived, there is some evidence of needles among the bone tools found at Zhoukoudian. Little is known about *erectus* social or religious life. The fact that they killed large animals meant that large amounts of meat had to be consumed rapidly. This suggests that social groups were relatively large and probably included complex mechanisms for distributing food, and perhaps other goods. One tantalizing if

grim bit of evidence about possible religious beliefs comes from Zhoukoudian. It is clear that the brains of some Zhoukoudian individuals were removed after their death, but why this was done is unknown. It could have been cannibalism; perhaps it was part of a religious ritual; or maybe individuals just wanted to use the empty skull case as a drinking vessel.

Until very recently, it had been believed that the last *Homo erectus* lived approximately 300,000 years ago. But in 2003 the paleontology world was rocked by the announcement of the discovery of a new species of hominin, *Homo floresiensis*, popularly called “The Hobbit.” *Floresiensis*, discovered on the island of Flores in Indonesia, appears to be a very small variety of *Homo erectus*. It was found in association with tools, though these do not resemble other *Homo erectus* tools. Perhaps most surprising of all, *floresiensis* has been dated to as recent a time as 13,000 years ago (Brown et al 2004). As of this writing, there is considerable controversy over *floresiensis* (see Balter 2004); however, recent tests show the *floresiensis* brain to be considerably different than other hominids but most closely resembling *Homo erectus* (Falk et al 2005).

Homo Sapiens

The critical anatomical distinctions between *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* lie in the volume and shape of the skull. On the average, **Homo sapiens** clearly have substantially larger brains than *erectus*. *Sapiens* skulls lack the heavy bony ridging above the eyes and the thick skull bone of the *erectus*. In addition, whereas *erectus* had a squat skull with a little forehead, the *sapiens* skull is high and vaulted with a large forehead.

The skeletal changes between *erectus* and *sapiens* reflect the tight interrelationship of learned behavior and biological evolution. *Erectus* tools were relatively crude. Using them in hunting required hunters to attack their quarry at close range, exposing them to substantial physical danger from the prey. In this situation, thick, heavy skull bones helped protect their brains from injury. As human ability to learn increased and weaponry improved, animals could be hunted from greater distance, and this favored the lighter-boned, bigger-brained *sapiens*.

The details of the transition from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens* are complex, but about half a million



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This skull of an anatomically modern human was discovered near the village of Herto in the Afar region of eastern Ethiopia. Its date of about 160,000 years ago makes it the earliest example of an early modern human.

years ago, some *erectus* groups were becoming more like *sapiens*. Bones from locations throughout the Old World attest to ancestors who had lighter-boned, more rounded skulls than *erectus*. However, these fossils still show the bony ridging above the eyes typical of *erectus*. Between 300,000 and 100,000 years ago, this brow ridging disappears in many of the fossils found in Africa. However, the brain size of all of these fossils is somewhat below that of modern people. About 130,000 years ago, **Neanderthals**, with brain sizes overlapping and sometimes larger than those of modern people, appeared in Europe and in some parts of the Middle East. They were present until about 35,000 years ago. About 195,000 years ago, anatomically modern people, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, appeared in Africa (McDougall, Brown, and Fleagle 2005). By about 35,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens sapiens* had spread throughout the range of all other populations of the *Homo* genus and was the only form present.

Since the 1980s, there has been much debate over the interpretation of these fossils and dates. Anthropologists have used the fossils themselves as

well as molecular and genetic data to try to discover the relationship between the different forms of *erectus* and *sapiens*. There are two prominent theories: the **multiregional model** and the **replacement model**. Supporters of the multiregional model argue that different populations of *Homo sapiens* evolved from different populations of *Homo erectus*. In other words, in many places, more or less simultaneously, *Homo erectus* populations became modern *Homo sapiens*. Because none of these populations were isolated, individuals (and their genes) moved freely among them. The result was that humanity developed as a single unified species, but different populations retained substantial differences in ancestry.

Some evidence supports the multiregional hypothesis and it seems to explain some of the anatomical differences among modern human populations. Fossil finds from China include 100,000-year-old skulls that seem to have both *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* traits. Evidence from Australia, based on the analysis of mitochondrial DNA, shows an anatomically modern human fossil that appears unrelated to current-day human populations (Adcock et al. 2001). If this is so, evolution to *Homo sapiens* must have happened more than once in widely dispersed locations: thus these data support the multiregional hypothesis.

The second prominent theory used to explain the transition from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens*, the replacement model, is sometimes called the Out of Africa model. This theory proposes that *Homo sapiens sapiens* evolved from an earlier *Homo* form in Africa about 125,000 years ago. Between that time and 35,000 years ago, this new species spread out from Africa to inhabit virtually all the world. When *Homo sapiens sapiens* ran into Neanderthals or other archaic

Homo sapiens A species of human found throughout the world. The earliest *Homo sapiens* appeared about 500,000 years ago.

Neanderthal Members of a population of archaic *Homo sapiens* that lived between 130,000 and 35,000 years ago.

multiregional model A theory that seeks to explain the transition from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens* by arguing that different populations of *Homo sapiens* are descendant from different populations of *Homo erectus*.

replacement model The theory that modern people evolved first in Africa and then spread out to inhabit virtually all the world, outcompeting or destroying other human populations in the process.

forms of *Homo sapiens*, they outcompeted them but did not mate with them. The result was that anatomically modern people replaced all others.

Much of the data supporting the replacement theory is based on biochemical and genetic evidence. There are two different strands of such evidence. First, there is evidence taken from the mitochondrial DNA of living humans. This has been analyzed to show that all living humans share at least one common ancestor, who lived in Africa approximately 200,000 years ago. Second, DNA extracted from archaic *Homo* populations such as Neanderthal shows that these populations are not very closely related to modern humans. For example, the evidence suggests that Neanderthals and modern humans last shared a common ancestor about half a million years ago (Ovchinnikov et al. 2000; Krings et al. 1997). Thus, modern humans could not have evolved from them.

A third theory, the **hybridization model**, provides a middle ground between the other two. It claims that *Homo sapiens sapiens* spreading out of Africa did mate with earlier archaic *Homo*.

Each of the theories has its proponents, and there is acrimonious dispute among them. It is possible that no one model is correct; perhaps data from different locations can be explained by different theories. However, most data in recent years support the replacement model and this model is widely accepted in the biological sciences.



Homo Sapiens Culture

Material remains show us that complex culture is not limited to modern *Homo sapiens*. Archaic forms such as Neanderthal were clearly cultural. Good evidence of this comes from burial practices. Several examples of burial of the dead by Neanderthals have been found.

One of the best-known examples is at Shanidar Cave in Iraq. There, anthropologists found the remains of nine individuals, four of whom were intentionally buried. These remains are between 45,000 and 60,000 years old. Two factors make the burials particularly interesting. First, high concentrations of pollen in the graves shows that the bodies were buried with flowers. This strongly suggests that Neanderthals had complex, symbolic rituals

for the burial of the dead, and possibly a belief in an afterlife (Solecki 1975). Second, one of the Shanidar individuals, a male known as Shanidar 1, was clearly severely injured during his life. He was blind in one eye, his right arm had atrophied from injury, and he would have walked with difficulty. Yet Shanidar 1 clearly survived in this condition for many years. This finding strongly suggests that Neanderthals cared for and supported this disabled individual.

We should be careful, however, to avoid romanticizing Neanderthal life. Data from Moula-Guercy cave in France show that some Neanderthals practiced cannibalism (Defleur, White, and Valensi 1999). Evidence gathered there shows that 100,000 years ago, Neanderthals used the same butchery techniques on game animals and other Neanderthals (Culotta 1999). That this is the case should not come as a great surprise. After all, within the past hundred years, people have used cannibalism under conditions of extreme deprivation and as part of religious rituals.

Homo sapiens sapiens made tools of much greater sophistication and efficiency than any prior species. For example, with a pound of flint, Neanderthals could make about 40 inches of blade; with the same amount of stone, *Homo sapiens sapiens* could make anywhere between 10 and 40 feet of blade (Bordes 1968). The tools of these early people are characterized not only by their efficiency but also by their variety: stone blades, scrapers, and chisel-like tools called burins, as well as tools of bone, awls, needles, and tools for scraping and smoothing leather. In addition to utility, many show clear aesthetic qualities, something not true of tools made by earlier species. One critical innovation was the compound tool, made of several wood, bone, and stone pieces bound together. Ax heads were hafted to wood or bone handles; blades of stone were set in wooden handles. One of the best-known innovations of the era was the spear thrower, or **atlatl**, a hooked piece of wood or bone used to increase the power with which a spear can be thrown (see Figure 2.4). The variety of *Homo sapiens sapiens* tools and the learning involved in their manufacture suggest that this species had much more complex culture than any earlier creature.

Although many of the best-known early tools come from Europe, some of the earliest examples come from Africa. For instance, extremely complex





Figure 2.4
Homo Sapiens Sapiens used spear throwers (atlatl) to increase a spear's power and range.

bone tools, probably designed to spear fish, have been found in eastern Congo. Though their dating is controversial, they are believed to be between 75,000 and 180,000 years old. If these dates are correct, the tools are considerably older than any *Homo sapiens sapiens* material found in Europe (Yellen et al. 1995).

The ability of humans to hunt using complex, efficient tools might have had a devastating effect on their environment. For example, *Homo sapiens sapiens* entered Europe during the Ice Age. At that time, much of the land was a vast tundra supporting an abundance of animal life, particularly large herd animals. Shortly after modern people appeared, more than 50 genera of large mammals became extinct. Because small mammals survived and there is no evidence of drought, it is possible that hunting by humans was responsible for these extinctions.

In addition to tools, early people left many symbolic and artistic remains. Among the best known of these are the so-called "Venus" figurines and cave paintings. Cave paintings are discussed on page 413 in Chapter 15. "Venus" figurines are small carvings of women sculpted in a variety of materials, including stone, bone, and wood, and made between 30,000 and 20,000 years ago. About 40 intact figures have been discovered, along with fragments of at least 80 more (McDermott 1996). Many depict women with exaggerated breasts and buttocks. The first of these statues was found in 1864, and controversy about their meaning and importance has raged since. They have been variously interpreted as art for art's sake (Ucko and Rosenfeld 1967), fertility magic (Burenhult 1993), representations of female deities (Gimbutas 1989), erotic images made for male pleasure (Guthrie 1984), and ordinary women's views of their own bodies (McDermott 1996).

About 10,000 years ago, the last of the Ice Ages ended. As temperatures rose, the ecosystems that



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Venus of Willendorf, Austria. "Venus" figurines are stylized representations of women made between 40,000 and 30,000 years ago.

hybridization model A theory that seeks to explain the transition from archaic to modern *Homo sapiens* by proposing that modern and archaic forms interbred.

atlatl A spear thrower, a device used to increase and extend the power of the human arm when throwing a spear.

"Venus" figurines Small stylized statues of females made in a variety of materials by early modern humans.



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Forensic Anthropology

Forensic anthropologists apply their knowledge of physical anthropology to the identification of skeletal or badly decomposed human remains. Their goal is to discover information that can assist in the detection of crime and the prosecution of those responsible. When human remains are found, forensic anthropologists are often called in to determine the age, sex, ancestry, and stature, as well as the manner of death of the individual. This information is used to identify the deceased and to determine whether a crime has been committed.

The work of forensic anthropologists is often vital in settling humanitarian issues. In the past 2 decades, forensic anthropologists have frequently been called upon to discover the identities of victims of political violence. A good example comes from Guatemala, where members of the Guatemala Forensic Anthropology Foundation are exhuming mass graves and examining bones to chronicle the nation's bloody 36-year civil war. More than 40,000 individuals disappeared during the war. Most were the victims of government death squads who, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, kidnapped and murdered many whom they believed to be their opponents. With the evidence provided by anthropologists, Guatemalans are beginning to confront their brutal past. Karen Fisher, one of Guatemala's leading human rights activists, has said, "When you've hidden secrets for years and years, the truth is going to heal your wounds, but it will take time; it won't be easy" (Moore 1998).

Forensic anthropologists played a key role in identifying the victims of the September 11 terrorist attack. Amy Mundorff, a forensic anthropologist working for the New York City Medical Examiner's office, was almost killed in the attack herself. She survived to work with a team of forensic anthropologists and other medical specialists who tried to identify the more than 16,000 body parts found at the disaster site.

While the identification of victims of atrocities often makes the news, most forensic anthropologists work closer to home, identifying the victims of violent crime. In 1998, for example, certified members of the American Board of Forensic Anthropology were called in to work on almost 1700 cases in the United States. David Glassman, a board-certified forensic anthropologist who is also Dean of Liberal Arts at the University of Southern Indiana, says he works on approximately 30 forensic cases each year. A case begins when a law enforcement agency or medical examiner's office calls for help in discovering the identity and cause of death of an individual whose remains have recently been found. Sometimes, it turns out that the remains are nonhuman; at other times, it is determined that they are archaeological; but in the vast majority of cases, the remains are from a recent violent crime.

The next step is the recovery of the body. Sometimes this has already been done by the law enforcement agency, but frequently anthropologists are called upon to assist and supervise the procedure. Sometimes bodies are found com-

had supported these ancient cultures changed, and for many people new ways of living became essential. As the wild animals associated with the Ice Age tundra disappeared, in some areas people turned increasingly to the domestication of both plants and animals. Dogs were domesticated between 10,000 and 14,000 years ago (Mestel 1994). People in the Middle East were beginning to use rye by about 13,000 years ago, but did not become dependent on farming until about 10,000 years ago (Pringle 1998).

The move from hunting herd animals to domesticating plants and animals involved substantial increases in the amount of work humans had to do. It almost certainly led to an upturn in rates of disease, increased physiological stress, a reduction in well-being, and a decline in nutrition (Larsen 1995). However, it also made it possible to support a larger population than ever before. Cities, kingdoms, and empires could emerge, using domesticated plants and animals as food sources. Thus, the origin of

plete and in good preservation, but often they are found skeletalized, burnt, fragmentary, or in various other stages of decomposition. Glassman reports that he has recovered bodies in rock shelters, in forests, under water, and in many other environments. In one case, he was called in to remove a body lodged in a metal pipe three feet underground, adjacent to a remote mountain road. To extract the skeletal remains, Glassman had to crawl into the pipe, slowly pushing dirt and debris out along his body until he was able to reach them.

After the body has been recovered, the anthropologist's job is to establish both the individual's identity and the cause of death. To do this, the bones and any other remains are analyzed to determine the sex, age, estimated time since death, ancestry, and stature of the individual, as well as any unique identifying marks such as healed fractures or skeletal abnormalities that might be useful in making a positive identification. In some cases, facial reconstructions are made to provide a likeness of the deceased. Analysis of the fracture patterns visible in the bones provides specific information about the cause of death. Glassman has analyzed fractures indicative of blunt trauma, sharp trauma, stabbing, gunshot, and hanging, as well as combinations of these. One particularly brutal case involved machete and gunshot wounds to the face, as well as ax and knife wounds to other parts of the body.

In every case, forensic anthropologists are required to produce a report of their findings.

These reports are used by law enforcement agencies to match the bodies with missing persons reports and, if foul play is suspected, to prosecute the individuals believed to be responsible. In most cases the anthropologist's work ends with the delivery of the report, but Glassman says that at least once a year he is required to testify as an expert witness at a criminal trial.



You can find additional information about forensic anthropology at the website of the American Board of Forensic Anthropology (<http://www.csuchico.edu/anth/ABFA>). You can find illustrated but fairly technical information on sex, age, stature, and other aspects of identification at the Osteo Interactive website (<http://medstat.med.utah.edu/kw/osteo/index.html>).



Courtesy of David Glassman

Forensic anthropologist David Glassman examines a skull.

current industrialized society lies in this move to dependence on domesticated plants and animals 10,000 years ago.



Human Variation

As we saw in Chapter 1, the notion of race in human beings has enormous historical and sociological importance, but no biological validity. No

agreed upon, scientific way to divide humanity into a set number of races, no matter how large, has ever been found. Biological analysis makes it clear that human populations are neither sharply genetically distinguished from each other, nor do they constitute distinct evolutionary sublineages of humanity (Templeton 1998; Tishkoff and Kidd 2004). Further, there is no evidence that traits such as skin color commonly used to determine race are of any more significance than any of the thousands of

other traits that make up a human being. Nonetheless, it is true that there is enormous variety among human beings, and the systematic variation of biological traits among human beings is an important subject for anthropological investigation. In this section we discuss a few prominent examples of variation. Some of the impacts of constructed categories of human variation on social stratification are discussed in Chapter 13.

Many human traits show **clinal distributions**. A cline is a geographical gradient, and a map of clines shows the systematic variation in the frequency of a trait from place to place. Blood type provides a good example. All human beings have type A, type B, type AB, or type O blood. The letters refer to the presence of specific antigens on the surface of the blood cells. Antigens are involved in the body's immune system; when foreign antigens are detected, the body attempts to eliminate them. The frequency of blood type varies geographically. In far northeastern Europe and northern Russia, between 25 and 30 percent of the population has type B blood. This number declines steadily as you move south and west. In Spain, in the far southwest, only 10 to 15 percent of the population has type B blood (Mourant, Kopec, and Domaniewska-Sobczak 1976). The pattern of blood type distribution around the world leads many anthropologists to believe that there must be some selective agent involved. In other words, it is widely believed that having one blood type or another gives specific advantages and disadvantages under different environmental conditions. However, no one has yet convincingly demonstrated what those advantages or disadvantages are.

The gene associated with the disease sickle cell anemia is another good example of a trait that follows a clinal distribution. The sickle cell gene is common in areas that have a high incidence of malaria, particularly certain regions of West Africa, India, and the Middle East (see Figure 2.5). Inheriting the gene from a single parent confers a degree of immunity to malaria; inheriting it from both produces sickle cell anemia. In some areas where malaria is particularly prevalent, as much as 20 percent of the population may have the trait. As one moves away from these areas, the frequency of the gene for sickle cell declines steadily.

Skin color is one of the most obvious aspects of human variation, and historically it has been the primary basis for constructing systems of racial clas-

sification. Although skin color is a complex trait and we do not entirely understand it, we do know quite a bit about the geographic distribution of skin colors and their adaptive significance.

Skin color in humans, and in many other mammals, follows a clinal distribution. The darkest colors are found in bright, tropical regions, and the lightest colors in far northern or southern areas where there is much less sunlight. As one travels, for example, from equatorial Africa to northern Europe, skin color becomes progressively lighter.

The primary factor in all colors of skin is a pigment called **melanin**. Melanin is produced by special cells in the skin called melanocytes. All human beings have about the same number of melanocytes. However, the amount of melanin (and the size of melanin particles) produced by the melanocytes differs among human populations. These discrepancies in melanin production create differences in skin color.

There is a clear relationship between melanin, ultraviolet light, and skin cancer. High levels of ultraviolet light are found in tropical areas and can cause genetic mutations in skin that lead to skin cancer. Some types of skin cancer can easily spread to other parts of the body and can be fatal. The damage caused by ultraviolet radiation is particularly important in the first 20 years of life. Melanin in the skin absorbs ultraviolet rays and hence protects people from this form of cancer. Australia, a largely tropical nation, which, because of colonization and immigration by northern Europeans, has a majority light-skinned population, provides a good example of the relationship between skin color and ultraviolet radiation. The skin cancer rates in Australia are the highest in the world, 10 times greater than in the United States; up to 60 percent of the Australian population will be treated for skin cancer at some point (Skin Cancer Research Foundation 1998).

Because human ancestors evolved in bright, tropical East Africa, they probably had very dark skin (although they did not necessarily look like dark-skinned people of today, and they are certainly no more closely related to modern-day dark-skinned people than to modern-day light-skinned people). As people moved away from areas with very high amounts of sunlight (and hence ultraviolet light) they tended to lose skin color. Following the logic of evolution, this could not have occurred simply because high levels of ultraviolet protection were no

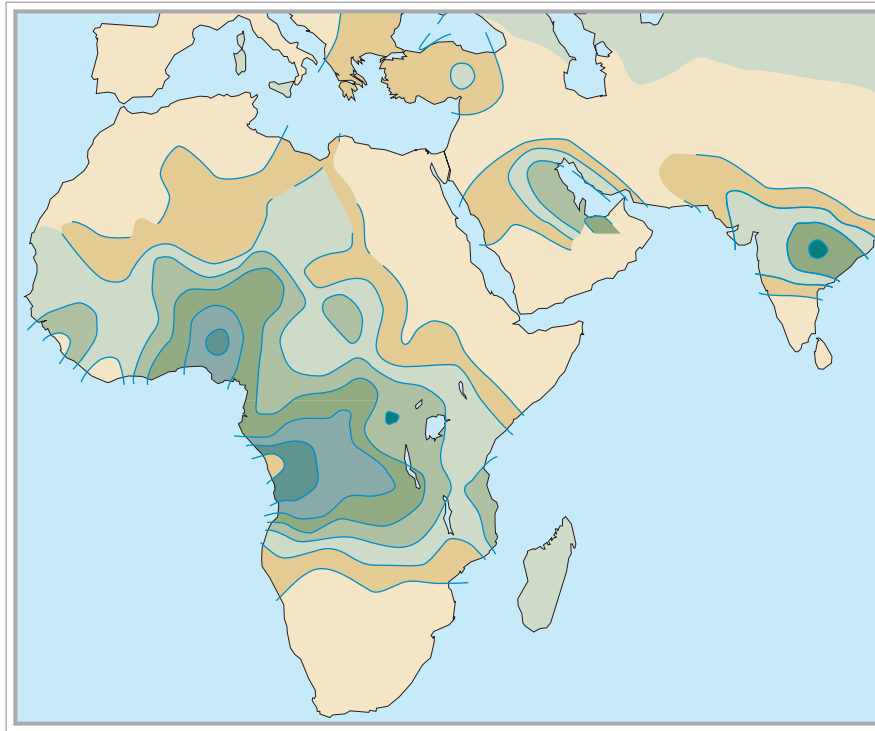
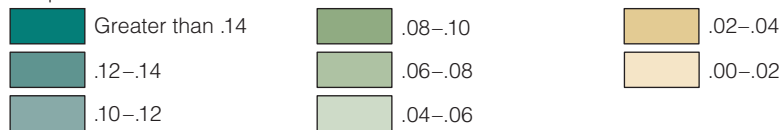


Figure 2.5
This map of the sickle cell trait shows a clinal distribution.

Frequencies of the sickle-cell allele:



longer necessary. In order for any trait to disappear, those possessing it must be at some reproductive disadvantage. That is to say, those without the trait must leave more offspring than those with it. We have already seen that in tropical areas, dark skin colors confer the advantage of protection from ultraviolet light. In northern latitudes, light skin color must confer some reproductive advantage.

There are two leading theories to account for the precise advantage conferred by light skin color in northern latitudes. The first concerns vitamin D. Vitamin D plays a critical role in bone growth, particularly in infants and children. Although people get some vitamin D from food sources such as fish oils and egg yolks, most vitamin D is produced by the body. Ultraviolet light interacts with special cells in human skin to produce its chemical precursors. Children with insufficient exposure to sunlight do not produce enough vitamin D. This insufficiency results in the bone disease **rickets**,

which leads to deformation of the pelvis. Before modern medicine and caesarian sections were available, women with deformed pelvises often died in childbirth.

The link between ultraviolet light, vitamin D, and rickets probably plays a critical role in determining skin color. Melanin in skin protects against skin cancer by absorbing ultraviolet light. However, in doing that it also reduces the amount of ultraviolet light available to interact with the cells that are

clinal distribution The frequency change of a particular trait as you move geographically from one point to another.

melanin A pigment found in the skin, hair, and eyes of human beings, as well as many other species, that is responsible for variations in color.

rickets A childhood disease characterized by the softening and bending of leg and pelvis bones. Rickets is related to insufficiency of vitamin D and calcium.



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critical in the manufacture of vitamin D. Thus, people with dark skin are less efficient at producing vitamin D than people with light skin. In bright, tropical areas where there is a great deal of ultraviolet light present, this inefficiency makes no difference. People are exposed to so much ultraviolet light that everyone produces adequate amounts of vitamin D. However, in far northern and southern areas, where there are few hours of daylight for much of the year and the cloud cover is often very dense, there is much less ultraviolet light present. In such places, efficiency at vitamin D production is at a premium, and people with light-colored skin are at an advantage; people with dark skin are more likely to get rickets.

Although there is very good evidence supporting this hypothesis (Jablonski and Chaplin 2000; Molnar 1983), it has also come in for criticism. Robins (1991), for example, argues that rickets was only a problem in urban industrial societies where people lived indoors, frequently in crowded slum conditions. This argument proposes that rickets would not have much of an effect on people who foraged or farmed outdoors, and thus it is unlikely that the disease had any effect on changes in skin coloration that happened thousands of years ago.

An alternative explanation for skin color difference is based on the reaction of different people to cold weather. Studies on soldiers from World War I through the 1950s showed that those with dark skin

were about four times more likely to suffer frostbite than soldiers with light skin (Boas and Almquist 1999:296; Post, Daniels, and Binford 1975). Thus, it might also be true that light skin color somehow confers a degree of protection against cold weather. However, if such a relationship exists, the biological mechanisms behind it are unknown.

Racial classification based primarily on skin color has been a compelling fact of human history for at least the past 500 years. On the basis of the color of their skin, some people have been enslaved, oppressed, and subjected to public scorn and humiliation. Others have been given special rights and privileges. This fact demonstrates the ability of people to create symbolic, cultural meaning around simple, biological aspects of the world. It shows the enormous power of culture. However, as we have seen, skin color is a complex trait that has to do with adaptation to environment. In and of itself, it has neither particular meaning nor importance. It does not serve as a good marker for other biological characteristics and has no biological connection with any particular cultural traits. Skin color is simply an evolutionary reaction to factors such as ultraviolet light, vitamin D, and cold weather. The notion that the historical exposure of a population to ultraviolet light or extremes of temperature has anything at all to do with cultural, intellectual, or physical superiority or inferiority is obviously ridiculous.



Summary

1. Although human behavior is almost entirely learned, it rests on a biological base that is the product of our evolutionary history.
2. Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection shows how humans and other species came to exist. The theory notes that there is much variation among members of all species, but most that are born do not survive to reproduce. Those that do reproduce pass some of the traits that favored their survival on to their offspring.
3. Although there is a great deal of religious and political controversy over Darwin's ideas about evolution, virtually all biologists and anthropologists agree that the basic elements of Darwin's theory are correct.
4. Human beings and other primates share common ancestry. Our closest relations are with chimpanzees and gorillas. Common ancestry gives all primates many similarities, including grasping hands and excellent three-dimensional vision.
5. Humans and other primates are highly social animals. Mothers and infants form very strong bonds, and these bonds favor teaching and learning. As primates grow, they interact more with their own age group and play becomes essential to learning. Dominance hierarchies are extremely common in primate societies. Position within these hierarchies is decided by both birth and individual action.



6. The earliest fossil remains for human ancestors are about 7 million years old. There are several groups of very early remains including the Lothagam mandible and *Ardipithecus ramidus*. These creatures had large jaws and small brains but were bipedal (walked on two legs).
7. Between 4.2 million and 1 million years ago, a diverse group of creatures called australopithecines lived in eastern and southern Africa. Australopithecines were bipedal and small-brained. They probably lived in part by scavenging.
8. When the weather turned cool about 2.5 million years ago, some australopithecines evolved into specialized vegetarian “robust” australopithecines. They are not ancestral to modern humans. Other australopithecines evolved into *Homo habilis*.
9. *Homo habilis* is distinguished by somewhat larger brains and the use of simple stone tools. They were probably omnivores, but it is unlikely that they were able to hunt large animals.
10. By about 1.8 million years ago, *Homo erectus* had appeared. These creatures had large bodies and brains. Their remains are found in many places in Europe, Africa, and Asia. They made more sophisticated tools than *Homo habilis* and probably were able to control fire. They clearly had much more complex culture than earlier species.
11. By half a million years ago, some *Homo erectus* had become “sapienized.” *Homo sapiens* are distinguished by substantially larger brain capacity and more complex culture than earlier forms. Between 300,000 and 35,000 years ago, there were several different forms of archaic *Homo sapiens*, including Neanderthals.
12. There are several theories concerning evolution from *Homo erectus* to modern *Homo sapiens sapiens*. These include the multiregional theory, replacement theory, and hybrid theory. There is vitriolic debate over which of these best represents the transition from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens*.
13. *Homo sapiens* culture is extremely complex. Neanderthals (archaic *Homo sapiens*) buried their dead and clearly had religious beliefs. “Venus” figurines and cave paintings attest to the highly developed artistic talents of human ancestors more than 30,000 years ago.
14. The human species shows enormous variety. Many human traits such as blood type or the presence of sickle cell show systematic change across different geographic areas. Such a pattern is called a clinal distribution.
15. Although skin color has been of critical cultural and historical importance, it has no special biological importance. It is simply an evolutionary adaptation to ultraviolet light. One prominent theory holds that melanin protects skin from cancer in sunny areas but interferes with vitamin D production in areas with little sunlight. Hence, dark skin colors are found in sunny areas and light skin colors in areas with less sun.
16. The fact that skin color is implicated in so much of history is an indication of our remarkable ability to invest inherently meaningless aspects of the world with symbolic, cultural meaning and of the absurdity of racism.



Key Terms

arboreal
atlatl
australopithecines
bipedalism
clinal distribution
evolution
genetic drift

gene flow
genus
Homo erectus
Homo habilis
Homo sapiens
hybridization model
melanin

multiregional model
mutation
natural selection
Neanderthal
Oldowan tools
omnivore
parallax
replacement model
rickets
species
termite fishing
“Venus” figurines



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Suggested Readings

- Dawkins, Richard. 1996. *Climbing Mount Improbable*. New York: Norton. Dawkins is one of the great popular writers in evolution and is noted for his insistence that natural selection occurs on the genetic rather than the individual or population level. In this work, he argues that the universe is a product of the laws of physics rather than any divine being. Dawkins's other popular books include *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (1995), *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), and *The Selfish Gene* (1976).
- Dennett, Daniel C. 1995. *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster. An outstanding, well-written introduction to evolution and some of its implications. The book covers the historical development of the theory of evolution, challenges to the Darwinian theory, and what evolution might be able to tell us about understanding human consciousness.
- Gould, Stephen J. 1998. *Leonardo's Mountain of Clams and the Diet of Worms: Essays on Natural History*. New York: Harmony Books. Gould, one of the best authors on evolution, wrote monthly essays for *Natural History* magazine about evolution and the history of science. Many of his books, including this one, are collections of the best of these essays. Other titles include *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (1996), *Eight Little Piggies: Reflections in Natural History* (1993), and *The Mismeasure of Man* (originally issued 1981, updated 1996).
- Marks, Jonathan. 2002. *What It Means to Be 98% Chimpanzee: Apes, People, and Their Genes*. Berkeley: University of California Press. In this book, Marks examines the notion that the genes of humans and our closest ape relations are only about 2 percent different. He explores the science behind this claim and the various uses to which the idea has been put. Marks points out that claims about the behavioral connections between humans and apes often rest on very weak data. We have increasingly detailed information about the biochemical makeup of the human genome, but we lack adequate theories for understanding its meaning.
- Stringer, Christopher, and Robin McKie. 1997. *African Exodus: The Origins of Modern Humanity*. New York: Holt. Stringer and McKie present a full overview of the origins of modern humanity. They describe the evolutionary history of humanity but focus on the distinctions between modern *Homo sapiens* and other human relatives such as Neanderthal. They also examine visible racial and ethnic distinctions.
- Tattersall, Ian. 1998. *Becoming Human: Evolution and Human Uniqueness*. New York: Harcourt Brace. Tattersall, the curator of anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, uses genetics, evolutionary theory, primate anatomy, and archaeology to explain the story of human evolution. This book shows the ways our ancestors adapted to their environments and the effects those adaptations had on our evolutionary history. Another Tattersall title, *The Fossil Trail: How We Know What We Think We Know about Human Evolution* (1995), examines the history of fossil discoveries and their interpretation.
- Weiner, Jonathan. 1994. *The Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time*. 1994. New York: Knopf. This popular account documents the work of Peter and Rosemary Grant on the Galapagos Islands. The Grants have spent more than 20 years documenting changes in populations of Darwin's finches. The Grants' work, including the documentation of DNA changes among the birds, shows the ongoing power of Darwinian evolution. Weiner's recent work, *Time, Love, Memory* (1999), is about the science and the biologists involved in the analyses of the relationship between behavior and genetics in fruit flies.



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Doing Cultural Anthropology



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Doing ethnography requires the anthropologist not only to observe and ask questions, but also to participate in the culture and social life of a society, as with this anthropologist living among the Mentawai of Sumatra. Traditionally, these tattoos are incised with needles and vegetable dye, though these are being done with washable pigments.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Ethnography and Fieldwork
Ethnography in Historical
Perspective

Franz Boas

Bronislaw Malinowski

Changing Directions in
Ethnography

Postmodernism

Feminist Anthropology

Ethnographic Data and Cross-
Cultural Comparisons

Special Issues in Contemporary

Ethnography

Studying One's Own Society

Collaborative Ethnography

Ethical Considerations in
Fieldwork

New Roles for the Ethnographer

“Anthropology is about taking people seriously. It is about trying to understand how people interpret and act in the world. Anthropologists listen to what people say; watch what they do, and then try to make sense of their words and their deeds by putting them into context . . . this takes time, lots of it.”

For more details, see page 60 (MacClancy 2002).

Jn their attempt to understand human diversity, cultural anthropologists have developed particular methodologies for gathering data and developing and testing theories. The controlled laboratory situation of the physical sciences is, for both technical and ethical reasons, of little use in cultural anthropology. Anthropologists can hardly go out and start a war somewhere to see the effect of warfare on family life. Nor can they control in a laboratory all the factors involved in examining the impact of multinational corporations on villages in the Amazon rain forest. Instead, they look to the existing diversity of human cultures. In place of the artificially controlled laboratory, anthropologists rely on ethnography and cross-cultural comparison.

Ethnography is the gathering and interpretation of information based on intensive, firsthand study of a particular culture (the written report of this study is also called an ethnography). Ethnographies are used as a basis for cross-cultural comparisons: the ethnographic data from different

societies are analyzed to build and test hypotheses about general, or even possibly universal, social and cultural processes.

Cultural anthropology encompasses a wide range of activities and specialties: solitary fieldwork in a remote location, delving into historical archives, testing hypotheses using statistical correlations from many different societies, administering a community health care clinic, formal and informal questionnaires, recording life histories, making ethnographic films, curating museum exhibits, and working with indigenous peoples as advocates in cultural and political projects. But all of these diverse activities are based on ethnography, which is not only the major source of anthropological data and theory but also an important part of most anthropologists' experience. We

ethnography The major research tool of cultural anthropology; includes both fieldwork among people in society and the written results of fieldwork.

thus begin this chapter with a discussion of ethnography and then turn to some of the ways in which ethnographic data are used in cross-cultural comparison.

Ethnography and Fieldwork

Ethnography is the written description and analysis of the culture of a group of people based on fieldwork. **Fieldwork** is the firsthand, intensive, systematic exploration of a culture. Although fieldwork includes many techniques, such as structured and unstructured interviewing, mapping space, taking census data, photographing and filming, using historical archives, and recording life histories, the heart of anthropological fieldwork is participant-observation. **Participant-observation** is the technique of gathering data on human cultures by living among the people, observing their social interaction on an ongoing daily basis, and participating as much as possible in their lives. This intensive field experience is the methodological hallmark of cultural anthropology. Typically, the field experience results in an ethnography—that is, an in-depth description and analysis of a particular culture.

The goal of fieldwork is to gather as much information as one can on a particular cultural system, or on a particular aspect of a culture that is the fieldworker's focus. The data are written up to present as authentic and coherent a picture of the cultural system as possible. The holistic perspective of anthropology was developed through fieldwork. Only by living with people and engaging in their activities over a long period of time can we see culture as a system of interrelated patterns. Good fieldwork and ethnography are based both on the fieldworker's ability to see things from the studied person's point of view (the emic perspective) and on the ability to see patterns, relationships, and meanings that may not be consciously understood by a person in that culture (the etic perspective).

Observation, participation, and interviewing are all necessary elements of good fieldwork. The anthropologist observes, listens, asks questions, and attempts to find a way in which to participate in the life of the society over an extended period of time.

Anthropology, like every other scientific discipline, must be concerned with the accuracy of its data. Anthropology is unique among the sciences in that a human being is the major research instrument and other human beings supply most of the data. At least in the initial stages of research—and usually throughout the fieldwork—anthropologists have to rely to a great extent on consultants from the culture being studied as well as observation for their data. **Consultants** (earlier ethnographies referred to these people as informants) are people through whom the anthropologist learns about the culture, partly by observation and partly by asking questions. Many people in a society may act as consultants, but most anthropologists also have a few key consultants with whom they work. **Key consultants** are people who have a deep knowledge of their culture and are willing to pass this knowledge on to the anthropologist. Anthropologists often develop deep rapport with their key consultants, and even lifetime friendships (Grindal and Salamone 1995). These key consultants are essential not only for explaining cultural patterns but also for introducing



Ruth Benedict's major work, *Patterns of Culture*, was a best-seller in the United States when it was published in the 1930s. It is still widely used in college anthropology courses. Benedict worked tirelessly with Franz Boas to demonstrate to Americans that ideologies of racial superiority had no basis in science. The work of Ruth Benedict, her mentor Franz Boas, and her student Margaret Mead had a deep and widespread influence on how Americans think about cultural diversity. Her contributions are recognized by her picture on a United States stamp.

anthropologists to the community and helping them establish a network of social relationships. The establishment of trust and cooperation in these relationships is the basis for sound fieldwork.

In the early stages of fieldwork, the anthropologist may just observe or perform some seemingly neutral task such as collecting **genealogies** (family trees) or taking a census. Within a short time, however, he or she will begin to participate in cultural activities. Participation is the best way to understand the difference between what people *say* they do, feel, or think and what they actually do. It is not that consultants deliberately lie (although they may), but rather, when they are asked about some aspect of their culture, they may give the cultural ideal, not what actually happens. This is especially true when the outsider has higher social status than the consultant. For psychological or pragmatic reasons, the consultant wants to look good in the anthropologist's eyes. Participation also forces the researcher to think more deeply about culturally correct behavior and thus sharpens insight into culture beyond that learned by observation alone.



Ethnography in Historical Perspective

Anthropology began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a comparative science; although its first practitioners were not fieldworkers, fieldwork and ethnography soon became its defining characteristics (Stocking 1992). For several reasons, the earliest ethnographers concentrated their studies on the small-scale, technologically simpler societies that had developed for thousands of years outside the orbit of European culture. One reason was the fear that much of the traditional culture of these societies was disappearing under the assault of Western culture, and so their cultures needed to be recorded as soon as possible. Another reason was that these cultures were sufficiently homogeneous that patterns and processes of culture could be more easily perceived than was possible in the large, technologically complex, heterogeneous societies of the West. In addition, it was necessary to look at societies outside the orbit of Western society in order to learn about the very diverse ways of being human.

European interest in cultural differences was enormously intensified by the fifteenth-century expansion of European power, which brought Europeans into contact with cultures that were very different from their own. This interest continued to develop and, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, laid the foundation for the emergence of anthropology.

Anthropologists attempted to grapple with the significance of the cultural differences between Europeans and other cultures, initially by placing the cultures they encountered on evolutionary scales of cultural development. On these scales, characterized by different stages of technology and social institutions (such as the form of family or type of religion), European culture was placed at the pinnacle and these other, “primitive” societies were viewed as earlier, less evolved cultures.

The earliest observers of the societies later studied by these nineteenth-century anthropologists were typically amateurs—travelers, explorers, missionaries, and colonial officers who had recorded their experiences in remote corners of the world. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, much of anthropological theory, including much of cultural evolutionary theory, was developed by “armchair anthropologists” who had not done fieldwork themselves and who based their theories on the often ethnocentric and unsystematic writings of the amateurs.

By the early twentieth century, fieldwork and ethnography had become the hallmarks of cultural anthropology, which attempted to understand other people in a scientific and objective way. Twentieth-century anthropologists hoped

fieldwork The firsthand, systematic exploration of a society. It involves living with a group of people and participating in and observing their behavior.

participant-observation The fieldwork technique that involves gathering cultural data by observing people's behavior and participating in their lives.

consultant A person from whom anthropologists gather data.

key consultant A person particularly knowledgeable about his or her own culture who is a major source of the anthropologist's information.

genealogy A family history; a chart of family relationships.



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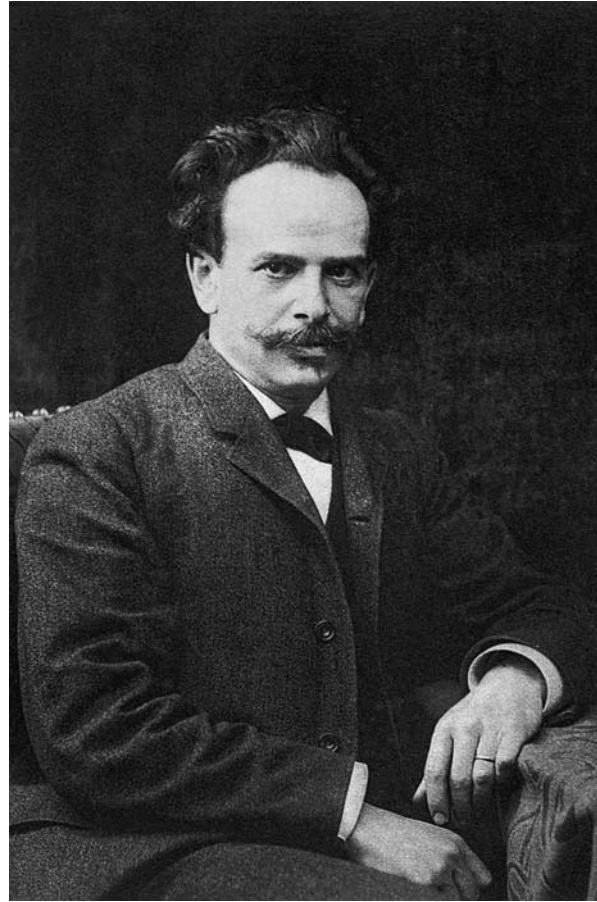
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that detailed ethnographies would illuminate the richness and human satisfactions in a wide range of cultures and thus increase respect among Europeans and North Americans for peoples whose lives were very different from their own. Particularly after the devastation and demoralization of, and disenchantment with, European civilization following World War I, academically trained ethnographers began doing intensive fieldwork in distant places and among peoples whose cultures were not only different from but often in striking contrast to Western culture (Tedlock 1991). This emphasis on fieldwork is linked particularly with the names of Franz Boas in the United States and Bronislaw Malinowski in Europe.

Franz Boas

Franz Boas, sometimes called the father of American anthropology, was the primary influence in anthropology in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. He turned away from arm-chair anthropology and rejected theories of evolution that held that some societies were more evolved than others. For Boas, the status of anthropology as a science would depend on complete and objective gathering of ethnographic data on specific cultural systems. He insisted that grasping the whole of a culture could be achieved only through fieldwork. This meant recording not only a group's cultural patterns but also descriptions of their languages, statistical measurements of their bodies, and archaeological investigations of their past. Boas was particularly concerned about the urgency of this fieldwork because it was feared that many of these small, non-Western cultures would soon disappear. Boas produced an enormous amount of ethnographic data on Native American cultures, particularly those of the Pacific Northwest.

But Boas's contributions to anthropology were theoretical as well as ethnographic. Boas used ethnographic data to support his key theoretical ideas: that all cultures are products of their own histories, that all human beings have equal capacities for culture, and that although human actions might be considered morally right or wrong, no culture was inherently more or less civilized than another. Boas was an unwavering supporter of the value of other cultures and of racial equality. His work and that of



In the first half of the twentieth century, Franz Boas was the primary influence in anthropology in the United States. He emphasized fieldwork and cultural relativism.

his students, notably Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, were widely used by Americans who argued for the equality of men and women, and the rights of African Americans, immigrants, and Native Americans. Although other anthropological perspectives, such as postmodernism, discussed in the next section, might seem to have displaced earlier, Boasian perspectives, in fact, Boas's contributions remain basic to cultural anthropology. (See the most recent discussion of the relevance of Boas's ideas to contemporary anthropology in Bashkow et al 2004.)

Bronislaw Malinowski

Bronislaw Malinowski, whose fieldwork was carried out in the Trobriand Islands, saw as an essential goal that the ethnographer “grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world” (1984/1922:25). Only an anthropologist who could learn to think, feel, and behave as a member of another culture could enter into another cultural experience. And this could be done only through fieldwork—living among the people, observing their behavior firsthand, and participating in their lives. With the publication of Malinowski’s unmatched ethnographies of the Trobriand Islands, doing fieldwork and writing ethnography became the dominant activities identified with cultural anthropology.

Boas and Malinowski together set the high standards for fieldwork, the unique methodology of cultural anthropology. The major criterion of good ethnography that grew out of their work was that it grasp the native point of view objectively and without bias. This goal was based on the assumption of **positivism**, an **empirical scientific** approach that dominated the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries. Positivism and empiricism emphasized the possibility and desirability of observing and recording an objective reality. Anthropology reflected this scientific view: the basis of the **ethnographic method** was the confidence that trained, neutral investigators could, through observation of behavior, comprehend the objective reality of a culture.

After World War I, and even more so after World War II, cultural anthropology took yet another turn, expanding fieldwork and ethnography to peasant and urban societies, which were enmeshed in more complex regional and national systems. Gathering data on such societies required some changes in the way fieldwork was practiced, because the study of these “part cultures” is not amenable to the same holistic perspective derived from the study of a small-scale, seemingly isolated cultures. This shift to the study of smaller units in complex societies led to new methodologies as well as new theories about culture, in particular about the relationships of small-scale cultures to larger systems. Indeed, in today’s global community, the connections between cultures are so central that no

society, no matter how seemingly remote, can be studied as if it existed in cultural isolation.



Changing Directions in Ethnography

Postmodernism

Since the 1970s, many of the assumptions of twentieth-century fieldwork and ethnography, including confidence in the possibility of discovering an objective reality, have become the subject of intense debate in anthropology (R. Lee 1992). These debates have involved **postmodernism**, a perspective that holds that all knowledge is influenced by the observer’s culture and social position. Postmodernism claims that there is no single objective reality but rather many partial truths or cultural constructions, depending on one’s frame of reference. In anthropology, this philosophy has resulted in intense reflection on why, how, and with what goals cultural anthropologists have done, are doing, and should be doing ethnography.

Under the influence of postmodernism, cultural anthropology today is significantly more sensitive to issues of history and power than it was in the past. It understands these issues in terms of the relationship of the anthropologist to the members of the culture observed, as well as in terms of the relationship of members of that culture to each other and to the larger social, political, and economic world.

positivism A philosophical system concerned with positive facts and phenomena and excluding speculation on origins or ultimate causes.

empirical science An approach to understanding phenomena based on attempts to observe and record a presumed objective reality.

ethnographic method The intensive study of a particular society and culture as the basis for generating anthropological theory.

postmodernism A theoretical perspective focusing on issues of power and voice. Postmodernists suggest that anthropological accounts are partial truths reflecting the background, training, and social position of their authors.

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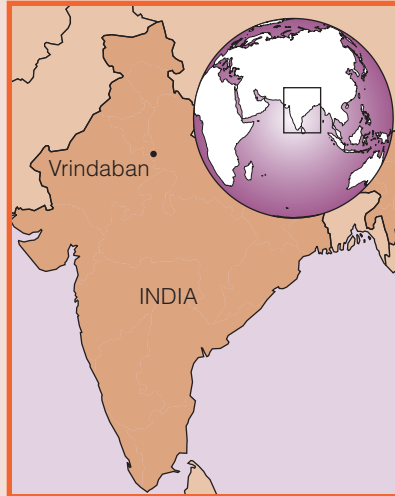
Ethnography

An Ethnographic Field Study in India

Charles Brooks is an American anthropologist who carried out field research on the impact of foreign Hare Krishnas in India. The followers of Hare Krishna, with their orange robes and shaved heads, their public processions and festivals featuring drums and cymbals, and their vegetarian food, are well known in the United States. Brooks worked not in an isolated, small-scale society, but rather in a large town in the very complex society of India. The following description of his fieldwork shows what anthropologists actually do as they go about understanding cultures. Although each fieldwork project is different, there are certain common steps: choosing the problem, choosing the site, locating consultants, gathering and recording the data, and analyzing and writing up the results.

Choosing the Problem

Like much contemporary fieldwork, Brooks's approach to the culture he was studying was holistic, yet focused on a number of specific questions. Through his graduate study, Brooks had become interested in religion and change in India. This interest formed the background of his research. Brooks was also aware of the most visible representation of Indian religion in the United States, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), also called the Hare Krishna. The Hare Krishna movement began in India as a way of spreading the worship of the Hindu god Krishna. In this religion, devoted worship of Krishna is the main path to religious or spiritual enlightenment. Krishna worship was brought to the United States in the 1960s by an Indian monk, Swami Bhaktivedanta, who aimed to save Westerners from what he saw as their materialism and atheism. His movement was very successful in the United States and Europe, attracting many converts from the counterculture of the 1960s. As part of their com-



mitment to their new religion, many of these people went to India to help spread Krishna consciousness in the land where it originated.

Brooks was fascinated by this process, and his research was guided by an overarching question: How did a Western cultural version of Hare Krishna fit itself into the religious culture of India? In order to answer this large question, Brooks broke it down into smaller questions that would actually guide his research. These questions included: "In

what specific types of situations did foreign and Indian Krishna followers interact?" "What were the similarities and differences in how foreigners and Indian devotees understood the symbols, rituals, meanings, and goals of Krishna worship?" "How did Indians react to foreigners who claimed they were Hindus—and Hindu priests at that?" "What opinions did Indians have about Westerners who were in India to spread the word about a religion that was originally Indian?" "Because Hindus believe that foreigners cannot become Hindus, as ISKCON members claim they have become, how was this paradox resolved?" and "How did ISKCON's presence in India affect both Hindu religious culture and the Indian and Western Krishna followers who encountered each other?" In sum, Brooks was interested in the subjective experience of individuals from two different cultures who had come together through participation in the same religion.

Picking the Research Site

Sometimes anthropologists have a particular site in mind when they begin their fieldwork, but in many cases they have only a general idea about a location that might suit their research interests. The ultimate choice involves some practical matters, such as the availability of housing, health care, and transportation, but the major considera-

tion is whether the site will allow the researchers to answer the questions they are interested in. Because Brooks wanted to study social interaction between foreign and Indian devotees to Krishna, his main criterion was to find a location where such interaction took place.

Anthropologists generally use the first month or so of their fieldwork to look over possible sites. (This has changed somewhat today thanks to cheaper airfares; many graduate students take an initial trip to pick a research site, and then return for the longer fieldwork trip.) Brooks's initial choice for his research was the sacred pilgrimage town of Vrindaban, where Krishna is said to have been born and lived for part of his life. This town has many temples and religious sites dedicated to Krishna worship, and Brooks knew that ISKCON had set up a temple there. He made an initial visit to discover whether significant social interaction took place among the Indian and foreign pilgrims and residents in Vrindaban and whether any Indians worshiped at ISKCON's temple. When he saw that such interactions did occur, and that the ISKCON temple attracted many Indian pilgrims, Brooks decided that this would be an appropriate site for his fieldwork.

Brooks chose as his residence a place where many foreign and Indian people stay while they are on pilgrimage at Vrindaban. As a neutral site, it would not associate Brooks with any particular religious faction. This would allow him greater access to a variety of social situations than if he had stayed at a place identified with a particular religious sect or temple. In addition, this residence was centrally located in the town and situated near a principal pilgrimage destination where Brooks could observe from his rooftop rooms the constant movement of pilgrims and the many cultural performances that were held in the adjacent public courtyard. Having found a suitable place to stay, Brooks turned his attention to beginning the research project.

Collecting and Recording Data

In anthropology, as in every science, method is connected to theory. The way we collect our data is

related to the questions we hope our research will answer. Because Charles Brooks's main interest was in the way people create meanings for their behavior through social interaction, participant-observation was his major method of collecting data. Only in this way did Brooks feel he could develop the "intimate familiarity and sensitivity to the social world" he wished to understand (Brooks 1989:235). In order to do this, he also had to take into account his own role as an anthropologist in these interactions.

Because the initial step of participation is to find a role through which to interact with others, Brooks defined his role as someone looking for personal development, and also as a research scholar who had been certified by the Indian government to study Vrindaban's culture and history. Both these roles were familiar and valid to pilgrims and town residents. In order to more effectively participate in the religious culture of the town without identifying himself with any particular faction, Brooks wore Indian clothing and accessories that were typical of Indians in Vrindaban but were not specifically identified with any particular religious sect. Because of the public nature of many of the religious interactions Brooks wished to understand, gaining entry to these situations and observing behavior was not difficult. And because he had learned Hindi, the main language used for social interaction in this part of India, he rarely needed an interpreter. But recording his observations presented more of a problem. Many anthropologists use tape recorders or take notes at the time of observation, but in some cases this hinders interaction. On one occasion early in his research, when Brooks was recording an interview in a small notebook, one of his key consultants, a guru, told him, "When you are ready to learn, come back without your notebook." From that point he stopped taking notes on the spot and waited until an encounter was over before writing it up. To help him remember and keep track of the many details of an interaction and record them in a consistent way, he developed a schematic flowchart into which he could fit his daily observations. He kept a



Ethnography—continued

different flowchart for each separate interaction, and each chart incorporated information on the actors, the content of their interaction, the symbols used, the goal of the interaction, and its conclusion. In addition, he also recorded his experiences in a more impressionistic way in a journal.

Second to participant-observation in its importance for collecting data, Brooks used unstructured, open-ended interviews. The goal of these interviews was to explore a particular topic in depth, such as the meaning of a particular symbolic object used in religious practice. Many of his interviews were with groups of consultants. These were helpful in comparing the ways different individuals interpret a symbolic object or act, whereas in the individual interviews people could speak about more private matters. This was the format he used for collecting life histories. The individual interviews were taped and were more structured, organized around preset questions, but Brooks also allowed the conversations to develop on their own if a consultant showed a particular interest in or knowledge of a subject. Twenty-two of these life histories were collected, and they were particularly valuable in giving information about the backgrounds from which consultants developed their interpretations of religious phenomena.

Brooks also used random verbal surveys to discover the castes and backgrounds of the pilgrims and town residents, and to learn their opinions and attitudes toward the foreign devotees in Vrindaban. He initially tried to use a written questionnaire to gather this kind of information but dropped that method as counterproductive. First, written questionnaires were foreign to Vrindaban culture and thus not very effective. Second, although Brooks assured consultants of their confidentiality, many people were nervous at the idea of writing down private information. Finally, the use of such formal documents might be interpreted to confirm the belief of many Indians that all Americans in India are working for the CIA.

Hardly any anthropologist could be found today who does not take a camera to the field. Brooks used photographs in several specific ways related to his research project: documenting the physical aspects of Vrindaban's religious complex, such as the temples and pilgrimage sites; documenting the different people who visited and lived in Vrindaban so that their clothing and appearance would serve to preserve a record of cultural diversity; and photographing the sites and participants of social interactions as an aid to remembering and interpreting them.

Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

Brooks's data indicate significant interaction between Indians and foreigners in Vrindaban. The ISKCON temple is accepted as a legitimate place of worship for Indian devotees of Krishna, and ISKCON members are accorded legitimacy as Krishna devotees by Indians. The interaction of people from different cultures in the religious complex of Krishna worship has led to changes in the meanings of the symbols involved in this worship.

On a more theoretical level, Brooks's research challenges some popularly held conceptions about Indian culture and society, especially concerning the importance of caste in social interaction.

As the study uncovered some ways that outsiders—the foreigners—could be accepted in a Hindu religious and social universe, it opened up new perceptions of social organization in India. Brooks found that in religious settings, caste identity, which is normally essential in social interaction, could be subordinated to evaluations of the sincerity of a person's devotion. The acceptance of foreigners as Hindus and even Brahmins highlights the complexity of Indian culture and demonstrates its flexibility—its ability to deal with novel and contradictory situations. Thus caste, which has popularly been viewed as a rigid hierarchy, can be deemphasized, superseded by other social statuses, or held irrelevant for determining individual social position.

In the case of Vrindaban, as is true in many other parts of India, religion is of prime importance in determining individual social position and social interaction. Religious competence and extreme devotion can actually override caste as indicators of rank and status. The fact that foreigners can be considered Brahmins in India shows that our understanding of caste may be incomplete and even incorrect—that Brahmin status, for example, may be achieved as well as acquired by birth.

Like all good ethnography, Brooks's study of one town in India has a wider application; it reveals the processes by which social reality is transformed into a meaningful universe. As people from different parts of the world increasingly

come into contact with one another and participate in common social systems, they are forced to rethink traditional cultural concepts and their own and others' cultural identities.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How might the social processes revealed in Brooks's study apply to the multicultural society of the United States?
2. If you were to study a situation in the United States like the one Brooks studied in India, what groups would you study and why?

Source: Based on Charles Brooks, *The Hare Krishnas in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).



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Courtesy of Charles Brooks

The hare krishna movement (left) has spread widely through Europe and the United States. Charles Brooks's ethnography is aimed at understanding how Western Hare Krishna devotees were integrated into the Indian city of Vrindaban, a center for Krishna worship. One of Brooks's key consultants (right) was Govind Kishore Goswami, a Brahmin priest and the owner of the Pilgrim's Hostel where Brooks lived during his research. Here Goswami is pictured with his wife and son during Holi, a festival in which people sprinkle each other with colored water.

Postmodernism challenges the notion that the ethnographer should be the sole, or even most authoritative, voice in representing a culture. From a postmodern perspective, ethnographies are just one “story” about experienced reality, and the ethnographer’s voice only one of many possible representations.

By the 1990s, the postmodernist-influenced trickle of reflection on fieldwork and ethnography had “turned into a flood,” and the “observation of participation” became a central focus of cultural anthropology (Tedlock 1991:69). Issues of subjectivity and objectivity in fieldwork, bias in the interpretation of field data, the accuracy of traditional ethnographic representations of culture, the relationship of ethnography to anthropological theory, and the usefulness of the culture concept itself (see Chapter 4), moved from the periphery to the center of cultural anthropology.

The postmodernist emphasis on “observing participation” has led anthropologists to reflect more consciously on how their own status, personality, and culture shape their view of others, and how the anthropologist ethnographer interacts with “the other” to produce cultural data. With this emphasis, fieldwork is now viewed more as a dialogue, a co-production between the ethnographer and the native consultant, rather than an anthropological monologue (see Crapanzano 1980).

Edward Said, an important critic of anthropology, opened the floodgates of postmodernism through his work *Orientalism* (1978). Said showed how Western colonial attitudes “constructed” the “Orient” (now called the “Middle East”) and opened the way for new anthropological understandings of this area and its cultures. Said charged that much of the anthropological literature assumed a universal notion of Islam that mysteriously molded social behavior “from above” and that simplified, distorted, and romanticized Middle Eastern cultures. This, he said, drew attention from the reality of these cultures, which were shaped, as all cultures are, by history, economics, political dynamics and ideologies, the formation of social classes, and the diversity and variety of cultural contexts (Waines 1982:652). An “essentialist” view of the Middle East particularly affected the study of gender, which also overemphasized Islam as the only cultural determinant of gender roles and women’s status and led to a neglect of study of the places, such as the family or the workplace, where men and

women meet and interact. In the contemporary world, where an understanding of the diversity and complexities of the Islamic world is needed more than ever, anthropology’s contributions of detailed ethnographies from a wide range of Islamic societies play a vital role.

Depending on their theoretical persuasions, anthropologists have viewed postmodernism as a threat to anthropology’s status as a science, a fad that will disappear, or an important contribution to making cultural representations a more accurate reflection of the multisided nature of personal and collective experience. Although most anthropologists reject extreme formulations of postmodernism, postmodern thinking has clearly contributed to anthropology. For example, almost all ethnographies now include some reflection about the conditions under which the fieldwork was carried out, and the nature of the relationships between the anthropologist ethnographer and his or her collaborators.

Feminist Anthropology

Understandings of the Middle East, and other cultures as well, have also been affected by an androcentric, or male bias. A significant contribution of feminist anthropology (see Chapter 10) has been to raise questions about the effects of gender bias in both ethnography and anthropological theory. Although women anthropologists, such as Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Cora Dubois, have probably had a greater influence in anthropology than in any of the other social sciences, historically much fieldwork was carried out by men who had limited access to women’s lives and their own perspectives on their culture. This is particularly true in cultures where men and women lead very separate lives and are often hostile to each other, as in New Guinea (Hammar 1989) or the Middle East, where cultural notions of honor and shame severely restrict the interactions of men and women who are not related (Abu-Lughod 1987).

The description of whole cultures based on male activities grew out of an assumption that the most important cultural activities are dominated by men. A good example is the work of Malinowski himself. His descriptions of exchange among the Trobriand Islanders almost completely excluded women’s gift exchanges, an omission rectified more than 50 years later by a female anthropologist whose



Anthropologist Nadine Peacock does participant observation among the Efe.

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restudy of the Trobriand Islands focused on exchanges among women (Weiner 1976).

Gender bias had its effect not only on the accuracy of ethnographies, but also on the development of theories about culture. When the culture of a small society is based on information from just one segment of the community—that is, men—the culture appears to be much more homogeneous than it really is. This erroneous picture may also perpetuate oppression of women by ignoring their perspectives on their own culture, which differ from men's. As we will see in Chapter 10, the recognition of the **androcentric bias** of anthropology has led to a new concern with the lives, thoughts, and activities of women, and also to a new interest in men's lives and activities and the whole subject of gender and sexuality.

These new emphases in ethnography are further evidence of the diversity and dynamism that have always characterized the history of anthropology. Discussions and debates over theory and method in contemporary anthropology highlight the wide range of approaches cultural anthropologists bring to the question of what it means to be human. Anthropology focuses on the “other” as well as ourselves; it is a comparative science as well as a unique, humanistic inquiry. Thus, many ethnographies continue to emphasize “objective” descriptions of a culture, whereas other, more experimental ethnographies try in different ways to incorporate the many voices that make

up a culture. In their field studies, some anthropologists still try to be the proverbial “fly on the wall,” observing and reporting from the position of outsider, but political activism and advocacy for the people one is studying have also come to be important goals. In meeting the challenges of a changing world, anthropologists are increasingly reflecting on the work they do and its place in the contemporary global society. These reflections have raised new issues and new interests in doing ethnography.



Ethnographic Data and Cross-Cultural Comparisons

The gathering of good ethnographic data through participant-observation is the hallmark of cultural anthropology and the foundation on which anthropological theories are built. Under the influence of anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas, the aim of anthropological fieldwork was the description of a total cultural pattern. Today, however, many anthropologists go into the field with

androcentric bias The distortion in theory and ethnography caused by excessive focus on male activities or male perceptions of female activities



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Global Perspective

Ethnography

An increasingly globally connected world requires anthropologists to expand their methodology as the “bounded cultures” characteristic of small scale, face-to-face societies give way to connections between people with different cultures and the diffusion of culture becomes a hallmark of the contemporary world. One kind of global reach is suggested by the ethnography of the Hare Krishna, studied by Charles Brooks, who examines a cultural phenomena that has its origins in Indian culture, spread to the West, and then spread back to India (see “Ethnography,” page 64).

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Inspired by methods in visual anthropology, in which the subjects of ethnographic films were asked to comment on the completed film, the researchers in this study used videotapes in their ethnography and then showed the tapes to audiences both from the filmed culture and from the two other cultures. This method thus not only documented the diversity of human cultures, but in good anthropological tradition, used the study of other cultures to achieve insights on one’s own culture.

Integrating the “local and the global” into anthropology requires new, often interdisciplinary, methods, theories and subjects, such as sustainable development, world ecology, environmental studies, global interdependence, internationalization, mass international communication, global finance, global popular and mass culture, tourism, and diasporas (Kearney 2004). Anthropologist Melvin Konner, for example, in his new

work *Unsettled: An Anthropology of the Jews* (2003) studies the Jewish diaspora from prebiblical days to remote communities in Asia. The word “unsettled” in his title nicely captures the contrast of today’s global ethnography with the settled communities that were the subject of earlier ethnographies, because Konner studies a people who have lived in many cultures and yet maintained a far-flung cohesion, with their past and with one another.

Another innovative ethnography, taking a global perspective on a local cultural pattern, is the examination of the transformations of the tango as it diffused from its center of origin. Originally a dance of the working classes of Argentina, the tango was “exported” to Europe, where it was “reclassified” as a more genteel dance shorn of its working class associations. It moved in that form to Japan, while at the same time it was diffused back to Argentina where it was transformed into a national symbol that transcended class boundaries (Savigliano 1995).

Tourism, one of the world’s biggest businesses, is largely built on the crossing of cultural boundaries and has become a new field for ethnographic study. So ubiquitous has tourism become throughout the world that Edward Bruner says that “ethnography [today] is not complete unless it takes account of tourists” (2005). Bruner carries out his ethnography both by traveling with tourists and by ethnographically investigating tourist sites, sometimes as a tour guide himself. He views the ethnography of tourism as requiring the essential fieldwork methods of observing, participating, and engaging in informal conversations, and views the tourist group itself as a “culture,” with its own practices, ideologies, and patterns of behavior. In his role as ethnographer of tourist sites, Bruner remains in one place of tourist interest for an extended period of time, studying the ways in which these sites—and sights—are constructed for tourist interest, the ways in which cultural performances are organized as “secular rituals,” and the ways in which different local groups benefit from the profits of the tourist

trade. We also see the importance of tourism as an audience for cultural validation among the Toraja (see page 80).

Another example of the global perspective in contemporary ethnography is the interest in American militarism (Johnson 2005; Gill 2005). The United States has over 725 military bases in some 132 countries around the world, which, some say, constitutes a new form of empire. Well over half a million Americans are deployed by the military in various capacities—not just soldiers but other capacities ranging from teachers to spies—in addition to contracts with civilian industries, which design and manufacture weapons for the armed services as well as build and maintain these American outposts.

Particularly, because of the secrecy with which much of the military operates, anthropologists have an important role to play in educating the public both about the culture of these military bases and the impact they have on the communities in which they are located.

Anthropologist Catherine Lutz has been studying elements of the U.S. military system for over 10 years. Lutz's newest study is the role of the U.S. military in the Asia-Pacific region, and the responses to U.S. military bases by local and global social movements (Lutz 2002; 2005).

Through her initial survey fieldwork in areas such as South Korea, Guam, and Okinawa, where the U.S. has a strong presence, Lutz has been able to uncover the sources of local resistance to these bases and the changes in U.S. basing over the last 60 years. As older bases close down, new bases are built in more varied regions: Ecuador, the Caribbean, Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the south Asian former republics of the Soviet Union, in addition to bases in the Middle East and eastern Europe. Using ethnographic methods such as interviews with local activists, base neighbors, and U.S. military personnel, Lutz demonstrates how the perceptions of these bases differ according to the political views of the different communities involved in them. For U.S. strategic thinkers, foreign military bases are crucial to demonstrating the power of the United States and defending America's allies against attack, while political activists in the areas where the bases are located see these bases as "tangible evidence of the imperial designs of the United States." For Lutz, the global distribution of these bases provides anthropologists with a unique opportunity to apply their comparative and critical methods to a critical contemporary political issue.

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the aim of focusing on specific theoretical problems, much as Charles Brooks did in his study of the Hare Krishna in India. Some of these field studies may be comparative, studying the same cultural pattern or social institution in several cultures, such as religion, family, or economics. However, these comparative approaches still depend on intensive field studies of particular societies and are well within the definition of the ethnographic method.

An entirely different kind of cross-cultural comparative method is the **cross-cultural survey**, or **controlled cross-cultural comparison**. The goal of the cross-cultural survey is to test generalizations about culture, using statistical correlations of culture traits based on a wide survey of many different cultures. The database for the cross-cultural survey method is the **Human Relations Area File (HRAF)**. The HRAF is an extensive filing system containing ethnographic data about hundreds of societies, past and present, from the main ethnographically distinguished areas of the world: Africa, Asia, native North and South America, and Oceania. Combining ethnographic information about these societies from books and articles, the HRAF cross-indexes hundreds of cultural features. Thus, it makes accessible information about specific cultural patterns in a particular society, and it also facilitates inquiry about cultural patterns that are found in association with each other.

Thousands of different kinds of questions can be answered by the cross-cultural survey method (Ember and Ember 1996). For example, in the 1950s, when divorce was becoming more common in the United States and the increasing divorce rate was causing some alarm, anthropologist George Murdock, one of the important pioneers in this methodology, used the HRAF to determine how marriage instability in the United States compared with that of other cultures (1996/1950).

Using a **random sample** of eight societies from each of the five major ethnographic divisions of the world, Murdock ascertained that 39 of the 40 societies in his sample made provision for the termination of marriage through divorce. When Murdock surveyed his sample for the frequency of divorce, he found that 15 societies had more stable marriages than the United States, and 24 societies (60 percent of the sample) had less stable marriages. He also investigated the grounds for divorce and found that the great majority of societies recognized only certain grounds as adequate and few societies condoned divorce for a “mere whim.” The most

common bases for divorce were incompatibility, adultery, barrenness or sterility, impotence or frigidity, economic incapacity or nonsupport, cruelty, and quarrelsomeness.

Murdock concluded from his cross-cultural survey that the American divorce rate was well within the limits that “human experience has shown that societies can tolerate with safety.” He also concluded that most societies, even those with high divorce rates, are not indifferent to family stability and that societies with lower divorce rates usually have social devices such as marriage payments, arranged marriages by parents, and prohibitions against adultery to support marital stability.

Most often, the cross-cultural survey is used to test hypotheses about cultural correlations and causes. For example, anthropologist Donald Horton used this method to test his theory that the primary function of drinking alcohol is to reduce anxiety (D. Horton 1943). One of the many hypotheses he tested as part of his larger theory was that drinking alcohol would be related to the level of anxiety in a society and that a major source of anxiety would be economic insecurity.

To test this hypothesis, Horton first classified societies in the HRAF for which there was information on drinking behavior into those having high, moderate, or low subsistence insecurity. He then classified the same societies into those having high, moderate, or low rates of insobriety. Horton found a significant statistical correlation between high subsistence insecurity and high rates of insobriety. After finding significant statistical correlations for many of the other hypotheses generated from his theory, Horton considered his theory confirmed.

The cross-cultural survey has both advantages and disadvantages. A major advantage of the method is that it encourages formulating hypotheses, which can then be tested by finding statistically significant correlations between two or more cultural traits. A problem, however, is whether the correlations found have explanatory power—that is, whether they indicate causality. For example, although Horton’s study found a statistically significant correlation between economic insecurity and high rates of insobriety, his findings cannot confirm that subsistence insecurity *causes* high rates of insobriety. To confirm causality one needs to test the association of many different features and to disprove alternative hypotheses.

Another problem with the cross-cultural survey is ambiguity about what constitutes a particular cultural trait and how to measure it. Because the cross-cultural survey method uses cultural traits taken out of context, it is not always clear that a trait has the same meaning in the different societies in which it is found. Insobriety, for example, would be construed differently in different cultures, and its measurement may be somewhat arbitrary. Still another problem is that for many societies, information on the particular cultural trait the investigator wants to measure may be missing from the ethnographic source. Because most of the ethnographic data in the HRAF were collected without HRAF categories in mind, not all societies have data on all of the same cultural patterns. Anthropologists using the cross-cultural method have tried to overcome these problems in different ways, and many continue to find the method of substantial advantage.

Carol and Melvin Ember, anthropologists prominently associated with the cross-cultural survey method, note that cross-cultural surveys help to prevent generalizing about human nature or making assumptions about cultural correlations based on only a few cultures (Ember and Ember 1996). Although many of these findings support commonsense expectations, it is useful to have the cross-cultural data as evidence. For example, cross-cultural comparative studies of violence confirm that societies that have a lot of violence in one aspect of culture tend to have a lot of violence throughout the culture. Societies that more often engage in warfare, for example, also tend to have a high degree of other forms of violence, such as homicide, assault, wife beating, capital punishment, and male socialization practices that permit or encourage aggression. HRAF studies are important in putting contemporary social problems in cross-cultural perspective, providing new insights into possible solutions.

Undoubtedly, as more anthropologists learn to use the HRAF through the annual Summer Institutes in Comparative Anthropological Research sponsored by the Human Relations Area Files and the National Science Foundation, cross-cultural comparisons will become an increasingly important part of anthropologists' work. The use of cross-cultural surveys and the HRAF database underscores the need for good ethnography. The use of both methods confirms anthropology's status as

the most humanistic of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities.



Special Issues in Contemporary Ethnography

The demand for more self-conscious fieldwork means that anthropologists need to be more aware of their own reactions in the field and to see themselves not only as the instrument of observation but also as the subject of observation. They need to reflect critically on their own position as observers and be aware of the moral and political consequences of their work. Insights gained in this fashion make fieldwork an exciting but risky enterprise.

Studying One's Own Society

The emphasis on more reflective fieldwork and ethnography affects all anthropologists but particularly anthropologists studying their own societies, or **native anthropologists**. When anthropologists study a culture different from their own, their main methodological task is to perceive the culture emically (that is, from the point of view of its members). Although training in anthropology is designed to increase awareness of and perhaps ultimately overcome cultural bias, even well-trained anthropologists slip into projecting their own culturally determined feelings and perceptions on other peoples. In studying their own cultures, anthropologists must try to maintain the social distance of the outsider because it is all too easy to take for granted what one knows. In addition, as

cross-cultural survey (also called **controlled cross-cultural comparison**) A research method that uses statistical correlations of traits from many different cultures to test generalizations about culture and human behavior.

Human Relations Area File (HRAF) An ethnographic database including cultural descriptions of more than 300 cultures.

random sample A selection of items from a total set, chosen on a random, or unbiased, basis.

native anthropologist An anthropologist who does fieldwork in his or her own culture.



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Anthropology Makes a Difference

Anthropologists Study the Use of Illegal Drugs

Anthropologists have an important contribution to make to our understanding of the use and abuse of controlled substances. In the 1960s and 1970s, the identification of a drug addict “subculture” drew anthropologists into the world of substance abuse and addiction (Schensul 1997). Ethnography was a particularly suitable methodology for studying street drug scenes and their participants.

Most social science models of drug use and distribution treat drug users and sellers as “deviants,” separate from the larger population, and indeed focus on “drug addicts” as criminal deviants, operating outside of larger social networks and cultural norms. Psychopharmacological models of drug use, which emphasize intrapsychic and chemical “causes” of substance abuse, also fail to consider the social and cultural contexts of drug-related behavior.

Anthropologists, in keeping with their broader holistic perspective, have introduced structural and cultural models as alternatives to the deviant and psychomedical models. Structural models aim at connecting the individual drug user and seller with the larger, structural features of the society, and particularly its political economy (Hamid 1998/1992/1990; Waterston 1993). Anthropologist Anselmy Hamid, for example, demonstrates that patterns of drug-related violence cannot be understood only in terms of an individual’s impulsive or economically motivated behavior, but rather vary as a result of the ways in which political decisions and economic processes impact on neighborhoods, families, and kinship networks. Hamid’s work goes

beyond the view of mainstream America—particularly the media and law enforcement—to show that drug use and distribution are not the work only of the “alienated, the deviant, or the diseased,” but are integrated with larger economic and political issues, particularly those affecting the transformation of minority neighborhoods.

This focus on the structures within which drug use and distribution are embedded makes ethnography a particularly valuable methodology, both for examining the links between drug users and sellers and their communities, and for examining the cultural meanings that users and sellers attach to their drug-related behavior (see, for example, T. Williams 1989; Sharff 1997; Bourgois 1989; Maher 1997).

Anthropologist Kojo Dei, in his ethnography of Southside, a lower-class African-American neighborhood in a suburban county bordering a major urban center in the Northeast, found that the residents of this community view drugs in quite a different way from that encoded in the laws and mainstream cultural norms of middle-class America. In this community, smoking marijuana is common. Although in public most adult residents of Southside give lip service to the view that “drugs are a major social problem,” in private they express different views. Many Southside residents note that alcohol and nicotine—two legal addictive drugs—do more harm than marijuana. The community’s view of a “drug addict” is a person who cannot function because of his or her drug use—a definition different from that of the social service and medical professions, which define ad-

distinguished anthropologist Margaret Mead once noted, remaining objective, or relativist, may be easier when confronting problematic patterns, such as cannibalism or infanticide, in other cultures than when confronting problematic situations such as child neglect, corporate greed, or armed conflict in one’s own society.

Some of the problems and the rewards of studying one’s own culture are found in the work of Barbara Myerhoff, an American anthropologist. Myerhoff

contrasted her earlier work with the Huichol of northern Mexico with her work among elderly Jewish people in an urban ghetto in California (1978). She notes that in the first case, doing anthropology was “an act of imagination, a means for discovering what one is not and will never be.” In the second case, fieldwork was a glimpse into her possible future, as she knew that someday she would be a “little old Jewish lady.” Her work was a personal way to understand the conditions of life in North American

diction in terms of physical withdrawal symptoms. And, unlike those with law enforcement perspectives, the community's main concerns are the violence and other criminal activities associated with the use and distribution of both illegal drugs and alcohol rather than the use and distribution of illegal drugs as such (Dei 2002).

As Jagna Sharff's (1997) study of a Puerto Rican neighborhood in New York shows, the sale of illegal drugs may even be viewed positively in poor communities, such as Southside, as a way for young men (few women are involved in drug distribution; Maher 1997) to help out their families financially. Indeed, many of the young men who distribute drugs in Southside view selling drugs as "work" and a legitimate, if not legal, path to achieving the American Dream through the capitalist model of entrepreneurship. In addition to appreciating the money, many of these young men prefer selling drugs to "working for the white man." Unlike the inner-city youth in Katherine Newman's (1999b) study, who are willing to work in dead-end jobs in the fast-food sector of the economy in order to get ahead, Dei's consultants in Southside consider these jobs "kid stuff."

Much "drug scene" ethnography by anthropologists has been used in formulating more effective services and risk reduction programs for those using drugs, such as AIDS education and needle exchange programs (Singer 2000). Ethnography also reveals where anti-drug-use programs are ineffective. In Southside, for example, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program, run by the school district, is largely ineffective because it

is taught by police officers in uniform, whom the black community generally distrusts.

Anthropology, then, through its holistic perspective on the individual, its ethnographic methodology, and its multilevel analysis of culture and society, has much to contribute to the formulation of policy regarding what is considered by many to be a major social problem in the United States.

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culture the lives of the elderly poor are often "invisible," Myerhoff's ethnography of elderly Jewish people who had struggled to overcome and had triumphed in many small ways over the disabilities of being old and poor in North America was, for her, a valuable and rare experience: that of being able to rehearse and contemplate her own future.

In cultures outside the United States, problems also arise for cultural insiders, although they may be different from those that arise in the United States.

Although Middle Eastern ethnography has improved substantially through the work of native women anthropologists, their fieldwork accounts suggest that the ethnographer's insider/outsider position still poses special difficulties in cultures where women's public activities are limited and where respectability, honor, and shame are central cultural values (Altorki and Fawzi El-Solh 1988). Anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod started her fieldwork in the 1980s, accompanied by her father; a



Studying one's own society has some advantages and also some special problems. Here Louis Tepadjuk, an Inuit, records the stories of Piugaatuk, an Inuit elder from Igloodik, Nunvut, Canada.

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circumstance that first irritated and embarrassed her. But she later concluded that her father's insistence that a "young, unmarried woman traveling alone on uncertain business" would be suspect and "have a hard time persuading people of her respectability" was culturally appropriate. This was all the more true because Abu-Lughod had lived in the West and was subject to the negative stereotypes some Arabs have of the morals of Western women. Abu-Lughod had confidence that she could overcome this suspicion by her own culturally sensitive behavior, but she did not realize until she reflected on her fieldwork that a young woman alone would be seen to have been abandoned or alienated from her family. This would cast doubts on her respectability (1987:9) and hinder her fieldwork, or even make it impossible, among the conservative Egyptian Bedouin whom she was studying.

Another dilemma experienced by many anthropologists, but particularly poignant for native anthropologists, is whether one should be a disinterested researcher or an advocate for the people one studies and whether it is possible to be both. Delmos Jones, an African-American anthropologist in the United States, experienced some of these conflicts in studying the role of voluntary organizations in effecting political and social change in African-American urban communities (1995). An

important finding of his research emphasized the contradictory demands on organizational leaders, who often had to compromise their members' expectations in order to remain effective with local power establishments. Leaders sometimes emphasized the importance of these connections with powerful outsiders to stifle dissent within their organizations' staff and membership.

Jones's finding on dissension between the leadership and the membership of these organizations presented him with a dilemma, one that rested partly on his being a native anthropologist. On the one hand, Jones acknowledged that he was given access to the leadership of the community organizations *because* he was African American and because he shared their concern about improving the position of African Americans in the United States. On the other hand, many of the members and staff of the organizations were more suspicious of Jones because they identified him with the leaders (who had given permission for the study) toward whom they were antagonistic. Nor was his finding of dissension between the groups' leadership and their membership palatable to the leadership. Jones asked himself whether he should omit reporting on the socially destructive aspect of the organizations' tension between their leadership and their members in the interest of racial unity or whether he

should describe how racial unity could be used as a slogan by the leadership to silence dissent among the organization members.

Reflecting on his research experience, Delmos Jones concluded that although being a cultural insider offers certain advantages for an anthropologist, such as access to the community, it also poses special dilemmas, particularly when the group being studied has been oppressed by the larger society. Indeed, he noted that the very concept of a native anthropologist is itself problematic. As he and other native anthropologists have pointed out, an individual has many identities, which include those of race and culture but also of gender and social class. Being a native in one identity does not make one a native in all one's identities (Narayan 1993; Cerroni-Long 1995). Furthermore, for all anthropologists who share Delmos Jones's view that the most important goal of research and ethnography is to demonstrate the ways in which social systems may exploit, alienate, and repress human possibilities, both cultural insiders and cultural outsiders face similar dilemmas.

As "exotic" cultures disappear, it becomes much more difficult for Western anthropologists to limit themselves to studying "others," and many more anthropological studies are being carried out in North America and Europe by natives of those cultures. But whether it is Western or non-Western anthropologists studying their own societies, the dimensions of native anthropology will become increasingly important as subjects for reflection.

On this subject, M. N. Srinivas, a distinguished anthropologist from India who has studied his own society, coined the term *thrice born* for what he called the ideal anthropological journey. First, we are born into our original, particular culture. Then, our second birth is to move away from this familiar place to a far place to do our fieldwork. In this experience we are eventually able to understand the rules and meanings of other cultures, and the "exotic" becomes familiar. In our third birth, we again turn toward our native land and find that the familiar has become exotic. We see it with new eyes. Despite our deep emotional attachment to its ways, we are able to see it also with scientific objectivity (quoted in Myerhoff 1978).

Srinivas's ideal anthropological experience is becoming more real for many anthropologists today.

It is also an experience completely consistent with one of anthropology's original goals: that of eventually examining our own cultures in the same objective way that we have examined other cultures, and of bringing what we learn back home.

Collaborative Ethnography

One kind of ethnography that reflects some of the concerns just noted is collaborative ethnography (Lassiter 2004). Collaboration is the process of working closely with other people, which is surely the hallmark of all fieldwork, so that **collaborative ethnography** might best be thought of as highlighting, systematizing, and prioritizing the collaborative nature of ethnography both in the field and in writing. Collaborative ethnographers place the ethical responsibility to consultants above everything else, and seek collaborative consultation and direction in shaping the ethnographic text; indeed collaborative ethnography is almost a joint writing process, displacing the anthropologist as the sole author representing the culture of a group. Collaborative ethnography also seeks to be especially sensitive to and honest about the ethical and political circumstances of fieldwork, to more explicitly acknowledge the contributions of cultural consultants, and to provide an ethnography that will hopefully help others understand and help the community. An important contribution to collaborative, engaged anthropology is the work of James Spradley, whose classic ethnography *You Owe Yourself a Drunk* (1988) was aimed at getting the public to understand and help the homeless alcoholics who were the subject of the book.

Erik Lassiter, inspired by Spradley's work, began collaborative ethnography, while still a student, with Narcotics Anonymous, a drug addiction and recovery group. Based on his observations of their meetings, Lassiter worked with his consultants to develop an ethnography focused on the experience of drug addiction and recovery that could be given to drug addicts considering joining the program. In a later project, Lassiter constructed a

collaborative ethnography Ethnography that gives priority to cultural consultants on the topic, methodology, and written results of ethnographic research.

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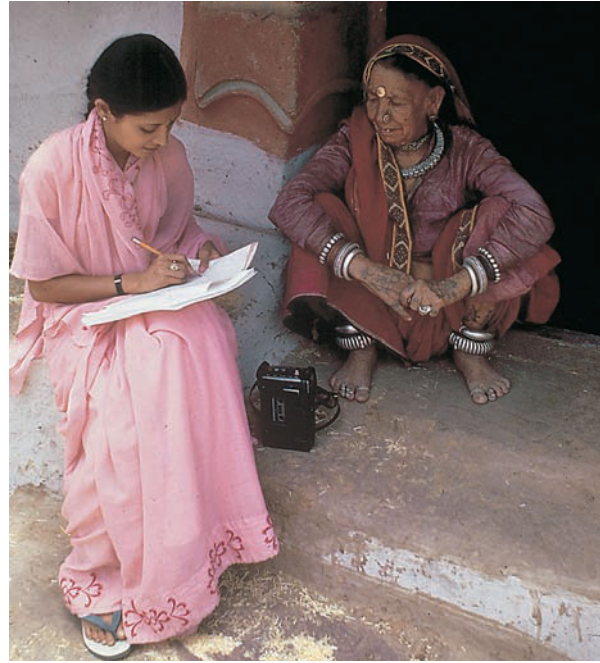


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collaborative ethnography with the Kiowa Indians, jointly writing an ethnography of Kiowa song. The Kiowa were particularly interested in this project, and stipulated that the ethnography be written so that it could be read and understood by the Kiowa people themselves, and that they would be acknowledged for their contributions (Lassiter 1998). Lassiter emphasizes that a critical aspect of his collaborative Kiowa ethnography was to give highest priority to representing the Kiowa cultural consultants as they wished to be represented, even if it meant their adding or changing information or disagreeing with his interpretations. Collaborative ethnography, then, is not just eliciting the comments of the cultural consultants; what's even more important, as Lassiter says, is integrating these comments back into the text. Some anthropologists will see this as overly and unnecessarily restrictive; Lassiter emphasizes that collaborative ethnography works best when communities want an ethnographer's help in "telling their story, their way" and may thus not work in some kinds of fieldwork. (For a discussion of engaged ethnography, which is similar to collaborative ethnography, see "Anthropology Make a Difference," Chapter 12.)

Ethical Considerations in Fieldwork

Ethical considerations come up in every fieldwork experience, and anthropologists are always required to reflect on the possible effects of their research on those they study. Three main ethical principles that must guide the fieldworker are obtaining the informed consent of the people to be studied, protecting them from risk, and respecting their privacy and dignity. Ethics in participant-observation is a matter of often agonizing concern and is surrounded by both professional codes and federal regulations (Murphy and Johannsen 1990). Some serious issues raised about ethical considerations, such as in the debate over the impact of anthropological fieldwork among the Yanomamo (Borofsky 2005), have caused soul-searching within the profession. Fieldwork is based on trust, and as anthropologists involve themselves in a continually expanding range of research situations, ethical dilemmas will increase.



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Contemporary anthropologists work with a wide range of communities, using a wide range of methods, including interviewing, surveys, and now more often, fieldwork in their own societies.

New Roles for the Ethnographer

Another important issue affecting fieldwork and ethnography is that, contrary to the situation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anthropology today is well understood in many of the societies that anthropologists study. People from those societies are attending universities in greater numbers, and some have become anthropologists themselves. In some cases, members of the societies studied resent anthropological representations of themselves; in other cases, ethnographic data are viewed as useful to a society, serving as a basis for the revitalization of traditional cultural elements and the creation of cultural identities that have been nearly effaced by Western impact (Feinberg 1994).

In societies where different versions of a culture are competing for validation as "authentic" in the construction of national identities, both anthropological data and anthropologists may be incorporated as important sources of cultural authority. When Ka
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A Closer Look

The American Anthropological Association Statement of Ethics

Anthropologists have many ethical obligations: to the standards of their discipline, to their students, to their sponsors, to their own and their host governments, and to the public. Anthropologists' obligations to the public, for example, include a positive responsibility to speak out, both individually and collectively, in order to contribute to an "adequate definition of reality" that may become the basis of public opinion or public policy, or a resource in the politics of culture. Thus, anthropologists must not only carry on fieldwork in a manner that involves working appropriately in collaboration with their consultants but also do ethnography in a way that most accurately represents both the culture and the collaborative dialogues through which cultural description emerges.

But in their research, anthropologists' paramount responsibility is to those they study. According to the American Anthropological Association Statement on Ethics—Principles of Professional Responsibility, "Anthropologists must do everything in their power to protect the physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honor the dignity and privacy of those studied." This includes safeguarding the rights, interests, and sensitivities of those studied regarding the transferring of information; explaining the aims of the investigation as clearly as possible to the persons involved; respecting anonymity of informants regarding information collected by all of the means of fieldwork, for example, cameras, as well as participant-observation; not exploiting individual informants for personal gain; and giving "fair return" for all services. It also includes the responsibility to communicate the results of the research to the individuals and groups likely to be affected, as well as to the general public.

Control over ethnographic data that may have commercial value also becomes an ethical issue involving anthropologists. In today's global economy, for example, huge multinational pharmaceutical companies continually search for new natural habitats in hopes of finding new

miracle drugs. These searches sometimes include interviews with native healers, who are most knowledgeable about medicinally effective plants in their environments, but much of the multinationals' research relies on digging out information from ethnographic publications. Once ethnographic and ethnobotanical data are published, they are in the public domain, and multinational corporations or governments may use the data with no legal obligation to get permission from the societies who are the source of the information or to remunerate the members of those societies financially or in any other way (Greaves 1995). Concern over this issue is part of a larger issue of the rights of indigenous people to protect their own cultural knowledge and cultural products. In many cases, these areas of knowledge and products are associated with secret societies and practices, and their dissemination beyond their original cultural borders violates important religious values. The increasing concerns of indigenous people over the appropriation of their cultural knowledge will undoubtedly affect fieldwork and ethnography, as these peoples exercise greater control over what ethnographers can publish. Recognition of the cultural and intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples and efforts to protect those rights are some of the adaptations ethnography must make in a changing world characterized by a global economy and global communication.

In asking what role anthropologists can play in protecting the intellectual rights of indigenous peoples, A. David Napier suggests that one main role is to call attention to the dilemmas of indigenous people as they try to negotiate over the commercial uses of their knowledge; another is to explain to the public how the power of corporations works in extracting knowledge from indigenous peoples who have very different notions of ownership than those operating in a market economy; and conversely, to explain to indigenous peoples how reciprocity works in the worlds of the anthropologist and corporations (2002).

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among the Toraja of Sulawesi, Indonesia, she found her consultants already quite sophisticated about ethnography. On her third day there, one of the Toraja told her, “As an anthropologist, you should write a book about the real Toraja identity and history, both the good and the bad . . . [the] authentic and the true . . . the Toraja without make-up” (Adams 1995).

Toraja society was traditionally based on a ranking of aristocrats, commoners, and slaves. In the last several decades, however, for a variety of reasons, including wage labor outside the region and income from tourism, lower-status people had begun to achieve some wealth. As the aristocrats became more insecure about the relevance of their own royal genealogies, anthropological accounts became an important resource, shoring up their claims to noble status, and elite Toraja competed for anthropological attention. Indeed, Adams became a featured event on tourist itineraries in the region as tour guides led their groups to the home of her host, not only validating his importance in the village but also bolstering the tourists’ experience of the Toraja as a group sufficiently remote to be studied by anthropologists.

The manipulation of anthropologists by the local politics of culture is another of the changed conditions reinforcing our recognition that the concept of a bounded, isolated tribal or village culture is no longer a viable basis for ethnography. Whether working in cities, villages, or with tribal groups, almost all ethnographers must take into account the interaction of these local units with larger social structures, economies, and cultures. These may extend from the region to the entire world. Such research may mean following consultants from villages to their workplaces in cities or collecting genealogies that spread over countries or even continents. In addition to expanding the research site, contemporary ethnographers must often use techniques other than participant-observation, such as questionnaires, social surveys, archival material, government documents, and court records. The deep connections among cultures and the global movement of individuals means that we must constantly reevaluate the nature of the cultures we are studying, their geographical spread, their economic and political position, and their relation to each other.



Summary

1. The main method of cultural anthropology is ethnography, or the intensive, firsthand study of a particular society through fieldwork. The major technique in fieldwork is participant-observation. An ethnography is the written account of a culture based on fieldwork.
2. An essential ability in fieldwork is to see another culture from the point of view of members of that culture. Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas were two twentieth-century anthropologists whose meticulous fieldwork set a standard for the profession.
3. Charles Brooks’s field experience in India illustrates the steps in doing fieldwork: choosing a research problem, picking a research site, finding key consultants, collecting and recording data, and analyzing and interpreting the data.
4. With the postmodern emphasis on multiple voices in ethnography, anthropological accounts of other cultures increasingly describe the fieldwork experience and raise questions about how anthropologists’ status and culture influence their perceptions and representations of other cultures.
5. Contemporary ethnography frequently takes an explicit global perspective, as it explores such topics as tourism, cross cultural comparisons of social institutions such as preschools, the diffusion of culture and entertainment, the diaspora of populations, and the spread of American military bases around the world.
6. In addition to ethnography, anthropologists may also use the rich ethnographic data of the HRAF in cross-cultural surveys to test hypotheses about human behavior and cultural processes.

- 7. Doing fieldwork in the anthropologist's own culture presents similar and different problems from doing fieldwork in another culture. Although native anthropologists may have advantages of access and rapport in some cases, they also experience special burdens more intensely, such as whether to expose aspects of the culture that may be received unfavorably by outsiders.
- 8. Anthropological ethics require protecting the dignity, privacy, and anonymity of the people one studies and not putting them at risk in any way. This may require extra caution when the

research setting is a site of illegal activity, such as drug use.

- 9. New roles for ethnographers include collaboration with cultural informants from the subject of the study to the writing up of the material; engaging in the study of one's own culture; validating cultural history among societies that depend mainly on oral traditions; and engaging in research that speaks to contemporary political and social issues.



Key Terms

androcentric bias	cross-cultural survey	Human Relations Area	positivism
collaborative	empirical science	File (HRAF)	postmodernism
ethnography	ethnographic method	consultant	random sample
consultant	ethnography	key consultant	
controlled cross-cultural	fieldwork	native anthropologist	
comparison	genealogy	participant-observation	



Suggested Readings

Angrosino, Michael V. 2002. *Doing Cultural Anthropology: Projects for Ethnographic Data Collection*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. This excellent, brief book is great for beginning anthropology students and those who want to try the variety of methods useful in cultural anthropology research. In addition to providing an introduction into ethnographic research, it covers such topics as life histories, archival research, using museums as ethnographic resources, designing questionnaires for cross-cultural research, and working with numerical data.

Behar, Ruth, and Deborah A. Gordon (Eds.). 1995. *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press. This edited volume, which includes

articles from many different cultural perspectives and ethnographic sites, illuminates the relationships between women and anthropology through reflective, innovative, and experimental writing.

Bernard, Russell H., and Jesus Salinas Pedraza. 1995. *Native Ethnography: A Mexican Indian Describes His Culture*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press. An innovative ethnography based on native-researcher collaboration, in which Salinas's ethnography of his own people, written in his own language, was guided, translated, and annotated by the American anthropologist.

Besteman, Catherine, and Hugh Gusterson (Eds.). 2005. *Why America's Top Pundits Are Wrong: Anthropologists Talk Back*. Berkeley, CA: University

- of California Press. Part of the excellent California Series in Public Anthropology, the articles in this volume critique the inaccurate and misleading generalizations of media “punditry” using an ethnographic and anthropological perspective on such subjects as Middle East politics, the relation of “race” and intelligence, and gender and class politics.
- DeVita, Philip R. (Ed.). 2000. *Stumbling Toward Truth: Anthropologists at Work*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. An anthology of original and often amusing articles by anthropologists who have been taught some important lessons by their consultants in the process of doing fieldwork.
- di Leonardo, Micaela. 1998. *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, and American Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A wonderfully insightful, provocative book about ethnography, anthropology, and their impact on American cultural images of the “other,” both abroad and at home. The author argues for the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach and a political economy perspective if anthropology is to achieve its historic potential for making the world a better place.
- Kidder, Tracy. 2004. *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. New York: Random House. An absorbing portrait of the ultimate engaged anthropologist, Paul Farmer, and his idealistic quest to cure infectious diseases in some of the poorest places on earth, which at the same time illuminates the conditions that contribute to global health problems.
- Marcus, Anthony (Ed.). 1996. *Anthropology for a Small Planet: Culture and Community in a Global Environment*. St. James, NY: Brandywine Press. A series of very interesting articles that takes seriously the anthropological admonition to “think globally and act locally.”
- Salzman, Philip Carl. 1999. *The Anthropology of Real Life: Events in Human Experience*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. Interspersing reflection on the concepts of culture and ethnography with the kind of ethnographic detail that anthropologists classically provide, the author expands our understanding of anthropological theory and method, as this provides a framework for his understandings of the Yaramadzhai, a pastoral nomadic society in Baluchistan.



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The Idea of Culture

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

Defining Culture
Culture Is Made Up of Learned Behaviors
Culture Is the Way Humans Use Symbols to Organize and Give Meaning to the World

Culture Is an Integrated System—Or Is It?
Culture Is a Shared System of Norms and Values—Or Is It?

Culture Is the Way Human Beings Adapt to the World
Culture Is Constantly Changing
Rethinking Culture

Sometimes we think that culture is like a watch; a thing composed of many parts that fit precisely together to operate in a smooth, consistent fashion. Many current anthropological theorists agree that culture is composed of different elements, but some say these cultural elements don't necessarily fit together very well; instead of running smoothly, the different parts grind against each other. If culture was a watch, we'd never know what time it was.

See pages 98–99 for details.

People in industrialized cultures that emphasize individualism sometimes think of culture as something that restrains them and deprives them of freedom, but without it, human beings would not be human beings. Although culture is not easy to define precisely, practically everything humans perceive, know, think, value, feel, and do—in short, almost everything that makes us human—is learned through participation in a sociocultural system. Even things that strike us as natural often are cultural.

The few well-documented cases of children isolated from society in the early years of life bear out this statement. One of these cases, known as the “wild boy of Aveyron” (Itard 1962/1806), is of exceptional interest. In 1799, a boy of about 12 was captured in a forest in Aveyron, France. He was brought to Paris, where he attracted huge crowds who expected to see the “noble savage” of the romantic eighteenth-century philosophical vision. Instead, they found a boy whose

eyes were unsteady, expressionless, wandering vaguely from one object to another . . . so little trained by the sense of touch, they could never distinguish an object in relief from one in a picture. His . . . hearing was insensible to the loudest noises and to . . . music. His voice was reduced to a state of complete muteness and only a uniform guttural sound escaped him. . . . He was equally indifferent to the odor of perfume and to the fetid exhalation of the dirt with which his bed was filled. . . . [His] touch was restricted to the mechanical grasping of an object. [He had a] tendency to trot and gallop [and] an obstinate habit of smelling at anything given to him. . . . He chewed like a rodent with a sudden action of the incisors . . . [and] showed no sensitivity to cold or heat and could seize hot coals from the fire without flinching or lay half naked upon the wet ground for hours in the wintertime. . . . He was incapable of attention and spent his time apathetically rocking himself backwards and forwards like the animals in the zoo.

According to Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard, the young psychologist who undertook to educate the

boy, whom he called Victor, this strange behavior was not caused by incurable mental disease or want of intelligence but by the lack of participation in normal human society. Itard's account of Victor's education makes fascinating reading. It underscores the fact that human potential can be realized only within the structure of human culture and through growing up in close contact with other human beings. Without the constraints imposed by a specific culture, we are not more free, but rather totally unfree in that none of our human qualities and abilities can develop. But what is culture?



Defining Culture

In 1873, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor introduced the concept of culture as an explanation for the differences among human societies. Tylor defined culture as the “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities acquired [learned] by man as a member of society” (1920:1), and he defined anthropology as the scientific study of human culture. Tylor's definition sounds straightforward enough, but his understanding of culture was actually very different from ours today. Tylor believed that culture was found to a greater or lesser extent among all the world's peoples. For him, there was a single, universal human culture, which members of different societies possessed to different degrees. As far as we know, no modern anthropologist holds this position. Anthropologists certainly agree that anthropology is the study of culture, but they now think of culture as something fully possessed by all human societies. Tylor's notion of one universal culture has been replaced by the modern idea of a great many different cultures.

Today, anthropologists generally agree that all cultures share, in some degree, the following six characteristics:

1. Cultures are made up of learned behaviors. People are not born knowing their culture. They learn it through a process called enculturation. Learning culture is a continuous process. We start learning our culture the day we are born, and we are still learning things at the time of our death.

2. Cultures all involve symbols. A **symbol** is simply something that stands for something else. People manipulate, invent, and change symbols. All cultures have language, a complex symbolic system. Using symbols, people create meaning including statements about the way the world should be. However, many different statements are likely to be found within any culture.
3. Cultures are to some degree patterned and integrated. That is, the elements of culture stand in some logical relationship to one another. However, as we shall see below, the degree of coordination among elements of culture is hotly disputed.
4. Cultures are in some way shared by members of a group. Every human being has an individual personality. Studying that is the domain of psychology. Each person must also interact with others and thus must share a framework of meaning and behavior with them. Studying that is the domain of cultural anthropology. However, people who share this framework do not necessarily approach it in the same way.
5. Cultures are in some way adaptive. That is, cultures contain information about how to survive in the world. Of course, cultures also contain much that is maladaptive.
6. All cultures are subject to change. Whether propelled by its internal dynamic or acted upon by outside forces, no culture remains static. However, the speed with which cultures change may vary enormously from place to place and time to time.

Based on this list, we might define culture as the learned, symbolic, at least partially adaptive, and ever-changing patterns of behavior and meaning shared by members of a group. Although anthropologists might agree to this broad definition, such accord would cover up enormous disagreements over what the definition really means. These disagreements are nothing new. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) collected more than 200 definitions of culture in the early 1950s. Although anthropologists agree on culture's basic characteristics, they disagree on how to interpret them, their relative importance, the ways in which they should be studied, and what sorts of things anthropologists should try to learn about cultures. No consensus has ever emerged on the precise definition of culture, nor on the precise meaning of the word.

Table 4.1 Some Major Anthropological Schools of Thought and Their Understanding of Culture

Theory Name	Understanding of Culture	Critical Thinking
Nineteenth-century evolution	A universal human culture is shared, in different degrees, by all societies.	E.B. Tylor (1832–1917) L.H. Morgan (1818–1881)
Turn-of-the-century sociology	Groups of people share sets of symbols and practices that bind them into societies.	Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) Marcel Mauss (1872–1950)
American historical particularism	Cultures are the result of the specific histories of the people who share them.	Franz Boas (1858–1942) A.L. Kroeber (1876–1960)
Functionalism	Social practices support society's structure or fill the needs of individuals.	A.R. Radcliffe Brown (1881–1955)
Culture and personality	Culture is personality writ large. It both shapes and is shaped by the personalities of its members.	Ruth Benedict (1887–1948) Margaret Mead (1901–1978)
Cultural ecology and neo-evolutionism	Culture is the way in which humans adapt to the environment and make their lives secure.	Julian Steward (1902–1972) Leslie White (1900–1975)
Ecological materialism	Physical and economic causes give rise to cultures and explain changes within them.	Morton Fried (1923–1986) Marvin Harris (1927–)
Ethnoscience and cognitive anthropology	Culture is a mental template that determines how members of a society understand their world.	Harold Conklin (1926–) Stephen Tyler (1932–)
Structural Anthropology	Universal original human culture can be discovered through analysis and comparison of the myths and customs of many cultures.	Claude Levi-Strauss (1908–)
Sociobiology	Culture is the visible expression of underlying genetic coding.	E.O. Wilson (1929–) Jerome Barkow (1944–)
Anthropology and gender	The roles of women and ways societies understand sexuality are central to understanding culture.	Sherry Ortner (1941–) Michelle Rosaldo (1944?–1981)
Symbolic and interpretive anthropology	Culture is the way in which members of a society understand who they are and give lives meaning.	Mary Douglas (1921–) Clifford Geertz (1926–)
Postmodernism	Because understanding of cultures most reflect the observer's biases, culture can never be completely or accurately described.	Renato Rosaldo (1941–) Vincent Crapanzano (1939–)

Note: Theoretical positions in anthropology represent sophisticated thinking and cannot be summed up in a single line. You will find detailed information on each of the theories listed in this table in the appendix: A Brief Historical Guide to Anthropological Theory, starting on page 470. There are many outstanding books about anthropological theory, including McGee and Warms (2004), *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History*.

Anthropologists disagree about the definition of culture because different ideas about which aspects of culture are fundamental represent different theoretical positions. Theory lies at the heart of anthropology, and each theoretical position directs those who adopt it to study a different aspect of society.

The notion of culture is like a window through which one may view human groups. Just as the view changes as one moves from window to window of a building, so the anthropologist's understanding of society changes as he or she moves from one definition of culture to another. Just as two windows may

have views that overlap or that show totally different scenes, definitions of culture may overlap or reveal totally different aspects of society. In this chapter, we explore some aspects of anthropological theory by presenting several different ideas about the nature of culture, each of which tells us something about what it means to be human. We examine culture as a system of human adaptation to the world, a way

that humans understand the world around them, and a way that people give meaning to their lives. We discuss the debate over the degree to which cultures are integrated systems and examine the question of whether members of a culture really share values and norms. Finally, we explore some of the ways cultures change. This discussion is not meant to be an exhaustive description of the ways anthropologists see the world. Rather, it is intended to give you some of the flavor of the lively debate within anthropology about the nature of human society and allow you to reexamine some of the ideas and ways of behaving that we perhaps take for granted in our own and other societies.

Table 4.1 provides a very brief list of key theoretical schools in anthropology and their understanding of culture. These schools are summarized in more detail, and key works within them are listed, in the appendix.



Culture Is Made Up of Learned Behaviors

Although studies show that almost all animate creatures are capable of some learning, human beings, more than any other animal, depend on the social, rather than biological, transmission of the knowledge necessary for survival. Learning is profoundly involved in even the most basic of human activities such as eating, sleeping, and defecating. All humans must do these things but we don't simply do them, we must learn how to do them and the proper way to do them varies enormously from society to society. We sometimes think of learning as an aspect of childhood, but in every society, human beings learn their culture continuously. We are socialized from the moment of our births to the time of our deaths.

Newborns of some species require no social learning. When sea turtle eggs hatch, for example, the mother is long gone. Newborn turtles make their way in the world (or fail to) without the help of parents. The young of all bird and mammal species require the assistance of adults of their species to survive. Some primates have long childhoods; chimps remain close to their mothers, learning from them, for about five years. No other species, however, has the extremely lengthy period

of childhood learning as humans. We remain physically, emotionally, and intellectually immature well into our teen years. Human infants become adults in a particular human society. Thus, the infant grows into a child and later into an adult not simply as a human, but as a particular kind of human: a Kwakiutl, Trobriand Islander, Briton, or Tahitian. Each society has both informal and formal means of enculturation, or transmitting its culture, so that children grow up to be responsible and participating adults and so that the society is reproduced socially as well as biologically.

Although all cultures nurture human infants and children so that they grow up into acceptable adults, the way in which human development is conceptualized is culturally variable. We may differentiate between biological conception and birth and social birth. Biological conception and birth are observable physical actions and people of different cultures and backgrounds can agree upon when they happen. Social birth refers to the point at which one is considered a human being and a member of human society (Morgan 1996). There is much variability in when cultures recognize a fetus, an infant, or a child as a social person; this is linked to factors including the productive basis of society, the relations between the sexes, the social stratification system, the culturally defined divisions of the life cycle, attitudes toward death, and particularly, infant mortality rates.

In cultures where infant mortality is high, social birth occurs only when the infant seems likely to survive. Newborns are not given names and sometimes they are not considered human at all. In Ghana, for example, mother and newborn are confined to the house for the first seven days to ascertain that the newborn is a human, not a spirit child. If the child dies within this period, the parents are not permitted to mourn but must show joy at being rid of an unwelcome guest.

Often, it is social birth rather than biological birth that is marked by ritual. Among the Toda of India, for example, the newborn is not considered a person until the age of 3 months, after which a "face opening" ceremony takes place. The infant is brought outdoors, its face is unveiled at dawn, and it is introduced to the temple, to nature, to buffaloes, and to its clan relatives (Morgan 1996:28).

In the poverty-stricken region of northeastern Brazil, a child is not considered a social person until it shows physical and emotional signs of being able to survive (Scheper-Hughes 1992). Children are raised under extremely harsh conditions. The need for both adults and children to work to avoid starvation results in babies frequently left at home during the day, a condition under which many weaker babies die. Infants who are small and sickly are believed to have an “aversion to living.” If they develop acute symptoms, such as convulsions, they are left to die. Their deaths are viewed as “nature taking its course” or as indicating that the child “wants to die.” Mothers learn to distance themselves emotionally from such infants and believe that allowing their deaths is cooperating with God’s plan. Dead infants are buried in unmarked graves with little ceremony and mothers are strongly discouraged from crying or grieving for them.

Cultural patterns of delayed recognition of social personhood contrast with cultural patterns in the largely affluent United States and shed new light on the intense debate over abortion policy. The American abortion debate is really about when one becomes a social person. Almost all Americans agree that biological birth marks the entrance of a new human being into society, but abortion opponents insist that becoming a social person occurs before birth. Some hold that biological conception and social birth occur at the same time. As we have seen, in other societies, biological birth and social birth are not identical. An infant who dies before social birth has died before it was born, and killing such an infant is not considered murder.

The recognition of human status is the beginning phase in human development. Beginning with birth, all humans pass through developmental phases, each characterized by an increase in the capacity to deal with the physical and social environment. At each phase, the biologically based physical, mental, and psychological potentials of the individual unfold, within a specific cultural context. Physically, the infant gains muscular coordination. Mentally, it increases its capacity to differentiate and classify objects and people in the environment. It begins to take an active role in trying new ways of behaving and exploring the world. Psychologically, the infant increasingly develops a sense of itself and others. As the infant grows, it learns to modify its



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As a way of adapting to a harsh environment, Inuit children are taught to be autonomous at an early age.

demands so that it will meet with success in its social environment. In thousands of different ways, through the attempts to satisfy its needs, the human infant slowly develops into a social person.

The human needs for physical gratification, emotional contact with others, the expansion of mental and physical capacities, and the development of self, although universal, are not acknowledged or marked in the same ways in all cultures. Some stages of life taken for granted in the United States as natural and universal—infancy, childhood, adolescence, middle age, old age—have been culturally constructed in response to specific social and economic factors. Among these factors is the necessity for record keeping in state bureaucracies, such as schools, and institutional reliance on chronological age in obtaining financial benefits such as Social Security. In other societies, childhood is not recognized as a distinct stage of life. Indeed, it was understood as a developmental stage in Western societies only after the introduction of

formal schooling in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Aries 1962:412).

Child-rearing practices in all cultures are designed to produce adults who know the skills, norms, and behavior patterns of their society—the cultural content. But the transmission of culture involves more than just knowing these things. It also involves patterning children’s attitudes, motivations, values, perceptions, and beliefs so that they can function in their society (which itself adapts to external requirements of the physical and social environment).

As an example, we will take a closer look at child rearing among the Inuit, a hunting people of the Arctic. Inuit child-rearing practices teach a child to deal with a world that is regarded as a dangerously problematic place, in which making wrong decisions might well mean death (Briggs 1991). To survive in this harsh environment, Inuit must learn to maintain a “constant state of alertness” and an “experimental way of living.” Therefore, developing skills for solving problems quickly and spontaneously is a central principle of Inuit child rearing. Children are brought up to constantly test their physical skills, in order to extend them and to learn their own capacity for pain and endurance (Stern 1999).

Inuit children learn largely through imitating their elders. Children are discouraged from asking questions. Rather, when confronted with a problem situation, they are expected to observe closely, to reason, and to find solutions independently. They watch, practice, and are then tested, frequently by adults asking them questions. For example, when traveling on the featureless, snow-covered tundra, an adult may ask a child “Where are we?” “Have you ever been here before?”

A key Inuit child-training technique is setting problems for the child to solve within the context of “play.” The play often tests the limits of things—objects, people, situations—and provides an opportunity to learn the consequences of various actions. Both boys and girls are encouraged to play with material objects by taking them apart and trying to put them back together. This develops careful attention to details and relationships, and provides practice in patient trial and error and mental recording of results for future reference.

The emphasis on experiential learning means that Inuit children are less physically restrained or verbally reprimanded than children in many other cultures. Inuit mothers are willing to permit a child

to experiment with potentially harmful behavior so that the child learns not to repeat it.

In addition to being physically adept and independent, Inuit children must learn to be cooperative and emotionally restrained. Under the conditions of their closely knit and often isolated camp life, expressions of anger or aggression are strongly avoided. The Inuit prize reason, judgment, and emotional control, and these are thought to grow naturally as children grow.

The Inuit believe that children have both the ability and the wish to learn. Educating a child thus consists of providing the necessary information, which sooner or later the child will remember. Scolding is seen as futile. Children will learn when they are ready; there is no point in forcing children to learn something before they are ready to remember it. Inuit elders believe that frequent scolding makes a child hostile, rebellious, and impervious to the opinions of others.

The study of enculturation has played an important role in the history of anthropology. It was a problem that fascinated many of the first generation of American anthropologists and gave rise to some of the most famous work in anthropology. Perhaps the best-known anthropologist who studied enculturation was Margaret Mead. Her 1928 book *Coming of Age in Samoa* was a landmark work that changed how Americans looked at childhood and culture. Mead and others who studied this problem are known as **culture and personality theorists**. This school of thought was extremely influential from the 1920s until the 1950s. Although few today would call themselves “culture and personality” theorists, enculturation remains an important topic of anthropological research.



Culture Is the Way Humans Use Symbols to Organize and Give Meaning to the World

Human beings are unable to see everything in their environment. Instead, we pay attention to some elements of our surroundings and disregard others. When you walk into a classroom, for example, you probably notice friends and other students, the professor, video equipment, and additional features of the room that are germane to learning and teaching. You might not notice the other things in the room.

noticing cracks in the wall, the pattern of the carpeting, the type of ceiling tile, or perhaps even the color of the walls. Yet these things are as physically present in the room as the chairs and your friends.

You see certain things in the classroom and overlook others because you come to the room as a student and organize its contents in that context. Some of the things in the room, such as professors and friends, you classify as important and worthy of notice. Others, such as the color of the walls, you discount and may not notice at all. It is virtually impossible to see things without organizing and evaluating them in some manner.

If you actually paid as much attention to the cracks in the wall, the patterns on the floor, and the humming of the ventilation system as you did to the professor's lecture, not only would you be likely to fail the class, but you would live in a world that was overwhelming and impossibly confusing. Only through fitting our perceptions and experiences into systems of classification can we comprehend our lives and act in the world. A human without the ability to organize and classify would be paralyzed, frozen by an overwhelming bombardment of random sensations. In fact, there is good evidence that this is precisely what happens to some autistics (Sainsbury 2000).

Methods of organizing and classifying are not individual but products of a group. You are not the only one who thinks that the students and professors in a classroom are more important than ceiling tiles; that perception is probably shared by all students and professors. Anthropologists have long proposed that all members of a culture share similar ways of organizing and classifying. In this view, culture is the mental model people use to organize and classify and ultimately to understand their world. A key way this model is expressed is through language, a symbolic system.

Different cultures clearly have different models for understanding and speaking about the world, and the ways people classify elements of their environment provide many examples. For instance, Bamana children in Mali classify some kinds of termites as food. Americans think of all termites as pests. In English, the verb *smoke* describes the action of ingesting a cigarette and *drink* describes the action of

culture and personality theorists Anthropologists who examine the theoretical perspective that focuses on culture as the principal force in shaping the typical personality of a society as well as on the role of personality in the maintenance of cultural institutions.



The Chinese understanding of health and sickness is very different from that of most North Americans. Anthropologists who study ethnomedicine focus on understanding the ways members of different cultures classify diseases and their treatments.



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Anthropology Makes a Difference

Culture and HIV

The theoretical perspective anthropologists take makes a critical difference in the ways they understand problems and the solutions they are likely to propose. A good example comes from work on AIDS prevention around the world. Some of this work focuses on physical and material aspects of AIDS prevention. Other work focuses on understanding the ways in which people think about sex. Work in the first of these perspectives treats culture primarily as a set of material practices—things people do. Work in the second perspective suggests that culture is more about the ways in which people understand themselves and the world—a mental template. In this case, the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and both provide insights into how to reduce the spread of HIV.

Anthropologists have applied a materialist focus to the transmission of HIV among intravenous drug users. People who inject heroin or other drugs are at high risk for HIV and AIDS because they share needles. Anthropological research shows that they do so because their dominant concern is the need to inject drugs, and clean needles are frequently unavailable. Many drug users cannot afford to buy their own “works” (syringes and related paraphernalia). Additionally, where it is illegal to own a needle without a prescription, as it is in many states, they fear carrying their own works. If clean needles were available, addicts would use them (Carlson et al. 1996). Because they are not, addicts often borrow needles from friends or rent

them in “shooting galleries.” These practices increase the transmission of HIV (Singer, Irizarry, and Schensul 1991).

Research on needle use has led applied anthropologists to conclude making clean needles available would greatly reduce HIV cases among addicts. Thus, they advocate a material solution: government or other agencies should fund free needle distribution or exchange programs. By the mid-1990s, many major American cities had implemented such programs. Three of the best known were in Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut, and Oakland, California. However, such programs have faced staunch political resistance (Heimer et al. 1996). For example, a successful needle exchange program in Windham, Connecticut, was terminated after a political campaign during which it was blamed for virtually all of the city’s drug-related problems. However, stopping the program did not cause any improvement in the city’s drug problems and led to increases in syringe sharing and a black market in syringes, crippling the city’s ability to protect its citizens against HIV and other drug-related problems (Broadhead, Van Hulst, and Heckathorn 1999).

Anthropologist Eric Ratliff (1999), in contrast, took an approach that focused on people’s understanding of sex and AIDS. Ratliff examined the ways in which exotic dancers in the Philippines understood sex, love, and their future marital prospects. He found that because people generally looked

consuming a liquid. However, in the Bamana language, you use the same verb, *min*, for smoking and drinking. Americans think rainbows are beautiful and take pleasure in pointing them out to each other. Lacondon Maya consider rainbows dangerous and frightening, and it is highly inappropriate to point one out to another person (McGee, personal communication).

One way of thinking about culture is as a codification of reality—a system of meaning that transforms physical reality, what is there, into experienced reality. Dorothy Lee (1987), an anthropologist interested in the different ways people see themselves and their

environments, described her perception of reality as she looked out the window of her house: “I see trees, some of which I like to be there, and some of which I intend to cut down to keep them from encroaching further upon the small clearing I made for my house.” But she noted that Black Elk, a holy man of the Oglala (Sioux) “saw trees as having rights to the land, equal to his own. He saw them as the standing peoples, in whom the winged ones built their lodges and reared their families.”

Many anthropologists believe that each culture has a particular way of classifying, and hence understanding, the world. Their interest is in de-

down on “sex workers,” even dancers in go-go bars who frequently exchanged sex for money and gifts did not think of themselves purely in those terms. They tended to define first-time sex encounters for money as “sex work.” Because they saw what they were doing as a job, it was acceptable for them to demand that their clients use condoms. However, the women tended to see additional sexual encounters with the same individual as part of building a relationship with a “boyfriend” that could turn into marriage and take them away from their lives as prostitutes. Because of this redefinition, they were unlikely to demand that their partners continue to use condoms. Ratliff notes that those in charge of AIDS prevention programs make a grave error when they define “sex workers” and prostitutes simply as women and men who sell sex for money. These individuals often see themselves as seeking long-term relationships based on love. AIDS prevention programs may be effective in promoting the use of condoms among such people when they have sex with a client for the first time. However, because repeat visitors are likely to be defined as boyfriends rather than customers, condom use declines and AIDS prevention programs fail.

The examples of the needle sharing and AIDS prevention programs demonstrate both the benefits of an anthropological approach and the difference theoretical positions make. In both cases, effective solutions to problems could only be proposed after fieldwork allowed anthropologists to

understand the cultural context of behavior as well as what people actually did, thought, and said. However, this did not lead to a single type of proposal. Instead, the anthropologists were guided by different theoretical perspectives to generate very different plans for improvement.

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describing the systems of organization and classification used by individual cultures, and their goal is to enable strangers to sort experience in the same way that the native would. Such anthropologists belong to the theoretical schools of **ethnoscience** and **cognitive anthropology**. Recently, there has been great interest in **ethnobotany**, or understanding the way members of different cultures classify plants (Schultes and von Reis 1995; Warren, Slikkerveer, and Brokensha 1995), and **ethnomedicine**, understanding the way they perceive health, sickness, and healing (Balick, Elisabetsky, and Laird 1996).

ethnoscience A theoretical approach that focuses on the ways in which members of a culture classify their world and holds that anthropology should be the study of cultural systems of classification.

cognitive anthropology A theoretical approach that defines culture in terms of the rules and meanings underlying human behavior, rather than behavior itself.

ethnobotany An anthropological discipline devoted to describing the ways in which different cultures classify plants.

ethnomedicine An anthropological discipline devoted to describing the medical systems of different cultures.



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Alejandro Toledo rose from humble origins to win the presidency in Peru in 2001. During his election campaign he made extensive use of symbols of Peruvian culture. He appeared frequently in traditional clothing and stressed comparisons between himself and the Inca emperor Pachacútec. In this picture, he wears the Inca flag around his neck. Toledo is married to anthropologist Elaine Karp.

Other anthropologists believe that although the details of a system of classification may be unique to individual cultures, there are grand overall patterns to these systems that are common to all humanity. The study of this aspect of culture is generally called **structural anthropology**. Perhaps the most important scholar in this school is the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. Levi-Strauss and his followers compare the myths and beliefs of different cultures to isolate common patterns. They believe that these reflect a universal underlying patterning of human thought: the tendency to divide everything into two opposing classes (male/female, good/bad, right/left), as well as a third class that crosses the boundary between these two.

Human beings not only classify the world, but they also fill it with meaning. Members of every culture imbue their world with stories and symbols. Ideas, words, and actions have not only practical value but symbolic meaning and emotional force. Human behavior signifies something. The central histories, legends, and lore of religions and cultures are not simply stories; they have powerful emotional resonance for us. People are literally willing to fight and die for their religious and moral beliefs. Actions, such as flag burning or the dese-

creation of religious symbols, that challenge the central meanings of our culture often bring immediate and passionate response. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz puts it, a human being is “an animal suspended in webs of significance which he himself has spun.” To put this another way, a culture is a story people tell themselves about themselves. Culture is the way people understand who they are and how they should act in the world. It is the context within which human actions can be understood.

Anthropologists try to understand this cultural context in several different ways. Some are concerned with analyzing the central symbols of culture. In many societies, these are found in religious rituals. Such symbols reflect the deepest concerns of the culture’s members in ways that are often difficult to articulate.

Among the Ndembu of East Africa, for example, the muddy tree is a central symbol. Its chief characteristic is that it has a white, milky sap. For the Ndembu, the tree has many meanings, and it plays important roles in girls’ puberty rites. It symbolizes breast-feeding, the relationship between mother and child, inheritance through the mother’s family line, and at the most abstract level, the unity and continuity of Ndembu society itself (Turner 1967). To understand the role the muddy tree plays in Ndembu society is to have penetrated deeply into the Ndembu view of the world.

As anthropologists attempt to understand culture, they sometimes turn to the tools of literature. A novel is fiction, a story, but it gains its poignancy from its relationship to the real-life experience of its readers. Culture itself is often like a novel. That is, it consists of actions, ideas, and stories through which we not only participate in our community but come to reflect on ourselves and our society. Through actions, ideas, and stories we not only make our lives, but make our lives meaningful. Just as a literary critic might analyze a novel, so an anthropologist might analyze a culture as a text.

For example, consider the American fascination with football. American football has little appeal outside the United States, but here it draws more fans than any other sport. In order to explain its popularity, analysts have studied the key themes of the game. They point out that the game is heavily laden with sexuality. Dundes (1980) notes that the vocabulary of football is full of sexual overtones (ends, making a touchdown in the end zone, scor-



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ing, going all the way). Football uniforms accentuate the male physique: enlarged head and shoulders, narrow waist, and a lower torso “poured into skintight pants accentuated only by a metal cod-piece” (Arens 1975). Dressed this way, men tackle each other, hold hands, hug each other, and pat each other’s bottoms. But sexuality is not the only important aspect of the sport. Football is, in Geertz’s terms, “playing with fire” (1973b). It is attractive to us because, more than other sports, it manipulates some of the most dangerous and controversial themes in American culture. These include masculine identity, the violence and sexuality underlying competition between men, the social role of women, the relationship of the individual to the coordinated group, rules and their infringement, gaining and surrendering territory, and racial character (Oriard 1993:18). As we watch football, we see these issues displayed and manipulated or implied. Football is a game, but it is also a commentary on American culture. It is a text that we read, and those who would understand Americans

must learn to read it as well (see also our discussion of deep play and the Balinese cockfight in Chapter 15, page 417).

Anthropologists who analyze culture in these ways generally refer to themselves as **interpretive** or **symbolic** anthropologists. They try to uncover and interpret the deep emotional and psychological structure of societies. Their methods are those of the humanities rather than the sciences; that is, they deal with meaning and interpretation rather than measurement and experiment. Their goal is to understand the experience of being a member

structural anthropology A theoretical perspective that holds that all cultures reflect similar deep, underlying patterns and that anthropologists should attempt to decipher these patterns.

interpretive (symbolic) anthropology A theoretical approach that emphasizes culture as a system of meaning and proposes that the aim of cultural anthropology is to interpret the meanings that cultural acts have for their participants.



Global Perspective

Understanding 9/11

On September 11, 2001, the United States came under terrorist attack. In New York City and Washington, D.C., tens of thousands of people witnessed the events in person. Millions throughout the nation sat by radios and televisions, often in stunned silence, as planes crashed, buildings fell, and thousands died.

As tragedies go, 9/11 was not particularly large. About 3,000 people died on that day, but that number pales before those killed worldwide by natural disaster and acts of war. In January 2001, more than 20,000 were killed by an earthquake in Gujarat, India. In the Northwest Turkey earthquake of 1999, 17,000 died. More than half a million died in the earthquake in T'angshan, China, in 1976. These were natural disasters, but acts of human violence have been even more devastating. It is estimated that genocide, tyranny, military and civilian warfare deaths, and man-made famine killed between 150 million and 200 million people in the twentieth century alone. These disasters often seem remote, but our own sense of grief and our search to understand now connect us to those everywhere who have suffered.

When anthropologists are confronted with disaster, they search for ways to understand it. In works such as "Global Violence and Indonesian Muslim Politics" (Hefner 2002) and "Narrating September 11: Race, Gender, and the Play of Cultural Identities" (Mattingly, Lawlor, and Jacobs-Huey 2002) anthropologists ponder questions such as: Why were we attacked? What should we do to prevent future attacks? How do we remember and honor those who died, those who labored to save them, those who came together to pick up the pieces?

Whether we realize it consciously or not, when we think about such things we are searching for theories and trying to apply them. For example, we might take a materialist or adaptationist approach to understand events. In so doing, we would focus on the economic forces at work and the conditions of life in the Middle East and in New York. We

would examine the roles of poverty and wealth, the ways in which the United States and the Soviet Union battled over Afghanistan in the 1980s, and the involvement of the United States in the Persian Gulf conflict of the early 90s. We would try to understand how these events created an environment in which hatred of the United States could flourish and individuals could be trained and equipped to act upon that hatred. We might use such knowledge to change that world by choking off supplies of funds, eliminating physical locations, and creating new economic and political opportunities. On the United States side, we may try to understand the economic and political forces at work in New York City in the 1950s and 1960s that led to the construction of two 110-floor towers on the former site of "Radio Row," an area of small shops and low buildings. We might try to understand how the attack created or destroyed political and economic opportunities and how our nation changed as the result.

Alternatively, we may take the idealist view, focusing our attention on the ways in which the people involved in the attack came to understand and organize their worlds: what violence against America symbolized and what their acts meant to them. If we took that approach, we might focus on examining the history of peace and violence in Islam. We would want to know how Osama bin Laden and the members of Al Qaeda modeled meaning in the world and how the United States fit into their model. We might reasonably conclude that in order to capture those responsible for the September 11 attacks and prevent future attacks, we have to discover what the events meant to them, to learn their ways of thought. To understand the impact of the disaster in the United States, we might examine the symbolic role that New York City and the World Trade Center towers play in American thinking. We might focus on the importance of key symbols such as American flags and firefighters, and explore the ways in which the attacks drove us to a new understanding of ourselves as Americans.

Many other theoretical perspectives are available to us. We could explore the ways in which the attacks fit into larger integrated patterns of culture, the role of diffusion of ideas and technologies, the history of conflict between the United States and the Middle East or Islam and the West, the intricacies of subcultures in the Middle East or in the banking communities of New York City, or the relationship between the cultures of the Middle East and the personalities of terrorists.

We can draw several conclusions from this. First, when we think about an issue such as 9/11, we rarely begin by saying “well, I think I’ll take such and such a theoretical perspective.” Nonetheless, we clearly do, whether we are conscious of them or not. Being aware of, and knowledgeable about, our theoretical perspectives allows us to achieve deeper understandings. It points the way to addi-

tional questions we need to ask. Second, different theoretical positions represent different types of questions and answers about world historical events. People who take a materialist or adaptationist approach want to know different things about culture and society than those who take a symbolic or cognitive approach. Third, no one perspective can supply all our questions and answers. Fully understanding an issue requires contributions from different kinds of thinkers. And, finally, although theory can guide us to ask the questions that deepen our understanding, it provides no ultimate answer. No matter how deeply we probe and how many different perspectives we employ, for most Americans, there will probably always be a fundamental incomprehensibility about the events of September 11 and our thoughts and feelings on that day.



The 9/11 bombing of the World Trade Center was interpreted in different ways. In New York City, an important reaction centered on grief and mourning for the victims and the heroism of those who tried to save them.

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of a culture and to make that experience available to their readers (Marcus and Fischer 1986).



Culture Is an Integrated System—Or Is It?

One of the key ideas of anthropology is the notion of holism (see Chapter 1). Franz Boas, who is often considered the founder of modern American anthropology, taught that cultures are systems composed of parts that stand in certain relations to one another. European anthropologists often compared culture to a biological organism. Just as an animal is composed of different organs that stand in certain relations to one another (the heart pumps the blood, the lungs supply it with oxygen, the liver purifies it, and so on), so a culture is composed of subsystems that stand in certain relations to one another. For example, the subsistence system provides food; kinship and political systems determine how the food is produced and distributed, religion provides motivation and justification for the distribution system, and so on.

This organic analogy has two implications, one widely accepted by modern anthropologists and one heavily criticized. The first implication is that a change in one part of such a system affects other parts of the system. For example, a change in the way people get their food may well result in a change in family structure. If people get their food by hunting and gathering, they may have a loose family structure. If they change to agriculture, with its heavier demands for coordination and direction, their family structure will probably become more rigid.

The second—and more controversial—implication of seeing cultures as analogous to organic systems is that cultures should be stable. We think of biological systems as composed of parts that work together to keep the entire organism alive and well. The lungs do not suddenly declare war on the liver. If they do, a doctor is called to try to restore balance and proper functioning. Thinking of cultures as systems suggests that, similarly, all their parts work in harmony to keep the whole functioning properly. But do cultures really work like this?

Consider the relationship between the American family and the workplace. Does the family system really fit well with the demands made by jobs? Most

Americans probably want to maintain long-term marriage commitments, raise families, and live middle-class lifestyles. Most jobs in the United States provide inadequate income for this purpose. Furthermore, jobs often require mobility, long hours, and flexibility, conflicting with the demands of the family. Americans must negotiate these conflicts among the lifestyle they desire, the demands of their families, and the requirements of their jobs. For most people, there is no way to satisfy all of these demands simultaneously. Some interests are always sacrificed to others. In the United States and elsewhere, conflict may also exist between different groups in society. Institutional arrangements within and between societies may favor one group over another. Societies may be divided into castes, or individuals of a particular ethnic origin may be relegated to undesirable positions. Social stratification in India and the United States is explored more fully in Chapter 12.

In socially stratified societies, different groups have different and often opposing interests, and this creates conflict. For example, consider a modern factory. Both the workers and the owners want the company to do well, but within this context, the owners hope to maximize their profit and the workers want to maximize their pay. Because increases in the cost of labor come at some expense to profits, there is a structural conflict between the owners and the workers. This conflict has the potential to erupt in violence. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, labor strikes in the United States repeatedly resulted in death and injury as security forces, police, the National Guard, and the army battled strikers. Even during World War II, a time we usually think of as characterized by great internal solidarity, the United States experienced 14,471 strikes involving 6,774,000 workers (Brecher 1972).

There is nothing uniquely American or modern about the conflict engendered by the different and sometimes opposing demands that cultures impose. People in nonindustrialized societies must also handle conflicting commitments to their families and other social groups, such as secret societies or religious associations, to which they belong. Nonstratified societies may have less conflict than those with separate castes, ethnic groups, or classes, but relations within them are not entirely peaceful. The interests of men and women may differ, as may those of different groups in the modern world,

nonindustrialized and nonstratified societies must often deal with the demands of governments and markets as well.

Thus, in all societies, social life may be characterized by conflict as well as concord. Culture may well be a system, but if so, it is a system composed of parts that rub and chafe against each other. Such parts do affect each other, but they do not necessarily work smoothly together.

Anthropologists who believe that culture is highly integrated have tried to work out the precise relationships between one aspect of culture and another. In the first half of the twentieth century, **functionalists** such as A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski tried to demonstrate the ways in which separate parts of society affected each other and operated together. They examined kinship in relation to politics as well as many other aspects of culture. For example, Radcliffe-Brown argued that religion supports the social structure of a society by giving individuals a sense of dependence, reinforcing the notion that people receive comfort and succor from society but must submit to its control (1965:176/1952).

More recently, **ecological functionalists** have focused on the relationship between the environment and society. For example, Marvin Harris, whose theoretical position, called **cultural materialism**, is very close to ecological functionalism, examined the Indian Hindu taboo on eating beef (1966). Despite widespread poverty and periodic famine in India, Hindus refuse to eat their cattle. Although this may seem incomprehensible to outsiders, it makes good ecological sense. Cows are important in India, not as a food source but because they provide dung for fertilizer and give birth to bullocks, the draft animals that pull plows and carts, which are essential in agriculture. If a family ate its cows during a famine, it would deprive itself of the source of bullocks and could not continue farming. Thus, Harris argued that the Hindu religious taboo on eating beef is integrated with the Indian subsistence system.

Although the notion that different aspects of culture have specific functions is widely accepted in modern anthropology, many anthropologists have turned away from the idea that in “normal” times, societies should run smoothly. Some insist that elements of discord may be more important than those of agreement. Anthropologists who study social change, such as **neo-evolutionists**, may see the

clash of interests within cultures as a key source of cultural transformation. Other anthropologists, particularly postmodernists (see Chapter 3), look at culture and society as battlegrounds where individuals and groups fight for power and the right to control the interpretation of culture.



Culture Is a Shared System of Norms and Values—Or Is It?

Imagine that a person had his or her own private integrated system of classification and meaning, which was shared with no one else. What would that person be like? He or she would live in a world where objects and actions made sense to him or her but had completely different meanings for everyone else. This would certainly create problems in interactions with others. Such a person would undoubtedly be isolated and would probably be considered insane. It is clear that at some level, members of a culture must share ways of thinking and behaving.

Norms and values are two sorts of ideas that members of a culture might share. **Norms** are the ideas members of a culture share about the way things ought to be done. They are the rules of behavior that reflect and enforce culture. Norms seem to cluster around certain identities, roles, or positions in society. The members of each culture have ideas about how people such as parents, politicians,

functionalism The anthropological theory that specific cultural institutions function to support the structure of society or serve the needs of individuals in society.

ecological functionalism A theoretical perspective that holds that the ways in which cultural institutions work can best be understood by examining their effects on the environment.

cultural materialism A theoretical perspective that holds that the primary task of anthropology is to account for the similarities and differences among cultures and that this can best be done by studying the material constraints to which human existence is subject.

neo-evolutionism A theoretical perspective concerned with the historical change of culture from small-scale societies to extremely large-scale societies.

norm An ideal cultural pattern that influences behavior in a society.



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or priests ought to behave. **Values** are shared ideas about what is true, right, and beautiful that underlie cultural patterns and guide society in response to the physical and social environment. For example, in contrast to many other societies, the United States is significantly oriented toward the value of technology—the idea that humans can and should transform nature to meet human ends.

Human behavior is not always consistent with cultural norms or values. What people do and what they say they do are not exactly the same. For example, among upper-middle-class Hindus living in large cities in India, the norm of social equality among all classes of society is widely accepted. However, this norm is considerably different from actual behavior, which rarely involves social interaction between people of the highest and lowest castes on a basis of equality.

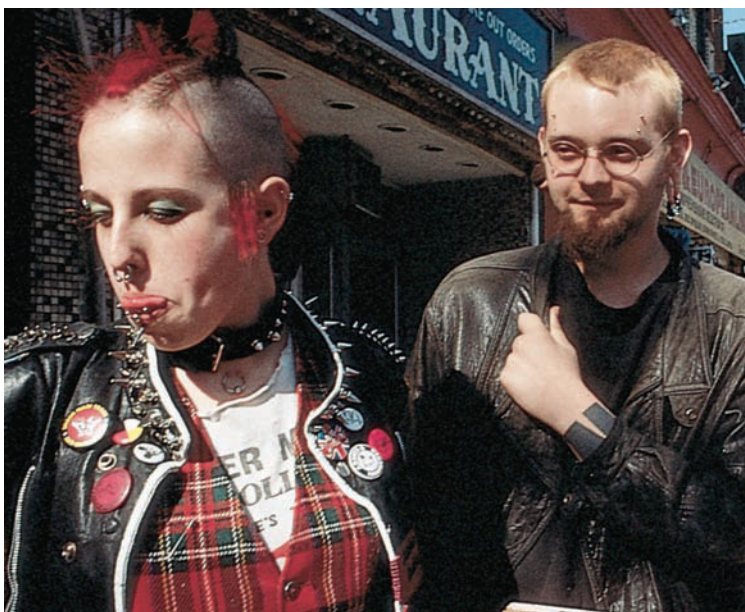
Norms may also be contradictory and can be manipulated for personal and group ends. For example, in India people believe that women should be in their home and not “moving about” with their friends. They also believe that women should spend a lot of time in religious activities. Modern Indian women use the second of these ideals to get around the first. By forming clubs whose activities are religious, they have an excuse to get out of the house to which their elders cannot object too strongly.

These examples raise important questions about norms and values. How do we determine the norms

and values of any society? Do all people in society agree on these things? How many people must agree on something before it is considered a norm or a value? Who gets to decide these sorts of things? Historically, anthropologists tended not to worry much about these issues, assuming that the small non-Western societies they studied were homogeneous. It followed that people in such societies always acted in the same way in the same situation and attached the same meanings and values to cultural patterns. As early as 1936, however, Ralph Linton, an important American anthropologist, noted that not everyone participates equally in a culture.

Research in the past 25 years in particular has shown that even in small societies, norms are elusive. Individuals differ in their knowledge, understanding, and beliefs. For example, one might expect that in a small fishing society all members would be able to agree on the proper names for different kinds of fish, but on Pukapuka, the small Pacific atoll studied by Robert Borofsky (1994), this is not the case. Even experienced fishermen disagreed much of the time.

Differences among individuals or groups within a society may be pronounced when values and beliefs are at issue. A close look at societies with significant sex segregation, such as those in New Guinea (Hammar 1989) and the Amazon (Murphy and Murphy 1974), makes it clear that men and women do not attach the same meanings to many



Not everyone in a culture must conform. While cultures demand a certain amount of consensus, members of a single culture often show great variability in knowledge, style, and beliefs.

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The Amish are members of an American subculture. They have customs, language, and values different from those of most Americans.

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of the myths and rituals that maintain the system of male dominance.

Issues concerning the degree to which people share a single culture are even more obvious in larger societies. Sometimes the term **subculture** is used to designate groups within a single society that share norms and values significantly different from those of the dominant culture. The terms dominant culture and subculture do not refer to better and worse, superior and inferior, but rather to the idea that the dominant culture is the more powerful in a society.

Dominant cultures retain their power partly through control of institutions such as the legal system, which criminalizes some subcultural practices that conflict with the dominant culture and threaten to undermine its power (Norgren and Nanda 1996). Additionally, dominant cultures often control the flow of information through which people get their images of subcultures. Hence, they have a powerful means of encouraging people to perceive subcultures in stereotypical ways.

Although in some situations domination of one group by another may be extreme, it is rarely com-

plete. People contest their subjugation through political, economic, and military means. Sometimes, when domination is intense, they are able to do so only through religious faith and tales that cast themselves in positions of power and their oppressors in weak roles (Scott 1992).

The result of struggles between groups in society is that norms and values, ideas we sometimes think of as timeless and consensual, are constantly changing and being renegotiated. This dynamic process involves conflict and subjugation as well as consensus. Understanding that norms and values are the result of such a process is critical because such cultural ideas influence and are influenced by real issues of wealth, power, and status.

value A culturally defined idea of what is true, right, and beautiful.

subculture A system of perceptions, values, beliefs, and customs that are significantly different from those of a larger, dominant culture within the same society.



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In the United States, for example, do we see individuals as responsible for their own destinies or as the product of social circumstances? This question, which goes to the root of a social norm, is extremely complicated, and has very important political ramifications. In the standard version of the American Dream, people compete with one another to achieve material success. The result is that the hardest-working, best-qualified individuals succeed. Thus, the rich and powerful deserve their wealth and power whereas the poor and weak have only themselves to blame. This is neatly captured in the American expression “If you’re so smart, why ain’t you rich?”

Although belief in the virtue of hard work seems central to American society, there is considerable dissent on its relation to outcomes. For people’s hard work to be justly rewarded, everyone must start out with a more-or-less equal chance for success. Some Americans insist that because people do start out with approximately equal chances that failure is thus the responsibility of the individual, and that society bears little responsibility for helping people to succeed. Others reject this notion, proposing instead that some people are born with particular advantages. Thus, success or failure depends to a considerable extent on accidents of birth and the many forms of prejudice institutionalized in American society. It follows that society has an obligation to provide services and programs that benefit historically oppressed groups. This point of view is common among the poor and among members of minority groups (Hochschild 1995). For example, a 2003 poll showed that most African Americans believed that racism was a big problem in the United States and nearly half said that they experienced some form of discrimination in the past 30 days. Whereas 61% of whites believed that blacks have achieved the same job opportunities as whites, only 12% of African Americans agreed (AARP, Gallup poll 2004).

Believing either that blame for failure is individual or that family and ethnic background plays the most important roles in social advancement does not make one individual more or less “American” than another. However, which of these notions is held by those in power is critical. It determines public support for social welfare programs that, for good or ill, have direct economic impact on the lives of many Americans. Anthropological analysis

helps to show that even though the vast majority of people who live in the United States consider themselves Americans, they do not necessarily share a common set of beliefs. Different groups may participate in the same culture in different ways.

To avoid the predicament of the insane person described at the beginning of this section, members of a culture must have a great deal in common. As we have seen, however, determining exactly what they share is not easy. Anthropologists have generally assumed that people need to share information in order to form a society (Borofsky 1994). It may well be, however, that people share certain information because they have learned how to interact with one another. In other words, shared ideas and the sense of community may be the result of human interaction rather than its cause.

Historically, the notion of culture as a shared set of norms and values was associated with American anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century. Many of Boas’s students, such as A. L. Kroeber, Paul Radin, Robert Lowie, Ruth Benedict, and Cora DuBois, saw shared norms and values as central to culture and tried to identify and describe the beliefs, values, and psychological characteristics that were central to individual cultures. In contrast, some contemporary **neo-Marxist**, postmodern, and **feminist anthropologists** hold that culture is a context in which norms and values are contested. Rather than assuming a cultural core of shared beliefs and values, these anthropologists try to describe the processes through which norms and values are both subverted and maintained. They often focus on the role of governments and other institutions in that process. This issue is more fully examined in Chapters 11, 12, and 13.



Culture Is the Way Human Beings Adapt to the World

Human beings, like other living creatures, have biological needs. They need a secure supply of food and adequate conditions under which they can live and raise their young. Like many other creatures, humans have psychological needs as well. These needs include safety, growth, and movement. Other animals fill their needs primarily through biological adaptation. For example, a lion uses speed

and sharp teeth and claws to capture and eat its prey. Humans, on the other hand, are singularly lacking in offensive biological weaponry. Left to get our food like the lion, we would surely starve.

Culture is the principal tool we use to feed ourselves. That is, human beings, in groups, develop forms of knowledge and technologies that enable them to get the necessary energy from the environment to make life more secure. This knowledge and technology form a core of culture that can be passed from generation to generation and group to group. Most of a lion's adaptation to the world is set biologically; it grows its teeth, claws, and hunting instinct as part of the natural expression of its biological heredity. Humans also have a biological adaptation to the world, but our particular biological adaptation is the capacity for culture. We learn culture as part of the natural expression of our biological inheritance. Thus, for people, culture plays a role similar to that played by tooth, claw, and muscle for the lion. Of course, there is a critical difference between the two: whereas all lions develop teeth and claws that are quite similar, humans live in cultures that are vastly different. Humans can use these cultures to adapt to a great variety of physical and social environments.

Cultural adaptation has some distinct advantages over biological adaptation. Because humans adapt through learned behavior, they can change their approach to solving problems more quickly and easily than creatures whose adaptations are primarily biological. Furthermore, biological or evolutionary change is based on the presence of more highly adapted variations within the gene pool of a species. These variations occur as chance mutations. If the variations happen not to be present, no change is possible. For example, imagine a species of fish living in a pond of fresh water. If the pond is polluted by industrial waste, all will die except those that, by chance, have a genetic makeup that allows them to survive in polluted water. These will go on to give birth to the next generation of fish. If such a variation does not exist, none will survive and the fish will become extinct. There is no way a fish can *learn* how to live in the polluted water. Either the genetic variation that allows some of them to survive is present or it is not. Human beings, on the other hand, can learn to live in polluted environments. They can develop ways to clean the environment or mechanisms to enable their survival

within it. People can teach these to others. No biological change is necessary.

