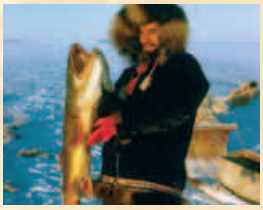
PART I Introduction to Cultural Anthropology



1 Anthropology and the Study of Culture



2 Methods in Cultural Anthropology



Anthropologists at Work

BRIAN CRAIK is a federal relations and environmental impact assessment anthropologist. "Working together" is his basic principle for achieving First Nations' rights in Canada. In his current position, Craik is the director of federal relations for the Grand Council of the Crees. The Cree People, or Eeyouch or Eenouch, number over 14 000. They live in the area of eastern James Bay and southern Hudson Bay in northern Québec.

In working more than 30 years as an applied anthropologist, Craik has combined his anthropological training with political skills to assist the Cree in seeking social and environmental justice. Early in his career, he lived with the Waskaganish Cree for many years. He is the first anthropologist in the world to become fluent in the Cree language (Preston 2006). After studying for his doctorate in anthropology at McMaster University in the early 1970s and being the first student to pass his language exam in the Cree language, Craik began working as a consultant for various Cree communities on issues such as the proposed Nottaway-Broadback-Rupert Project.

In 1984, Craik joined Canada's Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In that role, he helped to implement the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA) that was signed in 1975. The JBNQA was a benchmark settlement related to land-claims issues and compensation for damages. It awarded $225 million in compensation to the James Bay Cree and the Inuit of northern Québec to be paid by the federal and and Québec governments. The agreement defined Native rights to the land and laid out various protections to ensure the maintenance of these rights in the face of the undesirable social and environmental effects of commercial development. As part of this effort, Craik worked on the passage of the Cree/Naskapi (of Québec) Act, Canada's first Aboriginal local government act, and helped assure the approval of related funding.

In 1987, Craik left the government to return to private consulting. He worked with the Lubicon Crees of Alberta, the Inuit of northern Québec, the Micmac of Conn River, and the Mohawks of Kahnawake. In 1989, he advised the James Bay Cree on relations with the federal government and on the environmental and social issues related to the Great Whale Project. The Cree People appointed him to two of the environmental committees that reviewed the project. Craik played a central role in the 1989–1994 campaign that stopped the Great Whale River hydroelectric project. From 1997 to 1999, he negotiated an agreement between the Crees and the federal government on Canada Manpower Services and has worked to implement the 2002 New Relationship Agreement between the Crees and Québec's government—Craik also helped to review the Eastmain 1A–Rupert Diversion Project that the New Relationship Agreement contains.

The Cree People have faced many threats to their lifeway, culture, and environment. The Grand Council of the Crees was formed in 1974 in response to the James Bay Hydroelectric Project (see www.gcc.ca/gcc/fedrelations.php). Their political mobilization was inspired by the need to "stand in the way of development projects designed to serve others" (Craik 2004). With Craik's long-term assistance in their struggle, they have sharpened their political and economic power and skills. They now choose when to block a destructive project or when to work to change the terms of a project in order to mitigate damage to their culture and land and to reap some of the benefits for their own group-defined development goals.





1

Anthropology and the Study of Culture

INTRODUCING ANTHROPOLOGY

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Biological or Physical Anthropology

Linguistic Anthropology

Cultural Anthropology

Applied Anthropology: Separate Field or Crosscutting Focus?

INTRODUCING CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

- **Lessons Applied: Orangutan Research Leads to Orangutan Advocacy**

A Brief History of Cultural Anthropology

The Concept of Culture

- **Multiple Cultural Worlds: Globalization and Tomato Production**

Multiple Cultural Worlds

- ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE: **San Peoples of Southern Africa**

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Key Questions

- WHAT is anthropology?
- WHAT is cultural anthropology?
- HOW is cultural anthropology relevant to a career in the world of work?