Lions hunt and eat today in much the same way as they have for tens of thousands of years. The vast majority of human beings today do not live like humans of three or four generations ago, let alone our distant ancestors. Our means of feeding ourselves, our culture, has changed. **Plasticity**—the ability to change behavior in response to a range of environmental demands—has allowed human beings to thrive under a wide variety of ecological conditions.

Cultural adaptation has some disadvantages too. Misinformation, leading to cultural practices that hinder rather than aid survival, may creep into human behavior. For example, before 1820 most Americans considered the tomato to be poisonous and therefore did not use this valuable food source. Cultural practices that encourage overpopulation, or destructive depletion or contamination of natural resources, may lead to short-term success but long-term disaster. Further, it is clear that many human practices are not adaptive, even in the short run. Political movements such as policies of ethnic cleansing and genocide that urge people to murder their neighbors may benefit their leaders, but it is hard to see any meaningful way in which they are adaptive. A normal lion will always inherit the muscle, tooth, and claw that let it survive. Normal humans, on the other hand, may inherit a great deal of cultural misinformation that hinders their survival.

Anthropologists who view culture as an adaptation tend to be concerned with people's behavior, particularly as it relates to their physical well-being. They ask questions about subsistence technology and its relationship to family structure, religion, and

neo-Marxism A theoretical perspective concerned with applying the insights of Marxist thought to anthropology; neo-Marxists modify Marxist analysis to make it appropriate to the investigation of small-scale, non-Western societies.

feminist anthropology A theoretical perspective that focuses on describing and explaining the social roles of women.

adaptation A change in the biological structure or life ways of an individual or population by which it becomes better fitted to survive and reproduce in its environment.

plasticity The ability of humans to change their behavior in response to a wide range of environmental demands.



Ethnography

Building a House in Northwestern Thailand

The importance of adaptation to the environment is more easily seen in some areas of culture than in others. For example, the ways in which humans satisfy their basic needs for food, shelter, and safety, though part of a culturally constructed reality, are more directly adaptive to the physical environment than, say, art or music. The material culture of societies with simple technologies is based on adaptive strategies that have developed slowly over long periods of trial and error and are usually well suited to their physical environments, even when the people in the society cannot say why they do things in a certain way.

Anthropologist James Hamilton found this out the hard way when he tried to build a house for himself while doing fieldwork among the Pwo Karen of northwestern Thailand (Hamilton 1987).

To learn about house construction, Hamilton carefully observed the details of building a house. Karen houses are essentially wooden-post structures, raised about 6 feet off the ground, with bamboo walls, peaked roofs, and a veranda. There are no windows; the space between the thatch of the roof and the height of the walls serves for light and ventilation. The kitchen is in the house, with a water storage area on one side of the veranda. This is an important feature of a house because Karen customs of sociability require that visitors and guests be offered water.

Although Hamilton knew a great deal about Karen house construction, when he went to build his own home he decided to incorporate his own, American notions of what a proper, comfortable house should be. First of all, because the climate was very hot, he insisted that his house be in a



shaded area under some tall trees. The Karen villagers suggested that this was a bad location but failed to dissuade him. Like most Americans, Hamilton also liked his lawn—a wide grassy area in front of his house—and protested when the villagers started pulling up the grass. He said he was not concerned about the snakes and scorpions that might be in the grass; besides, he had a flashlight and boots in case he had to go out at night. In a traditional Karen house, a person cannot stand up straight because

the side walls are less than 5 feet high. In order to accommodate his belief that people ought to be able to stand up in their houses, Hamilton lowered the floor to about 2 feet off the ground. Furthermore, because the Karen house is dark and, to Americans, rather small, Hamilton decided to have his kitchen outside the house. Despite Karen grumbling that this was not the proper way to build a house, he built an extension on one side of the house with a lean-to roof covering made of leaves, and this became his kitchen. Finally, when the Karen started to cut off the long overhanging thatch from the roof, Hamilton asked that they let it remain, because it gave him some privacy from eyes peering over the wall, which did not meet the top of the house.

After the house was finished and Hamilton had lived in it for a while, he found out why the Karen did not like the alterations he had made to their traditional design. This part of Thailand has a heavy rainy season. Because the house was under the trees, the roof could not dry out properly and it rotted. In addition, so many twigs and branches fell through the roof that it became like a sieve, barely providing any protection from the rain at all. The

slope of the lean-to over the kitchen was not steep enough; instead of running off, the water came through the roof. That whole side of the house roof had to be torn off and replaced with a steeper roof, made of sturdier and more expensive thatch.

The nice lawn combined with the reachable thatch of the roof offered too great a temptation for the local cows, who tried to eat it. One morning Hamilton woke to find his lawn covered with piles of cow dung, with hundreds of dung beetles rolling little balls of dung all around the yard. He cut off the thatch overhang that was left under the trees and pulled up all the grass.

Because the house had been built low to the ground (by Karen standards) in a shady, cool, wet area, there was insufficient ventilation and drying in and around the house to prevent mildew. This meant that Hamilton had to sweep the walls and wipe all leather objects once a week and tightly seal all his anthropological tools, including field notes, camera, film, tape recorder, and typewriter.

The Karen house, like houses everywhere, has symbolic meanings and reflects the social organization and worldview of a people. But there is no getting around the fact that it must also be built within the constraints imposed by the physical environment. Although some alterations have been made in the Karen house over the past 80 years, reflecting some changes in social organization, Hamilton learned the hard way that Karen house design was extremely well adapted to the environment, and not easily tinkered with.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. James Hamilton's experience shows that even though traditional Karen housing ideals did not match American notions of housing, they were well adapted to their environment. What particular design features of housing are adaptations to the environment where you live?
2. Is housing in the United States generally well adapted to the environment? Consider both modern and older construction. Is modern construction better adapted to the environment than older construction?
3. Because it is a physical object, it is easy to see a house as an adaptation. But intangible things such as social structure and family type can also be adaptations. For example, the Shoshone Indians lived in the deserts of the American West and supported themselves by hunting animals and gathering plants. They lived in family groups of fewer than 20 people. In what way was living in such small groups an adaptation to their environment?

Adapted from James W. Hamilton, "This Old House: A Karen Ideal." In Daniel W. Ingersoll Jr. and Gordon Bronitsky (Eds.), *Mirror and Metaphor: Material and Social Constructions of Reality*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987.

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other elements of society. They investigate the ways in which cultures adapt to specific environments and the ways in which cultures have changed in response to new physical and social environments. Such anthropologists may identify themselves as belonging to theoretical schools including **cultural ecology**, cultural materialism, neo-evolutionism, neo-Marxism, and **sociobiology** (McGee and Warms 2007).



Culture Is Constantly Changing

In the popular press or movies, one often hears of “Stone Age peoples.” The implication is that a group of people has been living in precisely the same way for thousands of years. This romantic notion is, as far as we know, incorrect. All cultures have histories of change, and no one belongs to a culture that is stuck in time. In fact, one of the implications of the notion that culture is based on contention as well as on consensus is that cultures are likely to experience constant change. We discuss the historic process of culture change more fully in Chapter 16.

The fact that culture is constantly changing does not imply that all cultures change at the same speed. The pace of change in traditional cultures may have been much slower than in modern cultures. Cultural change may happen in small increments, or it may happen in revolutionary bursts. However, no culture is timeless. The source of cultural change may be the internal dynamic of a society, or it may originate outside the society. Like other aspects of culture, change often involves issues of conflict and oppression as well as consensus and solidarity.

In the past several hundred years, for many people around the world, by far the most important source of culture change has been the development of a world economic system based primarily in the wealthy nations of North America, Europe, and Asia. This has involved invasions, revolutions, and epidemic diseases. We discuss these historic processes in Chapter 16. In this chapter, we focus on some of the more traditional ways anthropologists have examined culture change.

Anthropologists have usually discussed cultural change in terms of innovation and diffusion. An **innovation** is an object, a way of thinking, or way of behaving that is new because it is qualitatively dif-



Innovation often involves crafting familiar things from new materials. In Niger, a craftsman fashions sandals from old tires.

ferent from existing forms (Barnett 1953:7). Although we are likely to think of innovations as technological, they are not limited to the material aspects of culture. New art forms and new ideas can also be considered innovations.

Some innovations seem to be genuinely new and different. Anthropologists sometimes call these primary innovations. Primary innovations are often chance discoveries and accidents. In our own society, some examples include penicillin, discovered when British researcher Alexander Fleming noticed that bacteria samples he had left by a window were contaminated by mold spores, and Teflon, discovered by Roy Plunkett, who was trying to find new substances to use in refrigeration. Microwave ranges were invented by Percy Le Baron Spencer while he was working on radar. And the artificial sweetener NutraSweet was discovered by James Schlatter, who was trying to develop a drug to treat ulcers. Of course, such accidental discovery is not limited to our own society. Critical changes in technology also occur by accident. An example of

this is the discovery, about 7,000 years ago, that when clay is fired, it hardens and becomes much more durable than unfired clay.

Primary innovations are sometimes called inventions, however we resist this term. The idea of invention seems to imply something wholly new and completely different. However, no innovation is really totally new. Even the examples listed above happened within a cultural context that provided the background, critical ideas, and history that made them possible. For example, although it is true that Fleming discovered penicillin by “accident,” it is also true that Fleming was a particular individual in a particular cultural context. Mold had contaminated bacteria an endless number of times in human history. In fact, the effects of mold on some forms of bacteria had been noted several times in the late nineteenth century: by Lister in 1871, Tyndale in 1875, Pasteur and Joubert in 1877, and Duchesne in 1897 (Macfarlane 1985). Fleming was able to understand the importance of penicillin mold because he was a trained bacteriologist who had been looking for a substance to fight infection for more than a decade and he was aware of the work of earlier scientists. It does not diminish his achievement to point out that he, like every other inventor or discoverer, did not create something totally new. He realized the critical importance of new combinations of things that already existed. His culture provided him with the training, tools, and context in which his discovery could be made.

All innovations involve human ingenuity and creativity, and these exist in the same quantity in all societies. However, even geniuses are limited by the nature of their cultures. Had Einstein been born among a group that did not have Western notions of science, he could never have “invented” the theory of relativity. If Beethoven had been a Bororo (a member of a Brazilian hunting, gathering, and gardening group), he would never have composed a symphony. An old cliché has it that we all stand on the shoulders of giants. This means that everyone in a culture builds on what has gone before.

Innovations tend to move from one culture to another. This process is known as **diffusion**. Diffusion can happen in many ways; trade, travel, and warfare all promote it. Direct contact among cultures generally results in the most far-reaching changes. That is why cultures located on major trade routes tend to change more rapidly than those in more isolated places. However, because no

human society has ever been isolated for a long time from all others, diffusion has always been an important factor in culture. This implies that “pure” cultures, free from outside influences, have never existed.

Innovation and diffusion are not simple processes. People do not “naturally” realize that one way of doing things is better than another or that one style of dress, religion, or behavior is superior. In order for innovation and diffusion to occur, new ideas must be accepted, and that is a very complex process. The discovery of penicillin again provides a good example. Although Fleming understood some of the importance of his discovery in 1928, he was not able to purify the drug; that was done by Howard Florey and Ernest Chain. Fleming himself did not advocate human trials with penicillin until 1940. Penicillin was used extensively to treat wounded servicemen in the later years of World War II, but it was not commonly prescribed by American physicians until the mid-1950s to the late 1950s. The commercial process to manufacture large quantities of the drug was developed by John Sheehan in the late 1950s. The drug companies played critical roles in popularizing the penicillin and promoting its acceptance by often reluctant physicians in America and elsewhere (Williams 1984; Sheehan 1982).

As the example of penicillin shows, even when the desirability of an innovation is very clear, gaining its acceptance is often far from straightforward. Part of the problem may be comprehension. People may not fully understand the new idea or its implications. But more frequently other factors are involved. First, people vary in their willingness to adopt change; some are, by temperament and personal history, early adopters of change. Others are much more conservative. Additionally, innovations do not necessarily benefit all segments of a society and rarely do they benefit all segments equally. New agricultural techniques, for example, may

cultural ecology A theoretical approach that regards cultural patterns as adaptive responses to the basic problems of human survival and reproduction.

sociobiology A theoretical perspective that explores the relationship between human cultural behavior and genetics.

innovation A new variation on an existing cultural pattern that is subsequently accepted by other members of the society.

diffusion The spread of cultural elements from one culture to another through cultural contact.



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A Closer Look

Diffusion: 100% American

In the 1930s, the prominent anthropologist Ralph Linton wrote a famous essay called “100% American.” At that time, isolationism and nativism were important political forces in the United States. Nazism was on the rise in Europe, and many Americans were sympathetic to its ideas of racial and cultural purity. Thirty million people, one third of the nation, tuned their radios each week to hear the virulently anti-Semitic Reverend Charles E. Coughlin praise the purity of American institutions and condemn outsiders. Prominent Americans such as Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh similarly made public statements praising Hitler’s Germany and demanding that America be cleansed of foreign ideas. In his essay, Linton lampoons these ideologues, pointing out that virtually everything praised as American actually had its origins somewhere else. Linton wrote:

There can be no question about the average American’s Americanism or his desire to preserve this precious heritage at all costs. Nevertheless, some insidious foreign ideas have already wormed their way into his civilization without his realizing what was going on. Thus dawn finds the unsuspecting patriot garbed in pajamas, a garment of East Indian origin; and lying in a bed built on a pattern which originated in either Persia or Asia Minor. He is muffled to the ears in un-American materials: cotton, first domesticated in India; linen, domesticated in the Near East. . . .

In the bathroom the American washes with soap invented by the ancient Gauls. Next he cleans his teeth, a subversive European practice which did not invade America until the latter part of the eighteenth century. He then shaves, a

masochistic rite first developed by the heathen priests of ancient Egypt and Sumner. . . .

Breakfast over, he places upon his head a molded piece of felt, invented by the nomads of Eastern Asia, and, if it looks like rain, puts on outer shoes of rubber, discovered by the ancient Mexicans, and takes an umbrella, invented in India. . . . At the station he pauses for a moment to buy a newspaper. . . . [He] reads the news of the day, imprinted in characters invented by the ancient Semites by a process invented in Germany upon a material invented in China. As he scans the latest editorial pointing out the dire results to our institutions of accepting foreign ideas, he will not fail to thank a Hebrew God in an Indo-European language that he is a one hundred percent (decimal system invented by the Greeks) American (from Americus Vespucci, Italian geographer).

Today, we are very aware of living in a multicultural world. Although we can appreciate Linton’s clever essay and the important political statement he made in publishing it, we are no longer shocked to hear that most aspects of our culture originated elsewhere. However, the essay is still an important reminder that, really, there is no such thing as cultural purity. All cultures are constantly changing. Innovations rarely stay in one place for long. Because cultures have always been interconnected, ideas, beliefs, and material goods diffuse among them. As they do, their meaning often changes, and they are frequently modified to fit their new cultural context. The result is that every culture is a mixture of behaviors, beliefs, symbols, understandings, and objects that had their origins in many different places.

benefit the wealthy landowner but impoverish small family farms. An examination of the Green Revolution (the use of highly productive and technological farming techniques) shows that it did raise yields in many poor nations but also had other less desirable affects. Dependence relations between landowners and laborers were undermined. Large landowners received the greater part of the benefit. Laborers, many of whom were landless,

were often impoverished (Das 1998). Additionally, Norman Borlaug, one of the architects of the Green Revolution, notes that although food supplies worldwide have increased, tens of millions go hungry because they lack the resources to purchase food (Borlaug 2000).

Change is often promoted or resisted by powerful forces. Innovations that have strong political, economic, or moral force behind them may be



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In today's global economy, traits spread rapidly from one culture to another. All cultures are affected by capitalism, mass communication, and the need for modern technical skills. The Maori children from New Zealand need to learn the skills of their traditional culture and also those of the postindustrial world.

rapidly accepted. But, when those forces are arrayed against an innovation, it can be profoundly delayed. New technologies may face powerful resistance from those who have invested heavily in older ones. For example, FM radio broadcasting is clearly superior to AM broadcasting; it has greater fidelity and is much less susceptible to static and interference. FM broadcasting was invented in 1933, but because of the resistance of CBS, NBC, and RCA, extremely powerful corporations heavily invested in AM technology, FM did not gain popularity until the late 1960s (T. Lewis 1991).

Innovations are often altered to fit new cultural settings. Thus, cultural elements that move from one society to another frequently undergo changes in both form and meaning as they become part of an existing cultural pattern. For example, American football had its origins in British rugby. Football was born when American colleges modified rugby rules in the late nineteenth century (Oriard 1993:26–27). It took on new meanings and has become a central symbol of American culture. Rugby is not nearly as important in British society. Changes in the meanings of cultural elements are particularly important in archaeology. Archaeologists who find the same material item in two different cultures cannot assume that it has the same meaning in both.

Like innovation, diffusion is often accompanied by conflict. Cultures often confront one another in war, and people who are captured or colonized by

others are forced to assume new cultural practices. New rulers may require that traditions be abandoned. Economic demands by governments or creditors often compel the adoption of new technologies and practices. Although these processes happen in most places where cultures confront one another, they have been particularly important in the past 500 years. During this time, cultures have been increasingly tied together in an economic system centered in northern Europe, North America, and Japan. We examine this process more fully in Chapter 16. The expansion of powers located in these regions has involved the diffusion of many cultural traits to all areas of the world. Such diffusion has sometimes been peaceful, but often it has involved conflict and unspeakable violence (E. Wolf 1982).

The rapid pace of cultural change and diffusion, particularly in the past 100 years, raises the question of cultural homogenization. Are cultural differences being erased? Are we all being submerged in a single global culture? There is no simple answer to these questions. On one hand, modern technological culture now penetrates virtually every place on earth. People in almost every country have access to radio, telephones, e-mail, television, and other aspects of modern technology. On the other hand, this access is extremely uneven. The world may be a global village, but not all parts of it are equally close to the center. The vast majority of the world's population, for example, is

located in the industrialized nations. People in rural African villages may have radios, but they are unlikely to be connected to the Internet any time soon.

The world dominance of industrialized nations has affected cultures everywhere, but rather than annihilating local culture, the result may be what Ortiz (1947) has described as **transculturation**. Cultural traits are transformed as they are adopted, and new cultural forms result. Radio is again a good example. Developed by industrialized societies, it has spread throughout the world, promoting the culture of consumption through advertising. But radio can be used to broadcast messages of resistance and cultural preservation as well as the messages of the society where it originated.

The Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the 1979 Iranian revolution, provides a good example of the revolutionary use of technology. Khomeini was virulently anti-Western, but tape recordings were essential to the success of his revolution. In 1978, more than 100,000 tapes of Khomeini's sermons were circulating in Iran (Taheri 1986:213). Late that same year, the Ayatollah went into exile in a suburb of Paris. During the four months he was there, he used the telephone to keep in touch with key supporters in Iran and gave 132 radio, television, and press interviews (Taheri 1986:228). Khomeini's use of the tools of technological society was fundamental to the success of his anti-Western revolution. Far more recently, Osama bin Laden as well as insurgents and jihadists in Iraq and elsewhere have made extensive use of television, cell phones, and the Internet in their campaign against Western technological society.

Anthropologists have traditionally worked in tribal and peasant societies. Because such cultures have been profoundly affected by their contact with industrial societies, anthropologists of most theoretical orientations have been interested in change. The study of cultural change has special interest for applied anthropologists, particularly those who in-

vestigate issues related to the economic development of poor nations.



Rethinking Culture

In the opening paragraphs of this book, we defined culture as the answer people have devised to the basic questions of human social life. These questions concern things such as how to feed oneself, how to live with other groups, and how to lend meaning to life. In considering ways to explore and understand these cultural answers, anthropologists have looked at different aspects of culture. The studies they have done reflect the facets of culture they chose to explore. In this chapter, we have described some of these different ways of looking at culture. Taken together, they do not make up a unified whole but rather involve contending views of what it means to be human.

Anthropologists are always involved in fractious debate over the nature of culture. For example, *Anthropology News* has carried a heated debate on whether anthropology should draw its models and methods from natural sciences such as biology and physics, or humanities such as philosophy and literary criticism (Benfer 1996; D'Andrade 1995; Dow 1996). However, as Geertz has written, "Anthropology in general and cultural anthropology in particular, draws the greater part of its vitality from the controversies that animate it. It is not much destined for secured positions and settled issues" (1995:4). Debates within anthropology are not a sign of the collapse of the discipline but rather of its continuing vitality. In debate, we arrive at new understandings of ourselves and our subject matter. We come to a keener appreciation of the nature of culture and, ultimately, what it means to be human.

transculturation The transformation of adopted cultural traits, resulting in new cultural forms.



Summary

1. Culture is an essential aspect of being human. The few recorded cases of children raised in isolation show that growing up as a member of society is absolutely fundamental to human development.
2. Culture is the learned, symbolic, at least partially adaptive and ever-changing patterns of behavior shared by members of a group. However, this broad definition has great controversy. Anthropologists differ on which aspects of culture

- are most important. Different definitions of culture lead to different theoretical positions, different research questions, and different areas of study.
3. At a basic level, culture is learned behavior. For humans, almost all behavior is at some level learned, even those things, such as eating, that are biological necessities. Anthropologists have been vitally interested in the ways in which culture is learned. They have studied cross-cultural variation in child rearing. Some anthropologists believe that patterns of child rearing are central to differences among cultures.
 4. Cultures are also symbolic systems. They are mental templates for organizing the world. Every culture has a system of classification through which its people identify and organize the aspects of the world that are most important to them. Comprehending these systems is an important step in understanding a culture. Culture is also a way of understanding ourselves and lending our lives meaning. A culture is a collection of symbols and meanings that permit us to understand others and ourselves. Through culture we experience our humanity. It is the web of significance that gives meaning to our lives and actions. Some anthropologists focus on understanding and analyzing the central symbols and meanings of a culture.
 5. Cultures, in some ways, are systems. That is, they are composed of parts that are related to one another. Changes in one aspect of culture result in other changes as well. At the same time, conflict is common in all cultures. If culture is a system, its parts do not fit together easily or well.
 6. Cultures are shared collections of norms, or guidelines for behavior, and values, or ideals. Norms and values are not necessarily consistent and may not be shared in the same way by all members of a culture. Individuals manipulate them, and groups battle over them. Norms and values are subject to constant renegotiation as different groups within society vie for power. They involve conflict and subjugation as well as accommodation and consensus.
 7. Many anthropologists understand culture as the major adaptive mechanism of the human species. Whereas other animals adapt primarily through biological mechanisms, humans satisfy their needs for food, shelter, and safety largely through the use of culture. Cultural adaptation has both advantages and disadvantages.
 8. Cultures are constantly changing. There have been no “Stone Age people” since the Stone Age. Anthropologists have traditionally discussed cultural change in terms of innovation and diffusion. Many cultural traits that we think of as being solidly American are the result of diffusion from other cultures.
 9. Cultural change often occurs as part of the domination of one culture by another. This process has occurred throughout human history, but it has been particularly important in the past few centuries. The process of expansion of Western capitalist culture to all areas of the world has entailed massive and often violent cultural change.
 10. Different anthropological views of culture do not present a complete and coherent picture. Anthropologists argue bitterly over the proper definition of culture and the right way to understand it. It is through such argumentation that our understanding of culture progresses.



Key Terms

adaptation
cognitive anthropology
cultural ecology
cultural materialism
culture and personality
theorists
diffusion

ecological functionalism
ethnobotany
ethnomedicine
ethnoscience
feminist anthropology
functionalism
innovation

interpretive (symbolic)
anthropology
neo-evolutionism
neo-Marxism
norm
pl
sociology

structural anthropology
subculture
symbol
transculturation
value



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Suggested Readings

- Borofsky, Robert (Ed.). 1994. *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*. New York: McGraw-Hill. This book of essays by modern anthropologists analyzes critical issues in current anthropology. The authors reflect on the history of anthropology and speculate on its future. Each essay includes a brief analysis by the editor.
- Harris, Marvin. 1968. *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture*. New York: Harper & Row. Harris' book is challenging reading, but it is one of the best-known analyses of the history of anthropological theory. The book is an essential source, but because Harris evaluates all thinkers according to the degree to which they conform to his own theoretical position—cultural materialism—it must be read critically. In addition to this and other scholarly works, Harris has also written a series of popular books on anthropology, including *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches* (1974), *Cannibals and Kings* (1977), *Why Nothing Works* (1981), and *Our Kind: Who We Are, Where We Came From, Where We Are Going* (1989). All of these well-written books explain cultural practices from Harris' theoretical perspective.
- Marcus, George E. (1998). *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. In this collection of essays, spanning the years 1980–1997, Marcus charts the changes in the ways anthropologists have pursued anthropology from a postmodern perspective. This volume is the latest in a series of influential books written or edited by Marcus, including *Anthropology as Culture Critique* (1986), *Writing Culture* (1990), and *Rereading Cultural Anthropology* (1992).
- McGee, R. Jon, and Richard L. Warms (Eds.). 2004. *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History* (3rd ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield. A comprehensive introduction to theory in anthropology, this edited volume contains essays by critical theoretical thinkers as well as detailed annotations and commentary by McGee and Warms.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press. This collection of essays deals with the nature of culture and the process of writing about it. Rosaldo's clear writing style and gift for storytelling makes this one of the most readable introductions to the postmodern position in anthropology.
- Salzman, Philip Carl. 2001. *Understanding Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theory*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. A brief and highly readable introduction to theory in anthropology. Salzman divides the history of theory into six major themes: interdependence, agency, politics and economics, cultural patterns, social and cultural change, and critical advocacy. In each case he provides examples from the theories and theorists principally concerned with each theme, for example, feminism and postmodernism are discussed under the theme of critical advocacy.
- Stocking, George. 1995. *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888–1951*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. Stocking, one of the most important historians of anthropology, has edited a series of books on the history of anthropology. The books are collections of his essays as well as essays by leading current anthropologists. Other titles include *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology* (1992), *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic History* (1991), and *Romantic Motives: Essays on Anthropological Sensibility* (1989).



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Also, check out the Anthropology Resource Center for a wealth of learning materials that include interactive maps, video exercises, simulations and breaking news in Anthropology. Be sure to explore InfoTrac College Edition®, your online library that offers full-length articles from thousands of scholarly and popular publications. To reach the Anthropology Resource Center and InfoTrac, check the card packaged with your book for the access code. Then go to <http://www.thomsonedu.com> to create an account through 1pass™. If there is no card in your book, go to <http://www.thomsonedu.com> to purchase an access code.

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5

Language



Courtesy of Serena Nanda

Human language consists of words and gestures, as illustrated in this interaction between Israeli Bedouin in a marketplace.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Origins and Development of Human Language
Characteristics of Human Language
Acquiring Language
The Structure of Language
Phonology
Morphology

Syntax
Semantics: The Lexicon
Language and Culture
The Ethnography of Communication
Languages and Dialects
African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)
The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Nonverbal Communication
Language Change
Changing Sounds
Changing Syntax
Changing Lexicon

Many people have pondered the origins of language. According to the Ancient Greek historian Herodotus, around 600 BCE, the Pharaoh Psammetichus ordered two children to be raised by shepherds in a place where they could hear no human voices. Psammetichus reasoned that because they had no outside influence, these children would speak the original human language. Similar experiments were reportedly conducted by Frederick II of Germany in the 1200s and James IV of Scotland around 1500.

Find the results of these experiments on pages 118–119.

Communication is the act of transmitting a message that influences the behavior of another organism. **Communication**, and hence interaction, in all animal species depends on a consistent set of signals by which individuals convey information. These signals are channeled through visual, olfactory, auditory, and tactile senses.

Many animals use sounds and movements to communicate, or share, information. Such communication can be quite complex. For example, a scout honeybee uses stereotyped and patterned movements to communicate information about the direction and distance of a field of pollen-bearing flowers to others in its hive. But although bees can say a lot about where flowers are, they cannot say much about anything else. Crows caw as a signal of danger, and crickets chirp when they are ready to mate. Dolphins have “signature whis-

bles” that enable them to identify each other as individuals (Janik and Slater 1998). Among primates, far greater amounts of information can be transmitted about many more subjects.

Although communication among animals is critical to their survival, it is quite limited compared with human language. Animal systems of verbal communication are referred to as **call systems**. They are restricted to a set number of signals generally uttered in response to specific events. Human language, on the other hand, whether spoken, signed, or written, is capable of re-creating complex

communication The act of transmitting information.

call system The form of communication among nonhuman primates composed of a limited number of sounds that are tied to specific stimuli in the environment.

thought patterns and experiences in words. Our linguistic abilities allow enormous variety in how we act, think, and adapt to our surroundings. Without human language, human culture could not exist.

Language makes possible the exchange of abstract and highly complex thoughts, and these play a crucial role in the maintenance of the social relationships within human societies. Without language, it would be impossible to socialize children into the intricate workings of their cultures, to teach others how to make anything but very simple tools, or to pass on the traditions, rituals, myths, and religious beliefs that instill a sense of group identity and maintain social order.

Origins and Development of Human Language

Like the communication systems of all animals, human language reflects the particular character of our adaptation. Language and human culture probably evolved together. The more elaborate the culture of human ancestors grew, the more complex the system of communication among people had to become. Conversely, increases in the sophistication of communication led to increases in the complexity of culture (Salzmann 1993:88).

No one really knows how human language originated, but one of the most widely accepted theories of language origin was proposed by Charles Hockett in the 1970s. Hockett suggested that language evolved in two steps. The first step, which he called **blending**, occurred when human ancestors began to produce new calls by combining two old ones. Hockett called this kind of communication **prelanguage**. He pointed out that blending would greatly increase the number of possible messages in a call system but that a system based on blending would still be limited compared with modern language.

The second step in the evolution of language was what Hockett called **duality of patterning**. At this stage, human ancestors acquired the ability to produce arrangements of blended sounds. By this means, a limited number of blended sounds could be combined into a virtually limitless number of utterances (Hockett 1973:106). Although prelanguage and early language sounded nothing like modern language, we can use current-day English to get a sense of blending and duality of patterning. Blending

would be like combining two words to make a third word (for example, combining breakfast and lunch to make brunch). Duality of patterning would be like combining the sound units that compose the words breakfast and lunch to make a great many different new words, such as bench, bunch, chest, fun, less, lust, and so on (Salzmann 1993:84).

Estimates of when language emerged vary tremendously. Some analyses of fossil anatomy support a very early date for the evolution of language (Wilkins and Wakefield 1995). Schepartz (1993:119), for example, suggests that analyses of the brains and vocal tracts of human ancestors provide evidence for the existence of language at the time of the origin of the genus *Homo*, about 2 million years ago. However, most recent work on this question favors a more recent date for the appearance of language. Many anthropologists argue that language emerged with the appearance of modern human beings, between 200,000 and 150,000 years ago (Salzmann 1993; J. Clark 1989; Vihman and DePaolis 2000; McWhorter 2002). Bickerton (1998) has hypothesized that its appearance is more recent still, perhaps only about 50,000 years ago. He suggests that the emergence of language is correlated with the substantial improvement in tools that occurred at about this time.

Others insist that it occurred much earlier. The development of language required physical changes in the brain, the ear, and probably the vocal apparatus. Therefore, at least in theory, the fossil record may provide us with some information on when modern language emerged (P. Lieberman 1984; Laitman 1984; Falk 1984).

Characteristics of Human Language

Human language is a unique system of communication, distinct from any other animal communication system in three ways: conventionality, productivity, and displacement.

Conventionality describes the association between a meaningful sequence of sounds and an object, action, or idea. In human language, a limited number of sounds (hardly any language uses more than 50) are combined to refer to thousands of different things and ideas. In other words, sounds are symbols and they

stand for things simply because speakers of a language agree that they do. An animal is no more a dog than it is a chien (French), a perro (Spanish), or a kutta (Hindi).

It is conventionality—the capacity to separate the vocal symbol from its referent—that is absent in the call systems of most nonhuman animals. If, like them, we had to use a different sound for every item of meaning, we would wind up with either a very small vocabulary or an impossibly large number of sounds. It is the ability to recombine sounds to create new meanings that makes human language such an efficient and effective communication system.

Not only is human language efficient, it is also infinitely **productive**. Humans constantly forge new combinations of words. The following sentence uses words in a series that you have probably never heard before; yet it can be easily created and understood by any English-speaking person: “I don’t know the man who took the spoon that Horace left on the table. . .” (Southworth and Daswani 1974). Speakers of any human language can generate an almost infinite number of such sentences. The productive capacity of human language, sometimes called openness, makes it an extremely flexible instrument for communication, capable of conveying all kinds of new information.

The third distinguishing characteristic of human language is **displacement**—the ability of language to convey information about something not in the immediate environment. We can describe things that happened in the past, will or may happen in the future, exist only in the mind, or are hypothetical (may not happen at all). This feature of human language allows us to think abstractly.

Among other animals, communication is generally about the present and the particular: a particular threatening object is in a particular place at this particular time. Human language generalizes; it categorizes some objects and events as similar and other objects and events as dissimilar. Humans can talk about a particular tree (“The tree in front of my house needs trimming.”) and also about trees in general (“I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree.”). Language allows trees to be differentiated from bushes, bushes from flowers, and flowers from grass.

Hundreds of thousands of natural and manufactured objects have significance for human beings. Taking command of this incredibly complex world

means classifying objects and events in an orderly way. Human language is the most effective means for doing exactly that. These qualities of human language—conventionality, productivity, and displacement—allow people to make plans, understand and correct mistakes, and coordinate their activities. They also give our species a distinct advantage over other animals.

By translating experience into language, humans build up a storehouse of knowledge that can be transmitted to new members of the group. Although one may learn simple tasks by imitation, complex human behavior patterns, such as religion, law, and science, would not be possible without the symbolizing capacity of human language. It is through this capacity for accumulating experience and passing it on by teaching others in the social group that human culture has developed.

Although at one time many anthropologists and linguists believed that contemporary human languages could be classified into primitive and civilized, less complex and more complex, inferior and superior, we know today that this is not so. No language is better or worse than any other. All are similar in possessing a well-defined system of sounds, finite in number, that can be combined to form words, phrases, and sentences according to definite rules; and all languages can be used for abstract thought. Although the vocabulary of each language differs, every language reflects what is important in a particular physical and sociocultural environment and has a vocabulary adequate to deal

blending The combination of two calls to produce a new call; a hypothesized early phase in language evolution.

prelanguage A language of human ancestors consisting of blended sounds; a hypothesized phase in the evolution of language.

duality of patterning The ability to produce arrangements of blended sounds; the hypothesized second step in the evolution of language.

conventionality The notion that, in human language, words are only arbitrarily or conventionally connected to the things for which they stand.

productivity (1) The idea that humans can combine words and sounds into new, meaningful utterances they have never before heard. (2) Yield per person per unit of land.

displacement The capacity of all human languages to describe things not happening in the present.



A Closer Look

Nonhuman Primate Communication

Studies of nonhuman primate communication, especially gestures and vocalizations, have been done in the field (see Goodall 1968), among captive groups, and in laboratory settings (Miles 1978; Terrace 1979). Baboons in the wild constantly transmit information to one another. Lip-smacking, grunts, stares, poses, and screams are all part of their communication system. One long-term study of rhesus monkeys revealed more than 120 behavioral patterns that are used in communication.

Because chimpanzees are thought to be among humans' closest relations, their communication system is of great interest to social scientists. Wild chimpanzees, like other primates, exhibit a wide variety of communicative behaviors, such as the apparent use of gestures and physical contact to express feelings. For example, when they meet in the forest, "old friends" kiss and hug, pat each other on the head, or rest a hand on the thigh of the other. In addition to gestures, chimpanzees use calls to communicate. These calls are distinctive—a *waa* bark for danger, a series of soft moans for worry, a hooting to communicate excitement caused by the presence of an abundance of food, and screams and squeals of fear (V. Reynolds 1965). However, a primate call system is not the same as human language. Although intonation can intensify the meaning of a call—for example, from "danger" to "extreme danger"—a chimp can signal only immediate danger. A second important limitation is that parts of calls cannot be recombined to generate new information; each call appears to have just one meaning.

Whereas it is well established that primates use calls in the wild, anthropologists have been very interested in whether they have the capacity to learn humanlike language. One research strategy involves teaching languages (usually either a version of American Sign Language or a language specially designed for experimental purposes) to higher primates, especially chimpanzees and gorillas. The results of studies based on this strategy show that chimpanzees are capable of much more complex communication than they demonstrate in the wild. One famous ape language study concerned Washoe, a chimpanzee who was raised in a human environment and taught American Sign Language (Gardner and Gardner 1967). After learning about 10 signs, Washoe spontaneously began to produce new combinations of signs. Researchers claimed she was ultimately able to master more than 85 signs. Even more impressive, without human intervention, Washoe has been able to teach more than 50 of these signs to her adoptive son, Loulis (Fouts and Fouts 1989). Much attention has been focused recently on pigmy or bonobo chimpanzees. Researcher Sue Savage-Rumbaugh has taught Kanzi, a bonobo chimpanzee, a vocabulary of about 150 signs. She claims that he is able to arrange these signs into sentencelike strings that use a very basic syntax different from that of English. Further, researchers argue that Kanzi has responded appropriately to more than 500 sentences of spoken English (Savage-Rumbaugh, Shanker, and Taylor 1998).

Although the data from experiments with Washoe, Loulis, Kanzi, and many other primates are

with that environment. Vocabulary can be expanded in any language, with new words added as cultural change requires.



Acquiring Language

The fact that linguistic symbols are nearly all arbitrary—that is, they are conventions by which certain sound are attached to certain objects and events—emphasizes the social aspect of language.

In this sense, language is a part of culture. An individual learns a language only by interaction with other human beings who speak that language. An individual from any human population, if taken at birth and brought up in a different society, will grow up speaking the language of the group in which he or she is raised. The normal physical and mental apparatus of young children everywhere allows them to learn any language with equal ease.

If you find it difficult to learn a human language, you would think if he or she were not taught any

certainly impressive, they are also controversial. It is not clear whether the remarkable achievements of these animals reflect true language abilities or simply training and unconscious cuing and projecting on the part of researchers. In his attempt to train a chimpanzee, for example, Terrace (1983) reported a lack of any true humanlike language abilities. His study has been criticized by other researchers, however, who claim that it was not conducted within a proper social environment and that he used inappropriate research methods.

The theoretical question underlying the ape language studies is whether human language is a completely separate and unique form of communication. The experiments suggest that the answer to this question is extremely complicated. On the one hand, the results show that some primates, particularly bonobo chimpanzees, have much greater linguistic abilities than previously recognized. On the other hand, the experiments demonstrate that, despite enormous effort in training, no chimp, or any other animal, has ever developed greater linguistic skill than a very young child. There are two possible explanations. Perhaps chimps are learning language in ways that are similar to those used by humans, and they have simply reached the limit of their linguistic ability. If so, then language is a continuum: chimps and humans are similar in the nature of their linguistic abilities; humans just have much more of that ability. Alternatively, perhaps chimps learn language poorly because they must learn it in ways fundamentally different from those used by people. Maybe human infants

learn language spontaneously because their biology compels them to learn it, whereas chimps must learn by rote memorization. If that is the case, then their linguistic abilities are not only different in quantity but different in kind from our own.

One thing is clear: human language is the result of our own particular evolutionary history. Human language is unique in terms of its great complexity and the importance of its role in human adaptation. We may be able to teach other animals simple humanlike languages, but these languages are not essential to them. In contrast, the use of highly complex language is fundamental to human culture.



Courtesy of Colorado University

Some physical anthropologists study the behavior of our nearest primate relations. In this picture, Nim signs "double apple" to his trainer, Joyce Butler, at Colorado University.

particular language, the answer is none. Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, reported that the Egyptian pharaoh Psammetichus ordered two infants reared where they could hear no human voices in order to learn the original language of humankind. Psammetichus assumed that the children would "naturally" talk in the language of their ancestors. To his ears, their babbling sounded like Phrygian, which he concluded was the original human language. King James IV of Scotland supposedly tried a similar experiment, and he claimed that

the two infants spoke Hebrew. Biblical scholars of his time asserted that Adam and Eve had spoken Hebrew, and people believed that it was the original, natural language of all humans.

The development of human language in children is illustrated by cases of those brought up in isolation, such as Victor, the "wild child" of Aveyron (see Chapter 4). Victor could understand much of what he heard, but although he lived in human society from about age 12 until he was 40, he never learned to speak like others. The same

was true of Genie, a child discovered in the 1970s by social workers in California. Genie had been locked in an attic for the first 12 years of her life. With training and good living conditions, she rapidly acquired a large vocabulary but never mastered English syntax. For example, she spoke in sentences like “Genie have Momma have baby grow up” (Pinker 1994:292).

Cases such as Genie’s suggest that people raised in isolation are later able to learn vocabulary but are incapable of mastering the full grammar of their language. This implies that there is a critical period of language development for humans. All children are capable of learning language before the age of 6, but thereafter it becomes increasingly difficult, and after puberty it is very rare (Pinker 1994:293). You have probably experienced the time-limited nature of human ability to learn language. All college students (and indeed all people) speak the language they learned as children with ease and fluency. Most, however, struggle to learn a second language in college, and very few will ever learn to speak it with the proficiency of a native speaker.

Studies of how children learn language indicate that human beings may have an innate predisposition or mechanism for learning language patterns

or rules. A child exposed to a language automatically begins to learn it. Furthermore, all human children go through the same stages of language learning, which appear in the same sequence regardless of the language being learned. Children actually take the initiative in learning language. They recognize the sounds of their language within days after birth. By the time children are 6 months old their babbling includes consonant and vowel sequences and repetitive patterns.

Most adults do not consciously know the rules of the languages they speak, certainly not well enough to teach them to children. What happens is that children are surrounded by a flow of sounds, words, and intonations. They not only imitate these but also form combinations of words they have not heard before but that are consistent with the rules of the language. Even when children do not understand what they are saying, they can speak grammatically, using the different parts of speech in correct relation to one another.

The realization that children surrounded by language learn it spontaneously has led to an increased interest in the biological basis of human language. On one level, the human brain and body are clearly biologically adapted for language. Not only are the visual and auditory areas of the brain directly con-



Interaction between infants and others is critical to learning language. By the time children are six months old, their babbling includes many of the sounds and sequences of the language that surrounds them.

nected to each other, but both areas are directly connected to the area concerned with touch. Thus, human children are able to make the association between the visible image, the feel of an object, and the sound pattern or word used to designate it, even though the word itself is an arbitrary symbol. Furthermore, the structure of human air and food tracts is different from that of our closest ape relations. Among apes, food and air pass through separate passageways. As anyone who has ever tried to speak while eating knows, in humans the food and air tracts are connected. This increases the possibility of choking but also greatly expands our ability to make different sounds. At a second level, many linguists, led by Noam Chomsky, have speculated that there is a **universal grammar**—a basic set of principles, conditions, and rules that form the foundation of all languages (Chomsky 1975). Language is thus an innate property of the mind. Children learn it by applying this unconscious universal grammar to the sounds they hear. They process the sequences of words in their parents' speech to figure out their language's grammar. They model their utterances to those they hear until their version matches, or almost matches, the one being used around them (Pinker 1994).

One good way to understand universal grammar is by using the analogy of computer languages. A computer language is a set of symbols and rules in which instructions are written for a computer to follow (see Figure 5.1). Some exam-

ples are FORTRAN, Pascal, C, and BASIC. A programmer uses a language to write a program. Many different kinds of programs can be written using a single computer language. However, because they all ultimately derive from the same set of principles and rules, they have certain fundamental similarities. In the same way, Chomsky and his followers argue, each individual is born with an instinctive universal grammar, analogous to a programming language. A child “programs” his or her language by interacting verbally with other people. The result is that, although humans speak many different languages, they all share fundamental underlying similarities.

The computer analogy is not perfect. Programming a computer is a conscious, voluntary task. Children learn language automatically, apparently without conscious effort. Furthermore, no computer application has yet been able to equal the subtlety and complexity of human language.

There is substantial evidence for this view of language. Pinker (1994:52–53), for example, points out that people who have a rare genetic disease called Williams syndrome have extremely low IQs and cannot learn tasks such as tying their shoes or telling left from right. However, such

universal grammar A basic set of principles, conditions, and rules that underlie all languages.

```
TYPE STRING = PACKED ARRAY[1..40] OF CHAR;
PART = RECORD
    DESCR : STRING;
    ID : INTEGER;
    COST : REAL
END; (*RECORD*)
NAME = ARRAY[1..20] OF CHAR;

VAR INFILE, OUTFILE : TEXT;
MAIL : FILE OF NAME;
WORDS : FILE OF STRING;
INVTRY : FILE OF PART;
LETTER : NAME;
WORD : STRING;
APART : PART;
```

Figure 5.1

Many sorts of computer programs may be written in a single language such as Pascal. Though such programs may be very different, they will share underlying resemblances. Similarly, all human languages may share characteristics of an underlying universal grammar.

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people often speak very well. They understand complex sentences and are fond of unusual words. This strongly suggests that language competence is not part of general intelligence. Another bit of evidence comes from the study of hearing-impaired children. When hearing parents who have learned sign language raise hearing-impaired children, the children often learn to sign far better than the parents. The parents have generally learned sign language late in life and do not use it with particular fluency. But deaf children are able to learn sophisticated and grammatical sign language from their parents' often unsophisticated and ungrammatical version of it. This suggests that children must have an innate ability to process language (Pinker 1994:38).

Most anthropologists agree with Chomsky's notion of a biological basis for language but point out that mastery of vocabulary and syntax is only part of language learning. Children must also learn to be members of a speech community. That is, they must learn the social rules about how to use language to participate in their society. These rules include when to speak and when not to speak, whom to speak to and in what manner, what to talk about, and many other aspects of participation (Duranti 1997:20–21). Thus, although the acquisition of language is based in biology, the acceptable use of speech to participate in a community must be learned culturally. Additionally, there are many different cultural scenarios through which language is actually learned. For example, Locke (1994) notes that in societies where children are the focus of much attention, their desire to share a social and emotional relationship with the people around them may propel them to learn some aspects of language through imitation. As an example, he points to an infant talking on a toy telephone. The child "babbles, pauses, babbles again. . . . Although no words may be spoken, the infant obviously takes pleasure in acting and sounding like the rest of us" (Locke 1994:438). Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) note that American parents spend a great deal of time talking with their infants and encouraging them to speak. The Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, on the other hand, rarely talk to their infants at all, except for an occasional rebuke. Although American and Kaluli children learn to speak at the same speed and with equal competence, Kaluli and

American speech patterns may be different as a result of these early experiences. Thus, language acquisition, though not controlled by culture, may very well be influenced by it.



The Structure of Language

Every language has a structure: an internal logic and a particular relationship among its parts. The study of the structure and content of specific languages is called **descriptive** or **structural linguistics**. Descriptive or structural linguists assume that language can be separated from other aspects of culture and studied without any direct reference to the social context in which speaking takes place (Hickerson 1980:3). Their work suggests that the structure of any language consists of four subsystems: **phonology** (a system of sounds), **morphology** (a system for creating words from sounds), **syntax** (a system of rules for combining words into meaningful sentences), and **semantics** (a system that relates words to meaning).

Phonology

People use hundreds of different sounds in their various languages. The total set of sounds that are used in all of the world's languages are called the set of **phones**. A system of writing, called the **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)** has been devised to represent the sounds of all of the world's languages. Although you may have experienced great difficulty in correctly producing the sounds of a language you are learning, all humans are biologically capable of making all of the sounds of the world's languages. However, any particular language uses only a relatively small number of phones and those are the ones its speakers learn to make and recognize. Sounds used in one language may be absent in other languages. English, for example, does not use the click sound of the language of the Ju/'hoansi (!Kung) of southern Africa or many of the tonal sounds of Chinese. Furthermore, combinations of sounds are used in different ways in different languages. For example, an English speaker can easily pronounce the *ng* sound in thing at the end of an utterance but not at the beginning; how-

ever, this sound is used in the initial position in Bambara, a language of Africa (compare the ease of saying *thing* with the difficulty of saying *ngoni*, the name of a musical instrument in Bambara).

The set of phones used in a particular language is referred to as the phonemes of the language. A **phoneme** is the smallest sound unit that distinguishes meaning within a given language. An example will help to make this clear. In **Standard Spoken American English (SSAE)**, the English accent you generally hear on network news broadcasts, the sound /d/ in the English word *den* and /θ/ in *then* are phonemes. The words *den* and *then* have different meanings, and this difference in meaning is indicated by the initial consonant sound (/d/ or /θ/). Spanish also uses these sounds, but in Spanish these two sounds are **allophones**; that is, both phones indicate only one phoneme. In Spanish, the sounds /d/ and /θ/ may be slightly different, but they do not distinguish words from one another. Rather, these sounds are used in different contexts (/d/ at the beginning of a word and /θ/ in the middle of a word). A person who says *nada* using the consonant sound in *día* (the Spanish “d”) will still be understood to be saying “nothing,” although people may think the accent is “wrong” or “foreign.”

English has many cases in which a single phoneme may be indicated by many phones; as in Spanish, different sounds do not necessarily serve to distinguish words. For example, the English phoneme /t/ includes at least six different phones (Ladefoged 1982). Consider the /t/ sounds in *stick*, *tick*, and *little*. The /t/ sound in each of these words is different. As you say the /t/ sound in one word after another, you can feel your tongue change position. Now, hold your hand in front of your mouth and say *stick* and then *tick*. Although the /t/ in each of these words might sound the same to you, you will feel a puff of air as you say the /t/ in *tick* but not when you say *stick*. This demonstrates that the sounds are different, even though you may have a difficult time hearing the difference.

Most languages use only about 30 phonemes in their structure. By an unconscious process, a speaker not only learns to make the sounds used in his or her native language but also to differentiate between sounds that are significant (phonemes)

and those that are not. The ordinary person does not consciously think about the phonemic pattern of his or her language. Only when trying to learn another language, or hearing someone with a thick foreign accent speak our own, do we become aware of the variation in sounds and phonemes.

Morphology

The smallest unit of a language that has a meaning is called a **morpheme**. In English, -s, as in *dogs*, means “plural”; un- as in *undo*, means “negative”; -er, as in *teacher*, means “one who does.” Because -s, un-, and -er are used not by themselves but only in association with another unit of meaning, they are called **bound morphemes**. A morpheme that can stand alone, such as *giraffe*, is called a **free morpheme**.

A **word** is the smallest part of a sentence that can be said alone and still retain its meaning. Some words consist of a single morpheme. *Giraffe* is an

descriptive or structural linguistics The study and analysis of the structure and content of particular languages.

phonology The sound system of a language.

morphology A system for creating words from sounds.

syntax The part of grammar that has to do with the arrangement of words to form phrases and sentences.

semantics The subsystem of a language that relates words to meaning.

phone A sound made by humans and used in any language.

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) A system of writing designed to represent all the sounds used in the different languages of the world.

phoneme The smallest significant unit of sound in a language. A phonemic system is the sound system of a language.

Standard Spoken American English (SSAE) The form of English spoken by most of the American middle class.

allophones Two or more different phones that can be used to make the same phoneme in a specific language.

morpheme The smallest unit of language that has a meaning.

bound morpheme A unit of meaning that must be associated with another.

free morpheme A unit of meaning that may stand alone as a word.

word The smallest part of a sentence that can be said alone and still retain its meaning.



example of a single-morpheme word. *Teacher* has two morphemes, *teach* and *-er*. *Unlocks* has three morphemes: *un-*, *lock*, and *-s*.

Languages differ in the extent to which their words tend to contain only one, several, or many morphemes, as well as in their rules for combining morphemes. Some languages, such as English and Chinese, are **isolating**. They have relatively few morphemes per word, and the rules for combining morphemes are fairly simple. **Agglutinating** languages, such as Turkish, allow a great number of morphemes per word and have highly regular rules for combining them. **Synthetic** languages such as Mohawk or Inuktitut (an Arctic Canadian language) have words with a great many morphemes and complex, highly irregular rules for their combination. In agglutinating or synthetic languages, translating a single word may require an entire English sentence. For example, the Inuktitut word *qasuirrsarvigssarsingitluinarnarpuq* contains 10 morphemes and is best translated as “someone did not find a completely suitable resting place” (Bonvillian 1997:19).

Even in isolating and agglutinating languages, the rules used to combine morphemes into words can be quite complex. For example, one of the rules of English morphology is that a plural is formed by adding the morpheme *-s* following the element that is being pluralized. Things are not quite that easy, however. In English, the plural of *dog* is made by adding *-s*, but the plural of *child* is made by adding *-ren*. A grammar therefore specifies not only the general rules of morpheme combination but also exceptions to the rules and the rules for different classes of exceptions.

Syntax

Syntax is the arrangement of words to form phrases and sentences. Languages differ in their syntactic structures. In English, word order is important because it conveys meaning. The syntax of the English language gives a different meaning to these two sentences: “The dog bit the man.” and “The man bit the dog.” However, word order is not equally important in all languages. In Latin, for example, the subject and object of a sentence are indicated by word endings rather than word order.

When they analyze the syntactic structure of a language, descriptive linguists establish the different form classes, or parts of speech, for that lan-

guage. All languages have a word class of nouns, but different languages have different subclasses of nouns, frequently referred to as genders. Gender classification can apply to verbs, indefinite and definite articles, and adjectives, all of which must agree with the gender classification of the noun.

The use of the term gender seems appropriate in the Romance languages (Spanish, French, and Italian), as well as in many others, because nouns are divided into masculine and feminine subclasses. In addition to these, German and Latin have a neuter subclass. However, some languages have a great many different subclasses. For example, Kivunjo, a language spoken in East Africa, has 16 subclasses (Pinker 1994:27). Although the word gender may be used to describe these classes, they have nothing to do with sex roles. Papago, a Native American language, provides another example of a linguistic gender division that has nothing to do with sex roles. The Papago divide all the features of the world into two genders, or classes: “living things” and “growing things.” Living things include all animated objects, such as people and animals; growing things refer to inanimate objects, such as plants and rocks.

Applying the rules of grammar turns meaningless sequences of words into meaningful utterances, but sometimes grammar seems to have a meaning of its own. We can recognize a sentence as grammatical even if it makes no sense. To use a now classic example (Chomsky 1965), consider the following sentences: “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.” “Furiously sleep ideas green colorless.” Both sentences are meaningless in English. But the first is easily recognized as grammatical by an English speaker, whereas the second is both meaningless and ungrammatical. The first sentence has the parts of speech in English in their proper relation to each other, so it seems as if it should make sense. The second sentence does not.

Semantics: The Lexicon

The total stock of words in a language is called a lexicon. The relationship between culture and language is clearly seen in a **lexicon**. In industrial societies, the lexicon contains many words reflecting technological complexity and specialization. In technologically simpler societies, the lexicon has few such words. The lexicon of any culture reflects what is important in that culture. For exam-

ple, whereas the average American can name only about 50 to 100 species of plants, members of societies based on hunting and gathering or on gardening can typically name 500 to 1000 species of plants (Harris 1989:72). Such lexical specialization is not limited to nonindustrial societies. Germans in Munich have a vocabulary of more than 70 words to describe the strength, color, fizziness, clarity, and age of beer (Hage 1972, cited in Salzman 1993:256).

Because vocabulary reflects the way people with a certain culture perceive their environment, anthropologists use it as a clue to understanding experience and reality in different cultures. Through vocabulary, anthropologists attempt to get an insider's view of the world less influenced by the anthropologist's own classification system. This perspective has long been used in studying the vocabulary for kinship, which gives good clues to the nature of family relations in a culture. In English, for example, the term brother-in-law can include my sister's husband, my husband's brother, and the husbands of all my husband's sisters. The use of a single term for all of these relations reflects the similarity of a woman's behavior toward all the men in those different kinship statuses. Hindi, a language of North India, has separate terms for my sister's husband (*behnoi*), my husband's elder brother (*jait*), my husband's younger brother (*deva*), and my husband's sisters' husbands (*nandoya*). The variety of words in Hindi reflects the fact that a woman treats the members of each of these categories differently.



Language and Culture

In the early years of the twentieth century, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure theorized that language could be best understood by separating it into *langue* and *parole*, or language and speech. He argued that *langue* (language) was an arbitrary and abstract system of signs that existed independently of any speaker. *Parole* (speech) was the actual performance of language by an individual speaker. In the sections you have just read, we have been examining language as an abstract system. However, anthropologists are also interested in understanding speech performance: the actual encounters that involve verbal (and also accompanying nonverbal) communication between human beings.

The Ethnography of Communication

Sociolinguistics is the study of the performance of communication. The sociolinguist attempts to identify, describe, and understand the cultural

isolating language A language with relatively few morphemes per word, and fairly simple rules for combining them.

agglutinating language A language that allows a great number of morphemes per word and has highly regular rules for combining them.

synthetic language A language that has words with a great many morphemes and complex, highly irregular rules for their combination.

lexicon The total stock of words in a language.



Languages build vocal vocabularies around ideas and things important to their speakers. Germans in Munich have more than 70 words to describe beer.

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Ethnography

The Indian and the “Whiteman”

Understanding the relationship between language and ethnocentrism is an essential part of the ethnography of communication. The following is a joke told by the Western Apache. It shows how cultural values are unintentionally encoded in verbal and nonverbal communication. The teller of the joke is poking fun at what he sees as European-American ethnocentrism. It is for the reader to determine whether the joke teller is being ethnocentric as well.



Where you buy them? Sure pretty good boots! I glad . . . (At this point, J breaks into laughter. K joins in. L shakes his head and smiles. The joke is over.)

This joke is one of an inventive repertoire among the Western Apache known as “Whiteman” jokes—elaborate satirical routines that the Apache do for one another as a way of expressing their sense of difference from European Americans. These jokes are part of a process of social criticism and self-definition. In them, the Apache try to make sense of the whites with whom they have had

Scene: It is a clear, hot evening in

July. J and K have finished their meal. The children are sitting nearby. There is a knock at the door. J rises, answers the knock, and finds L standing outside.

J (playing the part of the Whiteman): Hello, my friend! How're you doing? How you feeling, L? You feeling good? (J now turns in the direction of K and addresses her.)

J: Look who here, everybody! Look who just come in. Sure, it's my Indian friend, L. Pretty good, all right. (J slaps L on the shoulder and, looking him directly in the eyes, seizes his hand and pumps it wildly up and down.)

J: Come right in, my friend! Don't stay outside in the rain. Better you come in right now. (J now drapes his arm around L's shoulder and moves him in the direction of a chair.)

J: Sit down! Sit right down! Take your loads off you ass. You hungry? You want crackers? Maybe you want some beer? You want some wine? Bread? You want some sandwich? How about it? You hungry? I don't know. Maybe you sick. Maybe you don't eat again long time. (K has now stopped what she is doing and is looking on with amusement. L has seated himself and has a look of bemused resignation on his face.)

J: You sure looking good to me, L. You looking pretty fat! Pretty good all right! You got new boots?

to deal for a long time and to confer order on Apache experiences with European Americans. In these jokes, Apaches play at being white men, imitating them in speech and nonverbal gestures and behavior.

When Western Apaches stage joking imitations of whites, they portray them as gross incompetents in the conduct of social relations. Judged according to Apache standards of what is right and normal, the joke teller's actions are intended to seem extremely peculiar and wrong. This joke shows the different ways in which whites appear to the Apache as ignorant of the proper way to comport themselves in public situations.

In the first line of the joke, the use of “my friend” indicates the Apache view that European Americans use this word much too loosely, even for people whom it is clear they hold in low esteem. Among the Apache, a friend is a person one has known for many years and with whom one has strong feelings of mutual confidence and respect. “How you feeling?” as a question to a mere acquaintance is a breach of personal privacy for the

Apache and indicates an unnatural curiosity about the inner feelings of other people.

The second line of the joke criticizes what the Apache view as the unnecessary and embarrassing attention given to the individual in social situations by whites. Among the Apache, entering and leaving a group should be done unobtrusively to avoid making anyone feel socially isolated and uncomfortable. In the use of the personal name, L, the joke teller, contrasts the Apache view of a name as an item of individually owned and valued property with the European-American behavior, which uses such names loosely and without propriety. Also, the repetition of the name indicates the Apache view that Whitemen must have bad memories, because they continually remind themselves whom they are talking to. The humor is heightened when J slaps L on the shoulder and looks him in the eye. The Apache view such behavior as aggressive and insolent. Among them, adult men are careful to avoid touching each other in public, as this is viewed as an unwarranted encroachment on the private territory of the self.

In the third and fourth lines, J demands that the visitor immediately sit down and eat. These actions suggest that the European American is bossy and imply that the guest is a person of little account whose wishes may be safely ignored. The rapid-fire questions and repetitions about food are viewed by the Apache as a form of coercion, and the line “Maybe you sick” contrasts with the Apache belief that talking about trouble can increase its chances of happening.

In the final line, the attention J pays to L’s physical appearance and new boots is another example to the Apache of how white men force others into self-consciousness and embarrassment. Because this kind of remark appears to be well received among European Americans, however, the Apache conclude that white men are deeply absorbed with

the surfaces of themselves, an absorption that is related to their need to be regarded as separate and distinct from other people.

To the Apache, white men often seem insensitive in the ways they conduct themselves in the presence of Indian people. The Whitemen stories are a rare opportunity for European Americans to be on the receiving end of a “native” perspective.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. The Whiteman joke includes numerous examples of inappropriate speech in Apache culture. As the analysis shows, knowing what is inappropriate speech and why it is improper involves considerable understanding of the way the Apache see the world. What sorts of things are inappropriate speech in American culture, and what do they tell you about the way Americans see the world?
2. For better or for worse, ethnic jokes are common in American culture. The success of such a joke often depends on the ability of the teller to effectively imitate the accent and linguistic style of the people about whom the joke is told. Why is imitating accents central to these jokes? What sorts of information are conveyed by such imitation?
3. In telling this Whiteman joke, J is doing a parody of European Americans, commenting on their ethnocentrism in their dealings with Western Apaches. Is J, by doing this, also being ethnocentric? If so, is there any difference between J’s ethnocentrism and that of the people he parodies?

Source: Joke from Keith Basso, *Portraits of “The Whiteman.”* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

patterning of different speech events within a speech community (society or subsociety). The ways in which people actually speak is highly dependent on the context of their speech. For example, a political speech has different purposes and is limited by different norms from those for a political discussion among friends. And different cultures have different norms regarding political speeches: who can participate as speaker and audience, the appropriate topics for such a speech, what kinds of cultural themes can be used, where such speeches can take place, the relationship between the speaker and hearer, the language used in a multilingual community, and so forth.

Sociolinguists are interested in the ways in which speech varies depending on a person's position in a social structure or social relationship. In some cultures, different speech forms are used depending on whether the speaker and hearer are intimate friends, acquaintances on equal footing, or people of distinctly different social statuses. French, German, and Spanish, among other languages, have formal and informal pronouns and conjugations that are not found in English. The rules for their use vary from culture to culture. In France, parents use the informal term to address their children, but children use the formal term to their parents. In the Spanish spoken in Costa Rica, many people use three forms: the informal *tú* may be used by an adult speaking to a child (or lover), the formal *usted* is used among strangers, and an intermediate term, *vos*, may be used among friends. In India, the status of a husband is higher than that of a wife, and among most Hindi speakers a wife never addresses her husband by his name (certainly not in public) but uses a roundabout expression that would translate into English as something like "I am speaking to you, sir."

In many speech communities, the ordinary person knows and uses more than one language. Sociolinguists are interested in the different contexts in which one or the other language is used. The language a person chooses to use can be a way of solidifying ethnic or familial identity or of distancing oneself from another person or group.

An interesting example of this is Apache "Whiteman" stories. This speech performance, which developed out of the interaction between Native Americans and the larger society, is described in "Ethnography" on pages 126–127. The fact that Whiteman stories are never told to white men un-

derscores the point that the anthropologist must hear people speak in their natural settings in order to grasp their full linguistic creativity.

Languages and Dialects

All human groups have language, and all languages are equally sophisticated and serve the needs of their speakers equally well. A language cannot make its speakers more or less intelligent, sexist, sophisticated, or anything else. Individual knowledge of vocabulary may vary, as may the artfulness with which a person communicates, but every human being speaks with equal grammatical sophistication. Despite this, in American society (and many others with social hierarchies), some usages are considered "correct" and others are taken to be examples of poor grammar. Two examples with which most people are familiar are the use of *ain't* and the use of the double negative, as in "I don't got no money." In fact, there is no scientific reason why "is not" is superior to "ain't" or why "I don't have any money" is superior to "I don't got no money." In either case, the constructions are logical and consistent, and there is no linguistic reason to prefer one over the other. The fact that in each case one is labeled "proper" and the other is considered poor construction is a social rather than a linguistic issue. (By the way, double-negative constructions such as "I don't got no . . ." are not examples of two negatives' making a positive. Linguistically, they are simply two-part negatives, which are used in many of the world's languages. For example, French uses the words *ne* and *pas* to make a negative, as in "Je ne parle pas," meaning "I do not speak." Triple or even quadruple negatives are common in the world's languages.)

In a hierarchical society, the most powerful group generally determines what is "proper" in language. The grammatical constructions used by the socially dominant group are considered to be a language, and deviations from them are often called **dialects**. Linguist Max Weinreich has defined a language as a dialect with an army and a navy (quoted in Pinker 1994:28). By this he meant that whether something is considered a language or a dialect is determined by the power of those who speak it rather than by any objective linguistic criteria.

Some of the most often misunderstood languages are pidgins and creoles. **Pidgins** are languages of contact and trade. When societies that

speak different languages meet for trade, they often develop a new language that combines features of each of their original languages. No one speaks a pidgin as a first language, and the vocabulary of pidgins is often limited to the words appropriate to the sorts of interactions engaged in by the people speaking it.

Pidgins are part of a historical process of language change. As culture contact deepens and time passes, pidgins are sometimes lost, and people speak only the language of the dominant power. Additionally, pidgins may change into creoles. A **creole** is a language composed of elements of two or more different languages. But, unlike a pidgin, people do speak creoles as their first languages and the vocabulary of these languages is as complex and rich as that of any others. Many creoles were formed as Europeans expanded into Asia and the Americas. In many cases, members of the upper classes speak the language of the dominant European power. Lower classes speak creoles. Haiti is a good example of this. There, from 70 to 90 percent of the population speaks only Creole but almost all governmental and administrative functions are performed in French, the language of the elite.

As the examples above suggest, usages in language are closely related to issues of hierarchy and power. In a classic study, William Labov (1972) noted that elites and working-class people have different vocabularies and pronounce words differ-

ently. Those forms associated with higher socioeconomic status are considered “proper.” But speech forms associated with lower socioeconomic status are stigmatized and considered incorrect.

Labov found that speakers often vary their vocabulary and pronunciation in different contexts and that the degree of such variation is related to their social class. At the bottom and top of the social hierarchy there is little variation. Elites use privileged forms of speech and the poor use stigmatized forms. However, members of the lower-middle class often show great variation in speech pattern, using the stigmatized forms in casual speech but the privileged forms in careful speech. One interpretation of this is that people at the bottom and top of the social hierarchy do not vary their speech because, for better or for worse, their position is stable; the very poor do not believe they have much chance to rise, and the wealthy are

sociolinguistics A specialization within anthropological linguistics that focuses on speech performance.

dialect Grammatical constructions that deviate from those used by the socially dominant group in a society.

pidgin A language of contact and trade composed of features of the original languages or two or more societies. (Compare with creole.)

creole A first language that is composed of elements of two or more different languages. (Compare with pidgin.)



Pidgins develop when people who speak different languages come together. This church banner, in Papua New Guinea where people speak over 750 different languages, means “Jesus is Lord.”

secure in their positions. Members of the lower-middle class, however, are concerned with raising their social position and therefore copy the speech patterns of the wealthy in some social situations. However, they are also concerned with maintaining connections to family and friends, and therefore use stigmatized speech with them.

In any case, Labov's study makes clear what many of us know but do not like to admit: we do judge people's social status by the way they speak. The function of speech is not limited to communicating information. What we say and how we say it are also ways of telling people who we are socially or, perhaps, who we would like to be.

The relationship between speech and social hierarchy has been a particularly important issue in American society. In the 1950s and 1960s, educational psychologists argued that the poor, and particularly members of ethnic minorities, were handicapped by their language. They suggested that the general cultural deprivation of such people led them to use language that was coarse, simple, and irrational. Furthermore, the use of impoverished language perpetuated their economic poverty and social marginalization. Such scholars argued that if people could be taught to speak standard English they would be able to think logically, and this ability would lift them from poverty (Bereiter and Engelmann 1966; Engelmann and Engelmann 1966).

African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)

Social critics of the 1960s considered many varieties of English to be inferior, including Appalachian English, Dutchified Pennsylvania English, Hawaiian Creole, Gullah, and emergent Hispanic Englishes. However, **African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)**—also known as **Ebonics** or **Black English Vernacular (BEV)**—spoken by many African Americans, is perhaps the most widely known stigmatized variety. AAVE has deep roots in the African-American community, and although not all Americans of African origin speak it, it has become emblematic of blacks in the minds of many Americans. For various reasons, it is particularly deep-rooted among African Americans of working-class backgrounds, whether rural or urban. This form of speech has been heavily criticized. Arthur Jensen (1973) even argued that the deficiencies of AAVE provided

evidence for genetic intellectual inferiority of Africans.

Research beginning in the 1960s demonstrated that notions about the linguistic inferiority of AAVE were baseless. It is indeed a different variety from Standard Spoken American English (SSAE), the language spoken by most of the American middle class, but it is in no way linguistically inferior. Like every other language, it is fully systematic, grammatical, and symbolic, and is certainly no barrier to abstract thought. A good example, taken from the work of William Labov (1972:217), is the following interview with Larry, a 15-year-old core member of the Jets, an inner-city street gang.

Interviewer: But, just say that there is a God, what color is he? White or black?

Larry: Well, if it is a God . . . I wouldn't know what color, I couldn't say—couldn't nobody say what color he is or really would be.

Interviewer: But now, jus' suppose there was a God.

Larry: Unless'n they say . . .

Interviewer: No, I was jus' saying jus' suppose there is a God, would he be white or black?

Larry: He'd be white, man.

Interviewer: Why?

Larry: Why? I'll tell you why. 'Cause the average whitey out here got everything, you dig? And the [black man] ain't got shit, y'know? Y'understan'? So-um-for-in order for that to happen, you know it ain't no black God that's doin' that bullshit.

It is clear from this dialogue that there is nothing wrong with Larry's thinking. The argument he presents is sophisticated and logical.

Although Larry's English does not sound like SSAE, it is neither less complicated nor less abstract. It simply follows different rules. Some of the changes in the rules of syntax are quite rudimentary. For example, where SSAE uses the word *there* as a meaningless subject ("If there is a God"), AAVE uses the word *it* ("If it is a God"). Like SSAE, AAVE allows certain kinds of contractions. In both SSAE and AAVE in certain circumstances you may contract the verb *to be*. In SSAE, for instance, "you are" may be replaced with "you're," or "I am" may become "I'm." In AAVE "If you are bad" may be replaced with "If you bad" (see also other differences be



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Ebonics

Anthropologists have played a vital role in the controversy surrounding the place of African-American Vernacular English, or Ebonics, in educating American children. The story goes back to the 1970s in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In that year, a federal court ruled that the city's public schools were denying African-American elementary-school students their civil rights by failing to teach them to speak, read, and write standard English as an alternative to the Black English (now called African-American Vernacular English or AAVE) that was their native dialect. The court said that failure on the part of the schools to recognize and use AAVE as a basis for teaching standard English denied African-American children an equal opportunity to succeed in school and thus in later life.

An important part of the expert testimony was provided by William Labov, a sociolinguist who had conducted extensive ethnographic research in the language patterns of speakers of nonstandard English in the United States. Labov's research showed that AAVE is a distinct

linguistic system, as capable as standard English of expressing complex and abstract ideas, rather than an impoverished and deficient language. Labov argued that AAVE has many features in common with Southern dialects, and that it also has distinct marks of an Afro-Caribbean ancestry, reflecting earlier origins of the African-American community (Labov 1983:31).

Labov's testimony focused on the elements of AAVE that interfered with its speakers' learning how to read and speak in standard English. Based primarily on Labov's testimony, the judge charged the Ann Arbor school district with finding ways to provide its teachers with training in AAVE so that they could more adequately teach children who speak it to read and function in standard English.

The issue reemerged in December 1996, when the school board of Oakland, California, drawing on Labov's research, passed a resolution that encouraged teachers to understand and use Ebonics (AAVE) in the teaching of standard English. The school board's resolution ignited a

(continued)

tween AAVE and SSAE can be explained with similarly simple rules. The analysis of AAVE demonstrates that this variation of English is rich and potent, with a distinct, consistent pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Further, through the works of authors such as Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, and many others, it has enormously enriched American literature (Rickford and Rickford 2000).

Despite the fact that objectively AAVE is simply a language like any other, it is stigmatized in American society and since the 1970s, it has frequently been a political issue. You can read more about the controversies surrounding AAVE in the "Anthropology Makes a Difference" box in this chapter. Marcyliena Morgan (2004) notes that people in families that speak both AAVE and SSAE don't necessarily value one over the other. In fact, AAVE may deliver "formal and informal knowledge as well as local knowledge and wisdom." On the other hand, as adults they are aware that in the dominant cultural system

AAVE is stigmatized and symbolizes deviance and ignorance. SSAE, on the other hand, symbolizes normality and intelligence. Like others who are bilingual, they must engage in code switching. **Code switching** is the ability of speakers of two languages to move seamlessly between them. Those who code switch use each language in the setting that is appropriate to it. To successfully navigate both their own communities and the dominant community, they must be acutely aware of the politics of language.

African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) A form of English spoken by many African Americans, particularly among those of rural or urban working-class backgrounds.

Ebonics see African-American Vernacular English.

Black English Vernacular (BEV) see African-American Vernacular English.

Created with code switching The ability of individuals who speak multiple languages to move seamlessly between them.



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Anthropology Makes a Difference—continued

nationwide furor (Monaghan 1997). Legislators in several states introduced bills banning the teaching of Ebonics. Hearings were held in the U.S. Senate, where Senator Faircloth of North Carolina denounced Ebonics as “absurd” and described it as “political correctness gone wild” (Sanchez 1997). An editorialist for the *Atlanta Constitution* announced, “This movement is an ‘Ebonic plague’ that will kill this country faster and deader than our old enemies in Moscow ever dreamed of doing” (Matthews 1997). As in the earlier case, sociolinguists played an important role in the controversy. Labov, as well as several others, provided critical testimony at the Senate hearings. The Linguistic Society of America, at its January 1997 annual meeting, unanimously approved a resolution stating that the Oakland decision was both linguistically and pedagogically sound (Rickford 1997). The controversy became so intense that the Oakland school board dropped the word Ebonics (though not the general substance of its resolution) from its proposals in April 1997.

In the heat of debate over Ebonics, many critical points seemed to be lost. First, linguists had shown in the 1960s and 1970s that Ebonics was a distinctive and complex language. Second, no one suggested that students should simply be taught Ebonics. Rather, the school board pro-

posed the use of Ebonics to help students read and write in Standard American English. Finally, numerous studies have shown that using Ebonics to teach reading and writing in Standard American English is more effective than conventional techniques (Rickford 1997). On the other hand, work in the 1990s by William Labov (1998) showed that while the English spoken by many white Americans has picked up many phrases from AAVE, white and black English have become more rather than less divergent. Fewer African-Americans speak SSAE today than did in the 1960s (Gates 2004). Although the precise role Ebonics should play in the classroom remains an important subject for debate, the Ebonics controversy shows both the importance of anthropological research and the need for anthropologists to keep their findings in the public eye.



John Rickford of Stanford University is a leading scholar on Ebonics. He maintains a large website where you can read about Ebonics and the Oakland schools controversy (<http://www.stanford.edu/~rickford>).

Other good resources are pages for dialects and Ebonics at the Center for Applied Linguistics (<http://www.cal.org>) and the National Institutes of Health working group on African American English (<http://www.umass.edu/aae>).

Most speakers of AAVE, through school, exposure to mass media, and the need to work in the world outside the local community, become effective speakers of several varieties of English. However, some AAVE speakers do not become fluent in SSAE, leaving them at a disadvantage in their attempts to operate beyond the local community.

The study of AAVE shows the advantages of an anthropological approach. Much of the misunderstanding of AAVE occurred because it was studied in schools and in laboratory situations—places representing the dominant SSAE culture and often viewed as hostile by AAVE speakers. Linguists could only get an accurate appreciation of AAVE when they studied it within its own cultural context. This

very anthropological perspective is similar to that presented in other studies in this chapter. As we saw with the Apache Whiteman story, language use differs depending on its audience, and it may be only within the ethnic community that the linguistic capacities of speakers are fully realized.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

As we have seen, the use of language is a powerful cultural force. Patterns of usage are strongly implicated in determining boundaries of groups, as well as in indicating, establishing, and reinforcing hierarchical relations both within and among groups. Language is a cultural force in which individuals

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are introduced to their physical and social environments. Anthropologists have long wondered if language is an independent force, critically affecting how people perceive and conceptualize the world. In the first half of the twentieth century, Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf investigated the ways in which the use of a particular lan-

guage affected the way its speakers understood the world. Sapir and Whorf believed that languages had a compelling influence on thought. Sapir wrote:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone . . . but very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. . . . The fact . . . is that the

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“real world” is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. (1949b:162)

In other words, he believed that language played a critical role in determining the way people understand the world. It then followed that people who spoke different languages must understand the world in different ways. Sapir and Whorf proposed a set of ideas that have come to be called the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**. The hypothesis proposes that concepts such as time, space, and matter are not the same for all people but are conditioned by the structure of our language. Thus, we perceive the world in certain ways because we talk about the world in certain ways. Further, cultural ideas and behavioral norms are encoded in language. Thus, we act the way we do because we speak a certain language.

Consider, for example, the notion of missing a person in French and English. In English, we say “I miss you.” I, the person doing the missing, am the subject of the sentence, you, the person being missed, are the object. In French, however, the order is reversed: you say “Tu me manques.” The person being missed is the subject and the person doing the missing is the object of the sentence. If we translated the sentence literally, the French say “you miss me” instead of “I miss you.” If we follow Sapir and Whorf, we would expect that the result of this structural difference is that French speakers and English speakers have different understandings of what it means to miss a person.

It’s not at all clear that speakers of French and English really do understand missing a person in different ways. Few anthropologists today would argue that language has an iron grip on our thinking, a position called strong determinism. But most would agree with weak determinism, the notion that language is closely related to culture and does influence our understanding of the world. For example, the words chosen in advertising campaigns and in political debates are clearly designed to cause us to think about products and candidates in certain ways.

Anthropologists have attempted to test the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis with mixed success. Harry Hoijer (1964) applied it to the Navajo. Many aspects of Navajo grammar (such as the conjugation of active

verbs and the reporting of actions and events) emphasize movement. Hoijer found parallels to this linguistic emphasis on motion in many aspects of Navajo culture. In Navajo mythology, for example, gods and cultural heroes restlessly move from one place to another, seeking by their motion to perfect the universe. However, this sort of evidence is quite weak. Consider that like their Navajo counterparts, Greek cultural heroes such as Odysseus move restlessly from place to place, but the Greek language is utterly different from Navajo.

The use of grammatical gender presents yet other difficulties for the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In the Romance languages, it is necessary to distinguish masculine from feminine nouns; in Chinese, Turkish, and Farsi, it is not. This difference is interesting, but it tells us nothing about relations between men and women in these cultures. And the lack of gender classes for nouns and adjectives in English does not correspond to any culturally perceived equality between male and female.



Nonverbal Communication

In addition to speaking, all humans use a variety of other methods to communicate. Birdwhistell, one of the pioneers of research in nonverbal communication, argued that in any social situation, almost two-thirds of communicated meaning comes from nonverbal cues (1955). To quote Edward Hall (1959), another influential analyst of nonverbal behavior, “time talks” and “space speaks.” The study of nonverbal communication is divided into numerous fields—among them, artifacts, haptics, chronemics, proxemics, and kinesics. Although a full analysis of these is beyond the range of this book, we will present and discuss each of them briefly.

In the context of nonverbal communication, the analysis of artifacts refers to understanding the messages sent by clothing, jewelry, tattoos, piercings, and other visible body modifications. For example, among the Tuareg, a people of the Sahara whose men are veiled, the position of the veil is an important part of nonverbal communication (R. Murphy 1964). A Tuareg man lowers his

veil only among intimates and people of lower social status. When he is engaged in an encounter in which he does not wish to commit himself to a particular course of action, he wears the veil very high on the bridge of his nose so that the other party can read as little as possible from his facial expression. In the United States, we are very aware of the use of artifacts to send messages about ourselves. A pierced ear means something different from a pierced lip or tongue. Some students come to class in torn jeans and T-shirts; others wear designer labels or a white shirt and tie. All are trying to send messages about who they are.

Haptics refers to the study and analysis of touch. Touch carries important meaning in all societies. Handshakes, pats on the back or head, kisses, and hugs are all ways we communicate by touch. Many American males, for example, believe that much is communicated by the particular quality of a handshake. Strong, firm handshakes are taken to indicate power, self-confidence, and strength of character, whereas weak or limp handshakes may be interpreted as suggesting lack of interest, indecisiveness, or effeminacy. Americans generally feel free to use their left hands for virtually anything, but in many cultures, particularly in the Middle East, people scrupulously avoid the use of their left hands for eating, handling money, and many other social interactions. The left hand is considered unclean, and using it is generally unacceptable.

Analysts have frequently divided the world's societies into "contact" cultures and "noncontact" cultures (E. Hall 1966; Montagu 1978). Contact cultures are found in the Middle East, India, the Mediterranean, and Latin America. In these regions, people interact at very close distances and touch one another frequently. In "noncontact" cultures, including those of northern Europe, North America, and Japan, people generally avoid physical contact. The contact/noncontact dichotomy is simplistic and does not accurately reflect the variability and complexity of actual interaction. For example, people in Western "noncontact" cultures in certain instances may expect relatively high degrees of contact when conversing, even with strangers (Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall 1996).

In many cultures, there is a strong relationship between touch and power. In public social relationships, the person who touches another is likely to have more power than the person who is touched. Thus, bosses touch their subordinates, but workers are not likely to touch their bosses. Research shows

that in the United States touchers are likely to be perceived as more assertive, strong, and dominant than nontouchers (Leathers 1997:126).

Researchers interested in **chronemics** study the different ways that cultures understand time and use it to communicate. People in different cultures are likely to have different notions of the importance of time. For example, in North American culture, what are we saying to a person when we show up for an appointment 40 minutes late? Are we saying something different if we show up 10 minutes early? Is a Latin American who shows up late for an appointment saying the same thing?

The American concern with the precise measurement of time is suggested by the prominence of clocks in public places such as town squares and on banks and other commercial buildings. Most Americans wear watches and make sure that they are set accurately. Ferraro (1994) notes that the American obsession with accurate timing and schedules is often viewed negatively by members of other cultures. Keeping to a schedule often means rushing through appointments and thus sacrificing meaningful interpersonal relations to the rigors of timing.

Edward Hall (1983) divided cultures into those with monochronic time (M-time) and those with polychronic time (P-time). The United States and northern European countries exemplify M-time cultures. Hall argued that people in M-time cultures think of time as inflexible and organize their lives according to time schedules; in P-time cultures, time is understood as fluid; much more emphasis is placed on social interaction than on schedules, and human activities are not expected to proceed like clockwork. According to Victor (1992), time in P-time cultures simply exists. Being late for an appointment conveys virtually none of the unspoken messages that the same action would in an M-time culture.

Like the contact/noncontact dichotomy, the division of cultures into M-time and P-time seems to capture a basic truth about cultural variation but is overly simplistic. There is enormous variability within cultures. For example, how long an individual is kept waiting for an appointment may have more to do with power than with either polychronic or monochronic perceptions of time. People may be on time for their superiors but keep their subordinates waiting.

Proxemics is the study of social space, which is understood differently in different cultures. Americans, for example, focus on objects and think of the space between them as empty, whereas

Japanese tend to focus more on space and assign specific meanings to it. For example, Americans name streets in their cities, whereas Japanese name the intersections (Leathers 1997).

Researchers in proxemics identify three different sorts of space (E. Hall 1968, Rapoport 1982). First is the built environment: homes, buildings, parks, and how they are arranged. Such arrangements are referred to as fixed-feature space. For example, the number of rooms it is appropriate to have in a house and the relation of these rooms to one another are aspects of fixed space that vary from culture to culture. The second type, semi-fixed-feature space, refers to the placement of furniture, equipment, and decoration within an environment. Furniture, for example, has very clear communicative functions. Consider the placement of a desk within a professor's office. The office may be arranged so that the professor sits behind the desk and the student in front, or the desk may be off to the side so that the student and professor sit much closer to each other. The third type, non-fixed-feature space, refers to the space that individuals maintain around their bodies.

Hall (1968) identified three different ranges of personal communicative space: intimate distance, from 1 to 18 inches; personal distance, from 18 inches to 4 feet; and social distance, from 4 to 12 feet. He suggested that communication among friends ideally happened at personal distance, whereas lovers and very close friends communicated at intimate distance, and relative strangers at social distance. However, interpersonal communication distance is clearly affected by circumstances, culture, gender, and aspects of individual personality. We speak to strangers at a

much closer distance in a movie or a classroom than we would in an unconfined space. In the United States, women talk to each other at closer distances than men, as do mixed-gender pairs. In Turkey, on the other hand, men and women talk at close distances with members of their own sex but at very large distances with members of the opposite sex (Leathers 1997).

Finally, **kinesics** is the study of body position, movement, facial expressions, and gaze. Birdwhistell (1955) identified eight parts of the body that could be used to send messages: total head, face, neck, trunk, shoulder-arm-wrist, hand, hip-joint-leg-ankle, and foot. In other words, virtually all body movements can have significance. But, of course, not all do. We use our posture, our visual expression, eye contact, and other body movements to communicate interest, boredom, and many additional things. However, it is clear that not all the movements of our body carry social meaning. Clifford Geertz (1973b) famously suggested that the job of an ethnographer was learning to tell the winks from the twitches—that is, to tell the meaningful communication from the meaningless. Geertz meant this metaphorically, but those who study kinesics do it literally.

- haptics** The analysis and study of touch.
- chronemics** The study of the different ways that cultures understand time and use it to communicate.
- proxemics** The study of the cultural use of interpersonal space.
- kinesics** The study of body position, movement, facial expressions, and gaze.



In addition to speaking, people use hands and facial expressions, as well as interpersonal space to communicate.

The case of smiling is a particularly interesting example of kinesic research. There is very good evidence that smiling, and some other facial expressions, are biologically based human universals. There are no societies in which people do not smile. In fact, smiling is characteristic not only of human beings; our nearest nonhuman relations, chimpanzees and gorillas, smile as well. Moreover, smiling is a reasonably good indicator of happiness or nonviolent intent among all peoples. In any society, social interactions are more likely to have a positive outcome if people are smiling than if they are frowning or scowling. However, it is also true that a smile does not mean the same thing in all cultures. Americans generally equate smiling with happiness, but anthropologists report that people in many cultures smile when they experience surprise, wonder, or embarrassment (Ferraro 1994). A recent book on international business advises American managers that in Japan, happiness hides behind a straight face and that the Japanese often smile to make their guests feel comfortable rather than because they are happy (R. Lewis 1996:267). However, researchers Matsumoto and Kudoh (1993) found that despite substantial differences between American and Japanese interpretations of smiles, members of both cultures agreed that smiling faces were more sociable than neutral faces. Nagashima and Schellenberg (1997) found that similarities far outweighed differences in interpretation of smiles by American and Japanese college students.



Language Change

Language, like other aspects of culture, shows both stability and change. Historical linguists study the

ways in which languages change over time. **Historical linguistics** can be applied to phonology, syntax, morphology, or vocabulary.

Changing Sounds

When we imagine people speaking English hundreds of years ago, we often think of them as using different words than we do, but otherwise sounding pretty much like us. This is quite incorrect. Not only does the vocabulary of a language change, but the phonemes used to make words change as well. Linguists attempt to discover laws or rules that describe the ways in which the phonemes of a language have shifted.

A good example of this process is the change in the sounds of English that linguists call the Great Vowel Shift. Between 1400 and 1600, the sounds of many English vowels changed in systematic ways. Table 5.1 gives some examples of the ways in which the sounds changed. The Great Vowel Shift is one of the main reasons that many English words do not seem to be spelled the way they sound. Their current spelling reflects the way the words were pronounced before the shift took place (Fromkin and Rodman 1998).

Changing Syntax

In any language, the rules by which words are formed into meaningful utterances may also change over time. English again provides some excellent examples of this principle. Modern English is tightly tied to word order. In a modern sentence, the subject comes before the verb and the object comes after the verb. However, in Old English, as in

Table 5.1 The Great Vowel Shift

Middle English Vowel	Shifts to	Modern English Vowel	Middle English Word	<i>Is Pronounced to Rhyme with</i>	Modern Word	Becomes	Modern Word
i		aj	mis		piece		mice
u		aw	mus		moose		mouse
e		i	ges		place		geese
o		u	gos		close		goose
ɛ		e	brek		trek		break
ɔ		o	brɔk		squawk		broke
a		e	name		comm		name

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Global Perspective

Endangered Languages

There is no question that we are moving toward a world in which the overwhelming majority of the population speaks one of a small number of languages. In some senses, this is a positive development. In the future, more people will be able to speak to each other than ever before. However, the global movement toward fewer languages has very troubling elements as well.

There has generally been a strong connection between language and ethnic identity. People's language is often rooted in their culture and entwined with it. As language is lost, so are important elements of cultural identity. Additionally, the disappearance of languages reduces our ability to understand the underlying structures of language and the range of variability these enable.

Linguist Michael Krauss (1992) has estimated that about 10,000 years ago there may have been as many as 15,000 different languages spoken in the world. Today that number has been reduced to 6500, and about half of these are under threat of extinction in the next 50 to 100 years. Today, more than half of the world's 6000 languages are spoken by communities of 10,000 people or fewer. Together these account for only 0.3 percent of the world's population. On the other hand, more than half of the world's population speaks one of the 20 most common languages (Gibbs 2002).

Various factors may cause the disappearance of a language. It may die when all of its speakers are killed by disease or genocide. Government policies may deliberately seek to eliminate a language. For example, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the U.S.

government had an active policy of eliminating the languages of Native Americans. Students in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools were punished and humiliated for speaking their native languages (Crawford 1992).

Nation-states often try to suppress linguistic diversity within their borders, insisting that government, the court system, and other aspects of public life be conducted in the language of the most numerous and politically powerful groups. Global trade favors people who speak the languages of the wealthiest and most populous nations. Similarly, the vast majority of television and radio broadcasts, as well as the Internet, are in a very few languages. In the face of such forces, people who are members of linguistic minorities often abandon their languages because they find it more convenient, prestigious, or profitable to speak the languages of wealth and power.

Although there is probably no way to make sure all of today's languages will still be spoken in the future, some successes are possible. The Navajo, Arapaho, and Northern Ute, as well as several other Native American tribes, have adopted policies to promote the use of their native languages (Crawford 1992). A new \$30 million project funded by the Lisbet Rausing Charitable Fund hopes to document about 100 endangered languages. Anthropologists and linguists can help by providing dictionaries, guides to grammar, and a basic library of texts showing the language in use. The most fundamental element of any program to preserve or restore language, however, is the will and desire of the people who speak it to preserve it.

Latin, the endings of nouns indicated whether they were subjects or objects. Thus, the order of words within the sentence was less important. Sentences could occur either as subject-verb-object or subject-object-verb. For example, in Old English, the two sentences "The dog bit the child." and "The dog

the child bit." would have the same meaning and be equally grammatical.

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historical linguistics A branch of linguistics concerned with
documenting the histories of languages.



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Changing Lexicon

The vocabulary of a language also undergoes both internal and external changes. Words change their meanings. For example, in Old English, the word *silly* meant “happy.” By the time of Middle English, it meant “naive,” and now it has come to mean “foolish” (Fromkin and Rodman 1998). New words are constantly added to language. In the past 10 to 20 years, an entire vocabulary has grown up around computers and the Internet. Words such as software, dot-com, disk drive, gigabyte, e-mail, and snail mail would have been unintelligible to most people in 1980. WiFi, spyware, domain name, text message, and many others would have been meaningless to people in the mid-1990s.

Many words come into language as borrowings from other languages. As cultures come into contact, cultural items are borrowed, and frequently the original name for the item is borrowed as well. Pajamas are an item of clothing borrowed from India, and we have kept the original Indian word, incorporating it into the English vocabulary. In other cases, words or combinations of words already present in the language are applied to new cultural items. Some Native American groups, upon seeing their first horses (introduced by the Spanish), called them “ten dogs,”



Words that refer to technology can change very rapidly. But words that designate basic objects or actions may change quite slowly.

and North Americans refer to their automobiles in terms of “horsepower.” **Comparative linguistics** uses data on internal linguistic change to discover the relationships between different languages as well as their histories. A critical method for doing this is to search for similarities among languages. Languages may be similar because of historical contact between culture and resultant borrowing. However, if the similarities are numerous, regular, and basic, it is likely that the languages are derived from the same ancestral language.

Comparative linguists use a technique called **glottochronology** to learn about the historical connections among genetically related languages. They have identified a **core vocabulary** of 100 or 200 words that designate things, actions, and activities likely to be named in all the world’s languages. The core vocabulary includes words such as I, you, man, woman, blood, skin, red, green, and so on. **Glottochronology** is a statistical technique that uses this core vocabulary to estimate the date of separation of related languages. Researchers have found that a 100-word core vocabulary is likely to change at the rate of 14 percent per thousand years (Salzmann 1993:108). Based on this figure, by computing the percentage of basic vocabulary words shared among related languages, historical linguists can estimate how long ago they separated from a single ancestral language. Glottochronology is widely applied but has always been controversial. Critics charge that it is based on the assumption that core vocabularies change at a constant rate, whereas in fact the rate of change may vary (Renfrew 1989).

Comparative linguistics has been successful in documenting the relationships among many languages and grouping them into language families. Although this work has been done in greatest detail for Indo-European languages, the technique has also been applied to non-European languages.

Comparative linguistics is an important way of tracing cultural and historical processes. Through reconstruction of a protolanguage, comparative linguistics can also tell us something about the culture of the people who spoke that language. For example, the reconstructed vocabulary of proto-Indo-European contains words for trees and animals that existed in northern Europe, suggesting that this may have been the home of the original Indo-Europeans.

Was there a single, original human language? If so, what could it have been? Unfortunately, we really don’t know the answer to either of these questions.

The agreed-upon techniques of comparative linguistics can tell us a great deal about the history of languages in the past several thousand years. There are, however, no established techniques for establishing the patterns and content of language that can reach back several tens of thousands of years. Some anthropologists, biologists, and linguists looking at this question claim they can describe the original human language (Shevoroshkin and Woodford 1991; Ruhlen 1994). For example, Knight et al. (2003), using techniques from both comparative linguistics and biology, argue that there was an original language and it had many of the characteristics associated with modern day

African “click” languages. However, such claims are extremely controversial and, for the moment, are not widely accepted.

comparative linguistics The science of documenting the relationships between languages and grouping them into language families.

core vocabulary A list of 100 or 200 terms that designate things, actions, and activities, likely to be named in all the world’s languages.

glottochronology A statistical technique that linguists have developed to estimate the date of separation of related languages.



Summary

1. All animals communicate. However, human communication differs from that of other animals in its flexibility and its ability to convey new ideas and abstract concepts.
2. Researchers have trained some animals to use language in very sophisticated, humanlike ways. However, the use of language is a fundamental part of human adaptation. As far as we know, it does not play this role for any other species.
3. Conventionality, productivity, and displacement are key characteristics of human language. Conventionality is the idea that the meaning of any word is based on the agreement of speakers of a language rather than on characteristics intrinsic to the word. Productivity means that humans can produce and understand an infinite number of utterances they have never said or heard before. Displacement is the ability of human languages to describe things and actions not immediately present in the environment.
4. A child takes the initiative in learning language and learns to speak grammatically without being taught grammatical rules. This suggests that human beings have a precultural, or innate, language learning capacity. However, this potential for speech is realized only through interaction with other human beings speaking a human language.
5. All languages have structure. The subsystems of a language are a sound system (its phonology), a morphology, a syntax, and a lexicon. Phonemes

are minimum sound units used within a language. Morphemes are the units that carry meaning, syntax is the combination of morphemes used to produce meaningful utterances, and the lexicon links words to their meanings.

6. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is the notion that because grammar and vocabulary influence perception of the environment, speakers of different languages perceive their worlds in fundamentally different ways. There is some evidence to support this notion, but most linguists argue that the similarities among languages far outweigh their differences and that language does not have a systematic effect on thought or perception.
7. Sociolinguists focus on the cultural patterning of speech. They study the different forms of speech within communities and the ways in which speech varies depending on a person’s position in a society and relationships to others. In North American culture, one critical area of study is the speech differences between men and women.
8. Stratified societies often have many different forms of language. When this is the case, some forms are often considered to be correct and others improper or inferior. Although society may stigmatize some forms of speech, there is no scientific sense in which one grammatical error is better or worse than another.

9. Humans everywhere communicate nonverbally as well as verbally. In every society, people use gestures, facial expressions, posture, and time to communicate with one another. However, the meaning of a gesture or expression may vary greatly from culture to culture.
10. Language changes. Historical linguists are interested in internal linguistic change. Comparative

linguists attempt to discover which languages are related. Sociolinguists are interested in the historical and social factors in language change.

11. Linguists seek regularities in the ways in which languages change over time. Glottochronology is a technique that uses the regularity of change in a core vocabulary to discover the historic relationships among languages.

Key Terms

African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)	comparative linguistics	historical linguistics	productivity
agglutinating language	conventionality	International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)	proxemics
allophones	core vocabulary	isolating language	Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
Black English Vernacular (BEV)	creole	kinesics	semantics
blending	descriptive or structural linguistics	lexicon	sociolinguistics
bound morpheme	dialect	morpheme	Standard Spoken American English (SSAE)
call system	displacement	morphology	syntax
chronemics	duality of patterning	phone	synthetic language
code switching	Ebonics	phoneme	universal grammar
communication	free morpheme	phonology	word
	glottochronology	pidgin	
	haptics	prelanguage	

Suggested Readings

- Bauman, Richard, and Joel Sherzer (Eds.). 1989. *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This collection of classic case studies in linguistic anthropology spans traditional societies in the Americas, Africa, and Oceania, as well as English-, French-, and Yiddish-speaking communities in Europe and North America and African-American communities in North America and the Caribbean.
- Brenneis, Donald, and Ronald K. S. Macauley (Eds.). 1996. *The Matrix of Language*. Boulder, CO: Westview. A collection of essays that covers recent debates in the study of language and culture. Brenneis and Macauley's volume introduces students to current work in language and socialization, gender, the ethnography of speaking, and language in social and political life.
- McWhorter, John H. 2001. *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language*. New York: Times Books/Henry Holt. In this popular and read-

able account, McWhorter, an expert in creoles and pidgins, explores the origins of language and the ways in which it changes. He is particularly attentive to the ways in which language is affected by politics and economics. McWhorter targets those who imagine that language is fixed and unchangeable or that language has more and less perfect forms. Language, he reminds us, is changing and adaptable.

- Pinker, Steven. 1994. *The Language Instinct*. New York: William Morrow. A readable introduction to the highly technical field of linguistics. Pinker explains Noam Chomsky's theory of language and provides evidence for the innateness of language. Pinker has also published a follow-up volume, *Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language* (1999).
- Rickford, John Russell, and Russell John Rickford. 2000. *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English*. New York: Wiley. This lively and well-written account by a Stanford linguistics professor and a journalist is

aimed at both a novice and professional audience. The authors trace the history of Black English and explore the issues and controversies surrounding Ebonics and the Oakland School Board case.

Salzmann, Zdenek. 2003. *Language, Culture, and Society: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* (3rd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview. In this recent and thorough introduction to linguistic anthropology, Salzmann covers topics such as phonology, grammar, historical linguistics, and performance.

Scollon, Ronald, and Susan Wong Scollon. 1994. *Intercultural Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell. This book provides an introduction and practical guide to concepts and problems of intercultural communication. It focuses particularly on

language differences between Asians and Westerners and pays particular attention to issues of gender and language within businesses and professional organizations.

Tannen, Deborah. 1990. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: William Morrow. A witty, easy-to-read best-seller that uses research findings and everyday experiences to suggest that men and women follow different norms of speaking. As our box on this material shows, Tannen's work is controversial, but still worthy of serious consideration. Tannen has published several "follow-up" volumes, including *Talking from 9 to 5* (1994) and *Gender and Discourse* (1996).

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Making a Living

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

Human Adaptation and the Environment
Major Types of Subsistence Strategies

Foraging
Pastoralism
Horticulture

Agriculture (Intensive Cultivation)
Industrial Economies

“Where’s the beef?” The appetite for beef has worldwide ecological consequences. The production of enough ground beef for one hamburger requires the destruction of more than 20 plant species, 100 insect species, dozens of bird, mammal, and reptile species, and deforestation of enormous swaths of Central and South American rain forests. The social, cultural, and environmental consequences of “Having it your way” is an important subject of contemporary anthropological research. See pages 168–170 for details.

All societies survive by using their environments to provide people with the basic material requirements of life: food, clothing, and shelter. In this chapter, we focus on the different **subsistence strategies**, or ways in which societies transform the material resources of the environment into food.

Anthropology, particularly ecological anthropology, has always been interested in the interactions between human cultures and their environments. Ecological anthropologists seek to understand the effects of the physical environment on human activities and cultures, the effects of human cultures on the physical environment, the interrelationships among human cultures within a physical environment, and how human cultures change their subsistence strategies in response to challenges and threats to their livelihood (Bates and Lees 1996: Introduction). Although we are used to thinking about the physical environment as “natural,” it is important to keep in mind that the so-called natural environment is also a cultural construction (Igoe 2003).



Human Adaptation and the Environment

Human beings, unlike most other animals, live in an extremely broad range of habitats (environments). Some environments, such as the Arctic or the Great Australian Desert, present extreme challenges to human existence. Such regions are relatively limited in the numbers of people and types of subsistence strategies they can support. The productivity of any particular environment, however, is related to the type of technology used to exploit it. In aboriginal America, for example, the Great Plains supported a relatively small population, living mainly by hunting bison; with intensive mechanized agriculture, the same region today can support millions of people. In the same way, a desert area that can support very small numbers of people without irrigation can support much larger populations with irrigation agriculture.

subsistence strategy The way a society transforms environmental resources with food.



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Technological development has enabled humans to transform a wide range of materials into sources of usable energy. As a result, humans have been able to create many kinds of artificial environments, such as farms and cities, and many different economic systems and forms of social organization. These human technologies and cultural adaptations have led to great increases in **population density**, which in turn have greatly intensified the effects on the environment.

Up until about 10,000 years ago, humans lived by **foraging**—fishing, hunting, and collecting vegetable food. As tools improved, foragers spread out into many environments and developed diverse cultures, arriving in the Americas and Australia about 25,000 years ago. Foraging sets limits on population growth and density and, consequently, on the complexity of social organization in these societies. About 10,000 years ago, human groups in the Old World began to domesticate plants and animals, a food-producing “revolution” that occurred 4000 years later in the New World. The transition to food production was actually very gradual, more like

evolution than revolution, but it was revolutionary in the possibilities it opened up for the development of complex social organization.

With the increased populations that could be supported by the domestication of plants and animals, **sedentary** village life became widespread. More intensive means of cultivation and animal management developed, and human labor was more closely coordinated and controlled, leading eventually to complex social forms such as the state. Within this general outline of growing control over the environment and increasing human population, specific environmental and historical conditions explain the exact sequence of events in any particular place.

Why cultivation did not arise everywhere—and why some populations, such as the aboriginal peoples of Australia or the Inuit, never made the transition from foraging to food production—has several answers. In some cases, such as in the Arctic, climate and soil composition precluded agriculture. In other cases, such as the fertile valleys of California, aboriginal foraging was so productive there was little pressure to make the transition to food produc-



In foraging and horticultural societies, cultural adaptations include a variety of ways of getting food, using simple but ingenious technologies, and deep knowledge of the environment. In Kayapo, Brazil, men on the Xingu river in central Brazil fishes with a bow and arrow.

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tion. Sometimes foraging strategies were actually more dependable than cultivation or animal husbandry, which are more adversely affected by extreme drought. For example, with the introduction of the horse by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, some Native American Plains cultures, such as the Cheyenne, did so well with bison hunting that they gave up their traditional cultivation strategy. Even today, many foraging and pastoral populations resist abandoning these occupations for cultivation because they prefer the economic, social, and psychological satisfactions of a foraging or pastoral way of life. In these societies, hunting and pastoralism are highly valued occupations, intimately connected to a people's cultural identity, and in some circumstances more productive than agriculture.

In general, **industrialism**, or the replacement of human and animal energy by machines, has greatly increased productivity. In a typical nonindustrial society, more than 80 percent of the population is directly involved in food production; in a highly industrialized society, 10 percent of the people directly produce food for the other 90 percent. At the same time, increasingly complex technology and industrialism have brought new problems, particularly in their impact on the environment.

Many nonindustrial societies made entirely satisfactory adaptations to their environments without modern science and with simple but ingenious technology. This success is partly due to the vast knowledge and understanding these societies have of their environment. In the enormous Amazon **rain forest**, for example, people commonly know the names of hundreds of diverse species of plants and trees and the specific uses of each (Carneiro 1988:78). They also know the place of each species in the web of forest life and the importance of sustaining the vegetal diversity that provides different animal species with their specialized, preferred foods. Indigenous peoples of the Amazon forest also manage their food resources in diverse, complex, and sophisticated ways. The Kayapo of the Xingu River basin in South America, for example, carefully manage the soil, protect the ground cover, control humidity, and manage pests in their gardens, all based on their deep understanding of soil, the properties of fire, the relation of the seasons to plant growth, and the impact of human food-getting activities on the environment. They use this knowledge in efficient ways as they exploit various forest resources for food, medicine, and other necessities of life.

The environmental problems resulting from industrial and postindustrial society have led to a reawakened interest and respect for the ways in which nonindustrial people have adapted to their environment. In the modern technological age, we too frequently forget that technology must be used to human ends and that economic efficiency is only one of many important values. Consumer desires and energy needs of industrialized nations are central sources of environmental degradation today. Almost from the moment of European contact with other parts of the world, European culture affected the environment. For example, the introduction of domestic animals—cattle and sheep—consumed the crops of the indigenous peoples of Peru, upon which the Inca empire depended (Scammel 1989:125). The European fashion for furs almost denuded North America of fur-bearing animals such as the beaver, and today European consumer demands for tropical hardwoods are leading to devastating logging in tropical forests (Brosius 1999). The European demand for sugar and tobacco resulted in huge areas of monocrop agriculture, which not only transformed the physical environment of the Americas but, with the introduction of African slavery, its social environment as well (Mintz 1985). In the Pacific Northwest of the United States, dam building has affected the ability of salmon to spawn, a concern not only of conservationists but also of Native Americans in this area, for whom salmon are not only an important food but an object of religious awe (Duncan 2000).



Major Types of Subsistence Strategies

Anthropological understanding of the interactions among culture, making a living, and the environment can be approached by a typology of subsistence

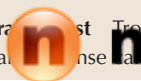
population density The number of people inhabiting a given area of land.

foraging (hunting and gathering) A food-getting strategy that does not involve food production or domestication of animals.

sedentary Settled, living in one place.

industrialism The process of the mechanization of production.

rain forest Tropical woodland characterized by high rainfall and dense canopy of broad-leaved evergreen trees.



strategies. Each strategy uses the environment in different ways, and each has a different impact on the environment. The five basic subsistence strategies identified by anthropologists are foraging, pastoralism, horticulture, agriculture, and industrialism (Y. Cohen 1971).

Foraging depends on the use of plant and animal resources naturally available in the environment. **Pastoralism** primarily involves the care of domesticated herd animals, whose dairy and meat products are a major part of the pastoralist diet. **Horticulture** refers to the production of plants using a simple, nonmechanized technology. **Agriculture** involves the production of food using the plow, draft animals, and more complex techniques of water and soil control so that land is permanently cultivated and needs no fallow period. Finally, industrialism involves the use of machine technology and chemical processes for the production of food and other goods. Within these basic types of subsistence strategies, however, there is much diversity. Furthermore, although any society normally uses one dominant strategy, many societies combine strategies in meeting their energy needs. Today no society, however seemingly remote, lies outside the impact of the industrialized world system.

Each subsistence strategy generally supports a characteristic level of population density (number of persons per square unit of land), and has a different level of **productivity** (yield per person per unit of land) and **efficiency** (yield per person per hour of labor invested). These criteria, in turn, tend to be associated with characteristic forms of social organization and certain cultural patterns. For example, where local technology allows only limited exploitation of the environment and where safe and reliable methods of artificial contraception are unknown, cultural practices such as sexual abstinence, abortion, and infanticide may be used to limit population growth. Other cultural practices and beliefs also result in limiting population. Late weaning and prohibitions on sexual intercourse after the birth of a child, for example, regulate population by spacing births.

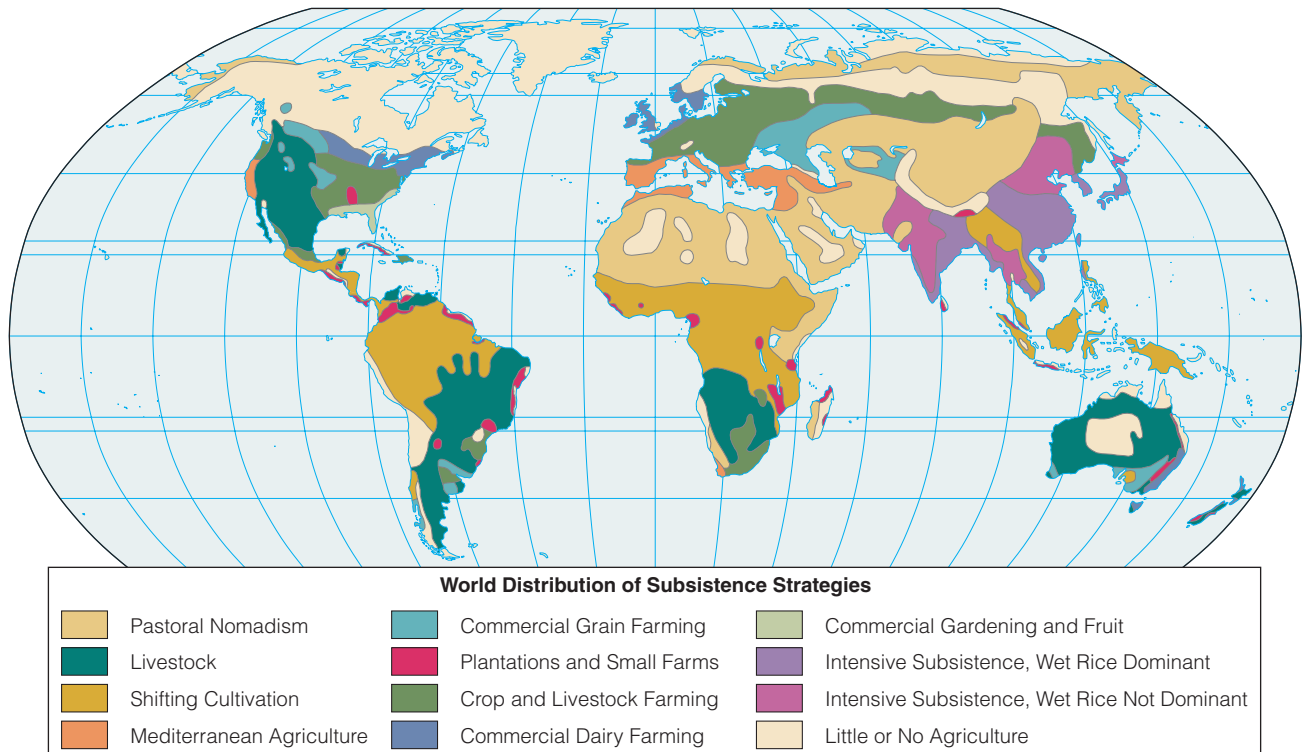
In addition to limiting population, a society can extend its resource base by trading. Trade occurs in all types of societies, including foragers. In the Ituri rain forest in Central Africa, Mbuti foragers have complex, hereditary exchange relationships with the Lese, their horticultural neighbors (Wilkie 1988). In exchange for meat, mushrooms, honey,

building materials, medicine, and agricultural labor, the Mbuti receive manioc, plantains, peanuts, and rice, which together form more than 50 percent of their diet. The Lese also provide the Mbuti with metal for knives and arrowheads; cotton cloth, which is stronger and more colorful than traditional Mbuti bark cloth; and aluminum cooking pots, which are more durable than traditional Mbuti clay pots (Wilkie 1988:123). Trade, of course, also forms the basis of the historical and contemporary global economy, incorporating peoples all over the world engaging in many kinds of food production and manufacturing.

Foraging

Foraging is a diverse strategy that relies on naturally available food resources. It includes the hunting of large and small game, fishing, and the collecting of various plant foods. Foragers do not produce food, neither directly by planting nor indirectly by controlling the reproduction of animals or keeping domestic animals for consumption of their meat or milk. Foraging strategies vary in productivity but, in general, support lower population densities than other subsistence systems. Today, only a very small proportion of the world's people live by foraging, mainly in marginal areas into which they have been pushed by expanding, militarily superior agricultural peoples and states. In the past, however, foragers occupied many diverse environments, including the Arctic tundra and the most arid deserts.

The Inuit: A Foraging Strategy All foragers exploit the diversity of their environments. In spite of the popular stereotype of prehistoric hunters, most foragers actually rely more on vegetal collecting than hunting. One exception is the Inuit of the Arctic Circle, whose traditional hunting strategy includes almost no collecting of plant food, which is virtually absent in their environment. Typical of most foragers, however, the Inuit food quest follows the seasonal variation of climate, which consists of a long, cold winter during which the water areas become sheets of ice, and a short, cool summer. Inuit culture adapts to the availability of different animals in the different seasons. The coastal Inuit of Alaska depend on whaling and sea resources, particularly seals, whereas the inland Inuit primarily depend on hunting caribou (Moran 1979). Animals provide not only



This map indicates the different ways of making a living through cultivation and animal husbandry as they are found in different environments.

culture, such as the layered clothing that keeps out the cold yet prevents overheating. In this harsh climate, Inuit survival depends upon their detailed knowledge of their environment and animal behavior, as well as cultural values of patience, innovative problem solving, cooperation, and the avoidance of conflict (Briggs 1991). Because of Inuit reliance on big animals, which are hunted only by men, Inuit women play a less important economic role than in most foraging societies. They make a vital contribution to Inuit survival, however, in processing meat for storage, making and repairing clothing, cooking, and caring for children.

As it did with many other foragers, the twentieth century brought drastic changes in Inuit subsistence strategies (Condon et al. 1996). The introduction of rifles led to a decline in caribou. At the same time, the Western demand for fox furs brought the Inuit into the global economy, partly (or largely, depending on the area) replacing a subsistence strategy with commercial trapping. Fox trapping provided the Inuit with guns and also with cash, which they use to buy food, tobacco, tea, canvas tents, and clothing. In addition, many Inuit are employed by the U.S. gov-

ernment, which established a Distant Early Warning radar installation in their midst. Trading posts attracted permanent settlement. Other important sources of income for Inuit today are handicrafts, tourism, and, when necessary, welfare payments.

More typical of foraging subsistence is the strategy of the Aborigines of the Australian Desert (see "Ethnography"), in which a wide range of vegetal foods provides most of their diet. Contrary to popular stereotypes, foraging is not necessarily a "harsh" existence, although in extreme environments, such as the Arctic and the Australian Desert,

pastoralism A food-getting strategy that depends on the care of domesticated herd animals.

horticulture Production of plants using a simple, nonmechanized technology; fields are not used continuously.

agriculture A form of food production in which fields are in permanent cultivation using plows, animals, and techniques of soil and water control.

productivity Yield per person per unit of land.

efficiency Yield per person per hour of labor invested.



Ethnography

The Complex Strategy of Australian Foragers

The Pintupi and Gurdja peoples of the Great Sandy Desert of Western Australia survived with a traditional foraging strategy until the mid-twentieth century. Beginning in the 1920s, because of prolonged drought, the Pintupi began moving to mission stations, cattle stations, government settlements, and towns around the desert fringe; the last Pintupi left the Western Desert in 1966 (Myers 1986). From the Pintupi point of view, they left the desert because food was easier to get elsewhere. As with other foraging peoples, the unreliability of water supplies posed a fundamental challenge to survival. For the Pintupi, the key to their long residence in this very arid area was their use of a wide variety of seasonally available plant and animal foods and their detailed knowledge of their environment. Even with simple technology, this made foraging a generally predictable and reliable strategy, though at certain seasons a very difficult way of life.

These Australian peoples recognize and can name 126 plants serving 138 different social, economic, and medicinal functions. They use more than 75 different plants for edible seeds, and also include in their diet various tubers, fruits, nectars, sap, and edible insects or larvae. Particularly important is the witchetty grub, an insect available all year round. Birds and bird eggs are important dietary resources, with bustards the most common and easily caught. Small mammals are also an occasional source of animal protein. The main constraint on population growth and density is the scarcity of water in the driest and hottest months. Thus, the Western Desert societies consist of small, isolated family groups, with a population density as low as one person per 150–200 square miles (compared, for example, with 1250 people per square mile in agricultural Java).

Climatic changes are extreme. Summer temperatures reach 120 degrees, and winter temperatures average around 72 degrees. Most critically, rainfall

is very low, unpredictable, and evaporates quickly. The availability of food, and particularly water, is the most important influence on the distance people travel, the places they camp, and the length of time they stay in one place.

In the wet season, December through February, families spread across the desert. The intense rainstorms deposit fresh, drinkable water in streambeds, rock pools, and cachelments. The availability of water permits high mobility; families move great distances to search for food and travel great distances to attend ceremonies. Though water is available, food is scarce at this time of year, limited mainly to fruits, seeds, and tubers left over from the previous year, lizards, and some edible toads. Men and women gather reptiles, which are a main source of protein and fat and are relatively easy to collect. The most common mammals, kangaroos, are not very common at any time of year, but during this season are so widely spread across the desert that they are only infrequently encountered.

At the end of the wet season, plants begin to grow, and the period March through May is called the “green grass time.” The temperature is moderate, and families move near the large surface water holes. Tubers are more readily available, and migrating birds become a more important dietary item.

The following season, June and July, called the “cold time,” brings the greatest material prosperity. Tubers, fruits, and large, tasty, and easily collected grass seeds are all abundantly available. Edible fruits are collected from 12 different plants, and several species are stored for the “hungry season.” People live semipermanently around large water holes, and the women gather tubers while the men engage in ceremonial activities. Night temperatures may drop into the 40s; people often stay up at night around a fire and sleep in the warmer hours of the midmorning.

The spring, August to October, or the “goanna get up time,” follows the cold season. Food availability decreases, and temperatures rise steadily, reaching over 100 degrees. The landscape begins to dry out, and people fall back to large rockholes where there is water. They set fires on the plains to attract game and to stimulate the growth of new grass seeds and tubers for the following year. They hunt goanna (lizards) and kangaroos and gather fruits, bulbs, tubers, and grass seeds, which are both eaten and stored. Men and women spend most of the day gathering.

With the onset of the “hot time,” the summer months of November and December, temperatures continue to rise, sometimes reaching as high as 120 degrees. This is the harshest time of year, called the “hungry time.” Families travel to the largest rockholes for water, but even these occasionally run dry. Food becomes less available, and many seeds and tubers run out completely. If the rain has not come by December, foraging ceases almost entirely. People try to take it easy to conserve food and water. Women remain in camp looking after the children and the elderly while the men search for food, sometimes traveling as far as 12 miles a day from camp. Average daily intake may be reduced to 800 calories per person. Heat stress and the shortage of water prevent the whole camp from moving to areas where food might be more available, and people are thus “trapped” in the areas around the larger water holes. Under conditions of starvation, people may be fed blood from healthier individuals to get them through the worst weeks. Now the availability of lizards becomes critical, because they may be the only food source if the rains are late.

The extraordinary ability of human beings to adapt to the most extreme environments is well illustrated by the Australians of the Great Sandy Desert. Though constrained materially by their simple technology, their detailed knowledge of

their environment has permitted them not only to survive as foragers for thousands of years, but to develop highly complex ceremonial, religious, kinship, and artistic cultural patterns.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What are the main strategies through which these indigenous Australians survive in their extreme environment?
2. In what ways do seasonal changes in the environment affect Australian subsistence and social life?

Source: Adapted from Scott Cane, “Australian Aboriginal Subsistence in the Western Desert.” In Daniel G. Bates and Susan H. Lees (Eds.), *Case Studies in Human Ecology*. New York: Plenum Press, 1996, pp. 17–51.



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A wide variety of plant foods and small animals permits people to survive in the harsh environment of the Great Sandy Desert.

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Despite drastic changes in the Arctic environment, Inuit subsistence still depends on the hunting of sea animals.

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there may be periods of desperation. In less extreme environments, where predictable vegetal foods can be supplemented by hunting, foragers may experience abundant leisure time and generally good health. Richard Lee estimated that an adult Dobe Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa, for example, spends an average of only two-and-a-half 6-hour days per week in subsistence activities, and a woman can gather enough in 1 day to feed her family for 3 days (1984:50–53). Some general social correlates of foraging are seasonal nomadism geared to the availability of game and wild plants; organization of the society into small camps with flexible membership, composed mainly of kinsmen; and seasonal association of larger groups when food is more available.

Pastoralism

Pastoralism depends primarily on the products of domesticated herd animals. It is a specialized adaptation to an environment that, because of hilly terrain, dry climate, or unsuitable soil, cannot support a large human population through agriculture, but can support enough native vegetation for animals if they are allowed to range over a large area. Because human beings cannot digest grass, raising animals that can live on grasses makes pastoralism an efficient way to exploit semiarid natural grasslands that are otherwise unproductive. Unlike ranching (commercial animal husbandry), in which livestock are fed grain (which could be used to feed humans) to produce meat or milk, pastoralism does

not require direct competition with humans for the same resources (Barfield 1993:13).

Pastoralists may herd cattle, sheep, goats, yaks, or camels, all of which produce both meat and milk. Because the herd animals found in the New World were not of a variety that could be domesticated (with the exception of the llama and alpaca in Peru), pastoralism did not develop as a New World subsistence strategy. The major areas of pastoralism are found in East Africa (cattle), North Africa (camels), southwestern Asia (sheep and goats), central Asia (yak), and the subarctic (caribou and reindeer). Subarctic Old World pastoral societies are divided into five distinct nomadic pastoral zones, each with its own style of animal husbandry and social organization (see map on page 149).

Pastoralism can be either transhumant or nomadic. In **transhumant pastoralism**, found mostly in East Africa, men and boys move the animals regularly throughout the year to different areas as pastures become available at different altitudes or in different climatic zones, while women and children and some men remain at a permanent village site. In **nomadic pastoralism**, the whole population—men, women, and children—moves with the herds

transhumant pastoralism A form of pastoralism in which herd animals are moved regularly throughout the year to different areas as pasture becomes available.

nomadic pastoralism A form of pastoralism in which the whole social group (men, women, children) and their animals move in search of pasture.



Ethnography

The Maasai of East Africa: A Transhumant Pastoral Adaptation

The Maasai, one of the many “cattle cultures” of East Africa, live in the semiarid grasslands (savanna) of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania, an area actually characterized by many different microenvironments. Like other cattle herding groups in the region, traditionally, the Maasai’s diet consisted primarily of the blood and milk of their cattle, supplemented by other resources such as grain or fish. In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult for the Maasai to maintain this diet because the loss of pasture and water has so negatively affected their herds. And although cattle are still considered sacred, as they were traditionally, the Maasai practice of not selling cattle and slaughtering them only for important ritual occasions is also becoming more difficult to adhere to. Indeed, more and more people are forced to sell their cattle just to survive.

The Maasai subsistence strategy is determined by various environmental factors such as elevation, the distribution of lakes and rivers, seasonal rainfall, vegetation, and the presence of tsetse flies and malarial mosquitoes. The most important factor to which the Maasai must adapt is seasonal rainfall. The rainy season generally lasts from about November through May, and the dry season from June through October. The uneven annual distribution of rainfall is affected by variations in topography and elevation. Plateaus in the Maasai area range from 3000 to 5000 feet; they are primarily of hard granite, which is resistant to erosion. Granite’s tendency to tilt or warp has created basins at elevations below the surrounding landscape, which are sometimes filled with water to create basin lakes. In some cases, volcanic activity has pushed the land up to form mountain ranges. The higher slopes of these ranges are cool and receive higher rainfall, and there is a relative absence of tropical disease. Suitable for forestry, intensive farming, and stalled livestock, these areas were taken over by the Europeans during the colonial period, beginning in the late nineteenth century.

Although the seasonal pattern of rainfall permits some general predictability, the Maasai

environment is full of uncertainties. Drought occurs every 7 to 10 years, and when the rains fail, crops also fail, and livestock die. The Maasai have survived by developing an economy adapted to the difficulties of their environment, including the periods of relative scarcity. The Maasai subsistence strategy, which depends on extensive knowledge of their environment, features the flexible exploitation of multiple ecological niches and includes measures to deal with environmental unpredictability and even occasional catastrophes.

Maasai resource management is a system of specialized herding well suited to East Africa’s savanna. Maasai livestock depend on the varieties of palatable grasses seasonably available, depending on rainfall. The seasonal rainfall dictates where herders move their livestock. During the dry season, the Maasai and their livestock concentrate around permanent water sources such as lakes and rivers. During the wet season they disperse from these permanent water sources in search of fresh pasture and temporary sources of water that has collected in low-lying areas following the rains. Whereas the dry season is often a period of hunger and scarcity, the wet season brings malaria and other illnesses and makes the roads impassible and travel uncertain.

The Maasai knowledge of their environment is passed down from fathers to elder sons and from elder to younger brothers. This complex knowledge focuses on information most necessary to effectively move their livestock, particularly information about the most likely areas of rainfall. Maasai women also have detailed knowledge of their environment, particularly about types of medicinal plants and the availability of water. Up-to-date information about the different areas in the region is shared through extended kin and trading networks, and at markets and ritual celebrations; and now, shortwave radios can communicate information about pasturage within a several-hundred-mile radius.

In addition to detailed knowledge of their environment, mobility, rotation, and flexibility are the keys to successful Maasai adaptation. The



Ethnography—continued

movement of livestock between wet and dry season pastures generally stays the same from year to year (exceptions occur when rain fails in one area and herders are forced to move their animals to areas where rainfall is more abundant). In the dry season, a Maasai community and its livestock concentrate around a permanent dry season water point. The area immediately surrounding the water is where livestock wait to drink according to elaborate schedules. A council of elder males sets the “queuing” schedules through consensus. The cattle line up and when one group has finished drinking and is herded away from the water point, the next herd enters. This is repeated many times during the day.

Beyond the queuing area is pasture reserved for sick, immature, and lactating animals, which cannot range far in search of pasturage. Permanent homesteads are built around this area so that everyone has equal access to it, but are built far enough away from each other to reduce the likelihood of overgrazing. This also ensures that all households are equally distant from the permanent water source.

The distance from households to the water is generally between 3 to 7 miles. This pasturage is available to anyone with a permanent homestead within proximity of the permanent water source, but outsiders must negotiate with the elders in order to gain access. No mature animals are allowed to graze in this area, and intentionally breaking this rule results in a fine paid in livestock.

The pasture beyond this area is for mature, healthy livestock. The number of animals concentrated around permanent water during the dry season often runs into several thousand, so that the Maasai water their animals on alternate days. On days that livestock are watered they are taken to the queuing area in the morning and, after being watered, moved beyond the permanent homestead into the dry-season pasture. They graze here and return home in the evening. On alternate days the livestock are herded away from the permanent water source to a different part of the dry-season pasture where they graze for the entire day.

When the rains begin, usually in November or December, the Maasai move most of their livestock to wet-season pasture. This area, which is beyond the dry-season pasturage area, has an abundance of seasonal water sources and mineral-rich pasture. This allows the dry-season pasture to recover. The young men take the mature and healthy stock to the wet-season pasturage areas, where they live in temporary, wet-season camps, while most of the women, children, and elder males remain in the permanent homesteads with the sick, immature, and lactating animals. Household heads check on their sons and herds periodically during the wet season. At the end of the wet season, in May or June, they return with the livestock to the permanent homesteads and a new cycle begins.

A critical adaptive feature of the Maasai strategy is the drought reserve, a setting aside of relatively large areas of water and pasture that never dry up, even during the worst years of drought. These areas are usually swamps, lakes, or mountain springs at relatively high elevations. During normal years, the Maasai do not bring their herds to these areas. When a drought occurs, however, herders will come from as far as a hundred miles away. Although animals do die during severe droughts, the drought reserve permits enough animals to survive so that the herd can recover in less than 5 years.

The Maasai also build flexibility into their adaptive strategy by treating land as common, rather than individual, property. Access to pasture and water are regulated and negotiated by a council of local elders representing the community. Kinship, clan membership, or membership in the age grade system (see Chapter 9) build up into extensive social networks in order to ensure maximum flexibility in giving a herder multiple options as to where he can move his herds. The flexibility of the Maasai adaptation also depends on exchange; in some areas the Maasai exchange small stock and milk for honey, gathered by local foraging groups, which is an essential ingredient in Maasai honey beer, used on all Maasai ceremonial occasions. Some Maasai also encourage farmers to settle

among them, and where small farmers have settled on riverbanks, they exchange fish, as well as grains, fruit, and vegetables with the Maasai. When the farmers earn cash by selling their products in the markets, they use it to buy livestock and milk from the Maasai, who in turn use the cash to buy clothing, aluminum cooking pots, iron spearheads, and veterinary medicine.

The Maasai lived successfully in the Great Rift Valley region for hundreds of years, but since the late nineteenth century it has become more and more difficult for them to practice their traditional transhumant pastoralist strategy. First, the English colonists appropriated the best grazing land on the mountain slopes as well as the Maasai drought reserve areas. After World War I, and increasingly after independence, as Kenya and Tanzania looked for new ways to improve their economies, the wildlife conservation movement resulted in the setting aside of huge tracts of land for national parks and game reserves in order to attract tourism. Many Maasai were evicted from this land and their herding areas narrowed substantially. As Maasai herding was increasingly circumscribed by

other land uses, such as commercial farms, much traditional herding knowledge has been lost. Although traditionally the Maasai had coexisted with wild grazing herds, and indeed imitated the seasonal patterns of the herds, today they are largely shut out of Western-oriented international and national conservation policy making, which regards them as obstacles to the most effective use of their own land.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What are the main things the Maasai have to know to adapt to their environment?
2. How do the Maasai build flexibility into their subsistence strategy?
3. Can you think of ways to reconcile the needs of the Maasai, the economic development of Kenya, and the ideology of wildlife conservation as these interact in the African savannah?

Source: Based on Jim Igoe, *Conservation and Globalization: A Case Study of Maasai Herders and National Parks in East Africa*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003.

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throughout the year, and there are no permanent villages.

Pastoralism involves a complex interaction among animals, land, and people. With domestication, animals became dependent on their human keepers for pasture, water, breeding, shelter, salt, and protection from predators. Pastoralists, therefore, must be highly knowledgeable about the carrying capacity of the land in proportion to the number of animals raised, as well as the number of animals needed to provide subsistence for the human population (Barfield 1993:6).

Sheep and goat pastoralism lies north of the arid deserts of camel pastoralism and south of the Central Eurasian steppe. It runs along the Mediterranean littoral through the Anatolian and Iranian plateaus into mountainous central Asia. Nomads here take advantage of changes in elevation, moving their livestock in a regular cycle of migration from lowland winter pasture to highland summer pasture. The area's herd composition is diverse, consisting of sheep, goats, horses, camels, and donkeys. Pastoral nomads in this area actually carry out mixed subsistence strategies because they could not exist solely on

the products of their herds. Pastoralists' survival depends upon relationships with their sedentary neighbors, with whom they trade meat animals, wool, milk products, and hides for grain (which constitutes the bulk of their diet) and manufactured goods.

The key to the pastoralist economy is herd growth, which depends primarily on reproduction by female animals. The number of animals needed to support a family is a perennial focus of decision making in pastoralist societies. Eating or selling too many animals in a single year may lead to insolvency, so pastoralists must always balance their present needs against future herd production. Pastoralism is a risky business; weather disasters such as drought or storms, disease, or theft can easily decimate a herd. These factors, along with social pressure by the nation-states within which pastoralists now subsist, are causing pastoralist peoples to become increasingly sedentary (see Chapter 13, pages 358–360).

Nomadic pastoralist societies tend to be based on **patrilineal** kinship. In Southwest Asia, their characteristic political organization is supratribal confederations, with powerful leaders allied in regional political networks. In the past, they were subordinated to various empires on the Iranian and Anatolian plateaus, which had little success in controlling them. For the past 200 years, however, pastoralists have had to adapt to the policies set by distant governments of centralized nation-states, losing much of their political and military autonomy (Barfield 1993:206).

The Yarahmadzai: A Mixed Pastoralist Economy

The chief problems of adapting to grassland environments involve the sustainable use of water and pasture. The Yarahmadzai, who live in the southeastern corner of Iran known as Baluchistan, are an example of a pastoralist adaptation (Salzman 2000). The Yarahmadzai tribal territory, about 3600 square miles, occupies a plateau at around 5000 feet where the winters are cold and the summers are hot. Maximum rainfall is about 6 inches a year, most of which falls in winter; some years there is no rain at all. The main natural vegetation is grass, although surrounding areas are almost completely barren. In winter (December, January, and February), each local community has a traditional camping area on the plateau consisting of 5 to 20 tents. Shepherds herd goats and sheep together while camels are herded separately. In winter there is practically no vegetation on the plateau, and they live pri-

marily on the accumulated fat of the previous spring. The Yarahmadzai compensate for the lack of pasturage by feeding the camels with roots, the goats and sheep with grain, and the lambs and kids with dates and processed date pits. The people depend on food stores from the previous year, but because this is the rainy season, water is normally available.

Milk is the staple food of the Yarahmadzai and is consumed in many different forms and preserved as dried milk solids and butter, which is both eaten and sold or exchanged for grain. Milk is the main source of protein, fat, calcium, and other nutrients; the Yarahmadzai, like most other pastoral peoples, do not eat much meat. Their flocks are their capital, a renewable resource, so that the object is to conserve the flock, not kill the animals to eat (Salzman 1999:24).

As nomadic pastoralists, the Yarahmadzai seek pasture according to the seasons. In spring (March, April, and May), grass begins to appear and plants bud, but because of variability in the rains and water runoff, availability of pasture changes annually. When information about good pasture becomes available, the whole Yarahmadzai camp migrates. Because even good pasturage quickly gets exhausted, the camp migrates constantly, anywhere from 5 to 25 miles in each move. From March to July, the animals give ample milk both for their young and for human consumption. In June and July, when pasturage begins to dry up, many Yarahmadzai migrate to areas served by government irrigation projects to harvest grain. The livestock graze on stubble and fertilize the ground with droppings. In late summer and early autumn, the Yarahmadzai migrate to the lowland desert and the groves of date palms, leaving their winter tents, goats, and sheep on the plateau in the care of young boys. During this time they live in mud huts, harvesting and eating dates and preparing date preserves for the return journey, in November, to their winter camps. Those who also farm plant grain at this time while the women work for cash in nearby towns.

Like most contemporary pastoralists, then, the Yarahmadzai combine herding with other subsistence strategies in order to earn a living. Many pastoralists today now depend less on consuming the direct products of their herds—meat, wool, milk—and more on the sale of animals and animal products for cash. In this sense, many nomadic pastoralists, like the Saami of Norway, discussed in

Chapter 13, are becoming ranchers: pastoral specialists in a cash economy.

Pastoralists today are often successful in adapting their products to local and even global markets. Nomads in Afghanistan and Iran, for example, are highly integrated into national and international trade networks. They specialize in selling meat animals to local markets, lambskins to international buyers, and sheep intestines to meet the huge German demand for natural sausage casings (Barfield 1993:211).

Critics of nomadic pastoralism focus on the “tragedy of the commons,” claiming that the individual pastoralist’s desire to increase the size of his herds inevitably leads to collective overgrazing and the destruction of grasslands. In fact, however, pastoralists are aware of this potential problem and in a variety of ways have restricted access to “common” pasture (Barfield 1993:214). Indeed, it is more often government policies that restrict nomadic use of pastoralist territories in an attempt to make them productive for agriculture that directly and indirectly exacerbate environmental degradation.

Pastoralism cannot support an indefinitely increasing population, and many pastoralists have already become sedentary. But with their knowledge of their environment, their creative use of multiple resources, and global demand for their products, pastoralism as a subsistence strategy has a strong future in exploiting the planet’s large arid and semi-arid zones.

Horticulture

Horticultural societies depend primarily on the production of plants using a simple, nonmechanized technology. In horticulture, cultivated fields are not used year after year, but remain fallow for some time after being cultivated. This is an important contrast between horticulture and agriculture. Horticulturalists plant and harvest with simple tools, such as hoes or digging sticks, and do not use draft animals, irrigation techniques, or plows. Horticulture produces a lower yield per acre and uses less human labor than nonmechanized agriculture. Traditionally, horticulturalists grow enough food in their fields or gardens to support the local group, but they do not produce surpluses that involve the

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Ethnography

The Lua': Swidden Cultivators in Thailand

The traditional livelihood of the Lua' living in the mountains of northern Thailand is swidden cultivation. After clearing a block of land, villagers allow it to lie fallow for about 9 years because they understand that in the second year the soil would lose its fertility and there would be too many weeds. Swidden blocks around the village are cultivated in a regular rotational sequence. Each household normally returns to the same field it cultivated 10 years before, marking their swidden field boundaries with a row of charred logs.

Every January, village elders inspect the swidden block they expect to use the following year to see whether forest regrowth has been adequate for cultivation. They check to see that fires have not occurred, because that would deplete the soil's fertility. Using long steel-bladed knives, the men clear their fields by felling small trees, leaving stumps about 3 feet high. They begin with the trees at the bottom of a slope and work uphill so that the falling trees knock down smaller vegetation. They are careful to leave a strip of trees along watercourses and at the top of ridges to prevent erosion and provide seed sources for forest regrowth during the fallow period. They also leave taller trees standing, but trim their branches so they will not shade the crops.

The fields are cleared in January and February and allowed to dry until the end of March, the driest time of the year. In consultation with ritual leaders and village elders, a day is chosen to burn the fields, which requires people to be available to prevent the accidental spread of the fire into forest



reserved for future cultivation or into the village. Toward this end, all the low vegetation is cleared to form a firebreak about 15 feet wide around the swidden block. The slash is consumed by a roaring fire within an hour or so. The men burning the swiddens usually carry guns, hoping game animals such as boar or barking deer will run toward them out of the burning fields, although this happens less today than in the past.

The cultivators first plant cotton and corn, which they sow on the slopes of the fields, and plant yams on the lower, wetter portions. For the next two weeks they prop up unburned logs along the contour of the fields to reduce hillside erosion. They mark the boundaries, gather larger logs for firewood, and build fences to keep livestock out of the field. By mid-April they begin to plant the main subsistence crop, upland rice, jabbing the earth loose with a 10-foot iron-tipped planting pole. They hope the rice will take root and sprout before the heavy monsoon rains come. Different types of rice are sown in different areas of the field. Quick-ripening rice is planted near the field shelter, where it can be easily watched. Drought-resistant varieties are planted on the drier, sandier tops of the slopes, along with millet.

Each household plants tall-growing sorghum (a cereal grass) to mark out their fields from their neighbors'. Mustard greens, peppers, several varieties of beans, and other vegetables are grown in gardens near the field shelters. Vine plants are grown along the creases in the hillside fields, which are more vulnerable to erosion. By May,

group in a wider market system with nonagricultural populations. Population densities among horticultural peoples are generally low, usually not exceeding 150 people per square mile (Netting 1977). Despite this, horticultural villages may be quite large, ranging from 100 to 1000 people.

Horticulture may be practiced in dry lands, such as among the Hopi Indians of northeastern Arizona, who cultivate maize, beans, and squash, but is typically a tropical forest adaptation found mainly in Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, some Pacific islands, and the Amazon Basin in South

weeding begins. The weeders, mainly women and older children, use a short-handled tool to scrape and hack at the weeds on the surface; weeds are not dug or pulled out by the roots.

Both men and women harvest the rice. They use small, handheld sickles, cutting the stems of each bunch of rice close to the ground. The stalks, about 3 feet long, are laid out to dry for a few days before threshing. At threshing time, women gather large bundles of rice stalks on a threshing floor leveled on the hillside. Young men beat the rice stalks against a threshing mat laid on the floor to knock the rice grains loose; other men beat the broken straw with bamboo threshing sticks to separate the rice grains as completely as possible. As the grain and chaff piles grow, the men shuffle through with their feet, fanning with a woven bamboo winnowing fan to blow away as much dirt as possible. After a second winnowing, the cleaned rice is loaded into baskets and kept in a temporary barn near the field shelter.

Like most horticulturalists, the Lua' maintain a pattern of varied vegetation zones around the village. Mature forests are preserved; here villagers are forbidden to cut lumber or make swiddens or gardens. Uncut forest strips are also maintained between swidden blocks, around the village, along streamcourses and headwaters, and at the tops of ridges, all of which reduce erosion. Villagers use the plant growth of fallow fields for grazing and as traditional medicines, dyes for homespun clothing, and material for weaving baskets and building houses. The wild fruits and yams that grow on fallow land are particularly important during food shortages.

The Lua' also keep pigs, water buffalo, cattle, and chickens, which may be sold at local markets for cash. Before the 1960s, when the big fish in the streams were killed by pollution from chemical

dumping of agricultural waste and malaria eradication pesticides, fish were another important addition to the Lua' diet. Hunting also has declined. Since World War II, there has been little game in the forests, although occasionally a forest animal will fall into a trap set in the fields to catch birds and rats, which can destroy a crop.

Lua' adaptation worked well with its relatively stable population, which until the 1960s was held in check by a high mortality rate (caused largely by smallpox and malaria) and a delayed age of marriage (men often had to wait until their 20s to accumulate the necessary brideprice). With a limited amount of cultivable land, large families are not seen as an advantage, and the number of women who migrate to the village as brides is generally balanced by the number who move out.

The stability of Lua' land use patterns and population has been changing since the beginning of the twentieth century, as other ethnic groups entered the area and began to pay rent to the Lua' to farm on their land. By the mid-twentieth century, other ethnic groups, including the Hmong, also began to settle in the area. These newer settlers were less careful about their swidden practices than the Lua', and the quality of the land began to deteriorate. Like many governments today, the Thai government claims ownership of all forested land and, without distinguishing between good and bad swidden practices, has outlawed all swidden as destructive. This has circumscribed traditional Lua' livelihood.

The Lua' were familiar with more intensive methods of agriculture, including permanently irrigated fields, and some Lua' had already switched to agriculture before the end of the nineteenth century. The pressure to substitute intensive cultivation for horticulture has increased, and today, instead of maintaining the diversity of their environment with

(continued)

America. In these environments, people practice **swidden**, or **slash and burn**, cultivation. In slash and burn cultivation, a field is cleared by felling the trees and burning the brush. The burned vegetation is allowed to remain on the soil, which prevents its drying out from the sun. The resulting

swidden (slash and burn) cultivation A form of cultivation in which a field is cleared by felling the trees and burning the brush.



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Ethnography—continued

their swidden-rotation system, the Lua' are homogenizing their land use with irrigated, terraced agriculture. With the increase of cattle and human population in the area, sorghum and millet are no longer grown. Fields planted with cotton have also declined, and now the Lua' usually buy thread for weaving and cotton clothes. Cattle grazing on the fallow land also means that less grass is available for house construction, and more Lua' now roof their houses with leaves or with corrugated metal if they can afford it. The increase of cash cropping in soybeans has transformed the previously clear and free-flowing streams to muddy, polluted pools, which the Lua' now consider too dirty to wash their clothes in, and year-round irrigation has brought in year-

round mosquitoes. Although the Lua' have not been subject to the severe dislocations of some neighboring ethnic groups, such as the Hmong, these changes in Lua' food production have brought about substantial changes in their economic, social, and ritual lifestyle.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What do the Lua' need to know about their environment in order to be successful farmers? What do you need to know about your environment in order to be successful?
2. Compare the effects of environmental pollution on the Lua' with its effects on your own life.



Swidden, or slash and burn, horticulture, as practiced traditionally in Northern Thailand, is based on a deep understanding of the forest environment. All the features of the landscape are taken into account as Lua' build their houses and plant their fields with a variety of crops used for subsistence, for cash, and for animal fodder.

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bed of ash acts as a fertilizer, returning nutrients to the soil. Fields are used for a few years (1 to 5) and then allowed to lie fallow for a longer period (up to 20 years) so that the forest cover can be rebuilt and fertility be restored. Swidden cultivators re-

quire five to six times as much fallow land as they are actually cultivating. Swidden cultivation *can* have a deteriorating effect on the environment if fields are cultivated before they have lain fallow long enough to restore forest growth. Even



In many tropical forest horticultural societies, like the Huli of New Guinea, domestic pigs add an essential protein component to the diet, and are also an essential part of the ritual feasting.

tually, the forest will not grow back, and the tree cover will be replaced by grasslands. Because of the possibility of irreversible ecological deterioration, swidden cultivation is considered both inefficient and destructive by governments in developing nations. However, it is modern industrial strategies such as logging and giant agribusiness, not swidden cultivation, that is mainly responsible for the deterioration and disappearance of tropical forests (Sponsel 1995).

Horticulture is also a mixed subsistence strategy. Most swidden cultivators grow several crops. Because their gardens do not provide all the necessary proteins for human health, they may also hunt and fish or raise some domestic animals. In New Guinea, for example, domestic pigs are an important source of protein. The horticulturalist Kofyar of Nigeria keep goats, chickens, sheep, and

cows. The Yanomamo of the Amazon rain forest hunt monkeys and other forest animals.

Because of the very diverse environments of swidden cultivation, horticulturalists have diverse cultures. Most horticulturalists shift residences as they move their fields, but some occupy villages permanently or at least on a long-term basis.