Folk dancers in Oaxaca, Southern Mexico. *(Source: Bob Krist/CORBIS)*

Old bones, *Jurassic Park*, cannibalism, hidden treasure, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. The popular impression of anthropology is based mainly on movies and television shows that depict anthropologists as adventurers and heroes. Many anthropologists do have adventures, and some discover treasures such as ancient pottery, medicinal plants, and jade carvings. But most of their research is not glamorous. Some anthropologists spend years in difficult physical conditions searching for the earliest fossils of our ancestors. Others live among, and study first-hand, how people work and organize family life in a setting permeated by modern technology. Some anthropologists conduct laboratory analyses of the contents of tooth enamel to reveal where an individual once lived. Others study designs on prehistoric pottery to learn what the symbols mean, or observe nonhuman primates such as chimpanzees or orangutans in the wild to learn how they live.

Anthropology is the study of humanity, including our prehistoric origins and contemporary human diversity. Compared to other disciplines that study humanity (such as history, psychology, economics, political science, and sociology), anthropology is broader in scope. Anthropology covers a much greater span of time than these disciplines and it encompasses a broader range of topics.

Introducing Anthropology

The breadth of topics in anthropology matches its breadth in research methods, which range from scientific to humanistic. Some anthropologists consider anthropology to be a *science*: a form of inquiry that involves first the formulation of a hypothesis, or hunch, about the way things work and then observation or testing to see whether the hypothesis is correct. Other anthropologists pursue a *humanistic approach*, which is a subjective way of understanding humanity through the study of people's art, music, poetry, language, and other forms of symbolic expression. This approach avoids working from a pre-set hypothesis but instead seeks insight through culturally informed understanding.

No matter whether it is pursued from a more scientific or a more humanistic perspective, anthropology seeks to produce new knowledge, and this is its primary goal as an academic field of inquiry. But its findings are also relevant to significant real-world issues and therefore to the public at large. Anthropologists' research findings can influence government policy-makers, businesses, technology developers, health-care providers, teachers, and the general public. You will learn more about these contributions in this chapter and throughout the book.



WHAT ARE your impressions of anthropology? How did you acquire them? Make notes of these impressions and review them at the end of the course.

In North America, anthropology is divided into four fields (see Figure 1.1) that focus on separate, but connected, subject matter related to humanity:

- **Biological anthropology** (or physical anthropology): the study of humans as biological organisms, including their evolution and contemporary variation.
- **Archaeology** (or prehistory): the study of past human cultures through their material remains.
- **Linguistic anthropology**: the study of human communication, including its origins, history, and contemporary variation and change.
- **Cultural anthropology** (or social anthropology): the study of living peoples and their cultures, including variation and change. **Culture** refers to people's learned and shared behaviours and beliefs.

Some anthropologists argue that a fifth field, applied anthropology, should be added. **Applied anthropology** (also called practising anthropology or practical anthropology) is the use of anthropological knowledge to prevent or solve problems or to shape and achieve policy goals. The authors of this book take the position that the application of knowledge, just like theory, is an integral part of each of the four fields and should be integrated within each of them.

The sheer amount of knowledge in the various fields has increased over time, and apparently greater differences in theory, methods, and subject matter have emerged, making interchange across fields less frequent or useful. At least two Canadian universities have split their departments into anthropology and archaeology. Only about one-third of the departments of anthropology in Canada include the four

anthropology: the study of humanity, including our prehistoric origins and contemporary human diversity.
biological anthropology or **physical anthropology**: the study of humans as biological organisms, including their evolution and contemporary variation.
archaeology or **prehistory**: the study of past human cultures through their material remains.
linguistic anthropology: the study of human communication, including its origins, history, and contemporary variation and change.
cultural anthropology or **social anthropology**: the study of living peoples and their cultures, including variation and change.
culture: people's learned and shared behaviour and beliefs.
applied anthropology or **practising anthropology** or **practical anthropology**: the use of anthropological knowledge to prevent or solve problems or to shape and achieve policy goals.

subfields within one department. Linguistics is most likely to be omitted, reflecting the British university pattern of considering linguistics outside the scope of anthropology (Darnell 1998). The distinctly Canadian triad of archaeology, ethnology, and folklore may have its roots in government-supported museums rather than US departments of anthropology (Preston 1983:288).

Archaeology

The field of archaeology is devoted to studying the lifeways of past cultures by examining material remains. Data include stone and bone tools, skeletal material, remains of buildings, and refuse such as pot shards (broken pieces of pottery) and coprolites (fossilized fecal matter). Since its beginnings in the mid-eighteenth century, archaeology has contributed knowledge about towns and villages, as well as the emergence of the great early states of Egypt, Phoenicia, the Indus Valley, and Mexico. New research is questioning some previous conclusions about "kingdoms." For example, excavations at a royal burial site of the Old Silla Kingdom of Korea, which extended from 57 BCE (Before Common Era) to 668 CE (Common Era), reveal that queens were often the rulers (Nelson 1993). This finding challenges the earlier generalization that centralized state systems always involve male political dominance.

An example of a relatively new area of research is archaeologists' examination of European colonialism and its impact on pre-colonial states (Graham 1998). In the Maya area, for example, where an interest in the civilization of the Classic Maya period has dominated research, archaeologists have documented intensive occupation from the time of the so-called Maya collapse, in the ninth century, to the end of the seventeenth century (Pendergast, Jones, and Graham 1993). This long sequence has enabled them to chart the changes that took place as the Spanish administrators and priests colonized the Maya world, and the result has been documentation of the continuity of cultural, social, and technological traditions from the ancient past to the modern times.

The archaeology of the recent past or social archaeology is another important research direction; an example is the "Garbage Project," which is being conducted by archaeologists at the University of Arizona at Tucson (Rathje and Murphy 1992). The "Garbage Archaeologists" excavated the Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island, near New York City. Its mass is estimated at over 90 million tonnes and its volume at 82 million cubic metres. Thus, it is one of the largest human-made structures in North America. Through excavation of artifacts such as pop-top can tabs, disposable diapers, cosmetic containers, and telephone books, the Garbage Archaeologists are learning about recent consumption patterns. These findings also provide lessons for the future. They reveal how long it takes for contemporary goods to decompose. Urban planners and other people interested in recycling may be surprised to learn that the kinds of garbage that people often blame for filling up landfills, such as fast-food packaging, polystyrene foam, and disposable diapers, are less serious problems than paper. Paper, especially newspaper, is the major culprit because of sheer quantity. This kind of information can help improve recycling efforts in North America.

Biological or Physical Anthropology

Biological anthropology encompasses three subfields. The first, *primatology*, is the study of the nonhuman members of the order of mammals called primates, which includes a wide range of animals from very small, nocturnal creatures to gorillas, the largest members. Primatologists study nonhuman primates in the wild and in captivity. They record and analyze how the animals spend their time, collect and share food, form social groups, rear offspring, develop leadership patterns, and experience conflict and conflict resolution. Primatologists are well known for their pioneering work in studying non-human primates in their natural habitats. Jane Goodall's (1971, 1986) research on Tanzanian chimpanzees revealed rich details about their social relationships. Linda Fedigan (1992) has shown how females play significant roles in the social structure of primate groups, and provided a feminist critique of theories of primate and human evolution.

The second subfield is *paleoanthropology*, the study of human evolution on the basis of the fossil record. One important activity is the search for fossils to increase the amount and quality of the evidence related to the way human evolution occurred. Discoveries of new fossils provide "ah-hah!" moments and arresting photographs for the covers of popular magazines. A less glamorous but equally important activity is *paleopathology*, the study of diseases in prehistory. Analysis of trace elements in bones, such as strontium, provides surprisingly detailed information about the diets, activities, and health of



Primatologist Dian Fossey interacts with a gorilla during fieldwork in Rwanda.