Agriculture (Intensive Cultivation)

In agriculture, the same piece of land is permanently cultivated with the use of the plow, draft animals, and more complex techniques of water and soil control than are used by horticulturalists. Plows are more efficient at loosening the soil than are digging sticks or hoes. The turning of the soil brings nutrients to the surface. Plowing requires a much more thorough clearing of the land, but it allows land to be used year after year.

Irrigation is also important in intensive cultivation. Although some horticulturalists practice simple methods of water conservation and control, agriculture in dry areas can be carried out only with sophisticated irrigation techniques. In hilly areas, agriculture requires some form of terracing in order to prevent crops and good soil from being washed down the hillside. Preindustrial agriculture also uses techniques of natural fertilization, selective breeding of livestock and crops, and crop rotation, all of which increase productivity. Whereas horticulturalists have to increase the amount of land under cultivation in order to support a larger population, agriculture can support population increases by more intensive use of the same piece of land.

Intensive cultivation generally supports higher population densities than horticulture. In Indonesia, for example, the island of Java, which makes up only 9 percent of the Indonesian land area, supports more than two-thirds of the Indonesian population through intensive wet rice cultivation using elaborate irrigation terraces. The Javanese population density of approximately 1250 people per square mile contrasts sharply with the maximum population density of swidden areas in Indonesia, which is about 145 persons per square mile (Geertz 1963:13).

The greater productivity of agriculture results also from more intensive use of labor. Farmers must work long and hard to make the land productive. For example, growing rice under a swidden system requires 241 worker-days per yearly crop, whereas wet rice cultivation requires only 22 worker-days a year. Agriculture



Ethnography

A Peasant Village in Upper Egypt

Musha is about 400 miles south of Cairo in the Nile Valley, a fertile agricultural strip between the riverbanks and the desert. Larger than the average Egyptian village, Musha has a population of about 18,000. Most village families own their houses, which, in addition to living quarters, are used for storage, stabling animals, raising poultry, and some agricultural work.

Musha's farmers practice a 2-year crop rotation system based on summer crops of cotton, maize, and sorghum, and winter crops of wheat, lentils, chickpeas, and bersim (a variety of millet). The cycle begins with cotton in the first summer, followed by wheat in the following winter. Maize or sorghum follows in the second summer, or the land may be left fallow. The cycle is completed in the second winter with bersim, lentils, and chickpeas. In addition, there are grape and pomegranate orchards, and farmers raise onions, peppers, watermelons, and other vegetables on small patches for home consumption. Small farmers also depend heavily on the milk, cheese, and butter from water buffalo and the cheese from cows, sheep, and goats. Only water buffalo are regularly eaten and sold.

The traditional technology in Musha relied on either animal power or human effort and a few basic wooden tools. Tools included the short-handled hoe for weeding and irrigation, a small sickle for harvesting, and a digging stick for planting cotton. Shallow plows and threshing sleds were pulled by cows. Winnowing relied on the wind and a winnowing fork and sieves for the final cleaning. Donkeys carried small loads for short distances; camels were used for larger loads and longer distances and for bringing the crops in from the field.

Many changes have occurred in Musha in the past 30 years. Almost all farmers now use machines at least some of the time. The number of tractors has increased enormously, and these also have a mechanism for threshing and for pulling



four-wheeled wagons, which transport fertilizer and bring crops in from the field. Farmers now depend on chemical fertilizers and pesticides as well as animal manure.

Individual farmers began using pumping machines to lift the groundwater to supplement the Nile floodwater for part of the year. Pumps made possible doublecropping and the cultivation of cotton. Land values increased, leading to the creation of large land holdings and increased demand for labor. In the 1960s,

when the completion of the Aswan High Dam brought an end to the flooding of the Nile, the government constructed feed canals, which were linked up to the privately owned pumps and became the main source of water for the fields. The government now supplies water to the canals every other week. The water raised from the canals to the level of the fields flows through a network of ditches until it reaches the fields. The pumps are generally owned by several people, who share the work of guarding and maintaining the pumps, maintaining the ditches, arranging for the distribution of water to the farmers' fields, and keeping accounts. Each farmer provides the necessary labor to open a break in the ditch band so that the water will flow into his field. The farmer pays the owner of the pump a set fee per watering and also pays the pump guard an annual fee. The government is responsible for maintaining the feeder canals and cleans them once a year.

In Musha, wheat and cotton are the most important crops. Wheat, normally planted in November and harvested in May and June, is used for both grain and straw; selling the latter is more profitable because of government-mandated price controls on grain. In order to grow wheat, the farmer must register his acreage with the government and follow government rules on crop rotation. The government-owned village

bank authorizes a loan in the form of fertilizer, insecticide, or seed.

After arranging for the distribution of water to his fields, the farmer must hire a driver and tractor (if he does not own one, which many small farmers do not) to plow the fields. Fertilizer and seed are hauled from the village bank to his home and from his home to the field. The fertilizer is then spread by hand.

Hired laborers usually harvest wheat using a small sickle. The reaped wheat is bundled into sheaves, which are transported by camel or wagon to the threshing ground at the edge of the village. The grain is threshed using a tractor and drum thresher. Threshing is a long and tedious job. It requires a five-member team to hand feed sheaves to the machine and to shovel away the threshed grain that has passed through the machine. The threshed grain, winnowed and sifted by specialists who are paid piece rates, is measured and sacked by the winnower, an activity the farmer personally supervises. In the final step, the grain and straw are hauled from the threshing ground back to the storeroom in the farmer's house.

The household is central in agriculture, although extra laborers are hired as needed and household members may work outside the agricultural sector. Women do the housekeeping, care for animals, and make cheese. In Musha they do not work in the fields, as they do in some other parts of Egypt. Children, recruited by labor contractors, cut clover for animals and help harvest cotton. Hired laborers, paid piece rates, generally harvest wheat and bundle it into sheaves. The household head plays a key managerial role in Musha, supervising others, making agricultural purchases, hiring labor, scheduling the use of machinery, and arranging for the water flow into his fields.

Wheat is grown for household use but also for the market, sold to merchants who sell it in the cities. (Until recently, the government was a major purchaser of grain.) Cotton is sold, in the form of "forced deliveries," to the government. At one time the farmers were obliged to sell their entire

cotton crop to the government; other crops could be sold at higher, market prices. For cotton, the farmer is paid a base price at delivery, from which the village bank subtracts the debt of services and products (such as fertilizer). Although the government sets a price relative to the world market price, intended to motivate the farmer to cultivate the cotton properly, the farmers, who know the world market price, often feel cheated by the lower government price. The farmer makes up for these lower prices by paying his workers lower wages.

The profit from farming is uncertain, and most families have several sources of income. Animals are sold in weekly markets through professional brokers who have established trusted relationships built on personal contact. Fruits and vegetables are sold either in the fields or to merchant brokers. In fact, 70 percent of village households derive their major income from activities other than farming: day labor, government jobs, craft trades, specialist agricultural work, as well as remittances from family members who have migrated, or from rents and pensions.

In deciding on their strategies for making a living, the farmers of Musha must adapt to the physical and social environment. Critical in the social environment is government intervention in the agricultural process, which has remodeled the very landscape on which the farmer works. The state makes major investments in agriculture through the irrigation system and other infrastructure projects. It provides agricultural credit for such inputs as seed and fertilizer, relieving the farmers of the need to finance each year's crop from the preceding harvest. The state is also involved in marketing, and state policies, such as importing wheat from the United States, affect the prices it is willing to offer the farmer. The state has a role in setting land ownership policy and makes rules governing land tenancy. These policies have made available large pools of labor, which thus have less bargaining power. The state also affects the labor market by controlling (and permitting or encouraging) migration outside the



Ethnography—continued

country, which acts as a safety valve for surplus rural labor. The state also benefits from the remittances in hard currency sent back by migrants.

In addition to interacting with government officials, farmers must also negotiate with the owners of tractors, day laborers, recruiters for child labor, neighbors, contractors for transport animals, and merchants, as well as supervising a complicated agricultural cycle. The farmer must know enough of the traditional skills of farming to supervise the agricultural work and also how to manage a wide range of activities, making important decisions at every step. With the increasing monetization of agriculture, farmers now consciously orient themselves to the market and have become sophisticated in dealing with it. Peasant farmers today are part of a world economy.



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Critical Thinking Questions

1. Compare how technological changes have affected the working environment in Musha with how technological changes have affected the working environment in the United States.
2. Compare the impact of the state on your life with the impact of the state on farmers in Musha.

Source: Adapted from Nicholas Hopkins, “Mechanized Irrigation in Upper Egypt: The Role of Technology and the State in Agriculture.” In B. Turner II and Stephen B. Brush (Eds.), *Comparative Farming Systems*. New York: Guilford Press, 1987, pp. 223–247. Reprinted with permission.

In peasant villages in Egypt, a farmer makes important decisions regarding the allocation of household and extradomestic labor, purchases necessities for agriculture, schedules the use of machinery, and negotiates with the government for the sale of his crops.

also requires more capital investment than horticulture; apart from the cost of human labor, plows must be bought and draft animals raised and cared for. And although agriculturalists may have more control over food production than horticulturalists, they are also more vulnerable to the environment. By depending on the intensive cultivation of one or two

crops, one crop failure or a disease that strikes draft animals may become an economic disaster.

Agriculture is generally associated with sedentary villages, the rise of cities and the state, occupational diversity, social stratification, and other complex forms of social organization, although some states, in Africa, for example, were built on horticulture.

And in contrast to horticulturalists, who grow food mainly for the subsistence of their households, farmers (agriculturalists) are enmeshed within larger complex societies. Part of their food production is used to support non-food-producing occupational specialists, such as religious or ruling elites. Rural cultivators who produce for the subsistence of their households but are also integrated into larger, complex state societies are called **peasants**.

Musha, the Egyptian village described in the “Ethnography” box, exhibits many of the general characteristics of peasant villages. These characteristics include the importance of the household in production, the use of a supplementary labor supply outside the household, the need of many farmers to depend on part-time work to supplement their income, and the surplus extracted from the cultivator by the state in the form of rent, taxes, and free labor. Although Egypt has a particularly long and well-documented history of state intervention in agriculture, the intervention of the state in Musha is typical of peasant societies generally. The multiple strategies for making a living in Musha highlight the ways in which both physical and social environments provide opportunities but also constrain human choices and shape culture and society.

Industrial Economies

The transition to machines and chemical processes for the production of goods was explosive in its effect on many aspects of economy and society. Industrialization led to vastly increased population growth, expanded consumption of resources (especially energy), international expansion, occupational specialization, and a shift from subsistence strategies to wage labor. Industrial economies are based on the principle that consumption must constantly be expanded and that material standards of living must always go up. This pattern contrasts with tribal economies, which put various limits on consumption and thus are able to make lighter demands on their environments. Industrialism, which promotes rapid resource consumption, has outgrown national boundaries. The result has been great movement of resources and capital and migrations of population, as the whole world has gradually been drawn into the global economy, a system we call **globalization**.

Industrial societies always have at least two social classes: a large labor force that produces goods and

services, and a much smaller class that controls what is produced and how it is distributed. In addition, there is a managerial class that oversees the day-to-day operation of the workplace, as evidenced in the ethnography of the beef industry in the United States (discussed later).

Poverty in industrialized societies punishes weakness, failure, or ill fortune in a way that is less true of the subsistence strategies of foraging, pastoralism, agriculture, and horticulture described earlier in this chapter. Contemporary industrial and postindustrial societies, characterized by well-coordinated specialized labor forces, increasingly require mobility, skill, and education for success. The creation of complex global systems of exchange between those who supply raw materials and those who use them in manufacturing, as well as between manufacturers and consumers, has resulted in significant economic inequities both within and among nations. The rise of a special kind of formal organization called a **bureaucracy**, market-oriented agriculture, the predominance of wage labor, and the subsequent loss of control over culture and social institutions are some of the constraints within which people in the modern global economy must struggle to make a living.

The contemporary world is characterized by connectedness and change of a magnitude greater than anything seen earlier. Events in seemingly far-off places have a direct impact on the ways people make a living: A shutdown of oil wells in the Persian Gulf halts generating plants in Ohio. Indians and Koreans are recruited to build cities in the deserts of the Middle East. A woman from the Philippines finds a job as a nurse in New York or as a waitress in an Israeli restaurant. For some people, the expansion of the global economy has meant new and more satisfying means of making a living. However, these opportunities are not equally available to all peoples or to all individuals within a culture and for

peasants Rural cultivators who produce for the subsistence of their households but are also integrated into larger, complex state societies.

globalization the integration of resources, labor, and capital into a global network.

bureaucracy Administrative hierarchy characterized by specialization of function and fixed lines.



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Anthropology Makes a Difference

A Successful Agricultural Intervention in Bolivia

The holistic approach of anthropologists can make a big difference in the quality and quantity of food production all over the world. This is demonstrated by the work of Alan Kolata, an archaeological anthropologist who, with agronomists and local farmers in a high plateau region of the Andes Mountains in Bolivia, is reviving an ancient system of agriculture.

This region, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, was the site of an ancient culture called the Tiwanaku. By around 1500 BCE, local farmers had developed a system of agriculture that was ingenious in taking advantage of the particular resources of this area while compensating for its deficiencies.

Lake Titicaca, which has the highest elevation of any lake in the world, is slightly salty. It is fed by rivers and springs and receives intense sunlight during the day, but during the growing season the area is subject to severe temperature drops in the evening. Successful farming in this area required cushioning the growing area from these temperature extremes and preventing the seepage of brackish water into the cultivated area.

To adapt to the opportunities and drawbacks of the region, the Tiwanaku farmers constructed a system of raised-bed agriculture. They made a



series of platforms, beginning with a foundation layer of cobblestones. Next they added a layer of clay that prevented the salty lake water from seeping into the topsoil. Above the clay was a layer of sand and gravel that promoted drainage, and above that was the fertile soil in which the crops were grown. Surrounding the platforms were canals, filled with water from a river that the farmers rerouted from its natural bed. This water trapped the radiant energy from the intense Andean sunlight, so

that an insulating blanket of warm water seeping into the growing soil from the canals protected the crops from evening frosts. These canals of standing water also became an environment for plants, insects, and other organisms that enriched the soil.

After the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century, these raised fields fell into disuse as the farmers adopted European farming methods. The platforms deteriorated into marshy pasture, although the mounds were still visible around the lake.

In 1979, Kolata noted the mounds while investigating the remains of the ancient culture in the area. His research indicated that this area had once supported a much larger population.

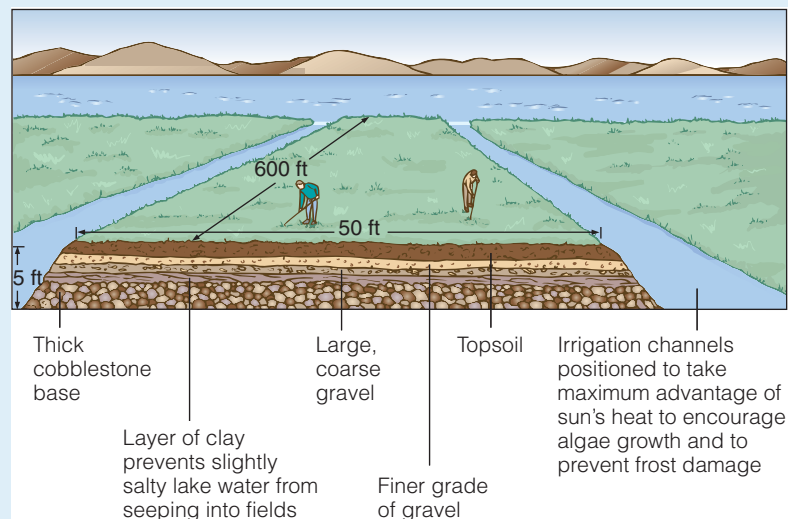
many peoples the promise of the global economy has yet to be fulfilled. Meanwhile, globalization has created many new problems, including degradation of the environment.

Different kinds of livelihood and economic systems all affect the quality of the environment—water, forests, air, and animal and plant life. Tropical and other old-growth forests all over the

world, critical for the maintenance of biodiversity, have been particularly hard hit. Corporations and states exploit tropical forests to meet consumer demands for tropical forest products. They are also negatively affected by increasing population in nations within which these forests are located. Tropical forest and other environmental conservation efforts have thus become a critical global

This led Kolata to think about whether reviving this earlier system of agriculture might prove more productive for local farmers than their present methods. Kolata's idea was positively received by local development experts, who were beginning to question industrialized, capital-intensive, irrigation-based agriculture as the only solution to problems of food production in developing nations and were looking for new alternatives more suited to local conditions. By 1987, Kolata was supervising five experimental raised-bed fields to compare current agricultural yields with those produced by traditional post-conquest farming methods.

The potato yield in the experimental fields was much higher than in the traditional plots, and the experimental fields survived a crucial test: when potatoes and other crops were nearly destroyed by a frost late in the growing season, the crops in the raised-bed fields escaped almost undamaged. Kolata is now spearheading a project to reclaim more land on which to revive this ancient system of agriculture that has proven to be so effective (Kolata 1996). In such ways, basic research in anthropology can be applied to solve human problems.



issue, one in which ecological anthropologists play an important role (see Murray 1986; Kottack 1999; Brosius 1999). Anthropology is particularly sensitive to the complex linkages between local, regional, national, and global contexts that structure the modern world. Anthropologists today can play an important role in shaping government and global economic policies that take into

account the environmental impact of different ways of making a living, the values and practices of local cultures, international plant and animal conservation efforts, and corporate- and state-driven efforts to participate in global markets.

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Ethnography

Industrial Agriculture: The Beef Industry in the United States

The custom of eating beef in the United States rests partly on the eighteenth century habits of the British upper classes for whom eating beef was associated with social status. In the United States, many immigrants viewed the regular eating of steaks and chops as a symbol of their having moved into the middle class. This culturally patterned taste for beef has continued to spread throughout the industrialized nations of the world, especially in the United States and Japan. The increasing global demand for cheap beef has resulted in the destruction of enormous swaths of rain forests in Central and South America as forest land is used for animal pasturage, and a growing industrialized beef industry in the U.S. Midwest.

From an investor's point of view, clearing tropical forests for pasturage is the best way to acquire the huge amount of land needed to raise cattle. But ecologically, cattle production is one of the worst land uses for tropical forests (Brookfield 1988). The production of enough ground beef for one hamburger requires the destruction of 200 pounds of living matter, including more than 20 plant species, 100 insect species, and dozens of bird, mammal, and reptile species. Cattle raising is also the most costly kind of food production. Producing 1 pound of beef takes 2500 gallons of water, compared with 119 gallons for corn, and 9 pounds of feed, compared with 2 pounds of feed for chicken. In the global economy, "having it your way" at your neighborhood fast-food restaurant translates into environmental consequences thousands of miles away (Rifkin 1993).

Anthropologists and human rights activists casting a critical eye on industrial agriculture in North America have found a common theme: food production is intimately connected to culture. In modern meat and poultry production numerous cultures intersect: the urban/suburban consumer culture demanding cheap meat and poultry; the corporate culture requiring cheap labor and cost-efficient production; a diverse, often unskilled and vulnerable workforce culture; America's rural culture where the factory farms and processing plants are increasingly located; and a union culture that must increasingly depend on negotiation rather

than strikes to mediate between the industry's executive suites and its assembly lines.

During much of America's past, meat or poultry was expensive for the average family, and its consumption a status indicator. Post-World War II, as disposable income rose, mainstream America prided itself on being a "meat and potatoes" culture. American dinner tables were supplied with the beef, pork, and chicken that came through a production chain that started with the livestock on a family farm and ended in the neighborhood retail butcher shop, where a knowledgeable homemaker selected the cuts that suited her tastes and pocketbook.

Increasingly, as both parents worked outside the home, as suburban living compelled longer commutes to work, and as busy and conflicting schedules splintered family togetherness, American food culture became marked by the consumption of packaged convenience meat and poultry items, which was "grazed" on either at home, in drive-ins or at fast food restaurants, or taken on the run as mobile "fast food." An ever-growing American—and global—demand for inexpensive, reliable, and widely available beef, pork, and poultry required cost-efficient mass production methods that could only be employed by huge transnational corporations with their mechanization, chemical fertilizers, and assembly line processing techniques.

America's love affair with cheap beef and poultry came at a significant price to the nation's rural culture and its environment. In the wake of monopolistic agribusiness, generations-old family farms were no longer economically viable. Rural poverty increased and young, would-be farmers saw little future for themselves. Some remained in America's rural areas and took the dangerous and poorly paid jobs offered by the corporate meat and poultry processing industry; others left the countryside altogether. Local Chambers of Commerce recruited agribusiness with free land and tax breaks, putting a greater revenue burden on farmers and small town residents already in a downward economic spiral. Requiring a huge pool of cheap labor, the meat and poultry industries often moved into an area with their own

large groups of contracted workers, frequently non-English-speaking immigrants who could not be easily absorbed into tightly-knit farm communities and small towns. Local housing, education, and medical resources were strained; cultural conflicts generated hostility; and food-borne diseases spread that were attributed to the processing plant workforce. The local water and soil were despoiled by chemical fertilizers, and noxious fumes from the processing plants polluted the air. Thus, although some rural regions experienced short-term job increases from the meatpacking and poultry processing industries, there was a hidden cost and a long term downside for rural communities.

The corporate culture of the meat and poultry industry publicly prioritizes the values of quality, safety, and productivity in their newsletters, training manuals, and advertising; in fact, its vaunted cost efficiency and increasing productivity is only made possible by cheap labor and “hitting the numbers,” that is, getting the maximum product out the door 24/7/365. “On the floor” this translates into a large proportion of unskilled, poorly trained, low paid hourly workers; a speeded-up “disassembly” line; an insufficiency of lunch and bathroom breaks; and no-paid “donning and doffing” time when workers can clean off the blood which bespatters them and change their clothing

at the end of their shift. Management also makes significant savings by discouraging worker compensation claims or refusing to pay such claims; by “writing-up” workers as malingerers if they request absence for illness; and by rigidly distinguishing job descriptions with differential pay scales down to the last penny per hour.

Work in the meatpacking and poultry processing industries are inherently difficult and dangerous in the best of plants, but workers say that conditions are made worse by management’s emphasis on raising productivity and cutting costs at the expense of everything else. The maintenance of tools and machines and a variety of janitorial tasks are often skimped or postponed when staff is shorthanded and replacement workers are needed on the line. The processing operations on the line involve thousands of panicked animals moving through a treadmill to be stunned by a “knocker,” axed in half by “splitters” on a moving platform, and deboned and cut up with sharp knives wielded by an assortment of specialists such as “stickers,” “gutters,” “tail rippers,” and “head droppers,” whose names suggest their roles in the process—and the possibilities for injuries. The blood, intestines, ears, hooves, and other animal by-products used for making perfumes, bonemeal, paintbrushes, and hundreds of other items are supposed to be continually cleaned up or removed to



Many cultural changes are the result of the industrialization of the beef industry in rural America. Thousands of workers, mainly immigrants, must adjust to the pressures and safety hazards of the work floor, while rural communities must also adjust to the replacement of family farms with the new subsistence pattern of industrialism.

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Ethnography—continued

separate locations for later use, but are sometimes left to decay, emitting noxious fumes. Workers have reported being put back on the line with flu, vomiting, or diarrhea, impacting not only their own health but also the quality of the product. Human Rights Watch has deemed conditions in this sector of American agribusiness so bad that they violate international standards and basic human rights.

Given the industry's "bottom line" mentality and its domination at its upper levels by largely white, native-born men, conflicts of a cultural and economic nature with its multiethnic, poorly educated, often immigrant and non-English-speaking assembly line workforce, are inevitable. Despite the tedious, degrading, and risky jobs they do, many workers are proud of their ability to "keep up the count," learn the necessary skills for the line, and turn out the product. But they resent management's indifference to their safety, and its disrespect for the suggestions about plant improvement that are solicited but then ignored. The workforce also generally views management as indifferent to the cultural and linguistic issues that impact on job performance.

One seemingly trivial incident in a poultry plant illustrates how cultural and workplace issues intersected on the line. In this instance, a largely young

Latina (female) workforce was required to wear highly visible white hairnets supplied by the company. The women say they found this type of hairnet insufficient to contain their "heavy hair," but also admitted that they found them unnecessarily old-fashioned and unattractive. They began to supply their own hairnets, which were dark brown in color, hence less visible and more becoming. When the supervisor demanded that they wear the company-issued hairnets, the women complained that he wanted the white hairnets only because they enabled him to more easily observe any gaps in the line where workers might be slowing down or taking a break. The women continued to wear their less visible, more attractive, and supposedly sturdier brown hairnets, and the issue had to be mediated through the union.

On a more serious level, many workers regard management as racist in hiring, training, and promotional practices, and only willing to make superficial changes when specific charges of prejudice or discrimination are aired. Prefacing a morning announcement with a greeting in Vietnamese, for example, without providing translations of necessary, substantive information, or hiring Spanish-speaking supervisors to be "culture brokers" then paying mere lip service to the complaints or suggestions



Summary

1. Different physical environments present different problems, opportunities, and limitations to human populations. In the quest for survival, humans have had increasingly intensive impacts on their environments as their populations have increased and they have developed more complex forms of social and economic organization. Ecological anthropology examines the interrelationships between humans and their environments.
2. The subsistence (food-getting) pattern of a society develops in response to seasonal variation in the environment and environmental variations over the long run, such as drought, flood, or animal diseases.
3. Modern science and technology are important strategies for successfully exploiting diverse environments. But traditional ways of using the land, based on simple but ingenious technology and vast knowledge of the environment, can also be successful strategies of environmental management.
4. The five major patterns of using the environment to support human populations are foraging (fishing, hunting, and gathering), pastoralism, horticulture, agriculture, and industrialism. As a whole, humankind has moved in the direction of using more complex technology, increasing its numbers, and developing more complex cultural systems.

transmitted are examples workers cite as ploys by management to keep the line going without making significant reforms. Line workers bridle at supervisors' frequent implications that the hourly workers—the lowest level on the floor—are culturally inferior, lacking the work ethic or the capacity “to take it” of the Anglos in the upper strata, some of whom have risen through the ranks themselves. Workers view as hypocritical supervisory “write-ups” for such trivial infractions such as tardiness, horseplay, or gum chewing while management routinely violates labor law, federal safety standards, and worker's compensation regulations. Although plenty of plant workers resist what they consider daily occurrences of exploitation and racism by leaving the job—the turnover rate is far above the average of any other industry—for many of these uneducated, unskilled workers there are few alternatives but to stay on. As one southern, native-born white chicken plant worker put it, “Well, it don't pay great, but down here it's one of the better paying jobs for a family.”

Union membership, with its core cultural dynamic of strength in unity, is the one means by which the industry's workers can constructively—and often successfully—resist their exploitation by the values and goals of management. As “The

Jungle,” Upton Sinclair's classic novel of a Chicago meatpacking plant a hundred years ago showed, only the unionization of the multiethnic, immigrant workforce was able to compel the “bosses” to improve wages and conditions. Unlike in previous eras, today's union culture largely looks to contract negotiations rather than strikes as a means of improving wages and working conditions. Many meat and poultry plants have tried to keep unions out by illegal threats against or firings of union “agitators.” But with a combination of determined workers, professional union organizers, and sympathetic legislators, some progress has been made in relieving the industry's worst conditions. Union culture also extends its unity theme beyond the plant's floor by offering outside social activities for workers' families and educational meetings and workshops on workers' rights. At this point it is not clear whether the industry will continue to reform, or whether the hidden environmental, social, and other costs of “cheap beef” will prove to be more than society is willing or able to pay.

Source: Donald D. Stull and Michael J. Broadway, *Slaughterhouse Blues: The Meat and Poultry Industry in North America*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004.

5. Foraging, which relies on food naturally available in the environment, was the major food-getting pattern for 99 percent of the time humans have been on earth. Although this way of life is rapidly disappearing, foraging is still a useful adjunct to other subsistence strategies for many societies.
6. Traditionally, the aboriginal peoples of Australia were adept at surviving in harsh desert areas, using their deep knowledge of the wide variety of plants, animals, and other edible resources of their environment. Despite extremes of climate, particularly heat and the absence of water, their seasonal rounds permitted them to exploit a wide range of resources in their quest for food, and provided them with a reasonably reliable subsistence strategy.
7. Pastoralism involves the care of domesticated herd animals, which alone cannot provide the necessary ingredients for an adequate human diet. Because supplementary food grains are required, pastoralism either is found along with cultivation or involves trading relations with food cultivators. The Yarahmadzai are an example of a nomadic mixed pastoralist economy.
8. The Maasai are a transhumant pastoralist society. Their subsistence strategy depends on extensive knowledge of their environment and features the flexible exploitation of multiple ecological niches. In addition to herding cattle, they trade small animals for honey, fish, grains, fruit, and vegetables.
9. Horticulturalists use a simple, nonmechanized means of production that are not used permanently.

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but are allowed to lie fallow after several years of productivity. Horticulture is typically a tropical forest adaptation and requires the cutting and burning of jungle to clear fields for cultivation.

10. The Lua' are swidden cultivators in the mountainous region of northern Thailand. Their major crops are cotton, corn, yams, rice, and sorghum; they also grow vegetables and keep pigs, water buffalo, cattle, and chickens, which they may sell at local markets for cash. The Lua' mixed economy is becoming more typical of horticulturalists in the modern world.
11. Agriculture uses land and labor intensively, with a complex technology that involves plows, irrigation, or mechanization. This food-getting pattern generally supports greater population densities than all but industrial patterns. It is associated with sedentary village life and the rise of the state.
12. Peasants, like those in Musha, Egypt, are cultivators who produce mainly for the subsistence of their households and who are part of larger political entities, such as the state. For peasants, agriculture is the main source of subsis-

tence, but they also participate in the larger cash economy of the state, engage in wage labor, and have some occupational specialties. Peasant farmers are controlled in many ways by state pricing and other regulatory policies, although at the local level they must also make important decisions about their work.

13. Industrialism is a system in which machines and chemical processes are used for the production of goods. Industrial societies require a large, mobile labor force. They are characterized by complex systems of exchange among all elements of the economy, by bureaucracies, and by social stratification, including a management class.
14. The beef industry in the United States is an example of industrialized agriculture. Driven by the demand for cheap beef and maximum profits, the beef industry in the American Midwest can be analyzed in terms of the intersection of several cultures that are involved: the urban/consumer culture, the corporate culture, the culture of the workers, the union culture, and the culture of the rural areas in which the meat plants are sited.



Key Terms

agriculture
bureaucracy
efficiency
foraging (hunting and gathering)
globalization

horticulture
industrialism
nomadic pastoralism
pastoralism
patrilineal
peasants

population density
productivity
rain forest
sedentary
subsistence strategy

swidden (slash and burn) cultivation
transhumant
pastoralism



Suggested Readings

- Condon, Richard G., with Julia Ogina and the Holman Elders. 1996. *The Northern Copper Inuit: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. A record of the many social, economic, and material changes experienced by a group of Copper Inuit on the west coast of Victoria Island, former nomadic hunter-gatherers who have become dependent on the modern consumer products of Western society.
- Denslow, Julie Sloan, and Christine Padoch. 1988. *People of the Tropical Rain Forest*. Berkeley: Uni-

versity of California Press. A beautifully illustrated, sensitive portrayal of the many peoples who inhabit the tropical rain forests in different parts of the world. The book includes essays on what we can learn from tropical forest peoples and the impact of the modern global economy on their subsistence economies and environments.

- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1968. *The Nuer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. *The Nuer* is an ethnography of East African pastoralists, with a focus on ecology.



- Griffith, David, Ed Kissam, Jeronimo Campseco, Anna Garcia, Max Pfeffer, David Runsten, and Manuel Valdes Pizzini. 1995. *Working Poor: Farmworkers in the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. A model of field research by a team, this meticulous study of farmwork in California, Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, New Jersey, and Michigan places this way of making a living in the context of American culture and the global economy.
- Lieber, Michael. 1994. *More Than a Living: Fishing and the Social Order on a Polynesian Atoll*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. This ethnography of a tiny Micronesian atoll helps fill the gap in anthropological analyses of fishing as a subsistence strategy. Its focus on the changing context of fishing activities provides useful insights applicable to the issue of overfishing now faced by many Pacific Island peoples.
- Roberts, Glenda S. 1994. *Staying on the Line: Blue-Collar Women in Contemporary Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Based on ethnography in a garment factory in Japan, in which the workers largely speak for themselves, this study

adds to our knowledge of the Japanese workplace, which up until now has focused mainly on white-collar employment.

- Schlosser, Eric. 2005. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. New York: Harper Perennial. A thoroughly researched and serious book that examines the fast-food process from meat to marketing and the consequences for Americans and the world. With a particular focus on McDonalds, this book tells you everything you might need to know about that authentic example of American culture: the hamburger and how you get it “your way.”
- Stull, Donald D. and Michael Broadway. 2004. *Slaughterhouse Blues: The Meat and Poultry Industry in North America*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. This model of interdisciplinary, applied social science between a social geographer and an anthropologist highlights the ways in which the meat industries, with their diverse immigrant labor forces, are changing the face of rural America. The vivid descriptions of the meat processing floor may turn you into a vegetarian!



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Economics

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

Economic Systems
Economic Behavior

Production
Allocating Resources
Organizing Labor

Distribution: Systems of Exchange
Reciprocity
Redistribution

Work relations in many noncapitalist societies are based on kinship. A person does certain work and receives certain benefits because of his or her membership in a family or kin links to others. In capitalist societies, most individuals work for impersonal firms and receive wages. Sometimes, capitalist relations of production are masked by kinship. People believe that they do certain work and receive certain pay because of their kin connections but impersonal, capitalist relations lie just beneath the surface.

For more details, see "Ethnography" in this chapter on pages 183–185.

All human societies have economic systems within which goods and services are produced, distributed, and consumed. In one sense, the economic aspect of culture is simply the sum of the choices people make regarding these areas of their lives. Such choices have important ramifications. For example, choosing to become a farmer rather than an insurance broker may determine where you live, who you are likely to meet, the sorts of behaviors you will expect in your spouse and offspring, and so on. However, such choices are not unlimited; rather, they are constrained by our cultures, traditions, and technologies. Furthermore, our environments set the boundaries within which choices about the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services are made. To the extent that economic systems are part of culture, people in different cultures have differing sorts of economic behavior.



Economic Systems

The part of a society that deals with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services is its **economic system**. Economics deals partly with things—with the tools used to produce goods and the goods themselves. More important, it deals with the relationship of things to people and people to one another in the process of producing, distributing, and consuming goods.

Anthropologists are interested in understanding the relationship between the economy and the rest of a culture. One aspect of this relationship is that culture defines or shapes the ends sought by individuals and the means of achieving those ends. Society and economy are interdependent in other ways. The way in which production is organized has consequences for the institution of the family and for the political system. For example, in southern Mali, where most people live by agriculture and where

economic system The norms governing production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services within a society.



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land is abundant, children can help farm when they are very young. Thus, families tend to have as many children as they possibly can. Large families can cultivate more land and therefore are generally wealthier than small families. Their leaders acquire the political power and social prestige that derives from having wealth and numerous relations.

Although economists often attempt to do so, it is difficult to separate the economic system from the rest of culture. Economics is embedded in the total social process and cultural pattern. In nonindustrial and kin-based societies, for example, few groups are organized solely for the purpose of production; their economic activities are only one aspect of what they do. Production is carried out by groups such as families, larger kinship groups, or local communities. The distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods is thus embedded in relationships that have social and political purposes as well as economic ones.

Economic Behavior

Economics is the study of the ways in which the choices people make as individuals and as members of societies combine to determine how their society uses its scarce resources to produce and distribute goods and services. The academic discipline of **economics** developed in a Western market economy, and there has been much debate within anthropology over its applicability to other cultures (Isaac 1993).

The idea of scarcity is a fundamental assumption of Western microeconomic theory. Economists as-

sume that human wants are unlimited but the means for achieving them are not. If this is correct, organizations and individuals must make decisions about the best way to apply their limited means to meet their unlimited desires. Economists assume that individuals and organizations will make such choices in the way they believe provides the greatest benefit to them. Economists call such choices **economizing behavior**.

Some scholars have equated benefit with material well-being and profit (see Dalton 1961). Will a business firm cut down or expand its production? Will it purchase a new machine or hire more laborers? Where will it locate its plant? Will it manufacture shoes or gloves? How much will be spent on advertising its product? Such decisions are assumed to be motivated by an analysis designed to produce the greatest cash profit and are assumed to be rational—that is, based on the desire to maximize profit. The notion of financial profit is very limited, however. Consider a choice you may make this evening. After you finish reading this chapter, you may well be confronted with a series of decisions: Should you reread it for better comprehension? Should you study for another course? Call and get a pizza delivered? Play with your kids? Socialize with your friends? Take care of that project for work? Get some sleep? Of course, there are many other possibilities.

You will make your choice based on some calculation of benefit. However, that benefit is not necessarily reducible to financial profit. It is quite possible for you to believe that you would ultimately make



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Decisions these stock traders make on the floor are based almost entirely on profit and loss. However, most of the time, our decisions are motivated by other considerations as well. We may prefer relaxation and free time to financial return.

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more money by studying and getting higher grades; yet because your choice is set in a context in which making money is not the only element of value, you may choose to socialize instead. We value our friends and our leisure time as well as many other things. Your choice is rational because it is based on some calculation of your needs and goals, but it need not lead to greater profit. If we were to predict your behavior on the assumption that you will always act to increase your material well-being, our predictions would be inaccurate. We would do better by asking what motivates you.

Just as you might value an evening spent with friends over an “A” in this class, members of other cultures might value family connections, community stability, cultural tradition, leisure time, or other things over monetary profit. People everywhere make rational choices based on their needs and their guesses about the future. But culture, values, and institutions provide the framework within which these choices are made. For example, Western culture is dominated by capitalism. We place an extremely high value on wealth and material prosperity and see the marketplace as the primary institution through which those goals can be achieved. In our popular mythology, those who can achieve high levels of wealth and consumption, such as athletes, actors, and entrepreneurs, are held up as role models. We are easily motivated by monetary profit (but not exclusively so). On the other hand, some other societies appear to be in business for their health (Sahlins 1972).

The Hadza, a hunting-gathering people of Tanzania, live in an area with an abundance of animal and vegetable food. Hadza men spend much of their time gambling, and they make no attempt to use leisure time to increase wealth. Surrounded by cultivators, for a long time the Hadza refused to give up their hunting way of life because it would require too much work (Woodburn 1968). Such behavior seems irrational or lazy only if we assume that people should value material wealth over free time. This is clearly not the case among the Hadza, or even among many North Americans.

Enjoyable use of leisure time is only one of the ends toward which humans may expend effort. They may also direct their energies toward increasing social status or respect. In Western society, **prestige** is primarily tied up with increased consumption and display of goods and services. In some other societies, prestige is associated not with individual display but with generosity and the giving away of

goods to others. Those who have much more than others may be considered stingy, and they may lose rather than gain prestige. Conspicuous consumers and stingy people become objects of scorn and may even be accused of witchcraft. Thus, we cannot assume that people’s choices are motivated only by material well-being.

In order to understand the economies of different cultures, anthropologists face two related problems. They must attempt to analyze the broad institutional and social contexts within which people make decisions, and they must attempt to determine and evaluate the factors that motivate individual decision making. These are important intellectual projects in their own right, but they become crucial in applied anthropology. Applied anthropologists are often concerned with issues of economic development in poor nations. It is very difficult to design programs that promote development in a foreign culture without a thorough understanding of that culture’s institutions and the forces that motivate its people.

Production

In order to produce, people must have access to basic resources: land, water, and the materials from which tools are made. Every society has norms or rules that regulate access to and control over such resources. In addition, labor must be controlled and organized to make these resources work. Examining the resources people use and the ways in which access to these are determined provides insight into the cultural variations in economy.

Allocating Resources

Productive resources are the things that members of a society need to participate in the economy. Thus, access to and control of **productive resources**

economics The study of the ways in which the choices people make combine to determine how their society uses its scarce resources to produce and distribute goods and services.

economizing behavior Choosing a course of action to maximize perceived benefit.

prestige Social honor or respect.

productive resources Material goods, natural resources, or information that are used to create other goods or information.

are basic to every culture. People everywhere require access to land and water. Until relatively recently, in most societies these were the most important resources. But, access to tools and the materials to make them, as well as knowledge, also played important roles. Among fishing societies, for example, productive resources include watercraft and elaborate trapping and netting devices. Producing and using such tools requires extensive knowledge of techniques of manufacture as well as the proper times, places, and techniques of fishing.

In current-day U.S. society, access to knowledge plays a critical role. Although there is no doubt that one gets more from college than simply a certain quantity of knowledge, university degrees are a good proxy for knowledge and examining the relationship between them and income provides a good illustration of the effect of access to knowledge in American society. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2003), the median income for high school graduates in 2003 was about \$26,000. The median for those with a college degree was almost \$42,000. The median for those with master's and doctoral degrees was substantially higher still.

An important point of contrast between economic systems is the extent to which the members of a society have access to productive resources. In general, differential access to resources develops as population and social complexity increase. Small-scale economies have a limited number of productive resources, and most everyone has access to them. Large-scale societies have a great many more resources, but access to them is limited. This can be seen by comparing access to resources among foragers, pastoralists, and extensive and intensive cultivators. Again, examining access to knowledge in the United States is instructive. Only 3 percent of the students at America's most selective universities come from households in the lowest 25 percent of the income scale; only 10 percent come from the bottom 50 percent (*Economist* 2005). This clearly shows that family wealth plays a critical role in determining access to knowledge and access to such knowledge plays a critical role in future wealth and social position.

Foragers Among foragers, weapons used in hunting animals and tools used in gathering plants as well as the knowledge to make and use these are productive resources. The technology is simple, and tools are made by hand. People take great care

to assure that they have access to the tools necessary for their individual survival. For example, among the Hadza of Tanzania, men spend much time gambling. However, a man's bow, bird arrows, and leather bag are never shared or gambled, because these items are essential to survival (Woodburn 1998).

Besides knowledge and tools, land and water are the most critical resources for foragers, and many forms of land tenure are found among them. The requirements of a foraging lifestyle generally mean that a group of people must spread out over a large area of land. Flexible boundaries have an adaptive value because ranges can be adjusted as the availability of resources changes in a particular area. The abundance and predictability of resources also affect territorial boundaries. Where resources are scarce and large areas are needed to support the population, territorial boundaries are not defended. Where resources are more abundant and people move less, groups may be more inclined to defend their territory (Cashdan 1989:42).

The Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari were typical foragers. Although today most Ju/'hoansi are settled, in earlier times their camps were located near water holes, and the area used by a local group was measured by one day's round-trip walk (about 12 miles from the camp) in all directions. Each camp had a core area best conceived of as a circle with the water hole at the center and a radius of about 6 miles. Points beyond this were rarely used. Although camps were moved five or six times a year, they were not moved far. Sometimes the move was only a few hundred yards; the farthest move was about 10 or 12 miles (R. Lee 1968). Ju/'hoansi territories were associated with long-standing residents who were spoken of as owners, although they did not have exclusive rights to the land. Their permission had to be asked when others wished to use the land's resources, but it was rarely refused, although visitors might be made to feel unwelcome (Cashdan 1989:41).

Hunters and gatherers require freedom of movement not only as a condition of success in their search for food but also as a way of dealing with social conflict. Hunting bands are kept small in order to exploit the environment successfully. In such small groups, conflict must be kept to a minimum. When arguments break out, individuals can move to other groups without fear that they are cutting themselves off from access to vital resources. If land were individual even though it is usually defended against

outsiders, the freedom of movement in hunting societies would be severely limited.

Pastoralists Among pastoralists, the most critical resources are livestock and land. Access to grassland and water is gained through membership in kin groups. Within pastoralist camps, all members share equal access to pastures. It is this right of access, rather than ownership, that is important. Livestock, on the other hand, are owned and managed by individual heads of households. Animals produce goods that are directly consumed, such as milk; they are also kept as a store of wealth, to produce other animals, and to exchange. Because animals must be cared for and fed, maintenance of these productive resources requires substantial time and energy.

Pastoral tribes have traditionally determined access to pasture and migration routes by arrangements with local authorities who have control over these areas. Contemporary pastoralists often establish access to land by contracts with the landowners of villages through which the pastoralists move in their migrations. These contracts, which must be renewed every year, specify the rent for the pasture, the borders of the area, and the date by which the area must be vacated.

The yak-herding Drokba of northwestern Tibet present an interesting historical example. The

Drokba were under the control of large Buddhist monasteries that owned all the grassland. Families were granted rights to use pastures in return for tax payments. Allocation of pastureland was reviewed every third year and altered to fit family herd size and composition. The system worked well because the land could be managed to even out grazing (Barfield 1993:188).

Extensive Cultivators In addition to land, tools, and knowledge, extensive cultivators often require storage facilities. In such societies, land tends to be communally owned by an extended kin group, although rights to use a piece of land may be given to households or even individuals. The users of the land may not sell it or otherwise transfer it, however, because ultimately the land belongs to the larger community. Designated elders or officials of the group often allocate plots to members of the group or heads of households.

For example, among the Ibo, swidden farmers in Nigeria, no individual owns land or has permanent rights to it. Instead, land is vested in kinship groups and allocated to individuals by leaders of these groups (Acheson 1989). But even the group that has rights to use the land may not dispose of it at will; land is “inalienable” and may not be sold. With this type of land ownership, few people are deprived of access to basic resources because almost every



The Meo (Hmong) are extensive cultivators. Here men clear land for their gardens.

person belongs to a land-holding group within the society. Control over land, therefore, is not a means by which one group can exploit another or exert permanent control over other groups.

In societies based on extensive cultivation, the work involved in clearing, cultivating, and maintaining the land is a large investment and is more important than exclusive title to the land. The rights to cleared and productive land and to the products of that land are vested in those who work it, most often the domestic group or household. Because the user of the land may die while the land is still productive, some system of inheritance of use rights is usually provided for.

Among the Lacandon Maya in the highlands of Chiapas in Mexico, for example, individuals may farm any unused piece of land. However, clearing virgin land is very difficult, so individuals retain rights to land they have cleared and are likely to reuse, even if it is not currently in production. People who migrate from the area may lose rights to land they have cleared, but their family retains ownership of any fruit trees that have been planted on it. Should a man die after investing time and labor in clearing and planting land, his wife and children retain rights to use the land (McGee 1990).

Where population densities are low or large areas of land are available for cultivation, rights to land use are very loosely held. For example, among the Machiguenga of Peru, a group with extensive lands, there is little sense of exclusive territory, although it is considered polite to ask permission before foraging near another settlement (Johnson 1989:58). But when specific geographical conditions limit the amount of land available, or when population pressures increase, land shortages do occur, as among the Enga in the New Guinea highlands. There the problem is dealt with primarily by warfare. Most Enga warfare is aimed at driving smaller, weaker groups off their land and annexing it (Johnson 1989:62). Warfare is not the only way land shortages can be dealt with. Sometimes they are alleviated by the development of more efficient technology. In this case, horticulturalists may become intensive cultivators.

Intensive Cultivators In more politically and technologically complex societies, access to productive resources is likely to be in the hands of a ruling elite. In these societies, intensive cultivation of the land comes to dominate production. Tech-

nology becomes more complex, and the material base of a society expands. Productive resources take many forms, including complex tools and the technological knowledge required to make them. Ownership of these critical resources may be limited to a small group whose members thereby gain power over others and control their labor.

In some societies, productive resources are continually reinvested in order to generate profit for their owners beyond their subsistence needs. When this happens, such resources are referred to as capital. Although the use of capital occurs in many different sorts of societies (Berdan 1989), it becomes the principal form of economic organization in capitalist societies (discussed later in this chapter).

Under conditions of intensive cultivation, the material and labor investment in land becomes substantial. However, the total quantity of production increases. The quantities of food thus generated can feed many more people than just those who work the land. When this happens, individual control of the land becomes far more important. Land may be privately owned, belonging to individuals by right of sale or inheritance. Within limits of the law, the owner has the right to keep others off and dispose of it as he or she wishes. Alternatively, land may be held by usufruct right. In this case, an individual has the right to use a piece of land and, in most cases, may pass this right to descendants; however, the land can not be sold or traded.

Individual land ownership may grow out of population pressures that produce land scarcity and lead to intensified methods of agriculture. Under these conditions, communal control of land creates conflict as people begin to grumble about not receiving their fair share. Those who have improved the land are unwilling to see the investment of their labor revert to a family pool. This may be particularly true in the case of cash crops such as coffee, which require long-term care and yield harvests over many years. Individuals thus become tied to particular plots of land. In a study of land use and rights in the New Guinea highlands, Brown and Podelefsky (1976) found that individual ownership of land was correlated with high population density and intensive cultivation. Individual rights to land (though within the framework of group territory) occurred where plots of land were in permanent use or had a short fallow period (less than 6 years) and where trees and shrubs had been planted by the owner.



In societies with intensive cultivation, those who work the land are not necessarily those who own it. Land may be owned by absentee landlords or large commercial organizations. In this picture, migrant workers pick strawberries on a farm in California.

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Private or family ownership of rigidly defined fields does not necessarily mean that landowners work their fields. Instead, fields are usually rented to laborers whose efforts support both themselves and the landowners. For example, a study of a rural village in Bangladesh showed that 48 percent of families were functionally landless. Their members had to rent land from large landowners or work for others (Michael Harris 1991:151–155). Under conditions such as these, a peasantry emerges. Peasants are agriculturalists who are integrated into large state-level societies (see Chapter 6). Part of what peasants produce is taken by a ruling class in the form of rents and taxes. In some cases, peasants may have **usufructory rights**, and thus be guaranteed the use of particular plots of land across many generations. However, in most places the peasants' access to land is contingent on payment of rents. Such peasants can be dispossessed if they fail to pay rent or if the landowner finds a more profitable use for their land.

In societies with peasantries, landowners rather than cultivators are able to claim most of the surplus, and land becomes an economic asset of great value. Landowners enjoy higher levels of consumption and standards of living based on rents and services they receive from the peasants. Landowners use these surpluses to command the services of craft workers, servants, and sometimes armed forces. Intensive cultivation therefore tends to be associated with a political organization characterized by a ruling landowning class and with occupational specialization.

Organizing Labor

In small-scale preindustrial and peasant economies, the household or some extended kin group is the basic unit of production and consumption (B. White 1980). Most of the goods these groups produce, they use themselves. Their goals are often social or religious rather than strictly monetary. Labor is not a commodity bought and sold in the market; rather, it is one aspect of membership in a social group such as the family.

In Western society, work has very important social implications. Of course people work to survive, to put food on their tables and roofs over their heads. But, for many people, particularly members of the middle classes, work is much more than survival; it is a source of self-respect, challenge, growth, and personal fulfillment. Political scientist Alan Ryan (1996) has noted, “We do not go to work only to earn an income, but to find meaning in our lives. What we do is a large part of what we are.” People work to consider themselves participants in society as well as for financial gain. Surveys about lottery winnings illustrate this point. You might expect that people who won large lottery jackpots would quit work. However, in a recent Gallop poll, 55 percent of Americans said they would continue to work after winning a \$10 million lottery jackpot (Gallop 2004). Surveys of actual lottery winners show that the

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usufructory rights The right to use something (usually land)
but not to sell it or alter it in substantial ways.



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majority of them do continue to work after sizable wins (Trice and Beyer 1993; Arvey, Harpaz, and Liao 2004).

Firms and Households In most nonindustrial societies, production is based around the household. Anthropologists generally differentiate between the household and the family (Rapp 1991). The **household** is an economic unit—a group of people united by kinship or other links who share a residence and organize production, consumption, and distribution among themselves. The family is an ideological construct—a set of ideas about how people are related to one another and what their mutual obligations are (Narotzky 1997). It is clear that family and household can refer to different groups of people. Households, for example, frequently include servants and lodgers, but these people are not considered family members.

Production and consumption based around kin groups and households are different from those in industrial societies, where the basic unit of production is the business firm. A **firm** is an institution composed of kin and/or non-kin that is organized primarily for financial gain. Individuals are usually tied to firms through the sale of their labor for wages. Labor is thus a commodity, bought and sold on the market. A firm does not produce goods for the use of its members; the items it produces are sold for profit.

Firms are geared toward economic growth. Their decision making is motivated primarily by financial gain. Their goal is to find the mix of capital and labor that will most increase the firm's value to its owners. This usually means that firms wish to increase their size indefinitely and search for technological innovation to increase their productivity.

On the other hand, the structure of households and kin groups as producing units limits their economic growth. In addition to seeking financial gain, households must also fill social and ritual functions. They are limited because they can draw labor from only a small group. A household cannot easily liquidate if it makes poor choices in the allocation of its resources (M. Nash 1967).

In economies where households are the producing units, there can be little expansion. Thus, large-scale production and mass distribution systems tend not to develop where economic systems are made up entirely of households. However, as we will see in the Ethnography box about Turkey later

in this chapter, household social relations can play an important role in an industrialized economy.

Division of Labor by Sex The sexual division of labor is a universal characteristic of human society. In every society, some tasks are considered appropriate only for women and others only for men. At some level, this division of labor is biological. Only women can bear and nurse children. Thus, caring for infants is almost universally a female role (see Nielsen 1990:147–168). Pregnancy and nursing tend to make women less mobile than men, and this may account for the fact that tasks that require mobility such as hunting large animals and warfare (in nonindustrial societies) are almost exclusively male occupations. As we will see in Chapter 10, however, the extent to which biological sex differences can explain sex-role differentiation is a matter of dispute among anthropologists.

Most anthropologists emphasize the tremendous variation in the sex-related division of labor, and they look for explanations in the environment, food-getting strategy, ideology, and level of sociopolitical complexity of the particular society. As Elizabeth Brumfiel (1991) notes, assigning specific tasks to one gender or another is actually quite complicated. Whether men or women perform a particular chore may depend on how the job is defined, the conditions under which it is done, and the personality of the individual doing it. The Sabarl, island dwellers who live near New Guinea, provide a good example of this. Among them, forms of wealth and labor are unambiguously classified as either male or female. However, women often do men's work and men often do women's work. The Sabarl explain this by quoting the proverb, "Some birds can swim, some fish can fly" (Battaglia 1992:5). Despite this variation, there are important general trends.

In foraging societies hunting is generally men's work and gathering is usually done by women (although, as noted in Chapter 10, there are exceptions). Among the Aché of Paraguay, for example, men hunt almost continually. Women are responsible for gathering food and carrying the family's

household A group of people united by kinship or other links who share a residence and organize production, consumption, and distribution among themselves.

firm An institution composed of kin and/or non-kin that is organized primarily for financial gain.



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Ethnography

Women and Labor in Urban Turkey

Turkey is a modern capitalist nation. A member of the European Economic Community, it produces many goods and services used in the West. Most of the inhabitants of Istanbul, a city of more than 8 million people, are part of a capitalist economy; they sell their labor in enterprises aimed at generating a profit. However, as Jenny B. White (1994) reports, they often attempt to convert relationships between buyers and sellers or bosses and workers into relations of kin. They say that money makes them relatives. This is particularly true for women.

Women in Turkey live in a complex social network that is characterized by obligations and relations of reciprocity. They identify themselves by the work they do and the labor demands placed on them by their parents, in-laws, husbands, and children. That is to say, being a good woman means laboring for relatives. This is true even when they knit clothing for the world market.

Turkey is a patrilineal and patriarchal society. Working outside of the home is not considered proper among poor and middle-class Turkish women. However, other work demands on women are very high. When a woman is married, she leaves her parents' home and moves in with her husband. There she is expected to manage all the household chores and to keep her hands busy with knitting, crocheting, or other skilled tasks. At the same time, she has a moral obligation to labor for her family of origin. She may be expected to help clean her mother's home, prepare it for religious ceremonies, and help out when her mother is ill. However, the greatest demands come from mothers-in-law.

A mother-in-law has the right to demand labor and obedience from her son's wife, and her demands cannot be easily refused. Mothers-in-law insist that their sons' wives help in their household chores. They may live with a son's



family or come for frequent extended visits. For example, one mother-in-law in White's study often visited for periods of up to a month. Each time she came to her son's home, she became "ill" and demanded that her daughter-in-law wait on her. At the end of each visit, she invariably became "well" and visited friends all over the city. She once told her daughter-in-law, "I will eat up my son's money. Why else did I bear a son?" (White 1994:48).

Mothers-in-law can exert such pressure on their sons' wives because of the relationship mothers build with their children. Mothers build good relationships with daughters, but these are tempered by the knowledge that daughters will marry and leave. As a result, women put most of their effort into forging very close relationships with their sons. Sons are kings in their houses. They are spoiled by their mothers and are allowed to command their sisters. They are encouraged to demand attention from female family members and may shout and hit in order to get it. It is not unusual for women to tie the shoelaces of their high-school-aged sons or slice and peel fruit for college-aged sons (White 1994:72). This special relationship between mother and son is the basis of the "milk debt." A mother's love, in theory freely given, incurs a debt that her son can never repay. A son and his family are perpetually paying back this debt, and this responsibility is the cornerstone of Turkish social relations. Other non-family relations, including business relations, are patterned on it.

Business in Turkey is often disguised as relations of kinship. Even though buyers and sellers are involved in commerce for profit, they prefer to see their exchanges as social rather than financial. Rather than the emphasis on price and impersonal service we expect in business dealings in the West, Turkish buyers and sellers wrap



Ethnography—continued

themselves in social relations. Business may appear as secondary to conversation, and money may rarely be discussed. People who do not know each other at all may buy and sell freely, but the closer the relationship between two individuals is, the less willing they are to discuss money openly. A further difference from Western practice is that, like the milk debt, business relations are open ended. That is, instead of trying to conclude business deals and settle accounts in full, buyers and sellers remain in constant debt to each other. This indebtedness obligates them to each other and keeps them bound in a social web.

The principles at work here can be seen very clearly in women's piecework. Women in Turkey knit and sew sweaters, blouses, and other garments that are exported and sold in the United States and other Western nations. This is called piecework because the women are paid by the completed piece. The yarns, leathers, and other materials they use are generally supplied to them by an organizer, who also finds a buyer for the finished product. The organizers are very often relatives, neighbors, and friends of the women who do the work. Piecework is widespread among the poor in Istanbul. A survey showed that about two-thirds of women in a poor neighborhood did piecework (White 1994:13).

It is particularly interesting that women who knit and sew sweaters do not consider their efforts work. In fact, overwhelmingly women think it is improper for them to work, and only 5.5 percent of women in this same neighborhood do paid work outside their homes. Instead, they think of piecework as a way for them to keep their hands busy, and they see knitting as part of their duty as

wives. They do it out of obligation to their husband's family. These ideas function as a way of reconciling two opposing cultural values. On one hand, women are not supposed to work in this society; on the other hand, these poor women must earn money. One of the ways to reconcile these opposing claims is to define their work as a gift.

Because women do not think of what they do as work, they do not calculate their wage per hour. Instead, they consider their work as a gift of their labor in return for a gift of money or other support. The price women receive for their efforts is very low but varies with their relationship with the organizer. A woman might work for free for a relative. A neighbor will pay, and people who are more distant will pay more.

Labor organizers also think of female workers as relatives to whom they have social as well as economic responsibilities. Labor organizers rarely pay women in full. When a woman returns finished products, the organizer pays her in part and advances her more raw materials. Thus, the organizer stays in debt to the women, and the women, who now have the raw materials, are in debt to the organizer. This exchange of debt tightens the social web between workers and labor organizers and provides increased security for both.

Much anthropological research has shown that for people in noncapitalist societies and the poor in capitalist societies, the web of social relationships ensures a degree of security. In the emerging capitalist economy of Turkey, the social web continues to have great significance because of the security it affords. Turkish women are understandably reluctant to exchange the safety of the social network for the impersonal interactions of the market, even if it

belongings on their very frequent moves. Although women's work may sound dull, they spend only about 13 hours a week getting food and have much more leisure time than men (Hill, Hawkes, and Hurtado 1985; Hurtado et al. 1985). Where hunting is a communal activity, as among the Mbuti, women and men from several families collectively drive the animals into some central area, although men do the actual killing. In some soci-

eties, men and women also work together gathering nuts or fishing in streams (Turnbull 1983).

In societies that practice extensive cultivation, both men and women play important roles in food production. However, there is an inverse relationship between the dietary importance of cultivated food (cultigens) and women's responsibility for food production. As societies depend increasingly on cultigens, men's responsibility for production increases.

means they are not financially remunerated for all the work they do.

The fact that Turkish hand-sewn garments are produced in an economic system based on reciprocity but are consumed in the market economies of wealthy nations has important implications. As we have shown, Turkish pieceworkers operate within traditional norms of reciprocity. Labor organizers also attempt to maintain relations of reciprocity with their buyers, the large export firms. However, these firms are governed by market considerations that owe little or nothing to social relations of reciprocity. Relations within this system are fundamentally unequal. Labor organizers generally do not get rich, but they profit more than their workers, and the large export firms benefit the most. Because hand-made garments are produced by people who do not directly calculate their wages, they are available at extremely low prices. Export firms can sell these products in market economies where handmade clothes command much higher prices. Thus, they are able to profit from the structural differences between the two economic systems.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. White argues that the masking of economic relationships is central to the production of piecework in Istanbul. Piecework performed by women is understood as a household chore rather than a job demanding payment set by its market value. One result is that women's contributions to the economy are undervalued. Does anything similar to this happen in American society? What might be the result of calculating such contributions in purely market terms?
2. White's ethnography raises important questions about international trade and redistribution of wealth among nations. How does this production system redistribute wealth from the poor of Turkey to the wealthy consumers of Europe and North America? Should anything be done about this situation? What sorts of actions might be taken, who could take them, and what might be their results?

Source: Adapted from Jenny B. White, *Money Makes Us Relatives*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

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and women's role decreases (Bossen 1989). In some cases women are responsible for cultivating the basic staples and men raise only the prestige crops used in exchange. In highland New Guinea, for example, women raise sweet potatoes, which are the main food for both humans and pigs. Men raise sugar, taro, and bananas, which are used only in exchange.

In societies that practice intensive cultivation (agriculture), the general shift toward male domi-

nance in farming activities continues. Wielding the plow is almost always a male task. In irrigation agriculture, women still do weeding and, if rice is grown, transplant the paddy, but men do most of the work in digging irrigation ditches, lifting water from wells and canals, and repairing terraces.

Many new demands are placed on women in farming societies. The time they spend in domestic tasks such as food preservation and processing and

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caring for domestic animals increases. Furthermore, because women in agricultural societies generally have more children than those in foraging or horticultural societies, time spent in child care increases (Bossen 1989).

Despite the fact that women's work increases in agricultural societies, their status generally declines. This is because men are less dependent on women's work than they are in nonagricultural societies. Men can enter the cash economy, selling the crops they produce and purchasing goods and services. It is far more difficult for women to enter the market, and thus they become more dependent on men. Flood (1994), for example, reports that as agriculture in Zinacantan, Mexico, has modernized, women's work has been devalued. Technological changes in farming have resulted in families becoming increasingly involved in and dependent on the market economy. Because men control cash crops, it is they who can participate in the market. There they can easily purchase many of the goods and services that women contributed to the household. The result has been that whereas Zinacantec women are increasingly dependent on men, Zinacantec men are less and less dependent on women. Women's position in society has suffered as a result.

Women's dependence on men in agricultural societies is conditioned by the fact that land is the primary productive resource, and access to land is frequently through men. When land is less important, women may be in stronger positions. Susan Vincent (1998) compares two generations of women in Mata Chico, Peru. In the 1930s, access to land was critical to peasant livelihoods. Because the only way women and their children could access land was through marriage, they were under great pressure to take husbands. By the 1980s, however, Peru was increasingly urbanized and many occupations were available to both men and women. Because women could support themselves and their children through employment in urban areas, they began to remain single longer; in some cases, they chose not to marry at all. Problems faced by women as a result of cultural change in the contemporary world are discussed more fully in Chapter 10.

Specialization in Complex Societies Some societies have very simple technologies. For example, although the tools and techniques of foragers are ingenious and fit the requirements of their environment, making tools that require skills be

yond those that can be learned through informal socialization. The work involved in making the tools of production can be done by every adult and requires no machines or scarce materials. There is little need for specialization.

Among hunter-gatherers and most horticulturalists, all adult men and women are actively engaged in the quest for food. The few specialists (for example, religious practitioners) are usually also engaged in food production. The characteristic division of labor is not by job but, as we have noted, by age and sex. This contrasts with industrial society, in which production is highly specialized.

The division of labor in society becomes more specialized and complex as the population increases and agricultural production intensifies. Agricultural surpluses are required to support people who consume food but do not produce it. These surpluses may be of two kinds: surpluses of perishable goods and surpluses of storable goods. Perishable goods may be used for exchanges, such as the Kula and potlatch described later in this chapter. However, because these goods must be either consumed immediately or left to rot, they rarely lead to high levels of full-time specialization. Storable goods such as grains, on the other hand, can be stockpiled and used to feed

large numbers of people over extended periods. The result is that societies based on grain agriculture are able to support large numbers of full-time occupational specialists.

The caste system in India provides an excellent example of occupational specialization. In traditional India, only people belonging to particular hereditary kinship groups can perform certain services or produce certain kinds of goods. Literally thousands of specialized activities—washing clothes, drumming at festivals, presiding over religious ceremonies, making pots, painting pictures—are traditionally performed by various castes within a village or even by villages as a whole.

Industrialization as an adaptive strategy requires the greatest specialization of labor. Only a small proportion of the population is directly involved in producing food. The remainder, supported by these food producers, are involved in countless specializations. A quick glance at the Yellow Pages of the phone book of a major American city gives a good indication of the degree of specialization in American society. Although specialization of production undoubtedly has advantages in terms of efficiency and the ability to produce large quantities of goods, we must also consider the price to be paid in terms of nonmaterial human values.



Traditionally, Indian society is organized into occupational castes and these are arranged hierarchically. Here, Dhobi, members of the washerman caste, ply their trade in Mumbai. The dhobi's low rank in the caste hierarchy is linked to their handling of materials contaminated by unclean matter.



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Anthropology Makes a Difference

Anthropologists in Business

Sooner or later, most people who decide to study anthropology have to answer questions from friends and family members who say things like “Anthropology? What are you going to do with that?” There are many good answers to this question. Perhaps the best is to remind them that anthropology is a liberal art. It’s a way of learning, analyzing, and thinking about actions in the world. These are skills that are applicable to jobs ranging from entrepreneurship to social service. Surveys show that the jobs that anthropology majors actually get are very similar to those for people who study history, philosophy, English, psychology, sociology, and other liberal arts subjects.

Despite this, you may be interested to know that over the past quarter century, professional anthropologists are increasingly in demand by both large and small corporations. Anthropologists have become popular because, while focus groups and opinion surveys explore what people say, anthropologists using participant-observation focus on what people actually do.

Anthropologist Francisco Aguilera has been consulting with business for more than 25 years. He notes that anthropological research is particularly useful in the modern corporate context. Whereas old-style corporations thought of them-

selves as fixed organizations with rigid boundaries, the new emphasis is on open production groups and an extension of networks across the organization’s boundaries to embrace customers, suppliers, and competitors in partnerships, alliances, and service delivery. In this situation, decision making based on ethnographic description and comparison is essential.

Aguilera says that although other social science disciplines can and do offer consulting to businesses, anthropologists have some unique gifts to bring to the table. First, culture is the mainstay of anthropology, and anthropologists have better ways of talking about it than members of other disciplines. Second, anthropologists understand that boundaries are artificial, so they seek to understand the entire environment of the business and its employees. Finally, because of the participant-observer methodology of ethnography and the multilevel analysis that makes sense of ethnographic data, anthropologists are more likely to comprehend the fuller meaning of informants’ reports than are practitioners of those disciplines that rely heavily on other forms of data collection and analysis.

Paco Underhill’s work presents an excellent example of the use of anthropological techniques in business research. For more than 20



Distribution: Systems of Exchange

In all societies, goods and services are exchanged. In fact, some anthropologists have long theorized that the exchange of goods is one of the fundamental bases of culture. The great French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1924/1990) theorized that societies were held together by patterns of giving and receiving. He pointed out that gifts invariably must be repaid. Through exchange we are obligated to each other, and in many situations it is better to give than to receive.

There are three main ways in which exchange occurs: reciprocity, redistribution, and market exchange. Although more than one kind of exchange

system exists in most societies, each system is predominantly associated with a certain kind of political and social organization (Polyani 1944). Where there is more than one system, each is normally used for the exchange of different kinds of goods and services. Let us look first at reciprocity.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the mutual give-and-take among people of equal status and is actually a continuum of forms of exchange. Three types of **reciprocity** are distinguished from one another by the degree of social distance between the exchanging partners. Generalized reciprocity, which is usually carried out among those with the highest degree of moral obligation. Balanced reciprocity is character-

years, Underhill has used observation, photography, and interviews to study the ways people shop. He is the founder of the consulting firm EnviroSell (<http://www.envirosell.com>), which advises clients such as McDonald's, The Gap, and Microsoft on how best to appeal to consumers. Some of Underhill's discoveries include the "transition zone" and the "butt brush." The transition zone is the area near the entrance to a store. Underhill observed that people need time to slow down and get used to a new environment, so they rarely purchase items from displays of merchandise that are within 12 or 15 steps of the front of the store. He also pointed out that women in particular will avoid purchasing items on low shelves in narrow aisles, because bending to reach such goods exposes them to being "butt brushed," or bumped from behind. Men are much less prone to avoid being jostled in this way. Underhill has summarized many of his findings in a popular book, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* (1999).

In addition to consulting for businesses, many anthropologists have gone on to found businesses or work directly for them. Major corporations such as Intel, Motorola, Ford, General Motors, Nissan, Procter & Gamble, Hewlett-Packard, Xerox and many others hire anthropol-

ogists to analyze their own organizations and do market research designed to tailor their products, services, and publicity to the public. In 1996, Intel created a research group including several anthropologists called "People and Practices" that focuses on understanding the cultural context of technology. The group has prospered despite large-scale layoffs in the tech industry (Tett 2005). You can visit "People and Practices" on the web at <http://www.intel.com/research/exploratory/papr>. Anthropologist Steve Barnett is a vice president at Citicorp who uses his anthropological training to help figure out who is a good credit risk. Robert Falkner is a corporate lawyer for Motorola, and Katherine Burr is the CEO of the Hanseatic Group (<http://www.hanseaticgroup.com>), an organization that manages financial programs for institutions and wealthy individuals. Michael J. Koss, who graduated with a degree in anthropology from Beloit College, is the president and CEO of the Koss Corporation (<http://www.koss.com>), a leading manufacturer of stereo headphones. You can read more about careers in anthropology at <http://www.aaanet.org/careers.htm>.

istic of the relationship between friends or members of different groups in a peaceable relationship with one another. Negative reciprocity refers to exchanges between strangers or peoples hostile to one another (Sahlins 1972).

Generalized Reciprocity Generalized reciprocity involves a distribution of goods in which no overt account is kept of what is given and no immediate or specific return is expected. Such transactions are ideally altruistic—that is, without any thought of economic or other self-interest. In Western society, we are familiar with **generalized reciprocity** as it exists between parents and children. Parents are constantly giving things and providing services to their children out of love or a sense of responsibility.

What would we think of a parent who kept an account of what a child "cost" and then expected the child to repay this amount? What parents usually expect is some gratitude, love, respect, and the child's happiness.

Generalized reciprocity involving food is an important social mechanism among foraging peoples. In these societies, a hunter or group of hunters distributes meat among the kin group or camp. Each person or family gets either an equal share or a share dependent on its kinship relationship to the hunter.

reciprocity A mutual give-and-take among people of equal status.

generalized reciprocity A distribution of goods with no immediate or specific return expected.

Robert Dentan (1979:48) describes this system among the Semai of Malaysia:

After several days of fruitless hunting, a Semai man kills a large pig. He lugs it back to the settlement. Everyone gathers around. Two other men meticulously divide the pig into portions sufficient to feed two adults each (children are not supposed to eat pork). As nearly as possible, each portion contains exactly the same amount of meat, fat, liver, and innards as every other portion. The adult men take the leaf-wrapped portions home to redistribute them among the members of the house group.

Similar systems are used by the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari and the Inuit (Figure 7.1).

A North American might wonder, What does the hunter get out of it? Aren't some people always in the position of providing and others always receiving? Part of the answer is that hunters gain satisfaction from accomplishing a highly skilled and difficult task (Woodburn 1998). However, in many cases they also receive other rewards. Because all people in the society are bound by the same rules, the system provides everyone with the opportunity to give and receive, although this cannot assure that people actually do give and receive equally. In addition, the hunter may derive a degree of status from his kill. For example, among the Pacaá Nova, a horticultural group in Brazil, distributing meat gives a man prestige and an opportunity to display

the culture's most valued trait, generosity. At the same time, it builds his credit for future reciprocity (von Graeve 1989:66). In small societies, where the good opinion of others is necessary for survival, the desire not to be thought stingy is a strong motivation to share and to do one's share.

Generalized reciprocity also has important adaptive functions. One hunter and his family probably could not consume the meat from a large animal at one sitting. Without techniques for storing and preserving food, the meat would go to waste if it were not distributed beyond the family.

Balanced Reciprocity Balanced reciprocity involves a clear obligation to return, within a specified time limit, goods of nearly equal value to those given. The fact that **balanced reciprocity** is most often called gift giving obscures its economic importance in societies where it is the dominant form of exchange. In the United States, we participate in balanced reciprocity when we give gifts at weddings or birthdays, exchange invitations, or buy a round of drinks for friends. The economic aspect of these exchanges is repressed; we say it is spirit of the gift and the social relationship between the givers that is important. However, we also know that accepting a gift involves the obligation to return a gift of approximately the same value. If we fail to do so, our relationship with the gift giver is unlikely to last very long.

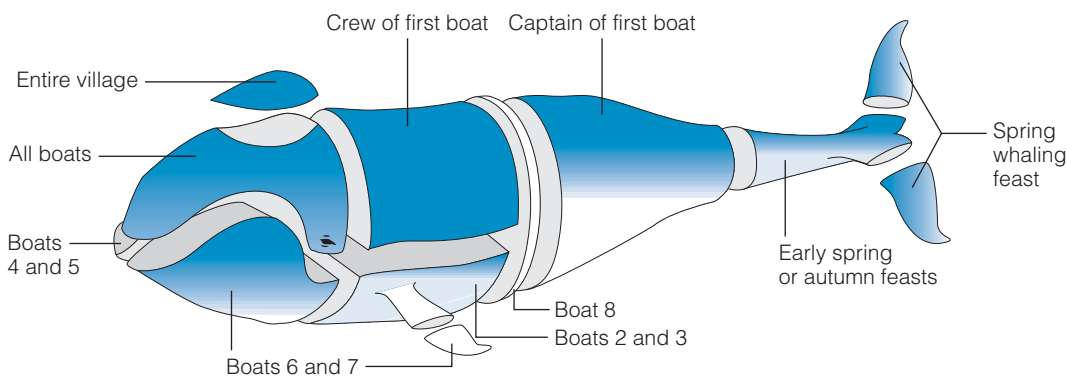


Figure 7.1

Generalized Reciprocity. Hunting of whales by the Inuit involves 10 to 15 boats standing by. The first eight boats to reach and harpoon the whale receive stipulated portions of the meat. The captain of each boat gets his traditional part of the body, and he shares his meat with his crew. The captain of the first boat gives the shaman a narrow strip cut from the belly between the eighth boat's strip and the genitals. The top of the head is cut up and eaten at once by everyone in the village. Portions of the tail are saved for feasting in the spring and autumn. Source: Carleton S. Coon, *The Hunting Peoples* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971, pp. 124–125). By permission of the estate of Carleton S. Coon.

The social obligation to give, accept, and return is at the heart of balanced reciprocity. A refusal to receive or a failure to reciprocate a gift is taken as a withdrawal from a social relationship. A gift that is accepted puts the receiver under an obligation to the giver, and if the social relationship is to continue, a return gift must be given. Sometimes, a return gift may be given immediately. In some marriages, friendship compacts, and peace agreements, people may give each other exactly the same types and quantities of goods (Sahlins 1972:194). For example, 100 yams may be exchanged for 100 yams. More often, the payoff is not immediate. In fact, sometimes an attempt to reciprocate the gift immediately is an indication of unwillingness to be obligated and shows that a trusting social relationship is neither present nor desired (Mauss 1924/1990).

Balanced reciprocity is often characteristic of trading relations among nonindustrialized peoples without market economies. Such trade is frequently carried out over long distances and between different tribes or villages. It is often in the hands of trading partners: men or women who have a long-standing and personalized relationship with each other. Trading partners know each other's personalities, histories, and other aspects of their social lives. The **Kula ring**, a long-distance system of trade in both valuable objects and commodities that occurs in Oceania, is an outstanding example of personalized trading relationships. It is described more fully in the accompanying A Closer Look box. Plattner (1989a) notes that the greater the risk of economic loss, betrayal of confidence, or unfair dealing, the more important such personalized relations are. They exist not only in societies characterized by reciprocity but in uncertain markets as well.

Negative Reciprocity Negative reciprocity is the unsociable extreme in exchange. It happens when trade is conducted for the purpose of material advantage and is based on the desire to get something for nothing (gambling, theft, cheating) or to get the better of a bargain (haggling). **Negative reciprocity** is characteristic of both impersonal and unfriendly transactions. As such, it is generally carried out by those who stand as outsiders to one another. Both in industrial society and in tribal and peasant societies, outsiders—however they may be defined—are considered fair game. In a large, complex society where economic dealings are carried out mainly among strangers, abstract principles of morality develop

that should apply to everyone. However, there are areas of commerce in which these ideals often are not met. Merchants of used goods, particularly cars and machinery, often have reputations for shady practice. The phrase *caveat emptor*, or “let the buyer beware,” neatly captures the notion that the rules of even trade are not always in force.

Tribal and peasant societies often distinguish between the insider, whom it is morally wrong to cheat, and the outsider, from whom every advantage may be gained. Anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn did important studies of the Navajo in the 1940s and 1950s. He reported that among the Navajo, the rules for interaction vary with the situation; to deceive when trading with outsiders is a morally accepted practice. Even witchcraft techniques are considered permissible in trading with members of foreign tribes (1959).

Another good example of negative reciprocity is the historic relationship between traditional dynastic China and the nomadic empires of Mongolia. For more than a thousand years, the nomadic tribes of Mongolia organized into empires to manage their relationship with China and gain access to its vast resources. The ability of Mongol empires to benefit their constituent tribes was based on their capacity to extract wealth and resources from China. They did this by following a policy of violent raiding and forcing the Chinese government to make tribute payments. Because the nomads were highly mobile, war against them was prohibitively expensive, and the Chinese were repeatedly forced to buy peace from the nomads. The threat of violence lay under the surface of all interactions between the two groups (Barfield 1993:150–155).

Redistribution

In redistribution, goods are collected from or contributed by members of a group and then given out to the group in a new pattern. Redistribution thus involves a social center to which goods are brought

balanced reciprocity An exchange of goods of nearly equal value, with a clear obligation to return them within a specified time limit.

Kula ring A pattern of exchange among trading partners in the Trobriands and other South Pacific islands.

negative reciprocity Exchange conducted for the purpose of material advantage and the desire to get something for nothing.



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A Closer Look

The Kula Ring

Bronislaw Malinowski's analysis of the Kula ring is one of the most famous anthropological studies of reciprocal trading (1984/1922). The Kula is an extensive system of intertribal trade among a ring of islands off New Guinea (today part of the nation of Papua New Guinea; see Figure 7.2). Among these are the Trobriand Islands where Malinowski did his fieldwork.

Although many kinds of goods are actually traded, Malinowski reports that from the Trobriand point of view, the most important aspect of the Kula is the trading of two kinds of articles, each of which moves in a different direction. Soulava, long necklaces of red shell, move clockwise, and mwali, bracelets of white shell, move counterclockwise. These items are exchanged between trading partners on the different islands that make up the Kula ring.

On most islands, all men participate in the Kula and some women are allowed to Kula as well (Macintyre 1983; Scoditti and Leach 1983; Weiner 1976). On the Trobriands, however, only high-ranking men can take part. They receive the necklaces or bracelets from their trading partners. Although Kula items can be permanently owned and may be taken out of circulation (Weiner 1976), people generally hold them for a while and then pass them on. Kula trading partnerships are life-long affairs, and their details are fixed by tradition.

Although on one level, the Kula is simply an exchange of goods, Malinowski demonstrated that

the trade is infused with a great many cultural norms and values related to Trobriand life. It has complex cultural, social, and psychological meanings for its participants. Kinship and political structure, magic, prestige, economy, technology, myth, ritual, feasting, and especially friendship and alliance all come together in the Kula. Participants derive prestige from generous behavior during the exchanges, and the Kula gives them an opportunity to display their wealth.


Malinowski focused his study on mwali and soulava. He reported that Trobrianders talked about and thought about the Kula trade in terms of these valuables. Other authors (Fortune 1932; Damon 1983; Munn 1983) emphasize that trade in many utilitarian items is carried out as well. Canoes, axe blades, pottery, pigs, and other items are exchanged along with armbands and necklaces as part of the Kula. These objects are often unavailable in the district to which they are given. The process of Kula, like other ritual trading partnership and feasts, allows groups to specialize in different aspects of production. This leads to an increase in both the amount of food and the quantity and quality of craft production within the region (Spielman 2002).

In addition to promoting economic intensification, both the Kula trade itself and the preparations for it reinforce ties among its participants and help assure that relations among trading partners are relatively friendly. This is important

and from which they are distributed. There are many contexts in which **redistribution** is the mode of exchange. In household food sharing, pooled resources are reallocated among family members. In state societies, redistribution is achieved through taxation—an obligatory payment on the part of the people in return for which various services are provided by a government. As the Global Perspective box in this chapter shows, redistribution can occur between societies as well as within a single society.

Redistribution can be especially important as a mechanism of exchange in societies where political organization includes “bigmen.” Such men act as social centers to whom goods and food are con-

tributed by the population. Often these items are redistributed back to the people in communal feasts, which the bigman sponsors to sustain his political power and raise his prestige. Redistribution also occurred in some chiefdoms. In these cases, however, a distinct hierarchy was involved. Chiefs collected goods and staple foods from many communities to support their households and attendants as well as finance large public feasts that helped solidify their power (Earle 1987).

Created with
The Potlatch The potlatch of Native American groups of the Pacific Northwest is one example of redistribution in action. In these groups, including

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because there is no formal government incorporating the different groups that take active roles in the Kula. Thus, the Kula trade contributes to

the integration of Trobriand society as well as the maintenance of economic and social relations among all its participants.

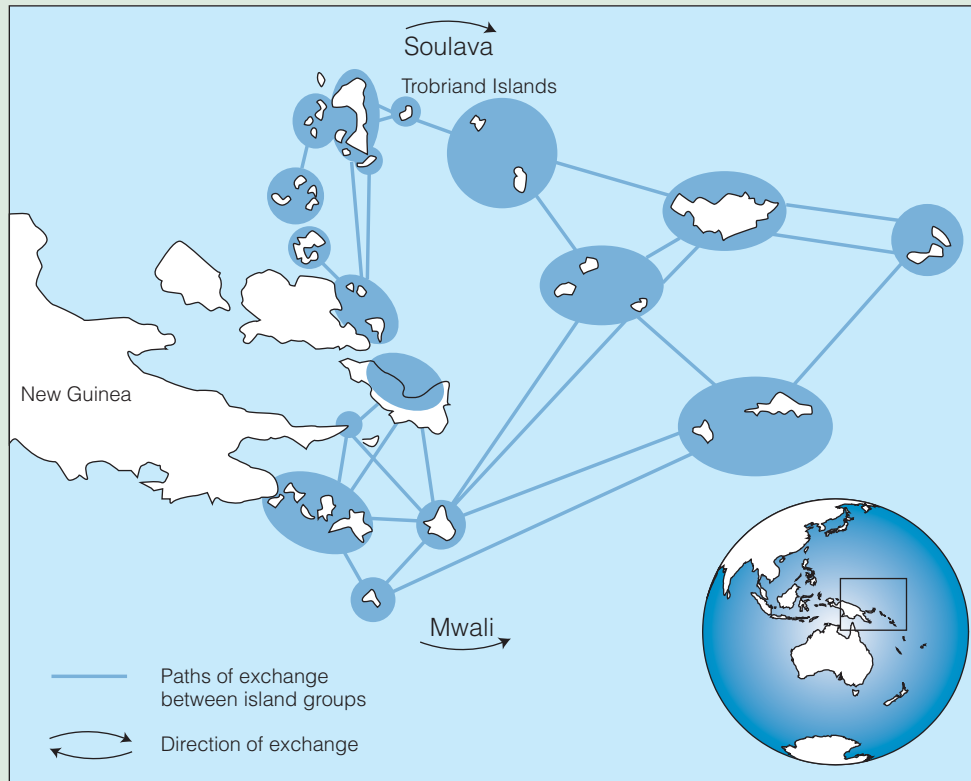


Figure 7.2
The Kula trade is an example of reciprocity. Necklaces (soulava) and armbands (mwali) are traded among these islands off the coast of New Guinea. Soulava move clockwise while mwali move counterclockwise.

the Tshmschan, Tlingit, Haida, Nootka, Bella Coola, and Kwakiutl, social ranking was a primary interest. Rank was inherited, but a claim to a rank had to be validated by a potlatch.

A **potlatch** was a feast in which many kinds of wealth were distributed by the chief to the people and to chiefs from other villages, invited as guests. If the distribution of goods at a potlatch was inadequate, the person who gave it might suffer a loss of prestige or others might not accept his claim of rank. In potlatching, an individual represented himself and his group. Potlatches might be held at times when issues of social rank and inheritance were important, such as births, deaths, marriages,

or a youth's coming of age (Rosman and Rubel 1971). The number of guests present and the amount of goods given away, or even destroyed, revealed the wealth and prestige of the host chief. The host publicly traced his line of descent and

redistribution A form of exchange in which goods are collected from or contributed by members of the group and then redistributed to the group, often in the form of ceremonial feasts.

potlatch A form of competitive giveaway practiced by the Kula and other groups of the Northwest Coast of North America.



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Global Perspective

West African Traders in New York City

Sidi Sansanne began as a trader of African goods—homespun West African cloth, traditional wool blankets, leather sacks and bags, and silver Tuareg jewelry—on the streets of New York City in 1989. He built up a profitable import-export business and now travels between his home in Niamey, Niger, and New York City about 10 times a year. In Sidi's African travels, he often acts as a courier, bearing letters, small gifts, or money from other traders to their families in Africa. Sidi became a permanent resident in the United States and sends his son to a public school, where he is a top student. Sidi speaks to his son in Songhay, his mother tongue, and plans to send him to the American high school in Niamey. "There he will learn French, as well as English and he will be able to choose a university in the United States, France, or Africa. He will be a real citizen of the world," says Sidi.

Sidi Sansanne is one of the thousands of West African traders participating in the urban informal economy. Most trade in New York City, but when times are not so good, some branch out to "the bush," as they call the Midwest, following Third World cultural festivals. Sidi is one of the more successful West African street traders, but his dependence on global connections for his success is typical.

Issifi Mayaki is another West African trader in New York City, who, like Sidi, has a network that

spans nations and continents. Issifi, a Hausa from Niger, is connected, through ties of fictive kinship, ethnicity, and national identity, with other West Africans in both Africa and New York. Hausa networks have historically been the basis of their long-distance African trade, but Issifi also has connections with members of other Nigerian ethnic groups such as the Songhay and the Fulani, with whom he does not share an African language. Beyond Issifi's intense interactions with Hausa group members are his extensive social and economic contacts with traders from Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. They, and other West Africans, notably the Wolof from Senegal, are middlemen in Issifi's cloth dealings. Issifi also has important contacts with Asians (Indians, Pakistanis, and Afghans) in New York City, who supply him with reproduced (machine-manufactured imitations of handwoven) Ghanain *kente* cloth, which is very popular in African-American communities. These Asian suppliers are linked to other Asian contacts in New York as well as to suppliers in India, Pakistan, and Indonesia.

Boube Mounkaila, a Songhay, is another West African trader in New York City's informal economy. Boube sells some Nigerian leather, but his main trade is in copies of internationally known designer-name watches, handbags, and other ac-

claimed the right to certain symbolic privileges, such as the ownership of a particular song or dance. Each of these claims was accompanied by feasting and the display and giving away of large quantities of food and manufactured goods, such as blankets, carved wooden boxes, boats, fish oil, and flour.

Potlatches often expressed an ethos of social competition and individual rivalry. When there was a competitive potlatch—that is, when two men competed for the same symbolic privilege—one of the rivals might ostentatiously destroy quantities of property (canoes, blankets, and even slaves) in order to show how great he was and how little his possessions meant to him (Rohner and Rohner 1970). Potlatch-type feasting is not limited to the Pacific Northwest.

Similar practices are found among the Trobrianders, among the Chin in Myanmar (Burma), in Samoa, and in ancient Chinese society (Rosman and Rubel 1971:xii). In Northwest Coast societies, competitive feasts were characterized by boasting, but this is not always the case. In Pohnpei, a Micronesian island, the production and display of food at community feasts is not done with bravado but with modesty. The man who brings the largest and best foods will always protest that someone else's products are better than his own (Bascom 1970).

Anthropologists believe that the boasting typical of the Northwest Coast potlatch intensified when Native Americans began to participate in the cash Canadian economy. The outside source of income resulted in the practice of potlatching and

cessories. Boube's suppliers of these "knockoffs" are Taiwanese and Korean wholesalers located in New York City; his clients are tourists from all over the United States, African-Americans from the local neighborhood, and Japanese tourists who are steered to him by a contact with a Japanese tour guide.

These brief ethnographic descriptions only hint at the extensive and varied global connections of West African traders in New York City.

Some of these connections between the West African traders and their Asian middlemen are relatively recent, and specific to the street trading milieu of New York City. Increasing West African immigration to the United States (which often initially means New York City) has been propelled by a number of factors. In 1994, under pressure from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the Nigerian currency was devalued. This wiped out many small businesspeople in Niger, making emigration more attractive. National immigration policies of the United States in the 1990s made it relatively easy for Nigerians to immigrate. Such policies are affected by both domestic and international political and economic situations, which thus affect traders' immigration status, their ability to earn a living, and their resulting migration to other parts of the United States or back to their home countries.

But African global connections are not only recent. The history of Islam in West Africa has also influenced the urban street traders. Islam came to West Africa along trading routes and has retained a connection with commerce. Islamic beliefs and religious practice are important common elements among West African traders and help to bridge differences in nationality and ethnicity. Some groups, like the Hausa, have long been associated with trans-African trading networks, spreading out all over West Africa. In the 1940s and 1950s, young and adventurous itinerant Hausa traders called themselves "jaguars" after an animal whose power stems as much from its adaptability as from its physical strength. Although the term is no longer in fashion, the global participation of West African traders today is testimony to the strength of their cultures, the importance of their community and personal relationships, and the qualities of daring and intelligence that serve them so well in Paris and New York, as it did historically in the desert cities of the Arab world and the cities and towns of West Africa.

Source: Based on Paul Stoller, *Money Has No Smell: The Africanization of New York City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

greater destruction of goods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The potlatch was ecologically adaptive and provided an important means of redistribution. The desire to gain prestige drove people to produce more than they could consume immediately. It was a way of providing reserves to be used in times of shortage and was particularly necessary where food preservation techniques were not well developed. A system of feasting also provided a way for food surpluses to be distributed among villages that were not in equally good environments. In lean years, such communities could accept the invitations of chiefs from other villages and receive food in return for the diminished status involved in receiving rather than giving. When things got better, the re-

cipients could become hosts, distributing food and goods to others who needed it and thus regaining some of their lost prestige.

Recent analyses of potlatch have focused on its function as a marker of cultural identity. Although the notion of competition is fundamental to the potlatch, among modern Native American groups such as the Haida (Stearns 1975) and the Northern Athapaskan Tanacross people (Simeone 1995), the potlatch is a symbol of unity. For example, the Tanacross people construct their identity in terms of the contrast between the cooperation they believe exists among native peoples and the competition that exists among nonnatives. The potlatch, with its demands for reciprocity, love, respect, and cooperation, is a central symbol of cooperation.

(Simeone 1995:162–165) and thus of native identity. According to Harry Wolcott (2004), today's Kwakiutl potlatch combines elements from ceremonies that, in the past, were celebrated at different times and seasons. However, it plays an important role in enculturating children and reclaiming a rich heritage. The Canadian government outlawed the potlatch between 1884 and 1951. To government authorities, potlatch was a symbol of the otherness and irrationality of Native Americans and their refusal to fully join the Canadian economic system (Bracken 1997).

Today, almost all groups are, to some degree, part of a market economy. In these circumstances, redistributive feasts such as the potlatch have lost most of their economic importance. However, they still retain their power as ceremonial demonstrations of ethnic identity.

Leveling Mechanisms Redistribution may either increase or decrease the inequality of wealth within a society. **Leveling mechanisms** are practices, values, or forms of social organization that result in evening out the distribution of wealth.

Leveling mechanisms force accumulated resources or capital to be used in ways that reduce economic differences. They ensure that social goals

are considered along with economic ones. Leveling mechanisms take many different forms. For example, if an economy is based around redistribution, and generosity is the basis of prestige, those who desire power and prestige will distribute as much wealth as they receive. We generally associate power and prestige with the accumulation of material wealth. However, in these societies, the powerful give much of what they have in exchange for prestige. Thus, they have the same or sometimes less wealth than other members of society. Sometimes, this is accomplished through feasting. For example, in Highland New Guinea, men who want to gain prestige arrange large feasts called Moka. Preparation for these events may take years of accumulating wealth including pigs, shells, cassowary, and in the modern world, money and manufactured goods. At the feast, all of this wealth is given away, distributed to those who attend.

Manning Nash (1967) describes a number of leveling mechanisms that operate in the village of Amatenango, in the Chiapas district of Mexico. One is the organization of production by households. As mentioned earlier, economic expansion and accumulation of wealth are limited where households, rather than business firms, are the productive units. A second factor in Amatenango is inheritance: all of



Cargo Leaders in Tenejapa, Mexico. These individuals have taken offices that require them to provide food, alcohol, and other goods during religious celebrations throughout the years.

a man's children share equally in his estate. This makes it difficult for large estates to persist over generations. Accusations of witchcraft are a third leveling mechanism. Should anyone in Amatenango manage to accumulate more than his or her neighbors, members of other families are likely to accuse him or her of witchcraft. A man who is thought to be a witch is likely to be killed. Witchcraft accusations are most often leveled at those who are rich but not generous.

Finally, Amatenango and many other villages have **cargo systems**. In a cargo system, every year a number of different cargos, or religious offices, must be assumed by men in the village. Assuming such a cargo is an expensive proposition. The officeholder cannot work full time, and the obligations of the cargo involve substantial purchases and donations, which take up some of a family's extra resources. A man must serve in 12 such cargos before he can retire from public life, so the cost continues throughout adulthood. In addition to these 12 offices, there is the *alferez*, a ritual position filled by a younger man. One of the requirements of this office is sponsoring a community feast, which involves paying for the food and liquor and renting costumes. Men are selected for this prestigious office by their ability to pay, and it is an enormous drain on the economic resources of their households.

Community obligations such as a system of expensive religious offices may help to limit the economic gap between the relatively rich and the poor, but they do not eliminate it. In fact, they may help to preserve it. Men who take cargos gain in prestige, differentiating themselves from the poor of the village. Increased prestige often leads to increased wealth. Cancian (1989) showed that in Zinacantan, which has a system of cargos or religious offices similar to that of Amatenango, men who took on cargos remained rich throughout their lives, whereas poor families incapable of filling such offices remained poor. Thus, although it does redistribute some of the wealth in the community, the cargo system in Mexican villages may serve to reinforce economic differences among families rather than equalize them (Cancian 1989:147).

Market Exchange The principal distribution mechanism in most of the world's societies today is **market exchange**. Goods and services are bought and sold at a money price determined, at least in theory, primarily by the impersonal forces of supply

and demand. Unlike reciprocity and redistribution, in which the social and political roles of those who exchange are important, in principle a market exchange is impersonal and occurs without regard to the social position of the participants. Market exchange is thus the most purely "economic" mode of exchange, the one in which participants' main concern is in maximizing material gain. In a society where the market system is the key economic institution, social or political goals are usually less important than financial goals. Organization around predominantly economic purposes and activities is a dominant feature of social life.

The penetration of the market varies among societies. Theoretically, in a market society, if one has enough money, everything may be bought and sold. In practice, all societies limit what may be purchased legally. In many traditional societies, people gain access to key factors of production such as land and labor through kinship or obligations of reciprocity and redistribution. In such places, markets may not exist or may be limited to trading a very small number of goods. Western society is overwhelmingly dominated by market exchange. However, for moral, social, and political reasons, governments limit trade in certain goods. For example, there are restrictions on the sale of drugs, guns, children, and college degrees.

Capitalism In the past 300 years, capitalism has become the predominant economic system around the world. The expansion of this system, centered in northern Europe, North America, and Japan, has transformed traditional economies worldwide. As capitalism has spread, through conquest, colonization, and trade, nations and cultures have become increasingly united in a complex integrated economy (Wallerstein 1995). The emergence of capitalism and its effects on noncapitalist cultures is the subject of Chapter 16. This section points out some of the most salient features of capitalism.

leveling mechanism A practice, value, or form of social organization that evens out wealth within a society.

cargo system A ritual system common in Central and South America in which wealthy people are required to hold a series of costly ceremonial offices.

market exchange An economic system in which goods and services are bought and sold at a money price determined by the forces of supply and demand.



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Productive resources become capital when they are invested in ways intended to increase their owner's financial wealth, as for this farmer in Bali.

As we have noted, people in all societies must produce. In noncapitalist societies, most people produce goods as ends in themselves, to trade for other goods, or to pay rents and taxes. For example, a farmer grows wheat. Some portion of the production is consumed on the farm, some is traded for other things the farmer needs, and some is paid in rent and taxes. In capitalist societies, firms produce goods not as ends in themselves but rather as a means to create wealth. For example, General Motors is not really in business to make cars. General Motors is in business to increase the wealth of its shareholders. Manufacturing automobiles is one (but only one) of the ways it achieves that end.

Productive resources become **capital** when they are used with the primary goal of increasing their owner's financial wealth. In capitalism, this becomes the most common (though not the only) use of such resources. **Capitalism** is further characterized by three fundamental attributes. The first is that most productive resources, the capital goods, are owned by a small portion of the population. Factories, farms, service corporations, and equip-

ment of all sorts are owned primarily by banks, corporations, and wealthy individuals. Some elements of ownership may be fairly widely spread. For example, in the United States, in 2005 almost half of all households owned some stocks or mutual funds (and thus owned some share of a business). However, the median value of these investments was \$65,000. Fewer than 4 percent of American households had stocks and mutual funds valued at more than half a million dollars (Investment Company Institute 2002). Thus, although a great many people held some ownership of business, the vast majority was held by a comparatively small group of people.

The second attribute of capitalism is that most individuals' primary resource is their labor. In order to survive, people sell their labor for wages. For example, most Americans work for large or small corporations that they do not own, or they are employed by government. For their work, they receive a salary or an hourly wage.

The third attribute of capitalism is that the value of workers' contribution to production is always greater than the wages they receive. Marx referred to the difference between wages and the contribution of labor to production as the **surplus value of labor**. We can also think of it as the profit that accrues to those who own the productive resources, generally the shareholders of the corporation (Plattner 1989b:382–384). The extremely high wages of some professional athletes and entertainers provide a good illustration. For example, Miami basketball player Shaquille O'Neal was paid a salary of \$27 million in 2004. He was not paid this very high sum because society benefited from his work, a matter of opinion and conjecture at best. Rather, he earned \$27 million because the owners of the Miami Heat believed that his presence on their team would enable them to earn substantially more than that. In other words, the value of O'Neal's labor was substantially greater than the wages he received. In general, workers wish to receive as close to the full value of their labor as possible while owners wish to pay as small a portion of labor's value as possible. This frequently results in conflict between the two groups.

The fact that most modern economies are dominated by capitalist market exchange does not mean that people always experience their economy in terms of buying and selling at whatever price the market will bear. Slavery has a social compo-

ment, which may mask capitalist relations. That is, capitalism may occur within the context of other sorts of relationships. Buying and selling, even when done to maximize profit, may be understood by participants in terms of reciprocity and redistribution. The “Ethnography” box on pages 183–185, about women in urban Turkey, shows that even in a capitalist context, labor may occur within the framework of kinship. Workers may understand their labor as a contribution to family solidarity rather than an economic transaction between them and their employers. This understanding (or misunderstanding) cushions a system whose primary beneficiaries are not the worker’s family members but the owners of productive resources. It makes high levels of exploitation possible.

It would be difficult to find any people in the world today not affected by capitalist markets. For the most part, members of traditional societies enter the market as low-wage laborers. The wealth they produce accrues to elites within poor nations as well as people in wealthy nations (E. Wolf 1982). The case of the Turkish women illustrates some of the ways in which this process takes place as traditional economies adapt to capitalism. Not all traditional societies are able to make such accommodations, however, and the expansion of capitalism and political power has been accompanied by the wide-scale destruction of traditional societies. Chapter 16 examines this process in some detail.

Capitalism is an extremely powerful economic system. It undoubtedly provides a greater number of goods and services to larger populations than other ways of organizing an economy, but at a cost. When some individuals or groups own or control basic resources, others must inevitably be denied access to them. This results in permanently differentiated economic and social classes, and these are an important feature of a capitalist society. Capitalism dictates that although the relative level of wealth may vary among societies, there will always be rich and poor. Often, part of the population lives in extreme poverty, without access to basic resources; in American society, this includes the homeless, the landless rural poor, and the permanently unemployed.

Although there are probably some individuals who act as capitalists in most monetized economies, societies organized primarily by capitalism are a late development in the history of humankind. Such societies were not a natural and inevitable

outcome of economic evolution. Rather they owed their origin to the specific conditions of the industrial revolution in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and have become increasingly prevalent in the world in the past 150 years.

Accommodation and Resistance to Capitalism

The fate of those who oppose capitalist expansion is not always submission or annihilation. Even in largely capitalist nations, populations that preserve noncapitalist lifestyles remain. One good example is the Gypsies of Spain (Kaprow 1982). Spanish Gypsies have resisted assimilation and wage labor for hundreds of years. They are self-employed, typically working as scrap dealers, peddlers, contract whitewashers, discount-clothing merchants, and part-time agricultural laborers. These occupations are difficult to regulate and provide the state with few or no taxes. The Gypsy avoidance of wage labor was part of their larger strategy for resisting state controls, but it has also turned out to be economically successful.

There are many examples of resistance to capitalism closer to home. Consider the inhabitants of Putnam County, New York (Hansen 1995). Located about 50 miles from New York City, Putnam County has been poor since the time of the American Revolution. Even in the preindustrial era, its farms were unable to compete successfully with surrounding areas. Today, no commercial farming is done in the county. Its people follow two fundamentally different strategies for survival and belong to two different but related economic systems.

Many of Putnam’s inhabitants are new residents who commute to jobs in New York City. They work for union-scale wages as police officers, firefighters, and schoolteachers, using their wages to buy houses, food, and so on. They are deeply in debt to mortgage and credit card companies but believe that higher future earnings will permit them to accommodate this financial burden. They are committed

capital Productive resources that are used with the primary goal of increasing their owner’s financial wealth.

capitalism An economic system in which people work for wages, land and capital goods are privately owned, and capital is invested for individual profit.

surplus value of labor Marxist term for the difference between the wages a worker is paid and the value of their contribution to production for the capitalist.





In capitalist economies, workers sell their labor to corporations in return for wages. In *Modern Times* (1936) Charlie Chaplin dramatized this by playing an assembly line worker literally caught in the machine.

to economic and social advancement, and many hope eventually to leave Putnam County for more prosperous and convenient suburbs closer to the city. Despite the fact that most of them work in public-sector jobs rather than for corporations, this group is deeply committed to capitalism. They own few productive resources, sell their labor for wages, and conduct the economic aspect of their lives almost entirely through the capitalist market.

Putnam County's other residents have lived there for generations. Members of this group very rarely have full-time wage employment. They almost never visit New York City, which to them has become "a metaphor for all the world's evils" (Hansen 1995:146). Instead they follow what Halperin (1990) has called a multiple-livelihood strategy. Members of this group acquire their land

through inheritance and generally own it outright. Most of these land holdings of 5 to 50 acres are forested, but all include gardens that provide almost all of the vegetables for those who own them. While women work the gardens, men hunt year-round, taking deer, rabbits, guinea fowl, and pheasants. They fish in ponds and streams and chop wood for fuel. In addition to these subsistence activities, members of this group do carpentry, electrical repair, masonry, plumbing, and other jobs. They barter these skills among themselves and sell them for cash to the commuters. They may also work temporarily for wages at construction jobs. Although Putnam's traditional residents do depend on markets for goods they cannot produce themselves or get through barter, only a small part of their total subsistence comes from the market.

The multiple livelihood strategies of Putnam's traditional residents are aimed at avoiding participation in the capitalist economy. Their financial goals are not to make money or to move to a higher level of consumption. They are concerned with stability rather than mobility and wish to live as independently as possible. Although they own productive resources such as land and equipment, these do not become capital because they are not used with the goal of making high levels of profit. Their productive resources are used to increase the security of their self-sufficiency rather than to accumulate wealth.

Resistance to wage labor and economic marginalization are not always self-chosen, as with the Gypsies of Spain or the traditional residents of Putnam County. Most often, the economic marginalization of certain peoples, whether because of race, ethnicity, or gender, is not voluntary but imposed, a subject that is explored in Chapter 13.

The examples of the Gypsies and the traditional residents of Putnam country remind us of a very important principle: the organization of our society is not inevitable. Because most Americans are immersed in the capitalist economy and the systems of hierarchy it creates, we tend to think of our social system as being logical and natural. But it is the result of history, culture, politics, economics, and individual choices. It is a creation of our culture. Understanding this opens the possibilities for change.



Summary

1. Economics is the study of choice. People around the world make rational choices to allocate scarce resources. Such choices do not occur in isolation but are embedded in other aspects of culture. Economic anthropologists study the institutional and cultural arrangements within which these choices occur. They attempt to delineate the factors that motivate economic choices in different cultures.
2. Although technological development has resulted in a dramatic increase in material productivity and consumption in Western societies, it also results in changes in the quality of life.
3. Access to and control over land are basic to every productive system. Among hunters and gatherers, there are few exclusive rights to land; among horticulturalists, land is controlled by the kin group. It is mainly with the rise of agriculture that land becomes subject to private ownership. Generally speaking, the greater the investment of labor and technology and the less land available, the more likely private ownership is.
4. In tribal and peasant economies, the basic unit of production is a kin group. Resources are produced and used mainly by this group, and production often has social and religious rather than monetary ends. This provides an important contrast with Western societies, where the basic unit of production is the business firm, whose interests are almost solely economic.
5. Tribal and peasant societies have little specialization of labor, compared with the high degree of occupational specialization in industrial societies. Two universal bases of occupational specialization are sex and age.
6. The sexual division of labor has some almost universal aspects: Hunting, fighting, and clearing land are generally done by men. Women are predominantly responsible for taking care of the children; they also gather crops and do the daily processing of food for domestic use. Beyond this, the sexual division of labor is highly variable; a man's job in one society may easily be a woman's job in another.
7. Productive resources are goods used to produce other goods. They are limited in small-scale economies. Productive resources become capital when they are invested primarily for profit. In many traditional societies, most people have access to productive resources and no one group is deprived of the ability to produce.
8. In all societies, goods and services are exchanged in some way. Three systems of exchange are reciprocity, redistribution, and the market. Reciprocity exists in all societies but is the characteristic system of exchange in band and tribal societies. The Kula ring is an example of a system of reciprocity.
9. Redistribution is the characteristic mechanism of integration and exchange in chiefdoms. An example of redistribution is the potlatch of the Kwakiutl and other groups of the Northwest Coast of North America.
10. Leveling mechanisms are norms and activities that result in an evening out of wealth among a population. The many different kinds of leveling mechanisms (obligatory generosity, witchcraft accusations, gossip, religious obligations) force accumulated resources to be used in ways that do not result in significant or permanent economic differences among individuals and groups.
11. Market exchange and capitalism dominate the economies of most societies today. In markets, goods and services are sold at prices that are determined primarily by supply and demand.
12. Most modern economies are capitalist; the owners of productive resources use them to increase their own financial wealth. However, as the ethnography of Turkish women shows, capitalist market relations are sometimes masked as relations of reciprocity.
13. The expansion of the European capitalist system has resulted in far-reaching transformations in many non-European societies. Some groups resist full-scale participation in national economic systems. The Gypsies of Spain and the traditional residents of Putnam County, New York, through their choice of marginal occupations, retain a large measure of control over their own labor.

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Key Terms

balanced reciprocity	economizing behavior	market exchange	redistribution
capital	firm	negative reciprocity	surplus value of labor
capitalism	generalized reciprocity	potlatch	usufructory rights
cargo system	household	prestige	
economic system	Kula ring	productive resources	
economics	leveling mechanism	reciprocity	



Suggested Readings

- Ensminger, Jean, ed. 2002. *Theory in Economic Anthropology*. An advanced reader in economic anthropology that combines ethnographic work from locations worldwide with recent insights from economics. Topics include the evolution of complex society, the roles of space and place, commodity chains, and consumer research.
- Halperin, Rhoda. 1990. *The Livelihood of Kin: Making Ends Meet "The Kentucky Way."* Austin: University of Texas Press. An ethnography of communities in Appalachia, this is an outstanding analysis of some of the alternative economic forms in the United States.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1990. *The Gift: Form and Reason of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: W. W. Norton. Originally published in 1925, this classic work on reciprocity in tribal societies includes much information on the ceremonial behavior of the potlatch, showing its many social and economic functions.
- Miller, Daniel (Ed.). 1998. *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. This book is a collection of essays by a variety of authors on the ethnography of consumption. Topics range from the role of paper in the workplace to Calypso music to Coca-Cola in Trinidad to catalog shopping in Britain. The essays emphasize the ways in which material objects encapsulate and express broader social values, as well as the contradictions in the lives of the people who own them.
- Sahlins, Marshal. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine de Gruyter. This classic work explores patterns of exchange in traditional societies, focusing on the domestic mode of production. This book is fairly difficult reading, but it is basic to understanding current economic anthropology.
- Schneider, Jane, and Rayna Rapp. (Eds.) 1995. *Articulating Hidden Histories: Exploring the Influence of Eric R. Wolf*. Berkeley: University of California Press. This collection of essays, honoring one of the most influential economic anthropologists, explores the ways in which economic and political forces condition the lives of people around

the globe. Twenty-one essays cover topics such as peasants, the market, nationalism, and cultural identity.

Wilk, Richard R. 1996. *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology*. Boulder, CO: Westview. In this advanced analysis of the history and current place of economics within anthro-

pology, Wilk focuses on the central issue of what motivates people and what that might say about human nature. He sees economic anthropology as a meeting place between materialist and symbolic approaches to anthropology.



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Marriage, Family, and Domestic Groups

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

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When asked about a man marrying his sisters, the Arapesh responded, "What, you would like to marry your sister? What is the matter with you? Don't you want a brother-in-law? Don't you realize that if you marry another man's sister and another man marries your sister, you will have at least two brothers-in-law, while if you marry your own sister you will have none? With whom will you hunt, with whom will you garden, with whom will you visit?" (Mead 1963:97/1935).

For details, see page 210.

All human societies face certain problems for which kinship systems, marriage, and the creation of families offer solutions. Every society must regulate sexual access between males and females, find satisfactory ways to organize labor, assign responsibility for child care, provide a clear framework for organizing an individual's rights and responsibilities, and provide for the transfer of property and social position between generations. This chapter and the next describe some of the many human solutions to these challenges. Although anthropologists have traditionally described these solutions in terms of the rules that govern them, we must keep in mind that cultural rules always bend to reality. When reality no longer meshes with the rules, the rules themselves change.



Functions of Marriage and the Family

The need to regulate sexual access stems from the potentially continuous receptivity of the human female to sexual activity. The human male also has the potential to be sexually aroused continually, rather than just at certain times of the year. Sexual competition could therefore be a source of serious conflict if it were not regulated and channeled into stable relationships that are given social approval. These relationships need not be permanent, and theoretically some system other than marriage could have developed. But in the absence of safe and dependable contraception (as has been the case for most of human history) and with the near certainty that children would be born, a relatively stable union between a male and female that involves responsibility for children as well as economic exchange became



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the basis for most, though by no means all, human adaptations.

Differences in strength and mobility between males and females, as well as women's biological role in infant nurturing, lead to a general gendered division of labor in nonindustrial societies. Marriage is the way most societies arrange for the products and services of men and women to be exchanged and for the care of children. An ongoing relationship between an adult male and an adult female provides a structure (a family) in which the male can provide food and protection and the female can nurse and provide the nurturing needed for the healthy development of children. Marriage also extends social alliances by linking different families and kin groups together, leading to cooperation among groups of people larger than the married couple. This expansion of the social group within which people can work together and

share resources appears to be of great advantage for the survival of the species.

Marriage refers to the customs, rules, and obligations that establish a socially endorsed relationship between adults and children, and between the kin groups of the married partners. Although in most societies marriage and the subsequent formation of families rest on the biological complementarity of male and female and on the biological process of reproduction, both marriage and family are cultural patterns. As such, they differ in form and functions among human societies and also within societies, and change over time with changing political and economic circumstances. Given the political debates over gay marriage in the United States, it is particularly important to understand the many alternatives to marriage as an exclusively heterosexual, monogamous institution. Anthropological research documents the conclusion that a vast array of family types,



Courtesy of Serena Nanda

A primary function of the family—husband and wife sharing responsibility for taking care of the children—is illustrated in this yarn painting of the Huichol Indians of Mexico. As the wife struggles to give birth, she pulls on a cord attached to the genitals of her husband so that he, too, may share in the pain.

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including families built on plural spouses, or same-sex partnerships, fulfill the functions of monogamous heterosexual marriage in satisfactory ways (Lathrop 2004:23ff). This variation in forms makes it difficult to find any *one* definition of marriage that will fit all cultural situations.

Even the most widespread definition of marriage as establishing the legitimacy or status rights of children, for example, is not universal. Among the Navajo, children born to a woman, whether or not she is married, become full legitimate members of her matriline (Stone 2004:10). Similarly, marriage across cultures most often involves heterosexual unions, but there are important exceptions, for example woman–woman marriage among the Nuer and some other African groups, in which a barren woman may divorce her husband, take another woman as her wife, and arrange for a surrogate to impregnate this woman. Children born from this arrangement, which did not involve sexual relations between the wives, become members of the barren woman’s natal patrilineage and refer to her as their father. A similar cultural pattern, involving two males, is found among the Azande (Kilbride 2004:17), where royal power was importantly sustained by multiple wives. When there was a shortage of marriageable women, men would pay bridewealth for a young man to become their wife. The two men would be socially recognized as a married couple having sexual relations. Many other variations occur, which will be described in this chapter.

Just as any one definition of marriage finds many exceptions, provoking anthropologists to rethink more traditional definitions, so, too, does the con-

cept of “the family.” Although in the United States the marriage tie is viewed as basic in the formation of families—hence the intensity of the debate over gay marriage—this is not true everywhere. In many societies, the most important family bond is between lineal blood relations (father and children or mother and children), or brothers and sisters, rather than between husband and wife. We must be careful, therefore, not to think of marriage and the family only in terms of the heterosexual nuclear family as we are familiar with it through contemporary political debate on “family values” in the United States. For even there, where “the family” has generally meant the heterosexual nuclear family, definitions are changing to accommodate new realities: the high divorce rate, same-sex commitments and domestic partnerships, the increasing numbers of working mothers and single-parent households, the growing number of couples who live together in long-term relationships with children but who do not formalize these relations in legal marriage, surrogate reproduction, childless couples, and the increasing numbers of people who never marry or, on the other hand, remarry.

From a cross-cultural perspective, the most basic tie in society appears to be that between mother and child. The provisioning and protective role is generally played by the mother’s husband (who is usually a

marriage The customs, rules, and obligations that establish a socially endorsed relationship between adults and children, and between the kin groups of the married partners.



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male), but it may be played by the mother's brother, the mother's female husband (see Chapter 10), or even the whole community (Spiro 1958). All societies construct rules about sex, infant care, labor, and rights and obligations between generations, but they do so in very different ways, as we see in the following section.



Are Marriage and the Family Universal? The Na of China

The Na of southwest China provide an example of a society whose cultural traditions raise questions about the universality of marriage and “the family” (Cai Hua 2001; Blumenfield 2004: 15; Geertz 2001). Na society does not have a word for “marriage,” nor do the Na practice marriage in fact. The idealized Na partnership is one where men pass nights in a lover's household and return to their own families in the morning. All sexual (and potentially reproductive) activity takes place at night during this concealed “visit” of a Na male to the household of a woman who has agreed beforehand to “lie” with him. The Na term for this “visit” suggests affection, respect, and intimacy, and the partners are called “lovers.” The Na sexual and kinship mores, however, do not include notions of fidelity, permanence, or paternal responsibility for children. Both women and men have multiple partners, serially or simultaneously, and no records are kept of “visits” to ascertain paternity of children. Thus, it may even happen that, unknowingly, a man may have intercourse with his own daughter. Yet there is no Na word for incest, nor for “illegitimate” child, infidelity, or promiscuity. The Na “visit,” treated as a mutually enjoyable but singular occurrence that entails no future conditions, has endured as the core of Na society for more than a thousand years.

Children stay with the mother's household for their entire lives; this includes children by a variety of fathers, and the blood siblings of two or more generations. Ideas of “motherhood” and “fatherhood” are fluid. When a generation lacks females (which threatens the continuity of the “family”), a household may “adopt” a relative's child or encourage a son to bring his lover into the household as a wife. The only males in a Na household are boy children born in the various generations, who are “brothers,” “uncles,” and “granduncles.” There are

no husbands or “daddies.” Where males are in short supply in a family, a woman may bring her lover home as a husband.

Na households and families are thus very diverse and flexible. Anthropologists cannot fit the Na household into either the “descent” kinship theory, which envisions a universal, “natural” nuclear family of a man, his wife and their children, or the “alliance” theory, which views marriage as an exchange of women that expands into an in-law network.

The unique Na “visit” appears to have none of the idealized, ritualized, or institutional aspects of marriage celebrated in most other societies. Yet it is a culturally regulated custom whose boundaries are clearly understood by all. There is nothing of brute force or coercion in the Na “visits.” Either party may offer, accept, or decline an invitation for a “visit.” To spare the other's feelings, one may say: “Tonight is not possible. I already have one for tonight,” and a woman may even turn away an invited lover at the door if she chooses. But although either the woman or the man may initiate the “visit,” it is always the man who comes secretly to the woman's household. Concealment is necessary because of a Na taboo forbidding a household's male members to hear or see any sexual talk or activities involving household females. Males will never answer the door after dark lest they encounter a woman's lover, and the lover himself makes every effort to avoid detection, often bringing food to prevent the guard dogs' barking, speaking only in whispers during intercourse, and leaving quietly before daybreak.

Historically, within the patrilineal, patriarchal, and ancestor-worshipping structure of mainstream Han Chinese culture, the Na “visit” has been condemned as a “barbarous practice.” Intermittent attempts to persuade or compel the Na into “normal” sexual, marriage, and kinship modes, including Maoist China's severe laws against unmarried Na “lovers,” have not been successful in assimilating the Na to mainstream Han Chinese values. However, the recent expansion of China's public school education and state-sponsored movies—imbued with mainstream Han mores and lifestyles—into the formerly isolated Na villages, will gradually induce shame among Na children for their cultural deviance, and their inability to name a father on the documents that will come in the wake of modernization will begin to appear as a stigma. Thus, as the Na enter a materially richer and more modern world, their “visit,” one

more example of human cultural diversity, ultimately faces extinction, leaving us less familiar with the wide variety of cultural patterns of marriage and family that serve as counterpoints to our own.



Marriage Rules

Every society has rules concerning mating (sexual relations) and marriage. All societies have an incest taboo. That is, they categorically prohibit certain individuals (and members of certain groups) from having sex with each other. Additionally, societies have rules that prohibit marriages between members of certain groups, determine what happens to an individual upon the death of his or her spouse, and dictate how many people an individual may marry at a time.

Incest Taboos

The most universal prohibition is that on mating among certain kinds of kin: mother and son, father and daughter, and sister and brother. The taboos on mating between kin always extend beyond this immediate family group, however. These prohibitions on mating between people classified as relatives are called **incest taboos**. Because sexual access is one of the most important rights conferred by marriage, incest taboos effectively prohibit marriage among certain kin.

There have been some very unusual exceptions to the taboo on mating and marriage among members of the nuclear family. Brother–sister marriage was practiced by Egyptian royalty, in traditional Hawaiian society, and among the Inca in Peru. Although there are numerous explanations for these cases, brother–sister marriage probably served to keep family wealth and power intact and limit rivalries for succession to kingship.

Anthropologists have advanced several major theories to explain the universality and persistence of the incest taboo, particularly as it applies to primary (or nuclear) family relationships. In considering these theories, we should keep in mind that the possible origins of the taboo, its functions in contemporary societies, and the motives of individuals in respecting or violating the taboo are all separate issues.

Avoiding Inbreeding The inbreeding avoidance theory holds that mating between close kin produces

deficient, weak children and is genetically harmful to the species. According to this theory, proposed in the late nineteenth century, the incest taboo is adaptive because it limits inbreeding. Work in population genetics appears to support the view that inbreeding is usually harmful to a human population. Moreover, these disadvantages are far more likely to appear as a result of the mating of primary relatives (mother–son, father–daughter, sister–brother) than of other relatives, even first cousins. However, this theory of the origin of the incest taboo has little credence today. Evidence from animal populations indicates, for example, that debilitating recessive genes are “pruned” out of a population through the process of natural selection. Individuals with these traits are unlikely to reproduce, and lethal recessives frequently result in miscarriages. Furthermore, this theory does not deal with the question of how prescientific peoples could understand the connection between close inbreeding and the biological disadvantages that result.

Preventing Family Disruption Bronislaw Malinowski and Sigmund Freud believed that the desire for sexual relations within the family is very strong. They suggested that the most important function of the incest taboo is preventing disruption within the nuclear family. Malinowski argued that as children grow into adolescence, it would be natural for them to attempt to satisfy their developing sexual urges within the group of people emotionally close to them—that is, within the family. Were this to happen, conflict would occur and the role relationships within the family would be disrupted as fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters, would be competing for sexual partners. This would hinder the family in carrying out its family activities in a harmonious and effective way. According to this theory, the incest taboo arose to repress the attempt to satisfy sexual desires within the family and to direct such desires outward.

This theory seems persuasive. Unregulated sexual competition within the family would undoubtedly be disruptive. However, an alternative to the incest taboo could be the regulation of sexual competition among family members. Furthermore, although Malinowski’s theory suggests why the incest taboo exists between parents and children, it does

not explain the prohibition of sexual relations between brothers and sisters. Regulating sexual activity within the family might solve the problem of disruption through sexual rivalry, but it would not solve the genetic problem. Only the familial incest taboo has both advantages: it prevents disruptions of the family over sexual competition and promotes outbreeding and genetic variability.

Forming Wider Alliances Another theory (Lévi-Strauss 1969/1949) stresses the adaptive value for humans of cooperation among groups larger than the nuclear family. The incest taboo forces people to marry outside the family, thus joining families together into a larger social community. This has undoubtedly contributed to the success of the human species. The alliance theory does not attempt to account for the *origin* of the incest taboo, but alliance between nuclear families certainly seems to be adaptive. The theory can account for the persistence of the familial incest taboo and its extension to groups other than the nuclear family.

Thus, the familial incest taboo appears to have a number of advantages for the human species. In other animal species, incest is often prevented by expelling junior members from family groups as they reach sexual maturity. Because humans take so long to mature, the familial incest taboo seems to be the most efficient and effective means of promoting genetic variability, familial harmony, and community cooperation. These advantages can explain the spread and persistence of the taboo, if not its origins (Aberle et al. 1963).

Exogamy

Two types of marriage rules, exogamy and endogamy, together work to define the acceptable range of marriage partners. **Exogamy** specifies that a person must marry outside particular groups; **endogamy** requires people to marry within certain groups. Because of the association of sex and marriage, prohibitions on incest produce an almost universal rule of exogamy within the primary family group of parents and children and between brothers and sisters. Exogamous rules also apply to groups larger than the nuclear family. Most often, descent groups based on a blood relationship (such as lineages and clans) are exogamous.

The advantages of exogamy are held to be the reduction of conflict over sex within the cooperating

group, such as the hunting band, and the alliances between groups larger than the primary family, which are of great adaptive significance for humans. Such alliances may have economic, political, or religious components; indeed, these intergroup rights and obligations are among the most important kinds of relationships established by marriage.

Early humans, living in hunting-and-gathering bands, undoubtedly exchanged women in order to live in peace with one another and to extend the social ties of cooperation. One outstanding feature of marriage arrangements among contemporary foragers is a system of exchange and alliance between groups that exchange wives. These alliances are important among peoples who must move around to find food. Different groups take turns visiting and playing host to one another, and this intergroup sociability is made easier by exogamy. One consequence of exchanging women is that each foraging camp becomes dependent on others for a supply of wives and is allied with others through the bonds that result from marriage. This system contributes to the maintenance of peaceful relations among groups that move around, camp with one another, and exploit overlapping territories. It does not entirely eliminate intergroup aggression, but it probably helps keep it down to a manageable level.

The Arapesh, a horticultural society in New Guinea studied by Margaret Mead, were, as we saw in the chapter opening quote, very clear and explicit that keeping one's own women for oneself is not advantageous. In these societies, not exchanging women between families would be just as unthinkable as not sharing food. In many societies, the very mention of incest is often accompanied by protestations of horror. For the Arapesh, incest simply does not make sense (Mead 1963:92/1935). In peasant societies, rules of exogamy may apply to the village as well. In northern India, a man must take a wife from outside his village. Through exogamy, the Indian village becomes a center in a kinship network that spreads over hundreds of villages. Because the wives will come from many different villages, the typical Indian village has a cosmopolitan character. Village exogamy also affects the quality of family life. In a household where brothers' wives are strangers to one another, peace at any price is an important value. The potential for conflict among sisters-in-law shapes child rearing and personality and helps explain many rules of conduct in the northern Indian family, such as the rep...

Endogamy

Endogamy, the opposite of exogamy, requires marriage within one's own group, however that group may be defined. In order to keep the privileges and wealth of the group intact, blood relations may be encouraged or required to marry. This helps explain endogamy among royalty. In India, the caste is an endogamous group. A person must marry someone within the caste or within the specific section of the caste to which he or she belongs. In the United States, although there are currently no named groups within which one must marry, so-called racial groups and social classes tend to be endogamous. In the past, racial endogamy was enforced by law in many states. In the case of social classes, opportunity, cultural norms, and similarity of lifestyle all contribute to maintaining endogamy. It may be as easy to love a rich person as a poor one, but it is a lot harder to meet one unless you are rich yourself. Endogamy is also an important rule for some religious groups in the United States, such as the Amish.



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All societies have rules of endogamy. In the United States endogamy within so-called racial groups was at one time sanctioned by law in many states. This is no longer true, although most, but not all, marriages still take place within these groups.

Preferential Marriages

In all societies, relatives are classified according to the rules of kinship that are part of culture (see Chapter 9). These classifications of kin are an important basis for choosing marriage partners. In addition to rules about whom one may not marry and the group within which one must marry, some societies have rules about the preferred categories of relatives from which marriage partners are drawn. Preferred marriage partners are often "cousins," that is, children of siblings at the parental generation, who are in fact biologically related, but who may not culturally be defined as such.

A common form of preferential marriage rules is cross-cousin marriage. **Cross cousins** are the children

of one's parents' siblings of the opposite sex (mother's brother or father's sister) (Fig. 8.1). These statuses actually extend beyond first cousins, and would include, for example, a mother's mother's

exogamy A rule specifying that a person must marry outside a particular group.

endogamy A rule prescribing that a person must marry within a particular group.

cross cousins The children of a parent's siblings of the opposite sex (mother's brothers, father's sisters).

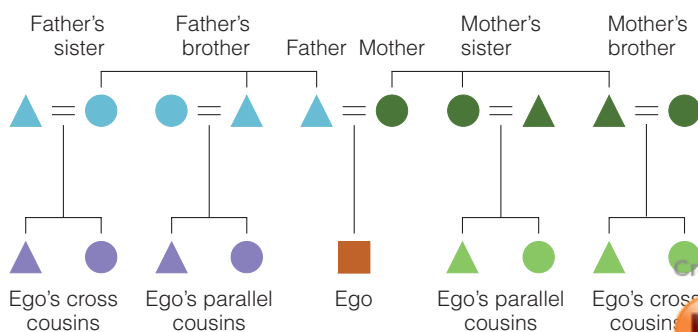


Figure 8.1

This diagram indicates the relationships of cross cousins and parallel cousins. In many cultures, these relationships are important for determining who can and cannot marry, and for designating preferred marriage partners.



brother's daughter's daughter. Got that? **Parallel cousins**, children of the parents' same-sex siblings (mother's sister or father's brother), are rarely subject to preferential marriage rules. In the differentiation between cross cousins and parallel cousins in many cultures we see clearly how kinship is not literally based on blood relations but rather culturally constructed.

Preferential cross-cousin marriage is related to the organization of kinship units larger than the nuclear family. Where descent groups are **unilineal**—that is, formed by either the mother's or the father's side exclusively—parallel cousins are members of one's own kinship group but cross cousins are not. Because unilineal kinship groups are usually exogamous, a person is prohibited from marrying parallel cousins (who are often considered brothers and sisters) but is allowed, or even required, to marry cross cousins, who are culturally defined as outside the kinship group. Preferred cross-cousin marriage reinforces ties between kin groups established in the preceding generation. In this sense, the adaptive value of preferential cross-cousin marriage is the same as exogamy: establishing alliances between groups. But where exogamy establishes alliances among several different groups, preferred cross-cousin marriage intensifies relationships among a limited number of groups generation after generation.

One of the few societies to practice preferred parallel-cousin marriage are Muslim Arabs of North Africa, where the preference is for a person to marry the son or daughter of the father's brother. Muslim Arab culture has a rule of patrilineal descent; that is, descent and inheritance are in the male line. Parallel-cousin marriage within this system helps prevent the fragmentation of family property because economic resources can be kept within the family. Another result of parallel-cousin marriage is to reinforce the solidarity of brothers, which has advantages. But by socially isolating groups of brothers, parallel-cousin marriage adds to factional disputes and disunity within the larger social system. Thus, each system of marriage and family has elements that contribute to solidarity and stability at one level but may be disruptive at another level.

The Levirate and the Sororate The **levirate** is a custom whereby a man marries the widow of his dead brother. In some cases, the children born to this union are considered children of the deceased

man. Among the Nuer, a pastoral people of Africa, a form called ghost marriage exists: A man can marry a woman "to the name of" a brother who has died childless. The offspring of this union are designated as children of the deceased. Thus, the levirate enables the children to remain within the dead husband's descent group and also keeps them from being separated from their mother. The **sororate** is a custom whereby, when a woman dies, her kin group supplies a sister as a wife for the widower. Also, where the sororate exists, the husband of a barren woman marries her sister, and at least some of these children are considered those of the first wife.

The levirate and sororate attest to the importance of marriage as an alliance between two groups rather than between individuals. Through such customs, group alliances are maintained and the marriage contract can be fulfilled even in the event of death. Because marriage involves an exchange of rights and obligations, the family of the wife can be assured that she will be cared for even if her husband dies. This is only fair if she has fulfilled her part of the marriage contract by providing domestic services and bearing children.

Where there are no available marriage partners in the right relationship for a preferential marriage, other kin may be substituted. For example, if a man is supposed to marry his father's sister's daughter, the daughters of all women classified as his father's sisters (whether or not they are biologically in this relationship) are eligible as marriage partners. A point to note here is that the levirate and the sororate are ideals; they refer to what people say should happen in their society, not what necessarily does happen. Sometimes, if no brother, sister, or other qualifying relative is available, or if the brother or sister is undesirable, the levirate or sororate will not take place.

Number of Spouses

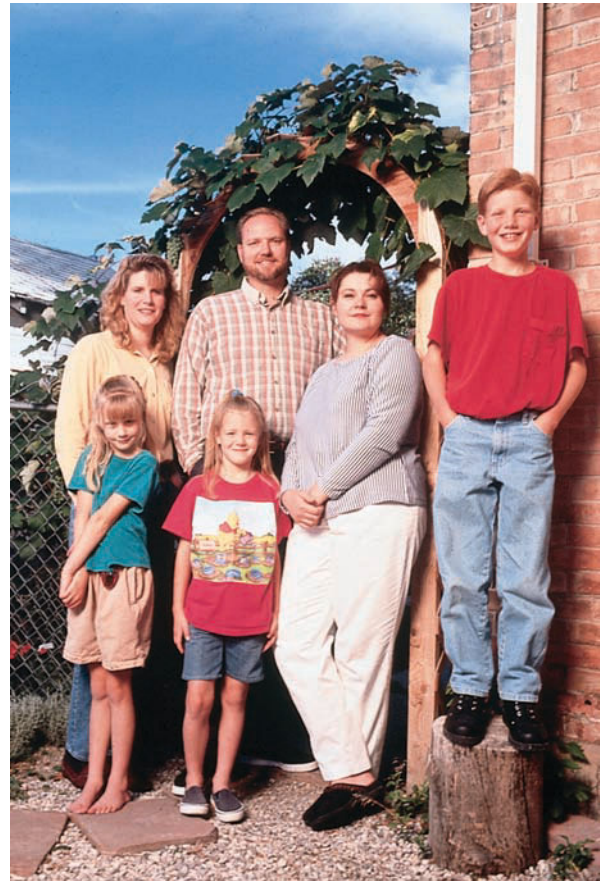
All societies have rules about how many spouses a person may have at one time. **Monogamy** permits only one man to be married to one woman at any given time. Monogamy is the rule in Europe and North America, but not in most of the world's cultures. Given the high divorce rate and subsequent remarriage in the United States, perhaps the term *serial monogamy* is more accurate. In this pattern, a man or woman has one marriage partner at a time but, because of the ease of divorce, does not necessarily remain with one partner for life.

Polygamy is plural marriage. It includes **polygyny**, which is the marriage of one man to several women, and **polyandry**, which is the marriage of one woman to several men. Most societies permit (and prefer) plural marriage. In a world sample of 554 societies, polygyny was favored in 415, monogamy in 135, and polyandry in only 4 (Murdock 1949:28). Thus, about 75 percent of the world's societies prefer plural marriage. However, this does not mean that most people in these societies actually have more than one spouse.

Polygyny Polygyny is related to different factors in different societies. Where women are economically important, polygyny can increase a man's wealth and therefore his social position. Also, because one of the most important functions of marriage is to ally different groups with one another, having several wives from different groups within the society extends a man's alliances. Thus, chiefs, headmen, or leaders of states may have wives from many different clans or villages. This provides leaders with increased economic resources that may then be redistributed among the people, and it also binds the different groups to the leader through marriage. Polygyny thus has important economic and political functions in some societies.

Polygyny is found most characteristically in horticultural societies that have a high level of productivity. Although the most obvious advantages in polygynous societies seem to go to men—additional women in the household increase both the labor supply and the productive yield, as well as the number of children—the status of females in such societies is not uniformly low. In some societies, women welcome the addition of a cowife because it eases their own workload and provides daily companionship. Although polygyny combined with patrilineality may mean that women are restricted by patriarchal authority, polygyny can also be combined with a high degree of sexual and economic freedom for women. Even in cultures in which polygyny is preferred, the ratio of males to females is usually such that few men can have more than one wife. Furthermore, where men must exchange wealth for wives, many men cannot afford more than one wife.

People from cultures where sexual fidelity in marriage is considered essential (particularly in the context of romantic love) may expect to find sexual jealousy in polygynous societies. This is not necessarily the case. Jealousy may occur in polygynous house-



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Although the Mormon church officially outlawed polygyny in 1890, as many as 30,000 Mormons live in polygynous families in the Western United States today.

parallel cousins The children of a parent's same-sex siblings (mother's sisters, father's brothers).

unilineal descent A rule specifying that membership in a descent group is based on links through either the maternal or the paternal line, but not both.

levirate The custom whereby a man marries the widow of a deceased brother.

sororate The custom whereby, when a man's wife dies, her sister is given to him as a wife.

monogamy A rule that permits a person to be married to only one spouse at a time.

polygamy A rule allowing more than one spouse.

polygyny A rule permitting a man to have more than one wife at a time.

polyandry A rule permitting a woman to have more than one husband at a time.



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holds, but relations between cowives may also be friendly and helpful. Some polygynous societies have mechanisms to minimize conflict between cowives. One mechanism is **sororal polygyny**, in which a man marries sisters, who may be more willing to cooperate and can get along better than women who are strangers to each other. Also, cowives usually live in separate dwellings. A husband who wants to avoid conflict will attempt to distribute his economic resources and sexual attentions evenly among his wives so there will be no accusations of favoritism. Where women's work is hard and monotonous, cowives may also provide welcome company for one another.

Polygyny among the Tiwi Although polygyny is mainly found in horticultural societies, the foraging Tiwi of Australia (Martin and Voorhies 1975) also have polygyny. Within the constraints of the marriage rules, a Tiwi father betroths his infant daughter to a friend or potential ally that he thinks will bring him the most economic and social advantage, or to a man who has bestowed a daughter to him (Hart and Pilling 1960:15). If he is looking for "old-age insurance," a father might choose a man much younger than himself who shows signs of being a good hunter and fighter and who seems likely to rise in influence. When the older man can no longer hunt, his son-in-law will still be young enough to provide him with food. Because the girl is an infant when her future marriage is decided, husbands are a great deal older than their wives.

As it happens that a young man who looks good to one girl's father is also attractive to other fathers, some men rapidly acquire several wives. As these wives begin to have children, he will betroth his own daughters to other men, while still acquiring more wives for himself. But some young men who do not seem particularly promising to potential fathers-in-law have difficulty getting wives and they will marry widows (and because men are much older than women in marriage, there are many widows).

The large, multiple-wife Tiwi household is an adaptation to their ecological conditions. The more wives a man has, the more food they can collect, and old wives are particularly useful in this respect because they know the environment and are experienced in finding food. Younger wives serve as apprentices and reinforcements for older wives. For this reason, every man tries to marry an older woman first. Households in which a man has only one or two wives have a much lower standard of living, especially if both wives are young.

From a Western perspective Tiwi women may appear to be pawns in a marriage game over which they have little control, but Tiwi women see themselves not simply as wives but as women who have a fluctuating inventory of husbands (Goodale 1971). Until their first pregnancy, Tiwi wives enjoy both sexual and social freedom. Young Tiwi women traditionally engage in several extramarital sexual unions with lovers of their own age, a practice that is tolerated although officially not approved of.

Early in life, Tiwi girls are introduced to the men who will become their sons-in-law. The relationship between a mother-in-law and her prospective son-in-law is very important in Tiwi social structure. When a woman gives birth to a girl, the daughter is soon given to a prospective son-in-law. The son-in-law must immediately begin to provide food and favors to his mother-in-law, and he often joins her camp at this time. This strong relationship continues for the remainder of the mother-in-law's life. As a Tiwi woman gets older, her respect and power increase. As a senior wife, she has power in the domestic group and considerable influence over her sons. Cowives and their daughters form a cohesive economic and social unit and Tiwi women have prestige, power, and independence based on both solidarity with other women and economic complementarity with men.

Polyandry Polyandry (the marriage of one woman to more than one man) is found in parts of Tibet and Nepal and among the Toda and Pahari Hindus of India. Polyandry may be an adaptation to a shortage of females, but such a shortage is created among the Toda and Tibetans by female infanticide. In a society where men must be away from home for long periods of time, polyandry provides a woman with more than one husband to take care of her. In Tibet, polyandry appears to be related to the shortage of land. If several men marry one woman, this limits the number of children a man has to support. If brothers marry the same woman, land can be kept within the family rather than fragmented over the generations.

The Toda of southern India are a classic case of **fraternal polyandry**. The Toda female marries one male and at the same time becomes the wife of his brothers. If other brothers are born after the original marriage, they will also share in the marital rights. Sexual access to the wife appears to rotate rather equally among the brothers, but little reported friction or jealousy when all the brothers live with their

wife in one hut, a brother who is with the wife will place his cloak and staff outside as a warning to others. When a wife becomes pregnant, determining the biological father is not considered necessary. Rather, a ceremony called “giving the bow,” held in the seventh month of pregnancy, assigns the child a legal or social father. This man makes a ceremonial bow and arrow from twigs and grass and presents these to the wife in front of his relatives. Usually the eldest brother performs this ceremony, and subsequent children are considered his. After two or three children are born, another brother usually gives the bow. Occasionally a woman marries several men who are not biological brothers. When these men live in different villages, the wife lives in the village of each husband for a month. The men arrange among themselves who will give the bow when she becomes pregnant. Because the practice of female infanticide has largely ceased among the Toda, the male-female ratio has evened out. For this reason, as well as the influence of Christian missionaries, the Toda today are largely monogamous (Queen and Habenstein 1974).



Choosing a Mate

In most societies, marriage is important because it links the kin groups of the married couple. This group interest in marriage, often overriding that of the individual partners, accounts for the practice of **arranged marriages**. In the United States, marriage is primarily an affair of individuals, and the married couple tends to make a new home apart from the parents. Families have less invested in whom their children marry, and certainly have less control over marriage, than in other societies. Although choice is not as free in practice as American ideals would lead one to believe, theoretically people are free to choose their own mates. Because sexual compatibility and emotional needs are considered important, mates are chosen on the basis of personal qualities such as physical attractiveness and the complex of feelings Americans call romantic love. Economic considerations are supposed to be subordinated to the ideal of marrying for love.

In societies where the personal satisfactions of the married couple are subordinate to the interests of the family or community, choosing a mate is much less of an individual, haphazard affair. Because of the substantial economic investment of kin groups

in marriage, parents and other kin have much more control over the choice of a spouse. Depending on the socioeconomic environment and family structure, different qualities are emphasized for the bride and groom. The economic potential of the groom is of great importance almost everywhere; for brides, reproductive potential and health are important. In addition, each culture has its own special emphases. In India, where a woman is expected to live in a joint family, or at least spend much of her time with her husband’s family, a demeanor of submissiveness and modesty is essential. Also, no one wants to arrange a marriage with a family that has the reputation of being quarrelsome or gossipy (Nanda 1999).

Where marriages are arranged, go-betweens are often used. A go-between, or marriage broker, has more information about a wider network of families than any one family can have. Furthermore, neither the family of the bride nor that of the groom loses face if its offer is rejected by the other party. Although the arranged marriage system tends to become less rigid as societies urbanize and industrialize, in most societies families and larger kin groups have a great deal of control over marriage and the choice of a spouse. Important cultural rules guide the arranging of marriages with, to a variable degree, some leeway for individual variation. Different patterns of choosing a mate are closely related to other social and cultural patterns, such as kinship rules, ideals of family structure, transfer of property at marriage, and core cultural values, all of which are rooted in how people make a living.



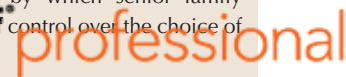
Exchange of Goods and Rights in Marriage

The essence of marriage is that it is a publicly accepted relationship involving the transfer of certain rights and obligations. These rights primarily involve sexual access of husband and wife to each

sororal polygyny A form of polygyny in which a man marries sisters.

fraternal polyandry A custom whereby a woman marries a man and his brothers.

arranged marriage The process by which senior family members exercise a great degree of control over the choice of the bride’s spouse.





Courtesy of Chamler Dembla

As in many societies, marriage in India is considered too important for the choice of the spouse to be left up to young people. Ideally, the bride lives with her husband's family, so her ability to get along with her in-laws is an important criterion of her suitability as a wife. Among modern Indian couples, such as the one pictured here, marriages continue to be arranged, but young men and women are increasingly being given an important voice in the selection of their spouse.

other, rights over any children born to the wife, obligations by one or both parents to care for children born to the union, and rights of husband and wife to the economic services of the other.

In many cultures, marriage is also an important means of making alliances between families. Thus, marriage may also give the families or kin groups of the bride and groom certain rights to goods or services from each other. Sometimes this exchange is simply of gifts—items customarily given as a way of winning the goodwill of those with the power to transfer marital rights, though not necessary to complete the transfer. In other cases, the exchange of goods and services is an essential part of the transfer of marital rights (although the exchanges may still be called gifts). If these exchanges are not completed, the rights in marriage can be forfeited.

Bride Service and Bridewealth

Three kinds of exchanges made in connection with marriage are bride service, bridewealth, and dowry. In **bride service**, the husband must work for a specified period of time for his wife's family in exchange for his marital rights. Bride service occurs mainly in foraging societies, where accumulating material goods for an exchange at marriage is difficult. Among the Ju/'hoansi, for example, a man may work for his wife's family for as long as 15 years or until the birth of the third child.

The most common form of marriage exchange is **bridewealth**, in which cash or goods are given by the groom's kin to the bride's kin to seal a marriage. (Bridewealth was formerly called bride price, an inaccurate term on the misleading perception that marriage was merely an economic exchange



Courtesy of Jean Zoin

Bridewealth is the most common form of gift exchange at marriage. Among the Medlpa of New Guinea, a marriage is formalized by the family of the groom giving gifts to the family of the bride. The bride's family comes to the groom's village to receive the gifts. The bigman of the groom's family (left) praises the quality of the gifts, while the bigman of the bride's family denigrates their value. Traditionally, pigs and various kinds of shells were part of the bridewealth. Pigs are still given, but these days cash and pig grease (rendered fat from the pig), which is in the can in the center, have replaced shell money.

[Ogbu 1978a]). A major function of bridewealth is legitimating the new reproductive and socioeconomic unit created by the marriage. In societies where bridewealth is customary, a person can claim compensation for a violation of conjugal rights only if the bridewealth has been paid. Furthermore, bridewealth paid at marriage is returned (subject to specified conditions) if a marriage is terminated.

Although most studies of bridewealth emphasize its role in entitling the husband to domestic, economic, sexual, and reproductive rights in his wife, bridewealth also confers rights on the wife. By establishing the marriage as legal—that is, recognized and supported by public sanctions—bridewealth allows wives to hold their husbands accountable for violations of conjugal rights. In sanctioning the proper exchanges of rights and obligations of both husbands and wives, bridewealth serves to stabilize marriage by giving both families a vested interest in keeping the couple together. However, that does not

mean that divorce does not occur in societies with bridewealth.