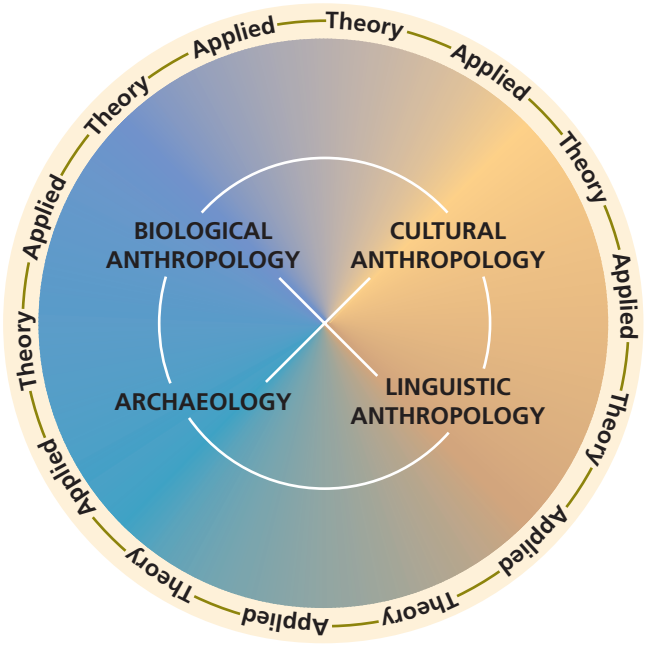


FIGURE 1.1 The Four Fields of Anthropology

prehistoric people, including whether they were primarily meat eaters or vegetarians and how their diets affected their health. Stress marks on bones provide information on work patterns—for example, skeletons of nineteenth-century voyageurs from a fur trade post in Alberta show evidence of arthritis of the spine, shoulder, and elbow, and robust muscle attachments compatible with paddling heavy freight canoes (Lovell and Lai 1994). We can also learn age at death, age at birth of first child for a woman, and birth rate per woman. Data from several time periods provide clues about how the transition to agriculture altered people's health and longevity (M.N. Cohen 1989; Cohen and Armelagos 1984; Cohen and Bennett 1993).

The third subfield is the study of *contemporary human biological variation*. Anthropologists working in this area define, measure, and seek to explain differences in the biological makeup and behaviour of contemporary humans. In the past, biological anthropologists defined what they perceived as significant differences among modern humans as "racial" (quotation marks indicate that the meaning of this term is contested). Early anthropologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries used the term "race" to refer to social categories defined on the basis of skin colour, hair texture, head shape, and facial features. These biological markers were supposedly associated with in-born ways of behaving and thinking. The controversial book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Herrnstein and Murray 1994), is an example of such thinking in the United States in its assertion that "race" determines intelligence and class position. In fact, DNA evidence clearly demonstrates that "races," defined on the basis of external physical features, are not scientifically valid categories; they lack internal consistency and clear boundaries. Anthropologists do, however, recognize the reality of racism and that many people in many contexts worldwide discriminate against people on the basis of their imputed race.



Maya people watch as forensic anthropologist Francisco de Leon conducts an exhumation of more than fifty bodies in a highland Guatemalan village in 1997. ■ (Source: AP/Wide World Photos)

Linguistic Anthropology

Linguistic anthropology is devoted to the study of communication, mainly (but not exclusively) human languages. Linguistic anthropology has three subfields: *historical linguistics,* the study of language change over time and how languages are related; *descriptive linguistics* or structural linguistics, the study of the structure of languages; and *sociolinguistics*, the study of the relation between language and social interaction, including nonverbal communication.

Linguistic anthropology is integral to cultural anthropology since language is the primary means for transmitting culture. How we classify relatives, honour our ancestors, and describe beauty make visible beliefs and values.



Stephen Lubkemann is trained as both a cultural anthropologist and an underwater archaeologist. He is documenting the remains of the hull of DRTO-036, a vessel that wrecked in the Dry Tortugas in the mid-nineteenth century. It lies within Dry Tortugas National Park in the Florida Keys. ■ (Source: Photo by Richard Gould)

Several new directions connect linguistic anthropology to important real-world issues. First is a trend to study language in everyday use, or discourse, and how it relates to power structures at local, regional, and international levels (Duranti 1997a). In some contexts, powerful people speak more than less powerful people, whereas sometimes the more powerful people speak less. Power relations may also be expressed through intonation, word choice, and such nonverbal forms of communication as posture and dress. Second is increased attention to the role of information technology in communication, especially the Internet and cell phones. Third is attention to the increasingly rapid extinction of indigenous languages worldwide.

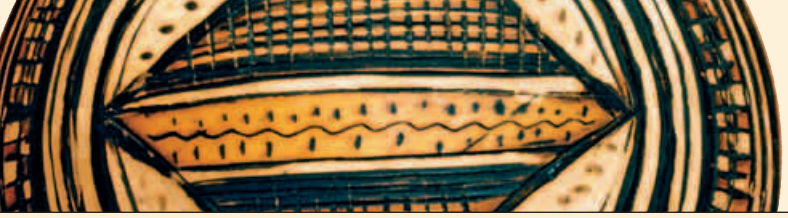
Early philologists such as Horatio Hale (1817–1896), who worked with the elders in the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario, in the 1870s, recorded and analyzed disappearing First Nations languages, concluding, for example, that Tutelo was related to Siouan language stock, that Mohawk was the senior language of the original Five Nations, and that Huron was nearer proto-Iroquoian than Mohawk. Today, most "disappearing" languages have either been recorded or lost, and most previously unwritten languages have been transferred into written form.

Cultural Anthropology

Cultural anthropology is the study of contemporary people and their cultures. It considers variations and similarities across cultures, and how cultures change over



Iron Bridge, England, is an important site of industrial archaeology. Considered the "birthplace of industry," the site includes the world's first iron bridge and remains of factories, furnaces, and canals. Take a virtual tour of the site by going to www.ironbridge.org.uk. ■ (Source: Barbara Miller and Bernard Wood)



Lessons Applied

ORANGUTAN RESEARCH LEADS TO ORANGUTAN ADVOCACY

Primatologist Biruté Galdikas (pronounced Beer-OO-tay GAL-dee-kas) first went to Indonesia to study orangutans in 1971 (Galdikas 1995). She soon became aware of the threat to the orangutans from local people who, as a way of making a lot of money, capture them for sale to zoos around the world. These poachers separate the young from their mothers, often killing the mothers in the process. Sometimes local police locate and reclaim these captured orphans. They try to return them to the rainforest, but the transition into an unknown niche is extremely difficult and many do not survive.

Orangutan juveniles are highly dependent on their mothers, maintaining close bodily contact with them for at least two years and nursing until they are eight. Because of this long period of orangutans' need for maternal contact, Galdikas set up her camp to serve as a way station for orphans and she became the maternal figure. Her first "infant" was an orphaned orang, Sugito, who clung to her for years as if she were its own mother.

Now, the survival of orangutans on Borneo and Sumatra (their only habitats worldwide) is seriously endangered by massive commercial logging and illegal logging, population resettlement programs, cultivation, and other pressures on the forests where the orangutans live.

Galdikas is focusing her efforts on Orangutan preservation. She says, "I feel like I'm viewing an animal holocaust and *holocaust* is not a word I use lightly. . . . The destruction of the tropical rainforest is accelerating daily. And if orangutans go extinct in the wild, paradise is gone" (Dreifus 2000:D3). Across all ranges, it is estimated that during the twentieth century the orangutan population experienced a huge decrease, from 315 000 in 1900 to 44 000 in 2000 (IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group 2004). Aerial surveys (Ancrenaz et al. 2005) and DNA analysis of living orangutans (Goossens et al. 2006) confirm recent and dramatic declines that, if not halted, will lead to extinction in the next few decades.



Biruté Galdikas in Indonesia. She has been studying the orangutans for over three decades and is an active supporter of conservation of their habitat. ■ (Source: © Spooner/Redmond-Callow/Gamma Press)

Galdikas has studied orangutans longer than anyone else. She links her knowledge of and love for the orangutans with applied anthropology and advocacy on their

time. Cultural anthropologists learn about culture by spending extended periods of time living with the people they study (discussed in Chapter 2).

Since World War II, cultural anthropology has grown dramatically in North America. This growth has brought about the development of many specialties within the field. Prominent areas of specialization include economic anthropology, political anthropology, medical anthropology, psychological anthropology, and development anthropology (the study of the effects and patterns of international development policies and plans in cross-cultural perspective). In the rest of this book, we cover these and other topics.

Applied Anthropology: Separate Field or Crosscutting Focus?