Bridewealth transactions, although globally widespread, are particularly characteristic of Africa. They are especially common among East African pastoralists such as the Gusii, Turkana, and Kipsigis. Cattle, which dominate these societies culturally and economically, traditionally make up the greater part of bridewealth. Bridewealth payments are embedded in the economic strategies of households; they are related to the ways in which men and women engage in labor, distribute property, and maintain or enhance status. Thus, the amount of

bride service The cultural rule that a man must work for his bride's family for a variable length of time either before or after the marriage.

bride price Goods presented by the groom's kin to the bride's kin to legitimize a marriage (formerly called 'bride price').

bridewealth paid varies as people adapt to changing economic, demographic, and social conditions.

Bridewealth among the Kipsigis This adaptation to changing conditions is illustrated by bride-wealth practices among the Kipsigis, a pastoralist/horticultural society in East Africa. Although in some societies bridewealth payments extend over many years, the Kipsigis make a single bridewealth payment, traditionally consisting of livestock but now including some cash, at the time of marriage. The Kipsigis distribute the bridewealth within the immediate families of the bride and the groom. First marriages are paid for by the groom's father and subsequent marriages by the groom himself, although grooms working for wages may also help with the first payment. The bride's parents are primarily responsible for the negotiation and final acceptance of the bridewealth offer (Borgerhoff Mulder 1995:576). Although young people occasionally pick their own spouses, both young people and their parents are expected to be satisfied by the marriage arrangement, and sometimes the young are brought into line by threats of disinheritance. Personality differences and individual circumstances play a role in bridewealth payments, but certain patterns are also observable.

Kipsigis bridewealth amounts have fluctuated over time. In the past, when agricultural land was available and prices for crops were high, bridewealth was high because of the importance of women's labor in cultivation. Recently, however, bridewealth payments have declined. Land is now scarce and crop prices low. As a result, women's agricultural labor has lost its value. Additionally, there are numerous other opportunities for men to invest their wealth, and less is available for bridewealth payments.

The bride's family must balance its desire for higher bridewealth payments with their concern for their daughter's happiness, the need to attract a good son-in-law, and the desire to avoid impoverishing the daughter in her new household. However, Kipsigis parents of girls educated beyond elementary school often demand high bridewealth, both as compensation for the high school fees they have spent on their daughters and because her increased earning potential will benefit her marital home.

Many early Westerners who encountered bridewealth practices assumed that it was both a cause and a symbol of a very low status for women.

This is not the case. John Ogbu (1978a) argues that such payments enhance rather than diminish the status of women by enabling both husband and wife to acquire reciprocal rights in each other. Indeed, as the Kipsigis illustrate, it is the higher-status, more educated women who demand higher bridewealth. The low status of women in some parts of Africa has nothing to do with the role of bridewealth in the legitimization of marriage. Despite the general persistence of bridewealth, women's status has declined with increasing modernization, urbanization, and participation in wage labor economies (Borgerhoff Mulder 1995).

Dowry

Dowry—a presentation of goods by the bride's kin to the groom's family—is less common than other forms of exchange at marriage. **Dowry** has somewhat different meanings and functions in different societies. In some cases, this transfer of wealth represents a woman's share of her family inheritance. It may be used by her and her husband to set up a new household, kept by her as insurance in case her husband dies, or spent on her children's future. In other cases, dowry is a payment transferred from the bride's family to the groom's family.

India is one culture where dowry is very common, although after independence it became illegal, because it was often misused as a way of extorting payments from families eager to marry off their daughters. The functions of dowry in India are debated. One view is that dowry is a voluntary gift, symbolizing affection for a beloved daughter leaving home and compensating her for the fact that traditionally she could not inherit land or property. Dowry may also be viewed as a source of security for a woman because the jewelry given as part of her dowry is theoretically hers to keep. Theories that view dowry as a source of economic security for a woman are challenged in the Indian context on several grounds. First, in reality, most women have no control over their dowries, which remain in the custody of their mothers-in-law or their husbands. Second, if the purpose of dowries really was economic security, they would be of a more productive nature, such as land or a shop, rather than the personal and household goods that constitute the main portion of Indian dowries today.

Another theory holds that dowry in India is a transfer of property from the groom's family as a

recognition of their generosity in taking on an economic burden because upper-class and upper-caste women in India are not supposed to work. Dowry from this standpoint is a compensatory payment from the bride's family, which is losing an economic liability, to the groom's family, which is taking one on. Even as the demanding or giving of dowry has been outlawed in India, a new emphasis on consumerism has increased its importance, especially among members of the middle classes striving for upward social mobility (see Anthropology Makes a Difference box).

Whatever the exact nature of exchanges of goods or services in marriage, they are part of the process of the public transfer of rights that legitimizes the new alliances formed. The public nature of marriage is also demonstrated by the ritual and ceremony that surround it in almost every society. The presence of members of the community at these ceremonies is a way of bearing witness to the lawfulness of the transaction. It is these publicly witnessed and acknowledged ceremonies that distinguish marriage from other kinds of unions that resemble it.



Families, Domestic Groups, and Rules of Residence

Two basic types of families identified by anthropologists are the elementary, or nuclear, family and the extended family. **Nuclear families** are organized around the **conjugal tie**, or the relationship between husband and wife. The **extended family** is based on **consanguineal**, or blood, relations extending over three or more generations.

A **domestic group**, or household, is not the same as a family. Although households most often contain related people, nonkin may also be part of a household. In addition, members of a family may be spread out over several households. The composition of a household is affected by the cultural rules about where a newly married couple will live. A **nuclear family** consists of a married couple and their children. It is most often associated with **neolocal residence**, where the married couple establishes an independent household. This type of family may exist as an isolated and independent unit, as it does in the United States, or it may be embedded within larger kinship units. Only 5 percent of the world's societies are neolocal.

The Changing American Family

In the United States, in contrast to most other cultures, the neolocal, independent nuclear family is the ideal for most people. It is related to the high degree of mobility required in an industrial system and to a culture that places emphasis on romantic love, the emotional bond between husband and wife, privacy, and personal independence. In nuclear family societies, a newly married couple is expected to occupy its own residence and to function as an independent domestic and economic unit. Larger kin groups are not involved in any substantial way in mate selection or the transfer of goods, and the nuclear family's dissolution (whether from death or divorce) primarily affects only the nuclear family members.

The American nuclear family is ideally regarded as egalitarian, although for many families this is not the case. Although roles in the American nuclear family are less rigidly defined than in other societies, research indicates that even where mothers work full time, they are also responsible for most of the housework and child care (Lamphere 1997).

The idealistic picture of the independent nuclear family in the United States must be modified to reflect some new (and some not so new) realities. One of these is the high rates of divorce and remarriage that enmesh nuclear families in ever larger and more complicated kinship networks, sometimes called blended families, which include previously divorced spouses and their new marriage partners, and sometimes children from previous marriages,

dowry Presentation of goods by the bride's kin to the family of the groom or to the couple.

nuclear family A family organized around the conjugal tie (the relationship between husband and wife) and consisting of a husband, a wife, and their children.

conjugal tie The relationship between a husband and wife formed by marriage.

extended family Family based on blood relations extending over three or more generations.

consanguineal Related by blood.

domestic group (household) Persons living in the same house, usually, but not always members of a family.

neolocal residence System under which a couple establishes an independent household after marriage.



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Anthropology Makes a Difference

Power, Culture, and Violence within Families

Although ideally we might think that families and households are tranquil and benign, this is not always true. All over the globe, violence often occurs within families, significantly because of the extreme vulnerability of some of its residents—especially women, teenage girls, young children, and also sometimes the elderly and the disabled (Eller 2006: 115–145). Cultural sanctions of patriarchy (male power) and patrilocality are clearly related to domestic violence, which occurs much less frequently in matrilineal, matrilocal societies. It is the relative powerlessness of women within families—whether that powerlessness derives from strict cultural rules limiting their options, their physical vulnerability, a cultural support for masculinity defined as control over women, women’s isolation from potential sources of support, or the lack of alternative economic opportunities to marriage—that provides the context for domestic violence.

Domestic violence against women occurs in Western and non-Western societies, and in some cases, increases with urbanization, upward social mobility, or other factors associated with modernization. For example, as we noted, dowry, though outlawed in India, is becoming more important among India’s urbanized, increasingly modern and upwardly mobile families, sometimes leading to what has been called “dowry deaths” (Stone and James 2005). Where a groom’s family is not satisfied with the amount of dowry the bride brings to her marriage, the young bride may be harassed constantly to get her parents to give more. In extreme cases, the bride may even be murdered, and the murder disguised as an accident or a suicide. This offers the husband’s family an opportunity to arrange another marriage for him, thus bringing in another dowry. Dowry death in India is associated

with several cultural and economic factors, including, as is common in many cultures, concerns with female “purity” and the notion that the honor of male kin groups rests on the seclusion and sexual purity of its women; it is also entwined with an economic structure that gives women few alternatives for independence, and a marriage system in which unmarried or divorced or widowed adult women are viewed as social and cultural threats, and returning to one’s family is not an option for most women.

Domestic violence is a major problem in the United States, where it also involves relative female powerlessness and economic dependence—though domestic violence is by no means limited to women in lower economic strata—and a still strong ideology of male dominance derived from Judeo-Christian religious values and English legal restraints on women’s autonomy and their disposal of property. Only recently are law enforcement agencies treating domestic violence against women as a serious issue. Though all women are vulnerable to domestic violence, immigrant women in the United States are particularly vulnerable. Many of these women are from cultures that have strong patriarchal values. These women also often lack the language, cultural, and economically valuable skills that would provide alternatives to violent treatment within their families or access to social services, and their U.S. visas are often dependent on their husbands, an added source of leverage against their wives taking legal action (Sokoloff 2005).

Anthropological understanding has been useful in providing social service and law enforcement agencies with a better knowledge of immigrant cultures but, in an ironic twist, this kind of knowledge has sometimes been used to justify the abuse of women through the “cultural

as well as multiple sets of grandparents and other similar relations. Although “blended families” do sometimes provide the kind of support provided in two-parent families, the facts are that only one child in six averages a weekly visit with a divorced father, and only one in four sees him once a month. Almost

half of the children of divorced parents have not seen their biological fathers for more than a year and 10 years later, more than two-thirds have lost contact with him (Hacker 2002: 99).

Another trend in the United States is the increasing number of single-parent households.

defense” (Reteln 2004). A cultural defense holds that although in the United States, “ignorance of the law is no excuse,” an individual’s rational expectations about normal and appropriate behavior (their state of mind) as a member of another culture may be part of their defense. The most frequent use of the cultural defense has been to mitigate responsibility for male defendants who have killed their wives, daughters, or other female relatives whom they view as having sullied their male “honor” or family’s reputation through sexual “transgressions.”

In an infamous 1988 New York City case, a Chinese man who beat his wife to death because he thought she was being unfaithful was acquitted when the defendant’s lawyers, backed by anthropological testimony, argued that the intense shame and dishonor a Chinese man experiences when his wife is unfaithful meant that the husband could not be held fully accountable for his actions (Cardillo 1997). Women’s groups, Asian Americans, and legal scholars strongly protested that “there should be only one standard of justice,” which should not depend on a defendant’s cultural background, and that the court’s decision sent out the dangerous message that Asian women cannot be protected by American law (Norgren and Nanda 1996).

In another case, *People v. Metallides* (1974) (Winkelman 1996), Metallides, a Greek immigrant, killed his best friend after this friend raped his daughter. Metallides’ lawyers, supported by anthropological evidence, argued successfully that in Greek culture maintaining the family honor demanded that Metallides attempt to kill his friend. Similar cases have involved Hmong (Vietnamese) and Laotian refugees where anthropological testimony about a Hmong husband’s culturally sanctioned control

over his wife was used to mitigate homicide charges (Norgren and Nanda 1996:272).

Culturally different marriage patterns have also led to a cultural defense. Among the Hmong, a cultural group from southeast Asia, a traditional pattern of elopement called “marriage by capture” begins with a ritualized flirtation, which a woman must strenuously protest by weeping and moaning to demonstrate her virtue. A man must strenuously overcome this refusal to prove he is not weak. Once sexual consummation has occurred, the woman will not be considered marriageable by anyone else. A case against a Hmong defendant practicing “marriage by capture” reached the courts as a rape and kidnapping case as a result of the girl’s parents calling the police. After hearing anthropological testimony on Hmong marriage customs, the judge decided that although the defendant was sincere in his *belief* that the woman was following the Hmong custom of ritualized protest, his behavior was nonetheless unacceptable. With the agreement of elders in the local Hmong community, the judge dismissed the rape and kidnapping charges, but found the defendant guilty of false imprisonment, sentenced him to three months in jail, and levied a \$1200 fine, of which \$900 went to the girl’s parents.

Anthropology can make a difference to women, however, providing culturally and linguistically sensitive programs and services for battered women and children and by acknowledging the need to fight culturally embedded attitudes, whether in society at large or among immigrant groups that deny that domestic violence is a problem. To learn more about groups working to protect immigrant women from domestic violence, go to the website of Sakhi for South Asian Women: <http://www.sakhi.com>.

Single-mother families now account for almost 22 percent of all households with children—more than double the proportion of a generation ago. According to one study (Luker 1996), about half the children in the United States will spend at least some of their childhood in a single-parent family. Half of

these will do so as the result of divorce or separation; the other half are mainly children of mothers who have never married, a figure about 5 times higher today than it was 30 years ago. The rise in single motherhood is most acutely felt by older women, though the focus of media attention remains on



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One of the important changes in the family in the United States over the past 50 years is the increasing number of women who work outside the home. In most families, women's domestic responsibilities have not decreased, but in some two-career families, there is a movement toward more equal sharing of domestic work and child care between husband and wife.

teenage single mothers, whose share of nonmarital births is actually declining (Hacker 2002: 22). Although there have always been many teenage pregnancies in the United States, until the 1970s, such pregnancies were quite likely to result in marriage. However, in the last several decades, there has been less pressure for pregnant teens to marry, and perhaps less advantage in doing so. In 1970, 30 percent of teenage mothers were unmarried at the time they gave birth; by 1995, this figure was 70 percent. To some extent, this mirrors the overall rise in the number of single mothers of every age. Just after World War II, almost every single mother was either a widow or a divorcee; fewer than 1 in 100 was an unmarried mother. Today unmarried mothers make up more than a third of the households headed by single women. Although woman-headed households are three times more common among African Americans than among European Americans (Andrews 1992:241), the rates of female-headed single-parent families and unmarried teenage mothers are increasing among both groups, and the differences between the two groups are shrinking.

Also changing is the number of single-father families, which now make up almost 6 percent of all households with children and approximately 20 percent of all single parent households. Single-mother families and single-father families are different in important ways, however. A 2000 census study found

that single fathers were 72 percent more likely to have a woman residing with them than a single mother was to have a man residing with her. And perhaps more important, the median income for custodial fathers is approximately \$35,000 whereas that for single mothers is \$21,000 annually, which includes child support payments (Hacker 2002: 22).

The increase in single parenting has a number of causes: one is new forms of contraception that make it easier for couples to have an active sex life without being married, bringing with it a new cultural climate in which marriage can be disconnected from having and rearing children. As moral disapproval of out-of-wedlock births loses cultural force, the number of unmarried mothers can be expected to grow. Although much of the concern over single-parent female-headed households is expressed as political rhetoric about "family values," the real problem is that female-headed households and teenage pregnancy are correlated with poverty. Although single mothering is often cited as a cause of poverty, it has also been suggested as a symptom, because many unmarried teenage mothers are already disadvantaged by the poverty of their parents (Luker 1996).

The nuclear family is adapted in many ways to the requirements of industrial society. Where jobs do not depend on family connections, and where mobility may be required for obtaining employment and for schools, a small, flexible unit such



Courtesy of Soo Ho Choi

In much of Asia, the family is an extended group of kin connected through patrilineal descent. While this extended kinship group often requires an individual to provide aid to many others, it is also ideally a source of lifetime security and social connectedness.

as the independent nuclear family has its advantages. Independence and flexibility are also requirements of foraging lifestyles, and more than three quarters of all foraging groups live in nuclear family groups. In such societies, however, the nuclear family is not nearly as independent or isolated as it is in U.S. society. The family unit almost always camps together with the kin of the husband or the wife.

Composite Families

Composite (compound) families are aggregates of nuclear families linked by a common spouse, most often the husband. Composite families are thus mainly **patrilocal**, structured by rules that require a woman to live in her husband's home after marriage. A polygynous household, consisting of one man with several wives and their respective children, constitutes a **composite family**. In this case, each wife and her children normally occupy a separate residence.

The dynamics of composite families are different from those of a family that consists of one husband, one wife, and their children, all of whom occupy a common residence. In the composite family, for example, the tie between a mother and her children is particularly strong. The relations between the children of different mothers by the

same father is different in a number of ways from the relationship between full siblings in the typical European-American nuclear family. In analyzing the dynamics of the composite family, the interaction between cowives must be taken into account, as well as the different behavior patterns that emerge when a man is husband to several women rather than just one, and where competition over inheritance and succession are likely.

Extended Families

The extended (consanguineal) family consists of two or more lineally related kinfolk of the same sex and their spouses and offspring, occupying a single household or homestead and under the authority of a household head. An **extended family** is not just a collection of nuclear families. In the extended family system, lineal ties—the blood ties between generations—are more important than ties of marriage. The extended family is the ideal in more than half of the world's societies, but even

patrilocal residence System under which a bride lives with her husband's family after marriage.

composite (compound) family An aggregate of nuclear families linked by a common spouse.



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in these societies it is found most often among the landlord and prosperous merchant classes; the nuclear or **stem family** (a nuclear family with a dependent adult added on) is more characteristic of the less prosperous peasants.

Extended families may be patrilineal or matrilineal. A **patrilineal** extended family is organized around a man, his sons, and the sons' wives and children. Societies with patrilineal extended families also tend to have patrilocal residence rules; that is, a woman lives with her husband's family after marriage. A **matrilineal** family is organized around a woman and her daughters and the daughters' husbands and children. Matrilineal families may have **matrilocal residence** rules (a man lives in the household of his wife's family) or **avunculocal residence** rules (a married couple is expected to live with the husband's mother's brother). If a couple can choose between living with either the wife's or the husband's family, the pattern is called **bilocal residence**.

Patrilineal, Patrilocal Extended Families In premodern China, the patrilineal, patrilocal extended family was the ideal. Lineal descendants—father, son, and grandson—were the backbone of family organization. The family continued through time as a permanent social entity. As older members were lost through death, new ones were added through birth. As in India, marriage in China was viewed more as acquiring a daughter-in-law than as taking a wife. It was arranged by the parents, and the new couple lived with the husband's family. The obedient relationship of the son to his father and the loyalty and solidarity of brothers were given more importance than the ties between husband and wife. In both India and China, the public demonstration of affection between a married couple was severely criticized. In both systems, it was feared that a man's feeling for his wife would interfere with his carrying out responsibilities to his own blood kin.

In these cultures, a good wife was one who was a good daughter-in-law. She had to work hard, under the eyes of her mother-in-law and her husband's elder brothers' wives. With the birth of a son, a woman gained more acceptance in the household. As the years went by, if she had been patient and played her role well, the relationship between husband and wife developed into one of companionship and a more equal division of power. As her sons grew up, the wife achieved even more power as

she began to arrange for their marriages. When several sons were married, a woman might be the dominant person in the household, even ordering her husband about, as his economic power, and consequently his authority, waned.

Matrilineal, Matrilocal Extended Families In the matrilineal extended family, which is also generally matrilocal, the most important ties are between a woman and her mother and her siblings. In a patrilineal society, a child's father is responsible for providing for and protecting the mother-child unit. He has control over women and their children, and owns property with other males in his family. In a matrilineal society, these rights and responsibilities fall to a woman's brother rather than her husband. In matrilineal societies, a man gains sexual and economic rights over a woman when he marries her, but he does not gain rights over her children. The children belong to the mother's descent group, not the father's.

In matrilineal systems, a man usually goes to live with or near his wife's kin after marriage. This means that the man is the stranger in the household, whereas his wife is surrounded by her kin. Because a husband's role in the matrilineal household is less important than in the patrilineal one, marriages in matrilineal societies tend to be less stable.

Advantages of Extended Families Societies such as the United States that extol the benefits of individualism and material success are structured around the relatively isolated nuclear family unit. Other kinds of families, however, whether extended families or nuclear families embedded in small communities, are clearly adaptive under certain economic and social conditions, and also may be experienced as having personal advantages. The

stem family A nuclear family with a dependent adult added on.

patrilineage A lineage formed by descent in the male line.

matrilineage A lineage formed by descent in the female line.

matrilocal residence System under which a husband lives with his wife's family after marriage.

avunculocal residence System under which a married couple lives with the husband's mother's brother.

bilocal residence System under which a married couple has the choice of living with either the husband's or the wife's family.



Ethnography

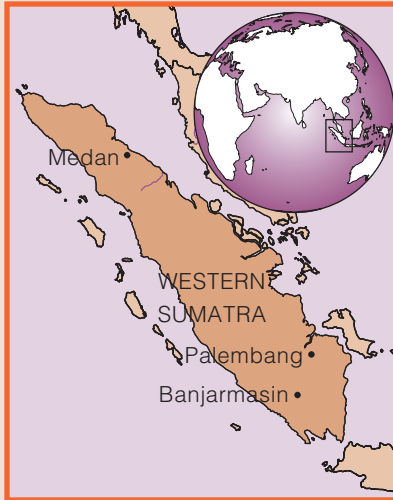
Matrilineal Families among the Minangkabau of Sumatra

The Minangkabau, a rice-growing society in Western Sumatra, Indonesia, is one of the few matrilineal Islamic societies in South Asia. In Minangkabau villages, kinship relations and families are organized around mothers and their daughters and sons. Life-cycle ceremonies, a key feature of Minangkabau culture, are organized by women and their brothers, and presided over by senior males. Early anthropological representations of Minangkabau society focused on the formal structures of kinship

and family, which emphasized the importance of the mother's brother, rather than the mother as the center of authority. Recent fieldwork, however, calls this emphasis on male power into question. The field research of Evelyn Blackwood, a feminist anthropologist, demonstrates that Minangkabau women wield significant informal power in their families and in their matrilineages, based on their ownership of rice land, their significant participation in decisions regarding life-cycle ceremonies, matrilineal residence of daughters after marriage, and matrilineal inheritance in which property and land are transmitted from mothers to daughters.

The "big house," or "matrihouse," as Blackwood calls it, is a central site of Minangkabau social relations. Big houses are impressive structures that incorporate many house posts, peaked zinc roofs, and decorative wood siding. They are identified with the matrilineage and usually contain an extended family of three or four generations, including a senior woman, her daughter(s), their husbands, and children. Compartments at the back of the big house are for the mother and her daughters, and the front half of the house is an open space for public gatherings and ceremonies. The central house post is identified with the senior woman, who is called "the central pillar of the big house."

When a daughter marries, she and her husband move into her big house. Each newly mar-



ried daughter resides with her husband at the end compartment farthest from the central house post, and elder married sisters move down the line of compartments toward the central post. Sons leave the house at marriage to move in with their wives, but one room next to the kitchen is designated as the men's room, for any divorced or widowed men forced to return home.

Women are not only symbolically identified with the core (pillar) of the house, but also

dominate the house in daily life and during ceremonies. A senior woman and her daughters are the core of the house. Because sons marry out, they are not part of the daily life of the house and even the senior male, or mother's brother, takes center stage only temporarily when he presides over ceremonies. The conjugal unit of husband and wife is a subsidiary unit within the matrilineal extended family, and husbands are peripheral to household affairs, most often away during the day working, returning to the house only in the evenings.

The composition of any particular matrihouse varies: it may be a several-generation extended family, or a two-generation household of adult women, that is, a mother and recently married daughter. Mother-daughter relations are the key to the actual composition of a matrihouse. Matrihouses continue from generation to generation as daughters are born, marry, bear children and eventually become senior women themselves. Usually only one of a woman's daughters will actually live with her husband and children in the matrihouse; other daughters and their descendants may split and establish their own houses, often close by. Thus, over generations matrihouses may develop into a cluster of houses of related kinswomen.

Matrilineal inheritance of property is key to female power in the household. Women have



Ethnography—continued

rights as heirs to and controllers of matrilineal property, and their daughters inherit the right to land and its disposition. Once a daughter is given land by her mother after marriage, it is under her control. The daughter decides how to use it and what to do with its produce, although she cannot pawn it without her mother's permission. No one can interfere with a senior woman's right to use and dispose of her land as she wishes. Sons may be given use rights to land if land is available and their mothers are willing to help them out, but they cannot pass matrilineal land on to their children. The members of a matrihouse share resources in complex ways, guided by the Minangkabau value on mutual cooperation and assistance among kin, as well as the belief that those who earn an income have some rights over how to dispose of it. A family's main income comes from the rice land belonging to the matrihouse, which is controlled by the senior woman, who uses the income to pay for common household needs. In some matrihouses, mother and daughters share the produce of their undivided rice fields; in other cases daughters also have access to their own income, either from their husbands, through their own labor, or from small-scale businesses, and may use some of this income for joint projects benefiting the matrihouse.

All matrihouse members are expected to contribute some form of unpaid labor or cash to the household. Mothers may leave small children with a variety of adults; both boys and girls watch younger siblings; girls help their mothers clean the house; boys tend to small animals. Young unmarried daughters weed the rice fields; adult daughters plant, weed, and harvest rice on the family land. Unmarried sons help with the harvest and transport unhusked rice to be milled. Minangkabau households are not authoritarian, but the expectation of cooperation is buttressed by the "rule" of the senior woman

and respect for and deference to elders. As senior women become elderly, the management of the household falls more to their daughters, as do the work and supervision of the rice fields.

Although married sons are not present in the daily life of the matrihouse, they remain kinsmen of the house with certain responsibilities and obligations, contingent on age and rank. Sons maintain a strong interest in and support for their natal kin group, and a son's cooperation with his mother helps ensure her continued support of his interests. A mother displeased with her son may take back some rice land she has given him, or refuse him return to the house after a divorce, although that is a male right. Apart from practical interests, a man feels emotionally tied to his mother. Young unmarried Minangkabau men who work for wages in other parts of Indonesia usually send home some of their wages to their mothers, or they may work in their mothers' rice fields. These filial obligations last throughout a man's lifetime. Even after marriage, a son remains part of the matrilineal family with a voice in family matters and even substantial influence if he has proven a reliable helper to the matrihouse.

Sons-in-laws, unlike sons, are peripheral to the matrihouse; in the past a son-in-law was only a temporary resident in his wife's family house, visiting at night and returning to his mother's house in the morning. Although a husband is now a more permanent part of his wife's house, he is still regarded more as an "honored, but relatively insecure, guest" than as part of the family. As "guest" residents, husbands provide additional labor, land, or income to the household but do not participate in decision making in their wives' lineage affairs. Husbands are expected to have their own source of income, through agricultural or wage labor, which they usually use for expenses associ-

extended family system prevails in all types of cultivating societies, where its main adaptive advantages are economic. One advantage of the extended family is that it provides more workers than the nuclear family. This is useful both for food production and for producing and marketing handicrafts, which

are generally more important among cultivators than among foragers. Furthermore, in stable agricultural societies, ownership of land becomes important as a source of pride, prestige, and power. The family becomes attached to the land, knows how to work it, and is reluctant to divide it.

ated with raising their children. Men have discretion in spending their income but are subject to strong pressure to be good providers for their wives' families.

A man's duty to provide material assistance to both his own matrilineage and his wife's family creates tensions for men pulled between their responsibilities as husbands and as sons, between financially assisting their wives' families and their own natal family. Mothers and sisters feel they have a right to make claims to a man's income, and there are no set rules for dividing income between the wife's matrihouse and the natal house. Men also maintain enduring ties with their children, even after divorce or remarriage. This, too, may cause tension as a man is pulled between leaving his assets to his own children or to his sister's children. As husbands, then, men are valued for their labor and income, however supplemental, as well as their reproductive capabilities, but they are subordinate in the household. A senior woman does not control her son-in-law's behavior, but he must show his respect by working hard for the household. If he does not, his marriage and relations with his wife's kin will be negatively affected.

The traditional matrilineal orientation of the Minangkabau conflicts with the patrilineal and patriarchal orientation of other ideologies to which the Minangkabau are subjected. In the last century, the Dutch colonialists, consistent with Western ideals, attempted to put land in men's hands. Both Islam and contemporary Indonesian nationalism emphasize males as household heads, women as dependent caretakers of home and family, and the primacy of patrilineal relations as the basis of family and community life. Participation in the capitalist global economy, which offers more wage work to men than to women, also supports the movement from female to male dominance in families. In

spite of these influences, however, a matrilineal ideology and its associated practices continue to hold a predominant place in Minangkabau life.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What are the sources of women's power among the Minangkabau?
2. What are the most important male roles in this society?

Source: Evelyn Blackwood, *Webs of Power: Women, Kin, and Community in a Sumatran Village*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.

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A system in which land is divided into small parcels through inheritance becomes unproductive. The extended family is a way of keeping land intact, providing additional security for individuals in times of crisis. The advantages of matrilineal extended families also appear to be important in societies in

which warfare takes males away from home for long distances and periods of time.

Although the nuclear family appears to be adapted to a modern industrialized society, the extended family is not necessarily a liability in some urban settings. The principles of mutual obligation of



Global Perspective

Aging and Family Life in Different Societies

One advantage of the extended family or of embedded nuclear families is a sense of participation and dignity for the older person, who lives out his or her last years surrounded by respectful and affectionate kin. In the standard nuclear family, the presumed advantages of privacy and personal autonomy are paid for as people grow old; they are regarded as a burden and a nuisance if they join the household of one of their children, and in the United States more than a million older people will spend their last years in nursing homes.

Individuals learn to understand, enter, and adjust to old age within a matrix of cultural meanings and social institutions. These meanings are shaped by individual circumstance but, more importantly, also by the material and social conditions of a society, including prevailing family structures. The American ideals of isolated nuclear families and individual independence lead to a primarily negative view of aging in the United States, particularly because American cultural values emphasize youth, and aging is connected with loss, abandonment, increasing poverty, and death.

This negative association is not universal. In many nonindustrial and economically underdeveloped societies, death is not uniquely associated with old age. In these societies, the human life span is shorter, and death is associated with infant mortality, childhood diseases, and accidents and sickness in adulthood, rather than with old age. Ironically, the association of old age and death in the United States is partly a result of scientific advances that have lengthened the life span. Under these conditions, old age becomes associated with the long dying process or mental deterioration of such “modern” diseases as hypertension, cancer, coronary heart disease, and senility, diseases that are almost absent in some nonindustrial societies.

It is important, however, not to romanticize aging in more traditional societies. In many societies, age itself is not so much a basis for authority or respect; rather, it is whether age brings with it or expands control over resources and knowledge, great accomplishments, or the accumulation of descendants (Counts and Counts 1985:261). In almost all societies, the experience of growing old and the treatment of the elderly are to a large extent dependent on their ability to function productively in society and the availability of resources to care for them. Although it seems generally true that old people fare better in societies with extended family systems, their life is not always enviable, even in these societies. When sons begin to raise families of their own, extended families often split apart and as the father loses productive abilities, he is slowly divested of his status and power. In Fiji, for example, although the ideal is that an old father should be properly cared for by his brothers and sons, these days he may just as likely be barely kept alive, his counsel is never sought, and he is more often considered silly rather than wise (Sahlilns 1957: 451).

Furthermore, even with its independent nuclear family ideal, aging in the United States is not uniformly perceived as negative. In fact, about 39 percent of Americans over 65 say they are very happy, but only about 30 percent of people between 18 and 29 say the same thing. Furthermore, those over 65 are about twice as likely to be satisfied with their current financial status as younger people (Stark 1996:419–424).

Where aging is linked to physical decline, a decrease in productive participation in society, and a scarcity of material resources, it is experienced in negative terms—both by the elderly themselves and by the families, kin, or communities who care for them. Thus, a culturally widespread concept is

extended kin, joint ownership of property, and an authority structure in which the male household head makes decisions after consulting with junior members have proved useful among the upper classes of urban India in their successful management of modern corporations (Milton Singer 1968).

Like family types, residence rules are likely to be adaptive to food-producing strategies and other economic factors. Patrilocality, for example, is functional in societies practicing hunting and in agricultural societies where men must work cooperatively. Matrilocality is more adaptive in horticultural

that of the elderly as a “burden.” This occurs even in those societies where, unlike the United States, self-reliance or competitive individualism are not central cultural values and where extended families are the ideal, if not the norm. In Japan, where integration and harmony within a group are valued over competitive independence, “becoming a burden” is a source of anxiety among the elderly. This concern arises not because of a generalized cultural fear of incurring obligations, but because of the anxiety of incurring obligations that cannot be reciprocated (Traphagan 1998).

Cross-cultural ethnography reveals a painful paradox: On the one hand, postindustrial technologies have made productive participation in society less dependent on physical vigor and created health technologies that compensate for physical decline. On the other hand, the social and cultural processes attending these technological changes (sometimes called “modernization”), especially where these lead to nuclear families, undermine the sources of social support and personal identity through which aging might be viewed in more positive terms (Keith et al. 1994:320).

A strong contrast to the perception of the very old as a “burden” are the Ju/’hoansi of Botswana (Rosenberg 2003). Formerly foragers, the Ju/’hoansi are now mainly sedentary pastoralists and agriculturalists, but their traditional values, particularly their ideology of sharing, remain largely intact. This provides a very positive context for the elderly, even those who are unable to care for themselves. The Ju/’hoansi divide old age into three categories: elders, the “old/dead,” which is a joking term that designates extreme old age, and the “old to the point of helplessness,” which refers to a sick or decrepit elder. Old age and the degenerative changes that accompany it are a constant

source of Ju/’hoansi conversation and humor, especially regarding the decline of sexual prowess and interest (among both men and women), but even the “old/dead” and the helpless old do not experience a sharp decline of social status. Elders are associated with generative and life-giving activities in the community, and are felt to have special powers, and may continue to have strong leadership roles. This is particularly impressive because, as foragers without property to pass on, Ju/’hoansi elders lack the leverage of inheritance to exact compliance from their children.

Caregiving is an important Ju/’hoansi value and is considered the responsibility of all adult children, whether male or female. This provides an interesting contrast with the United States, where caregiving, as it relates to both children and the elderly, is generally feminized. Although there is a culturally patterned “discourse of complaint” among the Ju/’hoansi, in which elders complain about not being properly cared for, and where indeed, occasional instances of neglect or even abandonment occur, caregiving to elders has not, in the past, been linked to an elder’s control over property. With the move toward a more pastoralist economy, however, in which livestock becomes an important asset, there are some indications that property ownership will become increasingly significant in the status and treatment of the elderly.

At the present time, Ju/’hoansi values of sharing and of responsibility for taking care of elders, as well as a humorous approach to the disabilities of aging, still dominate Ju/’hoansi culture, and even the very frail elderly are not targets of fear or anxiety. Ju/’hoansi elders are independent and autonomous. They do what they like. If they are able-bodied they continue to forage or otherwise participate in economic activities; they fetch water, visit, trade gifts,

(continued)

societies, where women have an important role in the economy. Nevertheless, many horticultural societies are patrilocal.

Patrilocal residence rules may also be adaptive in societies where males must cooperate in warfare (Ember and Ember 1971). Where fighting between

lineages or villages is common, it is useful for men who will fight together to live together. Otherwise, they might wind up having to choose between defending their wife’s local group, the one with whom they live, against the families with whom they grew up. There will be a place between societies,



Global Perspective—continued

make crafts, dance, and have valuable healing powers. The Ju/'hoansi elders live where they wish. They do not have fears of pauperization or anxieties about personal security, interpersonal violence or abuse, or being abandoned by their families. They do not talk about loneliness, and even the extremely weak are not socially segregated; they do not, as is common in the United States, see themselves as a burden, or apologize

when they can no longer provide for their own basic needs.

The Ju/'hoansi are a good example of the point we make about the paradox of the elderly: even in this society with very limited material resources, the situation of the elderly might well be envied by those in societies with a much richer material base.



Among the Ju/'hoansi, elderly people remain surrounded by kin and continue to make important contributions to community life.

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rather than within them, and where men must leave their homes to fight, cooperation among women is very important. Because common residence promotes cooperation, matrilineal residence is a functional norm when males engage in warfare that extends beyond local groups.

Residence rules and ideals of family structure are related to cultural values. However, they also grow

out of the imperatives of real life, in which individuals make choices that do not always accord with the rules. In studying marriage, the family, and households, anthropologists pay attention to both rules and realities, a dual focus that should be remembered as we study kinship systems in Chapter 9.



Summary

1. Three major functions of marriage and the family are regulating sexual access between males and females, arranging for the exchange of services between males and females, and assigning responsibility for child care.
2. Although marriage and family forms in most societies are grounded in the biological complementarity of male and female and the biological process of reproduction, there is great variation in the cultural functions of families.

- The Na of China do not traditionally practice marriage and children remain throughout their life in their mother's household, provoking the question of whether marriage is universal and whether procreation is a universal function of the family.
3. Incest taboos are prohibitions on mating between people classified as relatives. Some theories that attempt to account for the universality of such taboos are that they limit inbreeding, prevent disruption within the family, and force people to marry out of their immediate families, thus joining people into a larger social community.
 4. Exogamy is a rule that requires people to marry outside a particular group. This rule is adaptive in forging alliances between families within a society.
 5. Endogamy is a rule requiring marriage within a specified group. Its function may be to keep wealth within the group or to maintain the so-called purity of the bloodline.
 6. In many societies there are preferential rules of marriage, such as the preference for cross cousins or parallel cousins to marry, or the practice of the levirate or sororate.
 7. All societies have rules about the number of spouses one may have. Whereas the United States has a rule of monogamy (one spouse only), most of the world's societies allow some form of plural marriage (polygyny or polyandry).
 8. Polygyny is found mainly in horticultural societies but also in foraging societies, such as the Tiwi of Australia. Because Tiwi women make important contributions to the food supply, men benefit from polygyny, which is also a source of power for women, who become the center of a cohesive economic and social unit of cowives and daughters.
 9. Polyandry (one woman with several husbands) is much rarer than polygyny and occurs only in very special circumstances.
 10. In many societies, because of the substantial economic investment of kin groups in marriage, family elders have substantial or even total control over choosing their children's spouses.
 11. Marriage, a publicly sanctioned relationship, most often is legitimated by an exchange of goods between the bride's kin and the groom's kin. The most common form of exchange is bridewealth, in which the groom's kin gives various goods to the bride's kin, as among the Kipsigis of Africa.
 12. Because in most societies, males have culturally sanctioned power over females, domestic violence occurs in many societies. In the United States, where cases of domestic violence involve immigrant women, the cultural defense may be raised as an issue.
 13. There are two basic types of families: nuclear and extended. The nuclear family is organized around the tie between husband and wife (the conjugal tie) and is found predominantly in contemporary industrial societies and foraging societies. It appears to be adaptive where geographical mobility is important. The American family is changing in many ways from its ideal of a nuclear, neolocal family.
 14. The extended family predominates among cultivators. It provides a larger number of workers than does the nuclear family, and it allows land holdings to be kept intact over generations.
 15. A domestic group (or household) usually contains members of a family. The composition of households is shaped by the postmarital residence rules of a society.
 16. The most widespread rule of residence is patrilocal, which requires a wife to live with her husband's family. Matrilocal, which requires the husband to live with his wife's family, is found primarily in horticultural societies. Neolocality, in which the married couple lives independently, is found in a small number of societies, including the United States.
 17. In many societies the aged remain within their families or communities, but cross-cultural patterns show increasing variety. Important cultural factors in aging are the cultural value on independence, the economic situation of families and individuals, the advances of medical technology, and the availability of facilities of care.



Key Terms

arranged marriage	cross cousins	levirate	patrilocal residence
avunculocal residence	domestic group	marriage	polyandry
bilocal residence	(household)	matrilineage	polygamy
bride service	dowry	matrilocal residence	polygyny
bridewealth	endogamy	monogamy	sororal polygyny
composite (compound)	exogamy	neolocal residence	sororate
family	extended family	nuclear family	stem family
conjugal tie	fraternal polyandry	parallel cousins	unilineal descent
consanguineal	incest taboos	patrilineage	



Suggested Readings

- Abu-Lugod, Lila. 1993. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press. The author uses women's stories to "write against culture," breathing life and complexity into anthropological categories of polygyny, cross-cousin marriage, patrilineality, and other concepts used in studies of the Middle East.
- Kilbride, Philip L. 1994. *Plural Marriage for Our Times: A Reinvented Option?* Westport, CT: Greenwood. An exploration of new forms of plural marriage in the United States from the comparative perspective of more traditional forms of polygyny in Africa. The author suggests that plural marriage may be a viable alternative to the contemporary dissolution of families around the world.
- Mencher, Joan, and Anne Akongwu (Eds.). 1993. *Where Did All the Men Go? Female-Headed/Female-Supported Households in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Boulder, CO: Westview. An excellent collection by anthropologists and others who deal with policy issues related to female-headed households that challenge a number of myths, such as their negative effect on children.
- Sharff, Jagna Wojcicka. 1997. *King Kong on 4th Street: Families and the Violence of Poverty on the Lower East Side*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. This deeply moving book grows out of Sharff's innovative and long-term ethnography in this largely Latino but culturally mixed poor neighborhood in New York City.
- Therborn, Goran. 2003. *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900–2000*. London: Routledge. A majestic work of history and imagination, this powerful book combines theory with a

wealth of fascinating evidence on changes in family structures in every corner of the planet. Differences between cultural areas and within them highlights the complexity and diversity of the subject.

Werbner, Richard. 1991. *Tears of the Dead: The Social Biography of an African Family*. Washington, DC:

Smithsonian Institution Press. The story of an extended family, largely in their own words, from the Bango Chiefdom in Zimbabwe, which emphasizes the many strands of relationships that form the web of life in a small village community.



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Kinship



Courtesy of Tom Curtin

Ties of kinship, through descent and marriage, are important in all societies, even in complex societies like the United States where they compete with other institutional ties such as citizenship. In the United States, the annual family reunion, like that of the Tracys of Illinois, is a frequent element of the kinship pattern.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Kinship: Relationships through Blood and Marriage

Rules of Descent and the Formation of Descent Groups

Unilineal Descent Groups

Patrilineal Descent Groups

Matrilineal Descent Groups

Double Descent

Nonunilineal Kinship Systems

The Classification of Kin

Principles for Classifying Kin

Types of Kinship Terminologies

As an American woman married to a North Indian man, I (Nanda, one of this text's authors) was instructed that I must treat my husband's elder brother and his wife with respect, touching their feet when I met them and refraining from using their first names. But, I could treat my husband's younger brother and his wife with friendly informality. I can greet my husband's younger brother with an embrace and joke with him but I must never embrace my husband's elder brother, even though I like him equally well.

For more details, see "Ethnography" in this chapter on pages 247–250.

Jn American society, when you meet someone for the first time, you generally try to find some area of common interest. You may ask where the other person is from, what schools they went to, what their occupation is, or what hobbies or interests they have. You are quite unlikely to ask them the names of their grandparents, parents, and siblings. Although family is certainly important in America, most of the time we understand ourselves and each other as individuals first and family members second.

In societies traditionally studied by anthropologists, **kinship** is the most important social bond. People identify themselves first as family members, and when strangers meet they discuss their families and look for connections among them.

Although kinship systems are themselves embedded in economic systems, they have an important independent influence on behavior. Kinship is the basis of group formation, and relationships between individuals are governed mainly by kinship norms. The extension of kinship ties is the main

way of allying groups to one another and incorporating strangers into a group. In most of the world's cultures, kinship is central in determining people's rights and responsibilities.

In Western societies, other principles of social organization—such as work, citizenship, and common economic and political interests—are also important as bases for group formation and frameworks within which individual rights and obligations are articulated. This does not mean, however, that kinship is insignificant in modern industrialized societies. The nuclear family is a kin group and a core social institution in such societies, and inheritance of property is mainly along kinship lines. Larger groups of relatives also become important on various ritual occasions. For example, in the United States, those who celebrate Thanksgiving generally think of it as a family

kinship A culturally defined relationship established on the basis of blood ties or through marriage.



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holiday. A person claiming a kin relation is regarded differently from someone who is not a relative, and there is a strong sentiment that “blood is thicker than water.” Although kinship in the United States does not usually determine an individual’s choice of occupation, it does play a significant role in some important aspects of American life.

Anthropologist Jack Weatherford (1981) makes a persuasive case for the importance of kinship ties in American politics. Among the most important names in United States political history are Adams, Bush, Cabot, Gore, Kennedy, Lodge, Roosevelt and many others. Of course kinship ties are not essential to success in politics, but they can certainly help. Additionally, kin ties help Americans get into elite colleges (where “legacy” applicants often have an advantage), get preference for employment, and provide a safety net for those family members who fall on hard times. Kinship is critical to the economic structure of the United States. Studies show that intergenerational income mobility in the United States is relatively low. For most Americans, the wealth of their family of origin is a good predictor of their wealth (Mazumder 2003; Solon 1992).



Kinship: Relationships through Blood and Marriage

Kinship includes relationships established through blood, described through the idiom of blood, and relationships through marriage. In every society, the formation of groups and the regulation of behavior depend to some extent on socially recognized ties of kinship. Because the different elements of kinship such as behavior, ideology, and terminology are closely related to each other, anthropologists refer to kinship as a system. A **kinship system** includes all relationships based on blood and marriage that link people in a web of rights and obligations, the kinds of groups that may be formed in a society on the basis of kinship, and the system of terms (**kinship terminology**) used to classify different kin.

Although a kinship system always rests on some kind of biological relationship, kinship systems are cultural phenomena. The ways in which a society classifies kin are cultural; they may or may not reflect a scientifically accurate assessment of biological ties. The term for father, for example, may refer

to the child’s biological father (**genitor**), or it may refer to a man who takes on responsibility for the child’s upbringing or is socially recognized as the father (**pater**). When fatherhood is established by marriage, the “father” is the mother’s husband. In some polyandrous societies, such as the Toda of India, biological paternity is irrelevant; fatherhood is established by the performance of a ritual. In this case, social fatherhood is what counts.

Because kinship systems are cultural creations, both consanguineal relatives (those related “by blood”) and **affinal** relatives (those related by marriage) are classified in different societies in a wide variety of ways. The kinds of social groups formed by kinship and the ways in which kin are expected to behave toward one another also vary widely.

Culturally defined ties of kinship have two basic functions that are necessary for the continuation of society. First, kinship provides continuity between generations. In all societies, children must be cared for and educated so that they can become functioning members of their society. The kinship unit is fundamentally responsible for this task. A society must also provide for the orderly transmission of property and social position between generations. In most human societies, **inheritance** (the transfer of property) and **succession** (the transfer of social position) take place within kin groups.

Second, kinship defines a universe of others on whom a person can depend for aid. This universe varies widely. In Western societies, the universe of kin on whom one can depend may be smaller than in other societies, where kin groups include a wide range of relations that have significant mutual rights and obligations. The adaptiveness of social groups larger than the nuclear family accounts for the fact that expanded kin groups are found in so many human societies.

kinship system The totality of kin relations, kin groups, and terms for classifying kin in a society.

kinship terminology The words used to identify different categories of kin in a particular culture.

genitor A biological father.

pater The socially designated father of a child, who may or may not be the biological father.

affinal Relations by marriage; in-law relations.

inheritance The transfer of property between generations.

succession The transfer of office or social position between generations.



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Global Perspective

Kinship and Transmigration

Migration of people across national borders is a significant dimension of globalization. The importance of kinship in this process is apparent in the criteria by which immigration rights and citizenship are granted in most nations of the world. In the United States, for example, the priority of kinship and the cultural importance of bilateral kin relations are basic to contemporary immigration policy. In 1965, 1978, and 1990, new immigration laws abolished the discriminatory national origins quota system of the 1920s and emphasized family reunification. The current preference system, which gives highest priority to members of the nuclear family, indicates American cultural priorities: first preference is given to spouses and married and unmarried sons and daughters and their children, with a lower preference to brothers and sisters, their spouses, and their children.

Immigration policies that make it easy for kin to immigrate as well as high levels of illegal immigration (often to join family members as well) have led to a large foreign-born population in the United States. In 1970, less than 5 percent of the U.S. population was foreign born. By 1994, that number had risen to almost 9 percent and by 2003, almost 12 percent. In 2003, more than half of immigrants came from Latin America; a quarter came from Asia, almost 14 percent from Europe, and the remaining 8 percent from elsewhere in the world (Larsen 2004). The current percentage of foreign born is high compared to the era 1950 through 1980. However, it is lower than the early years of the twentieth century when almost 15 percent of Americans were foreign born (Hansen and Bachu 1995).

Communication is one critical difference between current immigration and immigration 100 years ago. In the past, most immigrants more or less severed ties with kin who stayed behind. Travel was difficult and very expensive. The only way most could keep in contact was by letters. Today, travel is relatively inexpensive and electronic communication is available at a very low price. As a result, kin are far more likely to maintain ties with their countries of origin. Not only do they travel back and forth, send e-mail, and make frequent phone calls, in many cases they also send substantial amounts of money back home. For example, according to a World Bank report, immigrants in the United States in 2001 sent \$18 billion back to individuals in their home countries. Immigrants to Saudi Arabia, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland also sent very large sums back home. These remittances help draw the economies of different countries closer together. In some cases nations depend on remittances. For example, money sent back to Nicaragua accounts for more than 15 percent of that nation's total economy.

A new term, *transmigrant*, has even been coined to refer to immigrants who maintain close relations with their home countries (Glick-Schiller 1992). Transmigrants move culture, money, and information around the world rapidly. As a result, culture is being redefined. We often think of culture as being linked to specific geographical locations. In the modern world, it often seems less related to territory and more of a portable personal possession that people carry back and forth across national boundaries.

Rules of Descent and the Formation of Descent Groups

In anthropological terminology, descent is culturally established affiliation with one or both parents. In many societies, **descent** is an important basis of social group formation. In one sense, of course, the nuclear family is a **descent group**, but here we use descent group to mean a group of consanguineal kin

who are lineal descendants of a common ancestor extending beyond two generations. Where descent groups are found, they have important functions in

descent The culturally established affiliation between a child and one or both parents.

descent group A group of kin who are descendants of a common ancestor, extending beyond two generations.



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the organization of domestic life, the enculturation of children, the use and transfer of property and political and ritual offices, the carrying out of religious ritual, the settlement of disputes, and political organization and warfare.

Two basic types of descent rules, or kinship ideology, operate in society. In a cultural system with a rule of **unilineal descent**, descent group membership is based on links through either the paternal or the maternal line, but not both. Two types of unilineal descent rules are **patrilineal descent** and **matrilineal descent**.

In societies with patrilineal descent rules, a person belongs to the descent group of his or her father. In societies with matrilineal descent rules, a person belongs to the descent group of the mother. In societies with a system of bilateral descent, both maternal and paternal lines are used as the basis for reckoning descent and for establishing the rights and obligations of kinship. A major distinction between systems of unilineal and bilateral descent is that in unilineal kinship systems kin groups do not overlap. In bilateral kin systems, they do. For example, consider your father's brother's children. In the American bilateral kinship system, they are your cousins, and therefore members of your kin. However, they are equally related to their mother's family, but this family is unlikely to be kin to you. If the system was patrilineal, your father's brother's children would be kin to you, but not to their mother's family. Thus, their kinship would not overlap. If all families had the same number of children, more people would be kin in a bilateral system than in a unilineal system. However, because kinship is overlapping in a bilateral system, people in a unilineal system would be bound more tightly to each other than those in a bilateral system. Most societies throughout the world have unilineal kinship. However, because bilateral kinship is common in industrial societies (particularly Western industrial societies), many of the world's people practice bilateral kinship.

The frequency of unilineal descent in the world's cultures reflects two major advantages. First, unilineal rules result in the formation of nonoverlapping descent groups that can perpetuate themselves over time even though their membership changes (as modern corporations can). Corporate descent groups are permanent units that have an existence beyond the individuals who are members at any given time. Old members die and new ones are ad-

mitted through birth, but the integrity of the corporate group persists. Such groups may own property and manage resources (just as a modern corporation does). Second, unilineal rules provide unambiguous group membership for everyone in the society. Where descent is traced through only one line, group membership is easily and clearly defined. By knowing the descent group to which they belong and the descent group of others, people can be sure of their rights of ownership, social duties, and social roles. They can also easily relate to a large number of known and unknown people in the society.

Although systems of unilineal descent share certain basic similarities throughout the world, they do not operate exactly the same way in every society. In addition, actual behavior in any society does not correspond exactly to the rules as they are defined in the kinship ideology. Systems of descent and kinship are basically a means by which a society relates to its environment and circumstances. As conditions change, the rules of kinship, like other cultural ideals, are bent and manipulated so that a group may be successful in its environment. The accepted departures from the norm that exist in every society give unilineal systems a flexibility they would otherwise lack—a flexibility necessary for human adaptation.

Anthropologists have offered a number of explanations for the evolution of unilineal descent groups. The common interests that cause people to join together and define themselves as a collective entity justified by kin relations are very diverse. These interests may be economic, such as land or cattle or gardens; they may be political or religious; or they may involve warfare within the society or with other societies. Kinship ideologies, which grow out of these varied common interests, take on a life of their own. With changing economic and historical circumstances, however, kinship ideologies can be manipulated and negotiated to fit new realities.



Unilineal Descent Groups

A group of kin whose members trace descent from a common ancestor and who can demonstrate those genealogical links among themselves is called a **lineage**. Lineages formed by descent through the male line are called **patrilineages**. Lineages formed by descent through the female line are called **matrilineages**.

eages. Lineages may vary in size, from three generations upward. Where lineages own land collectively and where the members are held responsible for one another's behavior, the lineage is considered a corporate group.

Related lineages may form **clans**. The common clan ancestor may be a mythological figure; sometimes, no specific ancestor is known or named. A **phratry** is a unilineal descent group composed of a number of clans who feel themselves to be closely related. Clans are often named and may have a **totem**—a feature of the natural environment with which they are closely identified and toward which the clan members behave in a special way.

Clans and lineages have different functions in different societies. The lineage is often a local residential or domestic group whose members cooperate on a daily basis. Clans are generally not residential units but tend to spread out over many villages. Therefore, clans often have political and religious functions rather than primarily domestic and economic ones.

One of the most important functions of a clan is to regulate marriage. In most societies, clans are exogamous. The prohibition against marriage within the clan strengthens its unilineal character. If a person married within the clan, his or her children would find it difficult to make sharp distinctions between maternal and paternal relatives. Robert H. Lowie (1948:237) wrote of the Crow Indians of North America, among whom clans are very important, that in case of marriage within the clan, “a Crow . . . loses his bearings and perplexes his tribesmen. For he owes specific obligations to his father's relatives and others to his mother's, who are now hopelessly confounded. The sons of his father's clan ought to be censors; but now the very same persons are his joking relatives and his clan.” Not only would this person not know how to act toward others, but others would not know how to act toward him. Clan exogamy also extends the network of peaceful social relations within a society as different clans are allied through marriage.

Patrilineal Descent Groups

In societies with patrilineal descent groups, a person (whether male or female) belongs to the descent group of the father, the father's father, and so on (see Figure 9.1). Thus, a man, his sisters and brothers, his brother's children (but not his sister's children), his own children, and his son's children

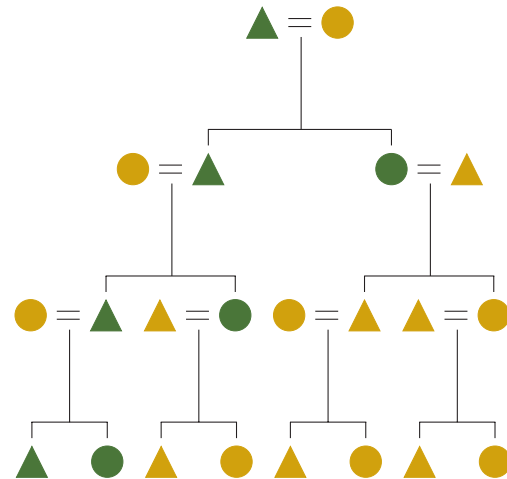


Figure 9.1

Membership in a patrilineal descent group. In societies with patrilineal descent groups, membership is based on links through the father only. Sons and daughters are members of their father's descent group (shown in dark green), as are the children of the sons, but not of daughters.

(but not his daughter's children) all belong to the same group. Inheritance moves from father to son, as does succession to office.

The Nuer, a pastoral people who live in the Sudan in East Africa, are a patrilineal society. Among the Nuer, all rights, privileges, obligations, and interpersonal relationships are regulated by kinship; one is

unilineal descent A rule specifying that membership in a descent group is based on links through either the maternal or the paternal line, but not both.

patrilineal descent A rule that affiliates a person to kin of both sexes related through males only.

matrilineal descent A rule that affiliates a person to kin of both sexes related through females only.

lineage A group of kin whose members trace descent from a known common ancestor.

patrilineage A lineage formed by descent in the male line.

matrilineage A lineage formed by descent in the female line.

clan A unilineal kinship group whose members believe themselves to be descended from a common ancestor but who cannot trace this link through known relatives.

phratry A unilineal descent group composed of a number of clans whose members feel themselves to be closely related.

totem An animal, plant, or other aspect of the natural world held to be ancestral or to have other intimate relationships with members of a group.

either a kinsman or an enemy. Membership in a patrilineal descent group is the most significant fact of life, and the father, his brothers, and their children are considered the closest kin. Membership in the patrilineage confers rights to land, requires participation in certain religious ceremonies, and determines political and judicial obligations, such as making alliances in feuds and warfare.

The patrilineage has important political functions among the Nuer. Lineage membership may spread over several villages and thus help create alliances between otherwise independent villages that contain members of several different lineages. Each Nuer clan, which is viewed as composed of related lineages, not individuals, is also spread over several villages. Because a person cannot marry someone from within his or her own lineage or clan, or from the lineage of the mother, kinship relations extend widely throughout the tribe. In the absence of a centralized system of political control, these kinship-based alliances are an important mechanism of governance. Because the Nuer believe that kin should not fight with one another, disputes within the lineage or clan tend to be kept small and settled rapidly (Evans-Pritchard 1968/1940). However, because all who are not in some way kin are enemies, an attack on one lineage segment may cause all members of a clan to coalesce against a common enemy (Sahlins 1961).

The degree to which a woman is incorporated into the patrilineage of her husband and the de-

gree of autonomy she has vary in different societies. In some cases a woman may retain rights of inheritance in her father's lineage. In general, however, in a patrilineal system great care is taken to guarantee the husband's rights and control over his wife (or wives) and children because the continuity of the descent group depends on this. Patrilineal systems most often have patrilocal rules of residence, so a wife may find herself living among strangers, which tends to undermine female solidarity and support.

Anthropologists have recently begun to focus on the complexity and conflict present within patrilineal families, and in particular on understanding women's roles in kin groups dominated by men. Lila Abu-Lughod's (1993) analysis of families in the Arab world is a good example. Such women have often been portrayed in terms of the kinship patterns of patrilineality, polygyny, and patrilateral parallel-cousin marriage. Analyses have focused on issues of honor and shame, with honor revolving around the male's ability to protect the sexuality of women in his family. According to Abu-Lughod, these generalizations gloss over many of the conflicts, doubts, and arguments of life as it is really lived. They portray life as timeless, ignoring changing motivations and historical circumstances. Abu-Lughod challenges these static pictures by analyzing the stories Bedouin women tell about themselves: women who refuse their family's choice of a spouse, women who get along (or don't) with their cowives, women who are sometimes disappointed in their sons, women who assert themselves against their husband's wishes; in short, women who rebel against the norms of their society in small and sometimes effective ways. The importance of family stories as a way of challenging a static picture of societies dominated by rigid kinship rules is illustrated in the accompanying "A Closer Look" box about a conflict over inheritance in a family in a Korean village.



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Patrilineal extended families, such as this one in Jordan, emphasize consanguineal relationships in the male line.

Matrilineal Descent Groups

Two fundamental ties recognized by every society are that between a woman and her children and that between siblings (brothers and sisters). In patrilineal societies, the most important source of male authority and control is the man's position as father and husband; in matrilineal societies, the most important male position is that of the mother's brother. In a matrilineal system, a man



A Closer Look

Rules and Realities: Conflict over Inheritance in a Korean Village

The classic anthropological picture of kinship in East Asian villages has been dominated by a focus on the rules of patrilineality, primogeniture (the eldest son inherits all of his father's property), seniority, Confucian ethics, and patriarchal authority. This emphasis on rules leaves little room for understanding the realities of family dynamics as they adapt to changing circumstances.

In Korea, as elsewhere, people manipulate kinship rules for their own advantage. Inheritance and succession to family headship are contested as family members try to ensure that their contributions are acknowledged and rewarded in a material way. Occasions on which family property is divided are particularly important occasions when the balance of credits and debts among family members is reckoned.

According to the local rules of inheritance in Pine Tree, a Korean village studied by anthropologist Soo Ho Choi, the eldest son gets the lion's share of his family's property, including his parents' house and more than half their land. In return, the heir is perpetually obligated to care for his elderly parents and worship them as ancestors after their deaths. The ancestor worship includes a man's parents and the three preceding generations of lineal ancestors.

However, the realities of contemporary life make it necessary to circumvent these rules in many cases. Most Pine Tree families are so poor that there is not enough property to divide so that any one child will significantly benefit. Sometimes the family property has been acquired through the financial contributions of several family members. When the family property is divided, these people will claim a larger share of the property than the rule of primogeniture would normally allot them. Also, the important Korean value of *chong*, or compassionate generosity, requires elder sons to provide for their younger siblings by contributing to their marriages, education, and living expenses. Any elder son who does not do so faces strong community disapproval. Finally, education can be an important factor.

In contemporary Korea, many families spend considerable sums educating one son in the city, a substantial expense for any peasant family. The poverty of many Korean villages and the pull of industrialization in Korean cities have made education in the city a respected alternative to remaining on the farm. Education is highly valued in Korea for both its traditional importance in Confucian ethics and its pragmatic value; it is also a source of pride to a Korean family to have a highly educated son. However, the high cost of education can be a source of conflict because the money spent on one child's education may be resented by his siblings, who experience his success as having taken place at their expense. This may be exacerbated by a feeling that favoritism plays a role in which son is chosen to be educated. Siblings also resent being left with the economically unrewarding burden of farming, as well as the burdens of ancestor worship and other lineage and village responsibilities. On their father's death, therefore, siblings may try to exclude the educated son from inheriting any family property.

Inheritance rules are also complicated by the status of women, who are legally entitled to an equal share of a family's property. In Pine Tree, however, a daughter's right to family property is considered terminated if her family has given her extensive gifts of cash, furniture, cloth, and jewelry on her marriage. Although a woman who has received such gifts is discouraged from claiming her legal share of family property, many women do make such claims. Contrary to stereotypes, Korean village women are not unassertive. They often participate in the rituals of ancestor worship (formally a male prerogative), which gives them a strong basis for claiming family property. These claims, too, may lead to conflict between brothers and sisters.

A case study of one family in Pine Tree illustrates many of these conflicting claims. In this family, Sungjo, a frail child who had one brother and two sisters, was his mother's favorite. Because of Sungjo's frailty, he would not be much use as a farmer, and his mother was determined to have



A Closer Look—continued

him educated in the city. She finally persuaded her husband to sell one-third of their land to finance Sungjo's education. The sale was opposed by his siblings, who now had to work much harder to compensate for the lost income. To earn additional cash, the women family members wove cotton and silk cloth, and Sungjo's elder brother collected and sold natural lacquer extracted from the woods in the nearby mountains.

After Sungjo's graduation from the university, he was employed by a big corporation and lived in Seoul in comfort. From his family's perspective, he neglected those left behind in the village. When his elder brother and one sister died young, their children attributed it to the sacrifices they had made for Sungjo's education. The elder brother, Sungman, had no sons. According to the cultural rules, his wife should have adopted Sungjo's oldest son as her heir, entitling this boy to perform the ancestral rites and ultimately inherit Sungman's property. But Sungman's wife refused to do this and performed the ancestor rites herself. When she became senile, her eldest daughter took over the performance of these rites and claimed the heir's right to Sungman's property. Sungjo opposed this claim and, after eight years of wrangling, finally prevailed in having his eldest son adopted by Sungman's family. Two years later, Sungman's wife died, and his daughter continued to perform the ancestor rites, although her claim to her parents' property was considerably weakened. As a married daughter, she was no longer considered part of her father's lineage, but that of her husband, and she had neither legal nor cultural support for her claims. Sungjo's eldest sister, who

stood to gain more from Sungjo's management of the property than that of her niece, allied with Sungjo to wrest the property from Sungman's daughter.

As stated earlier, one of the most important functions of kinship rules is to smooth the transfer of office and property between generations. The rules are important, but they are not inviolable. As Sungjo's family history illustrates, cultural rules may be broken to satisfy the demands of changing social circumstances. Conflicting claims based on specific circumstances and individual experiences compete with shared cultural rules and values, and may play decisive roles in family succession and inheritance.

Social institutions and cultural ideologies are closely intertwined. Basic to these interrelationships are economic systems, which include access to production, wealth, and property. There are no cultures where people always behave as they are supposed to, as the rules tell them to behave. However, as economic systems change, people's actual behavior tends to depart more frequently from the rules. When there is rapid economic change, as in Korea, exceptions to the rules become more and more common. Under the pressure of changing economic realities and behavioral adjustments, kinship systems, the rules themselves, may also change, but they tend to change much more slowly than behavior.

Source: Adapted by permission of the author and publisher from Soo Ho Choi, "The Struggle for Family Succession and Inheritance in a Rural Korean Village," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 1995, 51:329–346.

gains sexual and economic rights over a woman when he marries her, but he does not gain rights over her children. Children belong to the mother's descent group, not the father's, and many rights and responsibilities belong not to him but to the woman's brother. The membership of a matrilineal descent group (see Figure 9.2) consists of a woman, her brothers and sisters, her sisters' (but not her

brothers') children, her own children, and the children of her daughters (but not of her sons).

Matrilineal systems tend to be correlated with a matrilineal rule of residence: a man goes to live with or near his wife's kin after marriage. This means that in the domestic group, the man is among strangers, whereas his wife is surrounded by her kin. The son usually stays in the household is

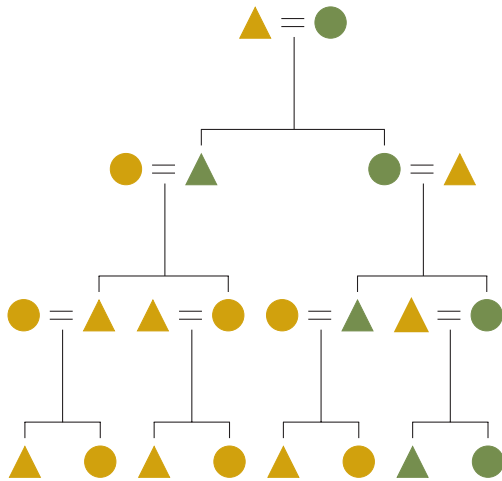


Figure 9.2
Membership in a matrilineal descent group. In a society with matrilineal descent groups, membership in the group is defined by links through the mother. Sons and daughters are members of their mother's descent group, as are the children of daughters, but not the children of sons.

less important in a matrilineal system than in a patrilineal one, and marriages in matrilineal societies tend to be less stable than those in other systems. As we saw among the Nayar of India, it is possible for a matrilineally organized group to do away with the presence of husbands and fathers altogether, as long as there are brothers who assume responsibilities. It is important to remember that although women usually have higher status in societies where there is a matrilineal reckoning of descent; matrilineality is not the same as matriarchy, in which the formal positions of power are held by women. With a few possible exceptions (A. Wallace 1970), the most important resources and highest political positions in matrilineal societies are in the control of males, although the male with the most power and control in these societies is not the husband (father) but the brother (uncle). The role of the mother's brother is an important or special one even in patrilineal societies, but in matrilineal societies it is particularly important. The mother's brother is a figure of authority and respect, and the children of a man's sister, rather than his own, are his heirs and successors.

In a matrilineal society, the relationship between a man and his son is likely to be affectionate and loving because it is free of the problems of authority and control that exist between fathers and sons

in a patrilineal society. A man may feel emotionally close to his sons, but he is committed to pass on his knowledge, property, and offices to the sons of his sister. With his nephews he may have less friendly relations or even conflicts because they are subject to his control. Thus, in a matrilineal system a man's loyalties are split between his own sons and the sons of his sister; in a patrilineal system, this tension does not occur as part of the kinship structure.

The Hopi, a Pueblo group in the American Southwest, are a matrilineal society. The matrilineage is conceived of as timeless, stretching backward to the beginnings of the Hopi people and continuing into the future. Both male and female members of the lineage consider their mother's house their home, but men move out to live with their wives after marriage. They return to this home for many ritual and ceremonial occasions, however, and also in the case of separation or divorce. The relationship of a man with his father's lineage and household is affectionate, involving some economic and ritual obligations but little direct cooperation or authority.

The Hopi household revolves around a central and continuing core of women. The mother-daughter relationship is an exceedingly close one, based on blood ties, common activities, and life-long residence together. A mother is responsible for the economic and ritual training of her daughters. The daughter behaves with respect, obedience, and affection to her mother and normally lives with her mother and mother's sisters after marriage. A mother also has a close relationship with her sons, although a son moves to his wife's home after marriage. A son belongs to his mother's lineage and keeps much of his personal and ritual property in her home. A son shows respect for his mother as head of the household and consults her on all important decisions.

The strongest and most permanent tie in Hopi society is between sisters. The foundation of the household group is the relation of sisters to one another and to their mother. The children of sisters are raised together; if one sister dies, another looks after her children. Sisters cooperate in all domestic tasks. There are usually few quarrels, and when they occur, they are settled by the mother's brother or their own brothers.

As in all matrilineal societies, a man's relationship to his sister's sons is very important. As head of his sister's lineage and household, a Hopi man is in a position of authority and control. He is the chief



The Hopi family is matrilineal and revolves around a core of women. A husband moves to his wife's household, in which he has important economic responsibilities but few ritual obligations. The most important male role in Hopi society, as in other matrilineal societies, is a man's relation to his sister's son, and a man retains authority and leadership in his natal household even after he marries.

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disciplinarian and has the primary responsibility for the important task of transmitting the ritual heritage of the lineage and clan. He is consulted in the choice of a spouse, instructs his nephews in the proper behavior toward his new relatives, and formally welcomes his niece's husband into the household. A man usually selects his most capable nephew as his successor and trains him in the duties of whatever ceremonial position he may hold. Boys may fear their maternal uncles as sources of power and authority.

Hopi husbands have important economic functions but do not participate in the matrilineage ritual. They may be peripheral in their wives' households, having not only divided residences but divided loyalties. A Hopi father's obligations to his sons are primarily economic. He prepares them to make a living by teaching them to farm and herd

sheep. At a son's marriage, a father often presents him with a portion of the flock and a small piece of land. The economic support a son receives from his father is returned in the father's old age, when he is supported by his sons.

Whereas a boy's relationship with his maternal uncle is characterized by reserve, respect, and even fear, his relationship with his father is more affectionate and involves little discipline. A Hopi man's relationship with his daughter is also generally affectionate but not close, and he has few specific duties in regard to her upbringing.

In addition to matrilineages, the Hopi also have matrilineal clans that extend over many different villages. A Hopi man must not marry within his own clan or the clan of his father or his mother's father. Through marriage a Hopi man acquires a wide range of relationships in addition to those results

ing from his membership in his mother's clan. Kinship terms are extended to all these people, leading to a vast number of potential sibling relationships and the lateral integration of a great number of separate lineages and clans. This extension of kinship relates a Hopi in some way to almost everyone in the village, in other villages, and even to people in other Pueblo groups who have similar clans. In the clans, men play important political and religious roles, in contrast to the marginal positions they have in domestic life (Eggan 1950).

Double Descent

When descent is traced through a combination of matrilineal and patrilineal principles, the system is referred to as **double descent**. Double descent systems occur in only 5 percent of the world's cultures. In these societies, a person belongs both to the patrilineal group of the father and to the matrilineal group of the mother, but these descent groups operate in different areas of life.

The Yako of Nigeria have a system of double descent (Forde 1950). Cooperation in daily domestic life is strongest among patrilineally related kinsmen, who live with or near one another and jointly control and farm plots of land. Membership in the patrilin is the source of rights over farmland and forest products. One obligation of the patrilin is to provide food at funerals. Membership in the men's associations and the right to fruit trees are inherited through the male line. The arbitration of disputes is in the hands of senior patrilin members. Cooperation in ritual and succession to some religious offices are also derived from patrilin membership.

Matrilineal bonds and clan membership are also important in Yako society, even though matrilineal members do not live near one another and do not cooperate as a group in everyday activities. The rights and duties of matrilineal kinship are different from those of patrilineal kinship. Practical assistance to matrilineal kin, the rights and obligations of the mother's brother and sons, and the authority of the priest of a matrilineal clan are based on mystical ideas regarding the perpetuation and tranquility of the Yako world. The Yako believe that the fertility of crops, beasts, and humans, and peace between individuals and within the community are associated with and passed on through women. Life comes from the mother. The children of one mother are bound to mutual support and peaceful

relations. The matrilineage is thus held together by mystical bonds of common fertility, and anger and violence between its members are considered sinful. These sentiments are reinforced in the cult of the matrilineal spirits, whose priests are ritually given the qualities of women.

Despite their isolation from one another by the rule of patrilocal residence, matrilineal relatives have specific mutual obligations. Rights in the transfer of accumulated wealth, but not land, belong to the matrilineal kinship group. The members of a matrilineal supervise a funeral and arrange for the disposal of the dead person's personal property. All currency and livestock customarily pass to matrilineal relatives, who also receive the greater share of tools, weapons, and household goods. The movable property of women passes to their daughters. Matrilineals are responsible for the debts of their kin, for making loans to one another at reasonable rates, and for providing part of the bridewealth transferred at the marriage of a sister's son.

Thus, for the Yako, paternity and maternity are both important in descent. Each contains different qualities from which flow the rights, obligations, and benefits, both practical and spiritual, that bind people to one another and ensure the continuity of the society.



Nonunilineal Kinship Systems

About 40 percent of the world's societies are structured around kinship systems that are described as **nonunilineal**, or **cognatic**. These systems are further divided into bilateral and ambilineal descent. In systems of **bilateral descent**, an individual is considered to be related equally to other kin through both the mother's and the father's side. In a unilineal kinship

double descent The tracing of descent through both matrilineal and patrilineal links, each of which is used for different purposes.

nonunilineal descent Any system of descent in which both father's and mother's lineages have equal claim to the individual.

cognatic descent Any nonunilineal system of descent.

bilateral descent System of descent under which individuals are equally affiliated with their mothers' and their fathers' descent groups.



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system, an individual is formally affiliated with a large number of relations extended lineally through time, but only on one side of the family; in a system of bilateral descent, both maternal and paternal lines are used in reckoning descent, in establishing the rights and obligations of kinship, and in forming social groups. Bilateral kinship systems appear to be particularly adaptive in societies where mobility and independence are important. They are basic to Western culture, including the United States, and predominate among foraging societies as well.

The people linked by bilateral kin networks are called a **kindred**. A kindred is not a group, but rather a network of relations with a single group of siblings at the center. With the exception of brothers and sisters, every individual's kindred is different from every other individual's. Kindreds are actually overlapping categories of kin, rather than social groups, and are more difficult to organize as cooperative, kin-based collectivities. For example, because it is not a group but rather an Ego-centered network, it cannot own land or have continuity over time.

In an ambilineal system, individuals may choose to affiliate with either their mother's or their father's descent group, but not simultaneously with both. The groups that result are called **rammages**. **Ambilineal descent** is found in many Pacific Island societies. In these, at marriage, the new couple chooses to live with and identify with either spouse's descent group. Generally, which descent group a couple chooses depends on a variety of factors. The most important of these is probably access to land, a resource in particularly short supply on many Pacific Islands, but friendships and politics also play important roles in such identification. One interesting aspect of ambilineal kinship is that the ancestors of a child might be quite different from the ancestors of his or her parents.



The Classification of Kin

In all societies, kin are referred to by special terms. The total system of kinship terms and the rules for using these terms make up a kinship classification system. In every system of kinship terminology, some relatives are classed together (referred to by the same kinship term), whereas other relatives are differentiated from each other (called by different terms). Kinship systems vary in the degree to which they have different kinship terms for different rela-

tives. Some kinship systems have only a small number of kinship terms, whereas others have a different term for almost every relative.

The ways in which kin are classified are associated with the roles they play in society. If a person refers to his father and his father's brothers by the same term, the social roles he plays with respect to these individuals will tend to be similar. By the same token, if he uses one term to refer to his father and another to refer to his father's brothers, there will probably be a difference in behavior as well. He will probably behave one way to his father and a different way to his father's brothers. For example, in our society, my mother-in-law and my mother's brother's wife are both relations by marriage. However, I distinguish only one of them terminologically: I have a mother and a mother-in-law, but my mother's sister and my mother's brother's wife are both my aunts. Given this, an anthropologist would expect that my behavior toward my mother would be different than my behavior toward my mother-in-law, but my behavior toward my mother's brother's wife and my mother's sister would be about the same. Of course, although kinship terms refer to behavioral expectations, actual behavior is modified by individual personality differences and special circumstances.

Understanding kinship classification systems is not just an interesting anthropological game. Kinship classification is one of the important regulators of behavior in most societies, outlining each person's rights and obligations and specifying the ways in which a person must act toward others and they toward him or her. Kinship classification systems are also related to other aspects of culture: the types of social groups that are formed, the systems of marriage and inheritance, and even deeper and broader cultural values. The "Ethnography" box on pages 247–250 shows how the differences in kinship classification systems between North America and North India reflect many other cultural patterns in those two societies.

kindred A unique kin network made up of all the people related to a specific individual in a bilateral kinship system.

rammage A kinship group produced by an ambilineal descent system.

ambilineal descent A form of bilateral descent in which an individual may choose to affiliate with either the father's or mother's descent group.



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Ethnography

Kinship Classification Systems in Action: A Comparison between North America and North India

As an anthropologist, I (Nanda, one of this text's authors) have had the traditional professional interest in kinship classification systems. As an American woman married to a man from North India, however, I have had a more personal interest in understanding how the principles of classification in my culture differ from those of my husband's culture. In order for me to behave properly with the members of my husband's family, I had to learn each of the North Indian kinship terms and the expected behaviors associated with them. At first, I made a lot of mistakes, but as I continued to meet new family members I learned to ask the relevant questions about their relationship so that I could act appropriately. My anthropological experience in making and interpreting kinship diagrams was very helpful in this respect.

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A comparison of kinship terms in India and the United States shows that one immediately apparent difference between the North American and North Indian kinship classification systems is the number of terms. North India has 45 different terms, compared with only 22 in the United States. This is because the North Indian system distinguishes several kinds of kin that North Americans group together. Although my husband also had to learn a new kinship classification system, it was easier for him because of the smaller number of categories of relatives and the correspondingly greater flexibility in behavior that is acceptable in North America. For me, learning the many different North Indian kinship terms and the many corresponding rules of kinship behavior seemed quite a burden. But when I understood the cultural patterns on which these terms and rules of behavior were based, they made more sense to me. I could more easily fit new rela-



tives into the system, and act accordingly.

Many of the North Indian cultural patterns that underlie kinship terminology are based on the importance of the patrilineal, patrilocal extended family (the importance of the male principle in inheritance and seniority); the lower status of the family of the bride compared to that of the groom; the obligations a male child has toward his parents, including the specific ritual obligations of the eldest son; and the ritual roles played by various kin in life-

cycle ceremonies such as marriage and funerals. These patterns are based on two major principles of Indian culture and social organization: hierarchy and the importance of the group. The contrasting Western values of equality, individualism, and the nuclear family are expressed in North American kinship terminology.

The principle of relative age, which is an aspect of hierarchy, is critical in the Indian kinship system but absent in North America. Thus, my husband uses different terms to refer to his father's elder brother (*tau*) and his father's younger brother (*chacha*), and this carries over to their wives; his father's elder brother's wife is *tai* and his father's younger brother's wife is *chachi*. This terminological difference reflects the respect attached to seniority. My relationship with my husband's brothers and their wives is also regulated by this principle of seniority. I was instructed that my husband's elder brother is my *jait* and his wife is my *jaitani*. I must treat both of them with deference, similar to that shown to my father-in-law, by adding the suffix *-ji* to their kinship terms, touching their feet when I meet them, and refraining from using their first names. But my husband's younger brother, who is my *deva*, and his wife, who is my *devrani*, may be treated with the friendly informality more



Ethnography—continued

characteristic of sister and brother-in-law relations in the United States. On our trips back to India, I can greet my husband's younger brother with an embrace and talk with him in a joking, familiar manner, but I must never embrace my husband's elder brother, even though I feel equally friendly toward him and like him equally well. Because Indians understand that Americans are generally friendly people who do not recognize these status differences in their own culture, my husband's relatives were very tolerant of my sometimes forgetful lack of deference. For an Indian woman, however, such lapses would be much more serious, and her relations with her husband's elder and younger brothers would be much more strictly differentiated. Indeed, were I an Indian woman, out of respect for the principle of hierarchy, I would probably have to cover my hair, if not my face, in the presence of both my father-in-law and my husband's elder brother.

A second principle that complicates the Indian kinship system from the point of view of a Westerner is the Indian differentiation of kin according to whether they are from the mother's side or the father's side of the family. This principle of bifurcation is absent in English kinship terminology. In North India, the father's brothers and the mother's brothers are called by different terms, as are the father's and mother's parents: *Dadi* and *dada* are the grandparents on the father's side, and *nani* and *nana* are the grandparents on the mother's side. These distinctions reflect the Indian principle of respect and formality associated with the male side of the family and the more open show of affection permitted with the maternal side of the family.

In India, social interaction with one's mother's parents is very different from that with one's father's parents. Ideally the Indian household is based on the patrilineal joint family, composed of a man, his brothers, his father, and his sons. Thus, a son interacts with his father's parents on an everyday basis, whereas his mother's parents live some distance away. Visiting his mother's parents is more like an exciting pleasure trip, and increased

fondness and absence of conflict seem to come with distance. Because the parents are expected to give gifts to their daughter and her husband when she visits their home, they also extend this gift giving to her children, who thus have an additional reason to look forward to such visits.

The patrilineal joint family structure also accounts for another terminological difference between India and the United States: the Indian grouping together of kin that Americans distinguish. In order to highlight the importance of the nuclear family in the United States, the American kinship system distinguishes between siblings (brothers and sisters) and cousins, both of which are collateral relations. But in India this distinction is not made. There is no word for cousin, and what Americans call cousins Indians refer to by the terms for brother and sister.

The Indian principles of hierarchy and patriarchy turn up again in the higher status accorded the family of the husband's relatives. This status inequality is reflected in a number of ways in Indian kinship terminology and behavior, such as the distinction between Ego's wife's brother (*sala*) and his sister's husband (*jija*). Both relations are called *brother-in-law* in the English system, reflecting the general equality in North America of the husband's and wife's sides of the family. In India, a man's sister's husband is in a higher position relative to him than is his wife's brother. Correspondingly, a sister's husband is treated with great respect, whereas a wife's brother may be treated more ambivalently and may be the target of jokes. The behavioral expectations of this unequal relationship between the bride's and groom's families extend even further. When my husband's sister's husband's sister's husband first visited our home, we treated him with the extra respect due to a man who had taken a "daughter" from our family (the "daughter" referring to both my husband's sister and her husband's sister).

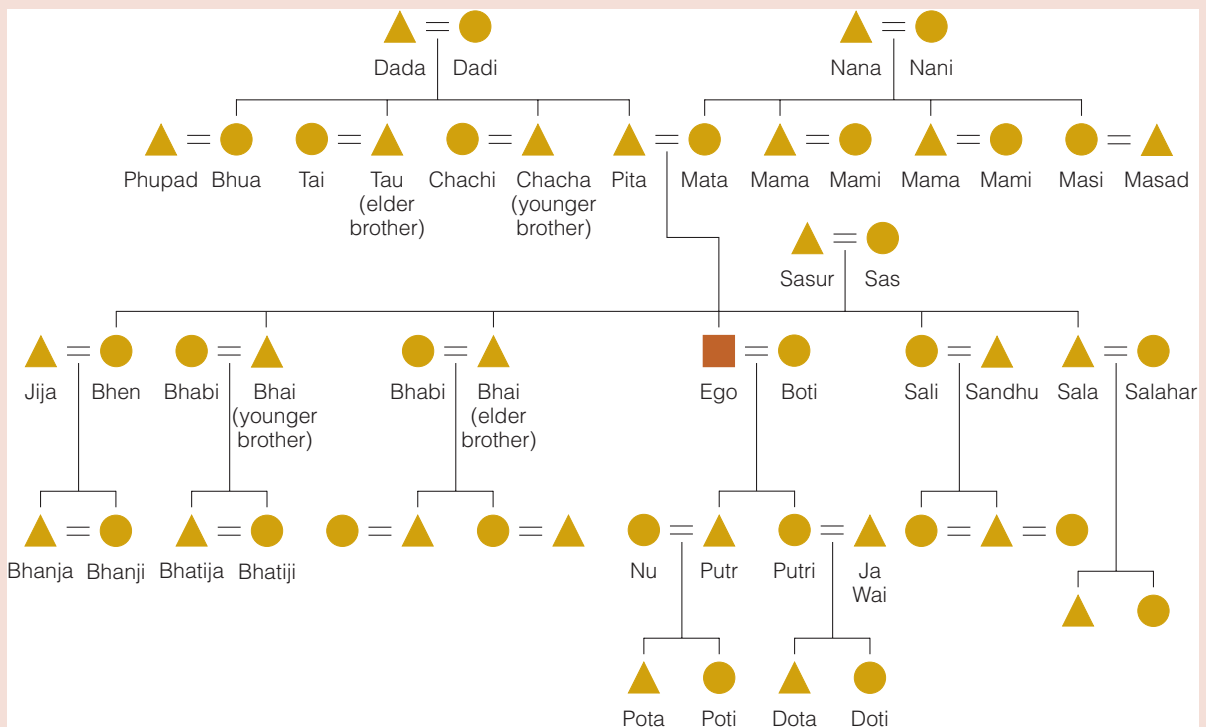
A last example of the importance of kinship terminology in regulating behavior involves the ritual role that different relatives take in life-cycle ceremonies, a form of behavior familiar in the United

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States. For example, in the United States, a woman’s father often accompanies her down the aisle when she marries. In India, the marriage ceremony is much more complex. Each part of the ceremony involves a person in a specific kinship relation to the groom or bride, reflecting all of the important principles by which kin are classified there: relative age, lineality, collaterality, bifurcation, gender, generation, consanguinity, and affinity. Thus, when my husband’s sister’s son got married, my husband, as the brother of the groom’s mother, tied the turban on the groom. However, when my husband’s sister’s daughter marries, he, as the mother’s brother, will give her the ivory and red bangle bracelets that she will wear for a year and the special piece of red cloth that is used in the marriage ceremony. These ritu-

als are concrete symbolic expressions of the continuing warmth and support a girl can expect to find among her mother’s male kin, a very important expectation in a culture where a woman is otherwise separated from her own family and incorporated into her husband’s family household. This ritual role of the mother’s brother in an Indian marriage ceremony also symbolizes the very important kinship tie in India between brother and sister, which is ritually affirmed every year. These rituals, like other aspects of culture involving kinship, reflect the underlying values of a society.

The kinship and other cultural rules that structure relationships between kin in North India, like those in the Korean village, are important. But their functions in guiding behavior, just like their functions in succession and inheritance described for



Kinship classification in North India: terms of reference. *Note:* There is no term for a man’s nieces and nephews on his wife’s side. They are referred to descriptively as wife’s sister’s daughters or sons. Not shown on the diagram are the terms a wife uses for her husband’s sister, her husband’s sister’s husband, her husband’s elder brother, his wife, her husband’s younger brother, and his wife, which adds six terms to the 39 used by male Ego.



Ethnography—continued

Korea, are resisted and manipulated in response to pragmatic interest, social circumstances, and emotion. Many members of my husband's family have migrated to the United States, and this has brought a closeness between our families that has lessened the social distance required by the kinship rules. Contesting claims over family property has also led to some alliances within the family that contrast with cultural rules about seniority and patriarchal power. Illness of some family members has also directed the flow of resources in directions not covered, and even in opposition to, kinship rules governing reciprocity.

In short, as close examination of kinship in any society reveals, our understanding of culture

and society must be based not just on the “rules of the game” but also the realities of the strategies all people use to negotiate their adaptation to life's contingencies.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What are the major differences between the kinship systems of North India and the United States?
2. What kinds of behavior in the United States are based on kinship relations and kinship ideology?

In addition to informing us about the behavior of people in other societies, the study of kinship systems goes to a fundamental point of anthropology. Most Americans consider it normal and natural to use our kin system. We “automatically” call our parents' brothers and sisters “aunt” and “uncle” and their children “cousin.” We feel that this represents an obvious underlying biological reality and find it hard to understand how other people could use different systems. We tend to ignore questions our system raises, such as why we use the same word for our mothers' sister, and our mother's brother's wife, a relative by marriage, or why there are no separate terms for male and female cousins but we do differentiate nieces from nephews. This points to a basic fact: kinship systems use the metaphor of biology, but they are social systems, not biological ones. The systems used by other societies feel as natural to their members as ours does to us.

Principles for Classifying Kin

Kinship can be described using a series of abstract, logical principles. The interesting thing is that the combination of these principles results in kinship systems that are extremely logical, yet very different from our own. Societies differ in the categories of relatives they distinguish and the principles by which

kin are classified. To understand the rules by which kin are classified, we must first establish the position of the individual from whose perspective the system is seen. We refer to this person as “Ego.” For example, if you were to describe your family from your perspective (I have three siblings, two aunts and uncles on my mother's side...) you would be “Ego.” If you were to do the same thing from your cousin's perspective, then he or she would be “Ego.” Once we have established Ego, we can examine how different categories of kin are grouped and distinguished according to the following seven principals.

Generation The generation principle distinguishes ascending and descending generations from Ego. For example, in English we call relatives in the parental generation by such terms as aunt or uncle, and kin in the descending generation nephew or niece.

Relative Age A kinship system that uses the relative age principle has different kinship terms for one's older brother and one's younger brother, for example. English kinship terminology does not recognize this principle.

Lineality versus Collaterality Kin related in a single line (such as grand-uncle—father—son), are

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called **lineal kin**. **Collateral kin** are descended from a common ancestor with Ego but are not Ego's direct ascendants or descendants. For example, brothers and sisters (siblings) and cousins are collateral kin. They are descended from the same ancestors but are not in a direct ascendant or descendant line. In many societies, collaterality is not distinguished in the kinship terminology. Ego may refer to both his father and father's brother as father. Both the mother and her sisters may similarly be called mother. In these systems, parallel cousins (but not cross cousins) may also be called by the same terms as those for brothers and sisters.

Gender In English, some kinship terms differentiate by gender, such as aunt, uncle, and brother; the word cousin, however, does not differentiate by gender. In some other cultures, all kinship terms distinguish gender.

Consanguineal versus Affinal Kin People related to Ego by blood (**consanguinity**) are distinguished from similar relationships by marriage. For example, English kinship terminology distinguishes sister from sister-in-law, father from father-in-law, and so on. The English word uncle, however, does not distinguish between consanguineal and affinal relationships; it is applied equally to the brother of our father or mother, and to the husband of our father's or mother's sister.

Sex of Linking Relative In societies where distinguishing collateral relatives is an important principle of kinship classification, the sex of the linking relative may be important in the kinship terminology. For example, parallel cousins may be distinguished from cross cousins, and may further be distinguished by the gender of the linking relative (for example, matrilineal as opposed to patrilineal cross or parallel cousins). This is particularly important where Ego is prohibited from marrying a parallel cousin but may, or even must, marry a cross cousin.

Side of the Family Some societies use a kinship system in which kin terms distinguish between relatives from the mother's side of the family and those from the father's side. This principle is called **bifurcation**. An example would be societies where the mother's brother is referred to differently from the father's brother. This principle is not used in English kinship terminology.

Types of Kinship Terminologies

The seven principles just listed are combined to form seven different systems of kinship. These systems were first described by Lewis Henry Morgan in the 19th century. With one exception, he gave them the names of Native American groups: Hawaiian, Eskimo, Iroquois, Omaha, Crow, and Sudanese. In some cases, these names reflect 19th century terminology. For example, even though the Eskimo call themselves "Inuit" we still talk about Eskimo kinship terminology. Although the groups that Morgan identified do use the kin terminology he associated with them, Morgan intended for his terminology to be much broader than this. He wanted to classify all the world's kinship systems. So, for example, the Iroquois do use the Iroquois kin system but this system is also used by the Yanomamo, a South American group, some villages in rural China, and many other groups around the world.

Systems of kinship terminology reflect the kinds of kin groups that are most important in a society. Each of these systems is described briefly in the following sections. You will find that careful attention to the accompanying diagrams will help you understand the descriptions.

Hawaiian As its name suggests, the Hawaiian system is found in Polynesia. It is rather simple in that it uses the fewest kinship terms. The Hawaiian system emphasizes the distinctions between generations and reflects the equality between the mother's and the father's sides of the family in relation to Ego. All relatives of the same generation and sex—for example, father, father's brother, and mother's brother—are referred to by the same kinship term. Male and female kin in Ego's generation are distinguished in the terminology, but the terms for sister and brother are the same as those for the

lineal kin Blood relations linked through descent, such as Ego, Ego's mother, Ego's grandmother, and Ego's daughter.

collateral kin Kin descended from a common ancestor but not in a direct ascendent or descendent line, such as siblings and cousins.

consanguinity Blood ties between people.

bifurcation A principle of classifying kin under which different kinship terms are used for the mother's side of the family and the father's side of the family.



children of one's parents' siblings (Figure 9.3). This system correlates with ambilineality and ambilocality, which means that a person may choose which descent group he or she wishes to belong to and will live with after marriage. Using the same terms for parents and their siblings establishes closeness with a large number of relatives in the ascending generation, giving Ego a wide choice in deciding which group to affiliate and live with.

Eskimo The Eskimo terminology, found among hunting-and-gathering peoples in North America, is correlated with bilateral descent. The Eskimo system emphasizes the nuclear family by using terms for its members (mother, father, sister, brother, daughter, son) that are not used for any other kin. Outside the nuclear family, many kinds of relatives that are distinguished in other systems are lumped together. We have already given the examples of aunt and uncle. Similarly, all children of the kin in the parental generation are called cousins, no matter what their sex or who the linking relative is. The Eskimo system singles out the biologically closest group of relations (the nuclear family) and treats more distant kin more or less equally (Figure 9.4).

Iroquois The Iroquois system is associated with matrilineal or double descent and emphasizes the importance of unilineal descent groups. In this system, the same term is used for mother and mother's sister, and a common term also applies to father and father's brother. Parallel cousins are

referred to by the same terms as those for brother and sister. Father's sister and mother's brother are distinguished from other kin, as are the children of father's sister and mother's brother (Ego's cross cousins) (Figure 9.5).

Omaha The Omaha system is found among patrilineal peoples, including the Native American group of that name. In this system, the same term is used for father and father's brother and for mother and mother's sister. Parallel cousins are equated with siblings, but cross cousins are referred to by separate terms. A man refers to his brother's children by the same terms he applies to his own children, but he refers to his sister's children by different terms. These terms are extended to all relations who are classified as Ego's brothers and sisters (Figure 9.6). In this system, there is a merging of generations on the mother's side. All men who are members of Ego's mother's patrilineage will be called "mother's brother" regardless of their age or generational relationship to Ego. Thus, the term applied to mother's brother is also applied to the son of mother's brother.

This generational merging is not applied to relations on the father's side. Although father and his brothers are referred to by the same term, this does not extend to the descending generation. The different terminology applied to the father's and the mother's patrilineal groups reflects the different position of Ego in relation to these kin. Generational differences are important on the father's side because members of the ascending generation

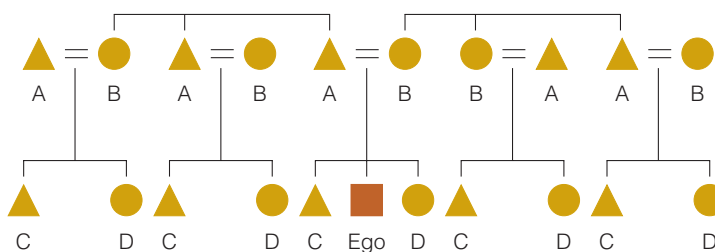


Figure 9.3 Hawaiian Kinship: The primary distinctions in Hawaiian kinship are between men and women and generations. All members of Ego's generation are designated by the same words Ego uses for brother and sister. All members of Ego's parents generation are designated by the same words Ego uses for mother and father.

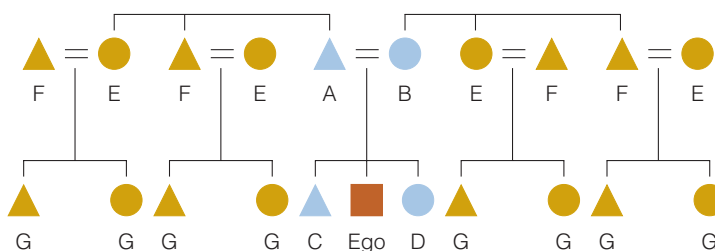


Figure 9.4 Eskimo Kinship: A critical distinction in Eskimo kinship is between lineal and collateral relations. Ego uses one set of terms to refer to lineal relations (A, B, C, and D) and a second set to refer to collateral relations (E, F, and G).

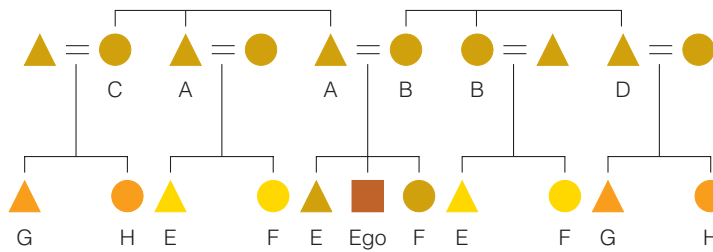


Figure 9.5
Iroquois Kinship: The Iroquois system is found in societies with unilineal descent. It distinguishes mother's side of the family (B and D) from father's side of the family (A and C) and cross cousins (in COLOR here) from parallel cousins (in COLOR here). Ego is generally encouraged to marry cross-cousins but forbidden from marrying parallel cousins.

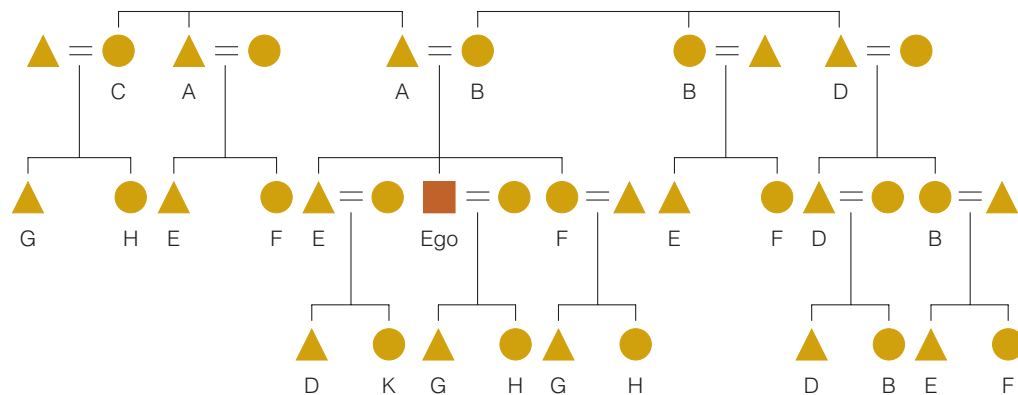


Figure 9.6
Omaha Kinship: The Omaha is a bifurcate merging system found among patrilineal people. Like the Iroquois system, it merges father and father's brother and mother and mother's sister. However, in addition, the Omaha system merges generation on the mother's side. So, men who are members of Ego's mother's patrilineage are referred to with the term for mother's brother, regardless of age or generation.

are likely to have some authority over Ego (as his father does) and be treated differently from patrilineage members of Ego's own generation. The mother's patrilineage is unimportant to Ego in this system, and this is reflected by lumping them all together in the terminology.

Crow The Crow system, named for the Crow Indians of North America, is the matrilineal equivalent of the Omaha system. This means that the relations on the male side (Ego's father's matrilineage) are lumped together, whereas generational differences are recognized in the mother's matrilineal group (Figure 9.7). In both the Omaha and Crow systems, the overriding importance of unilineality leads to the subordination of other principles of classifying kin, such as relative age or generation.

Sudanese No North American groups used Morgan's final kinship system, so he named it Sudanese, after the African groups, primarily in Ethiopia, who do use it. It's also used in some

places in Turkey and was used in Ancient Rome. Sudanese is the most descriptive terminology system. The types included here use different terms for practically every relative: siblings, paternal parallel cousins, maternal parallel cousins, paternal cross cousins, and maternal cross cousins. Ego refers to his or her parents by terms distinct from those for father's brother, father's sister, mother's sister, and mother's brother (Figure 9.8). The groups using Sudanese kinship tend to be strongly patrilineal and very concerned with issues of wealth, class, and political power.

The great variety of kinship terminologies underscores the fact that kinship systems reflect social relationships and are not based simply on biological relations between people. Kinship classification systems are part of the totality of a kinship system. Each type of classification emphasizes the most important kinship groupings and relationships in the societies that use it. Thus, the Eskimo system emphasizes the importance of the nuclear family, setting apart more distant relations on the maternal and paternal sides. The Iroquois, Omaha,

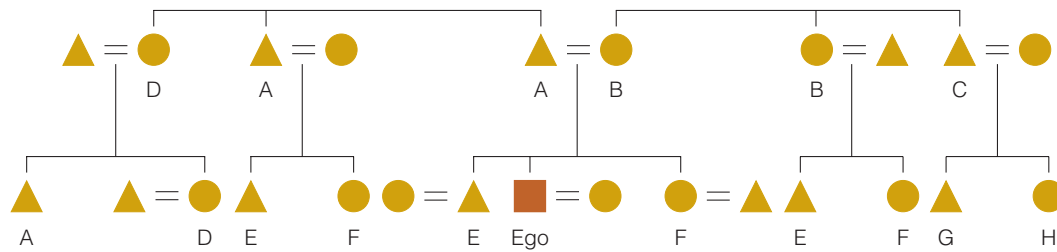


Figure 9.7

Crow Kinship: The Crow system is similar to the Omaha but is found among matrilineal people. Like the Omaha and Iroquois, it merges father with father's brother and mother with mother's sister. However, unlike the Omaha, it merges generation on the father's side so that all women who are members of the father's matrilineage are referred to with the term for father's sister, regardless of age or generation.

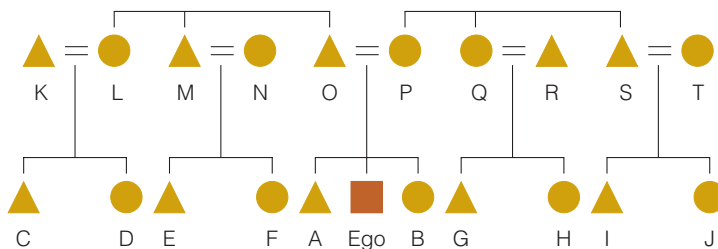


Figure 9.8

Sudanese Kinship: The Sudanese system occurs most frequently in societies with substantial hierarchy and distinctions of class. It includes a separate term for each type of relative.

and Crow systems, found in unilineal societies, emphasize the importance of lineage and clan. In the Hawaiian system, the simplicity of terms leaves the way open for flexibility in choosing one's descent group. In making sense out of kinship systems, an-

thropologists attempt to understand the relationship of terminologies, rules of descent, and kinship groups to the ecological, economic, and political conditions under which different kinship systems emerge.



Summary

1. Kinship systems are cultural creations that define and organize relatives by blood and marriage. A kinship system includes the kinds of groups based on kinship and the system of terms used to classify different kin.
2. The functions of kinship systems are to provide continuity between generations and to define a group of people who can depend on one another for mutual aid.
3. In traditional societies, kinship is the most important basis of social organization. This con-

trasts with industrial societies, in which citizenship, social class, and common interests become more important than kinship.

4. In many societies, descent is important in the formation of corporate social groups. In societies with a unilineal rule of descent, descent group membership is based on either the male or female line. Unilineal systems are found among pastoral and cultivating societies.
5. A lineage is a group of kin whose members can trace descent to a common ancestor. A

clan is a group whose members believe they have a common ancestor but cannot trace the relationship genealogically. Lineages tend to have domestic functions, clans to have political and religious functions. Both lineages and clans are important in regulating marriage.

6. In patrilineal systems, a man's children belong to his lineage, as do the children of his sons but not of his daughters. Husbands have control over wives and children, and marriage is governed by strong sanctions.
7. In matrilineal systems, a woman's children belong to her lineage, not that of their father. The mother's brother has authority over his sister's children, and relations between husband and wife are more fragile than in patrilineal societies.
8. Patrilineality grows out of patrilocality, which is based on the common economic interests of brothers. Matrilineality grows out of matrilocality, which arises under special circumstances; when these conditions disappear, the kinship system tends to change.
9. In systems of double descent, the individual belongs to both the patrilineage of the father and

the matrilineage of the mother. Each group functions in different social contexts. The Yako of Nigeria have a system of double descent.

10. In bilateral systems, the individual is equally related to mother's and father's kin. A bilateral rule of descent results in the formation of kindreds, which are overlapping kinship networks, rather than a permanent group of kin. Bilateral kinship is found predominantly among foragers and in modern industrialized states.
11. Kinship terminology groups together or distinguishes relatives according to various principles such as generation, relative age, lineality or collaterality, sex, consanguinity or affinity, bifurcation, and sex of the linking relative. Different societies may use all or some of these principles in classifying kin. A comparison of kinship terminology in North India and the United States illustrates these differences.
12. The six types of kinship classification systems are the Hawaiian, Eskimo, Iroquois, Omaha, Crow, and Sudanese. Each reflects the particular kinship group that is most important in the society.



Key Terms

affinal
ambilineal descent
bifurcation
bilateral descent
clan
cognatic descent
collateral kin
consanguinity

descent
descent group
double descent
genitor
inheritance
kindred
kinship
kinship system

kinship terminology
lineage
lineal kin
matrilineage
matrilineal descent
nonunilineal descent
pater
patrilineage

patrilineal descent
phratry
ramage
succession
totem
unilineal descent



Suggested Readings

Carsten, Janet. 2004. *After Kinship*. New York: Cambridge University Press. This book presents an analysis of the history and role of kinship studies in anthropology. At one time, kinship studies were central to the field. In the mid and late twentieth century, however, they were marginalized. Recently, they have once again become

more important. Carsten contemplates the meaning of kinship in an era when, more than ever, individual and state choices as well as technologies can shape our families.

di Leonardo, Micaela. 1984. *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience: Kinship, Class, and Gender among California Indians*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University

- Press. A lively account of ethnicity that emphasizes variability in ethnic experience among different social classes and between women and men. Kinship and family are discussed through individual life histories and in the context of regional, national, and global change.
- Parkin, Robert and Linda Stone, eds. 2004. *Kinship and Family: an Anthropological Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. This is a recent collection of essays on kinship. It includes classic work from authors such as Lowie and Evans-Prichard as well as modern work on topics such as surrogate motherhood and lesbian kinship.
- Pasternak, Burton. 1976. *Introduction to Kinship and Social Organization*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. A good introduction for the beginning student.
- Schneider, David M. 1968. *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. A look at kinship in the United States and what it suggests about American culture.
- Stone, Linda, ed. 2000. *New Directions in Anthropological Kinship*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. A collection of essays by current-day anthropologists looking at various dimensions of kinship. Topics covered include kinship in the history of anthropology, biology and culture in kinship studies, kinship and new reproductive technologies, kinship and gender, new forms of family, and kinship in the politics of nations.
- Trawick, Margaret. 1990. *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family*. Berkeley: University of California Press. A sensitive, insightful, and skillful interweaving of the author's own life with an ethnography of Tamil (Indian) family relationships. This book gives both a picture of culturally patterned relationships and a vivid experience of the individuals in the family.



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Gender



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Among the Wodaabe of Niger, marriages are based on romantic attachment as well as arranged. At the annual Gerewol celebration, young men apply makeup, dance, and make facial expressions that best display the whiteness of their eyes and teeth, in order to be chosen as the most charming and beautiful dancers, and capture the hearts of young women.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Sex and Gender

The Cultural Construction of Gender

Cultural Variation in Sexual Behavior

Sexuality and the Cultural Construction of Gender

Coming of Age in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Male and Female

Rites of Passage

Male Initiation

Female Initiation

The Construction of Masculinity in Spain

Proving Manhood: A Cultural Universal?

Gender Roles, Power, and

Prestige: The Status of Women

Gender Relations: Complex and Variable

Challenging “Man the Hunter”

Women and the Distribution of Power in Foraging Societies

Gender Relations in Horticultural Societies

Economic Development and the Status of Women

Technology and Gender Roles

Among the Arapesh, men and women both were expected to act in ways that Americans considered “naturally” feminine. Both sexes were concerned with taking care of children and nurturing. Neither sex was expected to be aggressive. In Mundugamor society, both sexes were what American culture would call “masculine”: aggressive, violent, and with little interest in children. Among the Tchambuli, the personalities of men and women were different from each other but opposite to American conceptions of masculine and feminine. Women had the major economic role and showed common sense and business shrewdness. Men were more interested in esthetics. They spent much time decorating themselves and gossiping. Their feelings were easily hurt, and they sulked a lot.

—From Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament*

See next paragraph for further discussion.

Jn the 1930s, Margaret Mead began to question the biologically determined nature of gender (Mead 1963/1935). Mead organized her ethnographic research around the question of whether the characteristics defined as masculine and feminine in Western culture, specifically the United States, were universal. She studied three groups in New Guinea—the Arapesh, the Mundugamor, and the Tchambuli. As the description above of these three groups indicates, Mead found that the whole repertoire of behaviors, emotions, and roles that

go into being masculine and feminine are patterned by culture.

In addition to its importance in gender studies, Mead’s work is significant because it reinforces a central anthropological thesis that in order to grasp the potential and limits of diversity in human life, we must look at the full range of human societies—particularly those outside Western historical, cultural, and economic traditions. Particularly in nonindustrial, small-scale, kinship-based, more egalitarian societies, gender relationships



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Anthropologist Margaret Mead was a key figure in emphasizing the cultural element in gender roles. She was also important in introducing these anthropological ideas to the general public.

clearly differ from those of the West. Indeed, recent research on gender diversity indicates that the very construction of sex and gender is extraordinarily diverse, as are the relationships between sex, gender, and other aspects of culture.

Ethnographic evidence for this diversity is legion. Among some subarctic Indian peoples, for example, where a son was depended on to feed the family through big game hunting, a family that had daughters and no sons would simply select a daughter to “be like a man.” When the youngest daughter was about 5 years old, the parents performed a transformation ceremony in which they tied the dried ovaries of a bear to a belt the child always wore. This was believed to prevent menstruation, protect her from pregnancy, and give her luck on the hunt. From then on, she dressed like a male, trained like a male, and often developed great strength and became an outstanding hunter (W. Williams 1996:202). For these Indians, being male or female included both biological elements, such as menstruation and the ability to become pregnant, and cultural features, such as the ability to hunt.



Sex and Gender

In contemporary social science, the distinctions between biological and cultural aspects of being male or female are very important. **Sex** is the biological

differences between male and female, particularly the visible differences in external genitalia and the related difference in the role each sex plays in the reproductive process. **Gender** is the cultural and social classification of masculine and feminine. Thus, gender is the social, cultural, and psychological constructs that different societies superimpose on the biological differences of sex (Worthman 1995:598). Every culture recognizes distinctions between male and female, but cultures differ in the meanings attached to these categories, the supposed sources of the differences between them, and the relationship of these categories to other cultural and social facts. Furthermore, all cultures recognize at least two sexes (male and female) and two genders (masculine and feminine), but some cultures recognize additional sexes and genders.

The current anthropological interest in gender emphasizes the central role of gender relations as a basic building block of culture and society (Yanagisako and Collier 1994:190–203). Gender is central to social relations of power, individual and group identities, the formation of kinship and other groups, and meaning and value. As was noted in Chapter 3, until the 1970s the central role of gender in society and culture was largely overlooked, and both ethnography and anthropological theory were skewed as a result.

The Cultural Construction of Gender

The central assumption of an earlier, androcentric anthropology was that gender, like sex, was “natural” or biologically determined. The different roles, behaviors, personality characteristics, emotions, and development of men and women were viewed as a function of sex differences, and thus universal. An assumed biological determinism meant that many important questions about the role of gender in culture and society were never asked. The emergence of feminist anthropology in the 1970s focused attention on cross-cultural variability in the meaning of gender. Biological determinism began to give way to the view that gender is culturally constructed (Ortner and Whitehead 1981). The **cultural construction of gender** emphasizes the different ways cultures think about, distinguish, and symbolize gender.

This new understanding of the cultural construction of gender has raised new questions about the culturally determined nature of women’s and men’s

lives in all cultures. It focused attention on evolutionary and historical changes in gender relations (Zihlman 1989; Spector and Whelan 1989; Lancaster 1989), the role of gender in human development (Chodorow 1974, 1978), the constructions of feminine and masculine in different cultures, and the connections between gender systems and other sociocultural patterns (Ortner and Whitehead 1981). It also raised questions about the effect of European expansion on gender relations in non-European societies (Nash and Safa 1986) and the changes in gender relations within Europe and North America as a result of industrialism, capitalism, and expansion of the global economy (Warren and Bourque 1989; Andersen and Collins 1995).

Alternative Sexes, Alternative Genders In the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, new anthropological research and reinterpretation of older ethnography added weight to the view of gender as culturally constructed. Particularly important were cultures that recognized more than two sexes and more than two genders (Nanda 1999; W. Williams 1986; W. Roscoe 1991; Herdt 1996) or where heterosexuality and homosexuality were defined differently than they were in the United States (Herdt 1981).

The division of humans into two sexes and two genders, characteristic of most cultures, appears to be natural and inevitable. Sex assignment, which takes place at birth, is assumed to be permanent over a person's lifetime. The view of sex and gender as a system of two opposing and unchangeable categories is taken for granted by most social science. It is difficult for most of us even to think about any alternative to this view.

However, a cross-cultural perspective indicates that sex and gender are not necessarily or universally viewed as identical and limited to a system of male/female opposites. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, for example, Amadiume (1987) notes that members of either sex can fill male gender roles. Daughters can fill sons' roles and women can be husbands, without being considered "masculine" or losing their femininity. Before the influence of Christianity among the Igbo, both women and men could use wealth to take titles (achieve rank) and acquire wives. Although Christian missionaries attempted to eliminate woman-woman marriage in Africa, the practice continues today. In some African societies that practice woman-woman marriages, such as the Nandi of Kenya, the female husband is considered to be a man and adopts many aspects of the male

gender role, such as participating in male initiation and public political discussions (Oboler 1980). The presence of female husbands has been reported for more than 30 African groups (D. O'Brien 1977). Although there are important variations among them, the literature specifically notes that the relationship between female husband and wife is not sexual.

Alternative gender roles—neither man nor woman—have been described for many societies. The **xanith** of Oman on the Saudi Arabian peninsula (Wikan 1977), the **two-spirit role** in many Native American tribes (Whitehead 1981; W. Williams 1986; W. Roscoe 1995/1991), the **mahu** of Tahiti (Levy 1973; Besnier 1996), and the **hijra** of India (Nanda 1999; Reddy 2005) are among the gender roles in which men take on some of the attributes of women and are classified as an in-between gender.

The Native American two-spirit role has long been a subject of anthropological interest. Two-spirit roles took different forms in different Native American cultures, but most often the two-spirit person was a man who dressed in women's clothing, engaged in women's work, and was often considered to have special supernatural powers and privileges in society (Whitehead 1981). There were also female two-spirit people (Blackwood 1984). Although alternative-gendered people were not equally valued in all Native American cultures, they were very highly valued in some, such as the Zuni (W. Roscoe 1991).

The form, frequency, and cultural specificity of alternative sex/gender roles are not random occurrences, but appear to be woven into cultural patterns. Sex/gender diversity varies cross-culturally; cultures differ on their criteria for constructing

sex The biological difference between male and female.

gender A cultural construction that makes biological and physical differences into socially meaningful categories.

cultural construction of gender The idea that gender characteristics are the result of historical, economic, and political forces acting within each culture.

xanith An alternative gender role in Oman on the Saudi Arabian peninsula.

two-spirit role An alternative gender role in native North America (formerly called *berdache*).

mahu An alternative gender role in Tahiti.

hijra An alternative gender role in India conceptualized as neither man nor woman.

sex/gender variation, the extent to which this variation is recognized and/or ritualized, the degree to which sex/gender transformations are considered to be complete and/or irrevocable, the association of sex/gender transformations with males or females, the special functions of alternative sexes and genders (such as healing or acting as go-betweens in marriages), and the value or stigma placed on such variations (Nanda 2000b).

Anthropologists attempt to explain the occurrence and form of sex/gender alternatives, though no one explanation covers all the ethnographic variation. In some cases, for example among some Native American groups or in Polynesia, sex/gender diversity is associated with an ideology that recognizes all individuals as having their own special characteristics, including sex/gender variation. In cultures like Thailand, there is less concern for an individual's private life as long as he or she observes social obligations in public, so that sex/gender diversity is not severely stigmatized. In India, the sex/gender alternative of the hijra is related to the Hindu philosophy of dharma, where each person is expected to follow his or her own life path, no matter how different or even painful that may be. In addition, Hinduism in general has the ability to incorporate cultural contradictions and ambiguities to a larger extent than, for example, Western religions, and this too is congenial to the emergence of sex/gender diversity. In some cases, sex/gender alternatives appear related to cultural systems with relatively low gender differentiation (the distinctions between male and female gender roles), though sex/gender alternatives also appear in cultures, like Brazil, where gender differentiation is high. Sex/gender alternatives also are found in cultures where transformations of all kinds—of humans into animals or vice versa, for example—are common, such as in some African cultures and in African diasporic religions. Where androgyny (the mixture of male and female) is considered sacred and powerful, as in southeast Asian island cultures, sex/gender alternatives also frequently appear. And where continuation of a patrilineage is central to a society's kinship structure, such as in the Balkans, or among the Ibo of Nigeria, one way of making sure there are people to fill all important kin positions is to permit women to take on not only male roles, but also other male gender characteristics. As in all things, from the seemingly most ordinary to the seemingly most exotic, anthropol-

ogy not only documents human diversity, but also tries to explain that diversity by drawing on the ethnographic record (see “Ethnography” box).



Cultural Variation in Sexual Behavior

In addition to varying in the number of sexes and genders they recognize, cultures also vary in their definitions of appropriate sexual behaviors. The cultural component of sexual behavior is not easily understood. Of all the kinds of human behavior, sexual activity is most likely to be viewed as “doing what comes naturally.” But a cross-cultural perspective on sexual behavior demonstrates that every aspect of human sexual activity is patterned by culture and influenced by learning.

Culture patterns the habitual responses of different peoples to different parts of the body. What is considered erotic in some cultures evokes indifference or disgust in others. For example, kissing is not practiced in many societies. The Tahitians learned to kiss from the Europeans, but before this cultural contact, they began sexual intimacy by sniffing. The patterns of social and sexual preliminaries also differ among cultures. The Trobriand Islanders, as described by Malinowski, “inspect each other's hair for lice and eat them . . . to the natives a natural and pleasant occupation between two who are fond of each other” (1929b:335). This may seem disgusting to people from the West, but to the Trobrianders, the European habit of boys and girls going out on a picnic with a knapsack of food is equally disgusting, although it is a perfectly acceptable custom for a Trobriand boy and girl to gather wild foods together as a prelude to sexual activity.

Societies also differ in the extent to which gender and sexuality are culturally elaborated. Whereas some societies have highly complex and explicit views on the relation of gender to sexuality, in societies such as Tahiti (Levy 1973), the Semai of Malaysia (Dentan 1979), and the Tlingit of the Northwest Coast of North America (Klein 1976), gender and sexuality are not core organizing principles.

Who is considered an appropriate sexual partner also differs in different cultures. In some societies, for example, homosexual activity is considered somewhat shameful or abnormal, but in other societies it is a matter of indifference or

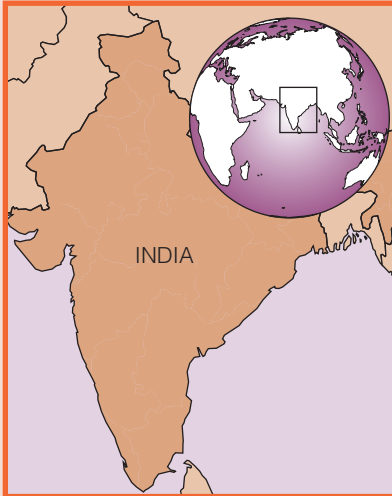


Ethnography

The Hijras: An Alternative Gender Role in India

The hijra of India is a gender role that is neither masculine nor feminine. Hijras are born as men, but they dress and live as women. The hijras undergo an operation in which their genitals are surgically removed, but unlike transsexuals in the West, this operation turns men into hijras, not into women. Hijras are followers of a Hindu goddess, Bahuchara Mata, and the hijra subculture is partly a religious cult centered on the worship of this goddess. By dressing as women, and especially through emasculation as a ritual expression of their religious devotion, the hijras attempt to completely identify with the goddess. Through this operation, the hijras believe that the procreative powers of the goddess are transferred to them.

Traditionally, the hijras earn their living by performing at life-cycle ceremonies, such as the birth of a child (formerly only for male children, who are much desired in India, but sometimes



for female children today) and at marriages. Because the hijras are vehicles of the goddess's powers of procreation, their presence is necessary on these occasions. They ask the goddess to bless the newborn or the married couple with prosperity and fertility. Hijras also serve the goddess in her temple.

The word *hijra* may be translated as either *eunuch* or *hermaphrodite*; in both cases, male sexual impotence is emphasized. In fact, few hijras are born hermaphrodites, and because there are many causes for male impotence, there are many reasons that men may choose to join the hijras. In some parts of India, it is believed that an impotent man who does not become a hijra, in deference to the wishes of the hijra goddess, will be reborn impotent for seven future lives.

The concept of the hijra as neither man nor woman emphasizes that they are not men because they cannot function sexually as men,



Courtesy of Serena Nanda

These Hijras, celebrating a marriage, exhibit exaggerated female gestures and clap their hands in the unique style of this subculture.



Ethnography—continued

though they were assigned to the male sex at birth. Hijras also claim that they do not have sexual feelings for women, and a real hijra is not supposed to have ever had sexual relations with women. But if hijras, as a third gender, are “man minus man,” they are also “man plus woman.” The most obvious aspect of hijras as women is in their dress. Wearing female attire is a defining characteristic of hijras. They are required to dress as women when they perform their traditional roles of singing and dancing at births and weddings, and whenever they are in the temple of their goddess. Hijras enjoy dressing as women, and their feminine dress is accompanied by traditionally feminine jewelry and body decoration. Hijras must also wear their hair long like women.

Hijras also adopt female behavior. They imitate a woman’s walk, they sit and stand like women, and they carry pots on their hips as women do. Hijras have female names, which they adopt when they join the community, and they use female kinship terms for each other such as *aunt* or *sister*. They also have a special linguistic dialect, which includes feminine expressions and intonations. In public accommodations, such as the movies, or in buses and trains, hijras often request “ladies only” seating. They also request that they be counted as females in the census.

Although hijras are like women in many ways, they are clearly not women. Their female dress and mannerisms are often exaggerations almost to the point of caricature, especially when they act in a sexually suggestive manner. Their sexual

aggressiveness is considered outrageous and very much in opposition to the expected demure behavior of ordinary Indian women in their roles of wives, mothers, and daughters. Hijra performances are essentially burlesques of women; the entertainment value comes from the difference between themselves, acting as women, and the real women they imitate. Hijras often use obscene and abusive language, which again is considered contrary to acceptable feminine behavior. In some parts of India, hijras smoke the hookah (water pipe) and cigarettes, which is normally done only by men.

The major reason hijras are not considered women, however, is that they cannot give birth. Many hijras wish to be women so that they can give birth, and there are many stories within the community that express this wish. But all hijras acknowledge that this can never be.

As neither man nor woman, the hijras identify themselves with many third-gender figures in Hindu mythology and Indian culture: male deities who change into or disguise themselves as females temporarily, deities who have both male and female characteristics, male religious devotees who dress and act as women in religious ceremonies, and the eunuchs who served in the Muslim courts. Indian culture thus not only accommodates such androgynous figures but views them as meaningful and even powerful.

The emphasis in this ethnography is on the cultural conception of the hijra role. The realities of hijra life do not always match the ideal,

approval. Among the Sambia of New Guinea, a period of obligatory homosexual relationships is part of the initiation for every adolescent male, who as an adult is expected to enter a heterosexual marriage (Herdt 1981). In this culture and others in the New Guinea Highlands, it is believed that only men can create men. This process involves a long period during which boys live away from their parents in a men’s cult house and engage in homosexual activity as part of their training to be vigorous, strong warriors. The assumptions of Sambia culture contrast strongly

with the dominant cultural ideology in the United States, where consistent heterosexuality is considered essential to masculine identity.

Among other variations are the ages at which sexual response is believed to begin and end, the ways in which people make themselves attractive, the importance of sexual activity in human life, and its variation according to gender—all these are patterned and regulated by culture and affect sexual response and behavior. A comparison of two cultures, the Irish of Inis Bagin and the gynestrians of Mangala, makes clear the role of culture in sexuality.

and, as in other societies, there are some tensions between them. A significant source of conflict among hijras is their widespread practice of prostitution, serving as sexual partners for men, which contradicts their identity as ascetics. Hijras see prostitution as deviant within their community, and many deny that it occurs. Others justify it by reference to their declining incomes from traditional performances.

Unlike many societies throughout the world with alternative gender roles that were suppressed by colonial authorities and Christian missionaries, hijras continue to function as an integral part of Indian culture, both in traditional roles and in changing roles that reflect new adaptations. One new role for hijras is in contemporary Indian politics, in which hijras have achieved some notable success. In recent years hijras have been standing for and winning election to local, state, and even national office (Reddy and Nanda 2005). Significantly, hijra success in politics has been achieved not by denying, but by emphasizing their ambiguous gender. (However, the election of one hijra has been overturned by a lower state court on the grounds that hijras are men masquerading as women and therefore cannot stand for election to seats reserved for women. What we seem to see here is a clash of cultural perceptions between traditional concepts that admit of in-between or alternative genders and Western concepts that recognize two genders only—man and woman.)

When they enter politics, hijras explicitly construct themselves as individuals without the obligations of family, gender, or caste, and emphasize that they are therefore free from the corrupting influence of nepotism, which plagues Indian politics. They also emphasize their identity as ascetics, Hindu religious figures who renounce sexual relations, claiming historical continuities with many Hindu political reformers. Hijras are also viewed as more empathetic to issues of poverty and social stigma because of their own low social status and have, on this basis, defeated traditionally powerful upper caste opponents.

The continued recognition of hijras in Indian society is a strong testimony to the cultural construction of genders. Unlike many other traditional alternative genders among indigenous peoples that have been stamped out or repressed by the powerful states in which they now live, the hijras continue both in their traditional roles and in new roles, contributing to the cultural variation that characterizes the human species.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How does a study of the hijras contribute to an understanding of gender as culturally constructed?
2. Can you compare the hijras to similar gender roles in your own society?

Source: Serena Nanda, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999.

John Messenger describes Inis Beag as “one of the most sexually naive of the world’s societies” (1971:15). Sex is never discussed at home when children are near, and parents provide practically no sexual instruction to children. Adults express the belief that “after marriage nature takes its course.” (As we shall see, “nature” takes a very different course in Inis Beag than it does in Polynesia!) Women are expected to endure but not enjoy sexual relations; to refuse to have intercourse is considered a mortal sin among this Roman Catholic people. There appears to be widespread ignorance in Inis Beag of the fe-

male capacity for orgasm, which in any case is considered deviant behavior. Nudity is abhorred, and there is no tradition of “dirty jokes.” The main style of dancing allows little bodily contact among the participants; even so, some girls refuse to dance because it means touching a boy. The separation of the sexes begins very early in Inis Beag and lasts into adulthood. Other cultural patterns related to sexual repression here are the virtual absence of sexual foreplay, the belief that sexual activity weakens a man, the absence of premarital sex, the high percentage of celibate males, and the extraordinarily

late age of marriage. According to a female informant, “Men can wait a long time before wanting ‘it’ but we [women] can wait a lot longer” (1971:16).

Although the idea of total sexual freedom in the South Sea islands is a Western myth, Mangaia, as described by Donald Marshall (1971), presents a strong contrast to Inis Beag. In this Polynesian culture, sexual intercourse is one of the major interests of life. Although sex is not discussed at home, sexual information is taught to boys and girls at puberty by the elders of the group. For adolescent boys, a two-week period of formal instruction about the techniques of intercourse is followed by a culturally approved experience with a mature woman in the village. After this, the boy is considered a man. This contrasts with Inis Beag, where a man is considered a “lad” until he is about 40.

Sexual relations in Mangaia take place in private, but there is continual public reference to sexual activity. Sexual jokes, expressions, and references are expected as part of the preliminaries to public meetings. This pattern of public verbal references to sex contrasts with the public separation of the sexes. Boys and girls should not be seen together in public, but practically every girl and boy has had intercourse before marriage. The act of sexual intercourse itself is the focus of sexual activity. What Westerners call sexual foreplay generally follows intercourse in Mangaia. Both men and women are expected to take pleasure in the sexual act and to have an orgasm. Female frigidity, male celibacy, and homosexuality are practically unknown. The contrast between Inis Beag and Mangaia indicates clearly that societies’ different attitudes pattern the sexual responsiveness of males and females in each society.

Sexuality and the Cultural Construction of Gender

A culture’s construction of gender always includes reference to sexuality and the differences between men and women. Cultural views of gender-related sexuality have often been used to support various sexual ideologies, which also intersect with the construction of race, class, and colonialist relationships. European constructions of masculine and feminine sexuality have been an important part of European images of their own society and of others.

Not all societies so strongly differentiate male and female sexuality. When gender ideologies do make these distinctions, however, they are also

likely to use this distinction as the basis of gender hierarchy, in which social control of women’s sexuality is central. These controls may take such forms as the seclusion of women (S. Hale 1989); a cultural emphasis on honor and shame as related to female sexuality (Brandes 1981); and control by men, or by the state and organized religion, over marriage, divorce, adultery, and abortion. Controls are also imposed on women through medical/scientific definitions of what constitutes the normal or the pathological in female bodily processes (Martin 1987) and sexuality (Groneman 2000). Society’s control of female sexuality is often inscribed on female bodies: female circumcision in some African societies (Barnes-Dean 1989), Chinese footbinding (Anagnost 1989), gang rape in the United States (Sanday 1992), sati (the Hindu practice of a woman burning herself on her husband’s funeral pyre) (Narasimhan 1990), and eating disorders in the United States (Brumberg 1989).



Coming of Age in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Male and Female Rites of Passage

All cultures have changing expectations of an individual at different points in life, as new capacities unfold or diminish. At each of these points, individuals learn what is necessary for the new roles associated with these changing expectations. The cultural learning that takes place in childhood is particularly important, but the teaching and learning of culture continues throughout life.

Adolescence, like childhood, is viewed as a distinct stage of life in some cultures but not in others. In the United States, adolescence is associated with the physiological changes of puberty; in other societies, adolescence, as a socially constructed stage of life, is not recognized. One important contribution of Margaret Mead’s classic study, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1971/1928), was her finding that the idealism, psychic conflict, and rebellion against authority that Americans view as an inevitable part of adolescence did not occur in Samoa. Rather, in Samoa, as in many societies, an individual’s transition from childhood to adulthood involved a gradually increasing participation in society, with little psychological trauma.

In many societies, however, the stage of adolescence is not recognized, children’s passage into

adulthood is marked by rituals, which are called **rites of passage** (Van Gennep 1960; see also Ch. 14, Religion). Arnold Van Gennep viewed rites of passage as a way of publicly and ceremonially acknowledging a change of social roles, or a passage from one social group to another. These rites were performed at important life events, such as puberty, marriage, and death. Their function was to reduce the potentially traumatic effects of such transitions both on the society and on the individual by formalizing and ceremonializing them. Subsequent to Van Gennep's discussion, most anthropological studies focused on the very widespread pattern of male initiations—the rituals surrounding the transition from childhood to the adult male status.

Male Initiation

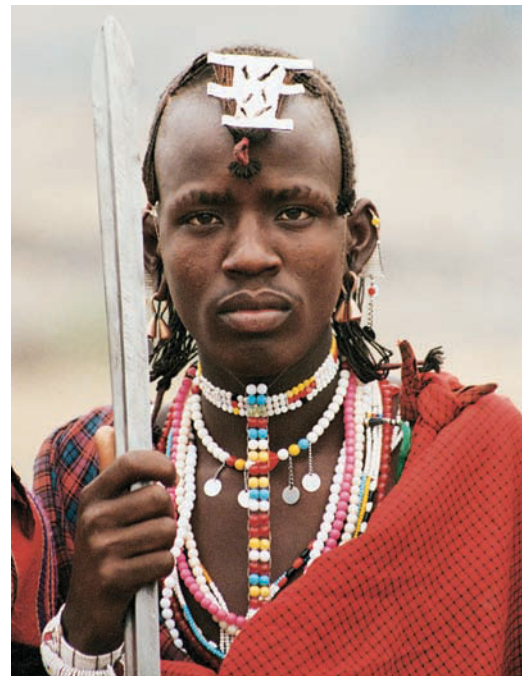
The importance of male initiation in many societies focused attention on their possible psychological and sociological functions, along with the cultural symbols and rituals that embodied them. Sociological theories held that male initiation rites primarily expressed and affirmed the enduring order of male relationships and male solidarity. In some societies, they also served to culturally validate male dominance. The most obvious purpose of the rites appeared to be the legitimation of a change of status from child to adult. They often involved an extended period of separation, during which the initiates learned the beliefs, skills, and knowledge necessary to participate as a functioning adult in society. Thus, another function of the rites was the transmission of culture. The social order was reinforced by dramatizing its values in a public context. By taking the child out of the home, initiation rites emphasized the importance of citizenship. An individual was responsible to the whole society, and society as well as the family had an interest in him (Hart 1967).

There are several different psychological theories of male initiation. The Freudian view is based on the Oedipus complex. Initiation rituals are seen as a symbolic means of mastering the universal conflicts generated by boys' identification with their mothers, from whom they must be separated in order to carry out their male adult responsibilities. Evidence for this theory can be found in the work of John Whiting, who showed that male initiation rites are more likely to occur in cultures where a boy has a strong identification with his mother and hostility toward his father (Whiting, Kluckhohn,

and Anthony, 1967). This may grow out of sleeping arrangements in which children sleep with the mother apart from the father. In these cases, says Whiting, male initiation rites are necessary to ensure the development of an adequate male role.

Other psychological theories of male initiation rites, particularly those involving bloodletting, explain the rites as symbolic reactions by males to their envy of female procreative ability and the mother-son bond (see, for example, Bettelheim 1996/1962). Margaret Mead noted that male initiation rites frequently involved men ritualizing birth and taking over, as a collective group, the functions women perform naturally. Gilbert Herdt (1981) described the male initiation rites of the Sambia of New Guinea in terms of men's symbolic control over the rebirth of boys, making them into men. Viewed from this perspective, male initiation is a type of fertility cult in which men celebrate and ritually reproduce their control over the fertility of crops, animals, and humans. Particularly in New

rite of passage A ritual that moves an individual from one social status to another.



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Among the Maasai, initiation signals a break between childhood and adulthood. A young man's ability to repress any emotional reaction to the pain of circumcision is a key ritual of male initiation. It states whether he is worthy of the warrior role that is central to Maasai adulthood.

Guinea, fertility is frequently a male as well as female principle.

Whatever the underlying psychodynamics, male initiation rituals clearly have an important sociological role in moving young people from childhood to adulthood. Radcliffe-Brown (1956), for example, viewed the ordeals, taboos, and solemnity of these rites as essential to communicating the seriousness of life and its duties to the initiates. The sociological and psychological features of initiation rites complement each other.

Female Initiation

Until recently, there was a general ethnographic neglect of female initiation rites in comparison to male initiation rites even though such rites, which are generally performed for individuals at their **menarche** (first menstruation), actually occur in more societies than male initiation rites. This anthropological neglect resulted partly from an androcentric bias and partly from the definition of initiation rites as group activities (Lutkehaus and Roscoe 1995). Recent research on girls' coming of age rituals indicates much cross-cultural variability (Lutkehaus and Roscoe 1995). Sometimes the initiate is isolated from society; sometimes she is the center of attention. Some rituals are elaborate and take years to perform; others are performed with little ceremony.

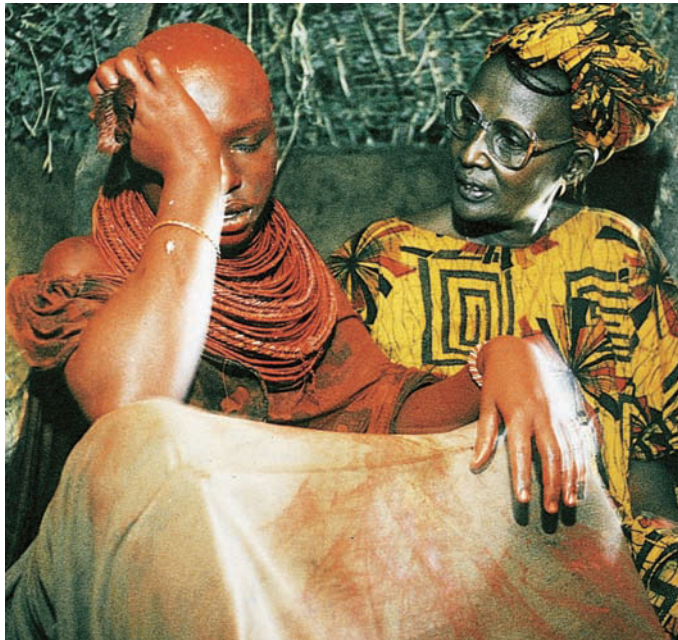
Several interpretations have been offered for girls' initiation rites. Judith Brown (1965) found that such rites are more likely to occur in societies in which the young girl continues to live in her mother's home after marriage. This suggests that the rites are a way of publicly announcing a girl's status change, because she will spend her adult life in the same place that she spent her childhood. Although the girl may continue to do the same kinds of tasks she did as a child, she now has to do them as a responsible adult. The rites are thus the means by which the girl publicly accepts her new legal role. As with boys, girls' initiation rites also teach them what they will need to know as adults. Bemba women explain their elaborate girls' initiation rite called Chisungu (Richards 1956:125) by saying that they "make the girls clever." The word they use means "to be intelligent and socially competent and to have a knowledge of etiquette."

Many of the older analytical frameworks of male initiation—transmission of cultural skills and tradi-

tions, the social importance of publicly moving individuals from one social status to another, and the channeling of sexuality into adult reproduction—are also relevant to female initiation. Female rites, however, are most productively analyzed on their own terms. Feminist anthropology, along with the current anthropological interest in women's bodies and reproductive experiences as sources of power as well as subordination, has given girls' initiation rites a new ethnographic and theoretical prominence.

Recent ethnography in New Guinea suggests that although girls' initiation rites are individual, they are connected to the larger social whole. These connections are seen in the ritual's sponsors, public observation of the rituals, and the meanings the rituals have as metaphors for other cultural patterns. In addition to making cultural statements about what it means to move from girlhood to womanhood, female initiation rites may also make more general cultural statements about gender and gender relations. Many female initiation rites in New Guinea suggest the complementarity of male and female, rather than male dominance and antagonism between the sexes. Among the Yangoru Boiken of New Guinea for example (Roscoe 1995:58–59), where achievement of success in the political and ritual fields depends on the complementarity of husbands and wives, female initiation rites emphasize those qualities that will help women to be strong wives who can help their husbands. The various elements of the rites, which at one time included scarification, motivate girls to bear and rear children, confers on them the full-bodied figure esteemed in connection with this task, strengthens their fortitude, and provides them with the capacity for the hard work necessary to assist their husbands in gathering wealth. In acknowledging gender difference, initiation rites for males and females may convey the message that both male and female powers and potentials are necessary for social reproduction—that each sex is dependent on the other to complete its personhood and make its contribution, as a father or a mother, to society. Thus, the sexual symbolism of girls' initiation rites may refer not only to male–female sexual relations and biological reproduction, but also to the reproduction of society.

The New Guinea studies also emphasize that initiation rites—for females as well as males—are processual; that is, they move individuals through successive stages of life. Among the Murik, a girl's transition from childhood to adulthood ends with a puberty



During female initiation, elders impart important information to girls that allows them to participate as responsible adults in their society. Where female initiation involves circumcision, as among the Kikuyu of East Africa, elder women give girls the necessary emotional support to help them get through this very painful ritual.

rite. Rather, the puberty rite is just one ritual step in a series of rites celebrating reproduction, culminating in marriage and the birth of the first child.

Analysis of female initiation provides new insights into the ritual manipulation of the body that is often central to these ceremonies. The ceremonies may include ordeals, scarification, circumcision, and infibulation (the stitching together of the vulva, leaving a small opening for the passage of urine and menstrual blood). The usual explanation of the emotional and symbolic significance of these often painful and traumatic transformations is that they are a test of the initiate's preparation for adulthood, and the permanent signs of the initiate's change of status. This emphasis, derived mainly from male initiation, overlooks the importance in body manipulation of the association among sexuality, beauty, and power. In some cultures, like those in New Guinea, this is a prominent theme in both female and male initiation. The attention to the body is not just for health, but also to enhance the beauty and sexual attractiveness of the initiate to members of the opposite sex.

This bodily attractiveness is one form of female power, manifest in procreation. Female initiation rites display other forms of power as well. Among the Manam of New Guinea, the exchange of valuables plays an important role in female initiation. In the Manam girl's initiation rite, the initiate dis-

plays the wealth her parents and clan have contributed for the event, which significantly influences later bridewealth negotiations (see pages 216–218 in Chapter 8). The wealth displayed in the initiation rite also affects the social reputation of the kin group who sponsors it.

This recent attention to girls' initiation not only deepens our understanding of cultural worldviews and symbolic meanings within cultures, but also suggests new directions for theorizing about an old topic of cross-cultural interest.

The Construction of Masculinity in Spain

With the recent interest in feminist anthropology and the construction of femininity in different cultures, there has been a parallel increase in exploring more explicitly the construction of masculinity, and how these constructions are supported by a society beyond what is taught in the passage from childhood. Like many cultures in the Mediterranean area, Andalusia, in southern Spain, includes a construction of masculinity in which control of female sexuality is central (Gilmore 1996). "Women are the Devil," a butcher in San

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Global Perspective

International Human Rights and Female Circumcision

Approximately 100 million females in the world today, mainly in Africa and the Middle East, undergo some form of female circumcision, the ritual cutting of a girl's genitals. In the societies traditionally practicing female circumcision, which in Africa include Muslims, Christians, Falasha Jews, and followers of indigenous African religions, it is viewed as an essential gender rite. It is intended to preserve a girl's virginity before marriage, to symbolize her role as a marriageable member of society, and to emphasize her moral and economic value to her patri-lineage (Walley 1997). Nubians, for example, view female circumcision and infibulation as symbolic acts that emphasize and embody the essence of femininity: uncontaminated, morally appropriate fertility.

An extraordinary first-person account of coming of age by a Somali girl, Aman, as told to two anthropologists, gives a detailed description of her circumcision at age 9 (Barnes and Boddy 1995). Aman describes her feelings about the rites, saying she, and all the girls her age, wanted it to be done because "it's shame not to—but I was afraid. . . . [although] they told us that there was no pain. . . . They do the circumcisions outside, with a lot of clapping and singing so people won't hear you cry. They were . . . singing my father's name and my lineage's name, saying that they were the best. I was so proud when I heard all this." Explaining the cultural function of the rite, Aman says, "The reason they do [it] is so that when you get married, your husband will know you are a virgin. . . . [If it's not done] he'll think you played around . . . That's why your mother and the woman who circumcised you do it. . . . A girl who is sewn won't play around, because she is scared of the pain, and she's scared her family will be able to tell when they check her every week." (pages 52–59).

Many anthropologists, as well as others, hold that the circumcision rite in its more extreme form is abusive, and the World Health Organization has condemned it as a violation of human rights of women and children and dangerous to health (Seddon 1993). The many scholarly and popular publications on female circumcision—or, as it is sometimes called, genital mutilation—are testimony that this is a highly charged cultural issue (Walley 1997). Today, many women from societies where female circumcision is practiced are migrating to Europe and the United States. This, too, has given this traditional local cultural pattern global dimensions (Seddon 1993). France is one of several European countries that have passed laws against female circumcision (Winter 1994). Some women from the societies that practice female circumcision have claimed rights of political asylum in Western countries based on the repercussions of their refusal to undergo the rites or to have their daughters undergo them. One such case, that of Lydia Omowunmi Ohuloro, occurred in the United States (Dugger 1996).

Although some women from societies that practice female genital operations (there are several different kinds with different levels of severity) defend it as affirming a woman's value and enhancing traditional cultural cohesion, others from those cultures, such as the Egyptian activist Newal El Saadawi, speak out against it (1980). But even for many African women who oppose female circumcision, attacks on the practice by outsiders are resented as yet another ethnocentric assault on African cultural integrity by former colonial powers. The international controversy over female genital operations is yet another demonstration that as the world becomes smaller, local cultural practices can become global issues.

Blas, Andalusia, explained to anthropologist Stanley Brandes, "because when Eve fell to the temptation of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, she then went on to tempt Adam to eat the apple of the tree of knowledge. . . . [Woman] was that way from the

beginning, and she has been trying to tempt and dominate man ever since."

For San Blas men, this biblical story justifies their view that men are more virtuous than women, more pure because they sinned only after he was

tempted by woman), and closer to God. Consistent with this religiously based view, men in San Blas assert that all women are “seductresses and whores,” possessed of insatiable, lustful appetites, who can break down a man’s control over his passions and lead him into temptation. Women possess goodness only in their role as mothers, an idealized, pure version of womanhood. Otherwise they are devils who threaten family unity and honor. The ability of women to bring down the reputation of their whole family and kin group through their lustful sexuality underlies the male ambivalence toward women that permeates San Blas social life.

One significant source of this view is early and medieval Christianity, in which Eve’s temptation was explicitly interpreted as sexual, and sexual passion was viewed as the mainspring of female nature. The particular suspicion with which medieval Christianity viewed single or widowed women is echoed in the mistrust with which widows are viewed in San Blas. Although wives devote themselves to their husbands, husbands fear that women drive them to a premature death by sapping their strength through demands for frequent sexual activity and heavy physical labor. The women do this, men explain, in order to live off their husbands’ social security payments without having to share them and to satisfy their voracious sexual appetites without the constraints of marriage (Brandes 1981:225).

The cultural construction of manhood in San Blas explicitly opposes the cultural construction of women. Space is constructed in gender terms: women belong to the home, men to the streets, bars, and other public spaces. Most men fear that their wives, driven by insatiable sexuality, will be unfaith-

ful, emasculate them, and ruin the honor of their families. They counter this fear by adhering to an image of manliness that centers on aggressive sexuality, a willingness to confront and compete with other men in public, and the demonstrated drive and ability to be successful, whatever the risks, in their marital and economic lives. Even language reflects the sexual inequality of Andalusian culture: terms from the sexual arena, in which men are supposed to be “on top,” are reflected in the language of social stratification in which the rich and powerful not only occupy the higher spaces in Andalusian towns but are considered to be “on top” of the poorer classes, dominating them the way men dominate women (Gilmore 1996).

Proving Manhood: A Cultural Universal?

The concept of a “real man” as one who proves himself to be virile, controls women, is successful in competition with other men, and is daring, heroic, and aggressive (whether on the streets, in bars, or in warfare) is an almost universal cultural pattern (Gilmore 1990). On the island of Truk, a U.S. trust territory in Micronesia, young Trukese men, who in the past were fierce warriors, are now known as hard drinkers and violent brawlers (M. Marshall 1979). Most young men in Truk go through a turbulent adolescent period of heavy drinking, which generally results in violent fights and serious injuries, particularly on weekends. Through the ethnography of anthropologist Mac Marshall, they have become known as the Weekend Warriors.



All-male groups, whether in the streets, bars, or coffee houses, are an important part of Mediterranean cultures and their Latin American counterparts.

Masculinity in Truk is defined in terms of competitiveness, assertiveness, risk-taking in the face of danger, physical strength, and, during adolescence, hard drinking, smoking, and physical violence. There is no initiation ritual that turns a boy into a man, and Trukese males must continually demonstrate their manhood in the public arena by cultural competence and effectiveness in everyday affairs (Gilmore 1990:66). This includes being successful at an occupation, acquiring consumer goods, and defending one's relatives, particularly women, against danger and dishonor.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, in many societies, becoming a man is tested by initiation ceremonies in which boys are expected to bear much physical pain without showing any emotion. Among the Sambia of New Guinea, boys were required to undergo a very long and painful process of initiation, which included whipping and beatings, before they were regarded as men (Herd 1981). In the United States, similar patterns exist in the oppositional cultures of urban streets and schools (see page 324) and in the great attraction of occupations such as firefighting, where the heroic ideal of sacrifice in the face of physical danger is played out on a regular basis (Kaprow 1991).

The near universality of the need to test and prove one's manhood has been called the **manhood puzzle**. Why, in so many different cultures, is the state of manhood regarded as uncertain or precarious, a prize to be won or wrested through struggle? Why does the transformation of a male into a "real man" require trials of skill or endurance, or special rituals? Various attempts to solve this puzzle, particularly in terms of the need for the young boy to separate himself from his mother, are suggested in our discussion of male initiation.

Some psychological anthropologists offer orthodox Freudian explanations. Thomas Gregor, for example, has described patterns of manhood among the Mehinaku Indians of Brazil (1985). Gregor ascribes the Mehinaku male's preoccupation with a public display of manhood to a culturally conditioned defense against castration anxiety. In order to compensate for their fears about castration, he suggests, Mehinaku men feel compelled to demonstrate their masculinity at every opportunity.

Anthropologist David Gilmore acknowledges the importance of **machismo** in resolving male ambivalence, but suggests that it has important social as well as psychological functions. According to Gilmore (1990), such cultural patterns help ensure

that men will fulfill their roles as procreators, providers, and protectors of their families. This essential contribution to society, he argues, is at the heart of the "macho" role and accounts for its intensity, near universality, and persistence.

The recent anthropological emphasis on the cultural construction of masculinity, as represented by David Gilmore, is a welcome and important addition to the literature of sex and gender, but also raises important questions. One problem with this universalist view of masculinity is that it does not recognize the plurality of masculinities within a culture, as well as possible differences among cultures (Conway-Long 1994). Although individual differences among men may be noted, this is usually ascribed to "deviance," and little work has yet been done on alternative masculine ideologies as cultural patterns. A second issue that needs to be addressed is that of the power differences between men and women in society: why is it that the important contributions of women in reproduction and food production, and their potential for group protection, are not culturally recognized and elaborated in ideologies and rituals similar to those of men, and why (as Margaret Mead noted more than 70 years ago) is whatever men do in a society more culturally valued and publicly elaborated than what women do? As Don Conway-Long points out, as masculinity becomes more central to gender research, these theoretical questions will undoubtedly become a more important part of the ethnographic research agenda.



Gender Roles, Power, and Prestige: The Status of Women

Fueled by European and American concerns about male dominance and women's subordination, much of the gendered anthropology in the last 3 decades has focused on the status of women and gender hierarchy. Studies have examined the significance of women's roles as mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters; women's economic contributions; women's perceptions of their cultures; women's roles in creating symbolic and collective worlds within the context of ideologies of male superiority; the sources of women's power and influence; and the development of women's identities.

Gender is also the cultural expectations of men and women in a particular society. Gender

roles include expectations about the “natural” abilities of men and women, the occupations considered suitable for each sex, differences in temperament and personality, the kinds of behavior that are most appropriate for men and women, and their attitudes toward themselves and others—in short, almost the entire range of the inner and outer life that characterizes human “nature” and society. **Gender hierarchy** is the ways in which these attributes are differentially valued and related to the distribution of resources, prestige, and power. Gender roles and gender hierarchy are clearly related to each other because access to material resources, prestige, power, and autonomy depend significantly on what one does, or is allowed to do, in society.

The question of whether (and if so, why) male dominance is universal emerged as an early debate in the anthropology of gender. One theoretical position held that women’s subordination to men is universal, based on women’s universal role as mothers and homemakers (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). In this view, all societies are divided into a less prestigious domestic (private) world, inhabited by women, and a more prestigious public world, dominated by men. This private/public opposition emerged most sharply in highly stratified nineteenth-century capitalist societies, such as those of Victorian Europe and the United States, as productive relationships moved out of the household and middle-class women (but not working-class women) retreated into the home. There they were supposed to concern themselves solely with domestic affairs, repress their sexuality, bear children, and accept a subordinate and dependent role (E. Martin 1987). It became apparent, however, that the **private/public dichotomy** was not applicable in many non-Western societies, where home and family and economics and politics were not easily separated. Indeed, the dichotomy also obscured the relationships among power, workplace, and family structures critical to understanding much of gender stratification in contemporary Western societies, particularly the United States.

Anthropologist Ernestine Friedl was an early critic of the notion that the private/public dichotomy was the key to women’s status. She attributed widespread male dominance to economic factors. In her comparative examination of foraging and horticultural societies, Friedl (1975) noted that one key factor in women’s status was the degree to which they controlled the distribution and exchange of goods and services outside the domestic

unit. She argued that in foraging societies the fact that men exercised control over the distribution of meat within the larger community gave them more power and status in society than women. In horticultural societies men cleared the forest for new gardens, and thus were in a position to exercise control over the allocation of land, which put them in a position of power. On the other hand, in societies where women had control over resources beyond distribution within the domestic unit (such as some West African societies, where women sold produce in the market), their status increased. Friedl also suggested that because the care of small children can be shared by older children, neighbors, relatives, and others, women’s low status cannot be explained by their obligations in child rearing. Thus cultural norms regarding family size and systems of child care are arranged to conform with women’s productive work, rather than the norms of work being an adaptation to pregnancy and child care.

Marxist-oriented feminist anthropologists added another dimension to the importance of economic factors, emphasizing the cultural and historical variation in women’s status, particularly the effects of the expansion of capitalism and European colonialism (Leacock 1981). Eleanor Leacock’s work on the Montaignais of eastern North America, for example, was persuasive in documenting that they were egalitarian before European contact, demonstrating in detail how European expansion led to gender inequalities in some non-Western societies. Leacock’s work led to a greater focus on changes in gender relations wrought by the European encounter.

In yet another approach to understanding the cultural variability in male dominance, Peggy Sanday

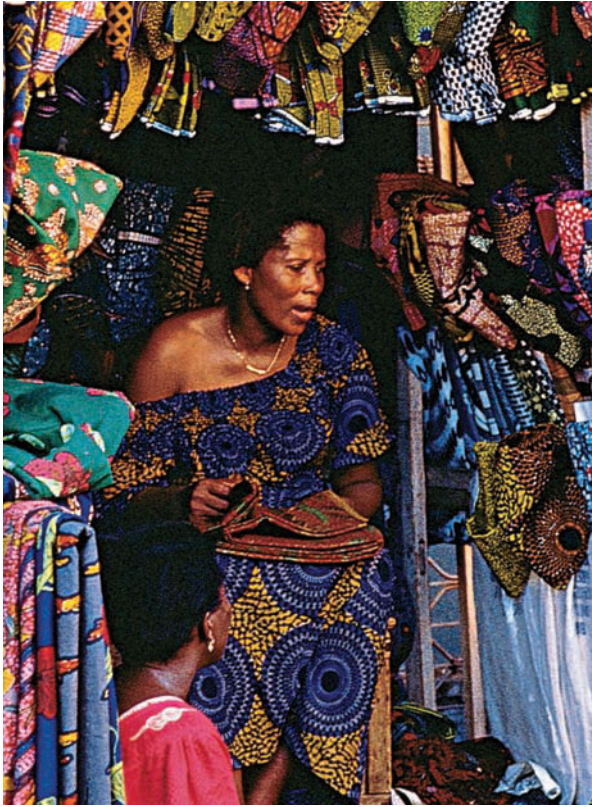
manhood puzzle The question of why in almost all cultures masculinity is viewed not as a natural state but as a problematic status to be won through overcoming obstacles.

machismo A cultural construction of hypermasculinity as essential to the male gender role.

gender role The cultural expectations of men and women in a particular society, including the division of labor.

gender hierarchy The ways in which gendered activities and attributes are differentially valued and related to the distribution of resources, prestige, and power in a society.

private/public dichotomy A gender system in which women’s status is lowered by their almost exclusive cultural identification with the home and children, whereas men are identified with public, prestigious, economic, and political roles.



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In many parts of West Africa, women both produce and sell their products in the marketplace. This control over important economic resources improves the status of women in society, particularly if women also control the cash they receive from their products.

(1981) used a controlled cross-cultural comparison to ascertain whether male dominance was universal and, if not, under what conditions it emerged. Sanday concluded that male dominance was *not* universal, but it was correlated with ecological stress and warfare. She showed that where the survival of the group rests more on male actions, such as warfare, women accept male dominance for the sake of social and cultural survival.

Gender Relations: Complex and Variable

Whatever their position on the universality or variability of gender hierarchy, all sides in this debate agree that gender hierarchies are culturally, not biologically, determined. Both the division of labor by sex and the meanings attached to gendered pat-

terns of activity show great cultural variability and historical specificity. In fact, the debate over the universality of male dominance has been not so much resolved as transcended. As one anthropologist put it, a gendered anthropology has moved from an interest in “woman” to an interest in “women” (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988:486). This move poses new challenges to old assumptions.

Challenging “Man the Hunter”

The interest in the cross-cultural variability of women’s roles has led to a reexamination of the sexual division of labor in foraging societies, in which men were previously seen as the sole hunters and male hunting was seen as the basis of male dominance. Contemporary ethnography now documents that, in many foraging societies, women contribute significantly to the food supply by gathering vegetable foods and also by hunting.

As noted in Chapter 8, among the Tiwi of Australia, women make important contributions to the food supply by gathering vegetable foods and hunting small animals (Goodale 1971). These economic contributions give large, multiple-wife households an adaptive advantage over households with fewer wives, which have a much lower standard of living.

Among the foraging Agta of the Sierra Madre in the Philippines, women make an important economic contribution to their households through hunting. Agta men tend to hunt alone, stalking pigs, deer, and monkeys with their bows and arrows. Women hunt in groups, with men or with other women, using dogs to drive the animals and killing them with long knives or bows and arrows (Estioko-Griffin 1986).

The Agta illustrate Ernestine Friedl’s contention that in foraging societies, which rely heavily on women’s economic contributions, child rearing is adapted to economic needs. Agta women carry nursing infants on their backs on their forest trips for hunting and gathering. Older children are left with older sisters or grandmothers. Fathers also spend significant amounts of time caring for their children.

Women and the Distribution of Power in Foraging Societies

Anthropologists have also found sources of women’s power and influence in those of their economic contribution. In many non-Western societies,

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where the private/public dichotomy cannot be applied, the power of women cannot be judged solely on the basis of formal political status. In addition to their important roles within households, women in many societies make alliances and participate in networks outside the household. These collectivities provide arenas for entertainment, prestige, influence, and self-esteem.

Because each cultural situation is complex and unique, it is difficult to generalize about the ways in which gender affects the distribution of prestige and power in society. Generally speaking, women had more autonomy and power in egalitarian foraging societies, such as those in native North America (Klein and Ackerman 1995), some tribal populations in Southeast Asia (Ong 1989), some hunters and gatherers in Africa (Shostak 1983), and the Mbuti of the Ituri forest in Africa (Turnbull 1961), than in horticultural or agricultural societies, although there is great variety among these also. Even generalizing about women's status by region becomes risky; it has been demonstrated that within such regions as aboriginal Australia (Burbank 1989) and sub-Saharan Africa (Potash 1989) there are great variations in women's roles and status.

Although women's economic contributions appear to be an important factor in their social power,

other factors are also important. For example, even in foraging societies where women make important economic contributions, men may have greater prestige and power through their (exclusive) participation in hunting large animals (as among the Inuit) or through male-dominated ritual activities, as in native Australian groups (Kaberry 1939; Bell 1981; Merlan 1988).

Among the most egalitarian societies were native groups in North America (Albers 1989). Egalitarian gender relations in these societies appear to be related to the absence of social hierarchy in most foraging societies and the high degree of individual autonomy accorded both men and women. Even when these groups are not egalitarian, however, gender may be unimportant to social hierarchy.

The Tlingit of the Northwest Coast of North America are a society where social hierarchy is important but gender relations are egalitarian (Klein 1995). Both women and men could achieve prestige through their own efforts and their kin relationships. Kinship relations and wealth obtained through extensive trade with other coastal societies were the keys to social status for both men and women.

The Tlingit sexual division of labor was clear but not rigid, and economic roles had little bearing on the power and influence of women. The abundant

food supply of the Tlingit depended primarily on salmon, which were generally caught by men and smoked and dried by women. The plentiful products of sea and land provided the basis for long-distance trade in “luxury” items such as furs and copper, wood carvings, and woven blankets, which were distributed at festive giveaways (potlatches) as indicators of wealth.

Although long-distance trade was centered on men, women often accompanied men, acting as negotiators and handling the money—a fact commented on by early European traders, missionaries, and anthropologists. Tlingit women regarded men as “being foolish with money,” and both girls and boys were expected to “work, save, get wealth and goods” (Klein 1995:35). Becoming a shaman was one route to wealth outside the kinship system, and this role was equally open to men and women.

The private/public dichotomy was not relevant to gender status among the Tlingit. Power and influence were embedded in kinship and rank, which applied equally to men and women. Although Europeans generally recognized only men as chiefs, some women were heads of clans or tribes, and Tlingit aristocrats were both male and female. In any case, wealth, kinship connections, and personality were more important sources of status than formal political roles. Titles of high rank were used for both men and women, and the ideal marriage was between a man and woman of equal rank.

The assertive competitiveness that appears to have characterized both women and men in traditional Tlingit society—noticed, not always favorably, by European observers—remains part of Tlingit life (Klein 1976). Tlingit women are found in the highest offices of the native corporations administering Tlingit land and in government, social action groups, and business and cultural organizations. Traditional female roles in accumulating wealth and handling money have served Tlingit women well in their contemporary communities, where they hold political positions and sit on the boards of the influential voluntary associations. With no traditional inhibitions about women appearing in public roles, Tlingit women have taken advantage of opportunities for education and easily enter modern professions. Unlike many societies in which the impact of Europeans resulted in a diminishing of women’s economic roles and influence, modernization has led to a broadening of women’s roles among the Tlingit.

Anthropologist Laura Klein, who has studied the Tlingit, warns against a Eurocentric reading of women’s status as one that diminishes men. Tlingit men and women both take pride in the accomplishments of prominent Tlingit women. Husbands proudly describe the achievements of their wives and daughters, encouraging them to go into public life. Klein concludes that the Tlingit are best described not as a matriarchy, or even as a society where exceptional women can occupy important masculine roles, but rather as a society in which roles are structured more on the basis of individual ability, training, and personality than on the basis of gender (1976:179).

Gender Relations in Horticultural Societies

Horticultural societies encompass a very wide range of gender relationships, from the highly egalitarian Iroquois of eastern North America (J. Brown 1975) to the highly sex-segregated and male-dominated Yanomamo of South America (Chagnon 1997) and most societies in highland New Guinea (Strathern 1995). There is a correspondingly wide variety in the sexual division of labor in horticultural societies, although some general similarities can be noted (see Chapter 7).

A high degree of segregation between the sexes, paralleled by the importance of males in ritual, is associated with male dominance in some horticultural societies. For example, among the Mundurucu of South America, adolescent boys are initiated into the men’s cult and thereafter spend most of their lives in the men’s house, only visiting their wives, who live with the children in their own huts in the village. These men’s cults are closed to women and surrounded by great secrecy. The men’s house itself is usually the most imposing structure in the village, and in or near it are kept the sacred musical instruments and paraphernalia of the cult. The musical instruments, which are often flutelike (shaped like the male genitals), are the symbolic expressions of male dominance and solidarity (Murphy and Murphy 1974). Often, especially in Australia, such cults are associated with circumcision rites for newly initiated boys, after which the initiates are considered men and introduced to the secrets of the cult. Sometimes associated with these cults is a mythology of the cult’s origin, which provides an “explanation” of why



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An emphasis on male dominance and aggression in horticultural societies overlooks the elements of affection and nurturance that males play as fathers, as in the Iban society of Indonesia.

women are not allowed in them. These myths may also “explain” why women are considered socially inferior to men and why men and women have different roles in these societies.

The solidarity of women in horticultural societies is usually not formalized in cults or associations, but is based on the cooperation of domestic life and strong interpersonal bonds among female kin. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the most important economic and emotional ties for both men and women are not between a married couple (conjugal ties) but between generations (consanguineal ties). Women’s most important ties are with their children, particularly their sons, on whom women depend for emotional support and security in old age (Potash 1989:199). The importance of kinship ties for African men has long been noted. Ethnographies focusing on the lives of women show how they, too, use kinship ties with their natal groups to gain

access to land, gain support in marital disputes, or participate in ritual activities (Sacks 1982).

The impact of European expansion on women in horticultural societies varied. Generally, women’s role declined as indigenous economies shifted from subsistence horticulture to cash crops to be sold in a world market. This process of change is illustrated by the Polynesian atoll of Nukumanu, a fishing and horticultural society studied by anthropologist Richard Feinberg (1986). Before European contact, Nukumanu depended for its food on the abundant marine life and a few indigenous plants, such as the coconut, pandanus, and taro (a starchy root). Women’s primary responsibilities were domestic, whereas men contributed food acquired some distance from the home through fishing, collecting shellfish, and collecting and husking coconuts. Men also made canoes and constructed new buildings, while women cooked food and collected and prepared leaves for thatch.

Both women’s and men’s roles were highly valued in Nukumanu society. Women exclusively controlled and cultivated swamp taro lands, which were inherited matrilineally. Matrilocality added to women’s status, whereas men’s power came from their economic contribution and their exclusive occupation of formal positions of power in the chiefly hierarchy. In the 1880s, under German colonialism, most of Nukumanu was turned over to production of copra (dried coconut meat). Wage laborers were brought in from nearby islands. This resulted in irreversible cultural and economic changes, most of which lowered women’s status. Commercial foods such as wheat flour and rice supplanted taro, and men’s wages were needed to buy coffee, tea, and sugar (once luxury items). As a result, women’s traditional sphere of influence declined, and men’s sphere expanded.

In addition, the traditional segregation of men’s and women’s activities has intensified. With the introduction of kareve (sap of the coconut tree fermented to make a potent alcoholic beverage) in the 1950s, men’s economic activities, such as canoe building, took on a social aspect involving drinking. Because the production and consumption of kareve takes up a great deal of men’s leisure time and excludes women, sexual segregation has increased.

With the declining importance of taro, women’s collective activities have become more individualized, leaving women more isolated and dependent on their husbands and brothers than they were in



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Advocating for Female Workers in the Global Economy

In the past 25 years, industrial production by multinational corporations in Latin America, Asia, and Africa has exploded. In the search for cheap labor, clothing manufacturing, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and electronics, assembly factories have recruited women—particularly young women. These jobs give women a chance to earn money on their own, and they offer women an important opportunity to act in their own interests. But there are also costs to the involvement of women in the workforce, especially in more traditional cultures, like those of Taiwan, for example. In these cultures, women's efforts to act in new ways disrupt the conventional organization of power within families, in which men, by virtue of their economic dominance, have power over women, and parents over children. This widening of alternative roles, for young women particularly, is becoming intensified in the global economy (Lee 1996).

The importance of women's work in the national and the global economy is clear to see in the rising economy of the People's Republic of China. In China, as elsewhere in the developing world, and indeed, in the United States itself, there is great concern for the conditions under which people work to meet the demand for cheaper goods. Global capitalism is expanding, and sweatshop working conditions in factories that produce goods for a global market is a situation that particularly affects women.

Pun Ngai, a Hong Kong anthropologist, spent 6 months tightening screws in computer hardware at an electronics factory in Shenzhen, Peo-

ple's Republic of China, as part of her ethnographic study of how *dagongmei*, or “working girls,” are responding to the pressure of China's increasing participation in the global economy (Tsui 2000).

The factory directors were interested in Pun Ngai's work because they hoped to learn more about what the workers want so they would know better how to deal with the workers. At first, the factory directors assumed that Pun Ngai would focus on the factory's operations and inundated her with personnel and administrative documents. They were astounded when she told them she wanted to work on the line and live with the workers, in the participant-observation mode of anthropology. Although the *dagongmei* were initially suspicious of Pun Ngai, when they saw she was really interested in their lives, they were so eager to talk with her she didn't have enough time to listen to them all. As an outsider, Pun Ngai quickly became a confidante, dealing with workers' complaints, offering academic guidance, and giving advice on love and other personal relationships.

Pun Ngai found the factory work interesting for the first week, but it soon became a monotonous routine. *Dagongmei*, most of whom are in their late teens or early 20s, spend 15 hours a day in the factory. They sleep in dormitory-type accommodations called cagehouses. In addition to boredom on the job, *dagongmei* also suffer from many physical ailments. Long working hours cause menstrual pain and anemia. Those who weld microchips suffer eyesight problems, and those who wash plates with acids are constantly at

the past. Male–female tensions have also increased, partly as a result of kareve drinking, which many women vehemently oppose. The traditional tendency for men to travel off the island more than women has also lowered women's status, and this pattern has continued because it is mainly men who go overseas for wage labor and higher education. But more recently, the introduction of a Western egalitarian influence is also having an effect, as some women have left the atoll to attend school and pursue careers. With the influence of a new kind of egal-

itarianism, women may be able to return Nukumanu culture to its tradition of sexual egalitarianism.

Economic Development and the Status of Women

Women's status in modern, stratified societies varies greatly, affected by economic development and ideologies. Women in agriculture, the direct female contribution in food production generally

risk of chemical poisoning. Accommodation and other expenses are deducted from their already low wages. The dagongmei also work and live under very strict rules. They have to wait their turn to go to the restroom. They are thoroughly searched before they are allowed to leave the factory premises. Security guards wielding electric batons guard the locked quarters at night.

Dr. Pun has followed up her field study with a continuing commitment to improving conditions for dagongmei in China. She represents the interests of dagongmei at labor conferences, fighting for their rights. In China, a residence permit is required to live in a particular city; dagongmei are denied residential rights even if they have been working in the same city for more than 10 years. They are also overcharged for medical and other services and consumer goods. Urban factories recruit dagongmei as cheap labor but then do not want to take proper care of them. When unemployment hits, the first thing people want to do is send the dagongmei back to their rural villages. After years of urban living and participation in a consumer-oriented global lifestyle, dagongmei find it difficult to readapt to village life.

Dagongmei receive little sympathy in China, especially from men who say they are taking away their jobs. In fact, times are getting harder for dagongmei. With China's admission to the World Trade Organization and the opening up of its agricultural market, more people are rushing to the cities. Urban unemployment is high, and thousands of workers have been downsized as a result of the privatization of factories.

Dagongmei see advantages in their factory work, however. It exposes them to a wider view of the world and permits some escape from the rigid patriarchal structure of the village. Some dagongmei, by pooling their earnings, have managed to open small factories. Others have ambitions for a business career, or to improve their education. But out of 70 million dagongmei, few succeed.

Multinational corporations' desire for cheap labor will lead to more women working in the global factory. Anthropologists such as Pun Ngai are trying to make sure their rights are protected when they do.



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An important part of the multinational factory worker workforce, and particularly of the Asian economic "miracle," consists of young woman workers.

drops drastically. Agricultural societies are a good example of the principle that women lose status in society as the importance of their economic contribution declines. This is usually accompanied by an increase in their work in the home and an increase in the number of children they have. As women become identified with the domestic sphere, as happens with the rise of plow agriculture and the introduction of a market economy and wage labor, their social status declines. This public/domestic opposition tends to be intensified by the impact of

capitalism, Christianity, and colonialism—either directly, as European administrators recognize only male political leaders, or indirectly with the devaluing of women's economic contributions.

The data on women in the global industrial economy vary considerably. Although development projects (often fueled by private or government aid) are expected to improve people's lives and to be readily accepted once their benefits are understood, neither of these assumptions is universally correct. One of the more dismaying results of many economic



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Most horticultural societies have culturally patterned ideas about men's work and women's work. Men most often do the clearing and planting, and women, the food processing. Among the Dani of New Guinea, tending pigs and barbecuing them is women's work, though men accrue the prestige for their use in ritual and in exchange networks.

development projects is that they fail to take women's economic contributions into account. A great deal is being written on the need for development projects to be sensitive to women's status, lest they increase gender inequality (Moser 1993). Some development projects, such as those stimulating the global marketing of women's textiles and pottery in Mexico and Guatemala, result in more prestige, income, and autonomy for women (J. Nash 1993). Unfortunately, this has sometimes led to increasing conflict between women and men, resulting in higher levels of wife abuse as men sense their loss of control over the proceeds from the sale of women's products (J. Nash 1994:15).

Technology and Gender Roles

Changes in technology are undoubtedly one of the most important kinds of transformations a society can experience. The introduction of sophisticated technological innovations, accompanied by andro-

centric biases in economic development, often worsen women's position in their societies (Warren and Borque 1989). In many rural development programs, women are perceived as peripheral to the agricultural economy, and their work roles are generally ignored in planning and policy making. The transformation of agricultural production through machine technology reduces the overall labor force, and this particularly affects women, whose traditional jobs in cultivation do not include working with this kind of technology. Thus, women are disproportionately excluded from the productive process as their jobs are replaced by technology. The inequality between the sexes is also apparent in the lower wages paid to women as agricultural laborers and in the concentration of women in the labor-intensive aspects of agriculture such as weeding, transplanting, and harvesting.

An example of this process occurred in North India's green revolution, based on the introduction of heavy technology and chemical fertilizers. This widely heralded development program did result in increased agricultural productivity among peasant farmers who were able to afford the new technology. But it also resulted in a lower status for women (Frankel 1971; Dasgupta 1980) and an increase in the disparity of income between men and women (Kelkar 1985).

Despite the important domestic and productive roles of women in rural India, their work is ignored by government planners as unpaid household work, and their contribution to agricultural production is regarded as secondary, or supplementary, to men's contributions. In contrast to the stated ideal, women in better-off Indian peasant families do engage in agricultural production, especially in transplanting unhusked rice (paddy), weeding, threshing, harvesting, and processing food grains. Indeed, as men increasingly engage in wage labor, women do even more agricultural work, but this work is perceived as merely an extension of women's domestic responsibilities.

With modernization, some valued and remunerative women's work, such as craft production, is being eliminated in the face of competition from urban industry. Women in rural India have always been prohibited from using the plow, and with the introduction of heavier machinery such as tractors and irrigation pumps, women's value in agricultural labor has declined further. Economic development has increased gender inequality.

The ideology of many development programs explicitly views the “backwardness” of peasant women as an obstacle to development. Such programs marginalize women’s contributions and stigmatize their resistance to change as irrational. Development projects must explicitly take into account their impact on women as well as men, and

this calls for a more thorough understanding of cultural and social factors than has previously been the case. By providing this kind of information and illuminating the intersection of class, gender, and culture, anthropologists can make an essential contribution to economic development.



Summary

1. Beginning with the work of Margaret Mead and emphasized in the work of feminist anthropologists, the prevailing view in anthropology today is that gender is not biologically determined but rather culturally constructed.
2. *Sex* refers to biological differences between male and female; *gender* refers to the social classification of masculine and feminine.
3. Although all cultures distinguish between masculine and feminine, some cultures also include alternative, in-between, or third-gender roles. These include woman–woman marriage in parts of Africa, the two-spirit role among Native Americans, and the hijras of India.
4. Hijras are men who dress and act like women, are regarded as ritually powerful devotees of the Mother Goddess, and perform ritually at weddings and childbirths.
5. Views about the nature of male and female sexuality are part of gender ideologies. Attempts to control female sexuality are embedded in gender hierarchies. Sexuality, though rooted in biology, is patterned by culture.
6. Many societies have initiation rituals, or rites of passage, for males and females, in which they are transformed from boys and girls into adult men and women of their society.
7. Female circumcision, or the cutting of the genitals, is part of a girl’s initiation ritual in some parts of Africa and the Middle East. In its most intense form it can be dangerous to health and has become the subject of worldwide debate.
8. Masculinity, like femininity, is also a cultural construction. It has been suggested that proving one’s manhood, as part of masculine identity, is very widely spread throughout the world and may have psychological as well as social functions.
9. A male-dominated gender hierarchy is a socio-cultural system in which men are dominant, reap most of the social and material rewards of society, and control the autonomy of women.
10. One explanation for gender hierarchy in some societies (mainly more complex ones) is the private/public dichotomy, in which men are associated with public political and economic activities and women are identified with the home and children.
11. The private/public dichotomy is not universal and does not appear to apply to many foraging societies.
12. The contemporary anthropological view is that gender relations are variable and complex and must be understood within particular cultural and historical contexts.
13. A traditional view of hunting as an exclusive male occupation in foraging societies is contradicted by more recent research, which indicates that in some foraging societies, women also hunt (although not as much as men).
14. The Tlingit, a matrilineal society of the Northwest Coast of North America, are an example of gender egalitarianism. Although there is a gendered division of labor, Tlingit women have high status and a great degree of autonomy and influence.
15. Gender relations in horticultural societies vary considerably. Often, the impact of Western economics has led to a decline in the economic status and prestige of women, as illustrated in New Guinea and the Pacific.

16. In agricultural societies, women's role tends to decrease and the private/public dichotomy becomes more relevant. Development projects, particularly those involving the heavy use of technology, also tend to marginalize women and reduce their autonomy and status.
17. Women are increasingly being incorporated into the world economy, especially working in multinational corporations in developing countries.

Key Terms

cultural construction
of gender
gender
gender hierarchy

gender role
hijra
machismo
mahu

manhood puzzle
menarche
private/public
dichotomy

rite of passage
sex
two-spirit role
xanith

Suggested Readings

- Behar, Ruth. 1993. *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. Boston: Beacon Press. An engaging literary approach to the life story of a Mexican woman reputed to be a witch. A final chapter contains the anthropologist's reflections on her own life from a feminist perspective.
- Fredrick, John and Thomas K. Kelly, eds. 2000. *Fallen Angels: The Sex Workers of South Asia*. New Delhi, India: Lustre Press/Roli Books. A highly moving account by social activist photographers and social scientists of young male and female sex workers in Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. The young people tell their stories in their own words with great dignity, which contrasts with the harshness of their lives. Proceeds of the sales go to Ray of Hope, an organization that develops economic options offering these young people a way out of sex work as their only means to survive (<http://www.rayhope.org>).
- Gianturco, Paola and Toby Tuttle. 2000. *In Her Hands: Craftswomen Changing the World*. New York: Monacelli Press. This gorgeously illustrated book is a cross-cultural look at the many ways that women are using their skills to develop indigenous crafts industries to help support their families. Each section highlights individual personalities as well as the connections these women make with development organizations. Purchase of the book goes toward supporting these indigenous enterprises. You can learn more about these efforts at <http://www.herhands.com>.
- Gutmann, Matthew C. 1996. *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City*. Berkeley: University of California Press. A new and original look at the construction of masculinity in Mexico City, with implications for the rest of Mexico, this ethnography undermines stereotyped views of machismo as the sole basis of Mexican manhood as it reveals the complexities and contradictions of Mexican gender.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1985. *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. An important and frequently cited study from Crete on the construction of masculinity. The "poetics" are the praises of their own virility sung by men in coffeehouses.
- Lepowsky, Maria. 1994. *Fruit of the Motherland: Gender in an Egalitarian Society*. New York: Columbia University Press. An ethnographic study of the Vanatinai of Papua New Guinea. The author concludes (somewhat in contradiction to her own evidence) that although it is not a perfectly egalitarian society, it comes close.
- Nanda, Serena. 2000. *Gender Diversity: Cross-Cultural Variations*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. Aimed at introductory students, this short book presents a cross-cultural look at alternative gender roles for both males and females among Native American societies and in India, Brazil, Thailand, the Philippines, Polynesia, Europe, and North America.
- Pun, Ngai. 2005. *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. This ethnography frames this ethnography from a neo-Marxist perspective.

phy of the *dagongmei*, young rural women who work in urban factories in China. Depending on your point of view, this new aspect of the Chinese economy either replicates the brutality of the early industrial revolution in the West or represents a real economic opportunity resulting from globalization.

Safa, Helen. 1995. *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner: Women and Industrialization in the Caribbean*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. This study uses comparative data from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba to address the changes in women's autonomy and status as a result of their increasing involvement in wage labor outside the home.

Strum, Philippa. 2002. *Women in the Barracks: The VMI Case and Equal Rights*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press. This brilliant case study, which reads like a novel, examines the resistance of the Virginia Military Academy to admitting women. Setting the case in the context of the culture of gender in the United States, essentialist anthropological theories of masculine development, and the functions of male initiation rites, Strum's study demonstrates the significant influence of culture on American legal institutions.



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Political Organization



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The rise of the state, and the expansion of empire depend ultimately on control over the use of force. For this reason, impressive displays of military might are usually the centerpiece of the state's demonstration of its power.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Social Differentiation

Egalitarian Societies

Rank Societies

Stratified Societies

Power and Social Control

*Formal and Informal Sources of Power
and Authority*

*Law: Social Control and Conflict
Management*

Types of Political Organization

Band Societies

Tribal Societies

Chiefdoms

State Societies

In Pebvil, Mexico, when a new chieftain took office, a low, woven chair with a hole in the middle was brought up and a pot filled with glowing charcoal was placed under it. The new chief sat in the chair until all the speeches and ceremonies were finished. Even then he remained a while to show he would not run from the pains and troubles of his office. When the charcoal died down, the chief got up slowly. Great blisters were raised on his skin. The chief would not forget for weeks what he had under his seat. It helped him considerably during his period in office to carry out his duties as the nation expected when it had elected him (Traven, 1971).

For details, see page 286.

Chiefs and formal leadership do not exist in all societies, as they do in Mexico, described in the chapter opening. The kind of political leadership and political organization a society has is related to many factors, among them the ways people in different societies make a living and how the society produces and distributes valued goods. As a result of these economic factors, societies also vary in their systems of **social differentiation**—that is, in the relative access individuals and groups have to basic material resources, wealth, power, and prestige. This chapter describes the ideal types of societies that anthropologists have developed in examining systems of social differentiation and related forms of political organization. Although these typologies are useful analytically, they hide a much more

complex reality. Social differentiation and political organization are always interrelated, but each ideal type includes many variations.



Social Differentiation

In all societies, individuals differ in talents, physical attractiveness, mental abilities, and skills; equalities and inequalities exist everywhere. But although individuals may be unequally endowed, not all societies

social differentiation The relative access individuals and groups have to basic material resources, wealth, power, and prestige.



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formally recognize these inequalities, nor do these differences affect access to important resources. Anthropologists commonly distinguish three types of systems of social differentiation: egalitarian societies, rank societies, and stratified societies.

Egalitarian Societies

No individual or group is barred from access to material resources or has power over others in **egalitarian societies**. This does not mean that all individuals are equally regarded. Besides age and sex differences, individual differences in skills and personal qualities are recognized, but no individual is denied the right to make a living or is subject to the control of others. Furthermore, inheritance does not lead to an accumulation of prestige or material goods over generations. Egalitarian societies have no fixed number of social positions for which individuals must compete. For example, the position of “good hunter” or “wise elder” can be filled by as many people as meet the cultural criteria. Egalitarian societies usually operate on the principle of generalized or balanced reciprocity in the exchange of goods and services. Egalitarian societies are associated with the forms of political organization called bands or tribes (Fried 1967).

Rank Societies

Formal differences among individuals and groups in prestige and symbolic resources characterize **rank societies**. These differences may be inherited. However, there are no important restrictions on access to basic resources, and all individuals can obtain the material necessities for survival through their membership in kinship groups. Some rank societies had slaves, but slaves had some rights, and their status was not hereditary. Slaves were individuals attached to wealthier families and not, as in some historic stratified societies, an exploited class central to the economic system.

Rank societies are normally based on highly productive horticulture or pastoralism, which permit sufficient accumulation of food so that a surplus can be appropriated and redistributed throughout the society. Redistribution is believed to have been the characteristic mode of exchange in rank societies, though balanced reciprocity is also important. Social ranking is associated with the form of political organization called a chiefdom.

Stratified Societies

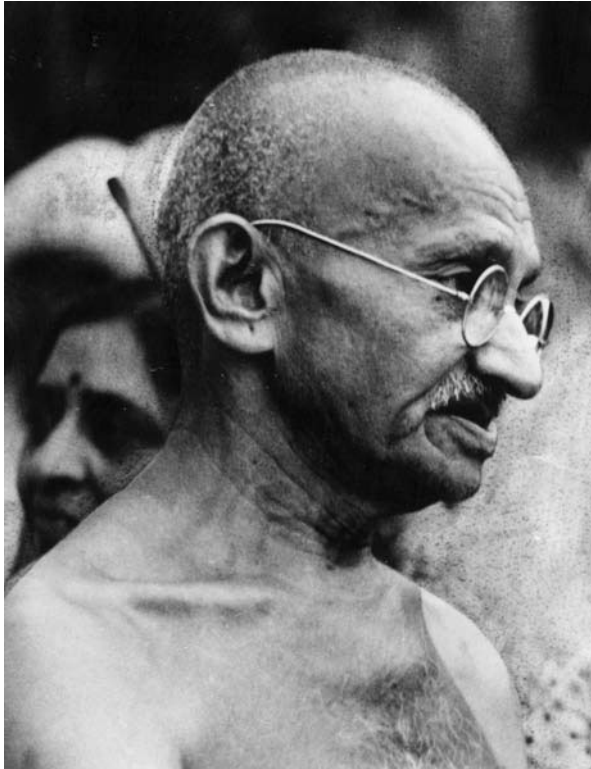
Formal and permanent social and economic inequalities are inherent in **stratified societies**. Not only are wealth, prestige, and office frequently inherited, but some individuals and groups are denied access to the basic material resources needed to survive. Stratified societies are characterized by permanent and wide differences among groups and individuals in their standard of living, security, prestige, political power, and the opportunity to fulfill one’s potential. These differences may be **ascribed** (based on birth) or **achieved** (based on individual accomplishment). Most stratified societies are economically organized by market systems, and are generally based on agriculture and industrialism. Stratified societies are the most socially complex, associated with a form of political organization called the state.



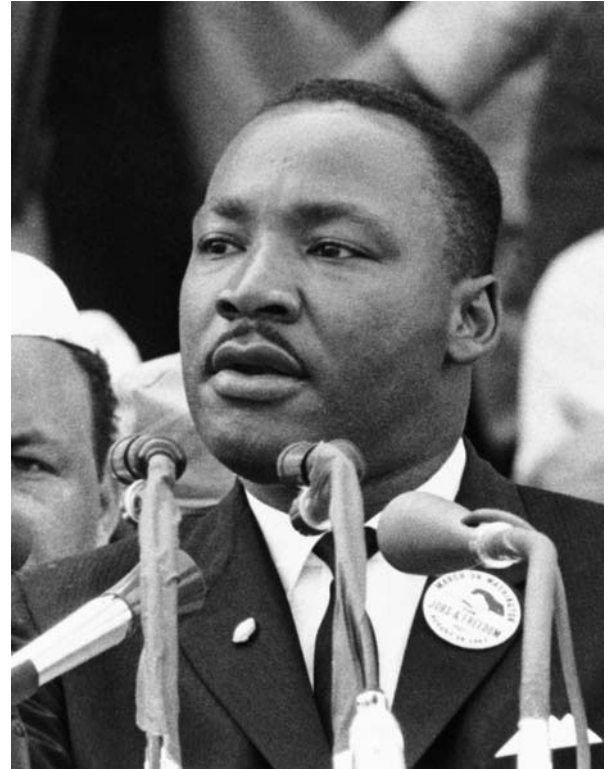
Power and Social Control

Power is the ability to cause individuals or groups to take actions that, of their own accord, they might prefer not to take. **Power** ultimately derives from the control of resources that people need or desire. For example, professors hold a degree of power in classrooms. They control grades and, because students need and desire good grades, they do things they would probably prefer not to do, such as take quizzes and exams or write papers.

Authority is the ability to cause others to act based on one’s characteristics such as honor, status, knowledge, ability, respect, and/or the holding of formal public office. The description of leadership in a Mexican village that opens this chapter indicates that although leaders have authority based on their occupation of public office, they also must be responsible to the duties of their office and the needs of their people in order to wield power and to maintain it. Authority is one important source of power, though by no means the only one. Thus, you may listen to your professors because of their knowledge, their ability to engage students, and the position they hold, as well as because they control your grade. As this demonstrates, a political office holder may be respected but also have the coercive abilities that come from control of resources. However, power can be held by people without authority. For example, an armed robber certainly has power, but people do not obey his commands.



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Mahatma Gandhi, who fought for freedom from British colonial rule in India, and Martin Luther King, Jr., who fought for African American civil rights in the United States, were leaders with great authority who did not hold formal political office. Both men depended on persuasion and nonviolent methods of civil disobedience to achieve their political goals.

because of their respect for him or because of the high social position he holds.

The shared values and beliefs that legitimize the distribution and uses of power and authority in a particular society make up its **political ideology**. Although unanimity is rare, there may be a broad social consensus about ideology. However, it is not necessary that all individuals and groups in a society accept and believe its political ideology (or accept and believe it equally). It may be accepted to a greater extent by those who benefit the most from it and to a far lesser extent by those who benefit less. The smaller the percentage of the society that accepts the political ideology, the greater the society's reliance on power and coercion. Although political systems differ in the degree of their reliance on coercion, both coercion and consensus contribute to maintaining order in almost all societies.

People conform to the political ideology of their society for complex and wide-ranging combinations of reasons. They may have a deep and abiding belief

egalitarian society A society in which no individual or group has more privileged access to resources, power, or prestige than any other.

rank society A society characterized by institutionalized differences in prestige but no important restrictions on access to basic resources.

stratified society A society characterized by formal, permanent social and economic inequality in which some people are denied access to basic resources.

ascribed status A social position that a person is born into.

achieved status A social position that a person chooses or achieves on his or her own.

power The ability to control resources in one's own interest.

authority The ability to cause others to act based on characteristics such as honor, status, knowledge, ability, respect, or the holding of formal public office.

political ideology The shared beliefs and values that legitimize the distribution and use of power in a particular society.



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in the values it represents. They may expect a short- or long-term benefit from the exercise of power and authority. They may fear the consequences of resistance to power. They may see no practical alternative. They may believe in the worth of their political system despite its failure to return benefits.

In many of the small-scale societies studied by anthropologists (bands, tribes, and chiefdoms), the use of power, authority, and decision making, as well as the coordination and regulation of human behavior, are not separate parts of the social system. Rather, they are embedded in other social institutions such as kinship, economics, and religion. Leadership may be based on an individual's position as the head of a family, lineage, or clan. Where supernatural intervention is an important aspect of decision making (where to hunt, when to move camp, how to find a thief), individuals with perceived access to supernatural power have important political roles in society. Where politics involves control over the distribution of goods and services, as it most often does, power and authority are embedded in economic roles and modes of exchange, as with the chiefs on the Northwest Coast of North America and "bigmen" in New Guinea.

Contemporary anthropologists are primarily interested in **political processes**—that is, how groups and individuals use power and authority to achieve various public goals. These goals may include changing the relationships between groups in society,

changing the relationship of a group to its environment (for example, building a road or clearing public land), waging war, making peace, or changing a group's position in the social hierarchy. Political goals have many motivations. Although, by definition, all political behavior affects the public interest, it is not always in the public interest. Groups and individuals may be motivated by personal profit or prestige or by altruism and idealism, although these are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In politically complex societies, those in power use various means to effect a close identification between their own goals and those of the larger society.

Formal and Informal Sources of Power and Authority

Formal political institutions are a source of power and authority, but these also have more informal bases. One informal source is **factions**—informal systems of alliance within well-defined political units such as lineages, villages, or political parties, though factions may also crosscut these units. **Leadership**, or the ability to direct an enterprise or action, may be a function of political office, but it can also be wielded through more informal means such as the manipulation of kinship networks or the distribution of wealth. Much of the power of women, for example, derives from these positions, espe-



Political processes are the ways in which different, often conflicting interest groups mobilize to achieve their goals. This protest is directed against the American invasion of Iraq.

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cially among Native Americans (see Chapter 10, pages 275–276). In West Africa, women derive power from their control over marketing agricultural and other products (Potash 1989). Particularly in matrilineal societies, such as the Minangkabau of Indonesia, women’s power is interwoven with their roles in the kinship, ceremonial, and economic systems (Blackwood 2000). (See Chapter 8, pages 225–227.)

In most of the tribes, chiefdoms, and states that have been studied by anthropologists, women did not hold formal political office. However, there are some important exceptions, particularly in Africa (Potash 1989:205; Matory 1994). Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, certain offices were reserved to represent women’s interests. Also in Nigeria, some Igbo groups had a female ruler and council that paralleled that of the king and his council but were concerned with women’s affairs. The Mende in Sierra Leone had women paramount chiefs, who were seen as “mothers writ large”; that is, they derived their authority and power from the reproductive and supportive roles of women as mothers. The Mende women’s secret society, called Sande, was very powerful, reflecting the important economic roles of wives, who were authority figures and who might even succeed a chief in office. One of the most famous Mende women of power was Madam Yoko. Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the changing political status of Sierra Leone in the nineteenth century, she succeeded her husband in office and was recognized as a paramount chief in 1884 (Hoffer 1974).

The study of political processes emphasizes how power changes hands and how new kinds of political organization and ideologies develop. Political processes are never static. The use of power and authority may stabilize a social order, avoid or resolve conflicts, and promote the general welfare. However, power and authority may also be used to contest prevailing political ideologies and to change or even destroy existing political systems. Groups or factions within a society, as well as governments themselves, use legitimate and sometimes illegitimate means (terrorism or torture, for example) to gain their ends, but illegitimate means are no less political than legitimate ones.

Conflict and violence do not necessarily destroy social order. In some societies, violence is a legitimate means of dealing with conflict and solving disputes—blood feuds or legally sanctioned death penalties are examples of this. Conflict may support

the social order, as competition for legitimate goals makes those goals seem worth fighting over. Even violent conflict between competitors for political office does not necessarily destroy the power or authority of the office being sought, as the struggle itself emphasizes that the conflicting groups view the office as politically important. Thus, there is a difference between **rebellion**—the attempt of one group to reallocate resources within an existing political structure—and **revolution**, which is an attempt to overthrow the existing political structure and put another type of political structure in its place.

Law: Social Control and Conflict Management

No human society is characterized by eternal peace and harmony. Individuals do not always do what they are supposed to do or expected to do, and they often act in ways that disrupt the social order. For a society to function satisfactorily, however, there must be some conformity among its members.

A major basis for conformity in most societies, particularly those organized through kinship and face-to-face social relations, is the internalization of norms and values. This process begins in childhood, but it is lifelong. In stratified state societies and in chiefdoms, behavior is regulated by the internalization of norms, and also by the state’s or chief’s ability to use force and its control over many social institutions and regulatory processes. Some might argue that these types of control are even more important than the internalization of norms and values.

Every society has some social mechanisms to deal with non-normative behavior and conflict. Informal mechanisms such as gossip and ridicule are effective because most people value the esteem of

political process The ways in which individuals and groups use power to achieve public goals.

factions Informal systems of alliance within well-defined political units such as lineages or villages.

leadership The ability to direct an enterprise or action.

rebellion The attempt of a group within society to force a redistribution of resources and power.

revolution An attempt to overthrow an existing form of political organization.



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(at least some) others. The shame of being gossiped about or ridiculed is a powerful way of ensuring conformity in face-to-face communities and in informal groups within complex societies (Merry 1981). Fear of witchcraft accusations is another informal control mechanism (Evans-Pritchard 1958; Lemert 1997; Seitlyn 1993). In societies with witchcraft beliefs, when something goes wrong, witchcraft accusations are directed at people who stand above the group, are malicious, have a nasty temper, or refuse to share according to group norms. The fear of being accused of witchcraft thus exerts pressure on people to conform.

Avoidance is another informal way of dealing with social deviants. In small-scale societies, where most activities are cooperative, a person shunned by others is at a great disadvantage, both psychologically and economically. In complex societies, avoidance is effective in smaller groups within larger institutions, such as the workplace in an industrial society.

Supernatural sanctions are also important in regulating human behavior. A sin is a violation of an important social norm that calls forth punishment by supernatural forces. In the Trobriand Islands, incest is a sin. A person who commits incest is punished by a divinely imposed skin affliction that is caused by an insect spontaneously generated by the sexual act that breaches the incest taboo (Malinowski 1929b:504). Supernatural forces that punish social deviants are found in every culture, whether they be ghosts, spirits, ogres, or a Santa Claus who gives presents only to “good” little boys and girls.

Law enters the picture when a social norm is so important that its violation authorizes the community, or some part of it, to punish an offender, resolve a conflict, or redress a wrong. In every society, some offenses are considered so disruptive that force or the threat of force is applied. In more complex societies, these functions belong to separate legal institutions, such as courts. In other societies, law, like power, is often embedded in other social institutions. Nevertheless, law is distinguished from the more general reciprocal rights and obligations that underlie conformity in all societies. A useful definition of **law**, then, is that it is a means of social control through the systematic application of force by a politically organized society. Sanctions are legal when they are imposed by a constituted authority (S. Moore 1978:220).

Law addresses conflicts that would otherwise disrupt community life. In politically complex societies such as contemporary nation-states, crimes

against the state are differentiated from grievances people have against one another, although both are addressed by law. In structurally simpler societies, even disputes between individuals may be handled as a potential threat to the social order because they are likely to have ripple effects throughout the community. Conflict management in egalitarian societies is more often directed at maintaining existing social relationships than defining winners and losers. Conflicts may involve the whole community as judge, as in Inuit song duels (see page 292), or a go-between may be authorized to bring the disputants to a settlement. Such go-betweens may have no authority other than their powers of persuasion in effecting the resolution of a dispute. This is in contrast to courts in state societies, which are authorized to decide disputes.



Types of Political Organization

The patterned ways in which power and authority are legitimately used in a society to regulate behavior are the society’s **political organization**. All cultures have political organization. A major way in which political organization varies cross-culturally is the degree to which political roles, institutions, and processes are centralized and differentiated from other aspects of social organization. Variations in political organization are related to **social complexity**—the number of different kinds of groups there are in a society and the ways in which they are connected to one another. Political organization is inextricably related to the forms of social differentiation (egalitarianism, ranking, and stratification) described earlier. Indeed, though they can be separated for analytical purposes, in reality they are like two sides of a coin.

Anthropologists have identified four ideal types of political organization: bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states. Typically, bands and tribes are egalitarian societies, chiefdoms are rank societies, and states are stratified societies (Service 1962).

Band Societies

Band organization is characteristic of foragers. A **band** is a small group of people (20 to 50) belonging to nuclear families that live together and are loosely associated with a territory in which they for-

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age. Generalized or balanced reciprocity dominates economic exchanges in band societies, which tend to be egalitarian. Band societies have minimal role specialization and few differences of wealth, prestige, or power. Bands are fairly independent of one another, with few higher levels of social integration or centralized mechanisms of leadership. Bands tend to be exogamous, with ties between them established mainly by marriage. Bilateral kinship systems link individuals to many different bands through ties of blood and marriage. Trading relations also link individuals to other band members. Membership in bands is flexible, and people may change their residence from one band to another fairly easily. The flexibility of band organization is particularly adaptive for a foraging way of life and low population density.

Leadership Band societies have no formal leadership; decision making is by consensus. Leaders in foraging bands are usually older men and women whose experience, knowledge of group traditions, and special skills or success in foraging are a source of prestige. Leaders cannot enforce their decisions; they can only persuade, and attract others to their leadership, on the basis of past performance. Thus,

among some Inuit, the local leader is called “The One to Whom All Listen,” “He Who Thinks,” or “He Who Knows Everything Best.”

In foraging bands, sharing and generosity are important sources of respect. Among some whaling Inuit, for example, successful whaling captains who do not generously distribute their accumulated wealth are merely called “rich men.” They are distinguished from those whose superior ability *and* generosity make them respected leaders in the village.

Social Control and Conflict Resolution In band societies, social order is maintained informally by gossip, ridicule, and avoidance. In extreme cases, a person may be killed or driven out of the community. Among the Inuit, supernatural sanctions are an important means of social control (Balicki 1970). Violations of norms are considered sins, and offenders may be controlled through ritual means such as public confessions, which are directed by a shaman. The offender is defined as a patient rather than a criminal and is led to confess all the taboos he or she has violated. The local villagers form the audience and participate as a background chorus. These confessions are mainly voluntary, although a forceful shaman may denounce a member of the community he feels has engaged in acts repulsive to the spirits and therefore dangerous to the whole group.

The romanticized view of band societies as non-violent is based on a confusion between collective violence and personal violence (Knauff 1987). The Ju/'hoansi, for example, do not engage in collective violence, but men frequently fight, mostly over women, and these fights often result in death (R. Lee 2003). Thus, although the need for cooperation and norms of reciprocity in band societies minimize conflict, it does occur. Because quarrels and conflicts between individuals may disrupt the

law A means of social control and dispute management through the systematic application of force by those in society with the authority to do so.

political organization The patterned ways in which power is legitimately used in a society to regulate behavior.

social complexity The number of groups and their interrelationships in a society.

band A small group of people related by blood or marriage, who together and are locally associated with a territory in the foraging

group, band societies have developed social mechanisms to inhibit conflict from spreading. The flexibility of band membership is one such mechanism. Among the Mbuti of the Ituri Forest, for example, a process called flux operates: bands regularly break up into smaller units and reform into larger ones throughout the year. Breaking the band down into smaller units separates people who have been in conflict with one another, thus preventing prolonged hostilities (Turnbull 1968).

In Inuit bands, disputes are sometimes resolved through public contests that involve physical action, such as head butting or boxing, or verbal contests, like the famous song duels. Here the weapons are words—“little, sharp words like the wooden splinters which I hack off with my ax” (Hoebel 1974:93). Although murder is normally resolved by killing the murderer, a man may choose to avenge his kin in a song duel if he feels too weak to kill his opponent or if he is confident he will win the song contest. Each contestant in a song duel tries to deliver the traditional compositions with the greatest skill. The one for whom the audience claps the loudest is the winner. Although winning a song duel is not based on the facts of the conflict, it does resolve the quarrel and restore normal relations between the hostile parties. The judgment of the community is accepted by the contestants, and the original complaint is laid to rest.

Because of the low level of technology, lack of formal leadership, and other ecological factors, warfare is largely absent in band societies. They have no formal organization for war, no position of warrior, little or no production for war, and no cultural or social support for sustained armed conflict. When there is violence, its primary objectives are personal, and fighting takes place in short skirmishes.

When band societies encounter technologically and culturally dominant groups, bands tend to retreat and isolate themselves in marginal areas rather than fight. Alternatively, they may form peaceful relations with their neighbors. Part of the debate over whether band societies have warfare is due to the way in which war is defined. If one defines **warfare** as formally organized and culturally recognized patterns of collective violence against another society, or between segments within a larger society, band societies do not have warfare. One of the important contributions of anthropology is to document societies where warfare is ab-

sent, as a counterexample to a prevalent belief in the contemporary United States, and elsewhere, that “warfare is in our genes” (Wallman 2000).

Tribal Societies

A culturally distinct population whose members think of themselves as descended from the same ancestor or as part of the same “people” is a **tribe**. Tribes are found primarily among pastoralists and horticulturalists. Their characteristic economic institutions are reciprocity and redistribution, although as part of larger states, they may participate in market systems as well. Like bands, tribes are basically egalitarian, with no important differences among members in wealth, status, and power. Also like bands, most tribes do not have distinct or centralized political institutions or roles. Power and social control are embedded in other institutions, such as kinship or religion.

Tribes are usually organized into unilineal kin groups, which are the units of political activity and the “owners” of basic economic resources. The emergence of local kin groups larger than the nuclear family is consistent with the larger populations of horticultural and pastoral societies. The effective political unit in tribal societies is a shifting one. Most of the time, the local units of a tribe operate independently; in some societies, such as the Yanomamo (described on page 296), the local units may be in a state of ongoing violent conflict among themselves. A higher-level unity among tribal segments most often occurs in response to the threat of attack from another society or the opportunity to attack another society.

Political Integration in Tribes The local segments of a tribal society may be integrated in various ways. One widespread integrating mechanism is groups based on age. An **age set** is a group of people of similar age and sex who move through some or all of life’s stages together. Age sets cross kinship lines and

war (warfare) A formally organized and culturally recognized pattern of collective violence directed toward other societies, or between segments within a larger society.

tribe A culturally distinct population whose members consider themselves descended from the same ancestor.

age set A group of people of similar age and sex who move through some or all of life’s stages together.

are the basis for important social bonds. Most age sets are made up of males and have military and political functions. Cross-cultural comparison of societies in which age sets are important—in Africa, Melanesia, South America, and the Great Plains of North America—suggests that they are associated with frequent warfare and unstable local groups. Where men cannot rely on their kin as allies in warfare because their kin may not be nearby, age sets provide a more dependable source of allies (Ritter 1980).

Age-based groups called **age grades** are also important in some societies. Among the Maasai, a herding people living in Kenya and Tanzania, males follow a well-ordered progression through a series of age grades. Entry into each grade requires a formalized rite of passage, which is at the heart of Maasai culture. A new age grade is opened for recruitment for groups of boys every 14 years. After childhood, boys are initiated into the warrior stage, which lasts about 15 years. Warriorhood is a period of training in social, political, and military skills, and is traditionally geared to warfare and cattle raiding. The warriors then ceremonially graduate to a less active status, during which they can marry. Finally, about 20 years after the formation of the age grade, when another age grade has become established, the original age grade retires to elderhood in another great ceremony.

Maasai age-mates are a cohesive group. They provide reciprocal hospitality when they visit each other's villages, expressing a warm and intimate relationship. Age grade ceremonies periodically bring together Maasai from different sections of the tribe. These gatherings renew their shared identity, sense of unity, and cooperation and confirm a system of leadership under age grade spokesmen. This lends political coherence to a people who live dispersed from one another and have no centralized government (Galaty 1986).

Other kinds of associations may cut across and thus integrate the local segments of a tribe. One example is the military societies that existed among some Plains Indian tribes in North America. Another is the **secret societies**, such as Poro society for males and Sande society for females, that are found in West Africa.

Local segments of tribes may also be integrated by clan organization. Among the Nuer of East Africa, a **segmentary lineage system** is a significant principle of social organization (Evans-Pritchard 1968/1940). The Nuer are divided into about 20

clans, each of which is further divided into lineages. Below the level of the clan are segments called maximal lineages, which are broken down into major lineages, spread over many villages. Major lineages are subdivided into minor lineages, which in turn are made up of minimal lineages. The minimal lineage contains three to five generations and is the basic descent group that functions in day-to-day activities. Members of a minimal lineage live in the same village and regard one another as close relatives. Minimal lineages are politically independent, and there is no formal or centralized leadership above this level. The higher-order lineages are called upon to function mainly in the context of conflict. They are not corporate groups; as Evans-Pritchard states, neither clans nor lineages have any corporate life, and their members do not live together. Rather, the coming together of members of clans and lineages occurs when lower-order segments come into conflict. In a serious dispute between members of different lower-order lineages, the higher-order lineage members take the side of their nearest kin. Thus, clans and lineages function as contingent alliance networks, rather than formal parts of the political structure. This kind of political structure, called **complementary opposition**, is illustrated in Figure 11.1.

A segmentary lineage system is particularly functional when stronger tribes want to expand into nearby territories held by weaker tribes. Complementary opposition directs the energies of the society upward, away from competition between kin, to an outside enemy. Lineage segments on the borders of other tribes know that if they attack an enemy, they will be helped by other lineages related to them at these higher levels of organization (Sahlins 1961).

age grades Specialized hierarchical associations based on age, which stratify a society by seniority.

secret societies West African societies whose membership is secret or whose rituals are known only to society members. Their most significant function is the initiation of boys and girls into adulthood.

segmentary lineage system A form of sociopolitical organization in which multiple descent groups (usually patrilineages) form at different levels and function in different contexts.

complementary opposition A political structure in which higher-order units form alliances that emerge only when lower units come into conflict.

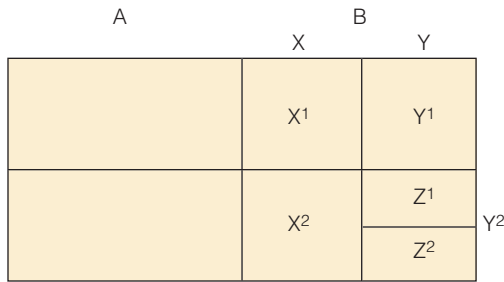


Figure 11.1

A segmentary lineage system with complementary opposition. Complementary opposition functions in the following way: when Z¹ fights Z², no other section gets involved. When Z¹ fights Y¹, Z¹ and Z² unite as Y². When Y¹ fights X¹, Y¹ and Y² unite, and so do X¹ and X². When X¹ fights A, X¹, X², Y¹, and Y² all unite as B. When A raids the Dinka (another tribe), A and B may unite. *Source:* Based on Evans-Pritchard in Marshall Sahlins, "The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion," *American Anthropologist*, 1963:332–345. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

Leadership Tribal societies have leaders but no centralized government and few positions of authority. Many Native American societies had different kinds of leaders for different kinds of activities. The Cheyenne had war leaders and peace leaders. The Ojibwa of Canada had different leaders for war, hunting, ceremonies, and clans. Europeans who first came in contact with the Ojibwa often misinterpreted their political system and imposed on the Ojibwa the concept of a supreme leader or chief. When the Canadian government insisted that the Ojibwa must have a chief, the Ojibwa coined a native word, *okimakkan*, which is best translated as "fake chief."

Another kind of tribal leader, found throughout Melanesia and New Guinea, is the **bigman**—a self-made leader who gains power and authority through personal achievements rather than through holding office. A bigman begins his career as the leader of a small, localized kin group. Through a series of public actions, such as generous loans, the bigman attracts followers within the community. He skillfully builds up his capital and increases his number of wives. Because women take care of pigs, a polygynous bigman can increase the size of his pig herds. He distributes his wealth in ways that build his reputation as a rich and generous man: sponsoring feasts, paying subsidies to

military allies, purchasing high ranks in secret societies, and paying the bridewealth of young men seeking wives. By giving generously, the bigman places many other people under obligation to him. Bigmen command obedience from their followers through this personal relationship of gratitude and obligation.

A bigman's activities provide leadership above the local level, but it is a fragile mechanism of tribal integration. It does not involve the creation of permanent office, but depends on the personality and constant striving of an individual. Bigmen rise and fall, and with their deaths, their factions may dissolve. Most important, however, the bigman must spur his local group on to ever greater production if he is to hold his own against other bigmen in the tribe. To maintain prestige, he must give his competitors more than they can give him. Excessive giving to competitors means the bigman must begin to withhold gifts to his followers. The resulting discontent may lead to defection among his followers, or even murder of the bigman. A bigman cannot pass on his status to others; each person must begin anew to amass the wealth and forge the internal and external social relationships on which bigman status depends (Sahlins 1971).

Under certain ecological and social conditions, more substantial and permanent political leadership may emerge in tribal societies, which then develop into chiefdoms.

Social Control and Conflict Resolution

Tribes, like bands, depend mainly on informal mechanisms for controlling deviant behavior and settling conflicts, but they also have more formal mechanisms of control. The Cheyenne were particularly successful in peacefully resolving intratribal conflict and controlling individual behavior when necessary for the common good. Their formal social control mechanisms came into play during the summer season, when the Cheyenne bands came together for great communal buffalo hunts and tribal ceremonies. Order was necessary to prevent disputes at these tribal gatherings. Strict discipline was required on the buffalo hunt; an individual hunter could ruin the hunt for others by alarming and scattering the buffalo. The tribal gatherings and communal hunts were policed by members of military associations. These associations not only punished offenders but also tried to rehabilitate them, bringing them back within the tribal structure.



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The bigman is an informal leader in many Melanesian cultures. Much of his influence is based on his ability to distribute resources, among which pigs are most important.

ture. The function of the police was to get the deviant to conform to tribal law in the interest of the welfare of the tribe. People were punished by a variety of methods. Sometimes their tepees were ripped to shreds, or the ears of their horses were cut off, a mark of shame. Offenders might also be whipped. If they resisted, they might be killed on the spot. However, if they accepted the punishment and appeared to have learned a lesson, they were accepted back into the group, and their belongings were often replaced. The Cheyenne military societies operated only during the hunt period. At other times, more informal sanctions and leadership operated at the band level (Hoebel 1960).

Regulating behavior in tribal societies may also involve go-betweens. Among the Nuer, this role is played by the Leopard Skin chief. If someone is

killed, retaliation from the victim's kin may begin an ongoing feud. However, a killer may seek sanctuary in the home of the Leopard Skin chief. The chief goes to the killer's family and gets them to promise to pay a certain number of cattle to the victim's family. He then goes to the victim's family and tries to get them to accept this settlement. The Leopard Skin chief can only **mediate**; he cannot compel either family to accept the settlement. In other kinds of disputes, such as those over ownership of cattle, the

bigman A self-made leader who gains power through personal achievements rather than through political office.

mediation A form of managing disputes that uses the offices of a third party to achieve voluntary agreement between disputing parties.



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Leopard Skin chief and perhaps other respected elders in the community may try to get the two sides to reach a settlement through public discussion. They have no means of enforcing their suggestions, however (Evans-Pritchard 1968/1940). Although go-betweens in tribal societies have little or no authority to enforce their decisions, they express the general interest of society in ending tension, punishing wrongs, and restoring social stability. Go-betweens, with the power of public opinion behind them, are usually effective. But if a settlement cannot be agreed upon, a feud will begin.

Another means of conflict resolution, which occurs prominently in New Guinea, is **compensation**—a payment demanded by an aggrieved party to compensate for damage. Compensation is based on the severity of the act that precipitated the dispute. It also tends to reflect the extent to which other kinsmen are involved as allies, because they must get part of the payment. Payment of compensation generally implies acceptance of responsibility by the donors and willingness to terminate the dispute by the recipients (Scaglione 1981). Currently, in some parts of New Guinea, highly inflated compensation payments are demanded in homicide cases. Rather than facilitating conflict resolution, the size and distribution of these payments have become the basis for further disputes (Ottley and Zorn 1983).

Warfare in Tribal Societies Compared to band societies, tribal societies seem to be characterized by a high degree of warfare, a fact for which anthropologists have suggested various explanations. In the absence of strong mechanisms for tribal integration through peaceful means, and the absence of strong motivations to produce food beyond immediate needs, warfare may regulate the balance between population and resources in tribal societies. With slash and burn horticulture, for example, it is much harder to clear forest for cultivation than to work land that has already been used. Thus, a local group may prefer to take land from other groups, by force if necessary, rather than expand into virgin forest. Warfare thus becomes one way for societies to expand when they are experiencing a population increase or have reached the limits of expansion into unoccupied land (Vayda 1976). Where there are effective ways other than war for distributing population within the tribe's total territory, tribes may not engage in war.

Tribal warfare can also be linked to social structure. Patrilineality and patrilocality promote male solidarity, and this makes the use of force in resolving local conflicts more feasible than in matrilineal, matrilocal societies. Matrilocal societies promote solidarity among women and may favor domestic harmony when warfare is carried out over long distances, as among the Iroquois (Ember and Ember 1971). Although anthropologists may not agree about the specific causes of warfare, one area of wide agreement is that war is grounded in historical, material, and ecological conditions, and not in any biologically based human instinct for aggression.

One tribal society that experiences both warfare and a high level of personal violence is the Yanomamo of the Amazon areas of Venezuela and Brazil. Violence by men against women, violence among men in the same village, and warfare between villages have all been described as central to Yanomamo culture (Chagnon 1997). However, the high degree of Yanomamo violence described by ethnographer Napoleon Chagnon has been challenged by other anthropologists (Good and Chanoff 1996), and persistent warfare among these so-called “fierce people” at certain points in their history has been a subject of much anthropological debate.

Napoleon Chagnon explains ongoing Yanomamo warfare and their military ideology as a way of preserving village autonomy. The high degree of violent conflict between men within villages leads to the division of villages into hostile camps. In order to survive as an independent unit in an environment of constant warfare, a village adopts a hostile and aggressive stance toward other villages, perpetuating intervillage warfare in an endless cycle.

Another explanation for Yanomamo violence and warfare is that of controlling population. William Divale and Marvin Harris (1976) argue that tribal warfare in horticultural societies like the Yanomamo regulates population—not by causing deaths in battles, but indirectly through female infanticide. In societies with constant warfare, there is a cultural preference for fierce and aggressive males who can become warriors. Because male children are preferred over females, female infants are often killed. The shortage of women that results

compensation A payment demanded by an aggrieved party to compensate for damage.



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Alternative Forms of Conflict Resolution

In many tribal societies, conflicts between parties with ongoing relationships are resolved by mediation, rather than by formal legal adversarial procedures. The aim of mediation is to resolve disputes in such a way that the social relationship between the disputants is maintained and harmony is restored to the social order. The community, rather than just the two disputants, is involved in resolving conflict. Mediation takes different forms in different cultures.

An important form of conflict management among the Kpelle of Liberia is the moot. When two Kpelle have a dispute, a moot is called. It takes place before an assembled group that includes kinsmen and neighbors of the disputants (Gibbs 1988). A short ritual begins the proceedings, aimed at reminding the audience of its common interests and unity. The complainant speaks first, but the mediator, or others in the audience, may interrupt with questions. The two parties may also question each other directly. The meeting is spirited and lively, but order is maintained by the mediator. After everyone has been heard, the mediator proposes a solution to the conflict that expresses the consensus of the disputing parties and the audience participating in the moot. The party at fault apologizes to the other party, and a ritual distribution of food and drink again unites the group, as the mediator stresses the importance of the restoration of community harmony. In mediation, a “deviant” is pulled back into a relationship with the wider community, and reconciliation is achieved with a minimum of resentment, so that conflicts do not continue and disrupt the social order (Gibbs 1988).

Another example of a community-oriented mechanism for dispute resolution is the kava-drinking circle in Tonga. Kava is an indigenous drink often consumed in ritual contexts throughout Oceania. In the Kingdom of Tonga, drinking kava is a semiritualized male activity that serves as a nonviolent alternative to alcohol-drinking events. The kava circle is an informal social context in which the status distinctions, otherwise so important in Tonga, are dissolved,

and men air their grievances in an atmosphere of social camaraderie.

Anthropological data on the West African moot, the kava circle in Tonga, and other non-adversarial conflict management systems have been used as a key source for reexamining the U.S. legal system, which depends on adversarial confrontations between disputants.

The adversarial system, which operates through formal courts, is costly and time consuming, and frequently leaves the disputants feeling dissatisfied with the outcome. Anthropologists have introduced alternative forms of conflict management based on what they have learned from small-scale societies like the Kpelle and Tonga. William Ury, an anthropologist and linguist, coauthored a now classic and best-selling account, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (Fisher and Ury 1981), that is widely used in many different kinds of negotiations and conflicts in the United States. Ury's principles for conflict resolution represent a win/win situation, in contrast to the win/lose model of litigation.

Because mediation and other alternative forms of conflict resolution are less hostile, less costly, and less time-consuming than court procedures, their use has grown enormously in the United States over the past 30 years. As courts become ever more overburdened and litigation ever more expensive, mediation has increasingly been used to resolve many kinds of disputes, especially when the disputants are in long-term relationships. Mediation is now frequently used in divorce proceedings, minor civil disputes, schools, housing projects, neighborhoods, the workplace, and many other situations. By introducing the idea of culture as central to conflict, and thus to conflict management, anthropologists have also made an important contribution to the development of models of alternative dispute resolution in the international arena (Avruch 1998). International disputes and group conflict within states are both about competition for resources and power, but there are often

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Anthropology Makes a Difference—continued

other, culturally generated contextual subtleties that need to be considered in resolving these conflicts without violence. Anthropological case studies provide an important foundation for discovering the cultural logic of different societies

on which nonviolent conflict resolution can be built, and also for identifying and applying cross-culturally applicable principles for the avoidance of violence (Fry and Bjorkqvist 1997).



Moot courts are found in many African societies. Here a group of elders are on their way to a moot.

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from female infanticide among the Yanomamo provides a strong conscious motivation for warfare—when asked, the Yanomamo say they fight for women, not for land—and a continuing “reason” to keep fighting among themselves. In a Yanomamo raid on another village, as many women as possible are captured.

Another important explanation of Yanomamo warfare involves the effects of European contact. According to Brian Ferguson (1992), the buildup of the extreme Yanomamo violence documented by Napoleon Chagnon in the 1960s was precipitated in the 1940s by severe depopulation, which was caused by European disease epidemics, fatal malnutrition, and intensified competition over European goods. The high death rate led to disruption of Yanomamo family life, and negotiating marriages became particularly difficult because of the deaths of adult males. In addition, the Yanomamo desire for European manufactured

goods—particularly metal machetes, axes, and knives, which are very useful for horticulturists—increased competition among Yanomamo males, and firearms substantially increased the number of fatalities in warfare. Whereas previously such goods were traded into even remote Yanomamo villages, by the 1960s the desire to acquire these goods led to the increasing settlement of Yanomamo around European outposts such as missionary stations. This led to the depletion of game, a highly desired food for Yanomamo cultivators who were also hunters. With the depletion of game, cultural norms of reciprocity broke down, meat was less likely to be shared, and conflict within villages increased. This, in turn, led to enmity between villages. The increasing intervillage warfare reinforced the low status of Yanomamo women and helped further male violence against them, perpetuating the cycle of female infanticide, shortage of women, and increased violence described by Diale

and Harris and Chagnon. Thus, historical factors complement other explanations of Yanomamo “fierceness.”

Chiefdoms

Since the classic formulations of chiefdoms, some anthropologists have argued that the term is not a useful one because so-called chiefdoms actually encompass a very diverse group of societies and lumping them together in a separate category obscures more than it clarifies (Earle 1987). Nevertheless, the term appears to retain sufficient usefulness as an ideal type to continue with the classic formulation, keeping in mind that ideal types are theoretical devices and reality is much more of a continuum.

Political Integration Two main characteristics distinguish chiefdoms from tribes. Unlike a tribe, in which all segments are structurally and functionally similar, a **chiefdom** is made up of parts that are structurally and functionally different from one another. Chiefdoms have been called the first step in integrating villages as units within a multicomunity political organization (Carneiro 1981). Robert Carneiro (1981:45) defines the chiefdom as “an autonomous political unit comprising a number of villages or communities under the permanent control of a paramount chief.” Carneiro holds that the reason chiefdoms are such an important human cultural “invention” is that it is in chiefdoms that villagers first surrendered their political autonomy to chiefs from other villages, thereby creating a second level of political authority. Chiefdoms vary greatly in their social complexity (Peoples 1990). Some ancient chiefdoms had monumental architecture, distinct ceremonial centers, elaborate grave goods reflecting high social status, and larger settlements, or administrative centers, surrounded by smaller villages. Each geographical unit within a chiefdom may also have had its own chief or council.

Chiefdoms are found mainly among cultivators and pastoralists, although chiefdoms also exist among some foraging groups. Chiefdoms are found in cultivating societies (and in those few foraging societies) where food resources are plentifully available. The abundance of food means that chiefs do not need to put excessive burdens on commoners to extract surpluses (Peoples 1990). The importance of a plentiful food supply helps explain the existence of chiefdoms among the foragers of the Northwest Coast of North America.

Leadership Although chiefdoms, like tribes, are organized through kinship, there is an important difference between them. Unlike **acephalous** tribes (tribes without centralized government), chiefdoms have centralized leadership that consists of the political office of the chief. Chiefs are born to that office and are often sustained in it by religious authority. Chiefdoms keep lengthy genealogical records of the names and acts of specific chiefs, which are used to verify claims to rank and chiefly title.

Anthropologists generally argue that the rise of a centralized governing center (that is, a chief with political authority) is related to redistributive exchange patterns, although other patterns, for example, a **tributary mode of exchange**, also exist in chiefdoms. In the tributary mode of exchange the primary producers, whether pastoral or agricultural, are allowed access to the means of production, and tribute is exacted from them by political or military means by the ruler or chief (Wolf 1982:80). In redistribution, goods move into the center (the chief) and are redistributed through the chief’s generosity in giving feasts and sponsoring rituals. Ideally, the economic surplus appropriated by a chief is dispersed throughout the whole society and is a primary support of the chief’s power and prestige, though these redistribution rituals may in fact occur relatively infrequently (Earle 1987), and chiefs may well control their populations by coercion or despotism. The chief also deploys labor as well as redistributing food, making for a higher level of economic productivity. Compared to tribes, the centralized authority of the chief helps prevent violent conflict between segments of the society, and gives a chiefdom more military power than acephalous tribes.

Chiefdoms are ranked societies. Some lineages, and the people in them, have higher social status than others, and these statuses are inherited. For

chiefdom A society with social ranking in which political integration is achieved through an office of centralized leadership called the chief.

acephalous Lacking a government head or chief.

tributary mode of exchange The primary producers, whether pastoral or agricultural, are allowed access to the means of production, and tribute is exacted from them by political or military means.



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example, among the Nootka, who live on the northwest coast of North America, rights to manage all economic resources, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering grounds, were held by individuals, although relatives could not be prevented from using them. Inheritance of these rights passed only through the line of the eldest son.

The same was true for the office of chief. The line that went through lesser sons was ranked lower than that of eldest sons, and these differences in rank were typically expressed in terms of wealth. Although such wealth consisted partly of important economic resources, it was also symbolic, as in the right to use special names, perform certain ceremonial functions, sponsor potlatches, and wear certain items of clothing and decoration. For example, only chiefs were allowed to wear abalone shell jewelry and sea otter fur on their robes. The right to direct the use of economic resources supported the symbolic ranking system. As manager, a chief of a kin group received resources that formally acknowledged his rank: the first of the salmon catch, the best parts of sea mammals that had been killed, blankets, and furs. It was from this source that a chief could sponsor a potlatch, at which most of these goods were given away.

Some of the most complex chiefdoms were found in Polynesia. In Tahiti, society was divided into the Ari'i, who were the immediate families of the chiefs of the most important lineages in the larger districts; the Ra'atira, who were the heads of less important lineages and their families; and the Manahune, which included the remainder of the population. Social rank in Tahiti had economic, political, and religious aspects. Mana, a spiritual power, was possessed by all people, but in different degrees depending on rank. The Ari'i had the most mana because they were closest to the ancestral gods from which mana comes. An elaborate body of taboos separated those with more mana from those with less and also regulated social relations among the three ranks. Higher-ranked people could not eat with those of lower rank, and because men had higher rank than women and children, they could not eat with them. The highest-ranking Ari'i was so sacred that anything he touched became poison for those below him. In some Polynesian islands, the highest chief was kept completely away from other people and even used a special vocabulary that no one else was allowed to use.

Chiefdoms were also recently found among pastoral nomads, such as the Basseri of Iran. To avoid

exhaustive grazing of an area, famine of the flocks, and intertribal fighting, nomads such as the Basseri must stick to their migration schedules and fixed routes. Thus, an important role of the chief is to coordinate movements of the tribe and conduct relations with outsiders through whose territories nomadic pastoralists must move (Barth 1964).

Social Control and Conflict Resolution Internal violence within chiefdoms is lower than in tribes because the chief has authority to make judgments, punish deviant individuals, and resolve disputes, although the stability of chiefly societies, for example, the Basseri (see previous section), rests on chiefly decisions backed up by popular consensus (Salzman 2000). In the Trobriand Islands, for example, the power of a chief to punish people is achieved partly by hiring sorcerers to kill the offender by magic. The greatest power of the Trobriand chief lies in his control of garden magic. As garden magician, he not only organizes the efforts of the villagers under his control but also performs the rituals considered necessary for success at every step: preparing the fields, planting, and harvesting. The ultimate power of the Trobriand chief is his magical control of rain: he is believed to be able to produce a prolonged drought, which will cause many people to starve. This power is used when the chief is angry as a means of collective punishment and enforcement of his will (Malinowski 1935).

Social order in chiefdoms is maintained through both fear and genuine respect for and loyalty to the chief. The chief's authority is backed by his control of symbolic, supernatural, administrative, economic, and military power, which offers a source of stability absent in acephalous tribes, although sometimes violent competition for the office of chief occurs. Chiefdoms may also be rendered unstable if the burdens the chief imposes on the people greatly exceed the services they receive from him. Chiefs generally suppress any attempt at rebellion or threats from competitors and deal harshly with those who try to take their power. To emphasize the importance of this office for the society, offenses against a chief are often punished by death.

State Societies

The most complex form of political organization is the state. A **state** is a hierarchical, centralized form of political organization in which a central government has a legal monopoly over the use of force.



Atahualpa, the last Inca king. The Inca empire in Peru emerged as a result of specific ecological conditions and was destroyed by the Spanish conquistadors.

Unlike chiefdoms, where ranking is based on kinship, in state societies kinship does not regulate relations between the different social classes. Each class tends to marry within itself, and kin ties no longer extend throughout the whole society. The legitimacy of the state rests on ties of **citizenship**, which supplant those of blood and marriage for many purposes. Through the concept of citizenship, the state has an ability to expand without splitting through the incorporation of a variety of political units, classes, and ethnic groups. Thus, states can become much more populous, heterogeneous, and powerful than any other kind of political organization.

The Rise of State Societies The formation of a state is the result of various interrelated events feeding back on one another in complex ways. State societies are associated with the ability to organize large populations for collective and coordinated action, to suppress internal disorder through monopoly over the legitimate use of force, and to defend against external threats. More than any

state A hierarchical, centralized form of political organization in which a central government has a legal monopoly over the use of force.
 membership in a state.

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other form of political organization, the state can carry out military action for both defensive and offensive purposes.

The origin of the state, one of humankind's most significant cultural achievements, cannot be explained by any one theory of cause and effect. Rather, it involves different factors interacting in different ways in different circumstances. Some states emerged as cultural solutions to various kinds of problems that demanded highly centralized coordination and regulation of human populations (Fried 1967; Cohen and Service 1978). Other states may have emerged as a result of particular historical or ecological conditions. Some states, such as the Asante (see the "Ethnography" box), emerged out of military triumph. Prestate societies in various situations respond to different selective pressures by changing some of their internal structures, by subduing a competing group, or by establishing themselves as dominant in a region. This initial shift sets off a chain reaction that may lead to state formation.

Anthropologist Robert Carneiro (1970) emphasizes the importance of ecology in his theory that a limit on agricultural land available to expanding populations may result in the emergence of a state. This seems to have occurred in pre-Columbian Peru, where independent, dispersed farming villages were confined to narrow valleys bounded by the sea, the desert, or mountains. As the population grew, villages split and populations dispersed until all the available land was used up. At this point, more intensive methods of agriculture were applied to land already being farmed, and previously unusable land was brought under cultivation by terracing and irrigation. As population continued to increase, pressure for land intensified, resulting in war. Because of the constraints of the environment, villages that lost wars had nowhere to go. In order to remain on their land, they had to accept a politically subordinate role. As more villages were defeated, the political organization of the area became more complex and chiefdoms developed. The warring units were now larger, and as conquest of larger areas continued, centralization of authority increased. Finally, the entire area was brought under the control of one chief. The next step was the conquest of weaker valley chiefdoms by stronger ones until powerful empires emerged, most notably that of the Inca.

Anthropological theories tend to emphasize either conflict (Fried 1967) or integration (Service 1971) as the dominant factor in the emergence of the state. Integration theories emphasize the benefits of the state to its members: its ability to provide the stability needed for growth and technological development, protection of the rights of its citizens, effective mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes, protection of trade and financial arrangements, defense against external enemies, and ability to expand. Conflict theories tend to emphasize the emergence of the state as directly connected with protecting the power and privileges of an elite class through coercive power and management of political ideology.

Centralized Government States are characterized by **government**: an interrelated set of status roles that become separate from other aspects of social organization, such as kinship. In state societies, groups based on territory become central and an individual belongs to a state through citizenship. The administrative divisions of a state are territorial units, cities, districts, and so on. Each unit has its own government, although these governments are not independent of the central government.

In state societies, the government emerges as a social institution specifically concerned with making and enforcing public policy, and engages in other functions that keep the society going. The state, for example, intervenes in every aspect of the economic process. Through taxation, it stimulates the agricultural production of households. It also controls labor. It can order people to work on roads and buildings and to serve in armies, thus affecting the workforce available for agriculture. The state also intervenes in the exchange and distribution of goods and services through complex market networks. It protects the distribution of goods by making travel safe for traders as they move their goods from one place to another and by keeping peace in the marketplace. The state may also intervene in the consumption process. It can pass laws regarding which people are allowed to use which goods—

government An interrelated set of status roles that become separate from other aspects of social organization, such as kinship. Created with



Ethnography

Wealth and Power in the Precolonial Asante State

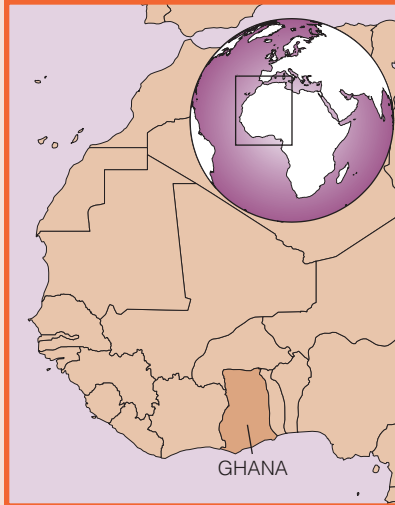
The Asante are a Twi-speaking Akan people who have long occupied the tropical forest area of what is now south-central Ghana in West Africa. The Asante state emerged in 1701, when the Asante decisively defeated a rival Akan power, and state expansion and elaboration occurred throughout the eighteenth century.

The Material Basis of the Asante State

The major material bases of the Asante state were intensive cultivation; substantial, accessible deposits of alluvial and shallow-reef gold, which by the fifteenth century involved the Akan in trade with Europeans; and participation, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the European slave trade (Wilks 1993).

In spite of the difficulties of cultivating the tropical forest, the Asante developed an agricultural economy that not only supported its rural population but produced a surplus sufficient to support a nonproducing urban elite, centered in the state capital of Kumasi. This economy initially required outside labor, which the Asante acquired from European slave traders in exchange for gold. Later, the Asante themselves exported slaves, most of whom they acquired in tribute or in warfare.

Asante agricultural productivity rested on a simple, labor-intensive technology. Staple crops of yam, plantain, cocoyam, and cassava were supplemented by Indian corn, sweet potato, millet, rice, sugar cane, ginger, tomato, onion, groundnut, orange, lime, banana, custard apple, and pineapple. The gathering of oil palm fruits, palm wine, fungi, and wild yams provided additional dietary support, as did wild game, freshwater fish (generally smoked), crabs, and snails (also an important trade item). Domestic sheep, fowl, goats, and pigs, though available, were not



common; their relatively high cost dictated their use as food mainly on ritual occasions. When the Europeans unilaterally abolished the transatlantic slave trade in the early nineteenth century, the Asante successfully reoriented its export economy to cocoa production.

Social Stratification and the State

The highly productive Asante economy was the basis of a complex social hierarchy, ruled by the Asantehene, or king. The state capital, Kumasi, which had been a small village in the seventeenth century, had a permanent resident population of about 25,000 by the early nineteenth century. Most of Kumasi's population was fully involved in the transaction of government business, in the time-consuming performance of elaborate state ceremonies, or in servicing the state sector through ancillary functions such as producing luxury artifacts. The officeholders and administrators, with their urban followers, were entirely provisioned and maintained by the intensive agricultural enterprise of the rural peasants, which included non-Asante slaves and less successful members of elite Asante families. This productive agricultural economy was achieved by a systematic rationalization and concentration of labor, organized, overseen, and given direction by the state in order to support the urban elites. The prodigious food requirements of Kumasi reflected the association of high social status with material well-being characteristic of state societies. The Asantehene's household alone—his royal wives and children—daily consumed large quantities of locally grown food, along with imported delicacies such as mutton, turkey, duck, wild game, rice, European biscuits, tea, sugar, and wine. Some of these were gifts from foreign visitors, which were reciprocated with local food supplies.



Ethnography—continued

Managing Social Stratification

Asante society was composed of several social classes: unfree, alien slaves; peasant commoners living in outlying villages; urban specialists offering their services to the elite; government officials of various classes and positions; and the Asantehene himself, with his royal family, at the top of the hierarchy. It was a dynamic social system, based on achievement, competition, and accumulation of wealth, with widely different levels of material well-being and many opportunities for upward mobility and social competition and conflict. In spite of these potential challenges, the Asante state demonstrated a remarkable stability for well over 150 years, through a balance of coercion, consensus, and regulation of the social hierarchy.

The precolonial Asante state lacked the social infrastructure and technology to command society by coercive force alone. Although it did use such tactics as espionage, detention, fines, confiscation of property, exile, and execution, a most important source of the state's power was its promotion of a central Asante value: that wealth and power went hand in hand, and that the accumulation of wealth by an individual was of benefit to the whole society (reminiscent of the claim by the president of General Motors that what was good for General Motors was good for the United States). Thus, wise investment and the accumulation of wealth resulted in high office, and holding onto high office had to be justified by the accumulation and display of wealth. This Asante value was central to the legitimacy of the state, which maintained its power by redistribution of wealth, regulation of the wealth any individual could accumulate through discretionary use of law and custom, and the control and management of ritual in which wealth was displayed.

Social status in Asante society was based on achievement in the form of accumulated wealth, particularly gold in all its forms: negotiable gold dust, crude rock gold, and gold worked into regalia and ornaments for display. Land and control over human labor, as well as holding high office, were also forms of wealth, but none could compete with gold. Gold was mobile, fluid, desirable, and convertible, giving it immense social value.

Gold conferred the highest prestige and the ultimate purchasing power; it was the currency of the state's taxes and fines, and it was internationally negotiable.

State Control over the Accumulation of Wealth

By the later eighteenth century, and well into the nineteenth, political office became the key to the accumulation of wealth. The Asante state was thus able to control access to wealth and to regulate its distribution, particularly in the form of gold. With the ending of the transatlantic slave trade, desired European goods such as guns, gunpowder, cloth, and luxury articles could only be paid for in gold. Gold ornaments were also necessary for display of social status. Thus, gold became a scarce commodity, exacerbating the Asante tendency to accumulate, hoard, and secrete it, and leading to high interest rates for loans of gold.

The state exploited this scarcity in several ways. For example, the state accepted only gold for payment of fines, tributes, taxes, and levies. Those who didn't have sufficient gold to pay the required amount, or who were unwilling to part with the gold they had, might mortgage land or laborers to acquire the requisite amount in gold, or give these assets directly to the state in lieu of the required amount of gold. As most mortgages wound up in default, the state expanded its assets in either case. These assets might be kept for state expenses or allocated to powerful officeholders as rewards. Through its legal system, then, the state could enrich itself directly and also "redistribute" wealth among the elite according to its own interests.

The state also controlled the allocation of wealth by using discretion in applying legal sanctions. For example, an individual could buy himself out of a mandatory death sentence with a payment of gold that went to the state. The decision was made by the Asantehene, frequently when he wished to ruin a rich officeholder and confiscate his assets. In addition, the state denied individuals the sole right to dispose of their wealth after death. The state levied death duties on self-acquired ^{immovable} property, and might also impose inheritance taxes on land, ^{for} the residue of

the deceased person's wealth was restored to the heirs or successors. The state determined death assessments on a case-by-case basis. Thus, it could fine-tune its control over the elite and prevent the emergence of a class of hereditary property owners that might be a threat to its own power.

The state controlled social stratification in other ways. The opportunity to accumulate wealth on the largest scale—by commanding the state's armies, conducting the state's trade, holding state office, or being a favored beneficiary of the state's law—was itself a gift of the state. Sometimes, the state might take the initiative and give an opportunity to some “up-and-comers” to see how they would fare in the competition for wealth and status. The Asantehene, for example, might lend gold to some rising army captains for a couple of years to see if they could not only repay the loan but parlay it into an accumulation of wealth. Thus, lending, repayment, reciprocity, and reward in the circulation and accumulation of wealth were key factors in the Asante state's ability to maintain itself in power.

The State's Control of Symbolic Capital

In addition to controlling access to material wealth, the state also controlled “symbolic capital.” Only the state could bestow titles or other symbols of high status on individuals in recognition of their success in accumulating wealth. The highest mark of political status granted by the state was the right to use the insignia of the elephant tail. Complex rituals and ceremonies, which combined public display with public acclamation, surrounded this right and title. The ceremonies were punctuated by symbolic and historical references aimed at glorifying the state and recalling the role of public officials as providers and protectors of the people, of which the successful elephant hunt was a symbol.

The aspirant to the title submitted his credentials to public scrutiny by displaying his accumulated wealth in gold, scattering pounded yam mixed with gold dust as he was carried through the streets. He challenged others to display equal wealth, and in other symbolic ways claimed his right to belong to the hallowed tradition of Asante

chiefs. Because aspiring to the elephant tail insignia involved the risk of loss of wealth and status, individuals generally attempted it only once in a lifetime, and only when they had indications that they were in favor with the Asantehene.

The equation of accumulated wealth with the social good was an important constraint on officeholders, including the Asantehene, against squandering their wealth. The prestige derived from the possession of the elephant tail was predicated on the identification of the individual with social prosperity. A person so honored was recognized as having added significantly to the wealth of Asante society, and nothing was considered more shaming to the posthumous reputation of a titleholder than that he died bankrupt—“boiled and ate the elephant tail.” Individual bankruptcy was considered antisocial, a theft from the future well-being of Asante society.

These constraints applied to the Asantehene as well. The Asantehene possessed the “Golden Elephant Tail,” which took precedence over all the others. It symbolized the commitment of each successive Asantehene to uphold and transmit the inheritance of Asante culture embodied in the concept of the elephant's tail. The Golden Tail, symbolizing wealth, was intimately connected to the Golden Stool, symbolizing political authority and legitimate power. The elephant tail was seen as the “helper” of the stool—wealth helps power. This symbolic conjunction, reinforced in ritual, promoted the political ideology that Asante culture and society were “helped” into being by the processes of accumulation. This ideology gave legitimacy to the state's political authority, which was rooted in effective controls over the right to amass and dispose of wealth. In Asante thought, the objective value of wealth was always firmly situated in relation to purpose: the embedding of culture, the increase of society, and the articulation of political authority.

In addition to managing social stratification and accumulating wealth, the state was also the sole guarantor of membership in the corporate groups (matrilineages) that were the basis of Asante society. The state also controlled the entry of



Ethnography—continued

foreign practices, and even foreign ideas, into the society, because alternative cultural values, particularly regarding wealth, were a threat to the state's hegemony.

As European contact increased in the mid-nineteenth century, the Asante state suffered from both internal and external pressures; by the late nineteenth century, it became part of the British Gold Coast colony. Today, however, the Asante continue as a vital ethnic group within the Republic of Ghana, which won its independence from Britain in 1957. The Asantehene retains his power as a ritual, spiritual, and cultural leader of the Asante people.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What were the economic and political ideologies underlying Asante culture?
2. How did the Asante state establish its control over wealth?
3. What were some important political symbols of the Asante state, and how did these support the Asantehene's power?

Source: Adapted from T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.



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In Ghana, the Asante Kingdom continued under British colonialism. Here, the paramount chiefs surround the sixth Ashanti king (Asantehene) of his dynasty, Osei Tutu II, for his enthronement ceremonies in Kumasi.

for example, by reserving for the elite such items as gold, silk, or other costly symbols of high status.

The state also has important military functions. Engaging in warfare strengthens the power of the state. At the same time, it leads to increased political centralization because of a greater need (from the state's perspective) to regulate daily life and to suppress internal conflicts. Because waging war is costly, it often leads to more centralized control over production. Unlike warfare in tribal societies,

which is conducted mainly through the voluntary (though sometimes under pressure) contribution of adult males, in a state society coercion replaces voluntary recruitment. Furthermore, going to war in state societies involves divergent interests; some economic and political groups benefit much more than others. As one American yeoman farmer commented about the Civil War, "it is a rich man's war and a poor man's fight" (Foner 1988)—a view that could be applied to many other wars among state



Global Perspective

Crossing State Borders

A fixed and secure geographical border is considered an essential characteristic of contemporary states, but the vulnerability of state borders is an issue that has been attracting a lot of attention in today's world. Though multinational corporations seem to cross state borders with relative impunity, people crossing state borders has become problematic on two fronts: labor migration and terrorism. Labor migration plays an increasingly important role in economic globalization and, at the same time, the regulation of the legal and illegal entry of foreign workers across state borders takes on a new political as well as economic urgency.

Anthropologist Avi Bornstein (2002) describes the many ways that the "Green Line," the border between Israel and the West Bank, impacts Palestinian politics, culture, and economics. Because of the unequal economic development between Israel and the West Bank, tens of thousands of Palestinians must cross the border each day to seek work. Bornstein demonstrates that although Israeli work permits allow thousands of Palestinians to cross the border legally, thousands of other workers, without permits, cross the border as well, responding to the availability of mainly unskilled

jobs such as agricultural work or construction. This heavy human traffic, in both legal and undocumented workers, results in increased militarization and law enforcement at the border, which is a source of increasingly hostile encounters, exacerbating political mistrust and violence on both sides.

Bornstein's ethnographic analysis of the economic inequalities generated by Palestinian workers crossing the Green Line raises obvious comparisons with the border between the United States and Mexico. Like the Israeli border, the American border has become increasingly militarized in an effort to keep out undocumented workers (as well as to interdict drug traffic). In a study of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States, anthropologist Leo Chavez refers to the border as "political theater," a place in which the American debate over immigration is dramatically played out. In spite of fencing, lighting, the use of infrared scopes, and underground sensors, thousands of undocumented Mexicans continue to cross the border in search of work. Increased law enforcement has not stopped the migration; it has, rather, redirected it toward more difficult

(continued)

societies. As part of the effort to mask this unequal benefit, states also take increasing control over information and channels of communication. This strengthens not only the war effort but also the power of the state.

The many economic, coordinating, and controlling functions of states, in peace and war, require extensive record keeping, giving rise to writing and systems of weights and measures. In some states, cities arose as administrative, religious, and economic centers. These centers then stimulated important cultural achievements in science, art, architecture, and philosophy, which are characteristic of states.

The major defining characteristic of state societies is the government's monopoly over the use of force. A state uses a code of law to make clear how

and when it will use force and forbids individuals or groups to use force except under the state's authorization. Laws (usually written) are passed by authorized legislative bodies and enforced by formal and specialized institutions of law enforcement. Courts and police forces, for example, have the authority to impose all kinds of punishments: fines, confiscation of property, imprisonment, and even death.

The State and Social Stratification State societies generally rest on agriculture. The productivity of intensive cultivation enables the central ruling authority or government to appropriate an economic surplus. This, in turn, permits the development of cities, economic and occupational specialization, and extensive trade. With the emergence of specialized, non-food-producing elites,



Global Perspective—continued

terrain and made the undocumented immigrants even more vulnerable to exploitation and crime (Chavez 1998:196; Hothouse 2005).

Crossing state borders also plays an important role for many Africans (Messer and Shipton 2002:245) because labor migration and remittance are important, even essential, economic realities for rural populations, many of whom live under conditions of extreme poverty. Before they can move across borders, these hopeful migrant workers need to make sure they can leave their own countries, enter other countries, and either remit money or reenter their own countries with their wages. All these movements are regulated by state borders and pose stiff problems for migrants, who are nevertheless constrained to cross borders to survive.

Although state governments work diligently to keep undocumented workers out, the employers of such workers are subject to much less vigilance. Politicians often describe the necessity of militarizing borders through the nationalistic and populist rhetoric of protecting domestic labor markets, ig-

norning the fact that workers who migrate across borders (whether legally or illegally) tend to take jobs that established groups refuse to take because of the low wages, low status, hard labor, or physical danger. In highlighting the economic functions of state borders, Bornstein (2002:133) points out a contrast in border enforcement. Whereas, in the past, border enforcement was often critical to the military defense of a nation, in the twenty-first century it has all too frequently become “a mechanism of tyranny,” restricting migration of workers but encouraging corporate free trade. This has very different benefits for those who cross borders to work and those who employ them. The militarization of borders, whether in Israel, the United States, or Africa, does not prevent undocumented workers from crossing them, but only pushes these desperate people into more covert, and therefore more vulnerable, positions. Through its regulation of workers, state border enforcement also has the effect of stabilizing the social stratification system of a society.



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Protecting borders has become a more urgent concern for nation-states as they try to hold back the flood of refugees, illegal immigrants, and terrorists, who increasingly seek to cross borders for economic or political reasons.

The rise of global terrorism has also given new urgency to state concerns over their borders. One definition of terrorism is that it is a political tactic involving the “unlawful use or threat of violence against persons or property to further political or social objectives” that selects noncombatants as targets (Eller 2006: 228). States have also used terrorism to oppress their own people, and terror is sometimes directed against the state by its own people, as, for example, in the case of the Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing. Today, it is international terrorism committed by subnational or nonstate entities that has been the focus of governments. This kind of terrorism may not be under the control of any state, and state borders have not been very effective in deterring either terrorists or their money from crossing state boundaries.

The global nature of terrorism is demonstrated by the activities of Osama bin Laden and the history of his global network, Al Qaeda. Although bin Laden is from Saudi Arabia (his family is originally from Yemen), his global “jihad” (holy war) began in Afghanistan. In December 1979, just a month before Ronald Reagan became the president of the United States, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Because the United States at that time was engaged in a global cold war with the Soviet Union, the American government viewed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a “proxy war” against the United States. In response, the American CIA encouraged and supported the Islamic jihad, waged by the Afghan *mujahideen* against the Russians, by giving them hundreds of millions of dollars in covert aid. This jihad was also supported by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. In 1985, in President Reagan’s second term, CIA support for the jihad was dramatically increased, and it recruited radical Islamic fighters from all over the Arab/Muslim world, including North Africa, Malaysia, West Africa, Europe, and particularly the Middle East, to defeat the Russians. In 1989, the Russians with-

drew from Afghanistan, and the United States withdrew its funding soon after, leaving behind a seasoned group of privatized Islamic militias that were now well trained and heavily armed. Cultural anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani (2004) emphasizes that it was these privatized, armed militias that significantly contributed to a terrorist movement with the ability to become global.

Among the many foreign fighters against the Russians in Afghanistan was Osama bin Laden, the enormously rich son of a Saudi billionaire, who had joined the jihad just after the Soviet invasion. bin Laden used his financial resources to build military facilities and camps for volunteer fighters recruited from all over the world, first to fight in Afghanistan against the Russians, and then, to carry out terrorist activities against other regimes—including that of Saudi Arabia (which had permitted the United States to build an air base on its soil, most holy to Muslims) and the United States—that he saw as threats to Islam. Over the next 10 years bin Laden built up a global terrorist network and claimed responsibility for terrorist acts in Yemen, Africa, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the United States, culminating in the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on Sept. 11, 2001 (Coll 2004).

As the Congressional investigation of 9/11 demonstrated, Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden’s international terrorist activity is adept at moving people and money across state borders, as well as using modern global communications, such as e-mail, satellite communications, and cell phones. Counterterrorism efforts, to be successful, demand an equally global strategy, involving international cooperation in the monitoring of terrorist communications, freezing of terrorist financial assets that cross state borders, and developing an international standard in the detention and treatment of alleged terrorists (9/11 Commission Report 2004).

social stratification becomes a key element of the state. Chiefdoms, too, rest on an economic surplus, but in state societies, unlike in chiefdoms, only a part of the surplus goes back to the people directly. The rest is used to support the activities of the state itself, such as maintaining administrative bureaucracies, standing armies, artists and craftworkers, and a priesthood. States use their power to collect food surpluses through taxation, and part of this wealth is used to support the ruling class in a luxurious lifestyle that differs substantially from that of ordinary people.

The elite classes in state societies are jealous of their control and strive at every turn to keep what they have. They maintain their power in two ways. First, they maintain control over the apparatus of the state—that is, the centralized government and its institutions, particularly its institutions of coercion. Second, they establish hegemony. **Hegemony**, as it is used here, refers to the development of ideologies, or patterns of belief, usually by economic and power elites, that attempt to justify the stratification system, making it part of the dominant cultural pattern and encoding it in law.

Even with their great coercive and hegemonic power, however, states are not necessarily peaceful and stable. They persistently experience rebellion, directed at overthrowing those who control the government, and sometimes revolutionary attempts to overthrow the entire structure of government. The state is constantly on the alert to ward off threats to depose the government, outbreaks of violence that might result in civil war, or the disruption of the privileges of vested interests. To the extent that a state wins the loyalty of its people, through its ability to shape political ideology and to implement effective protection of their economic and political rights, the constant use of force is not necessary. It is always there in the background, however, as a potential instrument of social control (Nagengast 1994:116).

hegemony The (usually elite) construction of ideologies, beliefs, and values that attempt to justify the stratification system in a state society.

Summary

1. Social differentiation is an important feature of political organization. Anthropologists have identified three major types of social systems: egalitarian, rank, and stratified. Egalitarian systems, mainly found among foragers and in some horticultural societies, give every individual and group in society equal access to basic resources, power, and prestige.
2. Rank societies, or chiefdoms, recognize differences in prestige among individuals and groups, but no one is denied access to the resources necessary for survival. Rank societies are organized through kinship. The ruling chief and his family maintain their position largely through the distribution of food and other goods throughout the entire society.
3. Stratified societies are associated with the state. Social, political, and economic inequality are institutionalized and maintained through a

combination of internalized controls, political power, and force. Kinship ties between the upper and lower classes no longer serve to integrate the society, and there is a wide gap in standards of living.

4. Power in the form of political systems, including law, addresses problems of coordinating and regulating human behavior. The major political processes in any society are making and enforcing decisions affecting the common good and resolving conflicts. Power can be legitimate or illegitimate.
5. Social control is effected through formal and informal means. Informal social control is achieved through gossip, ridicule, and ostracism. Formal sanctions include exile, death, and punishments meted out by courts, judges, police, and other institutionalized forms of regulation.

6. Political organization varies according to the degree of specialization of political functions and the extent to which authority is centralized. These vary with the degree of social complexity. Four major forms of political organization are bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states.
7. Band societies have little integration of groups beyond the level of the band. Leadership and social control are not centralized but are diffused throughout the society. Band societies are mainly foragers.
8. Tribal organization is found mainly among horticulturists and pastoralists. Most often, localized kin groups, the typical political units in tribes, act independently, but under certain conditions they may act collectively. Tribal societies contain some institutions, such as age groups, clans, and other associations, that integrate the local segments of the tribe.
9. Warfare is common in tribal societies. It may be adaptive in limiting population or redistributing goods, or it may grow out of competition for European goods. Tribal societies also use a wide variety of nonviolent means of conflict resolution to settle differences between people and to control deviance.
10. In chiefdoms, kinship is the most important principle of social organization. Unlike tribes, chiefdoms concentrate power in the office of the chief. The chief's power is bolstered by his role in the redistribution of food and other goods.
11. A state is a hierarchical, centralized form of political organization in which a central government has a legal monopoly over the use of force. The state emerged in different parts of the world in response to different historical and ecological conditions, all of which demanded more centralized coordination and regulation of human populations.
12. States are characterized by social stratification and, unlike chiefdoms, are not organized through kinship. The elites in state societies maintain their position through coercive institutions and through hegemony. An example is provided by the precolonial Asante state.



Key Terms

acephalous
achieved status
age grades
age set
ascribed status
authority
band
bigman
chiefdom
citizenship

compensation
complementary
opposition
egalitarian society
factions
government
hegemony
law
leadership
mediation

political ideology
political organization
political process
power
rank society
rebellion
revolution
secret societies
segmentary lineage
system

social complexity
social differentiation
state
stratified society
tribe
tributary mode of
exchange
war (warfare)



Suggested Readings

Barlow, David E., and Melissa Hickman Barlow. 2000. *Police in a Multicultural Society: An American Story*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. A historical and ethnographic work on a key institution

of power in a state society: the police. With a major focus on policing and African Americans, this comprehensive but readable study also includes other groups such as Native Americans.



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- Blackwood, Evelyn. 2000. *Webs of Power: Women, Kin, and Community in a Sumatran Village*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield. This study of an unusual Islamic matrilineal society in Indonesia analyzes the different levels and sources of power, their relation to gender, and the ways in which they have accommodated and resisted colonial, national, and global processes.
- Bracey, Dorothy H. 2006. *Exploring Law and Culture*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. An excellent introduction to the theories and methods of legal anthropology, this brief but comprehensive book examines the many-sided relations between law and culture from a wide range of historical and ethnographic sources.
- Greenhouse, Carol J., Barbara Yngvesson, and David Engel. 1994. *Law and Community in Three American Towns*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Three ethnographic studies in different regions of the United States—the South, the Midwest, and New England—come to similar conclusions about the importance of insider/outsider relations in the use of law and the maintenance of social order.
- Kaplan, Flora E. S. (Ed.). 1997. *Queens, Queen Mothers, Priestesses, and Power: Case Studies in African Gender*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences. Eighteen case studies of elite women from a variety of ethnic groups in southern Africa and West Africa focus on their political and ritual roles in both the public and the private domain.
- Nader, Laura. 1990. *Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. This expansion of Nader's earlier ethnography of a Zapotec village in Mexico reexamines some theoretical questions in legal anthropology, as well as issues of methodology and cross-cultural comparison.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1998. *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis*. Berkeley: University of California Press. In his typically insightful and original style, Wolf examines three uses of power in extreme cultural situations: Nazi Germany, the ancient Aztec, and the Kwakiutl.



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Stratification: Class and Caste



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As societies become more complex, specialized positions of authority develop as centers of power and control. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, in West Africa, the king is surrounded by symbols of his office as he presides over public events.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Explaining Social Stratification
Criteria of Stratification: Power,
Wealth, and Prestige

Ascription and Achievement
Social Class in the United States
*China: Class Stratification in a Socialist
Society*

Caste
The Caste System in India
The Dynamics of Caste
Changes in the Caste System

“Hell . . . nobody knows everything. One man is a doctor, so he talks about surgery. Another man is a teacher, so he talks about books. But doctors and teachers don’t know anything about concrete. You’re a cement finisher and that’s your specialty.”

“Maybe so, but when was the last time you saw anybody standing around talking about concrete?”

—Tally, from *Tally’s Corner* by Elliot Liebow

See page 317 for further discussion.

In this chapter and the next, we continue our examination of social differentiation and the distribution of power by looking at social stratification in complex societies. Here our focus is on class and caste systems; in Chapter 13, we focus on “race” and ethnicity. In fact, however, all the dimensions of contemporary social stratification—class, caste, “race,” ethnicity, and gender—interact in complex ways. Social stratification results from the unequal distribution of goods and services in a society. The ways in which this distribution takes place depend on cultural values, the organization of production, and the access that different individuals and groups have to the means for achieving societal goals.



Explaining Social Stratification

Social stratification seems an inevitable part of state societies; indeed, it is one of the criteria by which states are defined. No culture has ever devised a successful means of organizing a large population without stratification and inequality. One reason is that stratification has some clear social functions. From a **functionalist** perspective, inequality and the promise of economic and social rewards for effort motivate people to increase their efforts and engage in difficult, risky jobs, as well as jobs requiring long and arduous training. Society as a whole clearly benefits from having some people undertake such jobs. For example, in the United States, medical doctors are very highly

functionalism The anthropological theory that specific cultural institutions function to support the structure of society or serve the needs of individuals in society.



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paid. However, becoming a doctor requires 11 or more years of university, medical school, and internship. People must be highly motivated to undertake such an arduous course of study, and prestige and wealth are critical motivators impelling them to do so. If the members of a culture want highly trained medical personnel, they must provide them with rewards commensurate with the length and difficulty of the requisite training.

Although at some level inequality is functional, it is also clear that inequality does not always serve the general good. Every state society has difficult and arduous jobs that are not well rewarded. For example, in the United States, schoolteachers, nurses, and many other professionals do difficult jobs that require substantial training, yet they are not well compensated financially.

Emphasizing the positive, functional aspects of social stratification suggests that inequality benefits society as a whole by drawing the most able people to the most demanding positions. This, too, is not always the case. The effectiveness of social and economic inequality in benefiting society as a whole depends on the degree to which all people start with the same opportunities. However, in no state society do all people have an equal start. Family background, gender, ethnicity, race, social connections, and other factors play important roles in determining the sorts of opportunities available to individuals. As anyone who has ever worked for an inefficient, negligent, or incompetent boss knows, the best-paid and most prestigious positions do not always go to the most able people. And “connections” do count!

Furthermore, the motivating power of economic rewards seems to have limits. A person making \$25,000 a year would probably agree to work harder and undertake more training for a salary of \$50,000 a year. However, would a person making \$400,000 a year undertake additional work and training in order to make \$450,000 a year? Yet \$50,000 is still a great deal of money.

Beyond all these considerations is an issue of the human spirit. Although inequality seems inevitable in large-scale social systems, resentment, however repressed, always seems to accompany substantial inequalities (Scott 1992). Anthropologist Gerald Berreman calls social stratification “painful, damaging, and unjust” and attributes much of the conflict in modern societies—crime, terrorism, ethnic con-

flict, civil war, and international war—to organized inequality (1981:4–5).

Wherever there is inequality, individuals will struggle over rewards. Thus, although social stratification may be inevitable in state societies, and even of some benefit to their populations, it must also be viewed as a source of conflict and instability. This perspective, rooted in the work of Karl Marx and Max Weber, is known as **conflict theory**. In this view, social stratification results from the constant struggle for scarce goods and services. Inequalities exist because those individuals and groups who have acquired power, wealth, and prestige use their assets and their power to maintain control over the apparatus of the state, particularly its institutions of coercion and ideology. When attempts to establish hegemony falter, elites may fall back on the threat of force or its actual use to maintain the status quo. The description of the Asante state in Chapter 11 illustrates efforts by socially powerful groups to maintain political control, which is at the heart of the inextricable connection between social stratification and the state.

The insights of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and others who focus on the conflicts that underlie complex societies are fundamental to a comprehensive analysis of culture and society. The emphasis on conflict and change introduces a historical perspective in understanding social systems. Focusing on conflict also enables us to understand some of the hidden motivations of social actors and to assess institutions by their outcomes, as well as their stated intentions. However, just as the functional view of inequality may lead theorists to ignore the possibility of structural conflict, conflict theorists may sometimes ignore the very real mechanisms that promote solidarity across caste, ethnic, and class lines.



Criteria of Stratification: Power, Wealth, and Prestige

The social stratification system of any society depends on the complex interaction of the four main dimensions of stratification: power, wealth, occupation, and prestige. In Chapter 11, we defined **power** as the ability to control resources in one’s own interest. Anthropologists analyze power by examining its sources, the channels through which it is exer-

cised, and the goals it is deployed to achieve. For example, in the United States, we might compare the sources, uses, and goals of power among corporate presidents, elected public officials, movie stars, or heads of organized crime families. From a cross-cultural perspective, we might compare the sources and uses of power of an American president, an Asante king, and the chairman of the Communist party in the People's Republic of China.

The accumulation of material resources or access to the means of producing these resources is called **wealth**. Many social scientists believe that wealth is the most important dimension of social stratification and the foundation of both power and prestige. For Karl Marx and those who follow his thinking, understanding how material goods are produced and distributed is the critical factor in analyzing social systems. In his analysis of capitalism, Marx differentiated two main strata in society: the capitalists, who own the means of production, and the workers, who must sell their labor in order to survive. According to Marx, the relationship of individuals to the means of production is critical in determining how much power and prestige they have. Wealth translates into power in both direct and indirect ways. In the United States, for example, rich people are more likely to run for political office and win than others, and wealthy individuals

and organizations can influence government in ways that ordinary people cannot.

Social honor, or **prestige**, is a third dimension of social stratification. In complex societies, which are occupationally specialized, prestige is an important attribute of occupation. Occupations are ranked differently in different societies. In the Hindu caste system, for example, a central criterion for ranking occupations is the level of spiritual purity or pollution, a concept that is largely absent from occupational rankings in the United States. But although Americans don't like to talk about the differences in prestige associated with different occupations, they clearly exist, as brought home by the comments of Tally, a "street corner" man and sometime unemployed laborer, in his conversation with Eliot Liebow, the anthropologist, quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

As socioeconomic conditions change, the value system that supports a particular system of prestige

conflict theory A perspective on social stratification that focuses on inequality as a source of conflict and change.

power The ability to control resources in one's own interest.

wealth The accumulation of material resources or access to the means of producing these resources.

prestige Social honor or respect.

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also changes. Occupations may gain or lose prestige. In eighteenth-century Europe, surgery was performed by barbers and was a lower-class occupation; in contemporary North America, surgeons rank very high in prestige, not least because they make enormous amounts of money. And as we see in the discussion in a later section of the People's Republic of China, the prestige and power associated with different occupations has almost been completely reversed as Chinese society moved from a traditional Confucian value system to socialism, then to a system that now incorporates many free market practices.

The prestige awarded to different occupations is related to the power inherent in such occupations, the income derived from them, and their perceived real or symbolic importance to a society. Income is important both for its relation to the standard of living—the material things one has and the access to cultural and social institutions—and as a source of prestige. Although income is a basis for prestige in American society, the way in which that income is earned is also taken into account. Generally speaking, people who earn their incomes illegally have less prestige than do those whose incomes are legally earned. Who do you think has more prestige in the United States: a basketball player who signs a \$5 million annual contract, a heart surgeon who earns \$600,000 a year, or the head of an illegal gambling syndicate or drug distribution network who makes hundreds of millions of dollars? Although wealth is not the sole criterion of social status, money can eventually translate into high social position and legitimate power. Sending one's children to the most prestigious schools, buying a home in the best neighborhood, and joining the right social clubs, apart from the inherent advantages in these situations, also give people the chance to interact with others in high social positions. All of these opportunities cost money. The social status of a family can thus improve dramatically over just a few generations. Social scientists have long debated the question of whether prestige or class is more important in social stratification.

Opposing the views of Karl Marx, who argued for the priority of economic or class interests, are those of Max Weber, a German sociologist of the late nineteenth century. Whereas Marx saw people as conscious of their membership in a group of people with similar economic interests (class), Weber believed that people may value prestige and

the symbolic aspects of status even more than their economic position. Weber further argued that political action can be motivated by a group's desire to defend its social position as well as, or even in opposition to, its economic self-interest. For example, poor whites in the American South did not join poor blacks in working for improvement of their common economic position because they were more committed to maintaining status differences based on color and race. Similarly, many people in the 2004 presidential election voted against their class interests in order to promote their religious values which related to social issues such as gay marriage and abortion. (Frank 2004)



Ascription and Achievement

In comparing stratification systems in different cultures or over time, an important distinction is made between systems based on **ascribed status** and those based on **achieved status**. In a stratification system based on ascription, an individual's status, or position in the system, is determined mainly by birth. Sex and race, for example, are (with some exceptions) ascribed statuses in the United States. Kinship group and caste membership are other examples of ascribed statuses. In a stratification system based on achievement, a person's social position ideally is determined by his or her efforts. Wife, college professor, criminal, and artist are examples of achieved statuses in the United States. Although different systems of social stratification can be described as based primarily on ascription (**closed systems**) or achievement (**open systems**), most societies contain both. In less socially complex societies, most important statuses, such as kinship, may be ascribed, but prestige may also be based on individual achievement.

The two basic forms of social stratification, class systems and caste systems, are primarily associated

ascribed status A social position that a person is born into.

achieved status A social position that a person chooses or achieves on his or her own.

closed system A stratification system based primarily on ascription.

open system A stratification system based primarily on achievement.



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Global Perspective

Globalization and Stratification

Globalization refers to the global integration of the world's economy as this applies to competition for consumer markets, financial exchanges, production processes incorporating both the manufacturing and service sectors, and networks of communication and information. Those who promote globalization point particularly to its potential for raising standards of living in the developing countries, especially through economic development and free trade (see Chapter 16). In contrast, the many critics of globalization emphasize that it has promoted economic inequalities both within nations and between them, creating a world-scale crisis in social welfare that includes a sharp decline in developing countries' national spending on health, education, water and sanitation; a rise in infant mortality; and a worldwide drop in real wages. Anthropologists particularly have been concerned about the increasing dependence of even the previously most remote populations of foragers and horticultural forest dwellers on global enterprises for jobs, markets, or "hand-outs," as the advance of drug dealers, loggers, multinational corporations, miners, cattle ranchers, and irrigation dams, seriously threaten their subsistence economies (Nash 1994).

In examining globalization from an anthropological perspective, Jane Schneider characterizes the world as a "vastly uneven playing field in which a "free market culture" moves outward from centers of concentrated power and wealth—namely, the industrialized nations—the West and Japan—to the nations on the periphery (2002). The core values and practices of the

free market culture are based on the belief that unrestrained markets are efficient engines of progress and will lead to happiness not just for society's elites, but will help wipe out world poverty and create better standards of living for working and middle classes. Underlying this belief is the view that the drive for material gain is the mainspring of human behavior, that all humans will welcome the choices offered by a market system, and that they will choose "rationally" to maximize their individual advantage (Schneider 2002:65).

Where unfettered free markets do not lead to such results, but rather to disruption and growing inequalities between the rich and poor, free market promoters explain these as temporary aberrations soon to disappear. They argue that such problems result from the remaining constraints on free markets or market imperfections such as difficulties of communication or corruption. Sometimes free traders insist that problems are due to the personal unworthiness of the have-nots, cultural or religious dimensions of peoples that are obstacles to development, corruption in non-Western governments and elites, or overpopulation (Stiglitz 2002; Soros 2002).

Capitalism, or the free market culture, is a Western creation rooted in the scientific, technological, and commercial breakthroughs of early modern Europe, followed by the spread of Enlightenment principles, the industrial revolution, and the intensive marketing accompanying consumerism. The free market culture, like other aspects of Western culture, has spread to the rest of

(continued)

with achievement and ascription, respectively. In a **class system**, one's class status is held to be achieved, rather than ascribed. The different strata (classes) are not sharply separated from one another but form a continuum and **social mobility** (movement from one class to another) is possible. A person born into one social class can move, through various means—education, marriage, good luck, hard

work, taking risks—into another. In the discussion of class systems, particularly in the United States, the term *social mobility* generally implies upward

class system A form of social stratification in which the different strata form a continuum and social mobility is possible.
social mobility Movement from one social class to another.



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Global Perspective—continued

the world, though there is increasing resistance to its principles and practices (Hansen 2001). Industrial production in the non-Western world has incorporated millions of new workers into factories, workshops, and home piecework. In today's globalized economy, in contrast to nineteenth-century colonialism, industrial commodities are manufactured all over the world and are as likely to flow from the Third World to the West as in the reverse direction. Because much global production is owned by giant transnational corporations, attempting to avoid the high labor costs, environmental regulations, and taxes in their own, industrialized home countries, new industrial locales are under pressure to keep wages low and turn a blind eye to environmental destruction (Danaher 1996). This has resulted in greater economic stratification within nations as well as between them (see the discussion of China in this chapter).

But the globalized economy is not just a world of global production, but also a world of global desire. The consumer-driven global lifestyle features international brands such as Coke, Sony, Porsche, Honda, Benetton, and IKEA and is emerging among elites and even middle classes, in all the major cities of the world. Trade, travel, television, and the Internet are the basis of this revolution in global culture, and teenagers are among its major participants. Propelled by the global diffusion of MTV and worldwide advertising campaigns, more

than 250 million teens in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific Rim share a taste for Levi jeans, Nike shoes, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, hip-hop, reggae, and salsa. Eating at McDonald's is a status symbol in countries as different as Thailand and Russia. This diffusion of culture also affects the United States. Ethnic food is one of the hottest segments in the U.S. restaurant business, and cappuccino and Perrier are de rigueur in upper-middle-class urban America.

The globalization of desire is not limited to material culture. Any visitor to the Himalayas encounters hordes of Westerners from Germany, California, or the Netherlands wearing sandals and Indian smocks, searching for enlightenment, antiquity, authenticity, peace, and all the things they feel they can't get in the West, as Charles Brooks describes in his ethnography of the European Hare Krishna temple in India (see Chapter 3). At the same time, the Nepali villagers, wearing Lee jeans, Reeboks, and Madonna T-shirts, are looking for the paradise they associate with Los Angeles—a paradise of material prosperity and abundance.

Political scientist Benjamin Barber notes that such cultural elements have become an extraordinary force in globalization: "What is the power of the Pentagon compared with Disneyland? Can the Sixth Fleet keep up with CNN?" he asks (Barber 1992;1995). In Barber's view, McDonald's in Moscow and Coca-Cola in China will do more to

mobility, as if downward mobility is deviant or does not occur. As we will see in this chapter's "Ethnography" box (page 325), that is not the case. Social mobility can also be downward, and indeed, downward mobility is becoming more widespread in the United States.

Social Class in the United States

Social Mobility and the American Dream The United States has long prided itself on its claims to an open class system: the belief that one's social position—Americans are reluctant to acknowledge a

"class" system—depends largely on achieved statuses such as occupation, education, and lifestyle, and that if one works hard there are many opportunities to move upward in the class structure. This promise of upward mobility, called "the American Dream," is central to American national culture and is based on the democratic principle of equality of opportunity for all. Although belief in the American Dream is strong among all the different "racial" and ethnic groups in the country, any reality-based analysis of American stratification must take into account the intersection of "racial" and ethnic status with the various dimensions of class. We see in the following

create a global culture than military colonization ever could.

Television makes the images of this global lifestyle available to almost all social classes, but its cost puts it out of reach for most of the world's population. One effect of this class-based global lifestyle is a resurgence of cultural nationalism bent on keeping traditional cultures alive, which sometimes takes the form of anti-Westernization, a movement that often finds its most dedicated adherents among the poorer and more provincial

members of society. This cultural nationalism, along with its often associated religious fundamentalism, is one of the important effects of a global society increasingly divided into haves and have-nots. Benjamin Barber wrote prophetically, in 1995, that in the short run, the momentum of cultural and religious fundamentalism would dominate world events—9/11 appears to have borne this out—but he also expects that, in the long run, globalization will be an integrating force for world cooperation.



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Even as cultural nationalism and religious fundamentalism gain strength in many nations, the diffusion of Western culture continues to attract an elite, cosmopolitan social class, as here, in the nation of Malaysia.

sections, factors such as educational achievement, levels of indebtedness, income, and wealth accumulation are linked not just to class, but also to “race” and ethnicity, and thus also to social mobility.

Despite an optimistic view that the American class system is not one of deep divides but a “ladder with lots of rungs,” the gap between the classes is wide and appears to be widening in many aspects of life. Research on upward mobility indicates that in spite of people’s continued belief, there is in fact far less of it than there used to be. Although there are more self-made billionaires today than 30 years ago, most people are more likely to remain in the class status of

their parents than they were 30 years ago. By using more rigorous criteria of upward mobility—tracing peoples’ earnings over decades rather than using their subjective views about their own mobility—social scientists have found that moving up from poverty or the working class is more likely to take five rather than two generations to occur, as was the case in America’s past. And surprisingly, lower-class upward social mobility in the United States is not as high as in Britain, France, Canada, and some Scandinavian countries. As one social scientist who does research on social mobility explained it, “Being born in a white-collar family gives you . . . privileges that

very few people in the world have . . . , but being born poor in the U.S. gives you disadvantages unlike anything in Western Europe, Japan, and Canada (J. Scott and Leonhardt 2005).

This is particularly true with regard to health care. In addition to job loss, one of the most frequent emergencies for Americans that results in financial loss is health care. Research indicates that the chance of good health, quality health care in illness, and the life span itself is affected by one's social class (J. Scott 2005). The high and rising cost of pharmaceuticals and medical care is merely one aspect of the different life chances available to the poor, the middle class, and the wealthy. The more education and income people have, the less likely they are to have and die of heart disease, strokes, diabetes and many types of cancer. Upper-middle-class Americans live longer and in better health than middle-class Americans, who live longer and better than those at the bottom. And these gaps are widening (J. Scott 2005). Although the advances in medicine have increased life expectancy in the United States in general, these have disproportionately benefited people with education, money, good jobs, and connections who are in the best position to learn new information early, modify their behavior, take advantage of the latest treatments, and have the cost covered by insurance. Many risk factors for chronic disease are now more common among the less educated than the better educated. Smoking has dropped sharply among better-educated but not among less-educated people. Physical inactivity is more than twice as common among high school dropouts as among college graduates. Lower-income women are more likely than other women to be overweight. And although stress occurs in all social classes, recent research suggests that the stress from high-demand, low-control jobs further down the occupational scale is more harmful than the stress of professional jobs that have greater autonomy, control, job security, and of course, higher income.

Lower class status, especially poverty, tends to diminish not only one's own life chances but also those of one's children. Poverty often perpetuates itself through generations, calling into question the openness of the American class system. People's **life chances**—the opportunities they have to develop their full potential and take advantage of opportunities in their stratification system—are linked to their social class position. Although the American

ideal of equality includes the belief that “anyone can become a millionaire,” the demonstrated relationship between life chances and social class contradicts this belief for many people. Social mobility itself, for example, is a life chance that depends on where one already is in the class system. People born into positions of wealth, high status, and power strive to maintain those positions and often have the means to keep others from achieving upward mobility. Rich and powerful people have a better chance of maintaining their position over generations than people born into the middle class have of reaching these positions, and middle class people have a better chance of improving their life chances than do those of working or poorer classes (Bowles et al. 2005; Corak 2004; Frank and Cook 1996; Lareau 2003; Neckerman 2004). Because classes also are arenas for social interaction, and wealth and power are reinforced by kinship links, particularly among the upper-middle classes and elites, these links are utilized both as a basis for exclusive interactional networks such as social and business clubs, and as a way for members of the class to maintain their position and that of their children. As part of the denial of the relevance of class in the United States, many Americans associate the importance of kinship in the elite class with other cultures and nations, not their own. Yet the expression “It's who you know, not what you know that counts” suggests that many Americans are aware of the contradiction between the ideal of a merit-based class system and the reality, in which personal relationships play an important role in improving one's life chances.

The Material Basis of Class Life chances are the opportunities that people have to fulfill their potential in society. Life chances include the chance of survival and longevity, opportunities to obtain an education that will help maximize intellectual and creative potential, opportunities to participate in associations and cultural life, and opportunities to live in comfort and security. To a large extent, life chances are built on the material basis of class, that is, access to a decent income that allows access to basic needs—food, clothing, shelter, health care, a quality education, and the accumulation of some resources or equity as a safety net for emergencies.

Income has always been an important criteria of class in the United States, and family income plays a

crucial role in American life. Income is the gateway to a middle-class lifestyle and serves as the basis for family economic security; over the long term, sufficient and steady income is essential toward saving and accumulating assets.

From 1979 to 2001, there has been an extraordinary jump in income inequality in the United States. In that period, the after-tax income of the top 1 percent of American households jumped 139 percent to more than \$700,000; the income of the middle fifth of households rose only 17 percent, to \$43,700, and the income of the poorest fifth rose only 9 percent. In 2004, the chief executives at the 100 largest companies in California took home a collective \$1.1 billion, an increase of nearly 20 percent over the previous year, while the average worker in California saw a wage increase of just 2.9 percent. For most workers, only during the speculative bubble of the 1990s did income rise above inflation; reductions in pensions have also increased the prospect of financial insecurity in retirement. Tax cuts under President George W. Bush have exacerbated this inequality: the 400 taxpayers with the highest incomes—that is, over \$87 million a year (each)—now pay income tax, Medicare, and Social Security taxes amounting to the same percentage of their incomes as people making \$50,000 to \$75,000. Those people earning more than \$10 million a year now pay a lesser share of their income in these taxes than those making between \$100,000 and 200,000 a year. These income disparities will increase as globalization of production continues to cause job loss in the United States; manufacturing in the United States declines; and the labor movement weakens, giving American workers little leverage to use against employers and leading to a precarious existence for many members of the middle class (NYT Internet Graphics 2005).

Credit Card Debt: The Intersection of Class, “Race,” and Ethnicity Growing inequalities in income and wealth accumulation are intensified by credit card and other debt accumulation. The American cultural emphasis on consumerism, which to some extent blurs the lines between classes, has overshadowed the extent to which American working and middle-class standards of living are based on credit card debt, which rose substantially among households in all different income levels, age groups, and ethnic/racial groups since the late 1990s, driven by a combination of rising

consumer costs, stagnant or declining incomes, and a deregulated credit card industry characterized by high prices and fees, and not surprisingly, record profits for the industry. As a result of two Supreme Court cases denying limits on interest rates and fees, and the passage of the Bankruptcy Law in 2005, usuriously high interest rates, sharp hikes in fees, lower minimum payment requirements, and relentless credit extension is now the industry standard. These industry practices, combined with aggressive marketing beginning in the 1990s, foreshadowed an increased reliance on high-cost credit cards, and between 1990 and 2004 industry profits grew nearly fivefold. Although the industry appears relentlessly competitive, in fact, the top 10 credit card issuers control nearly 90 percent of the market share, an increase over the 56.6 percent share of these companies in 1990.

Debt accumulation is a good illustration of how class, “race,” and ethnicity intersect in the United States. Although increasing reliance on credit cards is one important way families in all communities and classes try to bridge the gap between falling incomes and rising costs, this burden falls heaviest on families with lower incomes, higher unemployment, and lower wealth and those in minority communities. These families often fall into “debt hardship” as monthly debt service payments equal 40 percent or more of their household income. To manage these payments, many families must turn to predatory lenders, who not only demand high fees, but market especially aggressively in low-income communities, and particularly in communities of color.

Because debt obligations are tied so closely to income and wealth accumulation, and because these vary among different ethnic and racial groups, the level of debt obligations vary significantly between white families and those in minority communities. African-American and Latino income gains achieved during the economic boom of the late 1990s were largely erased between 2000 and 2003, mainly because of high levels of unemployment due to job loss. With family income insufficient to cover expenses, credit card debt rose substantially. Although African-American and Latino households rely somewhat less than whites on credit cards for their needs, their access to credit cards increased substantially

over the past 15 years and they are more likely to be in debt, and for larger amounts, than their white counterparts. Part of the explanation for this gap, which is growing, is the longstanding disparities in wealth between African Americans and Latinos, on the one hand, and whites on the other.

In 2001, 31 percent of African-American households and 35 percent of Latino households, compared to 13 percent of white households, had zero or negative net worth, a gap that widened throughout the 1990s. Thus, households in these communities are less likely to have the extra safety net of home equity or liquid savings to handle unexpected expenses or a reduction of income, and in emergencies must turn to credit cards and other forms of short-term loans in order to make ends meet. In addition, African-American and Latino households are aggressively targeted by predatory lenders for short-term loans with much higher interest rates, putting them at greater financial risk.

An additional factor is that in all areas of the country, independent of their income level, African Americans and Latinos, even when their credit ratings are equal to those of whites, are more often denied conventional bank loans and are driven into the higher-interest market of subprime loans. Beyond banks, predatory loaners, such as “payday loan” companies, charge enormously high fees and interest rates—sometimes as much as 400 percent annually—that can result in financial ruin, close out chances of ever moving into the middle class, and ensnare families in a vicious cycle of debt (Silva and Epstein 2005).

Class, Culture, and Educational Achievement

As we have seen, economic status, culture, and minority group status are all useful contexts in which to analyze the American stratification system. Variations in educational achievement are particularly well suited to analysis within these contexts. Minority group membership is clearly related to academic success and failure. John Ogbu, a Nigerian anthropologist who has studied the differential success and failure rates of ethnic and racial groups in American schools, explains his findings through a cultural analysis that emphasizes the differences between minority student “culture” and the culture of the schools required for educational success. Using this cultural model, Ogbu differentiates between what he calls voluntary and involuntary minorities. Voluntary racial minorities, such as the Japanese

and other immigrant groups, came to the United States voluntarily in order to better their lives. Involuntary minorities, such as African Americans, arrived here under the brutal coercion of slavery; other groups, such as Native Americans and Mexican Americans, were incorporated through military policies of expansion. Ogbu’s studies indicate that students from involuntary minorities view the social hierarchy of the United States as unfair, permanent, and systematically discriminatory. In response, he says, many of these minority students reject school values and the importance of academic success, which they view as part of the social structure that oppresses them. Voluntary minorities, on the other hand—even those who, like the Chinese, have been subjected to severe racial discrimination—tend to emphasize the improvement in their current position over that in their homeland and bring with them a culture in which education is an important means of “getting ahead,” which gives them higher expectations for success in American society (Gibson and Ogbu 1991:211–218).

According to Ogbu, many students from involuntary minorities cope with their subordinated social status by creating a secondary cultural system. In this culture, peer group status is more important than academic achievement, and the peer culture stands in opposition to the school. This oppositional identity—which is furthered by public



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The achievement of minority groups in schools involves many factors. Some are cultural factors such as peer group oppositional culture, and others have to do with the resources available for inner-city schools.



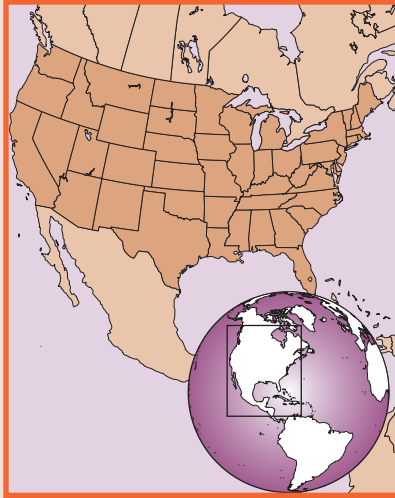
Ethnography

Downward Mobility in the United States

Until the declines in the stock market that occurred at the start of this century, most discussions of social class in the United States emphasized the openness of the class system and the opportunities for upward social mobility, either within one's lifetime or across generations. The belief in upward mobility is the core of the American Dream. It is part of our American national mythology and is closely tied to core American values: individualism, meritocracy, the work ethic, optimism, pragmatism, a national faith in progress and achievement, and a belief in the ability of individuals to control the circumstances of their lives.

The widespread belief in the American Dream leads to another myth: that the United States does not have a class system, despite the evidence of millions of people in poverty and the great, persistent, and increasing inequalities in opportunity, income, and wealth accumulation among different segments (racial, gender, ethnic, and regional) of the population. One way in which Americans characteristically deny the existence of class is by applying the label "middle class" to a very wide range of occupations, incomes, and lifestyles. Another way in which the denial of class operates is the almost exclusive focus on upward, as opposed to downward, mobility. In this chapter we have seen how downward mobility can occur among people at the lower end of the class system, how increasing cycles of debt are compounded by job losses and high health care costs. But downward mobility does not just occur among the working poor.

In her book *Falling from Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence*, anthropologist Katherine Newman defines the downwardly mobile middle class as people who had secure jobs, comfortable homes, and reason to believe that the future would be one of continued prosperity for themselves and their children. Through job



loss, they experienced not only economic decline but also a decline in prestige: they have lost their place in society and, with it, their sense of honor and self-esteem.

Despite the very high numbers of Americans who have become downwardly mobile, and despite its high toll on both individuals and the economy, downward mobility is almost institutionally invisible. The media, for example, most often focus on the lives of the rich and famous and those in the

business world who make fantastic salaries. American culture provides many rituals and symbols of upward mobility and success in the form of displays of wealth and status, but there are no such occasions to mark status deterioration. As Newman observes, "Downward mobility is a hidden dimension of our society's experience because it . . . does not fit into our cultural universe."

Because of the glorification of economic success in the United States and the consequent lack of discussion of failure, the economic burdens of downward mobility in the middle class are intensified by the psychological burdens. First, because American culture puts so much emphasis on people's ability to control their own lives, failure to do so quickly turns into self-blame. Our tendency is to blame the victim rather than investigate possible causes in systemic economic conditions, such as the flight of manufacturing jobs and capital investment to foreign countries, the transition from a manufacturing to a service economy, the recurring downturns that have been part of the capitalist economy for more than 200 years, changing demographics, and more recently, systemic corruption within financial markets. This mentality of blaming individuals for their losses means that the American government is less responsive to



Ethnography—continued

governments of Japan and many European nations, where the idea of the “working class” is stronger and upward mobility less of a dominant cultural theme. These governments spend more money on retraining workers who have lost their jobs, require substantial warning periods before plant closings, and have larger and longer unemployment benefits.

Economists and sociologists can provide statistical data on downward mobility, but anthropologists have a unique contribution to make in understanding its meaning for people who experience it. Using the anthropological idea that culture shapes our interpretations of experience, Newman compared the downward mobility of middle managers laid off from large corporations, air traffic controllers who lost their jobs as a result of a strike, a

town of blue-collar workers who became unemployed when their factory closed, and middle-class women in the aftermath of divorce. Her research shows that downward mobility is experienced differently by different segments of the middle class.

The group which was most likely to experience their downward mobility as personal failure and an emotionally debilitating experience were the middle managers and executives. These were mainly white men in their late 40s and early 50s, married suburban dwellers with teenage children, who typically lost their jobs as a result of corporate downsizing, justified by the corporations as the result of declining sales. For them, job loss frequently led to a sense of personal failure, resulting in demoralization, self-blame, shame, and an excruciating feeling of social isolation. Their job loss led to feel-

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opinion, peer pressure, and the media—includes behavior patterns, such as cutting classes, clowning, or aggressive disruption, that make academic failure likely (see Smedley 1998a:697).

While Ogbu’s distinction between immigrants and involuntary minorities is very powerful, it does

not tell the whole story (see Gibson 1997; Carter 2005). In addition to the oppositional culture of the peer group, hidden agendas of school policy, restricted budgeting, classroom practice, and educational policy have often resulted in less-experienced and less-qualified teachers, along with low expecta-

ings of worthlessness because their self-esteem was so closely tied to their prestigious and high-paying occupations, on which they had built an extremely comfortable lifestyle and invested their identities. Their social networks disappeared rapidly as they were increasingly unable to afford the reciprocity on which social interaction depends. They were isolated in their large suburban homes in neighborhoods where there was rarely a sense of community. Their economic contacts shrank as their peers were similarly vulnerable and, in fact, became their competition in the job market. Prolonged inability to find managerial jobs similar to those they had lost, or any job at all, brought home the stigma that unemployment carries in American middle-class culture.

Keeping up appearances was critical to these men; some managers did not even tell their wives and families about their firing until long after the fact. Their unemployment and subsequent downward mobility negatively affected all of their family life and routines. Many leisure activities had to be abandoned. Men's status in the family declined as wives and children saw them as responsible for the families' financial trouble. Family members were forced into the unfamiliar situation of having to talk to each other more than before.

Blue-collar workers and air traffic controllers did not experience the same degree of demoralization as the middle managers. Blue-collar workers were likely to feel betrayed by companies that had seemed like family to them, and to experience this as anger directed at those companies. The air traffic controllers studied by Newman were fired as the result of a strike in 1981. They experienced downward mobility, but this was accompanied by a

sense of moral victory achieved by holding true to their principles. For them, economic and psychological support from the union played an important role.

Newman's comparisons of experiences of downward mobility indicate that social class is defined by more than economic statistics. People interpret their place in society in different ways, even if they are culturally all labeled "middle class." Newman concludes that downward social mobility is costly not just for the individual but also for the society. The monumental waste of intelligence and motivation involved undermines confidence in business and government, leads to a decline in the quality of manufacture and service, and will ultimately leave the United States far behind as a competitor in a global economy. These conclusions of Newman's, written in the 1990s, have shown her to be prescient.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What cultural values in the United States support an almost exclusive focus on upward social mobility?
2. Examine the cultural assumptions in your occupational or career goals as they relate to upward and downward social mobility.
3. Evaluate the balance between economic and noneconomic factors in occupational choices in the United States, including your own occupational goals.

Source: Adapted from Katherine S. Newman, *Falling from Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence* (2nd ed). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

tions of minority students, are also significant in students' low school achievement, which helps maintain America's racial/ethnic/class stratification system. This connection between the "oppositional culture" to class as well as race or immigrant status has also been documented by studies of school fail-

ure of working-class boys in Great Britain (Willis 1981), where social classes are relatively rigid and a working-class identity has significant parallels to involuntary racial minority status in the United States. The role of elite schools in perpetuating the racial/class/ethnic stratification system of the

United States is described in chilling detail by anthropologist Philippe Bourgois, whose ethnography is based on four years of living in East Harlem, a Puerto Rican enclave in New York City (1996). Bourgois notes that many of his informants, who engaged in violent behavior as adults, were school dropouts. Nevertheless, he claims, school was an essential part of their enculturation. Many of the “crucial survival skills” of these men—fistfighting, verbal jousting, gang rape, and strategic cruelty—were begun in school at the expense of weaker classmates. Although these skills have high survival value on the streets, they are counterproductive in achieving upward social mobility in the larger society. Bourgois insists that school ethnographies need to take into account the nexus among the classroom, the halls, the institution, and the streets to gain a fuller understanding of the ways in which class, race, ethnicity, and culture intersect in social reproduction of the social stratification system (Bourgois 1996:251).

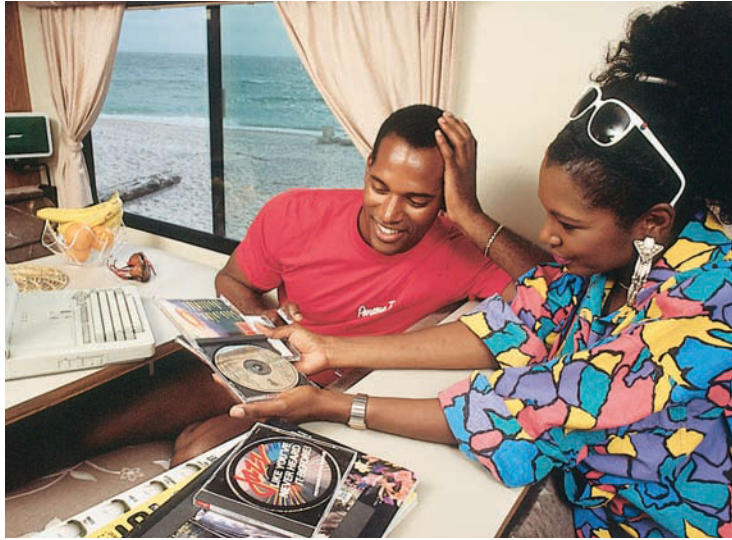
Whereas Bourgois extends Ogbu’s cultural emphasis, other ethnographic studies of inner-city schools question the validity of cultural models in explaining the connection between education and social stratification (Mateu-Gelabert and Lune 2003). Mateu-Gelabert and Lune (n.d.) point out that inner-city neighborhoods, characterized by concentrations of poverty, prolonged unemployment, and drugs, are combined with urban educational systems that track inner city students into oversized, overcrowded, and underfunded schools, whose teachers are often less qualified and less experienced, and unable to handle disruptive behavior of even the small percentage of students who engage in it. It is under these conditions that the “street culture,” such as that which Bourgois describes, too easily permeates school boundaries. In spite of a high number of security guards, these inner-city schools have lost control of their environments and many function more like juvenile detention centers than educational institutions. Under these conditions of chaos and violence, students must deal first and foremost with the threat to their physical safety. This may require them to engage in “street behavior” to survive, not because they are committed to an “oppositional” culture or uncaring about educational achievement. Indeed, many of the students Mateu-Gelabert interviewed explicitly did not embrace the “culture of the streets,” and looked for a school environment that was different and more protective.

Mateu-Gelabert’s study confirms other anthropological findings that inner-city residents largely support mainstream cultural norms and behaviors (Anderson 1999; Carter 2005), among them the importance of success in school and educational achievement. Thus, where Ogbu’s cultural model puts the burden on inner-city students to “change their culture,” Mateu-Gelabert emphasizes the necessity for inner-city schools to make their environments safer and more disciplined, yet less punitive, so that students can engage in success-enhancing behaviors. His in-depth interviews with students indicate that most are committed to education; however, they view the school environment as a difficult place to learn and express a yearning for stricter discipline of disruptive students on the part of teachers and administrators.

Addressing the persistent educational achievement gaps between different social classes and racial/ethnic groups in America becomes more important than ever, because with the decline of unskilled jobs, education becomes even more critical for social mobility. Yet, with the steep rise of college tuition, education seems more than ever linked to social class.

Social Classes as Subcultures To emphasize the importance of differences in income, wealth, and education in American social stratification does not mean that cultural factors are not related to social class. Although most Americans feel uncomfortable with acknowledging a class identity, many studies demonstrate that social class does correlate with differences in attitudes, behavior, lifestyle, and values. Thus, a social class has aspects of a subculture: its members tend to share similar life experiences, occupational roles, values, educational backgrounds, affiliations, leisure activities, buying habits, religious affiliation, and political views. Interestingly, however, although the material bases of class inequality are growing wider, the sharp cultural differences between classes appear less strong than previously (Steinhauer 2005). One of the factors clouding the issue of the importance of class in America is that although classes may share subcultural patterns, an incredibly high standard of material comfort is widely spread throughout the classes, even if much of it is based on growing debt obligations.

In a fascinating and innovative study, anthropologist Richard Shwartz has been examining the



In the United States today, the abundance of material goods is closely tied to the individual and class identity of the middle class, which in fact varies considerably as to salaries and the accumulation of wealth.

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consumption patterns that are central to middle-class identity in the United States. As Wilk points out, the lifestyle of the North American middle-class centers on the home and the “comfort” associated with it. One of the major symbols of this comfort is the recliner chair. Although the recliner was first built in 1927, it was not popular until after World War II, when it became a symbol of working-class domesticity and respectability. For a long while, it was despised by the elite as a symbol of the passive, anti-intellectual, working-class “couch potato.” Today the recliner has worked its way into more than one-fourth of all American homes and is associated with the new cultural themes of “relaxation” and deserved compensation for the stresses of work. For the American middle class, it is the overflowing quantity of material goods that is most closely tied to their expression of individual and class identity. Exploring the meanings that Americans of all classes attach to the artifacts and patterns of their lifestyle is a growing field in anthropology.

Beyond participating in shared cultural patterns, members of a social class also tend to associate more with one another than with people in other classes. Thus, the lifestyle and interactional dimensions of social class reinforce one another. Through interaction based on common residence and schooling, religious participation, voluntary associations, and other social institutions, people learn the lifestyle of their social class. Because lifestyle is an important part of sociability, informal and intimate social relationships, such as friend-

ship and marriage, also tend to bring together people from the same social class.

But though social diversity may have erased many of the old status markers—the clothes people wear, the cars they drive, the votes they cast, the music they listen to—class is still a very powerful force in American life, playing a more, not less, important role, as it affects one’s success in school, quality of health, and financial security and life span.

China: Class Stratification in a Socialist Society

Like the United States, the People’s Republic of China is ideologically committed to an egalitarian society, in this case through the economic system of socialism. Yet since its “economic reforms” began in the late 1970s, China’s increasing income gaps between regions, the sexes, and most important, rural and urban populations have produced increasing social inequalities. Now, although China is the fastest growing economy in the world, it is also one of the most unequal.

Until the Communist revolution achieved power in 1950, China was traditionally a complex agricultural state with rigidly defined social classes: peasants, a small trading and artisan class, a legal and governing bureaucracy appointed by a series of rigorous examinations, and an emperor, his court, and his relatives. A centralized economy brought in cash and crops to support an



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Engaging with Homelessness

“Are you going to write a paper or get some real work done?” one of the homeless people at the shelter asked Vincent Lyon-Callo. Lyon-Callo is doing both.

Along with increasing class inequalities, homelessness is also increasing in American society, exacerbated by unemployment, the lack of affordable and subsidized housing, and the welfare “reform” act of 1996. Although the sheltering industry and services for homeless people have expanded, these have been oriented toward reinforcing the general American view of poverty and associated problems as located within “deviant individuals” rather than within larger cultural and political-economic conditions. According to anthropologist Vincent Lyon-Callo, most homelessness in the United States is the result of a cultural and political philosophy that embraces the private, deregulated, “free” market as the solution to social problems, with the government’s role as that of promoting individualized competition and market-based policies. This philosophy rejects government spending on health, education, affordable housing, and social welfare programs that might provide a safety net for the working poor, claiming that such programs promote dependence and weaken America’s core value of self-reliance.

For Lyon-Callo, anthropology can make an important contribution to America’s social problems like homelessness by exposing the underlying “narrative” of political ideologies disseminated in

the industries that are supposed to help the homeless and the larger society. During the 1980s, as the homeless population swelled, an industry devoted to emergency shelters was developed. Simultaneously with the increase in homeless shelters, however, came widespread criticism that these shelters were largely “unsafe warehouses” that did little to address the basic causes of homelessness. In the early 1990s, in an attempt to respond to this criticism, federal, state, and local governments initiated and supported programs to address homelessness through a wide range of services, including attention to mental illness and drug addiction, and to provide job training, education, and employment. This individualized approach replaced the concept of a government-provided social safety net such as subsidized housing and health benefits for America’s poorest citizens. An increase in subsidized housing was initially included in the program, but Congress refused to fund this because some members argued that it encourages dependency.

Lyon-Callo takes great pains to point out in his book that although many Americans do care about homelessness, their caring takes the form only of charity, or of services aimed at reforming homeless people, who are seen as deviant, pathological, or disabled, needing the help of experts to “fix them.” This individualized “deviant model” undercuts and marginalizes any attempt to see homelessness as a result of systemic inequalities in the United States, such as increas-



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With increasing poverty in the United States, and a lack of affordable housing, many more people are finding themselves homeless. In response, the culture of the sheltering industry focusses almost exclusively on the immediate problem of finding shelter for homeless people rather than in confronting larger injustices in the economic system.

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ing unemployment, declining relative wages, and worker exploitation. Indeed, Lyon-Callo emphasizes, the social service orientation toward homeless people reinforces their compliance with the system and, by distracting action on systemic issues, actually helps to maintain homelessness. For Lyon-Callo, an engaged anthropology must not only critique the individualistic focus of services to the homeless, but also move narratives focusing on its systemic causes into the center of American culture and politics.

As an engaged ethnographer, Lyon-Callo worked in a homeless shelter in the small town of Northampton, Massachusetts. He used his observations at work to show that many of the well-meant social service practices of the sheltering industry at best help people “cope” with homelessness on an individual level, but also undermine collective efforts to change the system of inequalities and social injustices that underlie homelessness. Lyon-Callo describes his ethnography as an attempt to demonstrate how larger issues of poverty and inequality are transformed into issues of individual pathology; how homelessness is made to seem “natural” even within such an affluent society as the United States; and how the dominant “narrative” of homelessness as a problem of individual change results in practices by the sheltering industries and by homeless people themselves that stifle any efforts to change the system in any meaningful way.

Unlike ethnographies of homeless people that emphasize their “culture,” Lyon-Callo described the “culture” of the social service and sheltering industries. Building on the community-based participatory action research advocated by anthropologists Merrill Singer and Jean and Stephen Schensul, Lyon-Callo chose an explicitly interventionist and activist ethnographic method, working in a collaborative manner with community members and homeless people in challenging their “common sense” understandings of homelessness. As a worker in the shelter, he was able to formulate, document, and share his observations that the shelter’s normal practices were doing very little to decrease homelessness in Northampton.

Reaching out to homeless people, other shelter staff, administrators, elected officials, and advocates for the homeless, Lyon-Callo hoped that his critiques would lead to new understandings and practices.

Through documenting examples from homeless people themselves, Lyon-Callo pointed out that homeless people do want to work, but that the local job offerings were temporary, paid very little, were most often part-time, and had irregular hours that prevented a person from taking two jobs. In addition, because Northampton was a college town, there were so many college students, housewives, and retired people available for part-time work that employers had little incentive to give a homeless person a full-time job with decent pay and benefits. So from the homeless person’s perspective, there is little choice but to “cope” as best they can. Lyon-Callo also noted that the job-skills training offered was irrelevant to addressing the problem of homelessness because middle-class jobs were practically nonexistent and there was no affordable housing in the town.

Lyon-Callo describes some of the obstacles in the way of the ideological transformations he hoped to achieve in his engaged ethnography. For example, shelter services, including shelter itself, were overloaded, and the shelter staff had to “prioritize” shelter under crisis conditions of long waiting lists. Those homeless people who resisted the individual reformist directions of the sheltering industry’s practices by not adhering to shelter or staff rules got a reputation for being “noncompliant” or “abusing” the system, which severely constrained their chances of getting a bed for a night. Shelter administrators were also intimidated about suggesting changes or organizing collectively by reality-based fears that funding would decrease for their already limited programs. The staff knew that if they stepped too far out of their defined service roles and began to challenge the systemic conditions (such as the lack of affordable housing or the minimum wage) they put their jobs and their programs at risk.



Anthropology Makes a Difference—continued

Some of Lyon-Callo's efforts did succeed: on one occasion when the number of homeless people far exceeded the number of beds available and prevented the staff from carrying out even their individualized rehabilitation efforts, the administrators and staff documented the increased demand, presented their evidence to the Mayor's office, clergy, and the press, and eventually did win agreement from the community to organize a winter-cot program in churches.

Lyon-Callo's engaged ethnography raises a major question for anthropologists who want to make a difference: that is, how can the insights of ethnographic understanding be used to meaningfully work against the material conditions of homelessness and the culturally "normal" narrative of "the homeless" as deviant types? One ethnographic intervention he suggests is that anthropologists produce written material that becomes part of the public dialogue about social problems. Anthropologists can gather ethnographic data as well as other statistics collected by homeless shelters to demonstrate what needs to be done. In his own case, he incorporated statistics on housing costs and employment restraints in Northampton, which were incorporated into press releases. This helped the Northampton public see how difficult it is to work one's way out of homelessness within the prevailing labor and housing markets. Through collective efforts stimulated by Lyon-Callo's work, a "living wage" campaign for the city gathered momentum and a cooperatively run coffee grinding and wholesale business was started that employed some homeless people.

Lyon-Callo also suggests that through personal contact and participating in community hearings, anthropologists can get the public to critically examine the effects of current policy on homelessness and other social problems. By providing

alternative narratives, anthropologists can "problematize" routine understandings—raising new questions and getting people to think in new ways. To approach alternative systemic solutions, however, is slow work and can be paralyzing even for those who are ideologically committed to it. Even staff members at the shelter who were sympathetic with Lyon-Callo's view noted that at least the current individualized orientation to social services for homeless people "offers hope" whereas long-term political efforts can be very discouraging and even overwhelming. As one staff member put it, "it requires us to quit what we're doing." Although a few of the staff did in fact leave the shelter, most were too fearful of losing their middle-class jobs to consider that a viable alternative.

The kind of transformation in America's class structure that Lyon-Callo is aiming at is a long haul (if ethnography, as we suggested in opening Chapter 3, requires patience, engaged ethnography requires even more patience). Dominant, or hegemonic, ideologies that view poverty, inequality, and homelessness as resulting from deviant individuals not only reproduces the systemic conditions of this system, but also displaces attention from structural violence and structural inequalities. What engaged anthropologists must do then, says Lyon-Callo, is expose the connections between homelessness, specific political ideologies, transnational capital, and the increasingly global war on poor people. In the absence of political efforts toward this transformation, all the "caring," "helping," and charity will not end homelessness.

Source: Vincent Lyon-Callo, *Inequality, Poverty, and Neoliberal Governance: Activist Ethnography in the Homeless Sheltering Industry*. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2004.

enormous system of public works, the administration of the state, the imperial armies, and the court. Intellectuals and administrators were highly regarded; merchants and soldiers were disrespected, and peasants had no status beyond the produce they contributed to the state.

After 1950, Maoist China institutionalized Marxist socialism and communism "with a Chinese face." Private ownership of extractive industries, businesses, factories, land, retail stores, and health care and educational institutions was abolished. All means of production, health care and education,

transportation and welfare were nationalized and collectivized. Private landowners and businesspeople lost their property and status. Everyone was a “comrade,” but industrial workers, poor peasants, and army personnel were awarded the highest prestige, and intellectuals became the “stinky old ninth category,” lowest among the undesirable social classes (Bian 2002:97). Loyal Party members replaced educated bureaucrats in government administration from top to bottom. During the 1970s Cultural Revolution, Mao’s government attempted to erase the huge income, educational, and social divides that still existed between the impoverished countryside and the sophisticated cities, by “sending down people of the professional classes to impoverished rural areas for ‘reeducation’” in line with the egalitarian ideology of Communist China.

With Mao’s fall and the arrival of Deng Xiaoping as Communist Party Chairman in 1977, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) adopted a program of rapid economic modernization permitting more liberalized economic and trade policies. Many state-owned properties were sold off to private investors, with the former state-employed managers of these units becoming wealthy by acting as middlemen between government and the new, private owners. Educated urbanites once again staffed trading offices and practiced their professions on a private basis. Workers were hired by the many private companies dotting the new “enterprise zones” and peasants were permitted to lease decollectivized commune land, market their own produce, and initiate private farm-related businesses (Bian 2002).

However, the huge peasant–urban divide that Mao had created with his agricultural communes was not easily bridged by the new economic reforms. Because the restrictive Maoist household registration policies bound a person to the place of his or her birth, and because it was the work unit that allocated housing, the rural population was cut off from any of the privileges of urban or even town life, such as compulsory education, high-quality health care, individual family housing, and a variety of foodstuffs. Only through rare instances of military assignments, marriage, or attainment of education that would lead to a skilled job could the rural-born have a chance to move to a city or town. Although the new economic reforms alleviated the administrative obstacles of farm-to-city mobility, few peasants had the skills to meet the demands of urban living. As one peasant said, “My son wanted to study computers, but the officials said, ‘Such a country boy like him should be a cook’” (Kahn 2004).

Unsophisticated villagers taking city jobs often don’t know how much they are being paid and have no recourse when factory owners cheat them on their wages. Those peasants who remained in the countryside after their agricultural communes were dissolved lost their free housing, health care, access to farm machinery, and other necessary services. Although some government loans for housing, farm machinery, health care, and pensions for the aged were provided, they were not as substantial as the health insurance and other benefits given to city dwellers. Thus, 50 years after the Communist Revolution, the categories of “rich peasants” and “poor peasants” are again emerging as a few farmers—perhaps better located, more ambitious, or luckier than the rest—are able to produce goods for sale at the new free-market prices. Some villages were able to form farming cooperatives that were more economically viable than individual farming. But although China’s gross domestic product grew by more than 9 percent in the 1990s, and other economic indicators showed that both urban and rural Chinese had significantly increased their standard of living, the gap between rural and urban incomes, apart from a small proportion of “rich peasants,” remained larger than international standards and is growing wider.

Another aspect of modernization affecting inequalities in China has been the decentralization of authority that permits local Provincial and District offices more autonomy in economic affairs such as land reform, taxation, and the solicitation of private investors for real estate, industrial, and commercial development. Certain towns and cities with a head start in industry did well—one town became the sock supplier to two-thirds of the world (you are probably wearing one of those pairs of socks as you read this)—but the decentralization policy also provided opportunities for corruption as government officials less subject to scrutiny from the capital enriched themselves as middlemen for investors at the expense of workers and peasants or became developers themselves.

In just one generation these changes, mediated through China’s participation in the global economy, produced a rising inequality of social classes, including ostentatious displays by the rich, that looks more like the United States in the late-nineteenth-century age of the “robber barons.” As capitalism moves forward, some say eclipsing the remnants of socialism, the gains have made in the new society live by side with the have-nots. China now has



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This skyline and grand avenue of the Pudong New Area, in Shanghai, China, illustrates the growing economic inequality between urban and rural areas as China increasingly produces for the global market.

tens of thousands of multimillionaires, and many of them have abandoned the ascetic lifestyle of communism. Although some of the 10,000 businessmen in China who have more than \$10 million in assets started life as poor peasants, others rose to great wealth through their contacts in the Communist party. Real estate development, which has been shaking off the shackles of state control, is one of the ways to catapult to great wealth. As China's economy continues to produce very wealthy people, suburbs around the major cities are growing with high-end developments, some offering American-style single-family houses for \$1 million or more.

One real estate developer, Zhang Yuchen, built an imitation French chateau, including golf courses and riding trails, which he hopes to turn into a rental community for the rich. Mr. Zhang was allowed to develop this property, which sat upon land collectively farmed by 800 peasants, by economic machinations that would not be unfamiliar to an American reading the daily newspapers. Farmland cannot be bought or sold in China, only leased, and to be converted to commercial use it must be reclaimed by (sold to) the government and rezoned. Officials then oversee the development or sale of the property. Peasants rarely have any say, or share in the profits, when their land is developed. Mr. Zhang was

able to buy his land through a complex arrangement, including recategorizing the farmland he wanted as a conservation area, which lowered the price at which it could be leased. As part of the exchange, the village's elderly got a \$45 monthly stipend and the young men could apply for grounds maintenance jobs at \$2 a day. The villagers whose land was taken for Mr. Zhang's "gated community" say that, in violation of the state land policies incorporated into the contract, Mr. Zhang has removed so much fertile soil that the land is no longer fit for agriculture or conservation. The villagers have appealed to village, town, district, city, and national land bureaus, but so far have not received a reply. And now, the farmers say, they are poorer than before. Where they used to have their own wheat, vegetables, and farm animals, now they have to buy all their food in the market stalls that line the street outside the village, paying high "free market" prices for food while living on very low farm incomes. In addition, the villagers claim that the almost \$10 million Mr. Zhang paid to develop the land understated the land's market value and that the promises village leaders made them that the money would be used to start companies in which all the villagers would own shares were never fulfilled (Kahn 2004a).

A similar process took place in a remote village in Shuanghu, in central China. The government had called for farmers to turn over part of their land for reforestation in exchange for annual payments. One family who did so was promised an annual payment of \$65 for two-thirds of an acre, but they never received the money. Nor, according to the villagers, were 50 designated "poverty level" families in the village ever given their share in a \$2,500 assistance fund. "Not many benefits get down to us here," said one villager. "Local governments skim off most of the money."

The increase of commercial ventures and industry in rural areas has brought some nonfarm employment that has eased the unemployment situation arising from the dissolution of the state farms. However, salaries for workers in rural areas, especially the less fertile and impoverished regions distant from Beijing, are far lower than industrial wages in the cities and new enterprise zones. And the supposed boon to peasant women freed from communal farm life to enter the free market entrepreneurial economy has not fully materialized. Although opportunities for rural women did expand, narrowing income gaps that formerly existed be-

tween men and women and increasing women's status, men are leading the expansion of family businesses, leaving women behind in the less well paid and lower status agricultural sector (Han n.d.) The new, privatized industries often involve "factory despotism" (see page 278), with women subject to increasing discrimination in regard to working conditions, wages, and status.

In both the cities and rural areas, as local politicians and private entrepreneurs take over state enterprises, the disparity between the living conditions of the rich and the working and poorer classes becomes more visible and resented. The new class of millionaires—some tens of thousands of them—are building luxurious homes in the cities and suburbs, tooling along the roads in their foreign automobiles, and indulging in brand-name shopping in the joint venture department stores and food chains of Shanghai, Beijing, and other major cities, mostly along the eastern coast. Along with the new wealth comes a power and arrogance that has sparked off riots in several areas of the countryside. In one case, a wealthy official and his well-dressed wife blamed a pole-carrying porter hurrying through the streets for brushing against the wife's arm and dirtying her clothes. The official pulled rank on the worker and began beating him; fellow workers hastened to his aid, denouncing the official, and a full-scale riot broke out (Kahn 2004b).

Although some economists, both foreign and Chinese, argue that it is normal, and even beneficial, in the transition period to a modern economy that "a few get rich quickly" as an incentive to others, the Chinese government does not explicitly espouse this, and boasts of its efforts to bring the poorest of China's rural regions a share of the wealth so blatantly enjoyed by a small percentage. The most serious aspect of rural poverty is the enormous emigration of rural villagers to urban areas in order to find wage-earning jobs that will help them support their families in the countryside. Because peasants must now pay for schooling, health care, and other basic services, agriculture alone, especially in distant regions, is increasingly inadequate to support these costs. Typically, the father, and sometimes both parents, must migrate to an urban area for factory work and send money back home for their household, which typically consists of their child and the caregiver grandparents. Rural families are split up for years at a time. Because education is the main road out of poverty for rural children, parents will do

whatever they must to send them through the middle and secondary grades. "We have more freedom now than we did when we had a communal life," says one villager, "but where rich city people call their one child 'little sun,' we call ours 'left behind, growing up without their parents'" (Yardley 2004).

In 2003, the Central Committee of the Communist party conducted a survey of party officials in which the widening income gap ranked as the biggest concern, mainly because it has such a potential for stirring social unrest. The party officials have decided against giving peasants control over the land they farm, effectively denying them a share in the new market economy. Farm incomes were raised in 2004 after emergency rural tax cuts, and the government has tried to slow land confiscations; however, rural poverty increases, farmers leave their villages to work as migrants in cities, and their children go to school in the hopes of being anything but farmers. The money that farmers send home becomes essential for the jobless in rural China. Yet even that money is no longer enough as migrant wages have stagnated, education and health costs are rising, and the rural social safety net collapses. In a situation eerily parallel to the United States, medical costs are the leading reason that people fall into poverty. Whereas many city residents have some health benefits, peasants fall under a pay-for-service system where sickness can mean bankruptcy (Yardley 2004; Kahn 2004) article 3 stratification and social unrest. The Chinese motto for the new economy, "to get rich is glorious," has not fulfilled its promise for many people in China.

Caste

In contrast to class systems, which are largely based on achieved status, a **caste system** is based on birth. A person belongs to the caste of his or her parents and cannot move from one caste to another. In a class system, people from different classes may marry; in fact, marriage is one route to upward social mobility. In a caste system, a person can marry only within his or her caste. In other words, caste is hereditary, and castes are endogamous. Castes are

caste system A system of stratification based on birth in which movement from one stratum (caste) to another is not



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ranked in relation to one another and are usually associated, though more in the past than today, with a traditional occupation. A caste system, then, consists of ranked, culturally distinct, interdependent, endogamous groups. Unlike class systems, in which no clear boundaries exist between the different classes, a caste system has definite boundaries between castes.

The caste system of India is perhaps the best-known such system, and we describe it in some detail here. However, caste systems are common in the world's cultures. For example, in addition to other South Asian cultures, in many West African groups, blacksmiths, praise-singers, and leather workers are each endogamous castes. In traditional European society peasants and nobility were endogamous castes, and in Japan the Burakumin people represent a separate caste.

The Caste System in India

The unique elements of the Indian caste system are its complexity, its relation to Hindu religious beliefs and rituals, and the degree to which the castes (or, more properly, subcastes) are cohesive and self-regulating groups. Hindu belief includes four caste categories, called *varna*. The *varna* are ranked according to their ritual purity, which is based on their traditional occupations. The Brahmins, ranked highest, are priests and scholars; second are Kshatriyas, the ruling and warrior caste; third are the Vaisyas, or merchants; and fourth are the Shudras, or menial workers and artisans. Below these four *varna* is a fifth group, previously called untouchables, now called Harijans (children of God, so named by Gandhi), scheduled castes, or Dalits. Dalits perform spiritually polluting work such as cleaning latrines or tanning leather, and are considered so ritually impure that their mere touch contaminates the purity of the higher castes. A person's birth into any one of these caste categories is believed to be a reward or punishment for the quality of his or her actions in a previous life.

Caste interaction is governed by rules of behavior that help maintain caste boundaries. Under traditional norms, members of different castes do not eat with one another, and a higher-caste person will not accept most kinds of food or drink from a lower-caste person. In Indian villages, Dalits are spatially and socially segregated, and are prohibited from drawing water from the same wells that

higher castes use. Many traditional forms of maintaining caste boundaries, particularly between the upper castes and the Dalits, have been declared null by the constitution of independent India. The constitution incorporates protection of human rights and legal equality for all persons, and outlaws all forms of untouchability and other egregious, public forms of caste inequality.

Caste in India, particularly in villages, has an important economic dimension, involving traditional exchanges of goods and services. Families of various artisan and serving castes—such as carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, water carriers, leather workers (who remove dead cattle from the fields), barbers, and washermen—perform their services for high-caste landowning families and in return receive food from them. In addition, landowning families may pay serving-caste families with grain, clothing, fodder for animals, butter, milk, small amounts of cash, and many other things. Such client–patron, or *jajmani*, relationships may carry over for several generations. *Jajmani* relationships give landowners a steady supply of workers. The serving castes, in turn, gain stability.

The focus on the integrative functions of the Indian caste system is highly idealized, however, and rests on ethnography carried out mainly among Brahmins and other high castes. Anthropologists with a more conflict-oriented theoretical approach argue that the benefits of the caste system are much greater for the high castes than for the low castes. In this view, social integration in the Indian village is due as much to physical coercion and the absence of alternatives for the lower castes as it is to the integrating force of economic reciprocity (see Mencher 1980).

Although Indian castes are ranked on the basis of prestige rather than wealth, the gains of high caste position are not just symbolic. The higher castes also benefit materially from their higher status and are in a better position to exercise political power in their own self-interest. The lower castes appear to accept their low position without question, but their conformity also hinges on their awareness that economic sanctions and physical force will be used against them if they try to break out of their caste position. Members of the Indian elites have long used the rationalization that the lower castes are happy where they are. That this is not the case is clear from the many protest movements by scheduled-caste and Dalit castes

and the attempts of various castes to change their caste rankings.

The Dynamics of Caste

Earlier studies of the caste system in India tended to portray it in theoretical and static terms. In fact, lower- and middle-ranked castes often do not accept their caste position and use a number of strategies to rearrange their rank. Such efforts by Dalit castes often bring violent reactions from the higher castes, who see any attempt by Dalits to move up as a threat to their own prestige, wealth, and power.

Unlike in a class system, social mobility in the caste system is primarily a group rather than an individual effort. A caste that has been economically successful in some new occupation may try to raise its prestige by adopting the customs of a higher caste, claiming a new rank for itself. An upwardly mobile caste attempts to change the behavior of its members in the direction of conforming to higher-caste behavior patterns. These new behavior patterns are formulated by caste councils, and nonconforming members will be publicly censured or even outcasted. As part of its striving for social mobility, a lower caste may also invent an origin myth, claiming it originally belonged to a higher-ranked varna.

One aspect of the dynamics of the caste system is illustrated by the Camars, a Dalit caste of leather workers in Agra (site of the Taj Mahal) (Lynch

1969). Traditionally, Camars were shoemakers, and with an increased demand for shoes both in India and abroad, some of them became fairly wealthy. Improved economic circumstances, as well as their potential political power in independent India, stimulated the Camars to try to raise their caste ranking. They claimed to be Kshatriyas (the warrior caste). In an effort to get this claim accepted by the higher castes, they outlawed the eating of beef and buffalo among their members and adopted some high-caste rituals, such as tying the sacred thread. These aspirations for higher status were not acknowledged by others, however.

Subsequently, under the leadership of a Dalit, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a lawyer educated in England and the United States, the Camars tried a different strategy: conversion to Buddhism. Instead of trying to raise their status within the Hindu caste system, they sought to improve their position by putting themselves outside the caste system altogether. At the same time, however, they wanted to retain their status as a special caste in order to be eligible for the benefits of affirmative action offered by the Indian government.

Caste studies from the viewpoint of upper castes do not reveal the “cracks” in what is frequently portrayed as a monolithic social system. Ethnographies based on data from lower and particularly Dalit castes, however, reveal that Dalits are caught in a circular bind of stigmatized identity (the view that they are polluting) and economic exploitation. Even with



In India, the upper-caste view that the lowest castes are content in their socioeconomic position is contradicted by the many protests of Dalits against the unfairness of the caste system.

the constitutional prohibition on untouchability, India has not experienced the radical economic reform necessary to eliminate the economic barriers to Dalit social mobility. Without substantially increased economic power, there is little likelihood that the stigmatized aspect of their identity will change. At the same time, old attitudes regarding their stigmatized identity inhibit the possibilities of radical economic change. Whereas high-caste Indians often justify the caste system by reference to Hindu religious beliefs, scheduled caste members almost universally explain their low status by reference to economic factors, such as the unfair concentration of land or capital in the hands of the elite (Mencher 1980).

Changes in the Caste System

There have been important changes in the caste system in the past 50 years (Fuller 1995). In rural as well as urban India, caste ranking appears to be less sharply defined than formerly, at least within the higher caste categories. This is partly the result of the increasing differentiation of wealth, prestige, and power *within* each caste.

Perhaps the biggest change has occurred in the traditional connection between caste and occupations. New occupations, such as factory work, government service, and the professions that are not caste related have opened opportunities. At the

same time, many low-caste occupations, such as potter and drummer, have declined. These two trends have made caste less relevant for occupation, although the higher castes have the capital and know-how to best exploit new opportunities. Today, members of the middle-class “intelligentsia” feel almost no obligation to follow their caste’s traditional occupation (Beteille 1998).

At an ideological level, there has been a significant change in the public discourse about caste (Fuller 1995). Differences in caste are now referred to in public as cultural differences, rather than as a hierarchy based on spiritual purity and pollution. Corresponding to the new trends of public discourse, the more neutral, nonevaluative terms “community” and “association” are replacing the term *jati* (which literally means *species* but refers to subcaste). At the same time, caste boundaries—for example, in eating, drinking, and smoking the hookah—have weakened. It is unclear to what extent these changes reflect a real change in attitude. The urban upper classes, whose occupations make caste largely irrelevant, may dismiss notions of caste hierarchy, but for the lower castes these ideas are still very relevant. In private, people still speak of caste in a spiritual framework, and people still marry within their caste. This ensures that caste as a building block of society will not disappear in the near future.



Summary

1. Social stratification can be viewed as functional for the social order because it motivates people to undertake all the jobs necessary for the society to survive. Social stratification can also cause conflict, however; different social strata, with opposing interests, can clash with one another over goals and resources.
2. The three major dimensions of social stratification are power, wealth, and prestige. Power is the ability to control people and situations. Wealth is the accumulation of economic resources. Prestige is how one is socially evaluated by others. The particular value system of a culture determines how power, wealth, and prestige interact to determine where a person is placed in the stratification system.
3. Two major types of stratification systems are class and caste. In a class system, social position is largely achieved, although it is also partly determined by the class into which a person is born (ascribed). People may move between social classes, which form a continuum from bottom to top. Social classes are characterized by different lifestyles and life chances.
4. Globalization, the global integration of production and consumption, is viewed by free market capitalists as necessary for progress and increased happiness for all social strata around the

- world. Critics of globalization and the culture of free market capitalism hold that it results in increased inequalities both within nations and among them, as well as cultural fundamentalism.
5. The culture of the United States emphasizes “the American Dream,” that is, the improvement of one’s material standards and life chances. Ideally, class is dismissed as unimportant in the United States but, in fact, there are important material differences and differences in life chances in different social classes. Also, inequality between social classes is increasing, and downward mobility among the middle class is also part of the American class system.
 6. There is also increased downward mobility among working and poorer people as a result of recent job losses and the steep increase in health costs. This has led to increased credit card debt and even debt hardship among all social categories (except the very rich), particularly among minority families.
 7. There are also class and minority group differences with regard to education in the United States. Some anthropologists emphasize “cultural” causes for this, claiming that in some minority groups the students bring the culture of the streets into the schools; other social scientists point to the differences in school funding, the experience of teachers, and the inability of schools to provide a safe environment in which students can learn.
 8. Another aspect of the increasing inequalities of the American class system is the increase in homeless people. Although Americans do care about the homeless, the organization of social services, which emphasizes “fixing” the homeless person rather than the social system of inequality, may actually perpetuate conditions of homelessness even while it provides shelter.
 9. The People’s Republic of China has moved from its ideal as a classless socialist society under Chairman Mao to one in which there are now steep and increasing inequalities, owing to the participation of China in the global economy and its relaxation of socialist economic principles. Under the current incorporation of some free market principles, economic disparities between men and women, different occupational positions, and particularly rural and urban settings have widened enormously, causing many social disruptions.
 10. In a caste system, social position is largely ascribed (based on birth). Boundaries between castes are sharply defined, and marriage is within the caste. The caste system in India is the most complex; it is based on Hindu ideas of ritual purity and pollution. The boundaries of caste in India are maintained by prohibitions on many kinds of social interactions, such as sharing food, as well as by cultural differences.
 11. The positions of subcastes within the larger caste hierarchy, as well as the importance of the caste system itself, have changed in India with independence. The Indian constitution incorporates protection of individual rights and affirmative action for lower castes, particularly former untouchables. Other factors for change include the widening of economic and occupational opportunities, particularly in urban India.



Key Terms

achieved status
ascribed status
caste system
class system

closed system
conflict theory
functionalism

life chances
open system
power

prestige
social mobility
wealth

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Suggested Readings

- Danaher, Kevin, and Michael Shellenberger (Eds.). 1995. *Fighting for the Soul of Brazil*. New York: Monthly Review Press. This scholarly yet readable anthology is meant for the nonspecialist. It contains articles by anthropologists and others describing how participation in the global economy has intensified the inequalities of the Brazilian stratification system.
- Desjarlais, Robert. 1997. *Shelter Blues: Sanity and Selfhood among the Homeless*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. This innovative, ethnographically based portrait of the personal worlds of 40 homeless men and women living in Philadelphia's Station Street shelter examines the links among culture, illness, personhood, and politics on the margins of contemporary American society.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickle and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. New York: Henry Holt. This compelling and insightful book is based on participant observation in America's economic underclass by a well-known social science journalist. It describes the material deprivation, associated stress, and myriad indignities suffered by low-income, nonunionized workers. Perfect for undergraduates because it is so accessible, it also comes with a reading guide (see review by Constance deRoche, "Useful Ethnographies," *GAD Bulletin*, Spring 2005).
- Newman, Katherine. 1999. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Vintage. This book focuses on the working poor in urban ghettos, using life stories. It is particularly insightful in analyzing the fast-food service sector of the inner-city job market. Although this sector offers dead-end, low-skilled jobs, it attracts upwardly mobile young people with a strong work ethic that translates into school achievement.
- Sanjek, Roger. 2000. *The Future of Us All: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. This important, ethnographically based social history of New York City politics and local community relations focuses on one of the most multiethnic and multilingual neighborhoods in the United States, and perhaps the world. Among the topics analyzed are race, class, gender, ritual, and politics, and particularly, political alliances that cross ethnic and racial borders.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 1996. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Using narrative language and photographs, this experimental ethnography concerns the "other" America: the one that survives in communities among the ruins of the West Virginia coal camps, largely left behind by "progress."



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Stratification: “Race” and Ethnicity



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The creation of national and ethnic identities requires making distinctions between groups. Many of these distinctions are presented as rooted in ancient traditions but may actually be of much more recent origin.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Racial Stratification

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“Ideas about race, culture, and . . . ethnicity have long served to orient anthropology’s inquiries and justify its existence. As both offspring and critic of the human condition, anthropology bears a special responsibility to examine the commonplaces of its thought and the fighting words of its speech and to subject them to resolute analysis.”

—Eric Wolf, “Race, Culture, People”

For further details, see the following text.

One of the enduring legacies of Franz Boas was the challenge to think more clearly about the issues posed by race, culture, and ethnicity. It was Boas’s driving conviction that “any attempt to explain cultural form on a purely biological basis is doomed to failure.” His work contributed much not only to anthropology, but also to educating the public at large. But although “race” and culture were concepts central to anthropology very early in its history, ethnicity as a subject of anthropological investigation came into focus much more recently, around the beginning of the 1960s. With this new interest came an emphasis on studying social groups—whether “races” or ethnic groups—in relation to the larger systems of which they are a part, on both national and global levels. A corresponding interest developed in understanding how race and ethnicity intersect with other aspects of social stratification, such as gender and class.



Racial Stratification

As we noted in Chapters 1 and 2, race is a culturally constructed category, based on perceived physical differences, that implies hereditary differences between peoples and is used to justify social stratification. But although race is a culturally constructed category, it easily becomes a “social fact” and has enormous impact on the way people are treated and on their life chances.

Caste, class, or ethnic differences are often conceptualized in racial terms, even when there are no objective physical differences between groups so contrasted. In Japan, for example, the Burakumin are a historically stigmatized and oppressed group that are still so treated today, despite their official emancipation in 1871 (De Vos and Wagatsuma 1966). They are called a race in Japan because the Japanese believe that the Burakumin are innately physically and morally distinct from other Japanese, although this is not validated by any objective



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measures. Burakumin ancestry is manifested only in the family name, occupation, place of residence, and lifestyle. The Burakumin are thus an example of a sociological race that has no physical characteristics distinguishing it from the larger population. Social scientists sometimes refer to them as an “invisible race.”

The stigmatization of the Burakumin demonstrates a seemingly universal fact: all systems of inherited stratification include the belief that social distinctions reflect biological, or “racial,” differences. These so-called racial differences are associated with traits of culture, character, morality, intelligence, personality, and purity that are seen as natural, inherited, and unalterable, in a word, ascribed. Although it is socially easier to distinguish a race when individuals in the so-called racial groups exhibit obvious physical differences, the Japanese–Burakumin relationship demonstrates that a lack of observable physical differences does not prohibit the invention of racial categories. We will come across this again when we discuss racism and immigration laws in the United States in the section on ethnicity.

A conversation Nanda had in Malaysia highlights the ways in which races may be constructed in socially stratified systems and how race, class, and ethnicity intersect. Malaysia has three primary cultural groups—Chinese, Indian, and Malay—as well as a small population of Portuguese descended from sixteenth-century traders who politically dominated Malay society for 100 years. A Malay acquaintance, trying to describe the diversity of Malaysia, began by saying, “The Indians are the black people,” referring to the dark skin color of the Indians in Malaysia, who are mainly from South India. Joking with him a little, Nanda asked, “If the Indians are the black people, who are the white people?” “Oh,” the man answered, without missing a beat, “the Portuguese used to be the white people, but now the Chinese are the white people.”

To understand this conversation, it is necessary to know Malaysian history. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to dominate the area. They were later defeated by the British, who colonized Malaysia (then called Malaya), taking over the most important political and economic positions. When the British left, after Malaysia’s independence, the Chinese moved into many of the commercial and professional positions and now dominate the Malaysian economy. Having taken over the eco-

nomic position formerly occupied by the Portuguese and then the British, the Chinese are now defined as having taken over their “racial” category as well.

Gerald Berreman (1988), an anthropologist who writes about social inequality in the United States and India, holds that inequalities based on gender, race, and caste distinctions are invidious: they give offense and arouse ill will because they are perceived as unfairly related to the treatment a person receives and because they are attributes an individual is born with and cannot change. Invidious distinctions assign people to particular groups and stereotype them on the basis of group characteristics, which are understood as overriding individual qualities or achievements. In a birth-ascribed system of social stratification, “Everyone is sentenced for life to a social cell shared by others of like birth, separated from and ranked relative to all other social cells” (Berreman 1988:486).

Whatever the origin, ideology, or rules of racially stratified social systems, they have important economic, political, and psychological consequences for individuals of all races. Gerald Berreman and others before him have suggested that those in the higher social positions put intense energy into rationalizations of racial and other invidious distinctions because, at a deep level, they realize they are unfair. This unfairness as experienced by its victims may also explain why such systems tend to be unstable, maintained only at great cost to society.

Invidious social distinctions are kept in place by outward conformity, not by consensus; by sanctions of coercion and force, often naked violence, not by voluntary agreement. The oppressed in such situations may resign themselves to their social position and secure whatever secondary gains they can rather than engage in what seems like futile rebellion. Even when resentful of their position, they may not openly resist but they may nevertheless attempt to subvert the social system in many ways, even as they display outward compliance (Scott 1992). Thus, conflict and disorder are inherent in birth ascription systems, whether of race, caste, or entrenched class distinctions. Where the dominant group has overwhelming power and insists on uncompromising enforcement, its members may fail to notice the subtlety of subversion, and the social order gives the false impression of being based on legitimacy. Sometimes, when oppression is experienced as

volt may seem worth taking; conversely, it may be that when spaces in the stratification system open up that overt challenges emerge, as happened in the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the antiapartheid movement in South Africa in the 1990s (A. Marx 1997).

Racial Stratification Systems: A Comparison of the United States and Brazil

Racial Stratification in the United States In the United States, race is constructed largely on the basis of skin color and presumed ancestry, rather than any objectively measured physical characteristics. Apart from a few regional variations on "race"—for example, the Anglo-Hispanic distinction in the American Southwest—the North American system of racial stratification primarily divides people into "blacks" and "whites." This constricted dichotomy simply ignores the reality of the skin color spectrum, which includes many shades, as well as the historical and contemporary reality of racial mixing. The constructed nature of the racial dichotomy is clearly seen, for example, in antebellum Southern court decisions, which considered Chinese as "white"—that is, not black—for purposes of school segregation (Lopez 1997), and in changes in the racial designation of some American ethnic groups (Sacks 1994).

This construct of a dual racial system based on ancestry was legally encoded in many American states. In some Southern states, people were defined as black if they had one-thirty-second "Negro blood," even if they had light skin. One of these states was Louisiana. In 1982, a woman named Suzie Phipps, who had been classified as black because her great-great-great-grandmother was African, went to court to have herself declared white, a categorization that more accurately reflected her skin color. As a result of anthropological testimony that the Louisiana law was nonsense, it was dropped from the books (Dominguez 1986:3). In an ironic comment on the U.S. system of racial classification, Haitian dictator Papa Doc Duvalier once told an American reporter that 96 percent of Haitians were white. Surprised at his comment, the reporter asked him on what basis he arrived at this percentage. Duvalier explained that Haiti used the same procedure for counting

whites—a "drop" of white blood—that Americans used for counting blacks (Hirschfeld 1996).

The particular American binary form of racism that demands that people be classified as either black or white grew out of specific historical conditions. When attempts to enslave the native inhabitants of the Americas failed, Africans were imported to work the sugar and cotton plantations, and slavery soon became identified with Africans. After the abolition of slavery as a result of the Civil War, the freedmen's goals of autonomy clashed with the plantation owners' desires for cheap, subservient labor, and this led to laws inhibiting the freedmen's mobility (Foner 1985). Ever more intense rationalizations about the inferiority of blacks emerged to justify these laws. For example, the former plantation owners characterized the freedmen's desire to farm independently as "laziness."

The racial stereotypes that had reinforced slavery and segregation were supported by emerging biological and social sciences that legitimized races as hierarchically arranged natural categories, characterized by physical, cultural, and moral differences (Smedley 1998b). By the twentieth century, the system of race in the American South was very much like the caste system in India (Berreman 1959). The castelike aspects of this social system included membership based on birth (one was born white or black and remained in that category for life), marriage within the caste (states had laws against black/white intermarriage), cultural distinctiveness of the two groups, traditional occupations each group could enter or was prohibited from entering, and a rank order in which white was superior. Many of the norms of behavior in the Old South revolved around keeping blacks "in their place" and preventing blacks and whites from mixing except under certain conditions. Ultimately, this system was maintained by physical force, which came into the open whenever the status quo was threatened; each attempt by blacks to better their position, even if only by migrating, was met with violence by whites (Dollard 1937; Powdermaker 1967).

The "life sentence" of individuals in a racially based stratification system has social as well as economic consequences. In the United States, we think of race mainly in terms of African-, Asian-, or Native Americans—that is, of "minority" races. "Whiteness," though, is also a racial identity. But because being white is taken as the norm in the United States, until recently it has not figured prominently in social science analyses of race. The

privileges and advantages that go with being white are largely taken for granted and therefore hidden and generally unreflected upon (see T. Allen 1997; Frankenberg 1993; Hartigan 1997; J. Hill 1998). Peggy McIntosh (1999) notes that white people generally assume that ordinary experiences such as shopping, buying or renting a place to live, finding a hairdresser, or using a credit card will not be problematic; African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans have to think twice about how they might be treated in these ordinary, everyday activities.

The interaction between race and social stratification in the United States is manifold. Racial stratification is experienced in life's ordinary interactions, and it in fact impacts on the very chance of life itself. Statistics document, for example, the higher mortality rate for both infants and mothers among African Americans in the United States (Stolberg 1999). Racial stratification also affects social mobility, through the more limited opportunities open to racial minorities and their vulnerability in exploiting these opportunities based on their historic experiences of discrimination and the systemic and structural elements of racism in American society (F. Harrison 1998).

Racial Stratification in Brazil Brazil's race relations are often contrasted with those of the United States (Goldstein 1999). These two countries are the largest multiracial societies in the Americas. Both had plantation slave economies, and slavery in both societies lasted until the second half of the nineteenth century. In both societies, the legacy of slavery continues in the form of racial inequality (Andrews 1992). In contrast to the United States, however, Brazil never encoded its racial system into law. Partly for this reason, Brazil has often been heralded as a multiracial society in which race plays little part in social stratification (Sheriff 2000:116). Instead, Brazil has been considered a class-stratified society in which "race" is only one of many criteria, including education, wealth, and land ownership, that govern social status and social mobility (Skidmore 1985:20).

Brazilian and American anthropologists in the 1950s, drawn to focus on the important differences between the two societies, substantially contributed to this characterization of Brazil as a racial democracy (Goldstein 1999). One of these differences is the seemingly unrestricted interracial sexual rela-

tions and marriages among the different racial communities of Brazil—European, African, and indigenous peoples or Indians. Unlike the United States, with its many miscegenation laws, Brazil never legally prohibited sexual relations or marriage among different races. Donna Goldstein (1999) points out, however, that this difference may be more apparent than real. In Brazil, as in the United States, "race" is to a large extent color-coded. Although racially "mixed" individuals are considered more sexually attractive than they are in the United States, notes Goldstein, the most "African" looking individuals are considered the least beautiful. Furthermore, interracial sexual relations are entwined with the power relations of gender and class, which are rarely discussed in public. For the lower-class black women Goldstein studied, interracial sex is mainly the subject of a fantasy in which a young black or mixed woman becomes the mistress of an older, rich, white man, as a way of ensuring economic security. That these relationships are perceived as beneficial by the individuals involved is hardly testimony to racial egalitarianism.

Another factor contributing to the image of Brazil as a racial democracy is that American anthropologists generally studied smaller Brazilian communities, which are more economically and racially egalitarian than larger cities. In the village in the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia studied by Conrad Kottak (1992:67), for example, the general egalitarianism does include race. Although all the villagers in Kottak's study had slave ancestry, there was marked physical variation among them. Most would have been considered "black" in the United States, but in their own perceptions almost half the villagers identified themselves as mulatto, an intermediate category between black and white commonly used in Brazil. Unlike in the United States, where ancestry determines a person's race, in this village brothers and sisters were often classified as belonging to different races. These Brazilian villagers also used many more criteria than North Americans to assign race. Their racial descriptions included not only skin color, but the length and form of the nose, eye color and shape, hair type and color, and shape of the lips. The villagers actually used 10 to 15 different racial terms to describe people, such as mulatto, *mulatto claro* (light mulatto), or *sarara*, meaning a person with reddish skin and light curly hair. People were inconsistent in applying these terms to themselves and to



The color spectrum in Brazil and its multicategories of race.

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others, and there was wide disagreement among the villagers in placing themselves and others in racially defined categories.

The kinship, friendship, and ritual kinship relationships in the village spanned all the racial categories. There was no connection between race and social stratification, except for a correlation between landownership and lighter skin color. In this fishing village, landownership was not economically or socially significant as it is in other areas of Brazil, but the correlation is suggestive. As Kottak himself notes, in stratified Brazilian communities, light skin does indeed correlate with higher economic status.

Statistical comparisons of the intersection of race and social stratification indicate both similarities and differences between Brazil and the United States. Important measures of socioeconomic inequality are level of education, distribution of occupations, median income, and level of poverty.

In Brazil the educational disparities between whites and nonwhites are much greater than in the United States (Andrews 1992:243). This difference is based partly on the historical traditions of public education in the two countries. In the United States, providing education is a major obligation of the state and local government, but in Brazil, governments have assumed this responsibility only since World War II. Thus the general

level of education in Brazil for both whites and nonwhites is much lower than in the United States. Brazil also has a high rate of illiteracy, and higher education is almost entirely the province of white elites. In contrast, most Americans, white and black, are literate, and most are high-school graduates. Although the percentage of the black population enrolling in college lags far behind that of whites, black college enrollment has doubled since 1950.

Statistics on occupation show important changes over the past half century. In 1950 in the United States there were great job disparities between black and white women, with black women concentrated in the service sectors and white women in white-collar employment. By the 1980s racial inequality between black women and white women declined by more than a third. Although the gains for black men were less impressive, the disparity in the distribution of jobs among men also decreased, with more black men working in white-collar jobs and the professions and fewer in manual labor. In Brazil, between 1950 and 1980 the expansion of jobs in the white-collar sector was almost entirely occupied by whites. In sum, whereas racial equality in jobs increased in the United States, it decreased in Brazil.

As might be expected from the job distribution data, pay disparities by race are much higher in

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Brazil than in the United States (although in both countries gender inequality in earnings is greater than racial inequality and accounts significantly for the racial inequalities) (Andrews 1992:250). However, although black–white salary disparities in the United States decreased between 1950 and 1980, since the 1980s those disparities have increased. Salary inequities in Brazil have remained stable.

In Brazil, approximately 45 percent of nonwhite families and 25 percent of white families live below the poverty line; in the United States, 30 percent of nonwhite families and 8 percent of white families live in poverty. Thus, the level of poverty is much higher in Brazil, but the difference between whites and nonwhites is about 21 percent in each nation. In the United States, unlike Brazil, the rate of poverty among nonwhites is related to the increasing number of female-headed households.

Several factors help explain the differences in the intersection between race and class in the United States and Brazil. One is demography. In Brazil, for example, a larger percentage of nonwhites live in impoverished rural areas in the northeast, and migrants from these areas to the more economically developed south have mainly been white. In the United States, on the other hand, many nonwhites migrated to the more economically developed cities of the industrial Northeast and benefited educationally and economically by this move. A second factor is government intervention. In the United States, courts and the efforts of the federal government have not only dismantled much legal discrimination but implemented affirmative action programs, though under the administration of President George W. Bush, these came under assault. In Brazil, although racial discrimination is not supported in law, the federal and state governments cling to their view of Brazil as a multiracial society without discrimination and reject any special treatment of nonwhites as “reverse discrimination.” Finally, in both societies, an increase in black consciousness has resulted in greater cultural identification with Africa, particularly on the part of university students (J. M. Turner 1985).

Although statistical methods can be used to measure the role of racial discrimination as a cause of racial inequality, these methods are inexact at best. In both Brazil and the United States, nonwhite populations attribute racial inequalities at least partly to racial discrimination (see Goldstein 1999). It is also clear that growth rates for the econ-

omy as a whole play an important but somewhat different role in each society. What comparisons of the United States and Brazil conclusively demonstrate is that racial inequalities are possible within different cultural constructions of race. Racial stratification can occur not only in societies such as the United States, where race is dichotomous, but also in Brazil, where race is viewed as a continuum. Racial stratification can occur as well, of course, in a nation like South Africa under apartheid, where racial classifications—black, white, colored, Asian—were multiple but each classification rigidly defined and distinct from the others.

The representation of Brazil as a racial democracy, noted by anthropologists and promoted by the Brazilian government, has been contested in the past 20 years by Brazilian and North American scholars (Fontaine 1985; A. Marx 1997; Sheriff 2000). As the statistics cited above indicate, these more recent analyses suggest that racial discrimination and significant socioeconomic inequalities between whites and nonwhites do exist in both countries, despite important differences in the perception of race; a generally more accepting attitude toward interracial sexual and marriage relationships in Brazil; and the significant role of law in combating racial stratification in the United States.



Ethnicity and Ethnic Stratification

Ethnicity is a familiar term to most of us. It often appears in the media as a source of conflict and violence—between the Irish and the English in Northern Ireland, between the Hutu and the Tutsi in Central Africa, between Hindus and Muslims in India, between Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, between French-speakers and English-speakers in Canada, between Bosnians and Serbs, and Croats and Albanians, in the former nation of Yugoslavia, between Kurds and Muslims in Iraq. Ethnicity also makes the news in the United States, though more often as ethnic identity and ethnic politics than as outbreaks of ethnic violence.

Ethnicity refers to *perceived* differences—which include one or more patterns such as culture, religion, language, national origin, and historical experience by which groups of people distinguish themselves from others in



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Anthropologists Take a Stand against Racism

Racism continues to be a major American social problem. In today's more tightly integrated global society, "racial" identities continue to be reproduced and are a source of intergroup violence. At the same time, biological anthropologists are increasingly dismissing the concept of "race" as irrelevant for understanding human variation (J. Marks 1995).

Beginning with the work of Franz Boas (see Chapter 1), American anthropologists have taken strong stands on educating the American public about race and have played leading roles in critiquing both scientific and popular racism. In 1940, cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict, a student of Boas, published *Race: Science and Politics*, which was aimed at the general public. In 1942, biological anthropologist Ashley Montagu published another path-breaking and influential book, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. The horrors of the Nazi Holocaust, with its justification by an appeal to "the science of race," put race in the center of the postwar international agenda (di Leonardo 1998:201), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commissioned a committee to produce a definitive scientific repudiation of racism. Most of the members of this committee of experts were anthropologists, including Ashley Montagu, Claude Lévi-Strauss, E. Franklin Frazier, and Juan Comas. On the basis of their work, UNESCO published four statements on race.

Anthropological organizations have adopted numerous statements on race. The American Anthropological Association, the world's largest association of anthropologists, issued statements concerning race in 1961, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1994, and 1995. The following is the full text of the 1995 statement.

American Anthropological Association Statement on the Misuse of "Scientific Findings" to Promote Bigotry and Racial and Ethnic Hatred and Discrimination, adopted in October 1995:

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) is deeply disturbed and saddened by the spread of big-

otry and racial and ethnic hatred around the world, including but not limited to claims of racial supremacy or inferiority, calls for ethnic cleansing and purity, fanning xenophobic fears for political purposes and religious-based discrimination. The AAA also is greatly concerned that promoters of such attitudes and practices often cite alleged scientific findings to support their views. *No such findings exist* [emphasis added].

As stated in the AAA resolution on "race" and intelligence approved in 1994, "differentiating species into biologically defined 'races' has proven meaningless and unscientific as a way of explaining variation (whether in intelligence or other traits)."

The AAA Executive Board therefore finds that the worldwide scientific community has a responsibility to speak out against the use of purported scientific findings used to "justify" racial or ethnic superiority, inferiority or stereotyping and used to "justify" racial, ethnic and religious discrimination. To that end, the AAA Board resolves:

WHEREAS all human beings are members of one species, *Homo sapiens*, and

WHEREAS exclusionary practices and racial, ethnic and religious hatred based on differences among groups are spreading around the world, and

WHEREAS promoters of such attitudes and practices often claim their views are supported by scientific findings, and

WHEREAS no such scientific findings exist, and

WHEREAS the worldwide scientific community has a responsibility to promote responsible uses of scientific findings,

THEREFORE, the American Anthropological Association urges the worldwide scientific community to actively counter such claims whenever and wherever the claims are made, and requests [scientific organizations] to adopt and act on similar resolutions. . . .

FURTHER, the Board directs that copies of this statement and resolution be sent to the scientific organizations [listed] and to the media [and] be published in the *Anthropology Newsletter*.

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the same social environment. (We might compare race and ethnicity by noting that a concept of race always involves perceived *physical* differences, whereas **ethnicity** refers to perceived *cultural* differences.) The sense of self an individual acquires through identification with an ethnic group is **ethnic identity**. In the contemporary world, ethnic identity is a highly significant basis for self-identity, although it also intersects with other sources of identity such as age, gender, nation, “race,” and social class. Categories of people who see themselves as sharing an ethnic identity that differentiates them from other groups or from the larger society as a whole are known as **ethnic groups**. The perceived cultural attributes by which ethnic groups distinguish themselves from others are **ethnic boundaries**.

The perception that one belongs to a particular ethnic group, and the emergence of particular ethnic groups and identities, evolves from the interaction of a group with other groups and with the larger society. This interaction is significantly shaped by power and conflict over resources, hence the term ethnic stratification: As we noted below, for example, the nation-state is an important actor in distributing economic and political rewards to different ethnic groups, and indeed, in identifying some ethnic groups, but not others, as “mainstream,” or dominant in the society. Whatever its origin, however, in the course of time, ethnicity, like race, becomes a reality that has important social and political consequences.

Two Perspectives on Ethnicity

Essentialism Two alternative anthropological perspectives on ethnicity are called **essentialist** and **constructivist**. Essentialism views ethnicity and ethnic identity as an unchanging, essential idea of how people understand themselves as a cultural group and how they are understood by others. In this view ethnicity rests on a “bedrock” of cultural difference from others (Meier and Ribera 1993). This bedrock of difference from others may involve kinship, religion, language, attachment to place, custom, or “race,” that is, it incorporates what we commonly think of as the substance of ethnicity and ethnic identity. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls these attachments “assumed givens,” emphasizing that though they are different from “person to person, society to society, and from time to

time,” they are perceived as permanent, natural, and even spiritual, so that they have an overpowering and even coercive force in and of themselves, beyond any practical necessity or common interest (Geertz 1973:259). For those theorists who view ethnicity from this perspective, it is seen as an inherent part of human social life, based on the desire of individuals to identify with a group.

This essentialist view of ethnicity makes it appear that ethnicity is an independent force that explains why people act collectively in certain ways—whether voting as a political bloc, protecting economic interests, going to war with other ethnic groups, or rebelling against national governments. In the context of group conflicts, ethnicity is viewed as “a clinging to old loyalties,” or to the past, and as the cause of a group’s resistance to various aspects of modern life. But though it is undeniably true that cultural differences have been—and are—an important basis for group identity in all complex societies (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1995), it is equally true that ethnic identity, ethnic groups, and ethnic conflict are not an inescapable part of human social life. Rather, ethnicity is socially constructed and ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts become more or less important under specific historical, demographic, and economic conditions.

Social Constructionism In contemporary anthropology, ethnicity is not a self-explanatory cause of behavior, but rather a social construction that has its own history. Thus, although ethnicity may be based on preexisting cultural differences and group memories, any particular ethnic landscape is a response to changing realities, both within a group and in the larger society of which it is a part (di Leonardo 1998). For **social constructionists**, ethnic traditions and boundaries are not fossilized “age-old” patterns, but are repeatedly reinterpreted over time, particularly with regard to political power and economic resources. From a social constructionist perspective, ethnicity brings the past into the present, and the present makes the past meaningful in specific ways. Thus, constructionists might say, ethnicity rests less on a bedrock of culture than it does on the shifting sands of history and political power.

Anthropologist Frederik Barth, in his classic study *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (1998/1969), opened the way for a new view of ethnicity. Barth

acknowledged that ethnicity has an important cultural content, but he demonstrated that there is no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and objectively defined cultural differences. He emphasized that ethnic group development is based not on geographical and social isolation of groups, but on the very process of social interaction, in which different ethnic groups come to occupy different "niches." Barth's ethnography of Pakistan demonstrated that ethnic boundaries persist *despite* frequent and significant interaction among ethnic groups and even vitally important social relations across these ethnic boundaries. According to Barth, ethnicity is a socially constructed category that groups perpetuate to differentiate themselves from other, similar groups, in an ongoing process of identity formation. It is "the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1998:15/1969). Ethnicity thus becomes an aspect of relationships with other groups in a society. It is these relationships—which may be competitive, cooperative, conflictual, or a combination of these—that are the essential components of the process of ethnic group formation and definition.

Barth's approach led anthropologists to ask new questions about the circumstances that elicit or mobilize ethnicity as a vehicle for association, collective action, and personal identity. The emphasis now is on how ethnic groups emerge, change, and disappear in response to changing conditions in the economic and social environment, especially in the context of political or economic inequality or competition between groups for resources. As one ethnic constructionist puts it, "Ethnicity is a mask for confrontation" (J. Vincent 1974:377).



The Nation-State and Ethnicity

A constructionist view of ethnicity emphasizes active participation by social groups (whether immigrants, indigenous peoples, or cultural minorities) in defining their group identities and acting collectively. In constructing its ethnicity, a group seeks to determine the terms, modes of adaptation, and outcomes of its accommodation to others. Ethnicity viewed in this way emphasizes a process of negotiation between an ethnic group and the dominant

culture, and also among the different ethnic groups in a society.

The most important contemporary context for the emergence, change, and disappearance of ethnicity is the **nation-state**. Nation-states are governments and territories that are identified with culturally homogeneous populations and national histories. A nation is popularly felt by its members to be a natural entity, based on bonds of common descent, language, culture, history, and territory. However, all modern nation-states are composed of many ethnic (and other) groups. Benedict Anderson (1991) notes that such states are "imagined communities," because it takes an act of imagination to weld the many disparate groups that actually make up the state into a coherent national community. Anthropologists are interested in the historical circumstances under which nation-states evolve, the processes by which they are constructed and maintained, and the circumstances under which they are challenged and destabilized (Stolcke 1995).

The state is a territorial unit whose sovereignty is attached to specific spaces. One way states construct national identities is to attach new meanings to space, drawing boundaries between spatially defined insiders and outsiders (Handler 1988). Regardless of their differences, the people who live within these boundaries are viewed as having an essential natural identity, based on a common language and shared customs and culture. People outside the national

ethnicity Perceived differences in culture, national origin, and historical experience by which groups of people are distinguished from others in the same social environment.

ethnic identity The sense of self one experiences as a member of an ethnic group.

ethnic groups Categories of people who see themselves as sharing an ethnic identity that differentiates them from other groups or from the larger society.

ethnic boundaries The perceived cultural attributes by which ethnic groups distinguish themselves from others.

essentialism A view of ethnicity that holds that ethnic groups are distinguished by essential, historically rooted, and emotionally experienced cultural differences.

constructionism A view of ethnicity that holds that ethnic groups emerge and change based on specific historical conditions.

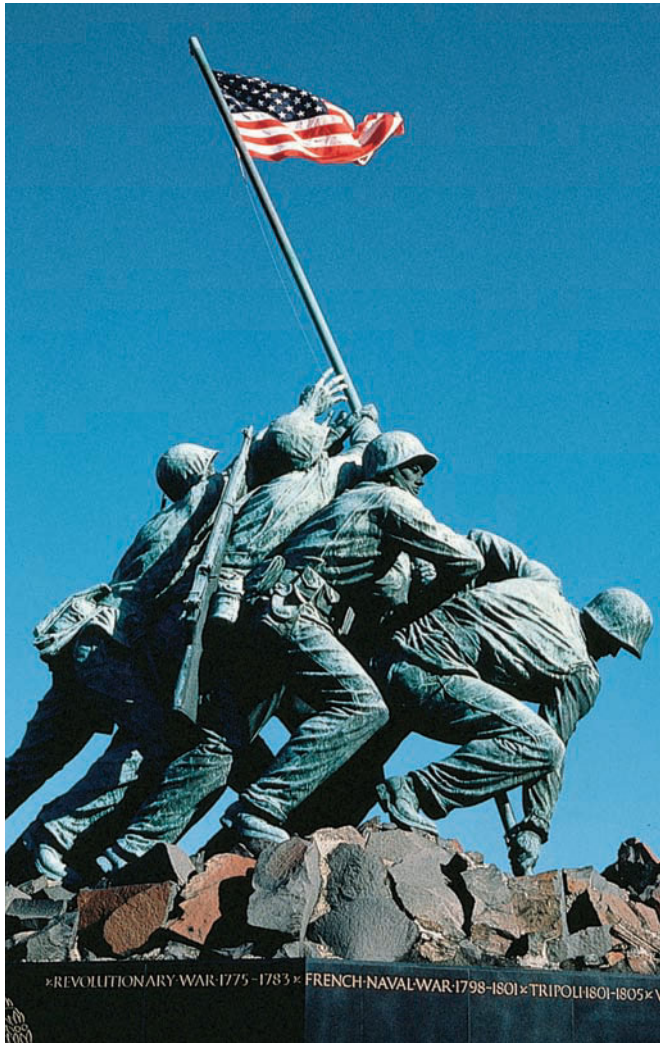
nation-state A sovereign, geographically based state that identifies itself as having a distinctive national culture and historical experience.



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Courtesy of Serena Nanda

Nation-states intensify national identities by presenting history in emotionally intense ways, such as this sculpture of the capture of Iwo Jima in World War II by United States Marines.

boundary are viewed as essentially different, having their own national identities. The importance of the spatial dimension of the nation-state is continually impressed on us by colorful world maps, which visually represent the world of nations as a discrete spatial partitioning of territory (Alonso 1994:382).

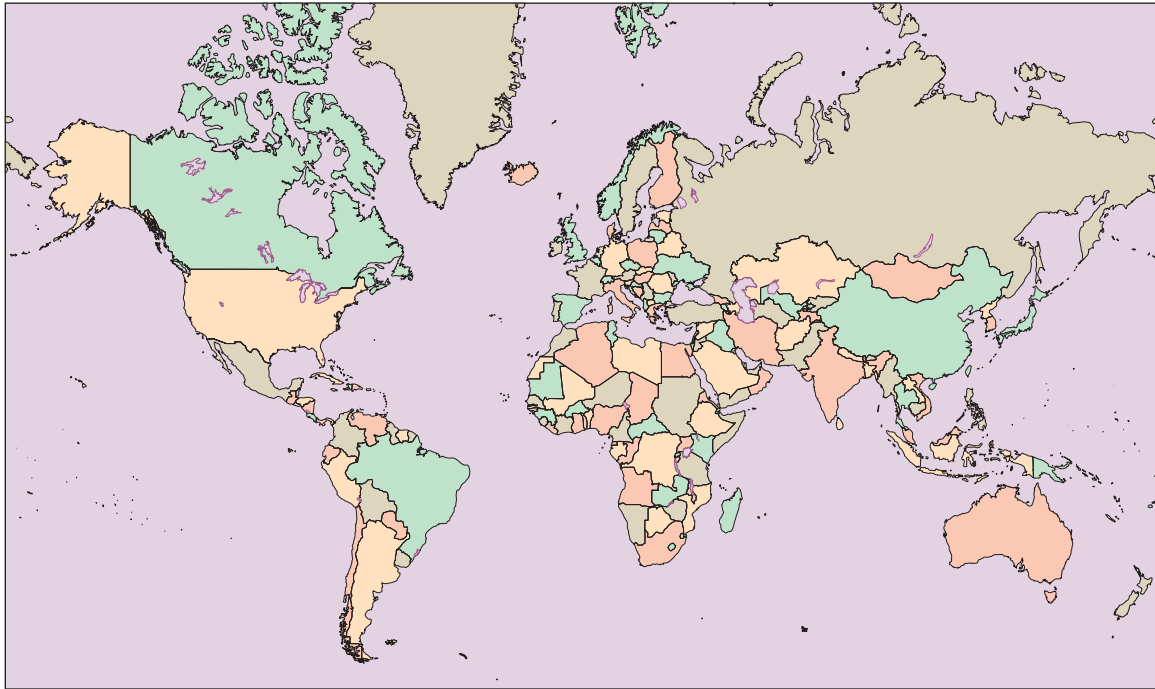
Nation-states are constructed by attaching people to time as well as to space. A common interpretation of the past is essential in creating national identities. Because interpretations of the past are so important in defining the present, the creation of national histories is marked by struggles over which version of history will prevail (J. Friedman 1992). “Tradition,” “the past,” “history,” or “social mem-

ory” are all actively invented and reinvented to accord with contemporary national interests and reproduced through rituals, symbols, ceremonies, memorials, and representations in museums and other cultural institutions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; White 1997; Nanda 2004). Coronations, inaugurations, a daily pledging of allegiance to the flag, or the singing of national anthems—ceremonies linking the nation’s dead to its living, and thus the past to the present—are all essential in maintaining the nation-state.

Although the construction of national identities may often be submerged by the nation-state as it seeks to represent itself as having always been what it now is, in fact national identities have throughout history struggled painfully to evolve and even today are problematic for many nations. This may be most true for postcolonial nations, whose artificial colonial boundaries encompassed many different ethnic groups, but it is also true in older nations as well. National identity for Canadians, for example, has always been, and continues to be, insecure and fragmented (Handler 1988). Because of the dual influence of the English and the French on Canada, the current British connection with Canada, the powerful English-speaking United States on its southern border, and the weight of regionalism in a huge territory with a small and geographically scattered population, the search for Canadian national identity is ongoing. It occasionally flares up in French speaking Quebecois separatism, and attempts at resolution include bilingualism, but it has by no means been settled. After World War II, the United Nations, including the United States, gave strong support to independence for various cultural communities, or peoples, resulting in a contemporary situation in which ethnic and religious communities seek to form their own nation states.

How the Nation-State Shapes Ethnicity

In a century in which conflicts are increasingly understood in ethnic terms, it is particularly important to ask questions about the relationship between ethnicity and the state: how and why does the state foster some ethnic groups and identities while disparaging and marginalizing others, exploit cultural diversity for various purposes, and officially ignore the many other cultural units other than the nation (Foster 1991)?



World maps reinforce the importance of the nation-state as a territorial unit.

The invention and implementation of a national identity, with its associated rites and symbols, are carried out by nationalist elites, intellectuals, politicians, and institutions. To be successful, a national identity must appear to be a real, unquestionable, timeless, and intrinsic element of personal identity (Foster 1991:238); the "imagined" or "invented" quality of national unity must be repressed.

The state's power in defining and perpetuating a national identity, as well as the tolerable limits of ethnicity within it, is substantial. For example, the state generally controls education and textbooks, important means of communicating national histories, which elevate some ethnic groups and ignore others. In the United States, as in other nations, textbook selection for public schools is highly political. Different groups battle over which version of American history should be presented to schoolchildren, which historic figures emphasized and which left out. The state, through its records and laws, access to the media, control of education, and other resources, attempts to create a national culture and identity that become the only authorized representation of society.

In the contest between ethnic groups and the state as to which version of culture will dominate, an important source of state power is its control of

law (Norgren and Nanda 2006). Conversely, law and courts can also be sites of ethnic resistance (Lazarus-Black and Hirsch 1994). The law may allow ethnic groups to express their cultural differences, or it may repress them, forbidding such expression. It may legitimate ethnicity but, at the same time, marginalize ethnic groups by attempting to construct borders between them and the cultural mainstream. The term *mainstream* conveys an acceptability at the national level denied to "subcultures"—even though the mainstream, like the subcultures, is a cultural artifact, and its borders are constantly changing.

The state can also influence the development of ethnicities by incorporating, for its own purposes, elements of subcultures into the national culture. The Jamaican government, for example, has incorporated some elements of Rastafarian culture, such as reggae music, into its national identity, while ignoring other aspects such as the Rastafarian rejection of cooperation with the capitalist state (W. Lewis 1993). In Central and South America, indigenous Indian ethnicity, if not totally repressed, is defined in ways that serve state purposes. Indians may be identified with a fossilized past as a folkloric irrelevance, a commodity, or a backward culture standing in the way of national development

(Alonso 1994:398). Only a few nations incorporate elements of Indian culture in their constructions of national identity. The Mexican government, for example, commonly uses symbols of the Aztec and Maya past in its self-representations. However, identifying “Indianness” with the past can also marginalize Indian communities by masking their con-

temporary conflicts with the state, as most recently expressed in the Zapatista rebellion (Maybury-Lewis 1997:15–21). Even revolutionary Central American governments, such as the Sandanistas in Nicaragua, initially viewed the Miskitu Indians in their country as culturally backward and politically conservative and viewed Miskitu demands for cultural autonomy as an impermissible obstacle to the construction of a new, homogeneous, Nicaraguan national identity (C. Hale 1994).

The Nation-State and Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict today is clearly tied to the rise, maintenance, and collapse of the nation-state (Stolcke 1995). The explanation of ethnic conflicts as “natural” eruptions of “age-old ethnic hatreds” has the virtue of simplicity, but is frequently inaccurate. Many contemporary ethnic conflicts are rooted, at least in part, in relatively recent circumstances, involving peoples whose cultures are only marginally different from each other and who lived together amicably in the past. Ethnic conflict, from this perspective, is not just about ethnic identity, but about power. Ambitious politicians often promote ethnic identity, building constituencies from groups that hope to gain increased access to economic and political power. Such individuals mobilize a rhetoric of historical abuses and inequities, arousing fears of victimization among group members.

Ethnic Violence in Yugoslavia Factors involved in ethnic conflict operate in ethnic violence and genocide, as in the case of the breakup of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia became a nation-state following World War II. Earlier, its territory was part of the Ottoman Empire ruled by Muslim Turks. Conflict between the Turks and Christian Europeans became a central force generating Serb nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But current ethnic conflict was not “caused” by the cultural distinctions and hostilities of the past. Rather a selectively remembered past of cultural differences has been mobilized in contemporary struggles over economic and political power (Maybury-Lewis 1997; Ramet 1996). Economic pressures beginning in the 1980s were more a cause of war among Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians than long-standing ethnic conflict (C. Hale 1994).



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Unique handwoven clothing is an important ethnic boundary marker among Indians in Guatemala. It distinguishes one ethnic community from another, and Indians of Mayan heritage from the dominant Spanish culture of the nation-state. While nations such as Guatemala are interested in capitalizing on Indian ethnicity for tourist dollars, they also attempt to coerce Indian assimilation through force.



Ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia began as a result of the political exploitation of relatively small cultural differences between Croats and Serbs.

In 1981, after the death of Yugoslav leader Tito, the new political leadership introduced an economic austerity program. In an attempt to increase the amount of hard currency, they tried to halt imports and increase exports. Shortages of consumer goods resulted, undermining faith in the government. Social relationships became more restricted as people depended even more than usual on networks of family and friends. Anxiety and friction increased in everyday life. Much of the resulting frustration was directed at the national government, which was perceived as corrupt and wasteful.

In this atmosphere of political and economic instability, long-standing clashes over points of cultural difference among the three ethnic groups soon became the metaphor for other conflicts. The differences were seized upon by numerous politicians, among them the Croat nationalist leader Franjo Tudjman. Tudjman gained supporters by urging Croats to claim their national rights against Serbs, Muslims, and others. As part of this process, Tudjman tried to rehabilitate the Ustashe government, which during World War II had helped massacre Jews, Communists, Serbs, and Gypsies. Bitter civil wars broke out between Serb partisans and Croatian fascists; and these political conflicts underlie the current ethnic conflict. Although Tudjman was imprisoned several times in the 1980s for his radical nationalist views, in 1990, after the breakup of the Yugoslav Communist Party, he led his own national-

ist party to victory in Croatian elections. Tudjman's declaration of an independent state in Croatia resulted in a bloody war with Serbia that ended with Croatian independence.

As the ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia heated up, old attributes of similarity were transformed into markers of difference. Croats and Serbs, for example, are both Christian but belong to different sects: the Croats are Catholic and the Serbs Eastern Orthodox. They speak the same language but use different writing systems. Anthropologist Mary Gilliland notes that the original rhetoric of the war was not ethnic, but it became so as a tactic of political manipulation. Croats, for example, now call their language Croatian rather than Serbo-Croatian, as it was formerly called (Gilliland 1995:202). The representation of the Serb-Croat hostilities as an ethnic conflict was promoted by the Yugoslavian media. The media began to identify the different parties by ethnic labels that dated back to World War II, when the Croats aided the Germans while the Serbs formed the backbone of anti-Nazi resistance.

Gilliland's work demonstrates that contemporary economic and political pressures, as well as long-standing ethnic conflicts, must be considered in analyzing ethnic identity and violence in the contemporary world. In many cases, economic and political considerations growing out of World War II had roots both in Europe and in former

colonies, that included many different ethnic groups, thus setting the stage for contemporary ethnic conflict.

Nation-States and Indigenous Peoples

One important source of conflict within some nation-states involves their relations with **indigenous peoples**. Indigenous peoples, sometimes referred to as members of the fourth world, are those small-scale societies designated as bands, tribes, and chiefdoms. These societies are typically characterized by close identification with their land, relative social egalitarianism, community-level resource management, and (previously) high levels of self-sufficiency. According to the 1993 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, indigenous communities have a historical continuity with the societies that developed on their territories prior to European contact, invasion, and colonialism; they consider themselves distinct from other sectors of society now living in those territories; they are non-dominant sectors of the larger societies of which they are a part (nation-states); and they are determined to preserve and transmit their lands and culture to future generations in order to continue their existence as a people (R. Lee 2000).

Indigenous peoples today are in a struggle for autonomy and survival in a world dominated by nation-

states and a global capitalist economy (Bodley 1999). The process of incorporation of indigenous peoples within larger states began as early as 1450, in the preindustrial stage of capitalist expansion, when European powers began their imperial and colonial projects. With European invasion and conquest, many indigenous societies completely disappeared as a result of epidemics, frontier violence, and military conquest; others survived as remnants in marginal geographic areas (see Chapter 16). Despite the intended and unintended destruction of indigenous peoples, as late as 1800, approximately 50 percent of the world's territory and 20 percent of the global population were still controlled by relatively autonomous and self-sufficient small-scale indigenous societies (Bodley 2000:398). The destruction of indigenous peoples intensified rapidly by the mid-nineteenth century as new frontiers were opened up in nations such as the United States, Australia, and Brazil. After World War II, when many indigenous peoples were incorporated into new postcolonial states such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and India, few independent, self-sufficient indigenous societies remained (Maybury-Lewis 1997).

The incorporation of indigenous peoples into modern nation-states involved at least partial destruction of their political and economic autonomy. Although these societies were by no means a pushover for expanding state powers, ultimately the military and economic power of nation-states domi-

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nated. Because indigenous peoples must maintain control over their land base and subsistence resources in order to remain self-sufficient and politically autonomous, their political defeat was usually accompanied by their economic marginalization. The larger societies in which they were now embedded appropriated—and continue to appropriate—their land, whether through legislation or by enabling others to utilize it in more “productive” ways. These “others” may be the state, or they may be other, nonindigenous, and often politically disempowered groups, such as the marginal peasants who have expanded into the borderlands of the Amazon in Brazil (Dombrowski 2000; Moran 1988:160). Without their land base, indigenous peoples were pushed into participation in the global market economy, which indeed was the express motivation of many European colonial projects.

The Imposition of Western Law Participation by indigenous peoples in larger economies was—and is—furthered by the “pull” of their desire for Western goods. However, whenever indigenous people were reluctant to acquiesce to colonial agendas, including participation in capitalist consumer-oriented economies, colonialism always fell back on threatened or actual coercion through military conquest.

The colonial agenda was also imposed on indigenous peoples through Western law. European colonial powers defined acceptable behavior in terms of their own ideologies and enforced that behavior through the establishment of written penal codes, constitutions, and Western-style courts, with severe sanctions for nonconformity (Merry 1991, 2000). A wide array of indigenous cultural practices—polygamy, sati (widow immolation in India), witchcraft accusations, use of peyote and marijuana in religious contexts, potlatching, drumming, dancing, warfare, collective land tenure, headhunting, slash and burn horticulture, transvestism, and many others—were outlawed in the name of social reform and the European civilizing mission (Bracey 2006:85). Many colonial laws involved restraints on sexuality. Sexual relations between European men and native women, which dissolved the line between the colonial power and the subordinate “natives,” were often explicitly prohibited. Sexual practices of indigenous peoples were often criminalized as uncivilized and un-Christian (W. Roscoe 1995).

Western law was also a key factor in effecting the transfer of land from indigenous peoples to Europeans and Americans. Most land in non-Western, small-scale societies was held collectively and could not be sold even when individuals or kinship groups had exclusive use rights to the land. Under European and American colonialism, indigenous collective rights to the land and norms of land tenure were undermined, and individual ownership of land was legally established. This permitted land to be sold and resulted in the transfer of much land to Europeans (Parker 1989).

After World War II, the establishment of the United Nations provided an international framework within which the concept of human rights was steadily expanded to include indigenous peoples as cultural groups and to legitimize their struggle for self-determination. Because the United Nations policy worked within the framework of the nation-state, however, it did little to support indigenous rights in any substantial way. National policies were frequently based on the expectation that indigenous peoples would eventually disappear, as they assimilated into national cultures and participated in national and global economic “development” programs. This was also the presumption of international financial organizations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, whose lending practices supported economic “development” programs that adversely affected the subsistence economies of indigenous peoples (Bodley 2000:378).

Many anthropologists actively participated with indigenous peoples in their struggles for justice. Cultural Survival, an anthropological group begun at Harvard University in 1972 under the leadership of David Maybury-Lewis, is one of the most well-known organizations promoting the rights of indigenous peoples. Cultural Survival works toward increasing the ability of indigenous peoples to improve their position within multiethnic or culturally pluralist nation-states. It helps indigenous peoples retain their cultural identities while they adapt gradually to the changes accompanying national economic development. Cultural Survival’s

indigenous peoples Groups of people who have occupied a region for a long time but who have a minority position and usually little or no influence in the government of the nation-state. They do not ultimately control their own land.



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advocacy for indigenous peoples is based on the conviction that such societies have been wronged over the past centuries and that anthropologists have an obligation to help right those wrongs (Maybury-Lewis 1993).

An important activity of Cultural Survival is educating the public about indigenous peoples and debunking the argument that they stand in the way of national economic development. Cultural Survival also helps indigenous peoples understand the implications of individual ownership of land and helps them become more effective in negotiating to protect their land base. Cultural Survival does not aim to preserve indigenous peoples in some mythical state of cultural “purity,” but rather to help them create conditions under which they can maximize their power to make decisions about their own future.

As indigenous peoples interact with nation-states, however, their cultures and identities also change. Although often romanticized as being completely egalitarian, in contemporary times, eco-

nomics and cultural differentiation as well as internal political opposition are increasing in indigenous societies (Dombrowski 2001). As we see in the case of the Saami, in the following section, this differentiation does not easily break down into a simplistic traditional/modern dichotomy but is, rather, a complex mosaic of traditional and modern features that have been shaped by contact with the different institutions of the state society.

Saami Reindeer Herders and the Nation-State

The struggle of indigenous peoples to retain traditional livelihoods and cultures in the face of opposition by modern nation-states is illustrated by the reindeer-herding Saami of Scandinavia. More than 100,000 Saami live in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and parts of Russia. The Saami are an indigenous people who have occupied this area for more than 2000 years, for most of that time as hunters of wild reindeer. In the past 400 years, the Saami have become reindeer herders, primarily using reindeer dairy products rather than the meat; reindeer are



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Saami reindeer herders have become caught up in the global economy by the need to earn cash to buy food, clothing, household appliances, and particularly snowmobiles and the gas to run them. Without snowmobiles, Saami herders cannot compete in herding large numbers of animals.

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slaughtered only reluctantly, even for ritual occasions. Saami livelihood depends on access to the lichen-rich subarctic tundra areas of northern Norway and Sweden, which provide winter pasture for their reindeer (Stephens 1987).

Many Saami today do not herd reindeer, but make their living through fishing, small-scale agriculture, crafts, logging, road building, and some government welfare payments. Even for the Saami who do not herd reindeer, though, reindeer herding has important historical and symbolic meanings.

About 60,000 Saami live in Norway. The Norwegian government considers the Saami a culturally distinct ethnic group and is officially committed to furthering the Saami reindeer-herding way of life. At the same time, however, Norway is committed to national economic development and environmental conservation, both of which, the government says, are impeded by unregulated Saami reindeer herding (Paine 1994).

In attempting to achieve its goals as a progressive, modern, egalitarian, multicultural nation, Norway considers it essential to regulate Saami reindeer herding and to change Saami cultural values and practices. This has been the source of conflict between the Saami and the government.

The essence of the Saami reindeer-herding culture is the close connection between herding families and their reindeer herds. Reindeer are individually owned and inherited, by men, women, and children, but are herded collectively by a few families who make up a work unit. Reindeer herding is physically exacting and demands extensive knowledge of the animals' terrain. Herders need to adjust their herd management to changing seasonal weather patterns and other ecological factors, all of which involve risk. Although the Saami value reindeer as a market commodity, reindeer also have intrinsic cultural value, both as a form of wealth and as a source of Saami cultural distinctiveness.

The Norwegian government regards many traditional Saami herd management practices as "unproductive," "irrational," and detrimental to the environment. The government's objectives, encoded since 1978 in the Reindeer Management Act, are to reduce the overall number of Saami reindeer, to equalize the number of reindeer in each family's herd, and to rationalize reindeer-marketing practices. The government has taken a number of steps to achieve these objectives. One is the official restricting of reindeer pastureland.

Norway now requires Saami herders to register themselves in one of several officially designated "reindeer districts" and limits the number of herders in each one. This regulation directly conflicts with—and overrides—Saami cultural knowledge about the importance of pasture flexibility.

In its insistence on the economic rationalization of the reindeer industry, the Norwegian government calls for more efficient, productive, and profitable herding, slaughtering, and marketing. Since World War II, a market has developed for reindeer meat as a luxury item in Scandinavia and other parts of northern Europe. Reindeer hides are a popular tourist souvenir item, and even reindeer antlers have a market in the Far East, where antler powder is believed to have aphrodisiac powers (Stephens 1987:37). As part of its marketing efforts, the Norwegian government has agreed to pay a minimum price for slaughtered reindeer and has set up regional slaughtering and marketing centers, where the reindeer are slaughtered in sanitary conditions and the meat certified as to grade. This requires, however, that Saami bring their reindeer to these centers to be slaughtered, which many Saami are reluctant to do.

The government has also formalized reindeer herd management, and provides the Saami with government "experts" to counsel them. Most Saami feel that these experts do not really know or care about the Saami way of life. They resent the government's intervention, even when some of the suggested changes have already been adopted by the Saami themselves (Paine 1994). Nor do many Saami think that formal training can match their own knowledge of the environment and herd management gained from years of experience.

Like many indigenous peoples, through their own desire to selectively "modernize," the Saami have become fully engaged in the cash-based global economy. At one time, reindeer herding supplied herding families with most of their needs—food, clothing, transportation, and hides for tents—but now Saami need money to buy many things: houses, furniture, radios, televisions, video recorders, clothes, food, cars, and snowmobiles (and the gasoline to run them), the latter essential to compete in herding large numbers of animals. Today more Saami lead a settled way of life, and many Saami children go further in school, leading them away from their traditionally based livelihood.

In spite of many cultural changes, however, the distinctive Saami culture still rests upon values that treat reindeer and reindeer herding as something more than an “economic bottom line.” But now Saami culture must compete with other national needs as well. Their area is desired for tourism, mining, and hydroelectric development, and large tracts have been set aside for military developments, such as the NATO bases in northern Norway.

The decade from 1979 to 1989 was a time of unprecedented state intervention in Saami reindeer pastoralism. Essentially, it resulted in Norway’s placing an ethnically distinct livelihood under state license. Although this provides a strong guarantee that at least some Saami, at the state’s discretion, will be able to continue reindeer herding, it will not be reindeer herding as the Saami have traditionally practiced it. The Reindeer Management Act is caught up in the contradiction between the government’s official support of Saami culture and the national priorities of social egalitarianism and economic development. The government objective of reducing herd size while increasing income (rationalizing herd management) gives the state the power to decide how many and which Saami may register as pastoralists and what the size and composition of their herds will be.

The premises of the modern, progressive Norwegian state embrace cultural difference represented by Saami reindeer herders only with difficulty. The state views pastoralism as productively inferior to agriculture. It sees the pastoral way of life as a gift from the state that will continue only so long as it does not interfere with other state objectives, including economic progress in the form of agricultural and industrial development. Government intervention, if it is successful, will transform Saami pastoralism, whose aim is to *keep* all animals except those slaughtered for domestic needs, into Norwegian reindeer ranching, whose aim is to *sell* all animals except those needed to feed the family.

The conflict between the Saami and the Norwegian state illustrates that even a benevolent state, based on universalism, bureaucracy, and economic rationalism, can negatively impact indigenous peoples. The Reindeer Management Act has failed in almost all its objectives to rationalize Saami reindeer herding and does not ensure a future of cultural autonomy for the Saami. Nor does the Saami

example offer reassurance of a secure future for other indigenous peoples, even those within democratic and progressive nation-states.



Ethnicity in the United States

Although the cultural diversity of the United States is based on conquest—of Native Americans and Native Hawaiians; incorporation of groups through military engagement, such as Mexican Americans especially in Texas and the Southwest; and the importation of African Americans as slaves—the dominant American narrative of ethnicity focuses on the national origins of its many immigrant groups. Only in the mid-twentieth century did African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos reassert their cultural identities as part of a civil rights movement, broadening definitions of ethnicity to reach beyond immigration.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity fluctuates according to circumstances. African Americans in Africa, for example, may feel that they share a common identity with other Africans, but Africans regard them primarily as Americans (Bruner 1996). Margaret Mead (1995) contended that an American national identity was more likely to be experienced in contrast to others who were perceived as not American, or not 100 percent American, than as a set of distinctive American cultural characteristics. Thus, the experiencing of one’s American ethnicity, like the experiencing of most ethnicities, comes into play mainly when interacting with others.

No one criterion of ethnic identity, or ethnic boundary, holds for all groups in the United States. Language, for example, may or may not be an important ethnic boundary marker, and it may be more important for outsiders than for insiders. Spanish is a major marker of Latino/Hispanic ethnic identity for the United States government, but many people whose mother tongue is Spanish prefer to be identified by their place of origin, such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Colombia, or Mexico. But because the United States government uses “Hispanic” ethnicity as a significant bureaucratic crite-

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rion for access to resources, such as bilingual education or legal redress for discrimination based on national origin, its importance as an ethnic marker has increased.

For many older ethnic groups of European origin, language is no longer an important ethnic boundary marker. Rather, more subtle ethnic patterns—food preferences, verbal and nonverbal means of communication, occupational choices, voting patterns, and experience of health, illness, and pain, among others that persist even over several generations—give substance to these ethnic identities (Cerroni Long 1993; Schensul 1997). At the same time, the relevance of ethnic groups, their relation to American identity, and their relations to each other have changed over time (di Leonardo 1998:80ff). Specific constructions of ethnicity and ethnic communities serve diverse interests—those of political elites as well as of ethnic communities themselves. In some historical periods, ethnicity and ethnic groups have been viewed as repositories

of "good" characteristics, such as placing a high value on the traditional family; at other times, ethnics have been designated as having the "bad" characteristics of being old-fashioned and culturally behind the times, obstacles to the furtherance of modernity and social unity (di Leonardo 1998:82). In the 1960s, when those in power saw widespread protest movements as threatening to the status quo, the United States experienced the "invention" of the "white ethnics"—ethnic groups of European origin who formed the "silent majority" that was presumed to support the social and political status quo. Just 40 years earlier, these same white ethnics had been characterized as undesirable "races," their immigration curtailed by discriminatory immigration laws! Indeed, some social scientists see the contemporary focus on ethnicity as a means of obscuring the more important role of class and race in the unequal distribution of wealth and power in the United States (Steinberg 1989; di Leonardo 1998; Reed 2000).

Ethnicity and Immigration

Because ethnicity in the United States, more than in many societies, is based on immigration, U.S. immigration history is an essential context for understanding contemporary constructions of American ethnicity and the relations between ethnic groups (J. Ryan 1999). There is no single immigrant experience; different groups have faced historically different circumstances (Lamphere 1992; di Leonardo 1984). Depending on these circumstances, their national origin, and the degree to which their culture was perceived as alien, immigrants have met with greater or lesser hostility from those already established here.

The continuous process of adaptation of immigrants in the United States has also intersected with the continuous, self-conscious project of creating a national identity—a key element in American culture that began with the American Revolution and continues up until the present (A. Wallace 1999). American efforts at creating a national identity led to ethnicity's becoming equated with “national origin” but this concept was not equally applied to all immigrants and nationalities. English national origin, for example, was not seen as ethnic, but as the American norm, even though the English were immigrants in a land already inhabited by Native Americans and, in different sections of the country, by other European nationalities as well. It was these other nationalities, such as the Dutch in New York and the Spanish in Florida, rather than the English, that became “ethnicized.”

Public debate on immigration has changed in intensity in different historical periods. Early idealistic visions of America as a land of economic opportunity and political freedom for immigrants from Europe were actually narrowly defined to encompass mainly those from northern and western Europe. In considering questions of citizenship in the creation of the U.S. Constitution, the framers effectively limited it to those who were “free and white.” By the 1830s, increasing immigration of Irish Catholics and Germans to the United States heightened earlier concerns that the new immigrants would undermine American republicanism—either because their previous poverty in Europe had denied them the experience of political freedom, or because their authoritarian religion would make them hostile to it and draw their loyalties elsewhere (Gjerde 1998). In addition, some Americans feared that an

influx of immigrants would result in lower urban wages, or that immigrants would flood and then dominate the western part of the country. These concerns coalesced in strongly anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant nativist movements.

Meanwhile, immigration continued to increase. Between 1850 and 1910, many immigrants gravitated to cities, where they lived in ethnic (actually multiethnic)—and poor—neighborhoods, generating the fear that they would be corrupted by urban political machines. On the basis of common culture and national origin, immigrants formed social and ethnic institutions. These organizations, which helped them retain some of their ethnic culture and separateness from the larger society, at the same time mediated their connections with it.

Immigration Laws: The Intersection of Ethnicity and “Race”

The largest and most varied immigration to the United States occurred between 1880 and the 1920s. In these years, the discourse on immigration moved from ethnicity to race. African Americans had always been viewed as a racial group, but by 1880 “racial” typologies were fashionable (a situation in which anthropologists unfortunately played a role) and began to be applied to Europeans as well. Southern and eastern Europeans were racially distinguished from the Nordic “races” from northern and western Europe, and by the 1920s restrictive immigration laws effectively limited immigration to these “Nordic” groups.

Proponents of restrictive immigration claimed that people who were members of different “races” could never become good American citizens and that the United States would “degenerate” if it incorporated them. This view finally triumphed in the passage of restrictive immigration policies in the 1920s. Nations such as England, viewed as culturally and politically similar to the United States, were allowed almost unrestricted immigration, but the nations of eastern Europe, including Greece and Poland, were allowed only minimal immigration. Immigration of Asians and persons from the Middle East were all but completely halted. The nexus made between national origin and race in this period led to several Supreme Court cases in which the Court grappled with the definition of “whiteness” in order to determine from such coun-



Global Perspective

Refugees and Political Asylum

One of the by-products of the many wars and racial, religious, ethnic, and political conflicts of the twentieth century has been millions of **refugees** worldwide. Refugees are people who have been uprooted from their native lands and forced to cross national boundaries into countries or regions that do not necessarily want them or who cannot provide for them. World War I and World War II created millions of refugees; ultimately many of them were resettled, either in their own or in other countries, with the help of international organizations, particularly the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Since that time, revolutions, wars of national liberation, civil wars, boundary changes, the dismantling of colonialism, and other situations have kept the refugee problem alive. At the turn of the twenty-first century, there were approximately 16 million refugees worldwide.

The wealthier industrialized nations have been traditional havens for refugees. The United States continues to be a beacon for millions.

The film, *Well-Founded Fear*, made by anthropological filmmakers Michael Camerini and Shari Robertson, highlights the process by which refugees are granted political asylum in the United States. In order to be granted political asylum, a refugee must prove a “well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” Any foreigner who finds a way into the United States may apply for refugee protection in the form of political asylum.

This widely acclaimed film, whose aim is to “get Americans to think about the world,” is unique in penetrating, with the consent of officers and applicants, the normally closed and confidential hearings of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), whose officers make the decisions to approve or deny applications for political asylum. In 1998, these officers heard 41,000 asylum cases and approved 13,000 applications. Among those documented in the film are applicants claiming asylum from the one-child policy in China, the rule that women must be veiled in Algeria, the suppression of political dissent in Romania and Nigeria, and the persecution of Jews in the former Soviet Union.

The willingness of countries to accept refugees appears to be declining, exacerbated by economic downturns. In 1987, for example, Switzerland outlawed asylum, and since the mid-1980s, anti-immigrant political parties in European countries such as Norway, France, and Germany have made significant electoral gains. In 1999, the United States also tightened its acceptance of refugees, reducing the number of people who can apply for asylum, jailing people who arrive at U.S. borders applying for asylum, and limiting their rights of appeal. Hearing the stories of well-founded fear in Camerini and Robertson’s film is a moving reminder of the ways in which the United States is part of a global community.

tries as India and Lebanon, who appealed the denial of their immigration status based on their “nonwhite” racial status (Dominguez 1986; Lopez 1997).

Models of Adaptation

The huge increase in immigration around the turn of the twentieth century was accompanied by popular and scholarly concern as to how immigrants should be incorporated into American society. The

dominant model was **assimilation**—the view that immigrants should, to the greatest extent possible, abandon their cultural distinctiveness and become “mainstream” Americans. Urban settlement houses,

assimilation model A model of U.S. ethnicity that holds that people should abandon their cultural traditions and become wholly absorbed in mainstream American culture.

refugees People who have been uprooted from their native land and forced to cross national boundaries.



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public schools, and “citizenship classes” were all designed to teach immigrants “American” ways, and motivate them to abandon the cultural patterns they brought from their homelands.

With few dissenting voices, assimilation also became the dominant American policy toward Native Americans—though even those groups, like the Cherokee, who had adopted many “American” cultural patterns, were still subject to removal and appropriation of their land by whites (Wallace 1999; Norgren 1996). By the mid-nineteenth century, forced onto reservations, Native Americans became a captive audience for the teaching of American values of individualism, Christianity, agricultural production, and the English language by missionaries and Indian agents of the U.S. government. Native Americans were also forced to send their children to American boarding schools, often hundreds of miles from their local communities, permanently alienating them from their native cultures and languages.

By the early 1870s, it became clear that the reservation policy had failed to transform Indians into mainstream Americans. Thus, in 1887, the U.S. Congress passed the General Allotment (Dawes) Act, which provided for Native American families to be given an allotment of land to be owned privately, not communally. The Dawes Act was based on the belief that only by becoming invested in the system of private ownership and individual enterprise could Indians “progress” and become “civilized.” Indians who participated, or who otherwise left their tribal cultures, would be given American citizenship. By the 1920s, it became clear that the Dawes Act, too, had failed in assimilating Native Americans. Only in the 1930s, under the director-

ship of John Collier, an anthropologist who headed the Bureau of Indian Affairs, were government policies reversed to support the strengthening of Indian cultures and societies (Norgren and Nanda 2006).

By the 1950s it was clear that although much of the cultural distinctiveness of ethnic groups in the United States had in fact disappeared, ethnic groups themselves persisted, now mainly as interest groups organized around political goals and mobilized for gaining access to economic resources (Glazer and Moynihan 1970). After the civil rights movement at midcentury, concepts of ethnicity and its relation to American nationhood changed again, as cultural diversity emerged as a positive value and one that added richness to the whole society. Sometimes called “**multiculturalism**,” this movement incorporates groups identified not only by cultural differences or ethnicity, but also by “race,” gender, sexual orientation, and indigenous status. Multiculturalism also intersected with the new streams of immigration brought about by changes in immigration law in 1965.

This new Immigration and Nationality Act replaced the discriminatory immigration laws of the 1920s and was explicitly aimed at reversing the discriminatory basis of earlier immigration laws. It greatly expanded the number of people permitted to immigrate from previously discriminated against nations, abolished immigration quotas, gave high priority to the social goal of family unification, and put refugee immigration on a more structured

multiculturalism The view that cultural diversity in the United States is a positive value and makes an important contribution to American national identity.



The large numbers of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe around the turn of the twentieth century sought economic improvement and hope of a better future.

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Ethnography

Chinese Immigrants in San Francisco

San Francisco's Chinatown, the oldest and largest in the United States, was established when the California Gold Rush of 1849 brought thousands of mostly unskilled, uneducated, male Chinese laborers from southern China into northern California to work in the mines and on the transcontinental railroad. Racism, fear of economic competition, and hostility greeted these immigrants, prompting them to live and work in the relative safety of Chinese settlements amid

those who spoke their language and shared their culture. By 1850, San Francisco's Chinatown included scores of Chinese-owned and -run general stores, restaurants, laundries, food markets, and boardinghouses—economic niches that required little capital investment and avoided competition with white workers.

As Chinese women and families were not permitted to immigrate to the United States, Chinese men in the "bachelor societies" of the San Francisco Bay Area worked mainly to save enough money to eventually return home. These "sojourners" lived in cramped quarters, worked long hours for low pay, and were continually subjected to legislative and physical attacks by whites. Legally barred from many occupations, lacking English skills and political power, and prohibited from educating their children in American schools, the first generations of Chinese immigrants organized their own ethnic economy and protective associations. After the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Chinese immigration and reentry by the sojourners were forbidden. Not until the 1940s were Chinese immigrants able to interact socially and economically with the European American mainstream.

The passage of the 1965 U.S. immigration law, emphasizing family reunification, dramatically changed the ethnic and economic composition



of the new Chinese immigration. Most new immigrants now became permanent residents or naturalized citizens. Many of these new arrivals initially lived in rented quarters in the older Chinatowns and worked the same long hours for low pay in the same ethnic economic niches as their forebears. Eventually, however, by pooling family resources, many were able to establish businesses and buy commercial or residential property outside historically Chinese neighborhoods, often in run-

down areas that had been abandoned by more prosperous whites. While the new immigrants continued to shop and attend cultural events in Chinatown, they educated their children in the culturally diverse American public schools, and the isolated "sojourner" ethnic mentality of the pre-1965 generations largely disappeared.

The differences between the earlier and the "new" Chinese immigrants stem from both the backgrounds of the new immigrants and the changed conditions of the American economic and social environment. Although sporadic arrivals of poor, uneducated, and terribly exploited illegal Chinese immigrants occur, most of today's new legal immigrants are educated, technically skilled, urban people. Those from Taiwan or Hong Kong are motivated primarily by economic and educational opportunities; they frequently arrive with access to capital and professional training, experience, or expertise in manufacturing, finance, or engineering. Many are relatively westernized and proficient in English, a crucial factor in their successful adaptation. The new immigrants from mainland China are more likely to be intellectuals escaping repression in their homeland, and are somewhat less westernized. As a group, however, despite continued discrimination and other hardships, the new Chinese immigrants have been able to use a much wider range of adaptive strategies, both socially and



Ethnography—continued

economically, than those of the nineteenth century and their American-born descendants.

The new Chinese immigrants to the San Francisco Bay Area mainly engage in family-type entrepreneurship—the establishment and management of commercial enterprises using family resources and kinship networks. Some of these businesses expand upon traditional ethnic enterprises such as gift stores, restaurants, and hotels. Others are financial institutions geared to the growing ethnic communities in the area. Still others, like garment manufacturing or construction, unknown in earlier Chinese enclaves, serve both Chinese and non-Chinese customers. Many new immigrants are also employed in the computer industry, initially as professionals or academics working for American corporations or universities, but later branching out as owners of or employees in Chinese family-type firms. Still other immigrants engage in transnational commerce. Central to successful Chinese entrepreneurship is the convergence of the new immigrants' cultural values with the requirements of modern business practices. The Chinese cultural core of Confucian ethics and tightly woven kinship networks are highly adaptive to the American, and indeed the global, marketplace.

The Confucian emphasis on the family is a valuable resource for Chinese entrepreneurs, who marshal family connections to borrow capital to start and develop their businesses. They also employ siblings, spouses, and children as loyal, trustworthy, industrious, and often nonsalaried or low-paid help. Confucian hierarchical values, which privilege fathers over sons, husbands over wives, and older siblings over younger ones, mesh well with the clear-cut chain of command in both small businesses and large, more complex ones. “Filial piety,” which encompasses respect to living parents and ancestors alike, ensures that family members will subordinate their own desires to the demands of the family enterprise, and save and share the family's wealth for the present and future success of the business. The Confucian ideal of glorifying one's lineage and the Confucian emphasis on education mean that even when the younger generations leave the family business for university study or the

professions, they still feel obligated to succeed and to be available as resources for their parents and the family firm. The achievements of each generation, whether in business or scholarship, give “face” (honor) to the family and assurance that its immigration was not in vain.

Ninety percent of new immigrant businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area are “family” firms, although as they grow, “family” may include fictive kin from the same village, town, school, or “last name” association. Nuclear family members (husband/wife or adult siblings) retain authority and financial control, but owners and their children often work alongside their employees at whatever jobs need doing, whether operating a sewing machine or clearing restaurant tables. All the workers, “bosses” included, work longer hours for less pay than would be the case in an American business.

These business practices allow owners to operate their businesses at a profit, which, although small, permits the accumulation of capital to expand or modernize the business. Employees benefit from profitable business management by increases in salary, responsibilities, or expertise that eventually result in their own accumulation of wealth. This economic niche provides an important transition for non-English-speaking employees, in a personalized, family-style atmosphere. Employees eat together as a family, consult the firm's owner about personal problems, receive time off for Chinese holidays, and sometimes can secure jobs for their children or their own recently arrived relatives. Because employees are hired because of kinship or friendship ties, the immigrant worker feels an obligation to repay this debt through loyal and industrious service.

The difficulties of capitalization and the small profit margin of many immigrant businesses, along with the long hours and grinding work required for success, increasing competition, the instability of the American economy, and the Chinese value on higher education, have directed some new immigrants with the necessary qualifications into professional and technical areas. But although American society is now more economically and socially hospitable to Chinese immigrants than in the past,

hostility still exists. Chinese labor practices are seen by some, including younger Chinese, as exploitative. Other Americans sometimes resent the influx of Chinese students into California colleges and universities, and glass ceilings in corporate work stall promotion of immigrant Chinese to high managerial levels. Immigrants encounter hostility toward Chinese specialty businesses and residential expansion into formerly "American" suburbs (Horton 1992). All these factors have led many new immigrants to expand their economic strategies. This may take the form of entrepreneurship in the global marketplace, using kin and friendship networks to gain employment in international firms or to expand their own businesses beyond American borders. Some Chinese have also returned to their homelands as academics, businesspeople, or government consultants. Although this transnationalism is economically adaptive, it can put extreme stress on family relationships if the breadwinning husband must be away from the home for long periods, leaving a wife and children to cope in an unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable environment.

Anthropologist Bernard Wong holds that transnational entrepreneurship is only a temporary adaptive strategy for new Chinese immigrants, most of whom are committed to their American communities and their identity as Americans. Although understandably reluctant to surrender their ethnicity

totally, the majority seek to combine their Chinese cultural traits with American values, synthesizing the more intimate scale of interaction in Chinese culture with American pragmatism, technological progress, democracy, and equality. Like many other ethnic groups, the Chinese have developed ethnic institutions, including an ethnic press and business and professional groups, to help them adapt to American society. Also like other immigrant groups, they have become more proactive in using affirmative action and the political process to fight discrimination and assist them in achieving their goals. The children of new Chinese immigrants, like many American-born Chinese, look forward to complete acceptance into American society based on a greater American understanding of their continued contributions to their local and national communities.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How are the "new" Chinese immigrants different from earlier Chinese immigrants to the United States?
2. What are some of the values that have helped the new Chinese immigrants adapt to the United States?

Source: Adapted from Bernard Wong, *Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship: The New Chinese Immigrants in the San Francisco Bay Area*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1988.



In contrast to the American emphasis on individual social mobility, family values are important to many immigrant groups and play an important role in their achieving success in American society.

basis (Lamphere 1992:Introduction; Fix and Passel 1994). Although the new law has resulted in a historic high of immigration, the percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign born (about 8.5 percent) is actually about half what it was at its historic peak (Fix and Passel 1994). The major change has been in the composition of the immigrant flow. The “new” immigrants have come in great numbers from nations that had hitherto been restricted because of “race”: from the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, China, Korea, the Caribbean, and parts of Central and South America. The new immigrants bring languages and cultures from all over the world, and the mosaic of American culture is palpable in any major American city today: one hears many languages, sees many forms of dress, can eat many different kinds of food, and can participate in cultural activities drawn from many sources. This has created dynamic synergies not seen in American society since the early 1900s.

The immigrants of the late twentieth century differ in significant ways from those of the early 1900s. Many of them entered the United States at a time of economic contraction. Corporate downsizing was curtailing the number of jobs for legal immigrants, while providing jobs at the lowest wages and under the most difficult conditions for illegal immigrants (Stull, Broadway, and Erickson 1992; Benson 1999). Also, immigrants in the 1990s were entering the United States when the pursuit of group interests, backed by policies such as affirmative action, had greater legitimacy than it did a century earlier. These new immigrants also now live in a world where communication—by telephone, e-mail, and the Internet—is abundant, relatively simple, and inexpensive, and air travel is within the reach of the middle class. Thus, many immigrants, especially those from nearby areas such as the Caribbean, are

able to retain much closer social and economic ties with their families and cultures in their homelands (Hamid 1990). Anthropologists refer to this pattern of close ties and frequent visits as **transnationalism** (Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1992). Though there are important class and educational differences among immigrant groups, in general, they are more familiar with American culture through its global diffusion than were immigrants of the past. This chapter’s “Ethnography” box about Chinese immigrants highlights the many ways in which the new immigration both builds upon and differs from immigration and models of ethnicity in the past.

The extent to which ethnic differences will persist among immigrants in the United States is unclear, and is perhaps as significantly affected by changing political and economic contexts as by the immigrants themselves. Although attempts to legislate “Americanness” have mostly faded, today’s immigrants and their children face enormous pressures from the marketplace, the media, and the schools to conform to a mainstream vision of American culture. Mainstream culture in the United States itself continues to be enormously flexible, absorbing distinctive cultural characteristics from all over the world. Although our focus has been on immigration in the United States, immigration is in fact a global issue. The enormous movements of populations in the twentieth century have a global aspect that makes immigration, multiculturalism, and ethnicity central to contemporary anthropological interests.

transnationalism A pattern of close ties and frequent visits maintained by immigrants with their native country.

Summary

1. Racial categories are culturally constructed, designating groups of people who are perceived as sharing similar physical and other characteristics transmitted by heredity. Though scientifically invalid, “race” is often used as the basis of systems of oppression and social stratification.
2. The biracial system of the United States and the multiracial system of Brazil are alternative ways of constructing race. In both systems, however, nonwhite status is related to a lower position in the socioeconomic hierarchy.
3. The differences in the racial stratification systems of the United States and Brazil are based

- on history, level of economic development, literacy and education levels, demography, and the role of the state in officially adopting policies of racial discrimination.
4. American anthropologists play an important role in educating the American public about the lack of scientific validity for the concept of race and concepts of racial inferiority.
 5. Ethnicity involves perceived cultural distinctions between groups. The essentialist view of ethnicity is that it reflects an emotional sense of collective selfhood based on shared cultural traits. The social constructionist view sees ethnicity, ethnic groups, and ethnic boundaries as contingent and dynamic cultural constructions.
 6. Ethnic groups, like races, castes, and social classes, are part of a system of social stratification in which these groups compete for political, social, and economic resources.
 7. The nation-state is a significant context for contemporary ethnic interaction and stratification. The nation-state emerges when governments and elites succeed in identifying the state with a group of people defined as culturally homogeneous.
 8. Within states, many contesting voices try to shape the creation of national identities. Among these, the government has the advantage of greater resources and control over its population, through the passage of laws, control of media, and other means. One goal of contemporary anthropology is to identify the processes by which states define and bring into existence both the nation and the ethnic groups that compose it.
 9. Extreme ethnic conflict is a product of contemporary economic, political, and social conditions. Ethnic violence, as described for the former Yugoslavia, suggests that political manipulation of cultural differences, not ethnicity per se, is at the root of interethnic violence.
 10. Indigenous peoples are small-scale, relatively separate societies with historical ties to a given territory that antedate European contact, invasion, or colonization. Nation-states are often in conflict with indigenous peoples, whom they have conquered and deprived of their land, leading to the destruction of indigenous cultures. Law has been an important tool in the arsenal of modern nation-states in changing the cultures of indigenous peoples.
 11. The conflict between the government of Norway and the indigenous Saami pastoralists, arising from Norway's attempts to rationalize reindeer herding, illustrates the kinds of conflicts experienced by indigenous peoples worldwide. Nation-states frequently view indigenous peoples as standing in the way of "progress" and economic development.
 12. The cultural diversity of the United States has largely been framed in terms of ethnicity based on the national origin of immigrants. A consistent theme in U.S. history has been a concern with the numbers and national origins of its immigrants. From the 1880s through the 1920s, restrictive and racist immigration laws were passed, giving preference to immigration from certain European countries. In 1965, changes in American immigration laws led to increasing immigration from a wide diversity of nations and "races."
 13. Previous models of assimilation of immigrants have given way, to some extent, to the idea of multiculturalism, in which diverse ethnic groups are viewed as making a positive cultural contribution to the culture and society of the United States.
 14. The adaptive strategies of recent new immigrants is exemplified by the Chinese in the San Francisco Bay Area.



Key Terms

assimilation model
 constructionism
 essentialism

ethnic boundaries
 ethnic groups
 ethnic identity

ethnicity
 indigenous peoples
 multiculturalism
 nation-state
 refugees
 transnationalism



Suggested Readings

- Dombrowski, Kirk. 2001. *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. This compelling, provocative ethnography of a Tlingit village in Alaska raises important, and until now largely unasked, questions about how resource development in indigenous communities can lead to local inequality and how interactions with the larger society can create conflicting ideas about culture and personal identity at the local level.
- Falla, Ricardo. 1994. *Massacres in the Jungle*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Written by a Catholic priest turned anthropologist, this outstanding example of action anthropology documents the massacres and counterinsurgency terror by the Guatemalan military in the 1980s against indigenous Maya of the recently colonized northern border regions.
- Foner, Nancy (Ed.). 2003. *American Arrivals: Anthropology Engages the New Immigration*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press. Edited by an anthropologist well known for her study of immigrants in the United States, this book gathers together useful theoretical approaches on processes of migration, transnationalism, gender, urban anthropology, and adjustment to American society, highlighting the usefulness of ethnography in studying immigration.
- Maybury-Lewis, David. 1997. *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. An anthropologist prominent in advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples explains many of the ethnic conflicts in the world today, involving both indigenous peoples and ethnic groups in European and African states. This volume is part of a series, Cultural Survival Studies in Ethnicity and Change.
- Nguyen, Tram. 2005. *We Are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11*. Boston: Beacon Press. A highly readable account of the many ways different immigrant groups in different parts of the United States were affected by the increased security operations—many of them misdirected—and the climate of fear and growing intolerance after 9/11.
- Norgren, Jill, and Serena Nanda. 2006. *American Cultural Pluralism and Law*. 3rd ed. Westport, CT: Praeger/Greenwood. Cultural diversity in the United States, as this involves gender, class, race, religion, ethnicity, and indigenous status, are examined within a legal, anthropological, and political context. Supreme and state court opinions are examined in relation to American values, law, and politics and the book includes chapters on Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos, among others.
- Sanjek, Roger. 2000. *The Future of Us All: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. This ethnographically based social history in one of the most multiethnic and multilingual neighborhoods in the United States focuses on race, class, gender, ritual, and politics, and particularly, political alliances that cross ethnic and racial borders.
- Smedley, Audry. 1993. *Race in North America and the Evolution of a Worldview*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. An ideal book for anthropology students at all levels and for the general public as well, this outstanding text explains the unique and extreme nature of the rigidly biracial ideology in the United States. The author traces the idea historically, and notes its intersection with the particular English experience with Native Americans, and later, African slavery, in its North American colonies.
- Trask, Haunani-Kay. 1999. *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (rev. ed.). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. An eye-opening account from a feminist indigenous perspective of the impact of U.S. colonialism on the native peoples of Hawaii.



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Religion



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Among the Mentawai of Indonesia, shamans read the entrails of chickens and pigs to diagnose and then cure illness.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

What Religion Does in Society

Searching for Order and Meaning

Reducing Anxiety and Increasing Control

Reinforcing or Modifying the Social Order

Characteristics of Religion

Stories, Sacred Narratives, and Myths

Symbols and Symbolism

Supernatural Beings, Powers, States, and Qualities

Rituals and Ways of Addressing the Supernatural

Religious Practitioners

Witches and Sorcerers

Religion and Change

In 1932, Leonard Howell, a former cook for the U.S. Army, returned to his native Jamaica. Once there, he had a prophetic revelation. He declared that the 1930 coronation of Ras (Duke) Tafari as Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia fulfilled biblical prophecies. Haile Selassie was the messiah and the hope of freedom for all black people.

For more details, see page 397.

Jn Trinidad, before harvesting, farmers make sacrifices to the *di*, the spirits of the first owners of their fields. They believe that failure to do so will result in a poor harvest. Because many fields are owned by absentee landlords, they also set aside a portion of the harvest to pay rent. Most people from industrialized societies would say that sacrifices to the *di* are supernatural and rent payments are part of the natural world. But is it really so simple? After all, as anthropologist Morton Klass (1995) points out, the farmer may have never seen a *di* or the landlord. He knows of people who have been evicted because they failed to pay the rent, but he also knows people whose crops have failed when they did not sacrifice to the *di*. Some people say that the *di* do not really exist, but others say that landlords really do not exist and everyone has a right to the land they live on and work. If we assume that the payments the farmer makes to the *di* constitute religion but those he makes to the landlord are something completely different, we seem to miss something essential.

All societies have spiritual beliefs and practices and anthropologists generally refer to these as reli-

gion; yet as Klass's example of the *di* and the landlord suggests, defining **religion** is surprisingly difficult. Most definitions focus on the supernatural. Because American culture makes a clear distinction between natural and supernatural, that seems logical enough. The problem is that some religions explicitly deny that supernatural beings exist, and others do not distinguish them from what Americans call the natural.

Even in the United States, the difference between the natural and supernatural may be problematic. Is God's presence in the world supernatural to the devout, or is it simply part of the natural order of the world? Many Americans believe that they are able to speak directly to God and God responds to them in ways that are visible and audible (to them). Would those people consider such a conversation supernatural? Should we?

religion A social institution characterized by sacred stories; symbols and symbolism; the proposed existence of immeasurable beings, powers, states, places, and qualities; rituals and means of addressing the supernatural; specific practitioners; and change.



Global Perspective

The Globalization of Religion in the United States

Although many people think of the United States as having an extremely secular culture, it is actually one of the world's most religious industrialized nations. When the French traveler and political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in 1831, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck his attention (1835–1840/1956:319). Additionally, America has a long history of religious diversity. In that same era, the French diplomat Talleyrand is reported to have complained that the United States had 32 religions but only one sauce (Smith 2002).

Today, 96 percent of Americans say they believe in God. Church attendance has risen steadily in recent years (Warner 2005). In 1940, only about 37 percent of Americans attended church regularly; today, according to the world values survey (Morin 1998), 44 percent do. This compares with 27 percent in Great Britain, 21 percent in France, and 4 percent in Sweden.

Not only are more Americans participating in religion, but religious diversity in America has grown rapidly over the past several decades. There have been Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities in America for more than a century but these groups have grown enormously over the past several

decades. In *A New Religious America* (2001) Diana Eck of Harvard University's Pluralism Project reports that changes in U.S. immigration policies have drawn large numbers of people from India, Pakistan, China, Korea, Vietnam, and elsewhere. This has resulted in large increases in minority religions. Additionally, many Americans born to different religious traditions have been attracted to these. Many Americans have adopted meditation practices from Hinduism and Buddhism, and Islam has proven very attractive to some African Americans.

In the 1970s, members of non-Judeo-Christian religions accounted for less than 1 percent of the U.S. population. By the early 2000s, that number had grown to about 2.5 percent. Estimates of the membership of many religions are highly controversial, but in rough numbers, the Buddhist population is currently about 2.3 million and the Hindu population about 1.1 million (Smith 2002). According to Eck, Los Angeles, home to many Asian immigrants, is "the most complex Buddhist city in the world." Estimates of the Muslim population ranges from about 2 million (Smith 2001) to more than twice that number.

One result of the growth of these religions has been an explosion in the construction of places of

Because different societies perceive reality in different ways, there is no agreed upon universal way to distinguish the natural from the supernatural. But our problems are even greater than this. For example, most Americans think of religions as being institutions that they are born into or join. If people are asked their religious identity, they generally respond by saying they are a member of a specific religious group. However, for many people in small-scale societies, there are no religious institutions; religion instead is woven into the fabric of daily life. For these people, the question "what is your religion?" makes no sense. Their religious identity is not a separable aspect of their life.

Thus, religions and religious identity around the world show enormous variation. Religion scholars Carmody and Carmody have noted that "religion ranges almost endlessly—into every geographical

area, into every temporal period, into so many uses of the human body, mind, imagination, social instinct, artistic genius, and all the rest that no library could contain all the studies that the full range of religion, actual and potential, would require" (1992:4). It is unlikely that any single belief is shared by all the world's people. Differences vary from issues as grand as the nature of life itself (whether we live once, as the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition teaches, or repeatedly, as the Hindu and Buddhist traditions teach) to issues as specific as sexual relations between men (discouraged by the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition but compulsory among the Sambia of New Guinea [Herdt 1987]).

Despite the bewildering variety of religious beliefs and practices in every society there is something that anthropologists (though not necessarily the members of the society identify as religion. It

worship. There are Buddhist and Hindu temples, mosques, and Islamic learning centers in most large American cities. Although these celebrate their respective traditions, they have in many cases become quite Americanized, offering classes, youth programs, and scout troops, programs similar to those often offered by churches and synagogues.

Eck points out that as religions expand they often meet with hostility. Thus, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists have frequently faced opposition from local groups and corporations. Zoning boards have sometimes denied them permission to build places of worship, and corporations sometimes tried to prohibit traditional garb such as head scarves. The conservative Christian Family Research Council attacked the U.S. House of Representatives for allowing a Hindu to offer the daily prayer. Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition, has repeatedly attacked Islam, calling it a religion that seeks to control, dominate, or, if need be, destroy others.

Despite some incidents of bigotry, most Americans have responded with tolerance. A good indication of this was the public reaction to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Although in the month that followed the attack there were about 700 hate

crimes committed against Muslims and Hindus, the overwhelming majority of Americans rejected hatred and reacted with support. In one incident, an attack on a mosque in Toledo, a Christian radio station called for people to come to the mosque and pray in solidarity with its members. More than 1500 individuals of all faiths came to join hands around the mosque. Around the nation, political and religious leaders from all groups and parties called for tolerance and support for the American Muslim community.

Mosques and temples are increasingly joining churches and synagogues on the American landscape. But if the acceptance of religious diversity holds a promise for members of minority religions, it hides a danger as well. Pressures for assimilation are strong, and it is difficult for members of minority religions to preserve their beliefs, practices, and identity.



You can visit the Pluralism Project at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism>.

is very difficult to formulate a concise definition of religion, but all religions share at least six common characteristics. First, religions are composed of stories that members believe are important. Second, religions make extensive use of symbols and symbolism. Third, religions propose the existence of beings, powers, states, places, and qualities that cannot be measured by any agreed upon scientific means—they are nonempirical. Fourth, religions include rituals and specific means of addressing the supernatural. Fifth, in all societies there are individuals who are particularly expert in the practice of religion. And, lastly, all religions are subject to change.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many anthropologists were concerned with trying to find the origin, and trace the development, of religion. For the most part, they wanted to demon-

strate that religion had evolved from primitive superstition to enlightened Christianity. E. B. Tylor, one of the founders of anthropology, saw religion as beginning with **animism**, the notion that all objects (living and nonliving) are imbued with spirit, and evolving through polytheism to monotheism. Tylor and many of his contemporaries believed the evolution of religion was part of the more general human progression toward logic and rationality. This view of religion has long been discredited; no religion is any more or less logical than any other and none is more evolved than another. Anthropologists today are interested in the ways in which religion operates in societies and ways in

Created with

animism

and

The notion that all objects, living and non-living,

are imbued with spirits.



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A Closer Look

Religion and Ecology

Religious belief and ritual may not only contribute indirectly to the survival of a society but may also directly affect the relationship between a social group and its physical environment. A classic study by Roy Rappaport (1967) of the Tsembaga of New Guinea shows how religious belief and ritual may produce a practical result on the external world.

The Tsembaga, who live in the valleys of a mountain range in New Guinea, are swidden cultivators who also raise pigs. Small numbers of pigs are useful and easy to keep. They eat anything so they help keep residential areas free of garbage. They can be useful in gardening as well: before planting, the Tsembaga allow pigs into garden areas to root after old seeds, tubers, and other plants. They not only dispose of weeds but also help churn and soften the soil, preparing it for planting. However, in the case of pigs, more is not necessarily better. As the pig herd grows larger, they become more difficult to feed and people must grow additional food just for the pigs. Furthermore, when there are too many pigs, they are more likely to invade gardens and eat or destroy crops meant for people. When this happens, it creates disputes among neighbors and friends. Thus,

it becomes necessary to reduce the size of the pig herd. Religion and ritual are part of the system that the Tsembaga use to maintain the pig herd at the proper size.

The Tsembaga have a ritual cycle that they perform to rearrange their relationships with the supernatural world. This cycle can be viewed as beginning with the rituals performed during warfare. In Tsembaga warfare, opponents generally occupy territories next to each other. After hostilities have broken out, each side performs certain rituals that formally designate the other group as the enemy. Fighting may continue on and off for weeks. Occasionally, one group scores a decisive victory over the other. In this case, survivors of the defeated group go to live with their kinsmen. The victors destroy the losers' gardens, slaughter their pigs, and burn their houses. The victors do not occupy their land, however, as it is believed to be guarded by the ancestors of the defeated group.

Most Tsembaga warfare ends in truce, however, with both groups remaining on their territory. When a truce is declared, each group performs a ritual called "planting the rumbin." The rumbin is

which it creates meaning in human life. In this chapter, we will briefly discuss some of the things that religion does in society and then turn to a more thorough examination of each of the six points enumerated above.



What Religion Does in Society

Religion does much work in a society. It may provide meaning and order in people's lives. It may reduce social anxiety and give people a sense of control over their destinies. It may promote and reinforce the status quo. But it does not always do these things. In some cases religion may make people profoundly disquiet or fearful. It may be an im-

portant force resisting the status quo and it may catalyze radical politics and, on occasion, murderous violence.

Searching for Order and Meaning

One of the most important functions of religion is to explain aspects of the physical and social environment that are important in the lives of individuals and societies and give them meaning. Although there is no single question answered by every religion, belief systems all provide responses to the central concerns of their followers. Religions usually support and are supported by the fundamental assumptions their believers make about the nature of reality. They provide a **cosmology**—a set of principles or beliefs about the nature of life and death, the creation of the universe, and the origin of society.

a type of plant. At the ritual, the rumbin is dedicated to the ancestors, who are thanked for helping in the fight. Then there is a wholesale slaughter of adult pigs. Some of the meat is eaten by the local group itself, and the rest is distributed to other groups that have helped it fight. After the feast, there is a period in which the fighting groups are still considered to be in debt to their allies and their ancestors. This period will not end until the rumbin plant is uprooted. Uprooting the rumbin also requires a pig feast and occurs when there are enough pigs. But how many pigs are enough?

When pig herds exceed four per woman caretaker, they become too troublesome to manage and begin to compete with humans for food. At this point, the wives of the owners of large numbers of pigs begin agitating for the ritual to uproot the rumbin. This ritual is followed by a pig festival lasting about a year, which involves much entertaining among villages. Food is exchanged, and hosts and guests spend the nights dancing. During this time, future alliances may be established between hosts and guests. Much trade also takes place, involving such items as axes, bird plumes,

and shell ornaments. For one festival, Rappaport observed that 4500–6000 pounds of pig meat were distributed over 163 occasions to 2000–3000 people in 17 local groups. The pig festival ends with another pig slaughter and the public presentation of a salted pig belly to one's allies. This concludes the ritual cycle. A local group would now consider itself free to attack its neighbors, knowing that assistance from both human allies and ancestors would be forthcoming because their obligation to feed them pork had been fulfilled.

Although the Tsembaga see their rituals in religious terms, it is clear that they have many ecological functions as well. The rituals form a complex system of cultural switches that control the production of pigs, warfare, trade, and the consumption of pig meat, turning each of these off and on. In addition to mediating the relationship between the Tsembaga and their ancestors and gods, religious rituals keep the Tsembaga in balance with their environment. They regulate the relationship between people and pigs, ensuring that neither exceeds the carrying capacity of the environment or the ability of the Tsembaga culture to handle stress.



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Religions provide a sense of order and meaning in a world that often seems chaotic. In hectic Bangkok, ethnic Chinese Thais offer prayer at Chi Se Ma Chinese temple.

the relationship of individuals and groups to one another, and the relation of humankind to nature. Human societies create symbolic images of reality that serve as a framework for interpreting events and experiences. Through religion, humans impose order and meaning on their world and often gain the feeling that they have some measure of control over it.

By defining the place of the individual in society and through the establishment of moral codes, religions provide people with a sense of personal identity, belonging, and meaning. When people suffer a profound personal loss or when life loses meaning

because of radically changed circumstances, religion can supply a new identity and become the basis for personal and cultural survival. Giving meaning to our lives and the world is fundamental to human existence. Psychologist Victor Frankl, a survivor of the Nazi death camps, found that those whose lives retain meaning, even in hopeless situations, are more likely to survive than those whose lives lose meaning (1946). Although there are many possible ways to give one's life meaning, historically and cross-culturally, religion is the principal means that people have used.

All of the above may sound like religion is a force for peace and tranquility, but clearly this is not always the case. Beliefs give meaning to people's lives in a wide variety of ways. Sometimes these involve denying the physical reality or importance of the material world, even to the point of suicidal individual or group action (as in the cases of Jonestown, Heaven's Gate, the Branch Davidians and many other groups). Sometimes models of meaning include unspeakable violence practiced on other peoples. Sometimes meaning is found in oppressing others or murdering them. The meanings that religion creates can be a chaotic wilderness of violence and destruction.

Reducing Anxiety and Increasing Control

Many religious practices are aimed at ensuring success in human activities. Prayers, sacrifice, and magic are used in the hope that they will aid a particular person or community. Rituals are performed to call on supernatural beings and to control forces that appear to be unpredictable. Although such practices are widespread, their presence is usually related to risk. The less predictable an outcome is, the greater likelihood prayer, magic, and sacrifice will be used. For example, if you have studied for a test and know the material well, you are unlikely to spend much time praying for success. You are more likely to pray for success if you have not studied, and you may even bring your lucky pencil or another charm to the test. Prayer and magic are prevalent in sports and games of chance. Anthropologist and former professional baseball player George Gmelch (2000) notes that professional baseball players are likely to use magic for the least predictable aspects of the game: hit-

ting and pitching. Fielding has little uncertainty, and few magical practices are connected with it.

Prayer and magic do not work in a scientific sense. That is to say that their efficacy has not been demonstrated by scientific experiment (many such experiments have been done, but none have proved convincing to the scientific community) (see Flamm 2002, Tessman and Tessman 2000). Despite this, prayer and magic can be effective in achieving results indirectly. They may alter the emotional state of those who practice them (or whom they are practiced upon) reducing or increasing their anxiety and perhaps creating other psychological states as well. In many cultures worldwide, much of prayer and magic concerns curing disease or creating it in others. There is surely a strong connection between our psychological and physiological states but it is poorly understood.

Reinforcing or Modifying the Social Order

Religion is closely connected with the survival of society and generally works to preserve the social order. Through religion, beliefs about good and evil are reinforced by supernatural means of social control. Sacred stories and rituals provide a rationale for the present social order and give social values sacred authority. Religious ritual also intensifies social solidarity by creating an atmosphere in which people experience their common identity in emotionally moving ways. Finally, religion is an important educational institution. Initiation rites, for example, almost always include transmission of information about cultural practices and tradition.

Religion can also be a catalyst for social change. When the image of the social order that a religion presents fails to match the daily experience of its followers, prophets may emerge who create new religious ideas or call for a purification of existing practices. Sometimes prophecies encourage people to invest themselves in purely magical practices that have little real effect on the social order. At other times, however, prophets call on their followers to pursue their goals through political or military means, which may result in rapid social change. The American civil rights movement, the Iranian revolution, the rise of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, and the conflict between Pakistan and India over Kashmir are all examples of

social movements in which religion has played a critical role.

At times, religion provides an escape from reality. Through the religious belief in a glorious future or the coming of a savior, powerless people who live in harsh and deprived circumstances can create an illusion of power. Religion in these circumstances has both individual and social functions. It provides an outlet for frustration, resentment, and anger and serves to drain off energy that might otherwise be turned against the social system. In this way, religion contributes indirectly to maintaining the social order.

Characteristics of Religion

Anthropologists may attempt to analyze what religion does in a society. However, members of the society do not experience religion in these terms. They experience it through their beliefs and practices.

Stories, Sacred Narratives, and Myths

At a fundamental level, all religions consist of a series of stories told by members of a group. **Sacred narratives** are powerful ways of communicating religious ideas. These narratives are not merely explanatory stories of the cosmos, but sometimes have a sacred power in themselves. This power is evoked when they are told or acted out. Sacred nar-

ratives may recall historic events, although these are often clothed in poetic and sometimes esoteric language. Anthropologists study the meanings and structure of these narratives.

Sacred stories or narratives are often called **myths**, but this is problematic. In some ways it is appropriate to use the term myth. When we think of myth, we think of stories of great deeds, explanations of origins of people, the world, or particular practices in it; stories of heroes such as Athena or Hercules; stories where time is compressed or expanded and reality is composed of many levels. These are indeed characteristics of religious stories. However, it is also true we use the word myth to denote a false belief, or a religious belief we do not share. Thus, we are likely to claim that our own religion is composed of history and sacred story, but other people have myths. For example, we may say that Christians, Jews, and Muslims have Bible stories, but Native Americans have myths. Clearly, we should apply the same terminology to others' religious beliefs that we apply to our own.

By explaining that things came to be the way they are through the activities of sacred beings, sacred narratives validate or legitimize beliefs, values, and customs, particularly those having to do with ethical relations. As Bronislaw Malinowski pointed

sacred narratives Stories held to be holy and true by members of a religious tradition. Sacred narratives tell of historical events, heroes, gods, spirits, and the origin of all things.

myths Sacred stories or narratives.



Religious narratives legitimize beliefs and social arrangements. In this image from the Temple of Osiris at Abydos, the Pharaoh Seti I (ruled 1294–1279 BCE) is confirmed in kingship by the Horus, the god of order (right) and Seth, the god of chaos (left). Egyptians believed that the spirit of Horus entered the Pharaoh and acted as his guide.

out, there is an intimate connection between the sacred tales of a society and its ritual acts, moral deeds, and social organization. These stories are not merely idle tales, wrote Malinowski, “but a hard-worked active force; the function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events” (1992:146).

A clear example of what Malinowski meant is provided by a portion of the origin narrative of the Hopi, an agricultural people who live in Arizona and New Mexico. Traditionally, they have been vegetarians, subsisting mostly on blue corn. Blue corn is more difficult to grow than most other varieties, but it is a strong, resistant strain. Hopi life is difficult; the Hopi say “it is hard to be a Hopi but good to be a Hopi” (Loftin 1991:5). Through the growing of blue corn, the Hopi re-experience the creation of their world.

According to Hopi belief, in earlier, imperfect creations they lived underground. Just before the Hopi appeared on the Earth’s surface, they were given their choice of subsistence activities. They chose blue corn and were given the sooya, or digging stick, to plant it. The techniques for the farming of blue corn were established by the god Maasaw, who taught the Hopi to treat the earth respectfully, as a relative. The Hopi believe that doing so recreates the feelings of humility and harmony that the ancestors chose when they selected the blue corn. Before the twentieth century, the Hopi farmed their fields in work groups made up of clan members. Because their tradition holds that clans were given land to farm together as they became members of the tribe, Hopi re-experience the settlement of their land by various clans as they farm (Loftin 1991:5–9). It is easy to see how the Hopi creation story serves as a charter for society. The Hopi live their religious understanding of their world as they grow blue corn. The telling of such stories, as well as the actions that accompany them or are implied in them, reinforce social tradition and enhance solidarity.

Symbols and Symbolism

As the story recounted in the previous section shows, religious stories make critical use of symbolism. Religious symbolism may also be expressed in material objects such as the cross, the Star of David,

and the crescent moon and star of Islam. Masks, statues, paintings, costumes, body decorations, or objects in the physical environment may also be used as symbols. In addition, religions frequently use verbal symbols. The names for gods and spirits, and certain words, phrases, or songs themselves are often believed to be powerful.

Religious symbols are intrinsically **multivalent**. That is to say, they pack many different and sometimes contradictory meanings into a single word, idea, or object. Briefly consider the Christian cross. What is the meaning of the cross? There can be no simple answer to this question. In fact, Christians have been considering it and writing about it for most of the last two thousand years. The cross means life, death, love, sacrifice, identity, history, power, weakness, wealth, poverty, and much more besides. It means all these things simultaneously. Because it carries so many meanings, it has enormous emotional and intellectual power for Christians. One implication of this is that desecration of the cross is an attack on all of these meanings and is likely to provoke very strong responses.

Symbolic representation allows people to grasp the often complex and abstract ideas of religion without much concern for the specifics of the theology that underlie them. The Christian ritual of the communion service, for example, symbolizes the New Testament story of the Last Supper, which communicates the abstract idea of communion with god. This idea is present in other religions but is represented by different symbolism. In Hinduism, for example, one of the most popular representations of communion with god is the love between the divine Krishna, in the form of a cowherd, and the gopis, or milkmaids, who are devoted to him. In the dramatic enactment of the stories of Krishna and in the singing of songs to him, the Hindu religion offers a path to communion with god that ordinary people can understand. Many additional examples of religious symbolism are presented in the following sections.

Supernatural Beings, Powers, States, and Qualities

A great many important religious narratives and symbols concern the world of spirits and sacred powers. Although many religions do not separate the natural from the supernatural, all propose that there are supernatural beings, powers, states, or qualities.



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Population Growth, Fertility, and Religion

Most preindustrial and industrializing societies have very high rates of population growth. For example, in many African nations, women have, on the average, between six and seven children each. In wealthier countries such as Canada, Italy, and Spain, the rate is between one and two children per woman. This shift from high to low rates of fertility is known as the “demographic transition.” Because high levels of population growth are often linked to poverty, land scarcity, migration, and the loss of culture, anthropologists, economists, and experts on international poverty have been extremely concerned with the demographic transition.

Based on their research with people in traditional societies, many experts have concluded that one critical aspect of the demographic transition is numeracy. They argue that in many societies, people have very few notions about the size of their families. They have few ideas about how many children the average woman has or how many children they desire, and they do not be-

lieve they have any control over these factors. If this is so, then the first step to limiting population growth is to teach family planning. People must count their children and understand that they can decide on the number of children they want. They must make effective choices to control their fertility. For example, Etienne van de Walle, a past president of the Population Association of America, has argued that numeracy about children is central to population control and that “A fertility decline is not very far away when people start conceptualizing their family size, and it cannot take place without such conceptualizing” (1992:501).

Anthropologist Sarah Castle, on the other hand, argues that statements such as van de Walle’s are often based on a misunderstanding of the relationship between religious ideas and the statements people make about fertility and family size. Castle bases her ideas on her research among the Fulani, a herding and farming society in Mali, West Africa. Among the Fulani, women rarely give numeric answers when asked how

(continued)

ties that exist apart from human beings. These beings, powers, states, and qualities are nonempirical. That is to say that there is no scientifically agreed upon way to measure their presence. Consider the God of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic tradition. Many religious people claim to see proof of god’s existence everywhere. However, there is nothing that members of all religious traditions as well as those who do not believe could agree upon to measure to demonstrate the presence of god. Thus, science, which depends on such empirical measurement, can neither prove nor disprove the existence of god. God is nonempirical.

Most religions populate the world with nonempirical beings or spirits. Such spirits may be **anthropomorphic**, or human in form; **zoomorphic**, with the form of an animal; or **naturalistic**, associated with features of the natural environment. They are generally **anthropopsychic**; that is, they have features of personality similar to those of human beings.

Spirits can act in the material world. They can be happy or unhappy, stingy or generous, or can

experience any other human emotion. The understanding of the spirits and souls of animals in hunting societies provides a good illustration. Among the Netsilik Inuit, the souls of bear, caribou, and seal were particularly important. The Netsilik believed that if the soul of an animal they killed received the proper religious attention, it would be pleased. Such an animal would reincarnate in another animal body and let itself be killed again by the same hunter. In this sense, a hunter who treated the spirits of the animals he killed properly

multivalent Containing many different and sometimes contradictory meanings in a single word, idea, or object.

anthropomorphic Having human shape.

zoomorphic Having an animal shape.

naturalism Endowing features of the natural world, such as rivers and mountains, with spirit, soul, or other supernatural characteristics.

anthropopsychic Having thought processes and emotions similar to human.



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Anthropology Makes a Difference—continued

many children they want, frequently answering that it is “up to God.” They do not count their children, or even point at them to confirm that they are theirs. Not only that, but they often seem to show a lack of regard for their children, describing them as “not at all nice,” “ugly,” or “useless.” Children are sometimes dressed in rags and straw; rags or bits of broken gourd are woven into their hair. Mothers often seem indifferent to their fate, seeming not to care when their children are sick and grieving little if they die. Given these facts, it would be easy for outsiders to conclude that Fulani do not care deeply for their children and take an extremely fatalistic view of them, believing that whether or not they have children, the number of their children and their survival rate are matters strictly in God’s hands.

Castle argues, however, that understanding the statements and actions of Fulani parents re-

quires knowledge of their belief system. Fulani actions do not indicate an inability to count children or a lack of caring for them, but their reverse. Two factors are critical in understanding this: beliefs about the supernatural world and beliefs about proper conduct. The Fulani understand many aspects of the supernatural world as dangerous. There are sorcerers who inhabit human forms and those that are invisible or take animal shape. There are other spirits that are hostile to humankind. Critically, these sorcerers and spirits attack anything present in excess. As a result, it is very important that children (and other things as well) not be counted. For counting may show excess and draw the attention of spirits and sorcerers. Counting one’s children or saying that one wants a certain number may cause the spirit world to reclaim them or prevent their births (Castle 2001:1836). It is critical that



In religious ceremonies, humans may be transformed into supernatural beings. This masked dancer from Côte d'Ivoire is not simply a person wearing a mask, but a person who has become a supernatural being.

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children not be praised as beautiful, smart, or helpful because that too is likely to draw the attention of spirits who might then make them ill or kill them. Families keep careful track of the average number of children women have in their communities. When they experience more child deaths than are expected, they are particularly careful to take measures to make sure their children do not draw the attention of spirits. Calling children ugly or worthless, dressing them in rags, or in some cases, hobbling them at night as one would a donkey are, in fact, measures to keep children from the attention of sorcerers and spirits and make sure they survive.

Similarly, parents' show of indifference might camouflage their feelings rather than demonstrating them. Fulani believe in a code of honor they call *pulaaku*. One aspect of this is to appear self-controlled and stoic at all occasions, includ-

ing the sickness and death of a child. Thus, parents who appear extremely indifferent to a sick child will be understood by members of their community to be telegraphing their concern, demonstrating that they are deeply worried about the risks their child runs (Castle 2001:1836).

Castle's findings, and others like them, are critically important. If the high birth rate among the Fulani is not based on an inability to count and plan for children but is intended to counter the frequent deaths of children, programs to educate them about family planning, fertility, and conception will fail. Among the Fulani, and perhaps the vast majority of people in poor nations, reducing family size is linked to reducing the high rate of child mortality and improving economic conditions. This will lead to a short-term rise in family size but a long-term decline.

would always hunt and kill the same animals. An animal soul that did not receive proper attention, however, would be angered and would not let itself be killed a second time. As a result, the hunt would fail. Particularly offended animal souls might become bloodthirsty monsters and terrorize people (Balicki 1970:200–201).

The term **god** is generally used for a named spirit who is believed to have created or to control some aspect of the world. In some religions, gods are of central importance, but this is not always the case. High gods—that is, gods understood as the creator of the world and as the ultimate power in it—are present in only about half of all societies (Levinson 1996:229). In about one-third of these societies, such gods are distant and withdrawn, having little interest in people, and prayer to them is unnecessary. An example is the creator god of the Igbo of Nigeria. Like other remote gods, he is accessible only through prayer to lesser spirits (Uchendu 1965:94).

A religion may be **polytheistic** (having many gods) or **monotheistic** (having only one god). However, the difference between them is not always clear-cut. In polytheistic religions, the many gods

may really be different aspects of one god. In India, for example, it is said that there are literally millions of gods; yet all Indians understand that in some way they are all aspects of one divine essence. Conversely, in monotheistic religions, the one god may have several aspects. In Roman Catholicism, for example, there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; yet these are all part of a single, unitary god.

One class of spirit that may be singled out for special treatment is the **trickster**. Trickster spirits come in many guises, but their key characteristic is that they are interested in their own benefit, not that of human beings. Some tricksters, such as the Christian Devil, are personifications of evil. Others are much more sympathetic. They often combine attributes

god A named spirit who is believed to have created or to control some aspect of the world.

polytheism Belief in many gods.

monotheism Belief in a single god.

trickster A supernatural entity that does not act in the best interest of humans.



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such as greed, lust, and envy with humor and wisdom. Tricksters are powerful, but they themselves are often fooled. In African religions, monkey and hyena spirits are often tricksters. In many Native American cultures, the key trickster spirit is Coyote.

In addition to nonempirical or supernatural beings, religions also posit the existence of states, qualities, or powers whose existence can not be scientifically measured. Enlightenment, in the Buddhist tradition, is a state of being that is not subject to measurement and verification. Similarly, groups such as the Society for Ethical Humanism search for Truth, a quality whose objective description has eluded philosophers for millennia. Religious beliefs often include the notion of an impersonal spiritual force that infuses the universe. In the early twentieth century, R. R. Marett coined the term **animatism** to refer to this force. Today, it is probably best known as mana. **Mana** may be concentrated in individuals or in objects. For example, as noted in Chapter 11, chiefs in Tahiti had a much higher degree of mana than ordinary people. Mana gives one spiritual power, but it can also be dangerous. That is why belief in mana is often associated with an elaborate system of taboos, or prohibitions. Mana is like electricity; it is a powerful force, but it can be dangerous when not approached with the proper caution.

Mana is most often found in areas (spatial, temporal, verbal, or physical) that are the boundaries between clear-cut categories. Hair, for example, is believed to contain supernatural power in many different cultures (as in the Old Testament story of Samson and Delilah). Hair is a symbol of the boundary between the self and the not-self, both part of a person and separable from the person. Doorways and gates—which separate the inside from the outside and can thus serve as symbols of moral categories such as good and evil, pure and impure—are also widespread symbols of power. Because these boundary symbols contain supernatural power, they are often used in religious ritual and surrounded by taboos.

Rituals and Ways of Addressing the Supernatural

Sacred narratives, symbols, spirits, and sacred power all find their place in religious ritual. A **ritual** is a ceremonial act or a repeated stylized gesture used for specific occasions (Cunningham et al. 1995). A religious ritual is one that involves the use

of religious symbols. Through ritual, people enact their religion. Rituals may involve the telling or acting out of sacred stories as well as the use of music, dance, drugs, or pain to move worshipers to an ecstatic state of trance.

The specific content of religious rituals—the stories and symbols they use, and the spirits and powers they address—varies enormously from culture to culture. However, certain patterns of religious behavior are extremely widespread, if not universal. Rites of passage and rites of intensification are found in almost all cultures.

Most religious rituals involve a combination of prayer, sacrifices, and magic to contact and control supernatural spirits and powers. The difference between these common ways of worship lies in the degree of control that humans believe they exert over the spirit world. In addition, people may also use divination to attempt to discover hidden truths.

Rites of Passage Public events that mark the transition of a person from one social status to another are **rites of passage**. Rites of passage almost always mark birth, puberty, marriage, and death and may include many other transitions as well. Rites of passage involve three phases (van Gennep 1960). The first phase is **separation**, in which the person or group is detached from a former status. The second, or **liminal**, phase is one of limbo, in which the person has been detached from the old status but not yet attached to a new one. The third stage is **reincorporation**, in which the passage from one status to another is symbolically completed. After reincorporation,

animatism Belief in an impersonal spiritual force that infuses the universe.

mana Religious power or energy that is concentrated in individuals or objects.

ritual A patterned act that involves the manipulation of religious symbols.

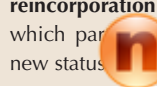
rite of passage A ritual that marks a person's transition from one status to another.

separation The first stage of a rite of passage in which individuals are removed from their community or status.

liminal The stage of a ritual, particularly a rite of passage, in which one has passed out of an old status but not yet entered a new one.

reincorporation The third phase of a rite of passage during which participants are returned to the community with a new status.

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A Closer Look

Cargo Cults, Colonialism, and Ritual

For the past 400 years, Western culture has spread through the islands of Melanesia, including the Solomon Islands and New Guinea. Initially, Melanesians were receptive to Western culture, which reached them primarily through trade goods, called “cargo” in pidgin English. Islanders believed that welcoming missionaries and colonial governments would bring them cargo and riches. However, they soon realized that the preaching of Western religion and promises of the benefits of European rule were different from the reality. Not only did Melanesians fail to gain wealth and power but, in many cases, they grew poorer and were more deeply oppressed.

In Melanesian society, secret knowledge and ritual action were major sources of power. Therefore, it was not surprising that some Melanesians concluded that ritual and secret knowledge were the source of the wealth and power of the whites as well. Melanesians observed that whites did not seem to work (at least as Melanesians understood work) but instead made “secret signs” on scraps of paper, built strange structures, and behaved in seemingly unusual ways. For example, they built airports and seaports with towers and wires and they drilled soldiers to march in formation. When they did these things, planes and ships arrived, disgorging a seemingly endless supply of material goods. Melanesians, who did so much hard physical labor, got nothing. Plainly, the whites knew the secrets of cargo and were keeping it from the islanders. If Melanesians could learn the secret knowledge and rituals of cargo, they believed they could rid their societies of oppressive colonial governments and gain access to immense wealth.

So-called cargo cults appeared all over Melanesia. Though there was some variety, the cults shared certain common features. A local prophet announced that the world was about to end in a terrible catastrophe, after which God (or the ancestors, or a local culture hero) would appear, and a paradise on earth would begin. The end of the world could be caused or hastened by the performance of ritual that copied what they had observed the whites to do. In some places the faithful sat around tables dressed in European clothes, making signs on

paper. In others they drilled with wooden rifles and built wharves, storehouses, airfields, and lookout towers in the hopes that such ritual would cause planes to land or ships to dock and disgorge cargo.

The first Europeans to write about cargo cults were colonial administrators, who saw them as the irrational beliefs and activities of a primitive, savage, unpredictable, and therefore potentially dangerous people who had succumbed to a kind of “madness.” This view explicitly opposed Melanesian irrationality to European rationality and justified the Australian colonial administration’s tighter control over New Guinea (Lindstrom 1993; Buck 1989).

Anthropologists, who began describing cargo cults in the 1950s, attempted to understand their logic from the Melanesian perspective. They pointed out that cargo cults were based in the experience of Melanesians, particularly during World War II. During the war, Melanesians witnessed Americans, Japanese, and others arrive and engage in seemingly odd ritualistic behavior. This was followed by the appearance of planes and ships bearing an apparently endless supply of goods and by cataclysmic battles. Thus, Melanesians were not irrational, but rather working with the objective knowledge derived from their limited experiences. Furthermore, anthropologists pointed out that these observations and practices dovetailed neatly with central themes in Melanesian culture: the importance of wealth, the seeking of economic advantage through ritual activities, and the role of ritual leader as supernaturally inspired prophet.

Anthropologists also interpreted the movements as symbolic of the Melanesian desire for social equality with Europeans. Cargo cults were seen as a form of religious resistance against colonial rule (Worsley 1959). The repressive colonial regime made it necessary to clothe resistance in the religious form, as political rebellion would have been immediately suppressed. They believed that when Melanesians became independent of colonial rule, they would organize their activities politically, and cargo cults would disappear. Although cargo cults have not entirely dis-



A Closer Look—continued

appeared, they have certainly declined in importance since independence.

Numerous aspects of American society, however, have similarities to cargo cults. One good example is prosperity theology or the Word-Faith movement. The central tenet of prosperity theology is that God wants Christians to be wealthy. If they give money to churches (the more the better) and pray with enough sincerity, devotion, and frequency, God will reward them with material wealth in the form of cash or objects such as cars and houses. In other words, if they perform the correct rituals, they will receive cargo. Conversely, if they are poor, it is because they have failed to properly ask God for wealth.

Prosperity theology has become extremely popular in the United States and in Latin America. Oral Roberts was one of its best-known earlier promoters. Prosperity theology preachers such as Jan and Paul Crouch, Creflo Dollar, Benny Hinn, and Kenneth Copeland appear on

hundreds of television stations in the United States and abroad. The prosperity theology based Universal Church of God's Kingdom, headquartered in Brazil, claims 3 million followers in that country and another 3 million worldwide. Officials of Copeland's ministry estimate its annual revenue at about \$70 million. The Crouches own TBN, the Trinity Broadcast Network, with an annual income greater than \$100 million.

Some scholars have also wondered if the American economic system itself is a bit like a cargo cult. Lamont Lindstrom (1993) argues that Westerners are obsessed with cargo, with desire for wealth and material goods, and that they increasingly turn to ritual strategies to obtain them. The endless desire for consumer goods and beliefs that purchases of specific brands of cars, drinks, or clothing will make us forever young, sexy, and powerful may not create happiness or give us the lifestyles featured in advertisements, but they do serve the market well.

the person takes on the rights and obligations of his or her new social status.

Anthropologists have been particularly interested in analyzing the liminal stage of ritual. The liminal stage mediates between two statuses; a person in the liminal stage is "neither here nor there." To emphasize this, the stage's symbols often focus on nothingness and ambiguity. The liminal stage has many different expressions, but it is often characterized by what anthropologists call **antistructure**, and it frequently includes role reversals. Behavior that would be virtually unthinkable under usual circumstances becomes normal. For example, ritual transvestism was once a prominent feature of community festivals in Japan. All members of the community would dance wearing the clothing of the opposite sex (Norbeck 1974:51). At the Wub-wang'u ritual among the Ndembu of Zambia, men and women publicly insult each other's sexual abilities and extol their own, but no one is allowed to take offense (V. Turner 1969:78–79).

More controversially, Turner argued that the liminal stage involved the dissolution of many of

the structured and hierarchical classifications that normally separate people in society (such as caste, class, or kinship categories). As a result, it put people in a temporary state of equality and oneness called **communitas** (V. Turner 1969). In *communitas*, the wealthy and the poor, the powerful and the powerless were, for a short time, all equals. Although it is certainly true that some of the rhetoric of ritual expresses concepts of oneness, most modern scholars doubt that *communitas* happens. The powerful may feel that they have achieved equality with the powerless, but these later rarely return that feeling.

In state-level societies, institutionalized liminal states sometimes emerge. Organizations such as monasteries and convents where people live permanently as members of a religious community embody liminality. Sometimes, groups that are institutionally liminal have low status and ambiguous nature. They are frequently associated with danger or supernatural power and sacredness. Their very marginality, paradoxically, is the source of their power. For example, the hijras of India (see

Chapter 10) are in between the classifications of male and female. Because of their sexual ambiguity, they are believed to have the power to confer blessings for fertility.

Rituals that include a state of liminality are extremely widespread and are often depicted in religious art, symbols, and sacred narratives. Societies must be structured to provide order and meaning. But antistructure—the temporary ritual dissolution of the established order—is also important, helping people to more fully realize the oneness of the self and the other (V. Turner 1969:131).

Rites of Intensification In addition to rites of passage, most societies have rites of intensification. These are rituals directed toward the welfare of the group or community rather than the individual. These rituals are structured to reinforce the values and norms of the community and to strengthen group identity. Through **rites of intensification**, the community maintains continuity with the past, enhances the feeling of social unity in the present, and renews the sentiments on which cohesion depends (Elkin 1967).

In some groups, rites of intensification are connected with totems. A **totem** is an object, an animal species, or a feature of the natural world that is associated with a particular descent group. **Totemism** is a prominent feature of the religions of the Australian aborigines. People are grouped into societies or lodges, each of which is linked with some

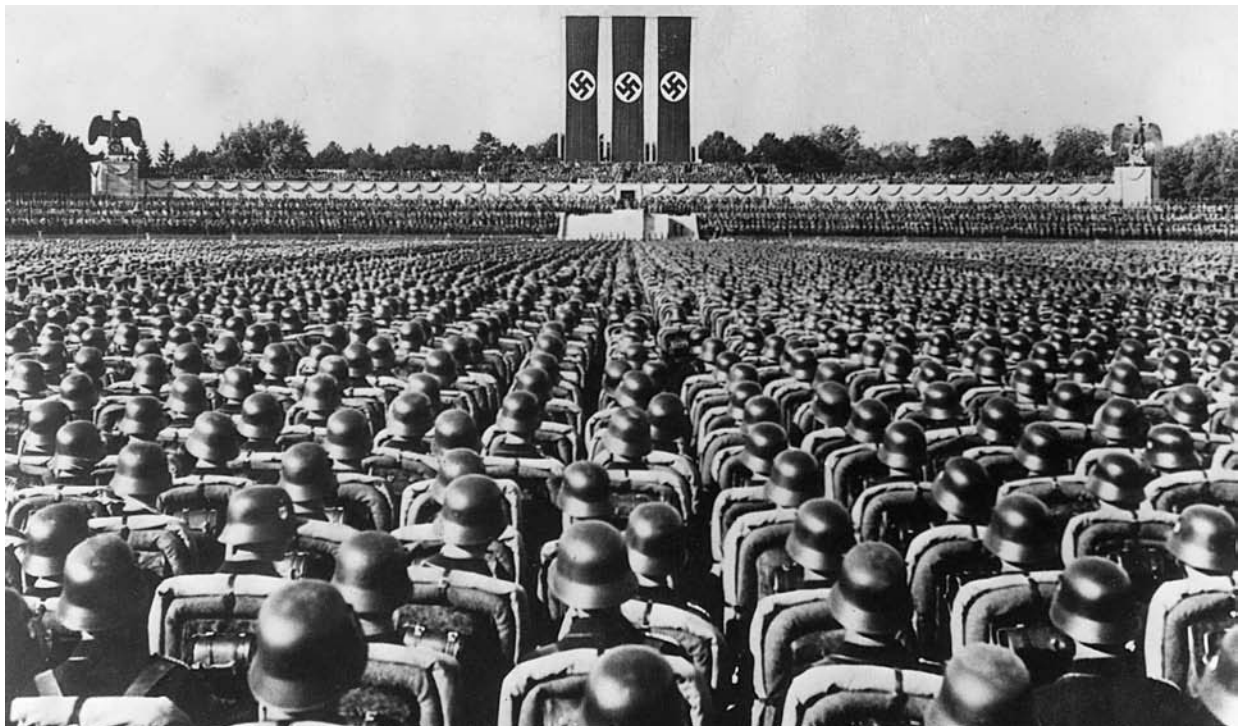
antistructure The socially sanctioned use of behavior that radically violates social norms. Antistructure is frequently found in religious ritual.

communitas A state of perceived solidarity, equality, and unity among people sharing a religious ritual, often characterized by intense emotion.

rite of intensification A ritual structured to reinforce the values and norms of a community and to strengthen group identity.

totem An animal, plant, or other aspect of the natural world held to be ancestral or to have other intimate relationships with members of a group.

totemism Religious practices centered around animals, plants, or other aspects of the natural world held to be ancestral or to have other intimate relationships with members of a group.



Rites of intensification create and reinforce group identity. They can be used for religious, political, or economic purposes. The Nazi Nuremberg rally, held annually from 1933 to 1938, was designed to force enthusiasm for the Nazi party and showcase its power

species in the natural environment that is its totem. Under most circumstances, members of a group are prohibited from eating their totem. In religious rituals, members of the same society or lodge assemble to celebrate their totems. The ceremonies, which often take place at night, explain the origin of the totem (and hence, of the group) and reenact the time of the ancestors. Through singing and dancing, both performers and onlookers are transported to an ecstatic state. In a classic description, French sociologist Émile Durkheim wrote:

When they are once come together, a sort of electricity is formed by their collecting which quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation. . . . [O]n every side one sees nothing but violent gestures, cries, veritable howls, and deafening noises of every sort. . . . One can readily conceive how, when arrived at this state . . . a man does not recognize himself any longer . . . [and feels] himself dominated and carried away by some sort of external power. . . . [E]verything is just as though he really were transported into a special world (1961:247–251/1915).

Durkheim believed totems were symbols of common social identity. When people worshiped them, they were, at the same time, worshipping the moral and social order of their society. In dance and worship, the aborigines achieved an ecstatic religious experience of their shared identity. Such experiences helped to bind the members of their society together.

The religious rituals of the Australian aborigines may seem exotic, but Americans participate in similar observances all the time—and to the same effect. Some American rites of intensification are religious, but many are secular. One with which most students are familiar is the college football game and the rallies associated with it. If the game is “good” or the school has “spirit,” these gatherings produce enormous excitement among their fans and transport them to “a special world,” as Durkheim called it. They also increase collective identity. If you are a fan, you will probably feel intense identification with your school and your team at such an event. Identification with your team and the excitement of sporting events will help to keep you “loyal” to your school (and hopefully encourage you to donate to it as an alumnus/a). Schools have totems (animal mascots) as well.

Prayer Prayer is any conversation held with spirits and gods. In prayer, people petition, invoke, praise,

give thanks, dedicate, supplicate, intercede, confess, repent, and bless (Levinson 1996). A critical feature of **prayer** is that people believe that its results depend on the will of the spirit world rather than on actions humans perform. Prayer may be done without any expectation of a particular response from the beings or forces prayed to. When prayer involves requests, the failure of a spirit to respond to a request is understood as resulting from its disinclination rather than from improper human action. When Westerners think of prayer, most probably think of words that are recited aloud or silently. However, there are many forms of prayer. For example, in Buddhist tradition, people may pray by hoisting flags or spinning wheels with prayers written inside them. Words addressed to gods and spirits are not always humble compliments either. For example, Benedict (1961:221/1934) reported that among the Northwest Coast tribes of North America when calamities fell or their prayers were not answered, people vented their anger against the gods by saying, “You are a great slave.”

Sacrifice Sacrifice occurs when people make offerings to gods or spirits to increase their spiritual purity or the efficacy of their prayers. People may **sacrifice** the first fruits of a harvest, animal lives or, on occasion, human lives. Changes in behavior are often offered as sacrifices. Many Americans are familiar with the practice of giving up something for the Christian holiday of Lent, a form of sacrifice intended to help the worshipper identify with Jesus, show devotion, and increase purity. In many religions, including Christianity, it is common to make a vow to carry out a certain kind of behavior, such as going on a pilgrimage or building a place of worship, if a prayer is answered.

Cattle sacrifices are central to religion among cattle pastoralists of East Africa, such as the Nuer and the Pokot. The essence of the East African cattle complex is that cattle are killed and eaten only in a ritual and religious context. This may be quite adaptive. In the absence of refrigeration, sacrifices and feasts offer access to fresh meat. One family could not consume a whole steer by itself, but this problem is solved by offering it to the community in a ceremonial setting. Cattle sacrifices happen in community feasts that occur about once a week. The feasts are an important source of meat in the diet. Because the products are distributed accord-

ing to age and sex by a rigid formula, meat can be shared without quarreling over the supply (Schneider 1973). Furthermore, the religious taboo that a person who eats ritually slaughtered meat may not take milk on the same day has the effect of making milk more available to those who have no meat.

Magic Magic is an attempt to mechanistically control supernatural forces. When people do **magic**, they believe that their words and actions compel the spirit world to behave in certain ways. Failure of a magical request is understood as resulting from incorrect performance of the ritual rather than the refusal of spirits to act.

Two of the most common magical practices are imitation and contagion. In **imitative magic**, the procedure performed resembles the result desired. A voodoo doll is a form of imitative magic with which many people are familiar. The principle is that mistreatment of a doll-like image of a person will cause injury to that person. The Christian practice of baptism can also be seen as a form of imitative magic. Most Christians believe that in baptism, original sin, often ritually compared with dirt or a stain, is washed away with holy water. Christians generally do not see themselves as compelling God in the baptism ritual, but they do believe that if the ceremony is done properly by duly constituted authority, God will not fail to remove original sin from the child.

With **contagious magic**, the idea is that an object that has been in contact with a person retains a magical connection with that person. For example, a person might attempt to increase the effective-

ness of a voodoo doll by attaching a piece of clothing, hair, or other object belonging to the person they wish to injure. People in the United States often attribute special power and meaning to objects that have come in contact with famous or notorious people. Signed baseballs, bits of costumes worn by movie stars, and pens used to sign famous documents all become collectors' items and are imbued with special power and importance.

In many cultures, magical practices accompany most human activities. Among the Asaro of New Guinea, when a child is born, its umbilical cord is buried so that it cannot later be used by a sorcerer to cause harm. To prevent the infant's crying at night, a bundle of sweet-smelling grass is placed on the mother's head, and her wish for uninterrupted sleep is blown into the grass. The grass is then crushed over the head of the child who, in breathing its aroma, also breathes in the mother's command not to cry. When a young boy kills his first animal, his hand is magically "locked" into the position of the successful kill. When he later tries to court a girl, he will use love magic, which in a particularly powerful form will make him appear in front of her with the face of another man to whom she is known to be attracted. Both magical and technical skills are used to make gardens and pigs grow. One technique is to blow smoke into the ear of a wild pig to tame it. This is based on the belief that the smoke cools and dries the pig's "hot" disposition. Magical techniques are used to treat serious illness: blowing smoke over the patient to cool a fever (which is hot) or administering sweet-smelling leaves with a command for the illness to depart (Lawrence and Meggitt 1965).



A voodoo doll is an example of both imitative and contagious magic.

prayer Any communication between people and spirits or gods in which people praise, plead, or request without assurance of results.

sacrifice An offering made to increase the efficacy of a prayer or the religious purity of an individual.

magic A religious ritual believed to produce a mechanical effect by supernatural means. When magic is done correctly, believers think it must have the desired effect.

imitative magic The belief that imitating an action in a religious ritual will cause the action to happen in the material world.

contagious magic The belief that things once in contact with a person or object retain an invisible connection with the person or object.

Divination A ritual practice directed toward obtaining useful information from a supernatural authority, **divination** is found in many societies. Divination discovers the unknown or the hidden. It may be used to predict the future, diagnose disease, find hidden objects, or discover something about the past. In many cultures, divination is used to discover who committed a crime.

The Naskapi, who hunt caribou on the Labrador Peninsula, use a form of divination called **scapulomancy**. In this divination ritual, a shoulder blade (scapula) of a caribou or other animal is scorched by fire. The scorched bone is used as a map of the hunting area, and the cracks in the bone are read as giving information about the best place to hunt (O. Moore 1969). This technique was also used in ancient China and Japan (de Waal Malefijt 1968:220). Scapulomancy may be adaptive because it randomizes the choices of hunting sites, a strategy that modern game theorists know results in the least chance of repeated failures.

Most Americans are familiar with a wide variety of divination techniques. Tarot cards, palmistry, flipping coins, and reading auras are all forms of divination. Some farmers use a divination technique called water witching or dowsing to find sources of well water. In one technique, the dowser holds a forked willow branch (a willow is a tree found by river banks and is “sympathetic” to water) in his hands as he walks over a property. When he stands above water, the wand is supposed to bend downward. The effect of this ritual is to help a homesteader make a decision and be able to move forward confidently in developing his farm. In fact, because of the great variability of the water table, the method of the dowser appears to be no more or less reliable than scientific techniques in determining which spots will have water.

The practice of divination makes people more confident in their choices when they do not have all the information they need or when several alternative courses of action appear equal. Divination may also be practiced when a group decision has to be made and there is disagreement. If the choice is made by divination, no member of the group feels rejected.

Prayer, sacrifice, and magic can be found in most religious traditions, and the distinctions between them are more a matter of degree than of exclusive classification. For example, a great many prayers contain elements of sacrifice, and most magical

practitioners agree that, in theory, it is possible that the spirit world will not honor their request, although in practice it may never happen.

Religious Practitioners

Every society has people who are considered to have a special relationship with the religious world. These religious practitioners are charged with organizing and leading major ritual events. There are many different kinds of religious practitioners, but anthropologists generally organize them into two broad categories: shamans and priests.

Shamans Shamans are part-time practitioners. In many respects, **shamans** are average members of the community; they must hunt, gather, garden, or get up and go to work like anyone else. Their shamanic activities are reserved for specific ceremonies, times of illness, or crisis.

Although learning to be a shaman may involve arduous training, such study is never sufficient. To be a shaman, one must have direct personal experiences of the supernatural that other members of the community accept as authentic. Shamans believe they are chosen by the spirit world and able to enter into it. They use prayer, meditation, song, dance, pain, drugs, or any combination of techniques to achieve trance states in which they understand themselves (and are understood by their followers) as able to enter into the supernatural world. They may use such contact to bring guidance to themselves or their group, heal sick people, or divine the future. Almost all societies have some shamans, but they are likely to be the only religious practitioners in band and tribal societies.

Vision Quest In some cultures, almost every adult may be expected to achieve direct contact with the supernatural. The **vision quest**, common among many Native American groups, was an example of this. In these cultures, a person was expected to develop a special relationship with a particular spirit that would give the person power and knowledge of specific kinds. The spirit acted as a personal protector or guardian. The vision seeker had very strong expectations and used fasting, isolation in a lonely spot, or self-mutilation to intensify his or her emotional state.

The Thompson Indians of western Canada had a vision quest that had the most of the traits of a

cal of this pattern. A boy would begin to search for guardian spirits between the ages of 12 and 16. He would prepare himself with ordeals such as running until exhausted and diving into ice-cold water. He would paint his face and wear special clothing. The nights before the quest were spent in dancing, singing, and praying around a fire on a nearby mountain peak.

The boy then went on lonely pilgrimages into the mountains, eating nothing for several days on end. He intensified his physical suffering by sweating himself with heated rocks over which he threw water and by whipping his body with nettles. This strenuous regimen continued until the boy had a religious experience. In an ecstatic state, he would experience meeting with his guardian spirit, usually an animal or bird, and receiving various forms of instruction. The guardian spirit would teach the boy a spirit song by which he could be called. He would learn how to prepare a medicine bundle of powerful magical objects (Pettitt 1972).

Although the vision quest was an intensely individual experience, it was shaped by culture. Among the Crow Indians, for example, several informants related the same vision and interpretation to the anthropologist Robert Lowie (1963). They told Lowie that they saw a spirit or several spirits riding along and how the rocks and trees around the riders turned into enemies who attacked them but were unable to do any harm. They interpreted this to mean that the spirits were making them invul-

nerable. This motif is common in Crow religious narratives, and the vision seekers worked it unconsciously into their experience. Another cultural influence is that most Crow Indians obtained their spiritual blessing on the fourth night of their seclusion, and four is considered a mystical number among the Crow.

Shamanic Curing Before the advent of modern technological medicine, in a great many societies illness was treated by means that we would today consider primarily spiritual rather than medical. Shamans frequently played important roles in curing. Illnesses were thought to be caused by broken taboos, sorcery, witchcraft, or actions that caused the ill person to, in some way, fall out of spiritual balance. In shamanic curing, the shaman, usually in a trance, travels into the supernatural world to

divination A religious ritual performed to find hidden objects or information.

scapulomancy Divination using the shoulder blade of an animal.

shaman An individual who is socially recognized as having the ability to mediate between the world of humanity and the world of gods or spirits but who is not a recognized official of any religious organization.

vision quest A practice common among many Native American groups in which individuals seek to achieve direct contact with the supernatural.



In many societies, shamans act as curers, often traveling into the supernatural to discover the source and treatment of a disease. In this picture, a shaman treats a child in Ladakh, India.

discover the source of illness and what might be done to cure it. This may consist of discovering the taboo that has been broken, uncovering the identity of the individuals or forces sending the illness, or combat, pitting the shaman, in his or her supernatural state, against the spirits that are responsible for the illness. The following description of a Netsilik Inuit curing performance shows the shaman battling with evil spirits:

The shaman, adorned with his paraphernalia, crouched in a corner of the igloo . . . and covered himself with a caribou skin. The lamps were extinguished. A protective spirit called by the shaman entered his body and, through his mouth, started to speak very rapidly, using the shaman's secret vocabulary. While the shaman was in trance, the tupiliq [an evil spirit believed to be round in shape and filled with blood] left the patient's body and hid outside the igloo. The shaman then dispatched his protective spirits after the tupiliqs; they, assisted usually by the benevolent ghost of some deceased shaman, drove the tupiliqs back into the igloo through the entrance; the audience encouraged the evil spirits, shouting: "Come in, come in, somebody is here waiting for you." No sooner had the tupiliqs entered the igloo than the shaman, with his snow knife, attacked them and killed as many as he could; his successful fight was evidenced by the evil spirits' blood on his hands (Balicki 1970:226–227).

If the patient died, it was said that the tupiliqs were too numerous for the shaman to kill or that after the performance evil spirits again attacked the patient.

In the modern world, shamanic curing often exists alongside modern technological medicine. People go to shamans for healing when they have diseases that are not recognized by technological medicine, they lack money to pay for modern medical treatment, or they have tried such treatment and it has failed.

Shamanistic curing does have important therapeutic effects. First, shamans generally do treat their patients with drugs. All traditional cultures have a **pharmacopoeia**, or collection of preparations used as medication. Scientific testing has shown that some (though not all) traditional medicines are effective (Fábrega 1997:144). Second, shamanic curing ritual uses story, symbolism, and dramatic action to bring together cultural beliefs and religious practices in a way that enables patients to understand the source of their illness. In other words, such rituals present a coherent model of sickness and health, explaining how the patient got ill and how they may become well

again. Such models can exert a powerful curative force. Roberts, Kewman, Mercier, and Hovell 1993)

Curing rituals express and reinforce the values of a culture and the solidarity of a society. They often involve participation by the audience, whose members may experience various degrees of ecstasy themselves. Shamanic curing ceremonies work by cultivating an awareness that "one's body is located at a central intersection within a system of relations. Illness ruptures this pattern, and healing restores the perception of harmony" (Glucklich 1997:95). Such ceremonies are cathartic in the sense that they release the anxiety caused by various disturbing events. The natural and supernatural forces that have the power to do evil in a society are brought under control, and seemingly inexplicable misfortunes are given meaning within the traditional cultural pattern.

Priests In most state societies, religion is bureaucratized; that is, it is an established institution consisting of a series of ranked offices that exist independently of the people who fill them. Anthropologists use the term **priest** to refer to a person who is formally elected, appointed, or hired to a full-time religious office. Priests are responsible for performing certain rituals on behalf of individuals, groups, or the entire community.

Priests are most often associated with gods who are believed to have great power. They may be members of a religion that worships several high gods, as in the religions of the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, and Romans, or only one high god, as in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. Where priests exist, there is a division between the lay and priestly roles. Lay people participate in ritual largely as passive respondents or audience rather than as managers or performers.

People generally become priests through training and apprenticeship. For example, to become a cleric in any mainstream American religion, you would enter the training program (usually a seminary) of the appropriate religion. If you were successful, at graduation you would be certified by the religious body (or church) and generally given an assignment. However, priestly authority derives from certification by the religious institution the priest represents. In some cases this may be given without any training.

In most mainstream religions in the United States, it is generally considered necessary for



Mayan temples were elaborate stages for rituals during which priests and rulers used dramatic techniques to travel into the supernatural world.

Courtesy of Serena Nanda

priests to have ecstatic religious experiences. However, this is not the case in all priestly religions. Although ultimately the priest's authority derives from position, such status may give a person the right to seek direct contact with gods and spirits.

For example, in ancient Maya states, priests were members of a ranked bureaucracy. In many cases, they were also political leaders; kings and members of the nobility exercised not only secular political authority but priestly authority as well. Their religious position gave them the right to use ecstatic techniques to travel in the spiritual world. At the dedication of buildings consecrated to the royal lineage, priests, including the king and other nobles, would let blood by perforating their penises and other body parts with special lancets and take hallucinogenic drugs. These methods created ecstatic states in which the priest/kings would travel to the supernatural underworld to inform their ancestors of the new building and invite the souls of these former rulers to inhabit it. A Mayan ritual might have looked like this:

Against a backdrop of terraced architecture, elaborately costumed dancers, musicians, warriors, and nobles entered the courts in long processions. Dancers whirled across the plaza floors and terrace platforms to music made on rattles, whistles, wooden trumpets and drums of all sizes. A crowd of participants wearing bloodletting paper or cloth tied in triple knots sat on platforms and terraces around the plaza. According

to Bishop Landa [an early Spanish writer], these people would have prepared themselves with days of fasting, abstinence and ritual steam baths. Well into the ceremony, the ruler and his wife would emerge from within a building high above the court, and in full public view, he would lacerate his penis, she her tongue. Ropes drawn through their wounds carried the flowing blood to paper strips. The saturated paper—perhaps along with other offerings, such as rubber (the chicle resin from which chewing gum is made)—were placed in large plates, then carried to braziers and burned, creating columns of black smoke. The participants, already dazed through deprivation, public hysteria and massive blood loss, were culturally conditioned to expect a hallucinatory experience. (Schele and Miller 1986:178)

As among the Maya, priests in state societies may pursue ecstatic religious experience. However, states generally attempt to suppress independent shamans or bring them under bureaucratic control. Shamans claim the ability to directly contact the supernatural without certification by any institutionalized religion, and this challenges the authority of church and state.

pharmacopoeia A collection of preparations used as medications.

Created with
priest One who is formally elected or appointed to a full-time religious office.



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Witches and Sorcerers

Although it is certainly not universal, belief in the existence of witches and sorcerers is a common element of many of the world's cultures.

What Are Witchcraft and Sorcery? In some societies, witchcraft is understood as a physical aspect of a person. People are witches because their bodies contain a magical **witchcraft** substance. They generally acquire this substance through inheritance and may not even be conscious that they possess it. If a person's body contains the witchcraft substance, his or her malevolent thoughts will cause ill to befall those around them. The Azande, an East African group, are a classic example. They believe that witches' bodies contain a substance called *mangu*, which allows them to cause misfortune and death to others (Evans-Pritchard 1937/1958). This sort of witchcraft is always understood as causing evil to others. It is only thoughts such as jealousy, envy, and rage that cause disease and ill fortune. A witch's positive thoughts do not help others. People who have the witchcraft substance may not be aware that they are witches. They are suspected of witchcraft when evil befalls those around them, particularly family members. Such witches are also generally believed to be unable to prevent themselves from causing evil.

The conscious manipulation of words and ritual objects with the intent of magically causing either harm or good is **sorcery**. Bone pointing, a magical technique of sorcerers in Melanesia described by Malinowski, is a good example of using sorcery to cause illness. The sorcerer ritually imitates throwing a magical stick, either an arrow or the spine of some animal, in the direction of the person the magic is intended to kill. For the magic to work, both the passion of hatred and the physical action of attack must be imitated. With an expression of absolute hatred, the sorcerer thrusts the bone in the air, twists it in the ground, and then pulls it out with a sudden jerk.

Cases of magical death, or death from sorcery, have been observed by anthropologists in many parts of the world. In a survey of numerous reports of death from sorcery, Walter Cannon (1942) concluded that death was usually caused by the victim's extreme terror. He argued that an individual was psychologically vulnerable to begin with and aware that he or she was being attacked by sorcery would exhibit

an extreme stress reaction that would have profound physiological effects. Such an individual may despair, lose his or her appetite, and slowly starve to death, unable to overcome the inertia caused by the belief that he or she is a victim. Persistent terror and the weakening effects of hunger may make the victim vulnerable to infectious agents as well as stroke and heart attack. Much work in biomedicine in the past 60 years confirms Cannon's ideas and details the specific biochemical pathways through which such reactions may occur (Sternberg 2002).

Accusations of Witchcraft or Sorcery Although people do actually practice witchcraft and sorcery, their main effects on society are probably through accusations. Leveling accusations against friends and neighbors is common in many cultures and serves various purposes.

The most common form of witchcraft accusation serves to stigmatize differences. People who do not fit into conventional social categories are often suspected of witchcraft. The European and American image of the witch as an evil old hag dressed in black is a good example. In traditional Western European society, social norms dictated that women should have husbands and children (or alternatively, they might become nuns). Impoverished women who remained in the community yet were unmarried or widowed without children violated this social convention and might be subject to witchcraft accusations. It is they who would have appeared as old hags dressed in black (Brain 1989; Horsley 1979). Those accused of witchcraft because they fail to conform may be ostracized and harassed but are unlikely to be killed or driven out of the community. They are valuable as negative role models, examples of what not to be. The lesson that a young girl might derive from the witch is: get married and have children or you might end up a witch.

Witchcraft and sorcery accusations may also be used to scapegoat. In times of great social change, when war, disease, calamity, or technological change undermines the social order, people's lives lose meaning. Under such circumstances, they may well turn to accusations of witchcraft, blaming their misfortunes on the presence of evildoers. They may conclude that the witches and sorcerers responsible must be found and destroyed for their own lives to be improved.

We often think of the era of European witch-hunting as long ago, in the Middle Ages, but this



Modern day Wiccans are members of a religion of nature worship. In this picture, Gypsy Ravish, of Salem, Mass., a high priestess of Wicca holds a ritual drum. The drum is used to raise energy during Wiccan ceremonies.

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was not the case. During the Middle Ages, the social order remained stable and accusations of witchcraft were fairly rare. The witch craze belongs to the Renaissance, a time of great artistic and technological achievement but social disaster. Plague swept repeatedly through Europe, and the medieval social and religious order collapsed in war and chaos. Under these circumstances, people were willing to believe that witches were the cause of their misery and pursue reprisals against people they suspected of witchcraft. The accused witch who is a social deviant may be scorned and ostracized, but witches who are believed responsible for wide-scale social disaster are often dealt with more harshly. Their lot is more likely to be death or banishment. Although the number of people who were murdered in the witch craze has often been overestimated (Hester 1988), it is certain that thousands of suspected witches were put to death.

Modern Witches, Wiccans, and Neopagans

Recent times in Europe and the United States have seen the emergence of religious worshippers who call themselves witches, **Wiccans**, or **neopagans**. A basic principle of most Wiccan belief is the threefold law, which proclaims that whatever good or ill people do in the world returns to them three times. Wiccans are no more likely to commit evil acts than are members of more mainstream religions.

Many Wiccan beliefs are derived from the work of nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors, particu-

larly Gerald Gardner. Gardner claimed to have rediscovered the ancient beliefs of an aboriginal fairy race, and many Wiccans today say that they practice an ancient pre-Christian religion of nature worship. However, most scholars believe that Gardner composed his religion from a variety of modern sources (A. Kelly 1991; Orion 1995; Hutton 1999). This doesn't matter much to most Wiccans. For example, Diotima Mantincia, associate editor of the *Witch's Voice* website (www.witchvox.com), says: "It doesn't matter to me how old Wicca is because when I connect with Deity as Lady and Lord I know I am connecting with something much larger and vaster than I can fully comprehend" (in Allen, 2001).

It is not clear how many Wiccans and neopagans there are. Many current estimates put the figure at somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000. The majority of Wiccans and neopagans live in the wealthy countries of North America and Europe. The majority, perhaps about two-thirds, are female and they have a higher than average level of education (Orion 1995:66).

witchcraft The ability to harm others by harboring malevolent thoughts about them; the practice of sorcery.

sorcery The conscious and intentional use of magic.

Wiccan (or neopagan) A member of a new religion that claims descent from pre-Christian nature worship; a modern-day h.



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Religion and Change

As we have seen, religion is generally a force that preserves the social order. This may be particularly evident in socially stratified societies, where the elite may invoke religious authority to control the poor. In such situations, the priesthood and religion act not only as a means of regulating behavior, which is a function of religion in all societies, but also as a way of maintaining social, economic, and



Courtesy of Serena Nanda

Religion, like all cultural patterns, changes. Easter, originally a sacred day in Christian religion, is now frequently an occasion for a secular parade involving the wearing of unique and creative hats having nothing to do with religious beliefs.

political inequalities. However, religion does not always act to preserve the status quo. In many circumstances, religions become powerful vehicles of change. Prophecy and the founding of new religions are common among oppressed groups and peoples caught in the grip of rapid social change. Religious fervor may be used, cynically or not, by politicians and demagogues to promote political, economic, and social policies.

Most religions contain implicit or explicit visions of the ideal society—an image of the way a correct, just social order should look. No society actually achieves its vision; people never live exactly the way they are supposed to. However, most of the time religion validates society. The image of society as it should be is not so different from life in society as it is. As a result, most people feel that the society they live in is essentially good (or the best available). If it hasn't achieved the perfection their beliefs tell them to strive for, it is at least on the right path.

However, if societies change very rapidly (as a result of colonization, disease, or technological change) or if groups are systematically enslaved and oppressed, the vision of the ideal world painted by people's religious beliefs may move far from their daily experience. People may feel that they are lost, that their vision of the ideal cannot be attained, or that, in light of new developments, it is simply wrong. Under these conditions, prophets may emerge, and new religions may be created. Religious movements vary in the effectiveness with which they bring social and political change. Even those that fail in this respect may create powerful new identities among their members.

Varieties of Religious Prophecy To begin a new religion or create a substantial modification in an existing religion, prophets must have a code that consists of at least three elements: they must identify what is wrong with the world, present a vision of what a better world to come might look like, and describe a method of transition from the existing world to the better world. Religious movements can, to some degree, be characterized by the nature of their understanding of the world to come and the methods for achieving that world.

Many religious movements are either nativistic or vitalistic. A **nativistic** movement aims to restore

nativism Created with
A religious movement that aims to restore a golden age believed to have existed in the past.



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Ethnography

The Rastafari: Religion and Resistance to Domination

The Rastafari religion began on the Caribbean island of Jamaica in the 1930s, a time when much of the Jamaican peasantry was being incorporated into the emerging capitalist economy as wage labor. Since that time, the Rastafari have spread throughout the Caribbean, into parts of the African states of Kenya and Ethiopia, and to the urban centers of the United States, England, and Canada. The Rastafari are an example of the successful emergence of a new religion that resists the culture that surrounds it.

In the nineteenth century, after slavery had ended in Jamaica, a peasant economy developed, organized around a system of localized, small-scale exchanges involving interpersonal networks of extended kin. But by the 1920s, capitalism, primarily in the form of the American United Fruit Company, had considerably undermined the peasant economy. Some Jamaicans benefited, but there was substantial racial stratification. Whites and mulattos accumulated wealth at the expense of black peasants. Lacking either land or wages, these peasants soon found themselves penniless. As Jamaica became increasingly tied to the capital provided by the international economy, the pool of landless unemployed grew. By the mid-1930s, they numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

It was out of this milieu that the Rastafarians emerged. In 1930, Ras (Duke) Tafari was crowned emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia. In Jamaica, the splendid coronation ceremonies, which included a retinue of European dignitaries paying homage to the emperor, drew enormous publicity. During them, Ras Tafari was proclaimed “King of Kings” and “Lion of Judah.”

Shortly after this event, Leonard Howell, a former cook in the U.S. Army (Lewis 1998), had a prophetic revelation. Born in 1898, Howell lived in the United States from 1918 to 1932. Probably influenced by Trinidadian black nationalist



George Padmore (Chevannes 1994), on his return to Jamaica in 1932 Howell declared that the coronation of Haile Selassie fulfilled biblical prophecies: Haile Selassie was the messiah and the hope of freedom for all black people. Howell proclaimed:

People, you are poor but you are rich, because God planted mines of diamonds and gold for you in Africa, your homeland. Our King has come to redeem you home to your motherland, Africa. (W. Lewis 1993)

Although Howell is generally credited with being the first preacher of Rastafari, others had similar visions—among them, Robert Hinds, Joseph (Teacher) Hibbert, and Archibald Dunkley.

The Rasta leaders founded communities in and around Kingston, Jamaica, that emphasized what they understood as traditional African values. Haile Selassie became their central symbol, embodying the value of cooperative work efforts, respect for life, and the unity of all peoples of African descent. Through their belief that he is the messiah (a faith that his overthrow and assassination in 1974 did nothing to diminish), the Rastas affirm blackness and their African roots. Through him, they proclaim their rejection of the values of capitalist society and the competitive marketplace.

A central theme in Rasta philosophy is repatriation to Africa. The concept of repatriation (like all symbols) has several meanings. It may mean a literal passage to Africa, and some Rastas did actually move to Africa (though with little economic or social success). Alternatively, repatriation may be interpreted as a call to live what Rastafarians believe are African lifestyles in whichever country they find themselves.

Two other important symbols of Rastafarian culture are the use of marijuana and a special vocabulary. The use of ganja (marijuana) has been common on Jamaican agricultural estates since



Ethnography—continued

the turn of the century and is considered a legitimate part of Jamaican working-class life. Although it was illegal, the upper classes approved of ganja use because it acted as a stimulant and an incentive to work. Rastafari, however, have reversed these meanings. To them, ganja is a tool of illumination. They use it to stimulate discussion at “reasoning sessions,” where they gather to interpret biblical passages and share beliefs about freedom, slavery, colonialism, and racism. Ganja, they believe, allows them to see through the evils of the bourgeois world, understand the roots of their oppression, and verify the authenticity of the Rasta lifestyle. Thus, whereas traditional use of ganja in Jamaica supported the dominant society, Rasta use subverts it.

In addition, the illegal sale of marijuana is part of the underground economy of many Rasta groups. The networks for growing it, preparing it for sale, and distributing it are all based on friendship, alliances, and reciprocity. Although the Rastas have encountered difficulties with law enforcement in connection with their use and sale of marijuana, ganja has provided the Rastas with a livelihood that allows them independence and freedom from the capitalist system, a position they value highly. Ultimately, many Rastafarians hope that their world will become more and more based on reciprocity and redistribution and that money as a medium of exchange will disappear from their community.

Rastafarian linguistic usages include the invention of *i*-centered words, phrases, and suffixes, such as *ital* for *vital*; and the replacement of such diminutive prefixes as *under-* and *sub-* by their opposites. For example, *understand* is rendered *overstand*. In rejecting diminutives and emphasizing *i*-centered words, the Rastafari appear to be dis-

avowing the hierarchical nature of relations in the marketplace. Rasta language contradicts the submissiveness that an employer expects of an employee. Their language is an assertion of their black self-worth, and this keeps them separate from the world of the boss and the worker.

Rejecting aspirations of social mobility and participation in wage labor, the Rastas fashion a livelihood by forming networks of cooperation. In Jamaica, they engage in fishing, handicrafts, and hustling in the cities and, in the rural areas, in a family-based subsistence agriculture with minimal involvement in the market economy. The small group of Rastas living in Shashemane, Ethiopia, rely on their agricultural produce and financial donations from abroad. In urban England, Canada, and the United States, Rasta economic activities tend to be small-scale cooperative businesses such as eateries, craft shops, small clothing stores, and the illegal sale of marijuana. All of these enterprises are based on the productivity and input of extended family networks, and Rastafari circulate their wealth through the community in the form of gifts, loans, parties, and many other personalized relationships.

The Rastas draw boundaries around themselves to exclude the outside world from participation in their economic and social relationships. There is strong solidarity against outsiders, particularly those in positions of authority. Rastas have rejected much of the social and psychological orientation of modern society, which they call Babylon. Although much of Rastafarian culture reflects the milieu out of which it emerged, including sources in the Hebrew and Christian testaments, Rastas have created a new religion and culture that allow

what its followers believe is a golden age of the past. The nativistic message is generally that things in the past were far better than at present. The reason things have degenerated is because the people have fallen away from the ways of the ancestors. The glorious past may be regained if certain practices are followed. The Ghost Dance, described in the next section, is a good example of a nativistic prophesy.

A **vitalistic** prophesy looks to the future rather than the past. For the vitalist, the past is seen as either evil or neutral. The golden age is in the future and can be achieved following the teachings of the prophet. The Rastafarian religion described in the “Ethnography” box in this chapter is a good example of a vitalist religion. Though it is not specifically religious, it is based on a vitalism with which most Americans are familiar is Martin Luther King’s

them to survive in a manner consistent with their own worldview.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. The Rasta movement arose in Jamaica but has gained enormous popularity worldwide. What sorts of people are likely to be attracted to the Rasta message, and what elements of that mes-

sage are likely to be particularly appealing to them?

2. Rastafarians are probably better known worldwide for their association with reggae music than with specific religious beliefs. Consider a reggae song by a major artist such as Bob Marley, Burning Spear, or Peter Tosh (do some research if you are not familiar with any of these artists). How do the lyrics reflect Rasta religious belief?
3. There are many new religions in the United States. Are any of them similar to the Rasta movement? In what ways are they similar?

Source: Adapted with permission from William F. Lewis, *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1993.



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Rastafarians are members of a religion of resistance that started in the 1930s.

“I Have a Dream” speech. In that speech, King describes a future where “the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood” and where children “will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

Often, the poor and powerless in a society create religions that challenge those of the mainstream. Such religions may rationalize their lower

social position and emphasize an afterlife in which their suffering will be rewarded. In some cases, these religions have a **messianic** outlook; they focus

vitalism A religious movement that looks toward the creation of a utopian future that does not resemble a past golden age.

messianic Focusing on the coming of an individual who will bring about a utopian world.

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A Closer Look

Fundamentalism

In the past two decades, there has been an increase in religious fundamentalism. Islamic fundamentalism is implicated in the attacks of 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, attacks in London and Madrid, the continuing violence in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, as well as numerous other conflicts around the world. Membership in American Christian denominations that describe themselves as fundamentalist has ballooned over the past two decades. For example, between 1960 and 2000, membership in the Southern Baptist Convention rose from about 10 million to more than 17 million. Membership in various Pentecostal churches rose from about 2 million to about 12 million. At the same time membership in less conservative churches fell. The Episcopal Church, for example, had about 3.5 million members in 1960 but had fallen to about 2 million by 2000. Jewish ultra-orthodox groups such as the Lubavitch Hassidim have also been growing. Christian fundamentalism and Islamic fundamentalism are most in the news in the United States but other fundamentalisms have been growing in importance as well. For example, in India, there are numerous Hindu fundamentalist organizations including the Bharatya Janata Party (BJP), which plays a very important role in national politics.

The rise of fundamentalism raises important questions for anthropologists. Three questions seem particularly critical. First, it is clear that the people we call fundamentalist have greatly varying beliefs. Hindu and Christian fundamentalists, for example, will find little to agree upon. Despite differences in belief, what traits do fundamentalist groups have in common? Second, have these groups emerged in response to purely local forces or are there global forces at work that have en-

couraged the development of fundamentalism in so many different locations? Finally, is fundamentalism a problem and if so, what should be done about it? None of these questions can be answered easily or definitively but we can propose some partial explanations.

Scholars have examined fundamentalisms around the world in considerable detail and have tried to define fundamentalism in a way that includes all religious traditions. Haddon and Shupe (1989) say that fundamentalism is “a proclamation of reclaimed authority over a sacred tradition which is to be reinstated as an antidote for a society that has strayed from its cultural moorings.”

Fundamentalisms throughout the world tend to have similar properties. Fundamentalists tend to see religion as the basis for both personal and communal identity. They tend to believe that there is a single unified truth and that they can possess and understand it. They tend to envision themselves as fighting in a cosmic struggle of good against evil. In this battle, demonizing the opposition is a perfectly appropriate tactic. Fundamentalists tend to perceive themselves as a persecuted minority even when this is not the case. They are selective about which parts of their tradition they emphasize and which parts of modernity they accept and reject (Almond, Sivan, and Appleby 1995). Although the vast majority of fundamentalist groups seem to share these traits, we should keep in mind that they are extraordinarily fractious and diverse. Even within a single religious tradition, fundamentalist groups tend to be deeply opposed to one another.

Determining the reasons for the surge in the popularity of fundamentalism is enormously difficult. To some degree, the pattern of emergence

on the coming of a special individual who will usher in a utopian world. Other religions are **millenarian**; they look to a future cataclysm or disaster that will destroy the current world and establish in its wake a world characterized by their version of justice. In many messianic and millenarian religions, members participate in rituals that give indi-

viduals direct access to supernatural power. They experience states of ecstasy heightened by singing, dancing, handling dangerous objects such as snakes, or using drugs.

The holiness churches common in Appalachia among coal miners and other rural poor who lead difficult a

fits the model described in the Religion and Change section of this chapter. In the past 50 years, the world has faced truly revolutionary change. The forces of technology and global capitalism have permeated societies throughout the world. They have brought people of disparate cultures together in a vast global network. However, this process has not been peaceful and has not produced equity. Traditional livelihoods, from cloth dying in West Africa to family farming in the Midwestern United States, have been undermined. The gap between the wealthy and the poor, both within societies and between them, has grown. Governments that seemed to offer the possibility of peace and prosperity have been discredited. Faced with this profound change, people look for stability and certainty. For some, fundamentalism of various kinds seems to hold this promise. Much (but not all) fundamentalism is nativistic; it presents a call to purification, to a return to the society and values of an earlier time, a time that believers understand as better, more holy, than the current era. However, it is also true that specific local histories play an extremely important role in the emergence of fundamentalisms. It would be impossible, for example, to explain the appearance of the fundamentalist radical group Hamas without reference to specific aspects of the long Israeli Palestinian conflict. Similarly, the development of the Taliban is directly related to the events surrounding the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

The forces that create rich ground for fundamentalism do not seem likely to abate any time soon. In fact, continual political and technological change seems likely to create even more extreme dislocations in the future. The various fundamentalisms will probably continue to experience

strong growth. This poses an extraordinarily difficult problem. On the one hand, people are surely entitled to their religious beliefs. The vast majority of people who might be classified as fundamentalist are innocent of any wrongdoing; they neither promote nor condone violence. They live peacefully with neighbors of different religious beliefs. On the other hand, fundamentalist beliefs have been repeatedly implicated in murderous violence: from the bombings of abortion clinics and the Olympic Games in Atlanta to the 9/11 attacks on the United States to the repeated anti-Muslim and anti-Sikh violence perpetrated by Hindu fundamentalists in India. The question then becomes: how do we encourage people to worship as they choose while at the same time preventing their beliefs from promoting violence against others who do not agree with them?

There is no doubt that much violence is enflamed by the harsh political and economic conditions of life and by the subversion of longstanding cultural practices. Promoting prosperity, more equitable distribution of resources, greater cultural sensitivity, and more responsive and honest government will certainly reduce popular support for violence. However, a small percentage of believers in all fundamentalist traditions understand the world in absolutist terms and see violence as a divinely ordained response. It is unlikely that we will ever dissuade these people from their understandings. Our only viable response to such individuals and groups is to attempt to find them and prevent them from doing violence.

a religion that has emerged in response to poverty and hardship. Church members cite biblical passages as the basis for their practices of faith healing, glossolalia (speaking in tongues), drinking poison, and handling poisonous snakes. Holiness church congregations view these activities as demonstrations of the power of God, working through people

whose beliefs allow them to become God's instruments (Covington 1995; T. Burton 1993). In church services, the loud music, singing, and dancing cause

millenarian One who believes that a coming catastrophe will signal the beginning of a new age and the eventual establishment of paradise.



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some members to experience “being filled with the holy spirit.” In this state, they handle poisonous snakes, which proves to them that “Jesus has the power to deliver them from death here and now,” even though they are often bitten and sometimes die. But their beliefs prove to them they have access to holiness that individuals who they perceive as members of the social elite lack (Daugherty 1993:344/1976).

Religious **syncretism** is often found among deeply oppressed people. In syncretism, people merge two or more religious traditions, hiding the beliefs, symbols, and practices of one behind similar attributes of the other. Santeria, an African-based religion originating in Cuba, is a good example (J. Murphy 1989). Santeria emerged from slave society. Europeans attempted to suppress African religions, but the slaves resisted by combining African religion, Catholicism, and French spiritualism to create a new religion (Lefever 1996). They identified African deities, called **orichas**, with Catholic saints and used them for traditional purposes: curing, casting spells, and influencing other aspects of the worshiper’s life. In this way, they could appear to practice Catholicism to their masters as they continued to practice their own religions as well. Each oricha-saint has distinct attributes and is believed to control a specific aspect of human life. For example, Orunmila, identified with Saint Francis of Assisi, is believed to know each person’s destiny and can therefore give guidance about how to improve one’s fate. Santeria has spread through the Spanish Caribbean, Brazil, and North America, taking different forms in different locations.

Religious Change in Native North America

The history of native North America provides a particularly good example of religious innovation. The European and (involuntary) African invasion brought disaster to Native American societies. Disease, warfare, and technological change undermined traditional native lifeways and belief systems. In this situation, a series of prophets and religious movements emerged. These included the prophetic movements of Handsome Lake, the Delaware Prophet, the Shawnee Prophet, and the Ghost Dance movement. As with the Rastafarian movement described in the “Ethnography” box, the timing and particular beliefs of these movements were closely tied to the social and political positions of their followers.

The visions of the Ghost Dance prophets of the second half of the nineteenth century were directly related to the expansion of Euro-American power. In the late 1860s, Wodziwab, a Northern Paiute Indian living in the Sierra Nevada, became the first **Ghost Dance** prophet. Wodziwab foresaw the return of the ancestors on an immense train. Following this, a cataclysm would swallow up all the whites but leave their goods behind for the Native Americans who became his followers. Heaven on earth would follow, and the Great Spirit would return to live with the people. Wodziwab taught that only his followers’ ancestors would return to earth (de Waal Malefijt 1968:344). Wovoka, the second Ghost Dance prophet, was the son of an early follower of Wodziwab and had probably seen the Ghost Dance and heard its prophecies as a boy. In 1889, during a total eclipse of the sun, Wovoka had a vision in



Santeria is a syncretic religion that combines elements Yoruba religion from Africa with elements of Catholicism. In Santeria, Yoruba orichas are combined with Catholic saints. In this picture from Cuba, a Santeria devotee holds a saint’s image during a ceremony.



© The Granger Collection

Some followers of the ghost dance prophet Wovoka believed that special ghost shirts would protect them from gunfire, but 350 Indian men, women, and children died at the massacre at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890, including the individual who wore this ghost shirt.

which “he saw God, with all the people who had died long ago engaged in their oldtime sports and occupations, all happy and forever young” (Mooney 1973:771/1896). Wodziwab and Wovoka taught that the arrival of paradise could be hastened by specific rituals, including a series of dances, songs, and, in the case of Wovoka, the wearing of ghost shirts (special clothing painted with designs he saw in his visions). Some of Wovoka’s followers believed that these shirts had the power to protect them from bullets. Although Wovoka called for peace with the whites, he also taught that the whites would either be carried away by high winds or become Indians (Lesser 1933), and he urged Indians to return to their traditional practices.

The Ghost Dance prophecy was welcomed by many Native Americans. Numerous tribes sent representatives, generally by train, to speak with Wovoka and learn the rituals of the Ghost Dance. The tribes heard the Ghost Dance vision in diverse ways, but it received its most radical interpretation among the Sioux, for whom the conditions of conquest and reservation life were particularly oppressive. Although the Sioux had defeated Custer at the

Little Big Horn in 1876, they were eventually forced into submission. Starved and expected to survive by agriculture on nonproductive lands, they found a vision that promised the disappearance of their oppressors and the return of traditional ways extremely appealing.

During the fall of 1890, Ghost Dancing spread among the Sioux. Government agents were frightened by the popularity of the dance, the threat that the Sioux would return to their traditional life, and the Sioux belief that the whites would shortly disappear. They ordered the Sioux to stop the dance; some but not all Sioux groups obeyed. The government tried to suppress the remaining dancers, but they fled into the badlands to perform the Ghost Dance ceremonies and await the cataclysm that

syncretism The merging of elements of two or more religious traditions to produce a new religion.

oricha An African deity identified with a Catholic saint in Vodou and Santeria.

Ghost Dance A Native American religious movement of the late nineteenth century.



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would sweep the oppressors from the plains. A complex series of moves followed as the government tried to force an end to the Ghost Dance. The final act of the drama occurred on December 28 and 29, 1890, when the Seventh Cavalry, the same unit that had been destroyed by the Sioux at the Little Bighorn, captured the last remaining band of Ghost Dancers. In the battle that ensued at Wounded Knee, about 350 Sioux Ghost Dancers, including many women and children, were killed, and the notion that doing Ghost Dance rituals would hasten the disappearance of the whites or protect Native Americans from them lost credibility.

The Ghost Dance religion did not end with the battle at Wounded Knee. Especially in Oklahoma, people continued to do the Ghost Dance into the 1930s, and one group of adherents continued to practice until the 1960s. Wovoka himself lived until 1932 and continued to promote his vision (Kehoe 1989). However, the battle at Wounded Knee marked a critical junction in the history of the prophecy. After Wounded Knee, the Ghost Dance declined, and by the first years of the twentieth century, few people practiced it.

Another religion that appeared at about the same time as the Ghost Dance, however, prospered and has become a major force in Native American communities. The **Native American Church**, sometimes known as the peyote religion, now has between 250,000 and 500,000 members in the United States and Canada (“For Indian Church” 1995; “Field Full of Buttons” 1999).

A small, hallucinogenic cactus, **peyote** grows only in south Texas and northern Mexico. Although peyote has always been part of religious rituals for some indigenous peoples, including the Huichol and Tarahumara, before the late nineteenth century its use was confined to groups in southern Texas and the Mexican desert. The modern peyote ceremony probably originated with the Carrizo Apache in south Texas; however, the spread of the ritual was due largely to the efforts of Comanche, Kiowa, and Caddo leaders, including Quannah Parker, Apiaton (Wooden Lance), and John Wilson. Some of them had visited Wovoka, the Ghost Dance prophet, but all had rejected his teachings (Stewart 1987:80). Peyote leaders (called Roadmen) taught that the use of peyote was a sacrament and that God was accessible through it. In all-night meetings, members of the Native American Church chew peyote, pray and sing, and experience the

presence of God. Quannah Parker said, “When an Indian Peyotist goes to [a peyote ceremonial meeting] he talks to God, and not about what man has written in the scriptures about what God said” (quoted in Brito 1989:14).

Although the use of a hallucinogen to achieve communion with the supernatural may seem like an affront to mainstream American society, other aspects of the peyote religion were definitely not. Church leaders preached a vision they called the **Peyote Road**. The elements of the Peyote Road include abstinence from alcohol, attentiveness to family obligations, marital fidelity, self-support, helpfulness among members of the group, and attempting to live at peace with all peoples (Brito 1989; Stewart 1987). These are all values that are likely to be supported by Americans of any ethnic origin. The teachings of the Native American Church provide a pathway through which Native Americans can operate successfully in mainstream American society. At the same time, the notion that communion with the Great Spirit is possible through the use of peyote and the rituals surrounding it separates them from other Americans and allows them to affirm their identity as Native Americans. Thus, the church has been successful because it simultaneously allows its members to reinforce their identity and adapt to the demands of the larger society.

More recently, in the United States, rapid cultural and economic change, economic oppression, powerlessness, and anomie experienced by different social groups have led to new religious movements, often with dire results. The prophecies of People’s Temple leader Jim Jones or the Branch Davidian David Koresh provided new lives for their followers. But in both cases, these leaders’ actions led to the violent deaths of their followers. Jones and Koresh presented their congregations with consistent and meaningful (if, in others’ view, misguided) ways of understanding the world. Participants in these groups constructed a collective identity through the use of stories, symbols, and organization. For members of the People’s Temple, personal annihilation may have been preferable to a public admission of the failure of the prophet’s vision and the recriminations that would have followed such an act (J. Hall 1993:107/1979). The same may well be true for other, similar groups.

Examples such as the Native American Church and the People’s Temple now something of the

range and effectiveness of religious movements. In most circumstances, religion is likely to support the status quo, but it can also become a powerful force for change. Religion offers a series of principles, encapsulated in story, symbol, and interpretation. Believers organize their lives around these, with varying results. Religion can be a powerful force for social change, providing people with the rationale and motivation for political involvement and personal renewal. From the Iranian Revolution and the Taliban to the Christian Coalition and the 700 Club, religious leaders can have a powerful political impact. However, prophets may also give their fol-

lowers convincing models that cannot exist in our material, social, and political world. When that happens, the results may be explosive.

Native American Church A religious revitalization movement among Native Americans, also known as the Peyote religion.

peyote A small hallucinogenic cactus found in southern Texas and northern Mexico.

Peyote Road The moral principles followed by members of the Native American Church.



Summary

1. The enormous variety in people's beliefs and practices worldwide makes religion difficult to define. However, all religions are composed of stories, make extensive use of symbols, have immeasurable beings, powers, and states, have rituals, have specific practitioners, and undergo change.
2. Through religion, people create meaning and order in their world. Religion has many functions. Some of the most significant are explaining aspects of the physical and social environment, reducing anxiety in risky situations, increasing social solidarity, educating, ensuring conformity, maintaining social inequalities, and regulating the relationship of a group of people to their natural environment.
3. Religious ideas are expressed through sacred narratives and symbols. Sacred narratives explain and validate or legitimize beliefs, values, and customs.
4. Religious symbols are a means by which abstract ideas can be expressed in terms that most people can grasp.
5. Most religions assume the world to be populated with nonempirical beings we call gods and spirits. Religions teach that such beings have life, personality, and power. Some common forms are gods, spirits, spirits of human origin, and tricksters. Additionally, religions usually postulate that people, objects, or places may be imbued with spiritual power, or mana.
6. Many kinds of rituals are used to communicate with, manipulate, and influence religious powers. Two common types of religious ritual are rites of passage and rites of intensification. Rites of passage mark the transition from one social status to another. Rites of intensification reinforce the values of the group and increase feelings of solidarity and purpose among group members.
7. People use prayer, sacrifice, and magic to interact with the world of the supernatural. Most religions include examples of all three. The key difference between the three is the degree to which people believe their own actions determine outcomes. Also common is the use of divination, a religious technique to discover the hidden.
8. All religions have practitioners, people who are charged with taking leading roles in performing religious ritual for other members of their society. Anthropologists divide these clerics into two classes: shamans and priests.
9. Shamans are religious practitioners whose legitimacy depends on their ability to achieve direct contact with the supernatural world. They are not members of bureaucracies and often interact between their communities and the

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supernatural world. Shamans are found in most societies.

10. Priests are professional religious specialists who hold offices in bureaucracies. Although priests' authority depends on their official positions, they may also use ecstatic techniques to contact the supernatural. Priests are typical of socially stratified societies.
11. Witchcraft and sorcery are common elements of belief in many societies. Some anthropologists differentiate between witches and sorcerers. Witches are people who unconsciously use their evil thoughts to harm people. Sorcerers use magic for both good and evil purposes.
12. Although people do perform magic, accusations that others are sorcerers or witches probably have a greater effect on society. Such accusations may function to promote conformity and explain catastrophic events.
13. Religion is often used to resist cultural domination. Such resistance movements are often syncretic; that is, they combine features of two or more religions so that a new religion emerges. Santeria, a syncretism of African religion, Catholicism, and spiritualism, is an example of a syncretic religion originating in resistance.
14. Religious revitalization movements are consciously organized efforts to construct a new culture and personal identity. These movements arise in situations in which a group of people has been oppressed and has suffered cultural loss and loss of personal identity. Native American religious movements such as the Ghost Dance and the Native American Church are good examples.
15. Religious movements may catalyze changes in political and social structure as well as individual personality. However, when religious movements cannot cause the changes they desire in the material world, their members may turn to self-destruction.



Key Terms

animatism	magic	Peyote Road	separation
animism	mana	pharmacopoeia	shaman
anthropomorphic	messianic	polytheism	sorcery
anthropopsychic	millenarian	prayer	syncretism
antistructure	monotheism	priest	totem
communitas	multivalent	reincorporation	totemism
contagious magic	myths	religion	trickster
cosmology	Native American	rite of intensification	vision quest
divination	Church	rite of passage	vitalism
Ghost Dance	nativism	ritual	Wiccan (or neopagan)
god	naturalism	sacred narratives	witchcraft
imitative magic	oricha	sacrifice	zoomorphic
liminal	peyote	scapulomancy	



Suggested Readings

Brown, Karen McCarthy. 1991. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley: University of California Press. This outstanding person-centered account illustrates that ethnography is a human relationship and introduces a fascinating religion to the reader.

Covington, Dennis. 1995. *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. This powerful account of a snake handling church in Alabama makes sense of the meaning of holiness, worship and raises important questions

about the nature of faith and community in the modern world.

Fadiman, Anne. 1998. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. In this engrossing and tragic book Fadiman explores the conflicts between spiritual and scientific understandings of disease. Lia Lee, an infant Hmong immigrant, has seizures. Western doctors diagnosed the problem as epilepsy but her parents understood her illness as caused by her soul wandering.

Faris, James C. 1990. *The Nightway: A History and a History of Documentation of a Navajo Ceremonial*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. This text is among the best ethnographies on Navajo religion, representing Navajo knowledge using biographical, linguistic, and behavioral data to convey the Navajo worldview.

Kehoe, Alice B. 1989. *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. An interesting and readable account of the history and practice of the Ghost Dance.

Numbers, Ronald L. 1992. *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism*. Berkeley: University

of California Press. This social history of the creationist movement in the United States highlights one prominent area of conflict between science and some religious traditions. The book is well balanced and tries to present an objective view of creationists and their claims.

Turner, Victor. 1977. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. A discussion of the roles and rituals that represent *communitas* in different societies, with a case study from the Ndembu of south central Africa, by a leading figure in symbolic anthropology.

Wafer, Jim. 1991. *The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomble*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. A winner of the Victor Turner Prize in ethnographic writing, this ethnography conveys the personal experiences of candomble, an Afro-Brazilian religion, and calls into question some traditional anthropological divisions of experience into oppositions such as rational and irrational.



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Creative Expression: Anthropology and the Arts



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These huli dancers from New Guinea, reenacting their warrior tradition in a cultural festival, formerly used naturally colored clay for their body and face painting. Today, they often use manufactured tempera.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Some Characteristics of Art

Some Functions of Art

Art as Ritual

The Arts and the Expression of Cultural Themes

The Display of Cultural Themes: Deep Play

The Arts and the Depiction of Social Structure

The Arts and Resistance

The Arts and the Recording of Cultural History

The Arts and the Expression of Cultural and Personal Identity

Cultural Identity and Body Art

The Expression of Personal Identity Through the Arts

The Arts: Representing the Other

The Artist in Society: Artists and Their Audiences

Marketing Cultural Identities Through the Arts

The anthropological view about art is well expressed by Marshall Sahlins, who quipped, “There is no such thing as an immaculate perception,” and by Franz Boas, who called “the seeing eye . . . an organ of tradition” (fn). (Quoted in Price 1989:19, 22).

For further details, see page 427.

Art is a universal aspect of human experience; there is no known culture without art. In every society, people express themselves in ways that go beyond the need for physical survival with characteristic forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles involving imagination, beauty, skill, and style. These expressive activities are sometimes called the **arts**. In this chapter we use the broadest definition of that term to include the graphic and plastic arts, such as painting, architecture, sculpture, carving, pottery, and weaving; **crafts**, or the application of aesthetic principles to the production of utilitarian objects and activities; the structured use of sound in music, song, poetry, folklore, and myth; the movements of the human body in dance, sports, games, and play; and combined forms of these in dramatic and ritual performance. From the very broad anthropological perspective used in this chapter, tea drinking is an art form in Japan, bullfighting is an art form in Spain, and calligraphy is an art form in China and the Islamic Middle East.

Evidence of human artistic expression goes back to the very dawn of the modern human species, indicating that artistic expression is a fundamental dimension of our species. Tools manufactured according to aesthetic principles, the embellishment of burial sites beyond the merely practical, and the sophisticated and complex cave paintings and sculptures of prehistoric peoples all indicate the inherent connection between the arts and being human. Evidence suggests that Neanderthals, who lived between 70,000 and 35,000 years ago, were the earliest groups to artistically embellish their world. They had ritual burials with flowers, and made simple pendants of animal teeth and bones and even shaped various ritual objects. Not only is creative artistic expression a

art Forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles and involve imagination, skill, and style.

crafts The application of aesthetic principles to the production of utilitarian objects and activities.

very old human cultural pattern, but it is also a universal one. No culture today, no matter how simple its technology or how difficult its environment, lacks art. In fact, cultures in which making a living is not easy and in which social structure is simple, such as Inuit and aboriginal Australian groups, often exhibit artistic skills of a very high level, and their artworks are much prized in the international market.



Some Characteristics of Art

The arts are a universal means of interpreting the world through images and marking the real world symbolically. Art expresses the basic themes, values, and perceptions of reality in ways that are culturally meaningful. Art is thus a reflection of cultural values and patterns at the same time that it intensifies the experience of these cultural values. Much of the power of the arts comes from their symbolic nature, which leaves their production and performance open to a variety of interpretations. An artistic product or performance may convey a basic cultural theme, or it may combine several themes, some of which may even be in opposition to one another. An important anthropological perspective on the arts is to understand both the surface and the deep symbolic structures through which the arts communicate and elicit responses from their participants and audiences.

But in some cultures, art is not only symbolic, that is, an image that stands for something else, but rather art products or performances—whether paintings, masks, sculptures, sounds, or movements—are believed not merely to represent but to be—to partake of the spirit of—the thing visualized. In these cultures, under specific ritual conditions, the spirit travels into the mask, painting, or dancer, which itself becomes powerful. Taking these forms, the spirits can be more easily manipulated and controlled by humans.

When objects, dances, songs, or other artistic forms are believed to be powerful in themselves, they are often created in ways that are strictly guided by traditional processes and resistant to variation or change. One important cultural factor that may limit the range of variation an artist displays is the relationship between art and religion. Where art and religion are entwined, there tends to be more stabil-

ity in the creation of images, than where art and religion are independent of each other. This was true in earlier periods of Western history and is true for many contemporary non-Western cultures, as we see later in the chapter with respect to Navajo music. Where religion and art have become separated, as in much of the contemporary world, experimentation, innovation, and real change in artistic style are more likely to occur.

Even in cultures where artistic forms are not themselves viewed as containing spiritual power, the arts are always powerful means of symbolic communication. They convey knowledge and provoke interpretations and emotions that have both individual and cultural dimensions. Each culture has specific traditional artistic symbols that stand for things or events in nature and human society or are associated with particular emotions. Because these symbolic elements are culturally specific, one needs to know the particular cultural meanings assigned to a particular artistic element to understand it. Conveying these meanings to cultural outsiders is one of the important contributions of an anthropological perspective on art.

In Western music, for example, the use of the minor scale conveys the emotion of sadness; various other musical forms are traditionally associated with other emotions. The traditional element is important in evoking the emotion because people in that culture have been taught the association. In the United States, for example, a story that begins with the phrase “Once upon a time” is a signal that this is not going to be a story about real events and people. This knowledge sets the stage for the audience to respond to the story emotionally in certain ways.

Each artistic endeavor embodies an artistic style, which refers to a characteristic manner of expression, and different cultures (as well as different artists) have different artistic styles. Although all cultures experience stylistic changes in their arts, aesthetic principles are often very stable. Archaeological evidence indicates that the artistic styles of many cultures changed very slowly over very long periods. That is why artistic styles are often used by archaeologists to characterize different chronological periods in a culture; to differentiate different cultures in a region from each other; to trace out the connections between different prehistoric cultures; and to speculate about life and social structures in a culture that either had no writing

or whose writing systems are not entirely understood by contemporary scientists.

Cultures also differ in their artistic emphases. In some cultures, masks and painting are the most important media for the expression of aesthetic values and technical skill. In other cultures, verbal skills are more important, reflected in a wealth of myths, folktales, and word games. Calligraphy (writing) is an important art form in both China and the Islamic Middle East, but is associated with quite different meanings in each of these cultures. In China, written language is considered one of the defining attributes of Chinese civilization and is a key source of Chinese cultural identity and unity. Writing was the ruler's instrument of legitimacy, and it appeared on state monuments and documents. Gradually, it became revered as an art form. In Islam, calligraphy is the most respected of the graphic arts because it is the visual representation of the Word (the Koran). Islam forbids

the worship, or even the creation, of graven human images, a prohibition often extended to the depiction of animals. In the Islamic cultures influenced by Persia (Iran), such as Mughal India and Ottoman Turkey, animals and even humans are portrayed in paintings and carpets, but the religious prohibition has led to an emphasis on abstract geometric designs and calligraphy in much Islamic Arabic art (Schuyler 1995). These two examples indicate that even where cultures seem to have a similar emphasis on artistic form, the cultural meanings may be very different.



Some Functions of Art

Art has many functions in society, such as expressing the symbolic elements in ritual; displaying cultural themes; confirming social hierarchies by making visible the power of the state or a governmental elite;

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The all-powerful hand is a highly symbolic image. Dating from the colonial period, it is still popular in Mexico today. Several layers of meaning are referenced in the image. The Eucharist is symbolized in the bleeding hand; the nail wound at the center is meant to recall the wounds Christ received on the cross. The seven lambs drinking the blood recall Revelations. The extended family of Christ is represented by the individual figures on each of the five fingers.

resisting authority by giving expression to voices from the margins; expressing personal and social identities. Both early and modern states use art to symbolize their own power, as we saw in the “Ethnography” box about the Asante state in Chapter 11. Indeed, sometimes the very rules for the creation and display of artistic endeavor are determined by elites in a way that confirms and extends the domination of those elites, as for example in consumptions laws, which allow only people in certain social statuses to wear certain materials, such as gold, fur, or other precious things. Art may also be used as a way of resisting the domination of the state and elites, such as in various forms of folk art, described in the following sections. Art is also used to intensify ideas of nationhood, to express ethnic identities and record ethnic histories, and to make political statements.

Art, such as personal adornment, is used to express personal identity, or social status, or identification with a particular group in society, as illustrated in art as varied as the painting of their trucks by Pakistani truck drivers or the widespread practices of body art and decoration.

Art is often central to ritual, whether in artifact, movement, or sound. Among the many functions of ritual art is control of the environment. In many cultures, artistic expression using ritual acts and ritual objects is a powerful way of communicating with and attempting to control the natural and supernatural worlds. In hunting and gathering cultures, for example, dance movements that imitate the movements of animals are believed to exert control over those animals. In these foraging societies, dependence on nature leads to a perception

of it as an active and personal force to which people must appeal in order to survive. Artistic expressions in contemporary hunting societies may represent the ritual restoration to nature of the animals that are killed. Whenever an animal is killed, its essence may be restored to nature by a ritual performance imitating the animal, or by a representation of the animal's image at a sacred spot, as we often see in rock paintings. Where restitution to nature is believed not only possible but necessary, drawing images is one way of accomplishing it (Levine 1957).

Art as Ritual

Paleolithic Cave Art Understanding the very early cultural connections between art and ritual owes much to the collaboration of archaeologists and cultural anthropologists studying Paleolithic cave art. Cave paintings are among the most spectacular cultural remains left by early *Homo sapiens*. The earliest cave paintings are about 32,000 years old and the most recent about 10,000 years old. It is possible that Paleolithic peoples painted on many surfaces around the globe, but this art survives only in well-protected caves and rock shelters. Some of these are in southern Africa, but the best-known sites are caves in Europe, particularly in the protected valleys in eastern France and northern Spain. This area supported abundant and varied animal and plant species, providing a common ecology and way of life.

The Altamira caves in Spain, and the Lascaux and Grotte Chauvet caves in France, are sites of the most elaborate cave paintings. These spectacular cave paintings were made during the last Ice Age, about 32,000 years ago, by the hunters of reindeer, mammoth, bison, and horse, and appeared at the same time that modern humans appeared in Europe and Asia, replacing the previous Neanderthal forms. These early humans put images on rock faces deep in caves, colored and decorated their habitation sites, and decorated themselves and their dead. In some places the artists used naturally occurring bulges and dips in the rock to make their animal portrayals more realistic. In others they partially sculpted the rock in low relief, to make their work more dramatic. They also made costume pieces and jewelry, carved and engraved human figures and ritual and ceremonial objects, and placed elaborate grave goods in burial sites. They made patterned notations that indicate some form of record keeping,



The spots and handprints seen in this 15,000-year-old painting of a horse, found in Lascaux Cave in France, support the argument that such prehistoric paintings had ritual significance for their creators.

made systems of signs and symbols, and above all, made awesome and dramatic paintings, using many different colors of pigment. This art supplies modern anthropologists one of the most useful tools with which to explore the inner and outer worlds of Paleolithic hunting societies.

The hills and river valleys of France and Northern Spain had a wide range of animal and plant species—at least 30 to 35 species, which included horses, deer, bison, and lions—all of which were depicted by these Ice Age artists. These hunters clearly knew every detail of the anatomy and behavior of the animals in their territory. Deep in the caves they had no animal models to copy, yet their animal paintings rendered the animals with magnificent realism. Many of the images indicate the sexual and seasonal characteristics or behavior of these species, for example: stags baying in the autumn rut, a bellowing bison bull and butting mammoth bulls in the autumn, a bison licking a summer insect bite and a bison with molting fur in the summer, and a bull and cow seal together in the early spring of the salmon run.

These images were not simply illustrations, but were symbols that stood for processes in nature. Archeologists speculate that these images played a role in ritual, religion, and storytelling, and were possibly used in different kinds of ceremonies—perhaps in curing ceremonies, or to mark changes in the seasons. The caves may have

been visited seasonally or only for rare and special occasions. In addition to animal paintings, the caves also contain frequent markings of human hands; one appears to be that of an adult holding an infant's hand to the wall by the child's wrist, interpreted as an act of ritual participation performed by the adult for the infant (Marshack 1978).

Naturalistic images of humans, found mostly in La Marche, France, illustrate real people with distinctive profiles and costumes, engaging in various activities such as dancing and praying. In a Ukraine site, a percussion orchestra was discovered, containing six different instruments made of mammoth bone, each with a different tone, indicating a specialization among musicians and the importance of the role of music in ceremony. Two flutes, each with six holes, were found in France and Russia and document the presence of true, tonal music.

In the caves that archeologists have defined as living sites, there were entirely different images: signs and symbols in different shapes—a key, a badge, a hut, a grid, or series of dots and lines—which were engraved on stones and bones, and sometimes on broken ivory. These symbols may have been part of ritual marking systems.

This sophisticated art made by a people living many thousands of years ago raises many questions about their meaning. Archeologists differ somewhat on their interpretations of this cave art. Because many of the images are of animals that were commonly eaten, some anthropologists argue that they were drawn as part of ceremonies intended to magically increase the chances of a successful hunt; one weakness in this theory is that the bone remains indicate that few of the many species depicted were eaten. A more commonly accepted theory is that many of the images were made for ritual use. The association of animals with varying signs and symbols reinforces this view: some animals are marked with handprints, or abstract signs, whereas others are pictured with plant forms. Infrared photography indicates that many of the animals were overpainted with other animals or reused by repainting and adding symbols. This ritual function of these animal images is supported by other evidence. Lions, for example, were not intended as a food source nor would the hunter have sought their increase, so that the paintings of lions—and, similarly, bears—apparently had symbolic functions in these Paleolithic cultures. It may also be that these prehistoric hunters drew an im-

age of an animal they had killed in a sacred spot in order to restore its essence to nature, an interpretation that draws upon analogous rituals among contemporary foragers (Levine 1957). Still another interpretation argues that the cave paintings contain encoded information about hunting techniques and other information useful for survival in the harsh conditions of the Ice Age (Strauss 1991). Another, more controversial interpretation, is that these paintings depict things seen by shamans in altered states of consciousness and that the caves were painted as part of religious rituals (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988). Because cave paintings were made by many different artists over a 20,000-year period, show many different subjects, and are painted in different kinds of space, it is unlikely that any single theory can explain them all, and each of the theories mentioned above may hold true for some cases.

The Arts and the Expression of Cultural Themes

Because artistic performances and products emerge from widely shared cultural themes, the arts can heighten the feeling of belonging to a particular group by generating intense emotions. Thus art forms do not merely reflect a society and its culture, but also heighten cultural integration by displaying and confirming the values that members of a society hold in common. The powerful artistic symbols of a society express universal themes—death, pride, gender, and gender relations—in ways that are culturally particular and therefore culturally compelling, even when (some might say particularly when) their content is not consciously articulated. The arts make dominant cultural themes visible, tangible, and thus more real.

These cultural themes may express conscious values, themes, and the psychological underpinnings of a culture, but also more unconscious, repressed aspects of a culture. The phenomenon we call pop culture has often been analyzed in terms of how it provides a particularly direct view of the repressed unconscious of a culture, including the creators of pop art, the consumers of pop art, and the broader culture and society itself. In Japanese popular culture, the cockfight in Bali, and the bullfight in Spain, we see examples of how diverse arts function in the dissemination of cultural themes.

Cultural Themes and Popular Culture in Japan

Among the most important aspects of post-World War II popular culture in Japan are **anime** (animation) and **manga** (comic book art). Anime, the animation of manga, is very familiar in the West—think Godzilla—and indeed, throughout the world, displayed in animation films, video games, children’s toys, the Internet, and commercial products. These popular art forms have also been taken up by a pop art movement, whose work is displayed in museums and art galleries in Japan and abroad. They have also spawned a subculture in Japan, called *otaku* (the closest translation is nerd or geek), whose darker side includes an obsession with themes of war and violence, including nuclear catastrophes, mutant monsters, robots, and science-fiction, sometimes joined with another major pop culture theme, *kawaii*, or “cuteness.” Cuteness is particularly displayed in images of Lolita-like pre-adolescent, seemingly innocent, schoolgirls, who nevertheless also convey a sexual knowingness that belies their innocence. Another major cuteness image is Hello Kitty, a big-eyed, beribboned, expressionless pussycat character (without a mouth to express emotion), whose images—on clocks, stuffed toys, purses, music boxes, and wallpaper—fuel more than a billion dollars a year in domestic and international sales.

On the apocalyptic side of this popular culture are monsters like Godzilla, who was awakened from eons of submarine sleep by a hydrogen bomb explosion. Godzilla exhibits radiation-induced physical

deformities and engages in nightly attacks on Tokyo, which reduce the city and its screaming population to ashes. Another well-known figure in manga and anime is Iron Man, as he is known in the West, whose artistic creator, Teruhiko Yokoyama, was inspired by the firebombing of Tokyo, when huge pieces of steel flew through the sky.

One of the leaders of this Japanese contemporary pop-art culture is Takashi Murakami, a very successful designer for Louis Vuitton, who recently curated a museum show in the United States that included manga and anime art. He called the exhibit “Little Boy: The Arts of Japan’s Exploding Subculture,” after the name given to the atomic bomb dropped by the United States on Hiroshima. Murakami interprets the contemporary pop culture of anime and manga, and its otaku subculture, as growing out of the repercussions of the Japanese defeat by the United States, the dropping of the atomic bomb, and the postwar Japanese society, dominated by the American imposed democratization and demilitarization.

Murakami, like other analysts of Japanese culture, emphasizes that Japan has not really examined the trauma of its militarism, its role in World War II, the atomic-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the prolonged American occupation that followed the Japanese defeat. In his analysis,

anime Animation, as in the popular culture of Japan, usually refers to animation of **manga**, or comic book graphic art.



Godzilla is one of the many monsters that are part of the Japanese popular culture of anime that has spread around the world. Underlying much of this culture may be the devastation Japan experienced in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which ended World War II.



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Global Perspective

World Music

As the diffusion of Japanese anime demonstrates, despite the close connection between the arts and particular cultural themes, the arts today have a global reach. One of the fastest growing global phenomena is the emergence of **world music**. World Beat emphasizes music from cultures throughout the world. It includes Caribbean sounds such as reggae and salsa but also Celtic folk songs, Louisiana blues and Cajun songs, and African, Middle Eastern, and Asian songs. It is featured on radio programs, including the nationally syndicated shows *Afropop Worldwide* (<http://www.afropop.org>), *Sacred World Music* (<http://www.sacredworldmusic.com>), and *The Thistle and the Shamrock* (<http://www.npr.org/programs/thistle>), as well as many locally produced shows. World Beat concerts are common in most large cities, and there are World Beat festivals in many countries.

World music is based on local musical traditions, produced for local occasions, in local languages. Communications technology and the movement of people have spread these musical

traditions around the world and often made them very popular. Reggae songs, originally a Jamaican musical style linked to religion and resistance (see Chapter 14, pages 397–399), today are written and performed by Africans, Asians, and Europeans as well as Jamaicans. Traditional musicians have frequently adopted Western instruments and styles. For example, Mory Kante is an African musician who plays traditional African instruments: the balafon and the cora. However, he is backed by a band of Western drums, guitars, basses, and keyboards. Western musicians, for their part, have adopted many of the styles and instruments of traditional music and modern world music. Paul Simon, Sting, and David Byrne have all recorded albums very heavily influenced by indigenous musical traditions.

Many cultures are contributing to musical fusion, but the influence of Africa and African-derived music stands out. For centuries, African and New World music have traded ideas, creating endless variations from shared foundations in call-

Murakami holds that denying these traumas created displaced emotions such as anxiety, shame, and a pervasive sense of impotence, which find their outlets in popular culture (Smith 2005). In calling his museum show *Little Boy*, Murakami reinforces his view that Japan's postwar dependence on the United States has kept it from growing up. This infantilism is reflected in the popular fascination in Japan with fantasies of violence and power, such as the Godzilla-like monsters and mushroom-cloud explosions that are so frequently used in Japanese animation. In a seeming contradiction, this infantilism and sense of powerlessness also shows up in the opposite obsession with "cuteness."

In addition to using the images of anime and manga, the pop art movement in Japan draws on other aspects of this Japanese popular culture, using, for example, a "superflat" painting style, which is continuous with the emphasis on surface decorations and patterns characteristic of traditional Japanese visual styles.

But even as the popular culture of anime and manga display cultural and psychological themes that are particularly Japanese, this popular culture has also become hugely popular throughout the world, particularly in the United States, which has, in fact, begun to produce its own Japanese anime (Solomon 2005; Condry 2005). There has also been some cross-cultural fertilization, as Japanese anime now also includes elements of African-American culture. In the teenage martial arts series, *Tenjho Tenge*, for example, an athletic black teenager break dances across the titles, demonstrating the new combination of hip-hop and Japanese anime. A hip-hop sound track now accompanies a new anime series, *Infinite Ryvius*, and in *Samurai Champloo* one of the main characters uses break-dance spins and flips in place of martial arts moves; for fashion-conscious Japanese teenagers, the height of fashion now is "cool, black, and American." In this expanding cross-cultural fertilization, one of the most common, called "fansi-

and-response and polyrhythm. The music of African religious ceremonies was preserved by slaves and adapted into the sacred and secular music of the New World (Pareles 1996). From the polyrhythmic basis of North American ragtime and early New Orleans jazz, through the African-Cuban percussionist influence of Mongo Santamaria, to the performance combination of Youssou N'Dour of Senegal, to the contemporary albums of griots from West Africa such as Salif Keita, to the wild enthusiasm of Europeans for hip-hop music of urban African-American culture, music from Africa and the African diaspora has transcended narrow cultural identities to become an important part of global culture.

Another example of music that has been widely diffused from its place of origin, and that has changed in the process, is **bhangra**. Bhangra originated in the folk music of Punjab, a region that includes parts of northern India and Eastern Pakistan. It was originally performed to celebrate harvest festivals. In the 1970s, in Britain, where

there is a large South Asian population, people began mixing bhangra beats and lyrics with British pop music and reggae. This trend has continued, and today bhangra is an amalgam of Punjabi, rock, pop, reggae, and hip-hop styles. It has spread from London and other large British cities to large cities in the United States, Canada, and many other nations where there are substantial South Asian populations. It has even become popular in India and Pakistan.

Bhangra is a music of identity but means different things to different communities (and to different elements within those communities). To the young, urban, British-born South Asians who created it, bhangra was often a music of resistance. It united South Asians of many different backgrounds—Indians and Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis, Sikhs, Muslims, and Jains—in a common community. Its lyrics, often in Punjabi but sometimes in English, discussed the problems of South Asians living in Britain—especially racism and the balancing of tradition and modernity. Bhangra was thus a

(continued)

bing” has emerged, whereby small groups of Japanese and American anime fans digitally record Japanese animated TV shows, translate the dialogue, add subtitles, and make them available (for free) online (Condry 2005). Ian Condry, whose field is Japanese cultural studies, emphasizes the great potential for anthropological and ethnographic research not only in exploring the cultural context of this Japanese popular culture, but in exploring the global interactions of its participants.

The Display of Cultural Themes: Deep Play

There are many kinds of cultural performances, such as games and sports, in which participants and spectators are joined together in experiences that have functions similar to those of the arts (Geertz 1973a). Clifford Geertz calls these performances **deep play**. Examples of deep play include cockfight-

ing in Bali, falcon hunting in Pakistan and other parts of Muslim Asia, football in the United States (see Chapter 4), and bullfighting in Spain. All of these are expressive forms of culture that heighten emotions, display compelling aspects of social structure and culture, and reinforce cultural identities.

Deep Play: The Balinese Cockfight Cockfights are a consuming passion of the Balinese that reveal much of Balinese culture, particularly

world music A musical fusion form, based on local musical traditions, that incorporates music from cultures throughout the world.

deep play Performances (like sports) that are expressive forms of culture with functions similar to the other arts.

bhangra A musical form originating in the folk music of Punjab in Northern India and Eastern Pakistan that is mixing with British pop music and reggae to become a popular form of world music.



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Global Perspective—continued

distinctly new musical form, a music of and by South Asians in Britain, giving identity and shape to that ethnic community, differentiating it and supporting it in contrast to both the white British majority and South Asians who had not immigrated (Lipsitz 1994).

In smaller British towns with small South Asian populations, the situation was different. In an investigation of bhangra in Newcastle, a medium-size town in northern England, Andrew Bennett (1997) found that South Asians understood bhangra as a more traditional art form. They used bhangra parties as occasions to dress in traditional Indian clothing. As one said, “It’s good to go to a bhangra gig because . . . it brings back memories . . . it’s like tradition . . . it gives you a buzz to be doing something a bit traditional.” However, South Asians in Newcastle also saw bhangra as a mainstream musical style, and a community radio station program called *The Bhangra Hustlers* mixed bhangra with rock, pop, and other ethnic musics to make it attractive to a broader audience.

In the United States, bhangra is increasingly popular, particularly in large urban centers. In New York, DJ Rekah mixes the lives of South Asian immigrants, community politics, bhangra, reggae, and hip-hop. However, in American

communities, although bhangra may bring people together, it often divides them as well. Both older and younger people identify bhangra with tradition, but it means different things to each. For youth, bhangra represents a connection to South Asian traditions. But elders often object to modern elements in bhangra, considering these Western pollution of their tradition. Resistance to the styles of dance associated with bhangra and the close contact between men and women they encourage may be behind these objections (Katrak 2002).

Bhangra is thus an art form linked tightly to South Asian ethnic identity, but its meaning and message are not consistent. Sometimes people listening to bhangra hear the music of resistance, separating South Asians from the larger communities they live in. At other times, people listening to the same music hear the sounds of assimilation, of a popular music drawing on traditions from around the world, dealing with current problems, and increasingly attractive to non-Asian audiences. Still others hear the sounds and traditions of the lands they or their parents left.

Like all world music, bhangra retains both its links with its local identities but has also changed as it has diffused around the world.

the competition for prestige among men. Balinese men have an intense identification with their fighting animals and spend much time caring for them, discussing them, and looking at them. The cocks embody two opposing Balinese cultural themes. They are both a magnification of the owner’s masculine self and an expression of animality, which in Bali is the direct inversion of what it means to be human. Thus, in identifying with his animal, the Balinese man is identifying with his ideal masculine self but also with what he most fears, hates, and is fascinated by: “the powers of darkness” that the animals represent. The cockfight embodies the opposition of man and beast, good and evil, the creative power of aroused masculinity and the destructive power of loosened an-

imality, fused in a bloody drama of violence as cocks with razor sharp, 5-inch-long steel spurs on their feet fight to the death.

Gambling is central to Balinese cockfighting and bets on the cockfight are central to the competition for prestige that forms its deep play aspect. The money at stake in the cockfight gambling is very important, but for the Balinese, esteem, honor, and dignity are more at stake than material gain. The two are tied together: it is because so much money is involved that risking it publicly is also risking one’s status, especially one’s masculinity. This belief increases the meaning of the cockfight for the Balinese.

The Balinese cockfight is a symbolic contest between male egos but it is also a symbolic expression of Balinese social structure. Prestige is the driving

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force in Balinese society and the central driving force of the cockfight, transforming the fight into a “status bloodbath.” The more nearly a match involves men of equal status, especially high-status men or men who are personal enemies, the deeper and more emotional the match is felt to be.

The Balinese are aware of the deep status concerns involved in cockfighting, which they refer to as “playing with fire without getting burned.” Cockfighting activates village and kin group rivalries and hostilities in “play” form. It comes dangerously and entrancingly close to the expression of open and direct interpersonal and intergroup aggression, something that almost never actually happens in the course of ordinary Balinese life. But then, the Balinese say, cockfights are not quite the same as “real” aggression because, after all, “it is only a cockfight.”

Deep Play: Bullfighting in Spain For many people, bullfighting is simply a violent, cruel assault on animals; however, for anyone who has watched a bullfight or analyzed its patterns and meaning to

the cultures within which it occurs, bullfighting is clearly an aesthetic ritual. Because fighting among animals is not a part of the dominant culture pattern of North America, Americans’ ability to look at these rituals from the point of view of people in those cultures is very difficult. To outsiders, the bullfight looks like an engagement in which a man tries to hurt or kill an animal in front of an approving audience (Eller 2006:104).

But in Spanish culture, the bullfight is not viewed as violence or cruelty, but as “the running of the bulls.” In spite of the violent acts of the bullfighter, he is culturally compelled not to show any sign of anger or aggression; indeed, such signs would be considered a negation of the essence of the ritual of running the bulls. Bullfights involve a complex and elaborate process of “ritualized violence” that makes it, for Spaniards, not only acceptable, but beautiful.

Within the Spanish cultural context, the point of a bullfight is not simply to kill a bull: that would be easy and would lack any cultural meaning. Rather, it is the killing as accomplished, as it must be, with

skill, grace, and courage. In some ways similar to cockfighting, the bullfight embodies the values of male competition in defense of the male self-image of honor (see Chapter 10, page 270). For the audience, the maximum vindication of honor is in the physical showdown, in public, between two men. The matador symbolizes the role of the honorable male; he is not a “fighter” or a man with a reputation for violence, nor is he an athlete, nor personally aggressive, nor necessarily big or muscular. In a bullfight the matador does not initiate violence, nor does he act against the bull in self-defense. It is the bull that is angry and ferocious while the matador is skilled, self-controlled, and calm—he is able to master the violent situation without becoming violent himself.

For the matador and the spectators, it is not the suffering of the bull but the style and aesthetic performance of the matador that is the central element in this aesthetic ritual. At the kill, the most dangerous part of the performance for the matador, the matador cannot use his sword to weaken the bull or defend himself. Any prolonged suffering of the bull is vociferously disapproved of by the spectators and a matador who performs a “sloppy” kill is called a “murderer.” For the Spanish, the running of the bulls is not an example of indulging in man’s “animal nature” (which is how they view a North American boxing match), but a performance that allows man to transcend his animal nature of violence and aggression and to display all of the elegance, poise, and self-control that distinguishes a man of honor from a man of anger.

The Arts and the Depiction of Social Structure

Another important function of the arts is the confirmation of a society’s social structure, particularly its social hierarchy. Very often, in hierarchical societies, the power embodied in the ruler is represented in the graphic, oral, architectural, or performing arts. These artistic displays reiterate and legitimize the divine source of the ruler’s power, and the political structure through which the society is governed. The totem poles of the Native American groups on the Northwest Coast of North America are an example of the arts that reflect and send powerful messages about the importance of social hierarchy in these societies, as are the many artistic products and

performances associated with the potlatch (Jonaitis 1991) (see Chapter 7, page 193).

There are countless examples of how the arts depict social structure, adding a legitimacy that helps integrate society and contributes to its stability. In colonial Peru, for example, after the Spanish conquest, Inca royalty commissioned indigenous artists to paint portraits of the Inca kings in order to keep alive the memory of Inca rulers for those claiming royal descent and noble status. Upper-class natives of Peru thus asserted their claims to high status and power in the colonial hierarchy by depicting their own illustrious forebears in paintings, the visual language of European culture. In imperial China, also, the arts were central in legitimizing the ruling class, especially the emperor (Hearn 1996). The Chinese believed that only those with a knowledge of the past could have a vision of the future, and it was essential for the imperial courts to possess historical writings and paintings to display that knowledge. Throughout Chinese imperial history, figure painting was directed toward commemorating the emperor. Life-size portraits of the emperor had to incorporate the two main Chinese ideals of imperial rule: moral authority and the power of the emperor’s central role in a controlled bureaucratic administration. Thus, paintings of the emperor had to show him with individualized features representing the humanistic Confucian values of compassion and virtue while conveying the imposing demeanor of the absolute ruler, the Son of Heaven. Another artistic representation that conveyed imperial power was a series of almost life-size portraits of Chinese cultural heroes, commissioned by some emperors in the twelfth century. By displaying these paintings in the court, the emperor demonstrated his identification with a mythologized past and his rightful place in the lineage of Confucian rulers.

The Arts and Resistance

Although the arts can help stabilize a society by validating its social hierarchy and expressing its common cultural elements, they also provide powerful ways to express disunity and conflict within a society, to resist state authority, and to give voice to members of oppressed or marginalized classes or social groups. Resistance to prevailing social structure is often an important dimension in folktales and other oral traditions. These oral traditions may re-



Art as politics? Graffiti is an art form of public places, often an artistic expression of groups marginal to American urban society, and often with indirect or direct political messages.

verse, ridicule, or question the social order and, in doing so, may provide satisfactory solutions to the conflicts that arise out of domination and control.

African-American oral traditions, for example, commonly contain the figure of the trickster, or clever hero, who is smaller and weaker than his opponent but triumphs through his wits rather than through force. The trickster tales, popular in one form as the Br'er Rabbit stories, have an obvious relation to slavery in the pre-Civil War South. At the same time that they conveyed a representation of the social structure based on race, these stories convey a message about how to overcome the system and provided an outlet for justifiable anger (Friedheim and Jackson 1996:24). As the American

social structure changed, however, and as possibilities of open protest against the racial caste system increased, African-American oral traditions also changed. The “badman,” who openly displays his arrogance and virility, came to supplant the trickster as hero (Abrahams 1970), and this image also diffused into contemporary films.

The Arts and the Recording of Cultural History

Another important function of the arts is to express a people's sense of their cultural identity through depictions of the past. The use of art to link the present with the past is widespread. In many cultures,

the most important artistic efforts and performances are those representing ancestors and the continuity of group identity; this is true for both literate and nonliterate societies, but is particularly important in societies without writing. Because they display cultural identity and history in ways that are visible, tangible, and emotionally compelling, the arts are an important way of interpreting and remembering both an actual and a legendary past.

Among the Luba of Zaire, works of art play a central role in reconstructing memory and making history (Roberts and Roberts 1996). Although the Luba declined in the wake of European colonialism and its aftermath, they were an important central African kingdom from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The Luba highly value the recounting of history, particularly as it relates to the most important statuses in their society. Kings, chiefs, titleholders, and members of associations all use the vocabulary of art—in memory boards, beaded emblems, sculpted wooden stools, staffs, figures, divination objects, and works in metal—to recall the significant events, royal lineages, and political relationships that make up Luba collective memory.

The most prestigious Luba histories are traced to their founding ancestral kings. The members of an association called Mbudyé, or “men of memory,” were rigorously trained to narrate family lineages and episodes in the founding of kingship with the assistance of memory boards. The Mbudyé society still performs public dances to reenact these historical narratives.

Luba memory boards are small, flat, wooden objects, studded with beads and pins or covered with carved ideograms, that can be read to recite sacred lore about cultural heroes, the beginning of the kingdom, and clan migrations. They contain the official history of the Luba. In addition to these memory boards, other artistic memory devices recall other histories. Carved staffs are used to remember family and clan history and migration. High-level officeholders carry staffs to public meetings to perform historical recitations to honor the ancestors and teach their descendants about family ties to Luba kingship. Carved thrones and stools, as the seat of the past, depict female figures that represent important women, who in turn represent previous male rulers. Divination objects, such as sculptures, baskets, and gourds, are used to recon-



Luba wooden female sculptures embody all the marks of the spiritual and moral perfection that the Luba see as a hallmark of their cultural identity: scarification, gleaming skin, an elegant coiffure, beaded accessories and apparel, filed teeth, eyes made of cowrie shells, a serene, composed attitude, and metal tacks in the head and coiffure to keep out enemies and keep in the spirit. The statues must be beautifully carved and adorned to be spiritually effective.

© Jerry L. Thompson/Courtesy of the Museum for African Art, New York

struct personal histories and use the knowledge of the past to solve current problems.

The specific elements in Luba art all convey meaning. Kings, for example, are represented on memory devices by anvil-shaped metal pins. These pins symbolize their association with iron smelting and blacksmithing, which was introduced by the Luba cultural hero. Every object associated with a Luba king contains these metal pins. The personal history of a Luba woman is represented on her body, which is considered a canvas on which her beauty will be perfected through intricate scarification, elaborate hairstyles, beaded apparel, and gleaming skin.

Another example of the use of art to record history and preserve cultural identity are the **ledger drawings** of Native Americans (Powers 2005; Greene 2001; Berlo 1996). In the past, anthropologists often dismissed Native Americans' oral histories as based on stories which were not based on historical evidence,

and therefore “untrue.” In fact, Native Americans did record their histories in various ways. Some of these involved material artifacts, such as the Iroquois practice of carving a record of their chiefs into canes; others were stories more in the nature of the Western Bible, that is, stories about events, origins and values that can be imagined but not proved. These records, whether material or oral, embody the effort of a people to define, explain, and amuse themselves and to keep alive their cultural identity as a people. Many of the old stories told by Native American groups incorporate jokes (see Chapter 5 “Ethnography” box) and demonstrate the resilience of a people who have experienced great hardship.

But Native American ledger drawings, among other Native American arts, also provide a readable historical record, a way of anchoring themselves in the real world and locating themselves in history beyond myths and legends. The ledger drawings, common among many western Native American groups, were frequently historical in purpose, a way of creating and preserving, through specific evidence, the actual past of real people and real events.

Ledger art got its name from the ledger books obtained from trading posts in which the Native Americans drew their records. The ledger drawings were made only by men, and initially served mainly to record the lost life of warfare, hunting, and tribal identity. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Native Americans were already using drawings, on skin shirts, robes, and teepee covers, to record personal histories. By the 1860s, these drawings had become more elaborate, colored, and carefully composed, and the original material of war deeds had expanded to include social customs and communal history. Ledger drawings flourished as an art form from about the 1870s to about the 1920s, during the “early reservation period,” a time of profound cultural change. It particularly expanded when about 70 Native Americans, mostly southern Cheyenne, were imprisoned for a time at Fort Marion, in St. Augustine, Florida. They produced scores of ledger drawings, for personal pleasure, for sale to tourists, and as gifts for the whites with whom they interacted. This period was a time of profound cultural trauma as Native Americans left the old free life of the buffalo-hunting days for a new life as semi-prisoners living on government rations, under official pressure to abandon their religion, traditional ceremonies, and the old ways of communal living. Ledger drawings serve not only

as an important expression of Native American arts, but also as important documents in the recording of actual events that can be used to expand knowledge about the past.



The Arts and the Expression of Cultural and Personal Identity

Cultural Identity and Body Art

For thousands of years, people all over the world have been marking and adorning their bodies. People use **body art** to identify their social bonds with other people and to reflect their identity with a particular group. Body art and adornment also mark social statuses but the details vary from culture to culture. In some societies, such as those of Polynesia for example, body tattooing indicates high social status; in Japan, however, body tattoos developed as a form of decoration that identifies men on the margins of society, such as criminals. In Western societies, older stereotypes of people who tattooed their skin referred to social deviants, but in North America and Europe, the increasing popularity of piercing and tattooing seems to indicate that these forms of body decoration are now part of the mainstream (Burton 2001).

In many cultures, body art is associated with enhancing beauty, and thus related to gender. In India and the Middle East, henna, an orange-red dye made from the leaves of a small shrub, is used to dye fingernails and other parts of the hands and feet to enhance a woman’s beauty, especially on ceremonial occasions such as religious holidays or marriage (Messina 1988). In Morocco, where anthropologist Maria Messina studied the body art of henna application, a young girl is first decorated with henna at age 3 or 4, in preparation for the important Muslim holiday of Ramadan. But the cultural importance of henna is on the occasion of a girl’s marriage, which marks her transition to womanhood. The “night of

ledger drawings Drawings, in ledger books, made by some Native American peoples to record personal and historical events.

body art Marking and adorning the body as an expression of cultural and personal identity, which serves other functions.



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henna” is the first night in the three-day marriage celebration; after that there is a “henna party” toward the end of her pregnancy. The month of Muharram, which marks the Moslem New Year, is another occasion for decorating married women with henna. Henna parties are also viewed as a way of preventing illness or misfortune by placating malevolent spirits, called jinn. Sometimes women hire a specialist in applying henna designs on the skin, but this may also be done by a member of the woman’s family. Although certain designs are traditional in certain regions, henna specialists also innovate in styles, and designs change according to the occasion and also according to fashion. Most of the designs have no explicit meaning, as representational art (art depicting any figures or forms found in nature or culture) is forbidden in Islam.

In addition to the cosmetic function of henna, and the prevention of illness, henna parties are celebrations during which friends visit and singing and dancing may take place; it also provides an occasion where women are the center of attention. The application of henna designs has also diffused from its original home (probably in India), and is now widely used in the United States, functioning less as a display of a group identity than as an expression of an individual’s assertion of choice and personal preference.

The Expression of Personal Identity Through the Arts

For people in European-based cultures, one of the more obvious functions of the arts is the expression of personal identity. Indeed, in these cultures, personal identity is assumed to be deeply connected to an artist’s body of work, and art history or art criticism often includes the attempt to link the artist’s personal identity with his or her art.

The work of Frida Kahlo, a twentieth-century Mexican painter, illustrates particularly well how artworks combine elements of the artist’s personality, life experiences, political ideology, and national identity. Frida Kahlo was born in 1907, three years before the Mexican Revolution of 1910, to an ethnically mixed middle-class family; her father was a German Jew and her mother half Mexican and half Native American. In her childhood she caught polio and a subsequent bus accident left her leg deformed and her body in great pain. Her marriage to the great Mexican muralist Diego Rivera was filled with conflict, and her attempts to have a child ended in a miscarriage. All of these cultural and personal issues are reflected in her painting, the subjects of which deal with issues of illness and health, female sexuality and gender identity, marginality, cultural identity, power and pain.

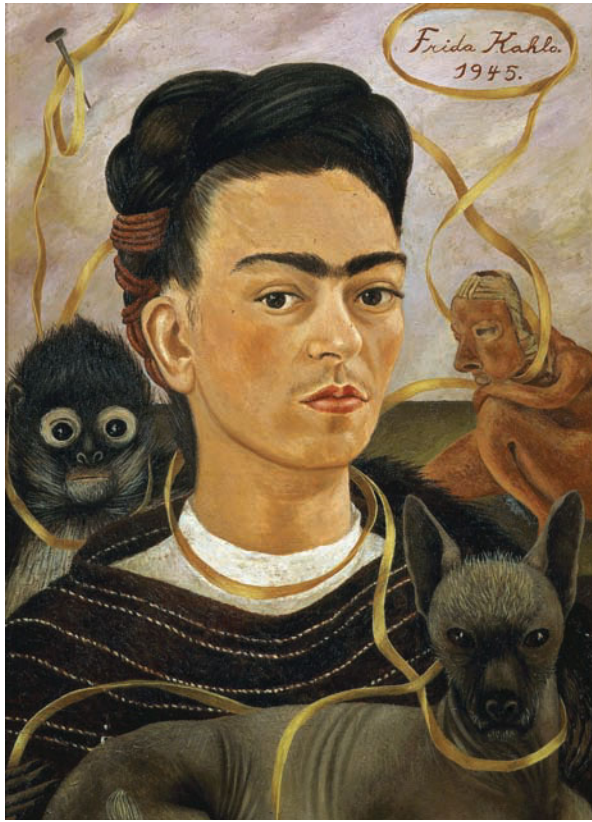
Frida Kahlo was profoundly influenced by the Mexican Revolution; to demonstrate her identification with the poor and the peasants, in whose name the Revolution was carried out, she changed her birth date to 1910. The Mexican Revolution ushered in a time of political freedom that led to a new pride in Mexican nationalism, fostering a renaissance in indigenous Mexican art, craft, and native traditions, which looked to pre-Columbian Mexico for their artistic roots. Frida Kahlo integrated all these features into her personal style and her art.

In her paintings she drew on many elements of Mexican culture, such as retablos (Mexican vernacular for votive paintings of Christian saints and martyrs); the Mexican folklore image of La Llorona, the archetypal, sexually voracious predator and evil woman who stands in contrast to the saintly wife and mother; and the indigenous Mexican Tehuana costume, with its long embroidered skirts and blouses, which expressed her solidarity with the peasants and poor of Mexico. She also wore this Mexican dress herself to demonstrate the cultural independence of Mexico (a less than ideal benefit of hiding



Courtesy of Serena Nanda

Body art has symbolic meanings and is often used in important life cycle ceremonies. In North Africa, India, and the Middle East, henna painting is an essential ritual for women getting married. It not only beautifies but serves to ward off evil on this auspicious occasion.



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An important function of art is the expression of personal and national identity. Frida Kahlo incorporated Mexican cultural elements in her self-portraits to assert her personal identity and her identity with the Mexican peasantry and their revolutionary ideals.

her deformed leg). Kahlo's paintings, especially her self-portraits, also evidenced dualistic principles, like contrasts of dark and light and night and day, which have their origin in pre-Columbian myth. Kahlo's paintings also examine the imbalance of power between Mexico and the United States, and the images of her broken body reflect the shattered dreams of the Mexican Revolution.

Although Frida Kahlo was well known in her own country, it was only in the 1990s that she emerged as an artist of great interest beyond Mexico, and she has now become an international cult figure. Her art particularly speaks to women, especially women's experiences of physical pain, of childbirth, and of the emotional pain of love, which is symbolized by the many broken hearts in her self-portraits. In Frida Kahlo's art, we clearly see the important role of art in expressing the many strands—cultural, political,

physical, and familial—that make up an artist's personal identity—and through their expression in art, speak to a world wider than the artist's own.

The Arts: Representing the Other

We have seen in the previous sections some of the important functions of art as they relate to cultural identities that may be constructed in terms of kinship, geography, ethnicity, “race,” gender, nationality, political alliance, or several of these criteria intersecting in different ways. But in representing cultural identities, art depicts not only the “we”—that is, the cultural “in-group”—but also the “other”—the alien, the foreigner, the outsider. Indeed, artistic forms are important aspects of cultural ideologies of difference, communicating in subtle but significant ways the nature of we/they distinctions.

This artistic rendering of the “other” appears in many aspects of European (or Western) art. One result of the encounters between Europeans and other peoples was a profound rethinking of European cultural identity (S. Schwartz 1994). Although these encounters were experienced differently in different times and places, Europeans most often responded by creating opposite categories of “them” and “us” (Bitterli 1986). These dichotomies take many forms: East and West; primitive, or barbarian, and civilized; traditional and modern; developed and undeveloped. Anthropology itself was closely connected to this process, and anthropological representations and their extensions into museums were an important element in these constructions of the “other” (di Leonardo 1998). Today, mass media continue these ascriptions of cultural difference, most often in ways that implicitly and explicitly reinforce the superiority of the West and the subordination of the “others” (Shohat and Stam 1994).

Orientalism in European Art: Picturing the Middle East

Artistic products can be a source of insight into the fantasies one group of people entertains about another (Bassani and Fagg 1988). Artistic images of outsiders may be useful as historical documents, portraying details of behavior and costume. But the unknown aspects of foreigners also act as an invitation to engage in fantasies having less to do with the reality of the observed than the needs and fantasies of the observers. Thus, representations of “other” in a culture's art forms

may reveal more about the creating culture's own basic concerns and fantasies than it does about the "other" (Tsuruta 1989).

In the nineteenth century, Europeans explored, wrote about, painted, conquered, and excavated North Africa, Arabia, the Levant, and the Ottoman Empire. This region, today called the Middle East, was then called the Orient. European artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries offered arm-chair travelers a vividly graphic image of the Islamic, largely Arabic cultures inhabiting this world. One important impetus for these representations, particularly in France, was the Napoleonic campaigns in Egypt (1798-99). By the mid-nineteenth century, the Egyptian experience had become part of the French cultural spirit and was found in a wide range of artistic representations called **Orientalism** (Hauptman 1985:48).

Europeans saw the Oriental "other" as threatening because they perceived it as the opposite of European civilization. The Orient was viewed as despotic, static, and irrational, whereas Europe was viewed as democratic, dynamic, and rational. But the Orient was also enchanting: a land of mystery, fairy tales, and exotic beauty. This perception of the Orient was reflected in and reinforced by its depiction in European paintings. Although many Europeans traveled to the Orient, painters generally worked from secondhand sources or, in some cases, purely from imagination. However, their works were rendered in exquisite detail, which gave the viewer a sense of historical accuracy.

Artists were inspired by the romantic spirit to seek out the picturesque and the awesome (fabled ruins, biblical sites, deserts, and mountains). The Orient was viewed as an area of enchantment, and Orientalist paintings emphasized the exoticism and glamour of Oriental markets, camel caravans, and snake charmers. Islam was captured not in its religious experience (to which Europeans were generally hostile) but in the architecture of its mosques and its practice of prayer, all portrayed in lavish, opulent detail.

Gender roles and relationships were a central theme in Orientalist painting. Men were perceived as clearly dominant and pictured in public places, where women were mostly absent. The Arab warrior was the most common symbol of Oriental masculinity, but men were also painted in more relaxed

poses, drinking coffee or smoking the hookah. But it was Oriental women who were central to European fantasies of the period (Thornton 1994). The difficulty of finding women to pose in no way inhibited their depiction; indeed, this difficulty gave free rein to artists' imaginations. Women were portrayed as the Orient's greatest temptation, whether hidden behind the veil or revealed in the harem.

Harems and slave markets, painted for male patrons by male artists, offered a convenient way of feeding European lust by displaying the dominant men and vulnerable women of another culture, far removed from home. Pornographic scenes disguised as either documentation or art were integral to the European market for Orientalist painting. These images were not confined to "fine" art but found frequent expression in other elements of culture such as the picture postcard, a genre that Alloula (1986) calls the "comic strip of colonial morality," referring to the French colonization of Algeria from which these postcards were sent. The postcards reveal the preoccupation of Europeans with the veiled female body (similar to the Western preoccupation today with the veiled female face in Middle Eastern countries). The native models for these postcards were photographed in studios reenacting exotic rituals in costumes provided by photographers. The models represent the French fantasy of the inaccessible Oriental female, more tempting because she is behind the veil in the forbidden harem.

Alloula connects these Orientalist fantasies to colonial reality, noting that the raiding of women has always been the dream and the obsession of the total victor: "These raided bodies are the spoils of victory, the warrior's reward." The postcards are an "enterprise in seduction directed to the troops, the leering wink in the encampment" (1986:122).

Orientalist representations of women reflected the long-standing conflict between Christian Europeans and Middle Eastern Muslims. Since the Middle Ages, Europeans had criticized Muslims for their practice of polygyny, which Europeans associate with promiscuity. Thus, popular images of slave girls, harems, and concubines provided a continual source of horror and titillation for Western critics of the Muslim world. Even today, Western thinking about the contemporary Middle East is preoccupied with the veiling, segregation, and oppression of women (S. Hale 1989).

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The Artist in Society: Artists and Their Audiences

In examining an audience's response to art, anthropologists take into account the culturally mediated perspective through which art is not only produced but viewed. Art historians, as the gatekeepers of the Western response to art, generally claim that great art is measured and responded to in terms of universal intrinsic artistic qualities. Anthropologists, in contrast, emphasize the cultural factors—such as education, social status, and knowledge about the reputation of the artist or the commercial value of the art—that shape the response of audiences to the arts.

The importance of the arts in communicating cultural themes means that the arts must be understood in relation to their cultural context. Most anthropologists agree that considering universal criteria of art independent of cultural context is based on Western ethnocentrism. Artistic expression is universal, and in different cultures, creative expression attaches to different aspects of culture; these also change as one aspect of culture change. But the high value the modern West places on art for art's sake is by no means universal. In fact, the opposite is true. In most societies, art is not produced or performed solely for the purpose of giving pleasure but is inseparable from other activities. The separation of art from other social behaviors, and the separation of a class of objects or acts labeled art, is a dimension of the generally

more fragmented nature of modern society. In nonindustrial societies, art is embedded in almost all aspects of culture; few separate classes of material products, movements, or sounds are created solely to express aesthetic values.

The Inuit, who have a highly developed artistic skill, do not have a separate word for art. Rather, all artificial objects are lumped together as “that which has been made,” regardless of the purpose of the object. This does not mean that the Inuit do not have aesthetic values, but that their plastic art was traditionally applied to the manufacture of objects that have primarily instrumental value, such as tools, amulets, and weapons. The Inuit, like most other nonindustrial societies, do not make a distinction between artist and craftworker, a distinction that does exist in Western societies. Similarly, many creative acts (such as dancing, weaving, singing, and playing a musical instrument) that in the West are performed as a special category of behavior called the arts are used in other societies in connection with other cultural activities such as religion, exchange, or storytelling. In all societies, some people are recognized as more competent in these skills than others, but this competence does not necessarily translate into the specialized role of artist.

The contemporary Western identification of art with originality, when imposed on other cultures, is also ethnocentric. Although anthropologists, and

Orientalism Scholarship and art generated by Europeans focusing on the Middle East.

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particularly art historians, have not generally investigated aesthetics in non-Western, nonindustrial societies, evidence indicates that the making of art in all cultures is recognized as a creative process, though not necessarily an innovative one (Price 1989). Many cultures do not prize originality—the creation of something entirely new—in their arts. In many societies in Africa, for example, improvisation is more highly valued than artistic originality. In many African cultures, creativity is expressed in creating interesting and endless variations on an already established artistic theme (Vogel 1991:20). Indifference to or even inhibition of originality in art occurs particularly when the arts are connected with religion. Among the Navajo, for example, there is believed to be only one right way to sing a song. Improvisation is not valued in Navajo singing, which has ritual connections, and the Navajo believe that “foreign music is dangerous and not for Navajo” (McAllester 1954). In other Navajo arts, such as weaving, styles remain stable but innovation is permitted; indeed, where marketing is the motive, traders may encourage innovation to increase sales.

Cultural attitudes toward the arts also shape artistic form. In much of the art in Africa, interaction with the audience is of central importance. As part of this interaction, this art emphasizes the content of art (the message it contains) and its function in community life. This contrasts with the Western emphasis on the individual aspect of artistic expression and the more private nature of much of Western art collection and display.

Anthropological study of the artist in society has often been limited by a lack of ethnographic data. In many small-scale societies, the artist as a specialist does not exist. Even if certain people are recognized as exceptionally skilled, they are unlikely to identify themselves as artists; rather, they express their artistic creativity as part of other, often religious, activities. Thus, artistic expression in these societies may be carried out by religious specialists rather than artists. The Western emphasis on originality has also led to underestimating the role of the artist in societies where art conforms more to cultural tradition. The Western emphasis on innovation and difference has led to conceptualizing the artist as a special person, often a deviant, working alone, and more likely to be in opposition to than in harmony with society. This perception is usually absent in art production in non-Western cultures (and historically not always true in the West itself).

Because “primitive art” (the term used by the Western art world for the art of non-Western “tribal” societies) is now part of an international art market, Western conceptions of such art have become important to its producers as well as those who market it. Often an important (and commercially valuable) dimension of the Western notion of primitive art is that of the anonymous artist. Thus, even when an individual artist can be tracked down, dealers and collectors are generally not interested in doing so (Price 1989). Art middlemen in West Africa know that an object is worth more to Westerners “if it is perceived by the buyer to have been created by a long-departed and unknown artist and to have come directly out of a remote village community” (Steiner 1995:157). Art middlemen are quite willing to manipulate both the objects and the information about their production to meet these demands of Western buyers. Although omitting identification of the artist may increase the value of African art, this is not true for all tribal arts, each of which has its own history of relations with the West. The value of Native American art, for example, increases with identification of the artist.

In native North America, Anglo interest in indigenous arts has been responsible for creating the status of artist in societies where it did not previously exist. One of the best-known examples is in the life and work of the renowned Pueblo Indian potter Maria Martinez of San Ildefonso (Babcock 1995). In the early 1920s, as part of an Anglo interest in reviving Native American arts, a number of wealthy Easterners and museum directors who had moved to the Southwest “reinvented” Native American pottery as a fine art. The pottery was sold to wealthy Americans in the newly established Santa Fe Native American market, and exhibited in museums (Mullin 1995). Maria Martinez and her husband, Julian, produced a matte-and-polish black-on-blackware that was an almost instant success in the Anglo market. To award Maria Martinez status as an artist within the Western meaning of that term, she was encouraged to sign her pots as a way of increasing their value for collectors. When other San Ildefonso potters asked her to sign their pots too, she willingly did so, expressing the egalitarian quality of Native American pueblo life—but causing havoc among her sponsors (Babcock 1995:137).

Maria and Julian Martinez shared their techniques with other members of their pueblo, and several members of her family actually participated in the various stages of making her pots. As a result,

San Ildefonso as a community became identified with fine pottery. It was Maria Martinez, however, who became the star in the Pueblo pottery revival. Maria Martinez's image was reproduced in photographs, videotapes, books, and other media, and she became identified with a romanticized image of the Native American woman potter.



Marketing Cultural Identities Through the Arts

Anthropologists are now interested in the role of the arts in a globally interconnected economic and cultural system (Mullin 1995). One result is an examination of the political and cultural meanings implicit in how creative works are classified (Clifford 1988). Another result is that the boundaries between “high” and “low” arts are increasingly contested (Bright and Bakewell 1995). Also included in these new anthropological approaches to art is an examination of the Western and international art worlds (Marcus and Myers 1995; Price 1989).

The arts have always been important in marking cultural boundaries. They retain that importance in the contemporary world, particularly with regard to the construction of ethnic identities of indigenous peoples (Graburn 1976). The linking of the arts to cultural identity is promoted by popular television shows about non-Western, “exotic” cultures, the worldwide sale of ethnic arts, traveling museum shows in which indigenous peoples are represented through their arts, the circulation of tribal arts among Western art collectors, and tourism. In addition to providing new sources of income, artistic objects and performances that have their origin in the ritual and social life of these societies become artistic products around which modern cultural identities may be constructed, by outsiders if not by the societies themselves.

The growth of tourism has been of particular relevance to indigenous peoples. Since World War II, there has been an enormous increase in the number of Europeans, Americans, and Japanese visiting what were previously remote areas of the world. With greater accessibility, primarily through the development of airports, islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean, villages in the center of deep jungle in South America, and Inuit communities in the Canadian and American Arctic are feeling the im-



© George Hainig/Photo Researchers, Inc.

Outside interest in Native American art created the status of artist and led to prominence for some individuals. Here, Maria Martinez, a major figure in the development of an art market for Native American pottery, makes one of her signature black-on-blackware pieces.

pect of tourism. Although 90 percent of the world's tourists both come from and visit countries in Europe, the United States, and Japan, tourist spending is often a major part of the economy in the developing nations in which indigenous peoples live.

The anthropological view of tourism is generally that it has negative impacts on local cultures, unless it is carefully controlled by indigenous peoples, and that it is bad for art. Tourism often does debase indigenous, culturally authentic, and creative art into mass-produced souvenirs of low quality, lacking any cultural meaning, but its effects on art and cultural identity have actually been mixed.

Created with “primitive” art The term used by the Western art world for the of non-Western, “tribal” societies.



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Tourism can support and reaffirm cultural identities by reviving respect for traditional art forms, as has occurred to some extent in the American Southwest (Mullin 1995). In Bali, the interest of tourists in cultural performances has stimulated an improvement in the artistic quality of some of the dance and dramatic performances. The economic boost from tourist patronage of these performances has allowed local troupes to buy new instruments for their gamelan orchestras and new costumes, and it has encouraged the opening of schools and institutes throughout Indonesia for training in traditional art forms. An expert and professional group of Indonesian artists has maintained tight control over performances and is acting to conserve the quality of the arts. Similarly, interest in the Inuit arts has been an extremely important alternative source of income for them, especially as their traditional hunting declines. This connection between art, tourism, and the strengthening of cultural identity is also seen in the weaving

of Native American women in Guatemala and Mexico, although this has increased conflicts within the society (J. Nash 1986).

Ritually and socially significant cultural elements change meaning as they become part of staged performances for tourists or move from their original cultural contexts into the world art market. This is part of a larger process in which culture itself has become a marketable commodity, reshaped and packaged in part in response to the demands of a world market. Among the more recent and interesting anthropological interests in art are the ways in which the artworks of nonindustrial societies have become commodities in the process of globalization and the ways in which they have been reconceptualized functionally and stylistically to meet a worldwide demand.

Will this marketing of culture move the world inevitably toward cultural homogenization? Or will the global economy and global village always leave room for the emergence of meaningful local artistic expressions of cultural identity?



Ethnography

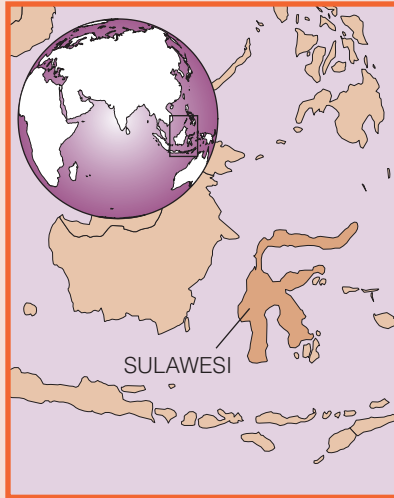
The Arts, Tourism, and Cultural Identity among the Toraja

The connection between the arts, tourism, and the construction of cultural identity is well illustrated by the Toraja of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The Toraja are mainly subsistence cultivators who also raise water buffalo, pigs, and chickens, all of which are killed and eaten on ritual occasions. Two artistic productions among the Toraja that have particular spiritual importance in their society are tongkonan, or ancestral houses (which represent the links among ancestors, living kin, and future kin), and the tau-tau, which are wooden effigies of nobles carved in connection with mortuary ritual.

Although the Toraja today are predominantly Christian, they continue to perform and have expanded their traditionally elaborate mortuary rituals. In fact, for outsiders and for the Toraja themselves, these ritual performances, and the artistic works associated with them, have emerged as a major component of contemporary Toraja cultural identity (Volkman 1984). Tourism has been essential in this process.

By the late 1960s, tourism began to expand in the Toraja area, almost all of it oriented toward viewing the Toraja mortuary rituals of animal sacrifice, the spectacularly carved tongkonan, and the eerie tau-tau. Organized tourism to Tana Toraja was an important part of Indonesia's tourist development program, aimed at increasing the flow of Western capital (Volkman 1984:162). Tourism increased rapidly, from only 650 foreign visitors in 1972 to more than 179,000 tourists (domestic and foreign) by 1987 (Adams 1990:31). Among the early tourists was a British film crew, so the Toraja became known throughout Europe in connection with their rituals and their art, specifically the tongkonan and the tau-tau.

The importance of these elements in creating a Toraja identity was illustrated in the tourist brochure issued by the American Museum of Natural History to promote a one-day tour to the



Toraja country, led by anthropologist Clifford Geertz. The Toraja were described as “a fascinating people who practice unique burial rituals, create beautiful artworks, and build striking, intricately carved houses” (Volkman 1984:163). Indeed, because of the artistic attraction of ancestral houses, which have upward-curving eaves resembling a boat and spectacularly carved side panels, the Toraja were forbidden by Indonesian tourist officials to alter them. These officials even questioned whether

the Toraja should be permitted to inhabit their houses because human occupancy could damage these “tourist objects” (Adams 1990:33). Reflecting the tourist demand for “portable art,” the Toraja began carving miniature ancestral houses for sale in tourist shops.

The other significant artistic element in Toraja cultural identity is the tau-tau. These effigies represent the spirit of a dead person; they are the vessel of the Torajan soul (Adams 1993). Tau-taus are permitted to be carved only for the wealthiest nobility and are therefore an important symbol of aristocratic status among the Toraja. Tau-taus are commissioned by the family of the deceased, and the carving is surrounded at every step by religious ritual. When the funeral begins, the tau-tau is adorned with finely woven clothing, a betel nut bag filled with silver and bamboo utensils, a head dressing, gold jewelry, and a sacred knife—all heirlooms associated with nobility or deities. The tau-tau is supposed to resemble the dead person; it makes his or her soul visible. During the funeral, the tau-tau is placed near the body of the deceased, from where it observes the mortuary ritual. When the mortuary rites are completed, the tau-tau is placed with its relatives on platforms chiseled into limestone cliffs, where it becomes a visual link between the community of the living and the community of the dead.



Ethnography—continued

Christian missionaries disapprove of tau-taus, but tau-taus continue to be part of Christian Toraja identity and may incorporate such Christian elements as Bibles and crosses. Tau-taus also incorporate other Western cultural elements, such as digital watches, eyeglasses, and Western clothing (Adams 1993). Although tau-taus were always carved as individualized portraits of the deceased, today they are carved and painted as very realistic resemblances. Indeed, in an attempt to reconcile their attachment to the tau-tau with church prohibitions, Christian Toraja explain the tau-tau as three-dimensional pictures of the dead.

Traditionally, tau-taus were closely associated only with noble identity, but for tourists the tau-tau have become emblematic of a generalized Torajan identity. Miniature tau-taus are sold in the tourist markets, along with large carvings of the burial cliffs. Thus, tourism began a process by which ritually significant objects have been transformed into art objects of economic significance.

As the tau-taus became known as art objects in the Western world, hundreds of them were stolen and sold to American, European, and Asian art collectors. Redesignated by Western curators and collectors as archaic Indonesian art, some effigies

have also found a home in Western museums. For the Toraja, the theft of a tau-tau is tantamount to the abduction of an ancestor, and the loss must be redressed by ritual propitiation. Additionally, the Toraja realize that without the tau-taus, tourism will decline, depriving them of an important source of income and prestige.

Unlike other artistic forms such as music or dance that, if appropriated or stolen, can be reenacted, the tau-tau is irreplaceable. Legal, political, and economic obstacles stand in the way of repatriation, and tau-taus today are openly sold for thousands of dollars in international galleries. The Indonesian government, more to maintain tourist interest than address Torajan concerns, has replaced stolen tau-taus with newly made ones, but the Torajans reject these as being not only clumsily made but without spiritual significance because they were not made under ritual conditions (Adams 1993).

Paradox and pathos thus attend the tau-tau today. The tau-tau's meaning has changed from ritual to art object, and whereas once the tau-tau served as a protection for the family of the deceased, today the family of the deceased must protect the tau-tau (Adams 1993).



Summary

1. From an anthropological perspective, the arts include a wide range of activities in which creative expression is guided by standards of beauty in a particular culture.
2. Aesthetic values differ among cultures. In some cultures, such as those in the West, originality is essential to art. In other societies, improvisation is more important. In some cases, artistic products are produced according to strict, often religious, rules.
3. Artistic emphasis also differs among peoples, depending on cultural values. Writing is an art form in one culture, tea drinking in another, and cockfighting in yet another.
4. When art itself is a ritual, artistic products or performances are often regarded as inherently powerful. In prehistoric cultures, cave paintings of animals may have been painted as rituals to provide control over hunting.
5. One of the powerful elements in art is the symbolic meanings it has for its audience. Art may have multilayered levels of meaning, communicating several cultural themes. Art has many functions. One important function of art is the display of cultural themes. In Japan, anime and manga culture displays repressed themes of the Japanese militarism of World War II, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the post-

Critical Thinking Questions

1. One of the effects of tourism is to make people more self-conscious of their culture. This can have both positive and negative effects. What effects has tourism had on Toraja cultural identity?
2. What forms of artistic expression are particularly important in relation to your own cultural identity?
3. What does it mean to say that culture has become a commodity? How does the buying and selling of cultural symbols affect the identities of those who sell them and those who buy them?

Source: Adapted from Kathleen M. Adams, “Theologians, Tourists and Thieves: The Torajan Effigy of the Dead in Modernizing Indonesia.” *Kyoto Journal*, 1993, 22: 38–45.



Tau-taus, or effigies of the spirit of a recently deceased noble person, have taken on new identities, both for the Toraja and for outsiders, as they have become transformed into artistic commodities for tourists and international collectors.

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- war dependence of the Japanese on the United States and resulting feelings of powerlessness.
6. Deep play is a form of the arts that also displays cultural themes and values. Examples of deep play are cockfighting in Bali, bullfighting in Spain, and football in the United States.
7. An important function of the arts is the validation of a social/political structure. Art can also challenge existing social structures by mocking those in power or questioning society’s rules.
8. The arts may also be used to record history and remember the past, as illustrated by the memory boards among the Luba of Africa and the ledger drawings of some Native American societies.
9. Body art can express both cultural (group) identity and/or personal identity, and it has several functions. In Morocco, henna designs are applied to women’s hands and feet to enhance health and beauty, to celebrate marriage, and to chase away evil spirits.
10. The arts are also an expression of an individual’s personal identity, as in the case of Frida Kahlo, whose paintings express her personal, familial, political, and gender identities.
11. Art can be used to express the cultural identity of an “in-group,” but also to reinforce that identity by depicting the “other”—those felt to be different in basic ways from oneself. Europeans

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represented the Oriental “other” especially through paintings and photographs of women in the harem.

12. Although art exists in every society, art for art’s sake and the specialized role of the artist do not. In most nonindustrial societies, art and the artist are part of other cultural activities such as ritual.

13. The arts are important ethnic boundary markers in the contemporary world. Indigenous peoples, particularly, are known to the West through their arts. With the increase in tourism, artistic objects, performances, and rituals that originally had spiritual meanings become transformed into staged displays of cultural identity for tourists or commodities in international art markets.



Key Terms

anime
art
bhangra

body art
crafts
deep play

ledger drawings
manga
Orientalism

“primitive” art
world music



Suggested Readings

Brownell, Susan. 1995. *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People’s Republic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. An exceptionally readable look into the ways in which China has developed a sports culture consistent with some traditional Chinese values, written from the ethnographic site of a university track team in Beijing.

Dalby, Liza. 1993. *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. An anthropologist who lived and worked in a geisha community for 14 months, the author discusses both historical and contemporary aspects of the kimono and its relationship to Japanese culture.

Dubin, Lois Sherr. 1999. *North American Indian Jewelry and Adornment: From Prehistory to the Present*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. An astonishingly beautiful book that interweaves anthropological and Native American perspectives. Dubin

undermines stereotypes of Native Americans through her emphasis on the connections between past and contemporary artistic creativity and by highlighting the voices of Native Americans as they explain the meaning of their art.

Miller, Ivor. 2002. *Aerosol Kingdom: Subway Painters of New York City*. Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press. Not everyone will agree with Miller’s contention about the aesthetic value of subway graffiti, but he makes a persuasive case that it is indeed an art form that both expresses the voices of marginalized urban populations and grows out of the cultural and artistic patterns of the Caribbean.

Rice, Timothy. 1994. *May It Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Compact disc included. An accessible yet scholarly introduction to the field of ethnomusicology, in which the reader gets to know the peo-

ple as well as the music. Particularly interesting is the discussion of the relationship between the music, the musicians, and the state.

Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. 1994. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London: Routledge. A spectacular, encyclopedic, and essential resource on the ways in which European films have represented non-Europeans and the contemporary ways non-Europeans are representing themselves.

Waterman, Christopher Alan. 1990. *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A scholarly treatment of an African performance tradition, examining the urban and colonial context, social relations, and aesthetic aspects of a popular musical form in contemporary Nigeria.



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Also, check out the Anthropology Resource Center for a wealth of learning materials that include interactive maps, video exercises, simulations and breaking news in Anthropology. Be sure to explore InfoTrac College Edition®, your online library that offers full-length articles from thousands of scholarly and popular publications. To reach the Anthropology Resource Center and InfoTrac, check the card packaged with your book for the access code. Then go to <http://www.thomsonedu.com> to create an account through Ipass™. If there is no card in your book, go to <http://www.thomsonedu.com> to purchase an access code.

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Culture Change and the Modern World



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The Tuareg are desert nomads. In previous times they used camels to cross the Sahara. Today, trucks and cars can move people and goods rapidly across old trails. On the other hand, camels are less expensive, more reliable, and never get flat tires.

OUTLINE

Making the Modern World
European Expansion: Motives and Methods
The Era of Colonialism

Independence and Poverty
Development
Multinational Corporations
Urbanization

Population Pressure
Instability
Looking to the Future

In the twentieth century, populations in colonized countries paid taxes not only in cash, but in blood. Most people have heard of de Gaulle's Free French, but few realize that between the fall of France in 1940 and the summer of 1944, the majority of the members of the Free French Army were African conscripts, drafted from areas colonized by France.

See page 448 for more information.

Culture, as we have seen, is dynamic and changing. Innovation, invention, and diffusion are always active processes and these aspects of change were discussed in Chapter 4 on pages 106 to 110. Environmental and population pressures, internal conflict, invasion, and subjugation frequently drive change. No people have ever been frozen in time, living unchanged across the centuries. At the same time, there can be no doubt that the pace of change is increasingly rapid, not only for ourselves but for people all over the world.

We can see the increasing speed of change in terms of world population and resource use. Consider the rate of population growth. Scientists believe that about 2 million years ago, our remote ancestors numbered perhaps 100,000. By the time the first agricultural societies were developing 10,000 years ago, world population had reached 5 million to 10 million people. Two thousand years ago, at the time of the Roman Empire, there were still only about 250 million people in the world. By 1750, this had tripled to 750 million. Then things really began to speed up. Fifty years later, in 1800, there were 1 billion people in the world; by 1930,

there were 2 billion. In the last two-thirds of the twentieth century, world population tripled, surpassing the 6 billion mark in the summer of 1999 (Erickson 1995; Fetto 1999). By the summer of 2005 it stood at about 6.4 billion. World population continues to increase at the rate of about 1 billion people a decade. A person born in 1985 who lives to be 75 years old will have seen the world's population increase from about 5 billion to more than 10 billion (Haub and Richie 1994).

This huge increase in population is related to many other changes. Ten or twelve thousand years ago, almost all the world's people lived by foraging. By 1500, only 1 percent of them did. Today all foraging groups have been pushed to deserts, tundra, and other marginal lands. Although no one really knows their exact number, very few are left (Blench 1999). One thousand years ago, the vast majority of the world's population consumed at similar levels, although substantial differences in wealth existed. Today, about one-fifth of the Earth's population takes home 64 percent of the world's income. Even more shockingly, the net worth of the 358 richest people in the world is

equal to the combined income of the world's poorest 2.3 billion people (United Nations Development Programme 1996). The average person in an industrialized nation consumes 3 times as much fresh water, 10 times as much energy, and 19 times as much aluminum as someone in a developing nation (Durning 1994).

We all know that the pace of change has been extremely rapid in the past several centuries; we know less about the patterns of change and their effects on cultures around the world. The story of these patterns is complex and diverse. It is a story of contact between cultures. A significant part of it is the story of the expansion of the wealth and power of places that are now considered industrialized nations. This expansion occurred in thousands of locations and had many different effects. Sometimes cultural contact was accidentally genocidal, sometimes intentionally so. Many traditional cultures have been destroyed; but others have prospered, though in altered forms. Members of different cultures often confronted each other through a veil of ignorance, suspicion, and accusations of savagery, but sometimes common interests, common enemies, mutual curiosity, and occasionally friendship among people overrode their differences.

Our world, the current result of this process, is an enormously contradictory place. All around us, we see increasing cultural homogeneity; you can find a bottle of soda, a radio, or a CD player almost anywhere in the world. Cell phones connect people in remote African villages to relatives in industrialized urban metropolises. The Internet lets teenagers in America bid on products in Hong Kong. At the same time, it is in many ways an increasingly divided world. First, economic inequality is perhaps greater than it has ever been. The disparities in quality of life are enormous. Someone born in the late 1990s in Japan had a life expectancy of 81 years. If you were born in those same years in Malawi or Mozambique, your life expectancy would be only 37 years. Second, although many of the forces at work in the world seem to favor homogeneity, people around the world are insisting, sometimes violently, on their right to preserve their cultural or ethnic identity or create new identities intentionally separating themselves from the dominant global culture.

In this chapter, we describe the overall pattern of change during the past several hundred years.

In the broadest sense, this pattern involved the incorporation of relatively separate cultures and economies into a vast, chaotic yet integrated world economic system. The formation of this system involved the creation of enormous inequality both within and among nations as wealth and labor flowed from one area of the world to another. It created the financial accumulation necessary for the industrial revolution and the development of capitalism. In this era, empires rose and fell as powers competed for dominance in their own sphere and with each other. The Ottoman Empire, as well as the growth of Russia and of Japan, played critical roles in the story. However, it was the expansion of the influence and power of Western European states that probably had the greatest impact worldwide. For that reason, we begin with a bird's-eye view of Europe and the rest of the world as it might have appeared in 1400.



Making the Modern World

As surprising as it may seem now, a visitor touring the world on the eve of European expansion in 1400 would probably have been amused by the notion that European societies would soon become enormously wealthy and powerful. Other areas of the globe would have seemed much more likely prospects for power. Europeans had devised ocean-going vessels, but Arab and Chinese ships regularly made much longer voyages. The cities of India and China made those of Europe look like mere villages. Almost no European states could effectively administer more than a few hundred square kilometers. Certainly there were none to compare to China's vast wealth and centralized bureaucracy. Europeans were masters of cathedral and castle construction, but other than that, their technology was backward. War, plague, and economic depression were the order of the day (Scammell 1989). Moreover, other areas of the world seemed to be expanding. Despite occasional setbacks, the Islamic powers had expanded steadily in the five centuries leading up to 1400, and Muslim nations stretched from Spain to Indonesia. Not only had these empires preserved the scholarship of India and the ancient Mediterranean civilizations, but they had greatly increased technical knowledge in astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, zoology,

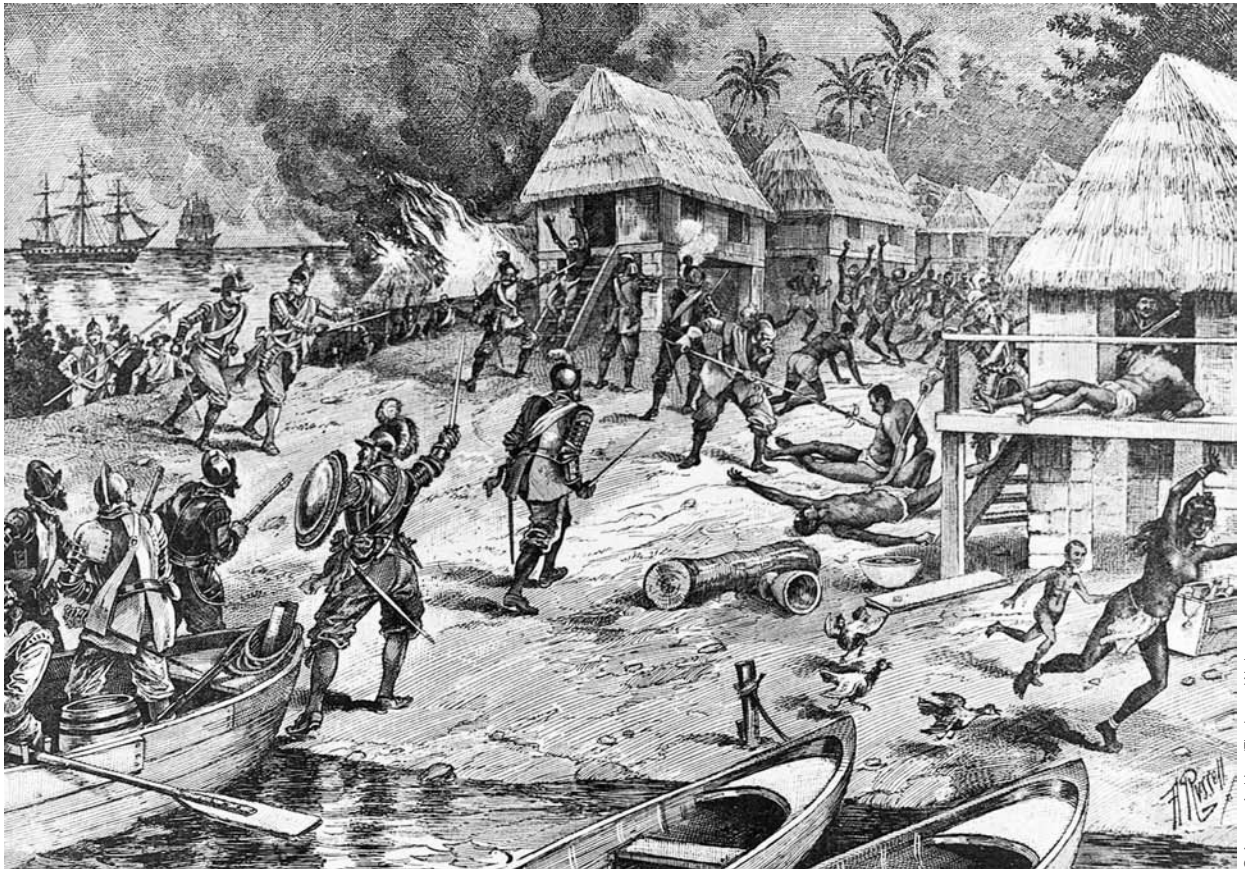
mineralogy, and meteorology (Lapidus 1988:96, 241–252).

China also had an extraordinarily ancient and powerful civilization. As late as 1793, Emperor Ch'ien Lung, believing China to be the most powerful state in the world (or perhaps showing bravado in the face of foreign traders), responded to a British delegation's attempt to open trade by writing to King George II: "Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated into every country under heaven and kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things . . . we have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufacturers" (Peyrefitte 1992:288–292). Unfortunately for the Chinese, by the time the emperor wrote this letter, it was no longer accurate. Half a century

later, by the end of the First Opium War, Britain virtually controlled China.

European Expansion: Motives and Methods

From slow beginnings in the fifteenth century, European power grew rapidly from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Many theories have been suggested to account for the causes and motives of European expansion. Although often a cover for more worldly aims, the desire of the pious to Christianize the world was certainly a motivating factor. The archives of the Jesuit order, for example, include more than 15,000 letters, written between 1550 and 1771, from people who wanted to be missionaries (Scammell 1989:60).



European expansion was often accompanied by violence and slaughter. Here, Bartolomeo, the brother of Christopher Columbus and founder of Santa Domingo (present-day capital of the Dominican Republic) destroys a village that resisted his rule.



A Closer Look

Why the Natives Died

Can you imagine a society in which no one ever gets a cold or the flu? Where measles, mumps, smallpox, tuberculosis, and most other contagious diseases are unknown? Though it may seem hard to imagine, the Americas were like that before Columbus arrived. Europeans brought disease and death to almost every place they visited outside of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Although estimates of the precontact population of the world are difficult and controversial, it is generally accepted that disease exerted a profound impact on many non-European populations. Smallpox and tuberculosis decimated the population of the Pacific Islands and Australia (Owsley, Gill, and Ousley 1994; Newson 1999). However, it was in the Americas that disease had its greatest effect. In the wake of contact with Europeans, up to 95 percent of the total population of the New World died of epidemic diseases. In the 50 years after Cortés arrived in Mexico, its population, estimated at between 25 and 30 million, declined to 3 million (Karlen 1995). Mesoamerica had at least 14 major epidemics between 1520 and 1600 (Wolf 1982). In New Mexico, between 60 and 70 percent of Pueblo Indians died between 1606 and 1638 (Palkovich 1994).

The founding of European colonies in New England led to rapid native population declines. By the mid-1600s, only 30 years after the Pilgrims landed

at Plymouth, Narragansett and Massachuset Indian populations had declined by 86 percent, the Pocumtut by 95 percent, and the Mohegan and Pequot by 81 percent (B. Baker 1994). Although occasionally epidemics may have been caused intentionally, neither Europeans nor natives had any knowledge of contagion or germs. The vast majority of deaths were not premeditated. Although Europeans later came to believe that the deaths of the natives demonstrated their biological inferiority and confirmed their own “manifest destiny,” initially they were bewildered at the extent and impact of these epidemics.

All of this happened because natives of the New World had no immunity to Old World diseases. This, however, raises an interesting question. Why didn't Europeans return home with New World diseases? If isolation were the only important factor, Europeans should have died of New World diseases as rapidly as New World natives died of European diseases. There are two principal answers to this question.

First, the key diseases that killed indigenous populations were smallpox, influenza, tuberculosis, malaria, plague, measles, and cholera. These diseases all have several characteristics in common. They spread easily and rapidly. They quickly kill those susceptible to them, and they confer im-

The desire to find a wide variety of wonders, both real and imagined, was also important. The Portuguese looked for routes to the very real wealth of Eastern empires such as China, but also for the mythical kingdom of Prester John, a powerful but hidden Christian monarch, the fountain of youth, and the seven cities of Cibola.

Beyond this, there was always the desire for wealth. Nations and nobles quickly lost their aversion to exploration as gold and diamonds were discovered. The poor and oppressed of Europe often saw opportunities for wealth and respect in the colonies. There, they often fulfilled their dreams of wealth by re-creating the very social order they had fled.

Europeans were aided in their pursuit of expansion by various social and technological develop-

ments. These included the rise of a banking and merchant class, a growing population, and the development of the caravel, a new ship that was better at sailing into the wind. Two further developments, the **monoculture plantation** and the **joint stock company**, were to have critical impacts on the world's people.

In many cases, however, the key advantage Europeans had over other people was the diseases they carried. Almost every time Europeans met others who had been isolated from the European, African, and Asian land masses, they brought death and cultural destruction in the form of microbes. In many instances, virtually the entire native population perished of imported diseases within 20 years. Although Europeans too died of diseases, they did so in far smaller numbers.

munity on those who survive them. Such diseases do not survive without infected humans to spread them. As a result, they are all diseases of crowds, requiring a large human population. To understand why, consider what would happen if one of these diseases attacked a small, relatively isolated group. All those susceptible to the disease would soon die. Those who survived, as well as their nursing infants, would be immune. A new generation of susceptible individuals would take a while to develop. Thus, epidemics can only sustain themselves if the population is so large that children without resistance are always available to be infected. For some diseases, the numbers required are quite high, perhaps a half million for measles (Diamond 1992). The result is that small groups are generally free of such diseases. They catch imported diseases easily but have few of their own to give back.

This explains the high death rate among small groups like the Narragansett and Massachuset, Indians of eastern North America. But what of the dense populations of Mexico and South America? The Aztec and other groups certainly had populations high enough to sustain these diseases, but they happened not to have been exposed to them. To understand why, we must consider the sources of crowd diseases. All of the diseases mentioned above had their origins in domesticated animals.

Measles, for example, probably came from a virus that affects cows; influenza had its likely origin in swine. Horses were the apparent source of the common cold. Sheep and goats together have contributed more than 46 diseases to humans (Karlen 1995). Europeans and others in the Old World had long been in contact with many domesticated animals. They had been exposed to these diseases and, as a result, both carried their germs and had developed a degree of immunity. But in the Americas, domesticated animals were extremely rare. Most of the wild animals that could have been domesticated became extinct at the end of the last Ice Age, about 11,000 years ago. The only domesticates present at the time of contact with Europe were turkeys, ducks, guinea pigs, and llamas. Of these, turkeys and ducks do not live in large enough flocks to develop crowd diseases, and llamas were generally not kept in close contact with people. Guinea pigs may be the source of one human disease, an infection carried by a trypanosome parasite that causes Chagas' disease, but they were limited to Peru. Because Native Americans had so few domesticated animals, they had neither immunity to European diseases nor crowd diseases to give to Europeans. This imbalance had fundamental implications for the course of history.

The European search for wealth depended on tactics that, in their basic form, were ancient. Two of the quickest ways to accumulate wealth are to steal it from others and to get other people to work for you for free. State societies have always practiced these methods. War, slavery, exploitation, and inequality were present in most of the world before European contact, so there was nothing fundamentally new about their use by Europeans. However, no earlier empire had been able to practice these tactics on the scale of the European nations. All previous empires, however large, were regional affairs. European expansion, for the first time in history, linked the entire world into an economic system. This system created much of the wealth of Europe and ultimately that of many of today's industrialized nations.

At the same time, it systematically impoverished much of today's developing world.

Pillage One of the most important means of wealth transfer was pillage. In the early years of expansion, Europeans were driven by the search for precious metals, particularly gold and silver. When

monoculture plantation An agricultural plantation specializing in the large-scale production of a single crop to be sold on the market.

joint stock company A firm that is managed by a centralized board of directors but owned by shareholders. Shares may be transferred from one owner to another, and shareholders are directly responsible for the firm's debts.



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they found such valuables, they moved quickly to seize them. Metals belonging to indigenous peoples were quickly dispatched back to Europe, and mines were placed under European control. The profits of this **pillage** were enormous. For example, in 1531, Pizarro captured the Inca emperor Atahualpa and received \$88.5 million in gold and \$2.5 million in silver (current value) as his ransom. A gang of Indian smiths worked nine forges day and night to melt down this treasure, which was then shipped back to Spain (Duncan 1995:158). In the early seventeenth century, 58,000 Indian workers were forced into silver mining in the town of Potosi in the Peruvian Andes (Wolf 1982:136). Between 1500 and 1660, Spanish colonies in the Americas exported 300 tons of gold and 25,000 tons of silver (Scammell 1989:133).

Such looting was not limited to the New World. After the British East India Company came to power in India, it plundered the treasury of Bengal, sending wealth back to investors in England (Wolf 1982:244). In addition, art, artifacts, curiosities, and occasionally human bodies were stolen around

the world and sent to museums and private collections in Europe.

Forced Labor Forced labor was also a key element of European expansion. The most notorious example was African slavery, but impressing local inhabitants for labor, debt servitude, and other forms of **peonage** was common. Europeans forced both the peoples whose lands they conquered and their own lower classes into **vassalage**. Europeans did not invent slavery in general or African slavery in particular; non-Europeans probably exported more than 7 million slaves to the Islamic world between 650 and 1600 (Lovejoy 1983). However, Europeans did practice African slavery on a larger scale than any people before them. Between the end of the fifteenth century and the end of the nineteenth, approximately 11.7 million slaves were exported from Africa to the Americas. More than 6 million left Africa in the eighteenth century alone (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1988). Although we are fairly certain that about 12 million slaves were transported across the Atlantic, no one really



Forced labor was critical to extracting wealth from newly acquired lands. Growing sugar in the West Indies was extremely profitable but demanded huge amounts of human labor. This demand for labor led to the importation of millions of African slaves. This 1855 woodcut shows men and women making holes for planting sugarcane, a process known as “cane-holing.”

knows how many died in the process of capturing and transferring slaves within Africa. Estimates vary from one to five individuals dead for every slave successfully transported across the Atlantic.

The massive transport of people had two important economic effects. First, the use of slave labor was extremely profitable for both slave shippers and plantation owners. Second, it impoverished areas from which slaves were drawn. The loss of so many people from the African continent was probably sufficient to stop population growth and radically alter African societies (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1988).

The demand for slaves was created by monoculture plantations—farms devoted to the production of a single crop for sale to distant consumers. Sugar and cotton were produced in the Americas and spices in Asia. These were sold to consumers located primarily in Europe. Through the eighteenth century, sugar was probably the most important monoculture crop. British consumption of sugar increased some 2500 percent between 1650 and 1800. Between 1800 and 1890, sugar production grew another 2500 percent, from 245,000 tons to more than 6 million tons (Mintz 1985:73). Growing and processing sugar was extremely labor intensive, and the massive labor power required was largely provided by slaves. Between 1701 and 1810, for example, Barbados, a small island given over almost

entirely to sugar production, imported 252,500 slaves, almost all of whom were involved in growing and processing sugar (Mintz 1985:53).

Joint Stock Companies The joint stock company was another innovation that allowed extremely rapid expansion and led to enormous abuses of power. Most early European exploration was financed and supported by aristocratic governments or small private firms. By the turn of the seventeenth century, however, the British and Dutch had established joint stock companies. The French, Swedes, Danes, Germans, and Portuguese followed by mid-century. Based on the sale of shares to many private owners, these companies enjoyed enormous financial power. Their ventures were far more profitable than earlier exploration by governments and small firms.

pillage To strip an area of money, goods, or raw materials through the use of physical violence or the threat of violence.

peonage The practice of holding a person in bondage or partial slavery in order for them to work off a debt or serve a prison sentence.

vassalage A condition of hereditary bondage in which the use of land is granted in return for payment, homage, and military service or its equivalent.

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The **Dutch East India Company** (VOC, after its initials in Dutch), founded in 1602, is a model of the joint stock company. Based on money raised from the sale of shares, the VOC was chartered by the Dutch government to hold the monopoly on all Dutch trade with the societies of the Indian and Pacific oceans. Shares in the VOC were available on reasonable terms and were held by a wide cross-section of Dutch society (Scammell 1989:101). In many ways, the company functioned as a government. Led by a board of directors called the **Heeren XVII** (the Lords Seventeen), it was empowered to make treaties with local rulers in the name of the Dutch Republic, occupy lands, levy taxes, raise armies, and declare war. The fundamental difference was that whereas governments are to some degree beholden to those they govern, the VOC was interested solely in returning dividends to its shareholders. Through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the VOC distributed annual dividends of 15.5 to 50 percent. It returned dividends of 40 percent per year for six consecutive years from 1715 to 1720 (Boxer 1965:46).

Through the seventeenth century, the VOC used its powers to seize direct or indirect control of many of the Indian Ocean islands. Among these were Java, including the port of Jakarta (which became their headquarters, renamed Batavia), Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and Malacca. In addition, the VOC acquired the right to control the production and trade of the most valuable spices of the area (cloves, nutmeg, and mace) and took brutal steps to maintain this monopoly. For example, during the 1620s, virtually the entire population of the nutmeg-producing island of Banda was deported, driven away, starved to death, or massacred. They were replaced with Dutch colonists using slave labor (Ricklefs 1993:30). By the 1670s, the Dutch had gained complete control of all spice production (Wolf 1982).

Natives of this region did not submit passively to VOC control, and the company did not have a clear-cut military advantage. Instead, the VOC rapidly (and ultimately disastrously) became embroiled in the area's wars. For example, in the seventeenth century, the Maratram Dynasty controlled most of central Java. In 1677, when the dynasty was about to be overthrown, the VOC intervened on its behalf in hopes of cash payments and trade concessions. In a bloody campaign, the combined VOC and dynasty forces crushed the rebellion, and Emperor

Amangkurat II was established on the throne. Trouble ensued when the VOC received neither payments nor concessions. An armed force that it sent in 1686 to make its demands was defeated by Amangkurat II. The company was unable to recoup its losses or claim its trading privileges (Ricklefs 1990). This was just the beginning of a series of extremely brutal wars pitting different factions of Javanese kingdoms against each other and against the VOC. Kingdoms alternately allied with and fought against the VOC as their interests dictated. These conflicts lasted until 1757.

The company often acted with extraordinary brutality. The treatment of the Chinese in Batavia is a good example. The Chinese had come to Batavia as traders, skilled artisans, sugar millers, and shopkeepers. Despite harsh measures against them, by 1740 roughly 15,000 Chinese lived there. VOC officials believed they were plotting rebellion, and after an incident in which several Europeans were killed, VOC governor general Adriaan Valckenier hinted that a massacre would not be unwelcome. In the melee that followed, Europeans and their slaves massacred 10,000 Chinese. The Chinese quarter of the city burned for several days, and the VOC was able to stop the looting only by paying its soldiers a premium to return to duty (Ricklefs 1993:90).

The burden of continual warfare, as well as corruption and inefficiency, forced the VOC into serious financial difficulties. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, large areas of coastal Java had been depopulated by years of warfare, but the VOC had not succeeded in controlling the principal kingdoms of the island. The Heeren XVII were dismissed by the Netherlands government in 1796 after an investigation revealed corruption and mismanagement in all quarters. On December 31, 1799, the VOC was formally dissolved, and its possessions were turned over to the Batavian Republic, a Dutch client state of France.

The story of the VOC was, in large measure, repeated by other mercantilist trading firms such as the British, French, and Swedish East India companies and the various West India trading firms. In each case, companies generated enormous profits but eventually fell into disarray and were either dissolved or taken over by their national governments. Despite their eventual failure, the trading companies placed fantastic riches at the service of European elites. They invested it in many different ways: in the arts, luxury goods, in architecture, but

also in science and industry. This supply of wealth became one of the sources of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism itself.

The story in the regions where the trading companies operated was far less pleasant. The VOC and other trading companies left poverty and chaos in their wakes. In every case, Europeans fundamentally altered the communities with which they came into contact. Frequently, brutal policies and disease destroyed entire cultures. However, in most cases, societies were not simply overrun. Before the nineteenth century, Europeans did not have a truly decisive technological advantage over others. Instead, Europeans collaborated with local elites and these were often able to use their contact with the foreigners to increase their own wealth and power. However, as a whole, their societies suffered. Trading companies created wealth in those places where their shareholders lived (generally Europe and North America) and left the areas where they operated deep in poverty.

The Era of Colonialism

Colonialism differs in important ways from the earlier growth of European power. Whereas much of the initial phase of European expansion was carried out by private companies and often took the form of raid and pillage, **colonialism** involved the active possession of foreign territory by European governments. Colonies were created when nations established and maintained political domination over geographically separate areas and political units (Kohn 1958). European colonies were of fundamentally different types. Some, as in Africa, existed primarily to exploit native people and resources. In other areas, such as North America and Australia, the key goal was the settlement of surplus European population. Still other locales, such as Yemen, which borders on the Red Sea, were seized because they occupied key strategic locations.

At one time or another, much of the world came under direct European colonization, but the timing of colonialism varied from place to place. The Americas were colonized in the 1500s and 1600s, but most other areas of the world did not come under colonial control until the nineteenth century. This is because it was only in the nineteenth century that Europeans (and their North American descendants) were able to acquire clear technological superiority.

Colonizing the Americas In the Americas, the quick success of the conquistadors was largely the result of disease. Cortés's conquest of Mexico is a good example. According to Spanish accounts, when Cortés first appeared in 1519, the Aztecs greeted him as a god, showering him with gifts. Later, they were overwhelmed by Spanish horsemanship and military superiority. However, there is a good deal of dispute over this account. It is more likely that Montezuma, following Aztec tradition, intended his gifts to Cortés and his opening of the city of Tenochtitlán to the Spanish to be a show of strength rather than a sign of surrender. When it became clear that the Spanish were their enemies, the Aztecs expelled them from the city in a fierce battle that cost the Spanish and their allies perhaps two-thirds of their total army. The Aztecs believed that this decisive victory ended their confrontation with the Spanish, but Cortés and his men were back in 1521. By that time, a smallpox epidemic had killed half the Aztecs. Even after such crushing losses to disease, the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán took more than four months to accomplish (Clendinnen 1991; Berdan 1982; Karlen 1995). Had the Aztecs not been devastated by disease, they might have again defeated Cortés.

Disease played an even bigger part in the conquest of the Incas in Peru. It swept across Central and South America well in advance of the Europeans themselves. By the time Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro reached Peru, the Inca Empire had already been decimated. Without the disease factor, the situation in the Americas might have been much like that in Java. Europeans would not have been able to rapidly establish control over vast areas of the Americas and would have had to fight protracted battles against powerful local kingdoms.

Colonizing in the Nineteenth Century By the beginning of the nineteenth century, industrialization was under way in Europe and North America.

Dutch East India Company A joint stock company chartered by the Dutch government to control all Dutch trade in the Indian and Pacific oceans. Also known by its Dutch initials, VOC, for *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*.

Heeren XVII The "Lords Seventeen," members of the board of directors of the Dutch East India Company.

Colonialism The active possession of a foreign territory and the maintenance of political domination over that territory.



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This had two immediate consequences. First, **industrialization** enabled Europeans and Americans to produce weapons in greater quantity and quality than any other people. Second, it created an enormous demand for raw materials that could not be satisfied in Europe. In addition, discoveries in medicine, particularly vaccines and anti-malarial drugs, improved the odds of survival for Europeans in places previously considered pestilential. Thus, Europeans had the means to colonize as well as uses for the products of colonization.

Acting in their own self-interest, however, Europeans and Americans generally did not move rapidly to place other areas under colonial control. The primary goal of European expansion was always the pursuit of wealth, and plundering was a rapid and cost-effective way to get it. The financial burden of establishing mercantile companies such as the VOC was borne by their shareholders. However, colonizing an area required some level of government expenditure (for example, for government officials and the troops to back them). In most cases, infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and railways also

had to be built. These were expensive undertakings, and governments were generally not enthusiastic about funding them. Most often, European governments felt forced to assume control either because of the scandals surrounding the collapse of mercantile companies or out of fear that their national commercial interests were threatened, generally by other European nations. It was this fear that led to the Berlin conference partitioning Africa among European powers in the late nineteenth century.

After European governments had established colonies, they had to sell this fact both to their own populations and to those they colonized. They defended their actions by cloaking them in the ideology of social betterment. In Britain, citizens were encouraged, in the words of the poet Rudyard Kipling, to take up “the white man’s burden” of bringing civilization to the “savage.” In France, the population was told that it had a *mission civilisatrice*, a civilizing mission that would both help the “savages” in the colonized areas and increase French political and cultural power throughout the world. They also referred to

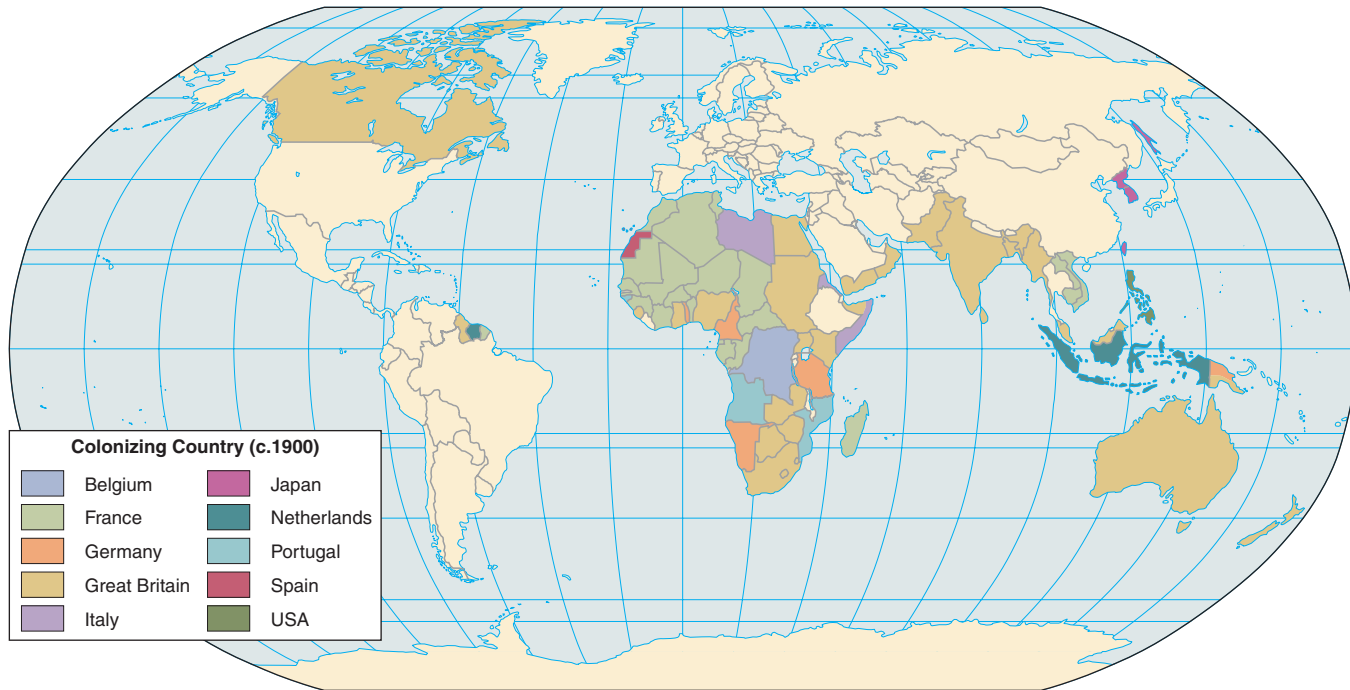


Figure 16.1

As the European powers and Japan expanded, much of the world fell under their colonial rule. The Americas were colonized in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but by 1900 most American nations had gained their independence. By 1900, the key areas under colonial rule were in Africa and Asia. Most of these nations gained their independence by the mid-1960s. Today, very few colonies remain, but many modern nations remain deeply affected by their colonial past.

French colonial practices as *rayonnement*, lighting the ways for others. In the colonies, as we will see in the next section, subjects were taught that they were colonized for their own good and that their societies would advance as a result.

Making Colonialism Pay Once colonies had been seized, they had to be administered and made profitable. Colonies were generally expected to pay their own way; that is, income from taxes should support the cost of colonial governments. However, in many cases, taxes received from the subject population did not cover the cost of colonial administration and the minimal infrastructure it provided. This imposed financial burdens on taxpayers in the colonizing country who had to make up the difference between colonial income and expenses. However, the costs of colonizing must be set against the enormous profits made by companies operating in colonized areas. Thus, the costs of colonizing were born (unequally) by the colonized people and taxpayers in the colonizing countries. Windfall profits

from colonialism went to shareholders of companies operating in the colonies.

Once they had seized control of an area, European administrators had to find ways to extract taxes and create the conditions in which their national corporations could make money. In many cases, that meant the systematic undermining of indigenous ways of life, as wage labor and transition to cash crops disrupted traditional economic patterns based on reciprocity and kin structures.

Sometimes colonial powers seized direct control of the political leadership, but more often colonialists ruled indirectly, through native leaders. Local elites not sympathetic to colonial rule were rapidly replaced by those who were. Where colonists could not easily identify ethnic groups or leaders, they often created new chiefly offices. Sometimes colonialists

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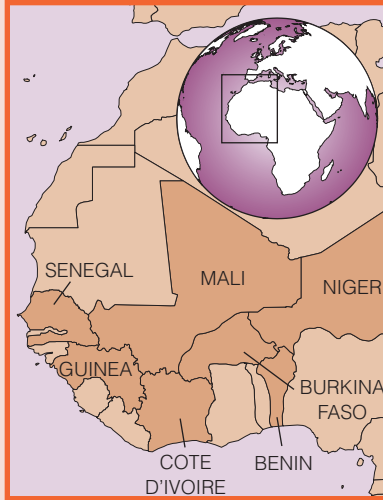


Ethnography

African Soldiers of Misfortune

Europeans saw in their colonies not only opportunities for the extraction of mineral and agricultural wealth, but also reservoirs of manpower. This was particularly true in Africa, which had traditionally served Europeans as a source of labor. Both the British and the French were quick to see the military potential of African labor, and both formed armies composed of Africans. The British unit was known as the King's African Rifles, and the French as the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* (Senegalese Riflemen). The French began using African military manpower in the eighteenth century, but the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* was officially created in 1857. Most of its soldiers were slaves, bought by the French for army service. Armed with French weaponry and led by French officers, their first task was the capture and control of colonies in sub-Saharan Africa.

The French completed their empire in Africa by the turn of the century, but the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* was not disbanded. Instead, powerful interests in France argued that Africans had an obligation to serve the French state and could revitalize its army. The first practical trial of this idea was in 1912, when Africans were used to quell a re-



bellion in Morocco, but the real test came in World War I. The practice of filling army ranks through the purchase of slaves had been abandoned in the late nineteenth century; by the time of World War I, men were drafted into military service. More than 135,000 African troops served for the French in the trenches of Europe in World War I, and almost 30,000 of these died there (Page 1987). The men who made their way back to Africa in 1918–1919, like many other veterans of World War I, had witnessed horrors incom-

prehensible to most of their countrymen. Like European and American soldiers suffering from “shell shock,” members of this group were often considered deranged.

Though manpower needs slackened after World War I, France continued to draft African men into the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*. Historian Myron Echenberg writes that French conscription in West Africa was “indeed a tax in sweat and blood” (1991:47). Between World War I and World War II, hundreds of thousands of Africans were conscripted into the army, and by 1939, on the eve of World War II, about 9 percent of the French army in France was composed of Africans. By the end of that war,

and missionaries forged entire new ethnic groups, lumping together people with different traditions and sometimes different languages (Harries 1987). Dozon (1985) has shown that the *Bété*, an ethnic group of central Ivory Coast in Africa, did not exist before the era of colonialism but was created by the actions of colonial and postcolonial governments.

One of the most direct ways that European governments tried to make their colonies profitable was by requiring **corvée labor**—unpaid work demanded of native populations. Until World War II, most colonial governments insisted on substantial labor from their subjects. The British often compelled subjects to work for up to a month per year;

the Dutch required two months. In 1926, the French enacted a law that permitted an annual draft of labor for their West African colonies. Conscripts were compelled to work for three years on bridge and road building, irrigation projects, and other public works. Mortality rates during the three years of forced labor were often very high and it was one of the most hated institutions of colonialism. Natives resisted colonial demands by concealing workers or by fleeing from authorities when such work was demanded.

In addition to public works, the British and French both drafted natives into their armed forces. They used these men to capture and con-

France had recruited (most often drafted) more than 200,000 Africans, and of these as many as 25,000 perished.

The role played by African troops was critical for France in World War II. Most people have heard of de Gaulle's Free French, but few realize that between the fall of France in 1940 and the summer of 1944, the majority of the members of the Free French Army were Africans. Even in late 1944, sub-Saharan Africans constituted as much as one-fifth of the total French army. For political reasons, both during and after the war, de Gaulle concealed the importance of African contributions to the war effort, but it is clear that events in France might have taken a very different course without African soldiers (Echenberg 1991:104). In addition, France's African possessions were also taxed heavily to provide food, cotton, latex (raw rubber), and other products for the war effort (Lawler 1992).

After the war, the returned soldiers occupied an important place in African society. Frequently veterans were respected by their peers because they understood modernity, foreigners, and in particular, the French (Lawler 1992:212). In addition, the sacrifices they had made, as well as the sacrifices of their countrymen, gave veterans a degree of moral suasion over the French colonialists. Veterans emerged as leaders, organizers, and agitators in the fight for African independence. The French, meanwhile, continued to enlist Africans in the

Tirailleurs Sénégalais and used them against natives fighting wars of independence in Indochina (Vietnam) and Algeria in the 1950s.

Most of the French colonies in Africa received their independence in the early 1960s. The years since then have not been kind to the veterans of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais. The military service that gave them moral power as subjects of France was something of an embarrassment after independence. Members of radical governments and younger people saw them as men who had wasted their time in the service of a discredited authority. They were considered promoters of colonialism rather than, more accurately, its victims. Today, the veterans of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais are all but forgotten. They are rapidly aging, and their struggles and trials seem irrelevant to the young. Most rarely talk about their experiences except with those who shared them. Veterans live throughout the former French possessions in Africa. More than 100 live in and around the town of Bougouni in Mali. In 1992 and 1995, Richard Warms, one of the authors of this text, was privileged to speak with many of them.

Soldiers who had served the equivalent of 15 years in the Tirailleurs Sénégalais were entitled to a small pension. Some veterans had been able to use this money to marry several wives and raise large families. These men often became prosperous and well-respected members of their community. Such veterans sometimes look back on their

(continued)

control their colonies, fight colonial wars, and augment their regular armies wherever needed. You can read more about these colonial soldiers in the "Ethnography" section of this chapter.

At the turn of the century, conditions were perhaps worst in the Congo, ruled between 1885 and 1908 as the personal property of King Leopold of Belgium. There, each native owed the government 40 hours a month in exchange for a token wage (Bodley 1999:116). Failures to work sufficiently or produce the proper quantities of goods (particularly rubber) were met with extreme measures. Leopold's subjects were held hostage, beaten, whipped, had hands cut off, and in many cases

were killed outright. Historian Adam Hochschild (1998) has estimated that by the time the Belgian government stripped Leopold of his control of Congo, between 4 million and 8 million Congolese had been killed or starved to death.

Particular projects might be done with forced labor, but to make a colony truly profitable, colonial masters had to encourage the population to work for them voluntarily or produce the goods they desired. Taxation was a key mechanism for accomplishing this. Taxation was needed to support the colonial

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Ethnography—continued

military careers with pride and some fondness. One said, “Well, [my military career was] the work of God. It’s the way God made it to be. . . . I had love for the army, and because of my love for the army, I was able to continue serving” (Warms 1996).

Most veterans, however, served only the required three years. They received no pension and, in some cases, were not even permitted to keep their uniforms. When they returned home, they often faced hostility or isolation. Fellow villagers couldn’t understand their experiences and often thought poorly of them because they had returned with nothing to show for their labors. For them, military service was something best forgotten. One said, “When you come back, you have to follow the ideas of the people in the village. If not, if you try to tell them all about the army and what you have seen, they are never going to understand you. You can explain things and there are those who will just say you are lying. You just let them alone, at least that’s the way I’ve gotten along” (Warms 1996).

Even those veterans who do receive pensions are given far less than French veterans and receive few services. Though they are proud of their accomplishments, they often feel like forgotten men, and many are profoundly disillusioned. In 1992, a 15-year pensioned veteran of World War II put it like this: “We gave our blood

and our bodies so that France could be liberated. But now, since they have their freedom, they have thrown us away, forgotten us. If you eat the meat, you throw away the bone. France has done just that to us” (Warms 1996).

Critical Thinking Questions

1. The Tirailleurs Sénégalais often fought for the French empire to keep rebelling subjects from gaining their political freedom. How, as oppressed people themselves, did they justify their participation in France’s colonial wars? How do you suppose the soldiers thought about their wars?
2. Whereas France is a wealthy country, Mali is extremely poor. Many veterans live in inadequate housing, with no access to safe drinking water or an adequate food supply. What obligations, if any, does France have to these men and their families?
3. Veterans who returned to their villages with no money were often poorly treated. The fact that, in many cases, they had seen much of the world did not necessarily make them respected. Why do you think that this was the case? Why weren’t veterans seen as a valuable source of information about the outside world?

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government, but its main purpose was to force native subjects into the market system. This participation in wage labor was viewed as the essential precondition for “civilizing” the natives. Taxes generally had to be paid in colonial money, which native subjects could obtain only by working for a colonist or producing something that the colonists wanted to buy. Taxation thus had a double effect in enmeshing the colonial subject in the market system. For example, farmers who spent time cultivating cotton to sell to a European company had less time to spend on their own crops. If they could not produce enough to eat, they had to buy it from the market, dominated by companies owned by colonialists. In this way, native subjects became increasingly dependent on the market.

Even when subject populations were not forced into labor gangs, economic and social policies of colonial regimes required them to radically alter their lifestyles. For example, Portuguese colonial policy in Mozambique forced almost a million peasants to grow cotton. The colonial government controlled not only what these growers produced, but where they lived, with whom they traded, and how they organized their labor. Although a few growers prospered, the great majority were impoverished and struggled to survive against famine and hardship (Isaacman 1996). By the 1960s, the brutality and terror used by the colonial regime to control their subjects resulted in a civil war that continued into the 1990s.

In addition to policies aimed at forcing subjects to participate in an economy centered in the industrial world, colonial governments took more direct aim at cultures through educational policies. Colonial education was often designed to convince subjects that they were the cultural, moral, and intellectual inferiors of those who ruled them. For example, education in nineteenth-century India encouraged children to aspire to be like the ideal Englishman (Viswanathan 1988). In French colonies in Africa, children were taught directly to obey their colonial masters, as illustrated in this passage from a turn-of-the-century reader designed to teach French to schoolchildren and used in the colonies:

It is . . . an advantage for a native to work for a white man, because the Whites are better educated, more advanced in civilization than the natives, and because, thanks to them, the natives will make more rapid progress . . . and become one day really useful men . . . You who are intelligent and industrious, my children, always help the Whites in their task (cited in Bodley 1999:104).

Education was often aimed at the children of elites. These children were taught that, although they might never reach the level of the colonists, they were considerably more advanced than their uneducated countrymen. In France’s African colonies, individuals who were educated and assimilated to French culture were known, both by the French and by themselves, as *evolues*, or evolved people. This increased the perception of the uneducated and unassimilated as backward and primitive. Thus, schooling both reinforced the colonizers’ position and created a subservient educated class convinced of its superiority (G. Kelly 1986).

Colonialism and Anthropology The origins and practice of modern anthropology are bound up with the colonial era. The evolutionary theories of nineteenth-century anthropologists pictured a world in which all societies were evolving toward the civilization already attained by Europeans. This convenient philosophy could be pressed into service as a rationale for colonization (Godelier 1993; Ghosh 1991). Some argued that because they were “civilized,” European nations had the right (or the obligation) to colonize. Through colonization, they claimed, other people could be hurried on the path to civilization.

In the first half of the twentieth century, colonial governments faced with the practical problems of governing their possessions often relied on information provided by anthropologists. Anthropologists, anxious to find funding for their research, argued that it had practical value to colonial administrators (Malinowski 1929a). However, anthropology did not come into being to promote or enable colonialism, which would have gone on with or without it (J. Burton 1992). Anthropologists did not generally question the political reality of colonialism, but they often self-consciously tried to advance the interests of the people they studied. Because of this, they were often looked at with mistrust by colonial officials. Prah (1990), for example, reports that although colonial officials in the Sudan used information provided by anthropologists to govern native groups in that colony, they were also deeply suspicious of them. Colonial officials generally believed that anthropologists were much too sympathetic to colonial subjects. Furthermore, as Goody (1995) points out, most anthropological research was financed not by governments but by private foundations, most of which had

reformist agendas. Some anthropologists financed their own research. The great French ethnographer Marcel Griaule, for example, put on a circus and promoted boxing matches to finance his ethnographic expeditions (Goody 1995:17).



Independence and Poverty

The eras of Western expansion and colonization radically and permanently changed the world. By the time of World War II, there were no “pristine” groups anywhere in the world. All peoples had been affected by Western expansion, and their cultures had been altered by this experience. Some, attempting to resist foreign influences and protect their ways of life, had moved as far away from outsiders as possible. However, most lived in societies where the presence and influence of outsiders, their demands for goods and labor, and their attempts to change culture were fundamental facts of life.

Most of the nations of the Americas gained their independence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Africa and Asia, independence from European colonialism was not achieved until after World War II. Many nations that were part of the Soviet Union only received their independence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There were as many reasons for the granting of independence as there were for exploration and colonialism, but two were of particular importance. First, civil disobedience, and in some cases civil war, made the colonies ungovernable. The purpose of a colony was to make money, but suppressing rebellion was expensive. The resistance of colonial subjects ultimately made continued colonization too expensive for the colonial powers. Second, the geopolitical situation was fundamentally altered by World War II. Before the war, Britain and France, the two largest colonial powers, were also extremely important economic and military powers. The war left their economies devastated. Political and economic problems at home became their first priority. Suppressing revolt abroad was, in most cases, unpopular at home.

After the war, the United States and the Soviet Union (and a bit later, China) emerged as the world’s dominant powers. These nations were rapidly embroiled in the Cold War. Despite their many differences, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was a major colonial power in Africa or Asia, and both promoted an end to colonialism.

The end of colonial rule brought numerous challenges to the newly independent nations. They were beset by issues of poverty, the presence of multinational corporations, urbanization, population growth, war, and instability. A few nations, such as Singapore (formerly a British colony) and Korea (a Japanese colony from 1905 to 1945), have done extremely well. In 1981 almost 64 percent of Chinese were living on less than \$1 a day. By 2001, that number had dropped to 16.6 percent, and today it’s believed to be close to 8 percent (in constant dollars). Despite these successes, the vast majority of the world’s nations remain extremely poor.

Economists often measure national wealth in **per capita gross national product (GNP)**. The GNP of a country is the total value of all the production of that country. It provides a very rough estimate of national prosperity. GNP can be evaluated using a method called Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), which takes account of the prices of goods and services in different countries (for example, basic foodstuffs can be relatively expensive in wealthy nations but quite cheap in poor nations). In 2004, the GNP per capita in the United States, adjusted for purchasing power, was \$39,710. Only in Luxembourg was GNP per capita greater. In that same year, 84 of the 208 nations listed by the **World Bank** had per capita GNPs of less than \$5,000. For 55 of these, the figure was less than \$2,500. Worse yet, many nations have grown steadily poorer. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the number of people living on less than a dollar a day has grown steadily. In 1981, it was about 164 million people but by 2001 it had risen to 313 million. Substantial rises in extreme poverty were also recorded in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (primarily in nations formerly part of the Soviet Union) and in Latin American and the Caribbean. In all, in 2001, about one fifth of the world’s population, more than a billion people, were living on less than \$1 a day. A bit more than half of the world’s population was living on \$2 a day or less (World Bank 2005 World Development Indicators).

No culture has been left unchanged by the events of the last 150 years. However, the burden has fallen with particular force on the world’s traditional peoples, most of whom live in the poor nations. Cultures have had to adjust to extraordinary circumstances. In the face of economic and political change, some have simply disappeared. Many others have managed to adapt, preserve many of their ways of life, and maintain a degree of integrity. New identities have been forged as people

and cultures respond to change. Some of the most important forces behind these changes are the idea of modernization and economic development, the influence of multinational corporations, the movement from rural to urban lifestyles, the explosive growth of population, and high levels of political instability. We will examine each of these in turn.

Development

The end of colonialism did not mean the end of forced cultural change or foreign intervention. If anything, the pace of cultural contact and change increased when nations became independent. In some cases, even the number of foreign nationals living in newly independent nations increased. For example, after Côte d'Ivoire, in West Africa, gained its independence from France in 1960, ties between the two countries grew stronger. In the 20 years following independence, the total French population there grew from 30,000 to 60,000 (Handloff 1991:170).

There were, however, critical differences between being a colony and being a newly independent nation. Before independence, economic plans generally concentrated on how to make colonies most productive for the nations that controlled them; after independence, the notion of economic **development** became ascendant. The idea championed by economists and development experts from industrialized nations was that former colonies were poor because they had underdeveloped, backward economies, but if they pursued the proper political and economic policies, they could become developed like the Western industrialized world. In order to develop, nations and cultures had to transform their traditional practices.

Development served the interests of both the industrialized nations and the elites in the former colonies. Industrialized nations promoted development to spread their economic and political influence. This was particularly important during the Cold War, when both Eastern and Western blocs used development aid to spread their ideology and advance their economic systems in the nonindustrialized world. In the former colonies, elites and government officials benefited from the prestige associated with development projects; because donated money generally passed through their hands, they gained economic advantages as well. Money from development aid supported an elite lifestyle and opened many possibilities for political patron-

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age, not to mention bribery, graft, and other forms of corruption.

In the West, the most popular ideology of development has been **modernization theory**. Modernization

per capita GNP The total market value of all goods and services produced in a country in a year divided by the population of that country; often used as a general measure of the wealth of a nation and the quality of life of its citizens.

World Bank Officially called the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, an international agency that provides technical assistance and loans to promote international trade and economic development, especially to poor nations. The World Bank has been heavily criticized for interfering in the affairs of these nations.

development The notion that some countries are poor because they have small industrial plants and few lines of communication and that they should pursue wealth by acquiring these things.

modernization theory A model of development that predicts that nonindustrial societies will move in the social and technological direction of industrialized nations.



Anthropology Makes a Difference

Development Anthropology and the Anthropology of Development

In the second half of the twentieth century, wealthy nations and newly independent poor nations turned their attention to the eradication of poverty. Early efforts concentrated on large-scale projects that focused on infrastructure: the building of roads, dams, and power plants. However, by the 1970s, it was clear that such construction projects were having little effect on the deeply entrenched problems of poverty. In response, major development organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations turned their focus to projects aimed more directly at improving the welfare of the poor, particularly in rural areas.

This change of focus made anthropology more central to the enterprise and drew many anthropologists to work for governmental and non-governmental aid organizations. This gave birth to a new specialty: development anthropology. Development anthropologists are trained to act as culture brokers—intermediaries between development organizations and the recipients of aid. With their specialized knowledge and ability to provide cogent analysis and assessment, they hope to make development projects work and directly benefit the world's impoverished people.

Two good examples of development anthropology are Gerald R. Murray's work on defor-

estation in Haiti and Margaret Clarke's work with midwives in Kenya, Egypt, Turkey, and other places. Murray used his knowledge of Haitian peasant agriculture to design successful forestry projects that treated fast growing trees as a cash crop. His efforts resulted in projects that led to greater prosperity for the villages in which he worked (Murray 1986). Clark designed instructional materials for midwives and training materials for Peace Corps volunteers; she also examined household economics in Greece, worked in strategic planning for the U.S. Agency for International Development, and worked on education programs in Egypt.

Clarke says that anthropology makes a major contribution to international development. Because anthropologists take a holistic approach, they tend to look for links between different facets of society that others may miss. They think in terms of understanding the entire system rather than single elements. Whereas economists and development planners often assume that all people think alike and respond to the same incentives, anthropologists use their skills in listening and observing to understand local people's perceptions of the world and to access their knowledge (Clarke 2000).

models describe a modern/traditional dichotomy in which non-Western societies move from tradition to modernity. Modernity is defined as the technological and sociocultural systems of industrialized nations. The notion of modernization was used, by anthropologists and others, both as a description of reality and as a prescription for what should happen in order for economic development to take place. Early modernization plans were based on the notion that poor nations would become wealthy and developed by repeating the historical experience of the industrialized nations. Perhaps the most famous example of this was W. W. Rostow's 1960 book *The Stages of Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Based on his analysis of European and American history, Rostow divided economic development into five periods: traditional society, the preconditions for takeoff, take-

off, the drive to maturity, and finally, the age of high mass consumption.

Rostow, and the governments and aid agencies influenced by his theory, sought to promote policies that would move poor nations from traditional societies to the age of high mass consumption. To this end, foreign advice and financial aid were designed to alter the structural, cultural, and psychological features that stood in the way of modernization. For example, because most traditional societies are agrarian, modernization models envisioned a change from using "simple" traditional technology and intensive human and animal labor to using machine technology. Economically, modernization assumes a shift from subsistence economies to cash economies. Indigenous peoples would move into the world market by increasing their output.

However, development anthropology has also been controversial. In the past two decades a field we might call the anthropology of development has emerged. Specialists in the anthropology of development do not understand development as either inevitable or inevitably desirable. Instead they take a perspective derived from postmodern thought and examine the historical, political, and economic grounds on which the ideas and practices of development emerged (Escobar 1997). Such anthropologists argue that in order to do development anthropology, people must buy into the basic ideas and practices of the governments and other agencies behind development programs. In most cases, either by design or practice, this results in projects that reinforce and validate the structures of inequality that create poverty in the first place. They call for a new model that validates local forms of knowledge and empowers the oppressed (see Crush 1995). Development anthropologists often respond that this is romantic and does little to help the immediate problems of people who are poor and often hungry. There may, however, be a middle ground. Anthropologists such as June Nash and Stacy Pigg do work that is historically and politically informed as well as practical. Nash has focused on the political,

ethnic, and economic problems of Chiapas in Mexico (1997). Pigg works on understanding international and local concepts of disease in Nepal and the implications this has for the training of health care workers (2001).



Regardless of whether you favor development anthropology or the anthropology of development, many informative websites provide information about the subject. Large governmental development organizations, such as the World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org>), the United States Agency for International Development (<http://www.usaid.gov>), and the United Nations (<http://www.un.org>) contain an enormous wealth of information. Volunteer opportunities abound on the Web. The Peace Corps (<http://www.peacecorps.gov>) maintains an extensive and highly informative website, including information on volunteering as well as stories from former volunteers. Other volunteer associations with interesting websites are WorldTeach (<http://www.worldteach.org>) and Global Citizens Network (<http://www.globalcitizens.org>).

vation of cash crops and moving from agriculture into industrial wage labor. Both of these shifts were presumed to result in economic development and higher standards of living.

Unfortunately, the record of policies based on Rostow's model has been dismal. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s not only did nations fail to develop, in a great many cases they got poorer. There were many reasons for this failure, but surely a critical one was a problem with the theory itself. Rostow and his followers envisioned the poor nations of the world becoming wealthy by following the same trajectory as the then-wealthy nations. They tended to assume that the societies they wished to develop were traditional and timeless. They ignored the fact that the societies they considered traditional were in many cases creations of colo-

rialism and European expansion. Nations had become wealthy through the oft-times brutal exploitation of the nations that became poor. It was impossible for undeveloped nations to repeat the historic experiences of the industrialized world. After all, the very existence and exploitation of these areas had been a fundamental part of the rise of industrialism.

The failure of development projects in the 1960s and 1970s led to the emergence of new ideas. These included the basic human needs approach of the 1970s and 1980s and the structural readjustment and free trade approaches that have prevailed from the late 1980s to the current day. In addition there have been innumerable grass-roots efforts at fostering development. There have been so many that it is difficult to list them. For example, the Granden

Bank, a grassroots organization offering small loans to poor women, has reached more than a million families around the world and has been effective in raising the standard of living among some of the world's poorest people. However, overall the record of development projects around the world has been poor. After World War II, development planners believed they could eliminate world poverty in half a century. Now, more than 60 years later, we do not seem much closer to that goal.

There were many reasons for failure. Development projects were often poorly designed. Sometimes they were based on technologies that did not work well. Often they had deleterious effects on both environment and culture. Frequently, large sums of money were lost to graft and other forms of corruption.

For example, Ostergaard (1990) reports that in lowland Sumatra (Indonesia), the introduction of improved rice varieties actually resulted in diminished yields compared to traditional varieties. The technologies that worked well in the lab failed under the political, economic, and ecological conditions of the field. Stonich, Murray, and Rossart (1994) note that aid projects helped to increase the export of shrimp in Honduras by more than 1500 percent, but the price of this growth was pollution, environmental destruction, and the impoverishment of people who lived near the shrimp farms. It's very difficult to gauge the cost of corruption but some numbers from the World Bank indicate the size of the problem. The World Bank estimates that the total worldwide cost of bribery alone is about \$1 trillion a year. Since 1999 it has investigated more than 2,500 cases of corruption involving its own funds (World Bank 2005).

Despite their difficulties, aid projects are a seemingly permanent part of life in the poor nations. In 1948 the United Nations proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25 of that declaration reads in part: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services . . ." Few would disagree with this statement but now, more than half a century later, we have not come close to fulfilling these goals. We may debate what form development projects should take, who should organize and run them, who the target audiences should be, as well as many other aspects of the development process.

However, we should be committed to raising the standard of living and lessening the burden of poverty around the world. Development projects, in some form, are a critical component of this process. There have been some successes. In the poor nations, life expectancy has increased 20 percent and literacy 25 percent in the past generation. Children are only half as likely to die before the age of 5 as they were a generation ago.

Anthropologists play increasingly important roles in the planning of development. The World Bank hired its first full-time anthropologist in 1974; today its staff includes 50 to 60 anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists who make important contributions in the design of development projects and their increased success rate. Anthropologists have demonstrated that development can be more successful when it gives a prominent place to issues of culture and social organization. Anthropological input has been especially critical to the success of resettlement programs (particularly on the Senegal River in West Africa) and to the formulation of policy on issues such as urban growth, primary education, forestry, and the use of water resources (Cernea 1995).

Multinational Corporations

The power of multinational corporations is another important factor in cultural change. Because such corporations control vast amounts of wealth, they play major roles in politics throughout the world. However, two factors make their presence in poor nations particularly important. First, despite their wealth, no corporation controls more than a small percentage of the economy of any of the rich nations. However, in poor nations, individual multinationals may have yearly budgets that are greater than that of the national government and may control large portions of the national economy. Thus, although large corporations are politically powerful everywhere, they are most powerful in poor nations. Second, **multinational corporations** try to ensure that their operations around the world contribute wealth to their shareholders, the vast majority of whom live in the world's wealthiest nations. Thus, the profits made by manufacturing and selling in poor nations are earned and, for the most part, spent in the wealthy nations. This continues the conversion of non-Western societies into economic colonies by the hands of outsiders that began

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with the expansion of Europe and has continued into the current era.

Multinational corporations use modern technology to move goods and information around the globe at high speed. As a result, they are able to seek out and move to the least expensive places to produce goods and services as well as the most profitable places to sell them. Multinational corporations bring employment opportunities as well as goods and services to people who would not otherwise have them. However, such advantages often carry a very high price. Multinationals have a powerful influence on the natural, economic, and social environments as they attempt to exploit natural resources for profit. They cause worldwide shifts in population as economic opportunities open up in some societies and decline in others, and are implicated in the transformation of agricultural populations into wage labor on a huge scale.

Because much of the cheap labor multinational corporations depend on for their profits is provided by women and children, there is a clear link between feminist concerns in anthropology and the extension of the global economy. The operations of multi-

national corporations affect land rights in many countries as national governments, including the United States, attempt to persuade or coerce indigenous populations to give up their land to make it available for the economic investments that only multinational corporations can afford.

Multinational corporations may also create major flows of labor; the Mexican **maquiladora** program is a good example. Maquiladoras are plants owned by multinational corporations and located in Mexico to take advantage of inexpensive labor there. Most are assembly plants that import almost all of their supplies. In theory, maquiladoras can be located anywhere in Mexico, but almost all are within a few miles of the U.S. border. The promise of jobs in maquiladoras has drawn millions of Mexicans to the border, and the growth rate of Mexican border cities is almost double that of the rest of the nation (E. Williams 1995). On the border, many live in shantytowns without running water or sewage facilities. Pollution, disease, and social strife have become common in these areas (La Botz 1994). Conditions in Juarez, for example, near El Paso, Texas are particularly bad. In 1996, Juarez still had no water treatment facility, and the city's 350 factories dumped 55 million gallons of raw sewage into the Rio Grande daily. Air quality was so poor that 75 percent of days during a recent 11-month period had unhealthy ozone levels. However, multinational corporations have benefited greatly from access to cheap labor. For example, the AFL-CIO (1995) reported that the CEO of Allied Signal made \$12.4 million in 1995, whereas the company's 3800 Mexican employees combined made an estimated \$7.8 million.

Sweatshops are factories where workers are employed for long hours under difficult conditions and at low pay. Much of South and East Asia might be considered a sweatshop belt. This includes the nations of China, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Bangladesh. Kristoff and WuDunn (2000) estimate that this area accounts for about

multinational corporation A corporation that owns business enterprises or plants in more than one nation.

maquiladora A manufacturing plant, owned by an international company, located in Mexico to take advantage of inexpensive labor there.

sweatshop Generally a pejorative term for a factory with working conditions that may include low wages, long hours, inadequate ventilation, and physical, mental, or sexual abuse.



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Global Perspective

Just Doing It: Nike and Sweatshop Labor

The 1990s campaign against labor abuses by Nike in its factories around the world is an important example of a campaign against sweatshop labor in the global marketplace. It shows that such campaigns can have significant successes but also shows their limits.

Nike was founded in 1964 as Blue Ribbon Sports and by the 1980s had become the world leader in sports shoes. In fiscal year 2003, it reported revenues of \$10.7 billion. By comparison, 96 of the 232 nations listed by the CIA World Factbook had GDPs less than that. From its founding through the early 1980s, Nike, based in Oregon, did most of its manufacturing in New England. However, by the late 1970s it had begun shifting its manufacturing off shore and by the mid-1980s no longer had any manufacturing plants of its own. Instead, it contracted with other companies to make shoes under the Nike brand. Today, it uses manufacturing facilities in more than 50 countries (Nike 2005).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a series of political reforms in countries where Nike operated, particularly Indonesia and China, allowed workers a degree of freedom to speak about their working conditions. Dire reports from these workers led to a series of investigations by academic, labor, reli-

gious, and human rights organizations from a variety of countries. Although the accuracy and methodology of these reports varied, a grim picture of Nike's employment practices began to emerge. More than 75 percent of Nike workers were women who put in 10- to 13-hour days six days a week. They were forced to work overtime several times a week. Their wages ranged from \$1.60 to \$2.20 a day, less than the subsistence level for a single adult. In some cases they were subject to harsh corporal punishment, which included having their mouths taped shut for disobedience (Sage 1999:209).

As these reports were published by the international press, opposition to Nike's practices began to build in the United States and Europe. Nike's public statements as well as interviews with its CEO Phillip Knight deepened the company's problems. Nike responded by blaming its subcontractors and denying it had any direct role in the oppression of workers. These reactions showed the company as naïve or willfully ignorant and callous. The result was the formation of a loose coalition of agencies referred to as the Anti-Nike Transnational Advocacy Network. This comprised a group of organizations in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand that shared information and co-

one quarter of the global economy. Much of the production of sweatshops is funneled into the United States in the form of cheap consumer goods. For example, in 2004 clothing manufacturer The Gap reported on its labor practices. The Gap uses more than 3000 factories in 50 nations to make the clothing sold at The Gap, Old Navy, and Banana Republic stores. Their study found that between 10 percent and 25 percent of its factories in China, Taiwan, and Saipan use psychological coercion or verbal abuse, and more than 50 percent of the factories in sub-Saharan Africa had inadequate safety practices (Merrick 2004).

Sweatshops are at the center of a lively debate and present a complex challenge for consumers in wealthy nations and anthropologists alike. Some economists champion sweatshops. They point out

that, in general, people are not forced to work in sweatshops. Rather, they choose such employment because, as bad as many of these jobs are, the alternatives facing factory workers are worse. Many workers are drawn from the ranks of the landless poor. The money they earn, however small, often marks the difference between food and a roof over one's head and hunger on the streets. Further, over time both conditions and wages tend to improve. Finally, many actions taken against sweatshops tend to backfire, causing drops in sales, throwing people out of work, and harming the very workers they are designed to help (Bhagwati 2002; Maskus 1997; Brown et. al 2003).

Many others favor taking action against sweatshops. They argue that labor costs and conditions are only a small portion of manufacturers' deci-

ordinated efforts to monitor working conditions at Nike factories and pressure the company to change its policies (Sage 1999; Rothenberg-Aalami 2004). These organizations funneled information to the media to keep Nike's business practices in the public eye. They organized three Nike International Mobilization days in 1997, 1998, and 1999. Each mobilization day included protests in multiple cities and nations. They organized protests at the opening of Nike stores and at shopping malls. They lobbied U.S. congressional representatives and senators to protest Nike's practices. Anthropologist Robert Hackenberg (2000) reports that university students and campus organizations played a major role in this mobilization effort.

In the early 1990s, Nike met these protests with propaganda of its own. It developed a code of conduct and produced a film to rebut reporting by news agencies, but these efforts neither improved workers lives nor stemmed the protest. By the late 1990s, as protests mounted, Nike began to make moves toward real reform. It increased the minimum age for workers, adopted some U.S. occupational safety standards, offered its employees expanded educational and loan programs, and began to implement an effective monitoring program. The company's current annual report

includes more than 30 pages of information on monitoring the conditions of workers in its factories. Though many problems remain, the company has made significant strides toward eliminating the worst of the abuses.

The Nike campaign shows that a well-orchestrated grassroots campaign can help to improve conditions for low-wage workers around the world. However, it also suggests some of the limits of such a campaign. The Anti-Nike Transnational Advocacy Network had some success because Nike was extremely vulnerable to its tactics. The market for athletic footwear is highly competitive and there are many companies that offer alternatives to Nike. Perhaps what's even more important, what Nike truly advertises and sells is its image. Nike commercials focus not on the quality of its product but on the feelings and associations it is supposed to inspire. The campaign against Nike dealt a severe blow to that image, substituting oppressed workers for sports heroes and personal accomplishment. Other companies are far less vulnerable. Their industries may be less competitive and they may be far less concerned with their public image.

sions about where to produce goods. Further, applying global standards for labor conditions would assure that companies cannot escape their obligations to workers by moving from one country to another. They point out that America and other wealthy nations did rely heavily on sweatshops in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and these did lead to increased wealth, but it took strong government intervention to improve factory conditions, limit child labor, and impose minimum wages. Today's poor nations are often discouraged from taking the actions that enabled wealthy nations to restrict sweatshop labor and create a strong middle-class (Rothstein 2005).

As the accompanying Global Perspective box on Nike and sweatshops shows, action against sweatshops can sometimes be effective. Publicizing exces-

sively harsh labor practices may bring pressure on companies to insist on better conditions for their workers. Bringing pressure on governments to enforce laws that protect workers from abuse can help to end some of the worst labor practices. Raising the level of education and training of workers can make it more difficult for employers to shift locations. Development policies that raise the standard of living for everyone will also raise wages for workers.

It is important to point out that sweatshop labor is not entirely a poor nation problem. One study found hundreds of sweatshop garment factories in New York City (Port 2001) and *USA Today* reported in 2005 that about 175,000 people, most of them immigrant women, work in sweatshop conditions in the United States (Malvey 2005). In many cases, the workers are victims of labor law violations.

Some of them are held against their will, victims of human trafficking as well.

The activities of multinational corporations raise important questions about the rights of different people to a share of the benefits that accompany their economic activities (Bonsignore 1992), as well as questions about how the social, cultural, and health costs of their operations should be borne. These questions become particularly urgent in the face of major disasters such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill of March 24, 1989, when an oil tanker ran aground and spilled more than 10 million gallons of crude oil in Prince William Sound in Alaska, and the accidental release of a lethal gas in December 1984 in Bhopal, India, in which at least 1700 people were killed and as many as 50,000 were injured.

Urbanization

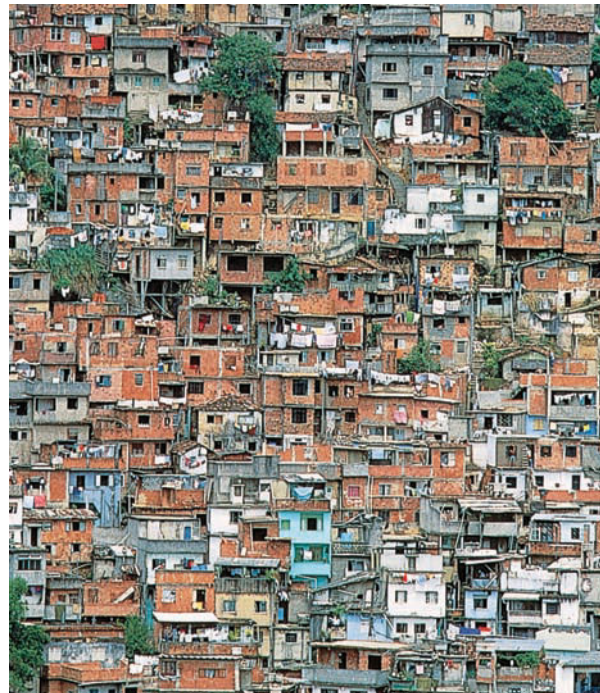
Although cities had important cultural roles in preindustrial societies, urban migration has in-

creased dramatically in the contemporary world. In 1950, only about 16 percent of the total population of nonindustrialized nations lived in large cities. By 1980, this figure had increased to 30 percent; in 2000 it was 40 percent; and it is projected that, by 2020, 50 percent of the population of nonindustrialized nations will live in large cities (UN 2003). Although the percentage of people living in cities is rising in most countries, it is rising much more rapidly in poor than in wealthy nations. The World Bank reports that between 1970 and 1997, the percentage of population living in the cities in high-income nations increased by about 5 percent; in low-income nations, it increased by 47 percent (World Bank 2000:30).

In 1990, 12 of the world's 20 most populous cities were in poor nations (including China and Korea). More than 40 percent of the population in Korea, Argentina, and Colombia lived in cities of more than 1 million inhabitants, compared with 39 percent for the United Kingdom, 34 percent for



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More than half of the world's largest cities are in poor nations. These pictures of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, show the enormous contrasts present in such cities. While Rio de Janeiro has an extremely prosperous elite, most of its residents live in abject poverty. Modern office and apartment buildings, as well as luxury resorts (left), exist alongside shanty towns with only minimal access to safe drinking water or sanitation.

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Germany, and 22 percent for France (Angotti 1993). By 2015, eight of the world's ten largest cities are expected to be in poor nations. The average population of these cities will be more than 20 million inhabitants (Population Reference Bureau 2005). Providing basic services to such large populations in places such as Lagos, Bombay, and Karachi will be a strikingly difficult problem.

Much of the growth of the cities is the result of migration from rural areas (Todaro and Smith 2003). Rural people come to cities seeking jobs and the social, material, and cultural advantages they perceive to be related to urban living. They are forced out of rural areas by high population levels, inability to acquire land, environmental degradation, and sometimes violence. In many places, development policies in the 1960s and 1970s encouraged people to leave the countryside (which development experts considered unproductive) for the city. Once they have arrived in the city, they often find dismal living conditions. In places such as Bogota, Casablanca, Cairo, Calcutta, and Caracas, more than half of the urban population lives in slums and squatter settlements (Todaro and Smith 2003).

Urbanization affects traditional societies in many different ways. Graves and Graves (1974) characterized the adaptations of traditional societies to urbanization as a three-ring circus, referring to the three arenas within which adaptation to urbanization takes place: among members of the home community left behind, among the urban migrants themselves, and within the urban host community to which the migrants go.

Many migrants who leave their local communities do so only temporarily. They return to participate in a variety of economic or social activities and maintain important ties with those left behind. The degree to which urban migration is permanent depends on the personal involvements of the migrating person, on the ability of the local community to reabsorb its returning migrants, and on the barriers to assimilation the migrant group meets in the urban area.

Whether temporary or permanent, urban migration is both a direct and an indirect source of change in traditional societies. Not only are urban migrants changed in the process of adapting to urban life, but the communities of origin are also changed. Most modern influences enter the countryside through urban centers, either by mass com-

munication or through the links between urban migrants and those who remain at home. New ideas and values, as well as consumer goods, may be passed on to villagers through urban migrants.

Urban life can be extremely difficult. Many of the urban poor are unemployed and face hunger, unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation facilities, and substandard shelter. Disease and early death are rampant in the slums of the world's large cities. Many of those who are employed fare little better, and most migrants to cities live in poverty for many years. In one study, researchers used a storytelling technique to evaluate three groups of Kenyan women: rural women in a traditional village, poor urban women, and middle-class urban women. The researchers showed each woman a picture and asked her to tell a story about it. The stories provided information on the ways that the women perceived their lives. The researchers found that the traditional women almost always told very positive stories that usually had a happy ending. Middle-class urban women told stories that emphasized their own power and competence. Poor urban women's stories were generally tragic and focused on powerlessness and vulnerability. The researchers note that many poor urban women have "lost the security and protection of the old [traditional] system without gaining the power or rewards of the new system" (Friedman and Todd 1994).

With urbanization, a great variety of social groups based on voluntary membership develop. These **voluntary associations** are adaptive in helping people to achieve their goals in complex and changing societies. They are especially helpful for migrants making the transition from traditional, rural society to an urban lifestyle. Although not all voluntary associations formed in newly urbanized societies have goals that are directly economic or political, these associations often serve as vehicles through which such goals can be achieved.

Voluntary associations that emerge among newly urbanized populations may serve as mutual aid societies, lending money to members, providing scholarships for students, arranging funerals, and taking care of marriage arrangements for urban

voluntary association A social group based on voluntary membership, typically found in complex, urban societies.

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migrants. Some develop along kinship or ethnic lines that were relevant in the traditional culture; others, such as labor unions, are based on relationships deriving from new economic contexts and have no parallel in traditional rural society.

Population Pressure

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the increase in world population is a powerful indicator of the accelerated speed of change in the modern world. It is also a critical problem for poor nations and traditional peoples (Figure 16.2). In the past several decades, most of the economic gains made by poor countries have been consumed by the increasing size of their populations. In some cases, high population levels mean that traditional subsistence strategies can no longer provide enough food. In other cases, the population explosion and the search for land and wealth have pushed people onto land previously occupied only by indigenous groups. For example, the lands occupied by the Yanomamo in Brazil are increasingly threatened by land-poor peasants and gold miners moving in from densely populated areas of eastern Brazil (Gorman 1991).

Traditional economic strategies may not be able to support extremely high levels of population growth. In parts of East Africa, the amount of arable land per person declined 40 percent between 1965 and 1987 (World Bank 1992), and this has resulted in important cultural changes. Among the Waluguru in the Uluguru Mountains of Tanzania,

for example, population increase has made it impossible for people to be self-sufficient in food (van Donge 1992). This is a recent phenomenon; in the 1950s, self-sufficiency was the rule. Solidarity and authority were powerfully structured within the area, and the economy was based on high levels of cooperation. People gained access to land through their lineage; therefore, the lineage head was a powerful figure. Today, not only has the institution of the lineage head completely disappeared, but it is hardly even remembered. Van Donge reports that people have few interactions involving economic cooperation, solidarity, or authority. Instead, as land has become scarce, women in this matrilineal society have tightened their hold over it. This has weakened the position of men in marriages to the point where many prefer to migrate to the cities to marry. More than 37 percent of women over 20 are now unmarried, compared with 15 percent of men.

Programs to control population growth are often extremely controversial. In many cultural groups, a woman's value is measured to some degree by the number of children she bears. In addition, religious authorities often take active stands against the use of birth control. Furthermore, intellectuals and governments in many poor nations are deeply suspicious of population control programs coming from the wealthy nations. They note that the economies of wealthy nations have often prospered in times of population growth; the period 1945–1965, for example, was a time of great population growth and great prosperity in the United States. They suspect

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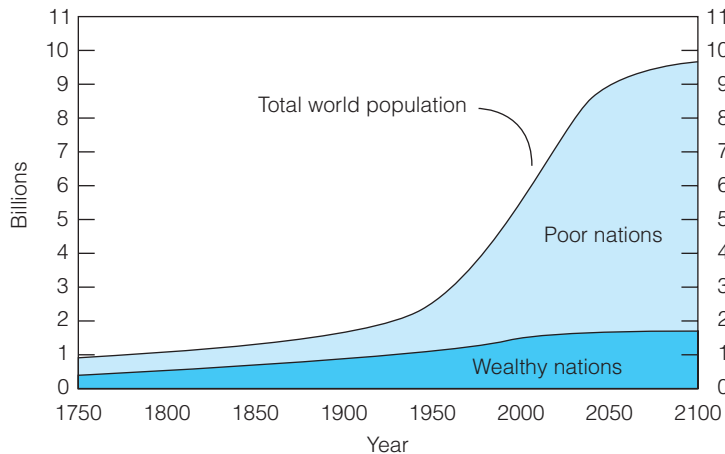
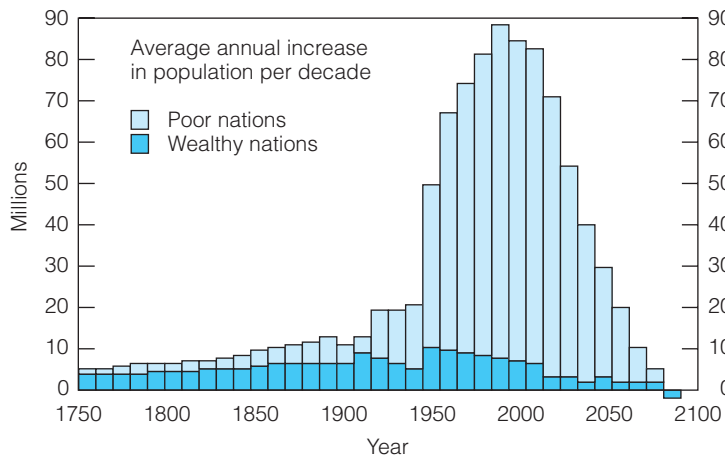


Figure 16.2

If current trends continue, world population will increase to about 10 billion by the middle of the twenty-first century before leveling off. The great majority of this increase will come in the poor nations.



that the wealthy nations are promoting their own interests when they attempt to limit population in other countries. Sometimes, they accuse the promoters of population control programs of racist intentions, noting that such programs usually consist of efforts by wealthy white people to limit the population growth of poor nonwhite people (Lichtenberg 1994).

Behind these accusations lies a central issue. Population growth is only part of a larger problem of distribution of resources. The poor nations of the world have high levels of population growth but still consume small portions of many of the world's resources. For example, the United States has a population growth rate of only 1 percent, but each American consumes 860 kilograms of grain a year (most of this is grain fed to animals, which are then eaten). Tanzania has a population growth rate more than three times as high, but each Tanzanian consumes only 145 kilograms of

grain a year (World Bank 1995; Postel 1994). If our concern is the ability of the world to support us, we had best look to our own consumption rather than the population growth of the poor. Furthermore, a major factor behind high population growth is the search for security. In conditions of poverty and economic uncertainty, having large numbers of children improves the odds that some will prosper and increase the family wealth. Improving the life chances of people in poor countries may ultimately prove to be one of the keys to controlling population growth.

Instability

The political instability of many nations has had dire consequences for cultures worldwide. Violent confrontation is nothing new. Traditional societies often fought with one another, and Western expansion was accompanied by a great loss of life and culture.



Violence and disaster often seem overwhelming. In 1994, in Rwanda, in a matter of weeks, over 800,000 Tutsis and their Hutu friends and supporters were slaughtered by Hutu troops and citizens acting with encouragement from the government. This photograph shows a memorial at the Ntarama church, south of the capital, Kigali, where up to 5,000 people were murdered in the church where they sought refuge.

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However, the past hundred years must be considered the most violent in human history. It is safe to say that in this time, people unleashed more brutality on other human beings than at any other time in human history. Furthermore, the industrialized and wealthy societies are primarily responsible for this savagery. It was they who created the trenches of World War I, the death camps of World War II, nuclear weapons, the purge, and the Gulag.

The nonindustrial world was deeply affected by Europe's wars. For example, about 50,000 Africans died in the East African campaigns of World War I (Page 1987), and enormous loss of life occurred during the Solomon Island campaigns of World War II. However, the era since World War II has been most devastating in many places. In some, such as French Indochina (later Vietnam), World War II faded into wars of independence that did not end until the 1970s. Other countries, such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Mozambique, were caught between the great powers in the Cold War and fought proxy wars. During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union furnished guerrilla movements, impoverished governments, and rebel armies with vast amounts of weaponry. Throughout the world, traditional people became involved in networks of warfare that connected them with competition between the great powers.

The foraging peoples of southern Africa are a good example. Most anthropology students are familiar with the !Kung, or Ju/'hoansi. They are well studied and often used as an example of a foraging

society. However, students may be unaware that many Ju/'hoansi, along with other southern African foraging people, eventually became soldiers in the South African Army. Through the 1970s and 1980s, South Africa fought a long war against the Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO), a guerrilla organization fighting for the independence of Namibia. South Africa had the support of the United States and other capitalist nations; SWAPO was supported by the Soviet Union. In 1974, the South African Defense Forces (SADF) began to recruit foraging peoples to act as trackers in their war; by 1981, Omega, the SADF base at Caprivi, included 850 soldiers, 900 women, and 1500 children. By this time, virtually the entire foraging population of the Caprivi was supported directly or indirectly by the military. The military plans for these people were based on the assumption that they should become as much like whites as possible. They were trained in the religion of the Dutch Reformed Church, agriculture, hygiene, sewing, and baking. In 1990, a few days before Namibia became independent, almost 4000 of them were resettled in South Africa by the SADF (Gordon 1992:185-192). It is clear that little remains of the hunting-and-gathering lifestyles documented by anthropologists in the 1950s and 1960s.

The end of the Cold War brought some relief to the nonindustrialized nations. In some cases, wars that were fueled by great power rivalries, such as those in Mozambique, Namibia, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, came to a rapid end. In other cases, however,

external threats or enormous flows of wealth began to battle each other. Traditional hatreds that had been muted by the Cold War reemerged in new violent forms. Yugoslavia, Somalia, Liberia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone are all examples of nations that fell apart as rival ethnic groups fought for control.

One particularly violent example is the 1994 destruction and genocide in Rwanda. Most Rwandans are members of one of two ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi. Although Hutu and Tutsi speak the same language, the Hutu majority are farmers and the Tutsi are herders. Rivalry between Hutu and Tutsi is quite ancient but was greatly exacerbated by colonial rule. Since 1959, there have been numerous violent clashes between the two groups, but in 1994 a new level of violence was reached when, in a matter of weeks, Hutus murdered 800,000 to 850,000 Tutsis and their Hutu friends and supporters. Only about 130,000 Tutsis in Rwanda survived the massacre. Every level of society was involved, and in many cases, women led the killings (Prunier 1995; Fenton 1996). Tutsis were massacred by their clergy in churches where they sought sanctuary: 2800 in Kibungo, 6000 in Cyahinda, 4000 in Kibeho, and more in many other places. Although most of the killing was done with machetes, technology played an important part, as the Hutu-controlled Radio Mille Collines—called “the radio that kills” by its opponents—spewed out a daily message of hate and encouragement to slaughter (Destexhe 1995). In the weeks that followed the genocide, a rebel Tutsi army took over the government, and more than 2 million Hutu refugees fled to neighboring countries. By 1995, more than one-third of the Rwandan population was either dead or living in exile. Today most of the living have returned, but their fate, and that of the nation of Rwanda, is very uncertain.

The changes that have rocked many of the world's societies in the last half century overwhelm the ability of social scientists to influence events, or perhaps even fully comprehend them. It is hard to imagine, for example, how anthropologists could have altered the situation in Rwanda. The forces of change at work in the world are simply too great. Students sometimes ask anthropologists whether they are afraid of changing, somehow contaminating, the people they study. Anthropologists reply that this idea reflects the sin of hubris, or excessive pride; anthropologists are too small, and the forces

affecting society are too large. However, even if anthropological contributions cannot change the underlying patterns of history, they can have some impact. As recent essays on the plight of Haitians show (Martinez 1996; Chierici 1996), they can document and publicize the stories of peoples around the world. If anthropologists were powerless to prevent the tragedies of places such as Rwanda and Haiti, they can at least try to ensure that they are not forgotten.



Looking to the Future

In 1966, in a speech in Cape Town, South Africa, Robert Kennedy said “There is a Chinese curse which says, May he live in interesting times. Like it or not, we live in interesting times . . .” It turns out that the curse is neither ancient nor Chinese, but the idea it expresses seems appropriate to our time. Our world is a wonderful yet frightening place, full of promise and despair, beset by enormous troubles, but despite all of them, filled with hope as well.

Anthropology helps us to understand and act in positive ways in this world. Although we cannot know the future, we can know that it's likely to bring us closer to others. One hundred years ago, people in many societies could go through their lives rarely interacting with those different from themselves. They generally shared the customs, languages, and beliefs of those around them. This was true for many people, even in large multiethnic societies. In nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America, for example, if you were a member of the majority white Protestant culture, you may have interacted with those who were different from you, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and immigrants from other lands, but you did so on your terms. It was they who had to learn your language, your customs, and your beliefs. Whatever its problems or virtues, this world is gone.

This can, to some extent, be seen in the history of debates over multiculturalism. In the 1990s, academics, politicians, and other leaders fought with great vitriol over the notion of multiculturalism. The debate was complex but one side held that Americans should perceive their nation as a single unified culture and portray it that way in books, films, and social analysis. The other side held that America's strength has been its multiplicity of cul-



In the 21st century, confrontations between the many diverse groups that make up our very complex world will increase. Anthropology, with its emphasis on culture and on studying the full range of this diversity and complexity, is perfectly positioned to play an important role increasing understanding between different human groups. In this photograph from New Zealand, Maori dancers tattooed in the traditional Maori manner, and adapting a traditional warrior stance, go toe to toe with Indonesian leaders, dressed in international Western government and military style.

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tures and that books, films, and social analysis should be designed to celebrate this diversity. Although there are people on both sides who continue this debate, it has largely ended. It didn't end because one side was more reasonable, rational, or intellectually powerful than the other. It ended because of real-life facts.

Over the past 15 years, we have seen an enormous increase in the interconnectedness of the world. Changes in U.S. immigration law as well as decreases in the cost of air travel have made it relatively easy for people to move about. For example, airfares, measured in constant dollars, dropped more than 20 percent between 1990 and 1998 alone (GAO 1999). Wireless telephone and computer service, the Internet, and most recently, services that enable people to make long distance telephone calls over the Internet for free or at very low prices have made contact and communication between remote places available to vast numbers of people. It is true that economic inequality abounds in the world. Most people do not have the money to jump on an airplane or the technical knowledge to use the Internet. However, hundreds of millions are able to use these opportunities. For example, according to the website www.internetworldstats.com, in November 2005, around the world, almost a billion people had access to an Internet connection and the knowledge to use it. Add to this the increasing prosperity of some segments of the population in China and other Asian nations as well as the more slowly growing middle classes of Eastern Europe and Latin America. The result is a world where people are confronted with greater cultural variety than ever be-

fore. This is easily visible in any American city and, according to the Census Bureau, in 2003, more than 80 percent of Americans lived in metropolitan areas (Mackun 2005). From the Hindu priest in saffron robes shopping at Wal-Mart, to Raging Grannies planning antiwar protests over plates of Pad Gra Prao at the local Thai restaurant, it is virtually impossible to live in the United States without experiencing diversity on a daily basis.

Of course, this is not the first time the United States has faced large-scale immigration. Millions of immigrants came to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but immigrants of this era were more or less cut off from their roots. Transportation and communication were slow and very expensive. Despite this, the areas that retained large numbers of immigrants became and remained the most diverse places in America—places such as New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco. Today, we face very large-scale immigration and, though most immigrants probably remain in large urban areas, large numbers have moved to small and mid-size communities throughout the nation. New immigrants often have inexpensive and rapid communication with those who remain in their home countries. In many cases they have wealth and numbers that give them increasing political voice. The result is that diversity is pervasive and will only increase. Wherever our future takes us and no matter who we are, it will bring us increasingly into contact with people of different cultures. And we will meet these people increasingly as equals. Our examples have been drawn from the past, but the same is true in

many nations of the world, particularly the wealthy nations of western Europe.

In such a diverse world, knowledge of anthropology can play a critical role. For more than a century, anthropologists have been exploring the structure, dynamics, and meaning of culture. More than any other discipline in the university, anthropology has developed the tools, models, and sensitivities to analyze culture and to provide bridges of understanding between individuals of different cultures. Anthropology raises awareness of the meaning, value, and importance of culture; this is a profoundly important thing in a world of unprecedented contact among people of different cultures.

Beyond the issues surrounding diversity, anthropology also teaches us something more profound. The second half of this chapter has documented and explained the frightening problems that face the world. Anthropology gives us hope that these problems can be solved. Anthropology teaches us that the human capacity for culture rests on biological foundations. We have culture because our brains and bodies have evolved to learn and be dependent on it. However, anthropology also teaches that biology is not destiny. Our biology may predispose us to behave in certain ways, but no aspect of

human culture can be firmly tied to a gene. Instead, anthropologists have shown over and over that culture is enormously flexible, fantastically changeable, and almost incredibly varied. This is an important point because it implies that the problems that face us are not the result of a fixed and unchanging human nature. War, poverty, pollution, and the other ills do not exist because humans are invariably given to warfare or human society somehow demands extreme wealth and desperate poverty. These are social facts; they are aspects of human culture and human society. Because of this, they can be changed. We can continue to invent new cultural forms, new designs for living. More than a century ago, E. B. Tylor, the man often considered the founder of British anthropology, wrote that anthropology was a reformer's science. By this he meant that if we could first understand that culture was not simply a reflection of human biology, and if we could then analyze and understand culture itself, we could discover ways to improve humanity's lot. Understanding that culture is flexible and variable gives us hope for a better future. Anthropology gives us at least some of the analytical tools to act on that hope.

Summary

1. Cultures are always changing, and no one lives today as people did in the "Stone Age." Cultural change has been increasingly rapid in the last several hundred years.
2. Some characteristics of recent change are rapid increases in population, increasing disparity between rich and poor, and expansion of the power of industrialized nations at the expense of nonindustrialized nations.
3. In the fifteenth century, Europe was neither wealthy nor technologically advanced. The centers of world power lay primarily in the Middle East and Asia. However, Europe was poised on the brink of a great expansion.
4. A combination of religious faith, greed, new social arrangements, and new technologies drove European expansion. Europeans were particularly successful in the Americas, where they were aided by the diseases they carried. They met far more resistance in Asia.
5. Plunder of precious metals, the use of slave labor, and the joint stock company, as well as political and military maneuvering, drew wealth from around the world into Europe. European nations became prosperous, but other areas of the world were impoverished.
6. Colonialism occurred when European governments took direct control of overseas territories. This happened very early in the Americas but was a much later development elsewhere in the world.
7. Although European governments often justified colonialism by calling it a civilizing mission, governments colonized to increase their wealth and protect their trade. They used forced labor, taxation, and education programs designed to discredit local culture to compel natives to produce for European interests.
8. Most colonies gained their independence between the First World War and 1965. Civil

unrest in the colonies and the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers played critical roles in the timing of independence.

9. After independence, development became a critical issue for former colonies. Economists believed that many nations were poor because they had undeveloped economies. Projects designed to change traditional practices served the interest of both the industrialized world and elites in the nonindustrialized countries.
10. Multinational corporations have also become extremely important in the world's poor nations. They are able to use inexpensive natural resources and labor in the nonindustrialized countries to benefit consumers and shareholders in industrialized nations.
11. Nonindustrialized nations are beset with problems of urbanization. More than half of the world's most populous cities are in poor nations, and urbanization has been a major force in changing traditional cultures. Providing

services to poor people in large cities is beyond the financial capacity of many poor countries.

12. Rapid population increases in the past several decades have led to the collapse of traditional subsistence strategies in many places. They have created a problem for poor nations' governments because even high rates of economic growth have failed to keep pace with population growth.
13. Political instability has had dire consequences for people worldwide. Wars of independence, the Cold War, and ethnic rivalries have led to violence that has destroyed cultures and societies.
14. Despite the difficulties facing us, the future is not necessarily bleak and anthropology can play a vital role in it. Anthropology gives us the tools to deal with a world characterized by ethnic diversity. Anthropology instructs us that humans are cultural beings. Cultures can be changed and perhaps improved. For humans, biology is never destiny.



Key Terms

colonialism	industrialization	multinational	sweatshop
corvée labor	joint stock company	corporation	vassalage
development	maquiladora	peonage	voluntary associations
Dutch East India	modernization theory	per capita GNP	World Bank
Company (VOC)	monoculture plantation	pillage	
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Suggested Readings

Bodley, John H. 1999. *Victims of Progress* (4th ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield. A comprehensive review of the effects of Western expansion on tribal and indigenous people. Bodley has written several books detailing the relationship of the industrialized powers to native peoples. Other titles include *Tribal Peoples and Development Issues: A Global Overview* (1988) and *Anthropology and Contemporary Human Problems* (3rd ed.) (1995).

Destexhe, Alain. 1995. *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Alison Marschner, Trans.). New York: New York University Press. An important work detailing the 1994 massacre of Tutsi by Hutu in Rwanda. Destexhe's work raises impor-

tant questions about the nature of ethnic conflict and genocide in the context of modern history.

Kottak, Conrad Phillip. 2005. *Assault on Paradise: Social Change in a Brazilian Village* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Chronicles almost 30 years of Kottak's work in the Brazilian village of Arembepe and the changes wrought by the village's increasing connection with the outside world and the global economy.

Larsen, Clark Spencer, and George R. Miller (Eds.). 1994. *In the Wake of Contact: Biological Responses to a New World*. New York: Wiley. This is a collection of rather technical essays that explore

the effects of disease in the wake of contact between Europeans and others. Most of the focus is on the Americas, but there are also essays on Pacific Islands.

Lawler, Nancy Ellen. 1992. *Soldiers of Misfortune: Ivoirien Tirailleurs of World War II*. Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press. This historical work chronicles the contributions of soldiers from Côte d'Ivoire to the French effort in World War II. It explores the political and economic consequences of World War II for France's colonial subjects in Africa.

Mintz, Sidney W. 1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin. A fascinating account of the ways in which sugar has changed the world economy. Mintz explores how sugar production and consumption changed both Europe and the Americas and altered our eating habits and diet. Mintz has recently published *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* (1997), a collection of essays that updates and expands his original work.

Scammell, G. V. 1989. *The First Imperial Age: European Overseas Expansion c. 1400-1715*. London: HarperCollins Academic. This work explores Europe's rise to world power, focusing on the precapitalist period. It is a particularly good source for understanding European involvement in Asia.

Wolf, Eric R. 1982. *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press. A classic and highly readable introduction to the history of Western expansion, written by a prominent anthropologist. Wolf explores the effects of European expansion on native peoples throughout the world. His work underscores the relationship between wealth and poverty and highlights the importance of history to understanding current societies. In the recently published *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis* (1999), Wolf uses case studies of the Kwakiutl, the Aztecs, and Nazi Germany to further explore his ideas about the historical relationship between power and culture.



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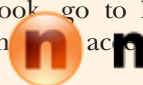


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APPENDIX

A Brief Historical Guide to Anthropological Theory

People have probably been curious about their neighbors since the emergence of the species *Homo sapiens*. They have investigated these neighbors systematically in many places and at many times. However, for our purposes, we may date the origins of anthropology as an intellectual and academic discipline to the beginning of the nineteenth century. In fact, the word *anthropologist* was first used in print in 1805 in *The Edinburgh Review* (Kuklick 1991:6). Since that time, numerous different theoretical schools have appeared, each related to its predecessors, but each with its own understanding of the critical issues that surround the analysis of culture. In this appendix, we provide very brief chronological descriptions of the principal schools of anthropological thought and introduce some of the key thinkers in each school.



Nineteenth-Century Evolutionism

Various forms of social evolutionary theory held sway throughout most of the nineteenth century. These theories were loosely based on evolutionary models drawn from biology, particularly the work of **Jean Baptiste Lamarck** (1744–1829) and **Charles Darwin** (1809–1882). Lamarck is best known for his notion of inheritance of acquired characteristics. He argued that organs improve with repeated use and grow weak with disuse and that living things are able to pass these strengths and weaknesses on to their offspring. Lamarck reasoned that over time this would give rise to new species. Darwin, on the other hand, showed that chance endowed certain individuals with traits that allowed them to produce relatively more offspring and that such individuals

were able to pass along these successful traits to their offspring. Darwin's theory, described more fully in Chapter 2, accurately describes biological evolution. However, cultural and social change may happen in the ways characterized by Lamarck. As interpreted by social thinkers, the key tenet of evolutionary thought was that the history of humanity could be described as progress toward increasingly complex forms of society. This progress followed discoverable natural laws and could be understood by using scientific methodology.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was a key early thinker in social evolutionism. He compared societies to biological organisms and proposed that both progressed by increasing in complexity. Although much of Spencer's theoretical position was established before Darwin published his theory of natural selection, Spencer rapidly incorporated elements of Darwin's work into his own.

The Englishman **Sir Edward Burnett Tylor** (1832–1917) and the American **Lewis Henry Morgan** (1818–1881) both proposed that all human societies progressed from a state of savagery, through barbarism, to civilization. Societies progressed at different speeds, however. Western European and European-American societies had achieved the fastest progress. Others, such as the Australian aborigines, had been left far behind in savagery. Although from our perspective this notion is deeply ethnocentric, it is important to point out that the evolutionary anthropological theorists were deeply critical of their own societies, particularly the entrenched hereditary privilege of the aristocracy and upper classes.

Karl Marx (1818–1883), along with **Friedrich Engels** (1820–1895), and **Sigmund Freud** (1856–1939) also proposed evolutionary theories that had profound effects on anthropology. Marx viewed

evolution in terms of conflict between different social groups (see Chapter 12 for more information on Marx). Freud wrote in the twentieth century but drew largely on nineteenth-century sources. He saw evolution as a psychological process and believed that the psychological development of the individual repeated that of human society. The children of the “civilized” were thus the emotional equals of adult “savages.”

The Early Sociologists

The key sociological thinker in turn-of-the-century France was **Émile Durkheim** (1858–1917). Durkheim believed that each group of people shared a *collective conscience*. The collective conscience consisted of a shared system of understandings, beliefs, and values that molded and constrained individual behavior. This notion was similar to what many anthropologists today call culture. Durkheim thought that the collective conscience had an existence independent of the people who shared it. It was something that operated by its own laws and could be studied on its own terms. The task of sociologists was to discover the contents of the collective conscience (which Durkheim referred to as social facts and collective representations) and the laws by which they functioned. One of the key laws that Durkheim believed he discovered was that the human mind divided things into opposites. The most basic of these divisions was between the sacred and the profane.

Durkheim and his students are often referred to as *L'Année Sociologique*, after a journal they published that reviewed each year's developments in sociology. His students were some of the brightest minds of Europe, including his nephew **Marcel Mauss** (1872–1950) and **Robert Hertz** (1881–1915). Sadly, most of Durkheim's students died in the trenches in World War I.

While Durkheim and his students focused on questions of social cohesion or solidarity, **Max Weber** (1864–1920) was more concerned with conflict. Weber was profoundly influenced by Marx, but he did not believe that social classes necessarily acted in solidarity. Weber is also known for promoting the notion that social scientists must develop empathetic understanding of those they study in order to understand their behavior.



American Historical Particularism

In the United States, much of anthropology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had been devoted to the attempt to find scientific justification for institutionalized racism. The German-trained scholar **Franz Boas** (1858–1942) created a new American anthropology that was utterly opposed to this thinking. Boas asserted that all human beings were biological equals and that differences among human societies were the result of culture alone. The form each culture took depended almost entirely on its own specific history (hence *historical particularism*, a term coined long after Boas's death) rather than any panhuman pattern of development as the evolutionists proposed. Boas went on to debunk many nineteenth-century thinkers, demonstrating that the cultural traits they believed showed general patterning actually arose from quite different histories.

The claim of particular historical development for each culture had important implications. First, it meant that cultures could be evaluated only on their own terms rather than by any universal yardstick of development. Therefore, cultural relativism became a cornerstone of Boasian anthropology. Second, though Boas wrote that controlled cultural comparison was possible and general laws of growth could be found (1896/1988a), his insistence that cultures are unique results of their history and context suggests that this is virtually impossible. No two cultures have histories so similar that no objection could be raised to their comparison and comparing similar elements of different cultures removes them from their context and thus violates Boasian principles. In any event, Boas and his students assiduously avoided making such comparisons or proposing general laws. Instead, Boasians focused on collecting ethnographic data through fieldwork, which became central to American anthropology.

Boas's influence on American anthropology was extraordinary. During his long career at Columbia University, he trained many of the most important American anthropologists of the first half of the twentieth century, including **A. L. Kroeber**, **Robert Lowie**, **Edward Sapir**, **Ruth Benedict**, **Paul Radin**, and **Ashley Montagu**.



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Functionalism

In Europe, the trauma of World War I led to the abandonment of social evolutionism. However, many of the ideas of Spencer and Durkheim were retained in British functionalism. Like Spencer, functionalists tended to view societies as analogous to biological organisms. Instead of being interested in their evolution, however, functionalists were concerned with the relations among their parts.

Two critical thinkers in functionalism were **A. R. Radcliffe-Brown** (1881–1955) and **Bronislaw Malinowski** (1884–1942). Radcliffe-Brown is considered a structural functionalist. Profoundly influenced by his reading of Durkheim, he wanted to discern and describe the role of social institutions such as kinship in maintaining the smooth working of society and preserving social solidarity. Malinowski's psychological functionalism focused on human physical and psychological needs. He proposed seven universal human needs: nutrition, reproduction, bodily comfort, safety, relaxation, movement, and growth. He examined cultural institutions in terms of the ways they functioned to meet these needs.

Although their theoretical positions were very different, Boas and Malinowski shared some interesting similarities. Like Boas, Malinowski set extremely high standards for fieldwork among his students. Also like Boas, Malinowski trained many important anthropologists, including **E. E. Evans-Pritchard**, **Meyer Fortes**, **Audrey Richards**, and **Raymond Firth**, during his long academic career at the London School of Economics.

Culture and Personality

Boas transmitted to his students his insistence on the historical uniqueness of each culture, but he did not give them any unifying principle around which to organize their work. To remedy this, many of them turned to the notion of personality. **Ruth Benedict** (1887–1948), **Margaret Mead** (1901–1978), and others analyzed culture as “personality writ large.” They believed that each culture had a unique configuration that shaped the personality of its members, molding them to fit the culture's dominant type. Benedict, for example, described the Zuni as having an Apollonian configuration; that is, the Zuni were reserved and levelheaded and avoided excess of any kind.

To solve the problem of how cultural configurations were formed and maintained, culture and personality theorists, particularly **Abram Kardiner** (1891–1981) and **Cora DuBois** (1903–1991), turned to Freud. Although they rejected Freud's evolutionary theories, they accepted the notion that early childhood experiences determine later life personality. Thus, they saw child-rearing practices as critical to understanding cultural institutions.

With the coming of World War II, the culture and personality theorists turned to writing national character studies of the United States, its allies, and its opponents. These works, produced by analyzing written data rather than fieldwork, were substantially less successful than their earlier efforts.

Although few anthropologists today would consider themselves culture and personality theorists, some of the best-known books in American anthropology are associated with this school of thought. These include Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) and Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1934).

Cultural Ecology and Neo-Evolutionism

By the mid-1930s, a second school of American anthropological thought emerged to compete with the ideas of Boas and his intellectual descendants. Cultural ecology and neo-evolutionism reevaluated the insights of the nineteenth-century evolutionists and, through new research, attempted to raise their scientific standards. Key thinkers in this enterprise were **Julian Steward** (1902–1972), **Leslie White** (1900–1975), and **George Peter Murdock** (1897–1985). All three searched for general laws of cultural development.

Steward, who coined the term *cultural ecology*, was particularly interested in the relationship between culture and environment. He believed that cultures at similar technological levels, in similar environments, would develop broadly similar institutions. His work thus depended on cross-cultural comparisons.

Leslie White was deeply influenced by his reading of Morgan and Marx. This led him to a concern with cultural evolution and the nature of production. He proposed that cultures evolve as the amount of energy they capture increases, an idea

that is known as White's Law. White believed that revolutionary changes in technology were critical to increasing the ability to capture energy.

George Peter Murdock was an intellectual descendant of Spencer. He believed that general principles of culture could be derived from cross-cultural analysis on a massive scale. Thus, he began a project to index and tabulate information on all the world's known cultures. This project, known as the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF), still continues today (see Chapter 3).



Neomaterialism: Evolutionary, Functionalist, Ecological, and Marxist

Steward, White, Murdock, and others set the stage for many of the anthropological theorists of the 1960s and 1970s. These combined earlier anthropological work with insights from the physical and biological sciences and, sometimes, a deep understanding and appropriation of Marxist thought.

Evolutionary theorists such as **Morton Fried** (1923–1986), **Marshall Sahlins** (born 1930), and **Elman Service** (1915–1996) looked for ways to combine the insights of Steward and White into a single theory of cultural evolution. They developed the band–tribe–chiefdom–state model commonly used in much of modern anthropology (see Chapter 11).

Ecological functionalists took the position that cultures were adaptations that permitted their members to exploit their environments successfully. They examined the ways in which cultural practices were related to physical, technological, and economic aspects of the environment. **Marvin Harris** (1927–2001) is perhaps the best-known functional ecologist. He used the term *cultural materialism* to describe his approach. Harris's analysis of Indian cattle worship (see Chapter 4) is a good example of his approach.

Neo-Marxists were a third group of thinkers within this tradition. Most neo-Marxists were particularly concerned with issues of colonialism and international economic relations, but their approaches to these questions varied. In Europe, French scholars such as **Claude Meillassoux** (1925–2005) and **Maurice Godelier** (born 1925) broke with the Soviet scholars who had dominated Marxist anthropology. They proposed new ways of adapting Marx's critical insights to the anthropology of nonindustrial society.

In the United States, political economy theorists, led by **Eric Wolf** (1923–1999), focused on the historical development of capitalism and the conflicts it generated. Wolf and others rejected the notion of cultures as bounded wholes that could be studied independently. They urged anthropologists to see issues of conflict, domination of one group by another, and appropriation of wealth as central to understanding culture.



Structuralism

Structural anthropology is based largely on the work of **Claude Lévi-Strauss** (born 1908). Lévi-Strauss was inspired by Durkheim's work on the nature of human thought as well as advances made in linguistics in the first half of the twentieth century. At that time, linguists were exploring the structure of languages. They based their work around patterns of phones and phonemes (see Chapter 5), which they considered the most fundamental units of language. In a similar fashion, Lévi-Strauss sought to uncover the basic units of culture and the rules by which they operated.

Lévi-Strauss suggested that the human mind had certain fundamental features and that the same basic units and rules of culture found expression in all societies. He reasoned that the basics of culture could best be discovered in the folktales and mythologies of primitive people. He believed these to be little changed by technological innovation and therefore thought they might present such units and rules in their most pristine form.

Much of Lévi-Strauss's life work has been in analyzing myths from different cultures to show what he believes to be the basic units and rules of culture. Like Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss holds that the most fundamental rule of culture is the tendency of human thinking to make binary distinctions. He adds, however, that human thinking is not satisfied with such distinctions and always tends to add a third category that in some way transcends or reconciles the opposition.

The process of structural anthropology involves analyzing myths and other aspects of culture by searching for the fundamental oppositions that compose them and then looking for ways in which these oppositions are transcended. Lévi-Strauss's hope is that as this process is completed for more and more cultures, general patterns will emerge.

These will illuminate fundamental patternings that underlie all human culture.

Lévi-Strauss's ideas have always been controversial in anthropology. His critics argue that the oppositions and mediations that he and other structural anthropologists find in culture are highly subjective. Nevertheless, structural anthropology has proven a useful source of insight into the interpretation of the symbolic aspects of culture. It has had a profound effect, not only on anthropology but on thinking in literature, political science, and psychology as well. Not surprisingly, this impact was felt first and most strongly in France. Some of the scholars strongly influenced by Lévi-Strauss include **Louis Althusser**, **Roland Barthes**, **Jacques Lacan**, and **Jacques Derrida**, although many of these were critical of structuralism as well. Scholars such as these were fundamental to the poststructuralist and postmodern anthropology of the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. Lévi-Strauss wrote many important works. These include *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949), *Triste Tropiques* (1955), and *The Savage Mind* (1962).



Ethnoscience and Cognitive Anthropology

Ethnoscience and cognitive anthropology were largely American developments. Some of the key scholars associated with these approaches are **Ward Goodenough** (born 1919), **Harold Conklin** (born 1926), **Stephen Tyler** (born 1932), and **James Spradley** (1933–1981). Ethnoscience is based on a critique of anthropological method but draws heavily on Boasian anthropology and structuralism. Ethnoscience and cognitive anthropologists claimed that existing anthropological reporting was unreliable because there was no regular, consistent anthropological methodology. Projects such as Murdock's HRAF were flawed because different ethnographers observed and reported on differing aspects of the societies they studied. Thus, generalizations about cultures could not be made. Ethnoscience and cognitive anthropologists proposed a way around this dilemma. They asserted that culture was a shared mental model through which people organized their world. Further, they claimed that language was the key means through which this organization was accomplished. Thus, the distinctions that people made in

speaking could be used to construct a model for each culture.

Ethnoscience and cognitive anthropologists developed a fieldwork method called the structured interview, which was designed to discover the linguistic models that members of different cultures used to classify their worlds. They claimed that if done properly, structured interviews could provide the information needed to behave like a member of the culture. Some ethnoscience and cognitive anthropologists suggested that a person who fully understood the mental model of another culture could think like a member of that culture as well, though this was hotly disputed.

One key tenet of ethnoscience and cognitive anthropology reflected its Boasian heritage: the belief that each culture had a unique mental model. Like Boas, thinkers in this school believed that, given enough time and data collection, some universal theory of culture might emerge. However, such a theory was only a long-term possibility for the distant future.

In the 1980s and 1990s, cognitive anthropologists turned away from the linguistic model. Realizing that many forms of knowledge and behavior did not involve linguistic processing, they began to look at insights from psychology and physiology. The result was the emergence of schema theory and connectivism. Schema theory describes knowledge in terms of generalized representations of experiences, events, and objects that are stored in memory. Connectivists argue that knowledge is structured in "processing units" and examine the ways in which such units might be distributed, linked, and networked. Current cognitive anthropologists attempt to describe the relationship among culture, schema, and behavior (D'Andrade 1995).



Sociobiology, Evolutionary Psychology, and Behavioral Ecology

Perhaps the most controversial theoretical position in anthropology is sociobiology. It was developed and promoted largely by biologists and anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of its key thinkers are biologists **W. D. Hamilton** (1936–2000), **Robert Trivers** (born 1943), and **E. O. Wilson** (born 1929), sociologist **Lionel Tiger** (born 1937), and anthropologists **Roland Barthes** (1915–1984), **Jerome Barkow** (born

1944), **Napoleon Chagnon** (born 1938), and **Kristen Hawkes** (born 1944).

Sociobiologists applied the Darwinian idea of natural selection directly to human cultural behavior. They believed that culture reflected an underlying genetic patterning. Further, as in biology, those genetically based culture traits that led to increased reproduction would be selected and transmitted, and thus would appear increasingly in the population. Thus, they viewed much of cultural behavior as a mechanism through which individuals tried to increase their chances of reproduction.

In the 1970s, sociobiologists were particularly concerned with the problem of altruism, in which an individual sacrifices his or her own reproductive chances to benefit those of another, and tried to show how such a trait could evolve. In the 1980s and 1990s, sociobiologists split into three groups: evolutionary psychologists, human behavioral ecologists, and those who study human universals. Evolutionary psychologists theorize that the mind is composed of a collection of specialized suborgans designed for particular tasks. They try to describe these and show what they were designed to accomplish. Human behavioral ecologists emphasize human populations rather than cultures and try to test the hypothesis that culturally patterned traits enhance fitness. Some anthropologists focus on discovering and describing human universals, or characteristics found in all societies.

Sociobiologists have insisted that understanding the connections between biology and culture should be the focus of anthropology. The vast majority of cultural anthropologists, however, believe that culture is almost completely independent of biology. As a result, sociobiology has been strongly criticized by cultural anthropologists, and it has remained a relatively small and isolated theoretical position.



Anthropology and Gender

The feminist critique of anthropology developed along with the women's movement in the late 1960s and 1970s (see Chapters 3, 4, and 10). Despite the fact that some very prominent anthropologists had been women, anthropology in general had been overwhelmingly concerned with men's activities. Though women constituted half the population, they were often invisible in ethnographic writing.

Feminist anthropologists such as **Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo** (1944–1981), **Louise Lamphere** (born 1940), **Sherry Ortner** (born 1941), and **Micaela di Leonardo** (born 1949) tried to rectify this situation by focusing attention on women's worlds.

Feminist anthropologists actually took many different theoretical positions, from structuralism to neo-Marxism to postmodernism. However, they all shared an interest in women's position in society. Much of feminist anthropology in the 1970s was concerned with trying to explain female subordination, which some scholars considered to be universal.

More recently, feminist anthropologists have focused on the social construction of gender, the relationship of gender to social, economic, and political power, and the cultural variation among different groups of women. The organizing theme that holds these disparate tendencies together is the idea that gender and relations among genders are a central patterning element of society. Understanding society involves elucidating gender relationships and showing the effect these have on other aspects of culture.



Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology

Like ethnoscientists and cognitive anthropologists, symbolic and interpretive anthropologists are fundamentally concerned with the ways in which people formulate their reality. However, unlike the former, who thought of culture in terms of formal linguistic models, symbolic and interpretive anthropologists use models from psychology and the study of literary texts to analyze culture. Some major figures in this group are **Clifford Geertz** (born 1926), **Mary Douglas** (born 1921), and **Victor Turner** (1920–1983). Geertz, one of the best-known modern anthropologists, believes that people use symbols to help them understand their own culture. Culture is like a story that people tell themselves about themselves, and in so doing give meaning and poignancy to their lives. Turner, on the other hand, followed the tradition of Durkheim and British functionalist anthropology, viewing symbols in terms of their role in the maintenance of society. He was particularly interested in the study of ritual and outlined the characteristics of symbols. Douglas also drew particular inspiration from her reading of Durkheim, and suggested that shared symbols

helped hold societies together. Douglas was particularly interested in beliefs about purity and contamination and held that such notions symbolized beliefs about the social order.

Most anthropologists have argued that their theoretical position rests on scientific principles. Symbolic and interpretive anthropologists make no such claim. Rather, they suggest that anthropology is an art of cultural interpretation, more of a branch of the humanities than a science. Its goal is often to provide people with a deep, empathic understanding of the nature of meaning to members of different cultures rather than to discover general principles or testable laws.



Postmodernism and Its Critics

Postmodernism grew from the insights of the feminist anthropologists, interpretive and symbolic anthropologists, and neo-Marxists, but its development was critically dependent on the thinking of cultural historian **Michel Foucault** (1926–1984) and literary critic **Jacques Derrida** (1930–2004). Anthropological postmodernists hold that all accounts of culture are partial and conditioned by the observer's personal history and experiences. One result, according to postmodernists, is that anthropological writing tells us a great deal about anthropologists and their society but rather little about the societies that anthropologists observe.

Issues of power and “voice” are critical to postmodern scholars. They assert that a great many different interpretations of history or culture are valid. The interpretations held by the wealthy and powerful are likely to be considered legitimate, while others are discredited. For postmodernists, culture is often viewed as a constant battle between opposing, contesting interpretations. Some, such as **Renato Rosaldo** (born 1941), focus on explanations of culture that highlight conflicting interpretations. Others, such as **Vincent Crapanzano** (born 1939) or **Gananath Obeyesekere** (born 1930), study anthropological writing itself. They analyze ethnographies to show the ways in which they are constructed and explain what they tell us about anthropologists and Western society.

At its most radical, postmodernism asserts that objectivity is impossible, implying that no interpretation or analysis can ever be better or worse than another. If this is the case, fieldwork is irrelevant

and anthropology should be understood as a branch of literature, less accurate than fiction because of its pretensions to authority and fact. For these reasons, many anthropologists have been loud in their denunciation of postmodernism. Critics such as Marvin Harris, Roy D'Andrade, and James Lett (born 1955) charge that most postmodern thinking is based around logical fallacies. Although they do not deny that writing is influenced by authors' histories, political positions, and agendas, they insist that there is a material world that exists independent of the observer. Anthropologists have an obligation to describe this world to the best of their abilities. They assert that for anthropology to be useful, it must be based on a scientific model of study rather than a literary one.

However, even postmodernism's detractors would agree that it has made anthropologists more sensitive to the ways that knowledge is generated in anthropology and to issues of whose story they are telling as well as their own motivations and agendas in telling it.



What's Next?

The brief analysis of anthropological theories in this Appendix has been presented in rough order of appearance. This can be deceptive because it seems to imply that one theory simply supersedes another. For example, the fact that postmodernism appears after symbolic anthropology might lead you to believe that anthropologists abandoned symbolic anthropology and took up postmodernism. This is not at all the case. Although very few people today would call themselves historical particularists or psychological functionalists, many schools of anthropological thought are very much alive and well. A healthy debate exists among scholars representing various theoretical positions. New ways of looking at culture emerge from these conflicts.

Perhaps the most important new trend within anthropology in the past decade has been a focus on globalization. The fall of the Soviet Union and consequent emergence of new nations in Central and Eastern Europe, the vast improvements in the technologies of communication, the expansion of global capitalism, the emergence of China as an important capitalist society, the increasing permeability of international borders, and the increasing instability in

many areas of the world has led to a new focus on culture contact and change. Anthropologists have turned their attention to the ways in which individuals and societies navigate and negotiate identity, economy, and politics within the context of global connectedness and inequality. One of the foremost spokespeople for this school of thought is Arjun Appadurai (born 1949). Appadurai's influential 1996 book *Modernity at Large* envisioned the cultural

world as composed of a series of overlapping “scapes,” or understandings of reality, that are at the same time physical, virtual, and cognitive. Appadurai distinguishes five “scapes:” ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. Other anthropologists theorizing globalization include Akhil Gupta, Grant McCracken (who blogs at www.cultureby.com), Aihwa Ong, Marc Edelman, and June Nash.



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chapter and a practice final exam, as well as links to anthropology websites and information on the latest theories and discoveries in the field.

Glossary

A

acephalous: Lacking a government head or chief.

achieved status: A social position that a person chooses or achieves on his or her own.

adaptation: A change in the biological structure or life ways of an individual or population by which it becomes better fitted to survive and reproduce in its environment.

affinal: Relations by marriage; in-law relations.

African-American Vernacular English (AAVE): A form of English spoken by many African Americans, particularly among those of rural or urban working-class backgrounds.

age grades: Specialized hierarchical associations based on age, which stratify a society by seniority.

age set: A group of people of similar age and sex who move through some or all of life's stages together.

agglutinating language: A language that allows a great number of morphemes per word and has highly regular rules for combining them.

agriculture: A form of food production in which fields are in permanent cultivation using plows, animals, and techniques of soil and water control.

allophones: Two or more different phones that can be used to make the same phoneme in a specific language.

ambilineal descent: A form of bilateral descent in which an individual may choose to affiliate with either the father's or mother's descent group.

androcentric bias: The distortion in theory and ethnography caused by excessive focus on male activities or male perceptions of female activities.

animatism: Belief in an impersonal spiritual force that infuses the universe.

anime: Animation, as in the popular culture of Japan, usually refers to animation of **manga**, or comic book graphic art.

animism: The notion that all objects, living and non-living, are imbued with spirits.

anomie: A situation where social or moral norms are confused or entirely absent; often caused by rapid social change.

anthropology: The comparative study of human societies and cultures.

anthropomorphic: Having human shape.

anthropopsychic: Having thought processes and emotions similar to humans.

antistructure: The socially sanctioned use of behavior that radically violates social norms. Antistructure is frequently found in religious ritual.

applied anthropology: The application of anthropology to the solution of human problems.

arboreal: Tree-dwelling.

archaeology: The subdiscipline of anthropology that focuses on the reconstruction of past cultures based on their material remains.

arranged marriage: The process by which senior family members exercise a great degree of control over the choice of their children's spouses.

art: Forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles and involve imagination, skill, and style.

artifact: Any object made or modified by human beings. Generally used to refer to objects made by past cultures.

ascribed status: A social position that a person is born into.

assimilation model: A model of U.S. ethnicity that holds that people should abandon their cultural traditions and become wholly absorbed in mainstream American culture.

atlatl: A spear thrower, a device used to increase and extend the power of the human arm when throwing a spear.

australopithecines: Members of an early hominid genus found in Africa and characterized by bipedal locomotion and small brain size.

authority: The ability to cause others to act based on characteristics such as honor, status, knowledge, ability, respect, or the holding of formal public office.

avunculocal residence: System under which a married couple lives with the husband's mother's brother.

B

balanced reciprocity: An exchange of goods of nearly equal value, with a clear obligation to return them within a specified time limit.

band: A small group of people related by blood or marriage, who live together and are loosely associated with a territory in which they forage.

bhangra: A musical form originating in the folk music of Punjab in Northern India and Eastern Pakistan that is mixing with British pop music and reggae to become a popular form of world music.

bifurcation: A principle of classifying kin under which different kinship terms are used for the mother's side of the family and the father's side of the family.

bigman: A self-made leader who gains power through personal



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- achievements rather than through political office.
- bilateral descent:** System of descent under which individuals are equally affiliated with their mothers' and their fathers' descent group.
- biological (or physical) anthropology:** The subdiscipline of anthropology that studies people from a biological perspective, focusing primarily on aspects of humankind that are genetically inherited. It includes osteology, nutrition, demography, epidemiology, and primatology.
- bilocal residence:** System under which a married couple has the choice of living with the husband's or the wife's family.
- biopsychological equality:** The notion that all human groups have the same biological and mental capabilities.
- bipedalism:** Walking on two feet, a distinctive characteristic of humans and our ancestors.
- Black English Vernacular (BEV):** see African-American Vernacular English.
- blending:** The combination of two calls to produce a new call; a hypothesized early phase in language evolution.
- body art:** Marking and adorning the body as an expression of cultural and personal identity, or which serves other functions.
- bound morpheme:** A unit of meaning that must be associated with another.
- bride service:** The cultural rule that a man must work for his bride's family for a variable length of time either before or after the marriage.
- bridewealth:** Goods presented by the groom's kin to the bride's kin to legitimize a marriage (formerly called "bride price").
- bureaucracy:** Administrative hierarchy characterized by specialization of function and fixed rules.
- call system:** The form of communication among nonhuman primates composed of a limited number of sounds that are tied to specific stimuli in the environment.
- capital:** Productive resources that are used with the primary goal of increasing their owner's financial wealth.
- capitalism:** An economic system in which people work for wages, land and capital goods are privately owned, and capital is invested for individual profit.
- cargo system:** A ritual system common in Central and South America in which wealthy people are required to hold a series of costly ceremonial offices.
- caste system:** A system of stratification based on birth in which movement from one stratum (caste) to another is not possible.
- chiefdom:** A society with social ranking in which political integration is achieved through an office of centralized leadership called the chief.
- chronemics:** The study of the different ways that cultures understand time and use it to communicate.
- citizenship:** Membership in a state.
- clan:** A unilineal kinship group whose members believe themselves to be descended from a common ancestor but who cannot trace this link through known relatives.
- class system:** A form of social stratification in which the different strata form a continuum and social mobility is possible.
- clinal distribution:** The frequency change of a particular trait as you move geographically from one point to another.
- closed system:** A stratification system based primarily on ascription.
- code switching:** The ability of individuals who speak multiple languages to move seamlessly between them.
- cognatic descent:** Any nonunilineal system of descent.
- cognitive anthropology:** A theoretical approach that defines culture in terms of the rules and meanings underlying human behavior rather than behavior itself.
- collaborative ethnography:** Ethnography that gives priority to cultural consultants on the topic, methodology, and written results of ethnographic research.
- collateral kin:** Kin descended from a common ancestor but not in a direct ascendent or descendent line, such as siblings and cousins.
- colonialism:** The active possession of a foreign territory and the maintenance of political domination over that territory.
- communication:** The act of transmitting information.
- communitas:** A state of perceived solidarity, equality, and unity among people sharing a religious ritual, often characterized by intense emotion.
- comparative linguistics:** The science of documenting the relationships between languages and grouping them into language families.
- compensation:** A payment demanded by an aggrieved party to compensate for damage.
- complementary opposition:** A political structure in which higher-order units form alliances that emerge only when lower-order units come into conflict.
- composite (compound) family:** An aggregate of nuclear families linked by a common spouse.
- conflict theory:** A perspective on social stratification that focuses on inequality as a source of conflict and change.
- conjugal tie:** The relationship between a husband and wife formed by marriage.
- consanguineal:** Related by blood.
- consanguinity:** Blood ties between people.
- constructionism:** A view of ethnicity that holds that ethnic groups emerge and change based on specific historical conditions.
- consultant:** A person from whom anthropologists gather data.
- contagious magic:** The belief that things once in contact with a person or object retain an invisible connection with that person or object.

C

call system: The form of communication among nonhuman primates

conventionality: The notion that, in human language, words are only arbitrarily or conventionally connected to the things for which they stand.

core vocabulary: A list of 100 or 200 terms that designate things, actions, and activities, likely to be named in all the world's languages.

corvée labor: Unpaid labor required by a governing authority.

cosmology: A system of beliefs that deals with fundamental questions in the religious and social order.

crafts: The application of aesthetic principles to the production of utilitarian objects and activities.

creole: A first language that is composed of elements of two or more different languages. (Compare with pidgin.)

cross cousins: The children of a parent's siblings of the opposite sex (mother's brothers, father's sisters).

cross-cultural survey (also called controlled cross-cultural comparison): A research method that uses statistical correlations of traits from many different cultures to test generalizations about culture and human behavior.

cultural anthropology: The study of human thought, meaning, and behavior that is learned rather than genetically transmitted, and that is typical of groups of people.

cultural construction of gender: The idea that gender characteristics are the result of historical, economic, and political forces acting within each culture.

cultural ecology: A theoretical approach that regards cultural patterns as adaptive responses to the basic problems of human survival and reproduction.

cultural materialism: A theoretical perspective that holds that the primary task of anthropology is to account for the similarities and differences among cultures and that this can best be done by studying the material constraints to which human existence is subject.

cultural relativism: The notion that a culture should not be judged or evaluated according to the values of another culture. They must be analyzed with reference to their own histories and culture traits understood in terms of the cultural whole.

cultural resource management (CRM): The protection and management of archaeological, archival, and architectural resources.

culture: The learned behaviors and symbols that allow people to live in groups. The primary means by which humans adapt to their environments. The way of life characteristic of a particular human society.

culture and personality theorists: Anthropologists who examine the theoretical perspective that focuses on culture as the principal force in shaping the typical personality of a society as well as on the role of personality in the maintenance of cultural institutions.

D

deep play: Performances (like sports) that are expressive forms of culture with functions similar to the other arts.

descent: The culturally established affiliation between a child and one or both parents.

descent group: A group of kin who are descendants of a common ancestor, extending beyond two generations.

descriptive or structural linguistics: The study and analysis of the structure and content of particular languages.

development: The notion that some countries are poor because they have small industrial plants and few lines of communication and that they should pursue wealth by acquiring these things.

dialect: Grammatical constructions that deviate from those used by the socially dominant group in a society.

diffusion: The spread of cultural elements from one culture to another through cultural contact.

displacement: The capacity of all human languages to describe things not happening in the present.

divination: A religious ritual performed to find hidden objects or information.

domestic group (household): Persons living in the same house, usually, but not always members of a family.

double descent: The tracing of descent through both matrilineal and patrilineal links, each of which is used for different purposes.

dowry: Presentation of goods by the bride's kin to the family of the groom or to the couple.

duality of patterning: The ability to produce arrangements of blended sounds; the hypothesized second step in the evolution of language.

Dutch East India Company: A joint stock company chartered by the Dutch government to control all Dutch trade in the Indian and Pacific oceans. Also known by its Dutch initials, VOC, for *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*.

E

Ebonics: see African-American Vernacular English.

ecological functionalism: A theoretical perspective that holds that the ways in which cultural institutions work can best be understood by examining their effects on the environment.

economic system: The norms governing production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services within a society.

economics: The study of the ways in which the choices people make combine to determine how their society uses its scarce resources to produce and distribute goods and services.

economizing behavior: Choosing a course of action to maximize perceived benefit.

efficiency: Yield per person per hour of labor invested.



egalitarian society: A society in which no individual or group has more privileged access to resources, power, or prestige than any other.

emic (perspective): Examining society using concepts, categories, and distinctions that are meaningful to members of that culture.

empirical science: An approach to understanding phenomena based on attempts to observe and record a presumed objective reality.

endogamy: A rule prescribing that a person must marry within a particular group.

essentialism: A view of ethnicity that holds that ethnic groups are distinguished by essential, historically rooted, and emotionally experienced cultural differences.

ethnic boundaries: The perceived cultural attributes by which ethnic groups distinguish themselves from others.

ethnic groups: Categories of people who see themselves as sharing an ethnic identity that differentiates them from other groups or from the larger society.

ethnic identity: The sense of self one experiences as a member of an ethnic group.

ethnicity: Perceived differences in culture, national origin, and historical experience by which groups of people are distinguished from others in the same social environment.

ethnobotany: An anthropological discipline devoted to describing the ways in which different cultures classify plants.

ethnocentrism: Judging other cultures from the perspective of one's own culture. The notion that one's own culture is more beautiful, rational, and nearer to perfection than any other.

ethnographic method: The intensive study of a particular society and culture as the basis for generating anthropological theory.

ethnography: The major research tool of cultural anthropology; includes both fieldwork among peo-

ple in society and the written results of fieldwork.

ethnohistory: Description of the cultural past based on written records, interviews, and archaeology.

ethnomedicine: An anthropological discipline devoted to describing the medical systems of different cultures.

ethnoscience: A theoretical approach that focuses on the ways in which members of a culture classify their world and holds that anthropology should be the study of cultural systems of classification.

etic (perspective): Examining society using concepts, categories, and rules derived from science; an outsider's perspective, which produces analyses that members of the society being studied may not find meaningful.

evolution: The change in the properties of populations of organisms that occur over time.

exogamy: A rule specifying that a person must marry outside a particular group.

extended family: Family based on blood relations extending over three or more generations.

F

factions: Informal systems of alliance within well-defined political units such as lineages or villages.

features: Artifacts that cannot easily be moved, such as ruins of buildings, burials, and fire pits.

feminist anthropology: A theoretical perspective that focuses on describing and explaining the social roles of women.

fieldwork: The firsthand, systematic exploration of a society. It involves living with a group of people and participating in and observing their behavior.

firm: An institution composed of kin and/or non-kin that is organized primarily for financial gain.

foraging (hunting and gathering): A food-getting strategy that does not involve food production; domestication of animals

forensic anthropology: The application of biological anthropology to the identification of skeletalized or badly decomposed human remains.

fraternal polyandry: A custom whereby a woman marries a man and his brothers.

free morpheme: A unit of meaning that may stand alone as a word.

functionalism: The anthropological theory that specific cultural institutions function to support the structure of society or serve the needs of individuals in society.

G

gender: A cultural construction that makes biological and physical differences into socially meaningful categories.

gender hierarchy: The ways in which gendered activities and attributes are differentially valued and related to the distribution of resources, prestige, and power in a society.

gender role: The cultural expectations of men and women in a particular society, including the division of labor.

gene flow: Mixing of genetic material that results from the movement of individuals and groups from place to place.

genealogy: A family history; a chart of family relationships.

generalized reciprocity: A distribution of goods with no immediate or specific return expected.

genetic drift: Changes in the frequencies of specific traits caused by random factors.

genitor: A biological father.

genus: In biological classification, a group of similar species.

Ghost Dance: A Native American religious movement of the late nineteenth century.

globalization: the integration of resources, labor and capital into a global network.

glottochronology: A statistical technique that linguists have devel-



oped to estimate the date of separation of related languages.

god: A named spirit who is believed to have created or to control some aspect of the world.

government: An interrelated set of status roles that become separate from other aspects of social organization, such as kinship.

H

haptics: The analysis and study of touch.

Heeren XVII: The “Lords Seventeen,” members of the board of directors of the Dutch East India Company.

hegemony: The (usually elite) construction of ideologies, beliefs, and values that attempt to justify the stratification system in a state society.

hijra: An alternative gender role in India conceptualized as neither man nor woman.

historical linguistics: A branch of linguistics concerned with discovering the histories of languages.

historical linguists: Study relationships among languages to better understand the histories and migrations of those who speak them.

holistic/holism: In anthropology an approach that considers culture, history, language, and biology essential to a complete understanding of human society.

***Homo erectus*:** A species of early human found in Africa, Asia, and Europe. *Homo erectus* were present between 1.8 million and about 200,000 years ago.

***Homo habilis*:** A species of early human found in Africa. *Homo habilis* were present between 2.5 and 1.8 million years ago.

***Homo sapiens*:** A species of human found throughout the world. The earliest *Homo sapiens* appeared about 500,000 years ago.

horticulture: Production of plants using a simple, nonmechanized technology; fields are not used continuously.

household: A group of people united by kinship or other links

who share a residence and organize production, consumption, and distribution among themselves.

Human Relations Area File (HRAF): An ethnographic database including cultural descriptions of more than 300 cultures.

human variation: The subdiscipline of anthropology concerned with mapping and explaining physical differences among modern human groups.

hybridization model: A theory that seeks to explain the transition from archaic to modern *Homo sapiens* by proposing that modern and archaic forms interbred.

I

imitative magic: The belief that imitating an action in a religious ritual will cause the action to happen in the material world.

incest taboos: Prohibitions on sexual relations between relatives.

indigenous peoples: Groups of people who have occupied a region for a long time and are recognized by other groups as its original (or very ancient) inhabitants. Indigenous peoples are often minorities with little or no influence in the government of the nation-state that ultimately controls their land.

industrialism: The process of the mechanization of production.

industrialization: The process of the mechanization of production.

inheritance: The transfer of property between generations.

innovation: A new variation on an existing cultural pattern that is subsequently accepted by other members of the society.

International Phonetic Alphabet

(IPA): A system of writing designed to represent all the sounds used in the different languages of the world.

interpretive (symbolic) anthropology: A theoretical approach that emphasizes culture as a system of meaning and proposes that the aim of cultural anthropology is to interpret the meanings

cultural acts have for their participants.

isolating language: A language with relatively few morphemes per word, and fairly simple rules for combining them.

J

joint stock company: A firm that is managed by a centralized board of directors but owned by shareholders. Shares may be transferred from one owner to another, and shareholders are directly responsible for the firm's debts.

K

key consultant: A person particularly knowledgeable about his or her own culture who is a major source of the anthropologist's information.

kindred: A unique kin network made up of all the people related to a specific individual in a bilateral kinship system.

kinesics: The study of body position, movement, facial expressions, and gaze.

kinship: A culturally defined relationship established on the basis of blood ties or through marriage.

kinship system: The totality of kin relations, kin groups, and terms for classifying kin in a society.

kinship terminology: The words used to identify different categories of kin in a particular culture.

Kula ring: A pattern of exchange among trading partners in the Trobriands and other South Pacific islands.

L

law: A means of social control and dispute management through the systematic application of force by those in society with the authority to do so.

leadership: The ability to direct an enterprise or action.

ledger drawings: Drawings in ledger books made by some Native

American peoples to record personal and historical events.

leveling mechanism: A practice, value, or form of social organization that evens out wealth within a society.

levirate: The custom whereby a man marries the widow of a deceased brother.

lexicon: The total stock of words in a language.

life chances: The opportunities that people have to fulfill their potential in society.

liminal: The stage of a ritual, particularly a rite of passage, in which one has passed out of an old status but not yet entered a new one.

lineage: A group of kin whose members trace descent from a known common ancestor.

lineal kin: Blood relations linked through descent, such as Ego, Ego's mother, Ego's grandmother, and Ego's daughter.

linguistic anthropology: A branch of linguistics concerned with understanding language and its relation to culture.

M

machismo: A cultural construction of hypermasculinity as essential to the male gender role.

magic: A religious ritual believed to produce a mechanical effect by supernatural means. When magic is done correctly, believers think it must have the desired effect.

mahu: An alternative gender role in Tahiti.

mana: Religious power or energy that is concentrated in individuals or objects.

manhood puzzle: The question of why in almost all cultures masculinity is viewed not as a natural state but as a problematic status to be won through overcoming obstacles.

maquiladora: A manufacturing plant, owned by an international company, located in Mexico to take advantage of inexpensive labor there.

market exchange: An economic system in which goods and services are bought and sold at a money price determined primarily by the forces of supply and demand.

marriage: The customs, rules, and obligations that establish a socially endorsed relationship between adults and children, and between the kin groups of the married partners.

matrilineage: A lineage formed by descent in the female line.

matrilineal descent: A rule that affiliates a person to kin of both sexes related through females only.

matrilocal residence: System under which a husband lives with his wife's family after marriage.

mediation: A form of managing disputes that uses the offices of a third party to achieve voluntary agreement between disputing parties.

medical anthropology: The study of illness and health across cultures. The application an ethnographic and holistic perspective to the provision of health care services.

melanin: A pigment found in the skin, hair, and eyes of human beings, as well as many other species, that is responsible for variations in color.

menarche: A woman's first menstruation.

messianic: Focusing on the coming of an individual who will usher in a utopian world.

millenarian: One who believes that a coming catastrophe will signal the beginning of a new age and the eventual establishment of paradise.

modernization theory: A model of development that predicts that nonindustrial societies will move in the social and technological direction of industrialized nations.

monoculture plantation: An agricultural plantation specializing in the large-scale production of a single crop to be sold on the market.

monogamy: A rule that permits a person to be married to only one spouse at a time.

monotheism: Belief in a single god.

morpheme: The smallest unit of language that has a meaning.

morphology: A system for creating words from sounds.

multiculturalism: The view that cultural diversity in the United States is a positive value and makes an important contribution to American national identity.

multinational corporation: A corporation that owns business enterprises or plants in more than one nation.

multiregional model: A theory that seeks to explain the transition from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens* by arguing that different populations of *Homo sapiens* are descendant from different populations of *Homo erectus*.

multivalent: Containing many different and sometimes contradictory meanings in a single word, idea, or object.

mutation: A random change in genetic material; the ultimate source of all biological variation.

myths: Sacred stories or narratives.

N

nation-state: A sovereign, geographically based state that identifies itself as having a distinctive national culture and historical experience.

Native American Church: A religious revitalization movement among Native Americans, also known as the Peyote religion.

native anthropologist: An anthropologist who does fieldwork in his or her own culture.

nativism: A religious movement that aims to restore a golden age believed to have existed in the past.

natural selection: The mechanism of evolutionary change; changes in traits of living organisms that occur over time as a result of differential reproductive success among individuals.

naturalism: Endowing features of the natural world, such as rivers and mountains, with spirit, soul, or other supernatural characteristics.

Neanderthal: Members of a population of archaic *Homo sapiens* that lived between 130,000 and 35,000 years ago.

negative reciprocity: Exchange conducted for the purpose of material advantage and the desire to get something for nothing.

neo-evolutionism: A theoretical perspective concerned with the historical change of culture from small-scale societies to extremely large-scale societies.

neolocal residence: System under which a couple establishes an independent household after marriage.

neo-Marxism: A theoretical perspective concerned with applying the insights of Marxist thought to anthropology; neo-Marxists modify Marxist analysis to make it appropriate to the investigation of small-scale, non-Western societies.

nomadic pastoralism A form of pastoralism in which the whole social group (men, women, children) and their animals move in search of pasture.

nonunilineal descent: Any system of descent in which both father's and mother's lineages have equal claim to the individual.

norm: An ideal cultural pattern that influences behavior in a society.

nuclear family: A family organized around the conjugal tie (the relationship between husband and wife) and consisting of a husband, a wife, and their children.

O

Oldowan tools: Stone tools made by *Homo habilis*.

omnivore: An animal that eats both plant and animal foods.

open system: A stratification system based primarily on achievement.

oricha: An African deity identified with a Catholic saint in Voodoo and Santeria.

Orientalism: Scholarship and art generated by Europeans focusing on the Middle East.

P

paleoanthropology: The subdiscipline of anthropology concerned with tracing the evolution of humankind in the fossil record.

parallax: The slight difference in the image of an object seen from two different vantage points.

parallel cousins: The children of a parent's same-sex siblings (mother's sisters, father's brothers).

participant-observation: The fieldwork technique that involves gathering cultural data by observing people's behavior and participating in their lives.

pastoralism: A food-getting strategy that depends on the care of domesticated herd animals.

pater: The socially designated father of a child, who may or may not be the biological father.

patrilineage: A lineage formed by descent in the male line.

patrilineal descent: A rule that affiliates a person to kin of both sexes related through males only.

patrilocal residence: System under which a bride lives with her husband's family after marriage.

peasants: Rural cultivators who produce for the subsistence of their households but are also integrated into larger, complex state societies.

peonage: The practice of holding a person in bondage or partial slavery in order for them to work off a debt or serve a prison sentence.

per capita GNP: The total market value of all goods and services produced in a country in a year divided by the population of that country; often used as a general measure of the wealth of a nation and the quality of life of its citizens.

peyote: A small hallucinogenic cactus found in southern Texas and northern Mexico.

Peyote Road: The moral principles followed by members of the Native American Church.

pharmacopoeia: A collection of preparations used as medications.

phratry: A unilineal descent group composed of a number of clans whose members feel themselves to be closely related.

phone: A sound made by humans and used in any language.

phoneme: The smallest significant unit of sound in a language. A phonemic system is the sound system of a language.

phonology: The sound system of a language.

pidgin: A language of contact and trade composed of features of the original languages or two or more societies. (Compare with creole.)

pillage: To strip an area of money, goods, or raw materials through the use of physical violence or the threat of violence.

plasticity: The ability of humans to change their behavior in response to a wide range of environmental demands.

political ideology: The shared beliefs and values that legitimize the distribution and use of power in a particular society.

political organization: The patterned ways in which power is legitimately used in a society to regulate behavior.

political process: The ways in which individuals and groups use power to achieve public goals.

polyandry: A rule permitting a woman to have more than one husband at a time.

polygamy: A rule allowing more than one spouse.

polygyny: A rule permitting a man to have more than one wife at a time.

polytheism: Belief in many gods.

population density: The number of people inhabiting a given area of land.

positivism: A philosophical system concerned with positive facts and

- phenomena and excluding speculation on origins or ultimate causes.
- postmodernism:** A theoretical perspective focusing on issues of power and voice. Postmodernists suggest that anthropological accounts are partial truths reflecting the background, training, and social position of their authors.
- potlatch:** A form of competitive giveaway practiced by the Kwakiutl and other groups of the Northwest Coast of North America.
- power:** The ability to control resources in one's own interest.
- prayer:** Any communication between people and spirits or gods in which people praise, plead, or request without assurance of results.
- prehistoric:** Societies for which we have no usable written records.
- prelanguage:** A language of human ancestors consisting of blended sounds; a hypothesized phase in the evolution of language.
- prestige:** Social honor or respect.
- priest:** One who is formally elected or appointed to a full-time religious office.
- primate:** A member of a biological order of mammals that includes human beings, apes, and monkeys as well as prosimians (lemurs, tarsiers, and others).
- "primitive" art:** The term used by the Western art world for the art of non-Western, "tribal" societies.
- private/public dichotomy:** A gender system in which women's status is lowered by their almost exclusive cultural identification with the home and children, whereas men are identified with public, prestigious, economic, and political roles.
- productive resources:** Material goods, natural resources, or information that are used to create other goods or information.
- productivity:** (1) The idea that humans can combine words and sounds into new, meaningful utterances they have never before heard. (2) Yield per person per unit of land.
- proxemics:** The study of the cultural use of interpersonal space.
- R**
- racism:** The belief that some human populations are superior to others because of inherited, genetically transmitted characteristics.
- rain forest:** Tropical woodland characterized by high rainfall and a dense canopy of broad-leaved evergreen trees.
- rammage:** A kinship group produced by an ambilineal descent system.
- random sample:** A selection of items from a total set, chosen on a random, or unbiased, basis.
- rank society:** A society characterized by institutionalized differences in prestige but no important restrictions on access to basic resources.
- rebellion:** The attempt of a group within society to force a redistribution of resources and power.
- reciprocity:** A mutual give-and-take among people of equal status.
- redistribution:** A form of exchange in which goods are collected from or contributed by members of the group and then redistributed to the group, often in the form of ceremonial feasts.
- refugees:** People who have been uprooted from their native lands and forced to cross national boundaries.
- reincorporation:** The third phase of a rite of passage during which participants are returned to their community with a new status.
- religion:** A social institution characterized by sacred stories; symbols and symbolism; the proposed existence of immeasurable beings, powers, states, places, and qualities; rituals and means of addressing the supernatural; specific practitioners; and change.
- replacement model:** The theory that modern people evolved first in Africa and then spread to inhabit virtually all the world, out-competing or destroying other human populations in the process.
- revolution:** An attempt to overthrow an existing form of political organization.
- rickets:** A childhood disease characterized by the softening and bending of leg and pelvis bones. Rickets is related to insufficiency of vitamin D and/or calcium.
- rite of intensification:** A ritual structured to reinforce the values and norms of a community and to strengthen group identity.
- rite of passage:** A ritual that moves an individual from one social status to another.
- ritual:** A patterned act that involves the manipulation of religious symbols.
- S**
- sacred narratives:** Stories held to be holy and true by members of a religious tradition. Sacred narratives tell of historical events, heroes, gods, spirits, and the origin of all things.
- sacrifice:** An offering made to increase the efficacy of a prayer or the religious purity of an individual.
- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis:** The hypothesis that perceptions and understandings of time, space, and matter are conditioned by the structure of a language.
- scapulomancy:** Divination using the shoulder blade of an animal.
- secret societies:** West African societies whose membership is secret or whose rituals are known only to society members. Their most significant function is the initiation of boys and girls into adulthood.
- sedentary:** Settled, living in one place.
- segmentary lineage system:** A form of sociopolitical organization in which multiple descent groups (usually patrilineages) form at different levels and function in different contexts.

semantics: The subsystem of a language that relates words to meaning.

separation: The first stage of a rite of passage in which individuals are removed from their community or status.

sex: The biological difference between male and female.

shaman: An individual who is socially recognized as having the ability to mediate between the world of humanity and the world of gods or spirits but who is not a recognized official of any religious organization.

social complexity: The number of groups and their interrelationships in a society.

social differentiation: The relative access individuals and groups have to basic material resources, wealth, power, and prestige.

social mobility: Movement from one social class to another.

society: A group of people who depend on one another for survival or well-being as well as the relationships among such people, including their status and roles.

sociobiology: A theoretical perspective that explores the relationship between human cultural behavior and genetics.

sociolinguistics: A specialization within anthropological linguistics that focuses on speech performance.

sorcery: The conscious and intentional use of magic.

sororal polygyny: A form of polygyny in which a man marries sisters.

sororate: The custom whereby, when a man's wife dies, her sister is given to him as a wife.

species: In biological classification, a group of organisms whose members are similar to one another and are able to reproduce with one another but not with members of other species.

Standard Spoken American English (SSAE): The form of English spoken by most of the American middle class.

state: A hierarchical, centralized form of political organization in which a central government has a legal monopoly over the use of force.

stem family: A nuclear family with a dependent adult added on.

stratified society: A society characterized by formal, permanent social and economic inequality in which some people are denied access to basic resources.

structural anthropology: A theoretical perspective that holds that all cultures reflect similar deep, underlying patterns and that anthropologists should attempt to decipher these patterns.

subculture: A system of perceptions, values, beliefs, and customs that are significantly different from those of a larger, dominant culture within the same society.

subsistence strategy: The way a society transforms environmental resources with food.

succession: The transfer of office or social position between generations.

surplus value of labor: Marxist term for the difference between the wages a worker is paid and the value of their contribution to production to the capitalist.

sweatshop: Generally a pejorative term for a factory with working conditions that may include low wages, long hours, inadequate ventilation, and physical, mental, or sexual abuse.

swidden (slash and burn) cultivation: A form of cultivation in which a field is cleared by felling the trees and burning the brush.

symbol: Something that stands for something else; central to culture.

syncretism: The merging of elements of two or more religious traditions to produce a new religion.

syntax: The part of grammar that has to do with the arrangement of words to form phrases and sentences.

synthetic language: A language that has words with a great many

phemes and complex, highly irregular rules for their combination.

T

termite fishing: The learned use of twigs or blades of grass to extract termites from their mounds characteristic of some groups of chimpanzees.

totem: An animal, plant, or other aspect of the natural world held to be ancestral or to have other intimate relationships with members of a group.

totemism: Religious practices centered around animals, plants, or other aspects of the natural world held to be ancestral or to have other intimate relationships with members of a group.

transculturation: The transformation of adopted cultural traits, resulting in new cultural forms.

transhumant pastoralism: A form of pastoralism in which herd animals are moved regularly throughout the year to different areas as pasture becomes available.

transnationalism: A pattern of close ties and frequent visits maintained by immigrants with their native country.

tribe: A culturally distinct population whose members consider themselves descended from the same ancestor.

tributary mode of exchange: The primary producers, whether pastoral or agricultural, are allowed access to the means of production, and tribute is exacted from them by political or military means.

trickster: A supernatural entity that does not act in the best interests of humans.

two-spirit role: An alternative gender role in native North America (formerly called *berdache*).

U

unilineal descent: A rule specifying that membership in a descent group is based on links through

either the maternal or the paternal line, but not both.

universal grammar: A basic set of principles, conditions, and rules that underlie all languages.

urban archaeology: The archaeological investigation of current-day cities.

usufructory rights: The right to use something (usually land) but not to sell it or alter it in substantial ways.

V

value: A culturally defined idea of what is true, right, and beautiful.

vassalage: A condition of hereditary bondage in which the use of land is granted in return for payment, homage, and military service or its equivalent.

“Venus” figurines: Small stylized statues of females made in a variety of materials by early modern humans.

vision quest: A practice common among many Native American groups in which individuals seek

to achieve direct contact with the supernatural.

vitalism: A religious movement that looks toward the creation of a utopian future that does not resemble a past golden age.

voluntary association: A social group based on voluntary membership, typically found in complex, urban societies.

W

war (warfare): A formally organized and culturally recognized pattern of collective violence directed toward other societies, or between segments within a larger society.

wealth: The accumulation of material resources or access to the means of producing these resources.

Wiccan (or neopagan): A member of a new religion that claims descent from pre-Christian nature worship; a modern-day witch.

witchcraft: The ability to harm others by harboring malevolent thoughts about them; the practice of sorcery.

word: The smallest part of a sentence that can be said alone and still retain its meaning.

World Bank: Officially called the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, an international agency that provides technical assistance and loans to promote international trade and economic development, especially to poor nations. The World Bank has been heavily criticized for interfering in the affairs of these nations.

world music: A musical fusion form, based on local musical traditions, that incorporates music from cultures throughout the world.

X

xanith: An alternative gender role in Oman on the Saudi Arabian peninsula.

Z

zoomorphic: Having an animal shape.

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Note: Glossary words are indicated with an italic *g*; tables with an italic *t*; figures with an italic *f*; maps with an italic *m*.

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