Applied anthropology, or practising anthropology, involves the application of anthropological knowledge to help solve social problems. Richard Salisbury (1983), who developed applied anthropology at McGill University in Montréal, saw applied work as the growth point of anthropology in Canada, and trained many Canadian anthropologists to put their research to practice in fields such as Native land claims, health care, and ethnic diversity. Active engagement with First Nations peoples and rural communities characterized the work of



MAP 1.1 Orangutan Regions in Malaysia and Indonesia. Orangutans are the only great apes living outside Africa. Fossil evidence indicates that their habitats in the past extended throughout Southeast Asia and southern China. They are now limited to pockets of forest on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo.

behalf. Since the beginning of her fieldwork in Borneo, she has maintained and expanded the Camp Leakey field site and research centre (named after her mentor, Louis Leakey, who inspired her research on orangutans). In 1986, she co-founded the Orangutan Foundation International (OFI), which now has several chapters worldwide. She has published scholarly articles and given public talks around the world on her research. Educating the public about the imminent danger to the orangutans is an important part of her activism. Galdikas and other orangutan experts are lobbying international institutions such as the World Bank to promote forest conservation as part of their loan agreements.

Camp Leakey employs many local people in diverse roles, including anti-poaching guards. The OFI sponsors study tours to Borneo for international students and opportunities for them to contribute to conservation efforts.

The success of Galdikas's activism depends on her deep knowledge of orangutans. Over the decades, she has filled thousands of notebooks with her observations of orangutan behaviour, along with such details about their habitat as the fruiting times of different species of trees. A donor recently gave software and funding for staff to analyze the raw data (Hawn 2002). The findings will indicate how much territory is needed to support a viable orangutan population. In turn, this process will facilitate conservation policy and planning.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- Some people claim that science should not be linked with advocacy because it will create biases in research. Others say that scientists have an obligation to use their knowledge for good causes. Where do you stand in this debate and why?

francophone anthropologists in the 1960s. Many anthropologists in small colleges and universities engaged in community-based applied research. One of the defining features of Canadian anthropology is the integration of basic and applied research. From the earliest work of nineteenth-century ethnologists to the expert witnesses in current land claim issues, we find the widely shared assumption that anthropological research should not be morally or ethically neutral (Darnell 1998:155). Advocacy roles, however, require sensitivity to complex moral and political contexts.

Applied anthropology is an important thread that weaves through the entire discipline of anthropology (Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and van Willigen 2006). Application of knowledge to help solve particular social problems is, and should be, part of all four fields. Just like theory, application is a valid aspect of every branch of the discipline. Many archaeologists in Canada are employed, for example, in *cultural resource management* (CRM), undertaking professional assessments of possible archaeological remains before construction projects such as roads and buildings can proceed. Biological anthropology has many applied aspects. For example, *forensic anthropologists* participate in criminal investigations through identifying bodily remains. Others work in the area of primate conservation (see the Lessons Applied box on page XX). Applied

linguistic anthropologists consult with educational institutions about how to improve standardized tests for bilingual populations, or they may do policy research for governments. Development anthropology refers to an aspect of applied anthropology concerned with how so-called developing countries change and how knowledge in anthropology can play a role in formulating and implementing more appropriate kinds of change.

Many anthropologists are concerned that applied anthropology should be addressing more directly and with greater force the effects of globalization, particularly some of its negative consequences such as the increasing wealth gap between powerful industrialized countries and less powerful, less industrialized countries (Hackenberg 2000). This need takes anthropologists in a challenging direction since it involves the study of global-local interactions and change over time, both important parts of cultural anthropology's focus. Moreover, it asks that cultural anthropologists abandon an attitude of non-involvement in change. One anthropologist goes so far as to ask, "Can anthropology in the 21st century be anything except applied anthropology?" (Cleveland 2000:373).

Introducing Cultural Anthropology

Cultural anthropology is devoted to studying human cultures worldwide, both their similarities and differences. Ultimately, cultural anthropology decentres us from our own cultures, teaching us to look at ourselves from the "outside" as somewhat "strange." Cultural anthropology makes "the strange familiar and the familiar strange" (Spiro 1990). A good example of making the familiar strange is the case of the Nacirema, a culture first described in 1956:

> They are a North American group living in the territory between the Canadian Cree, the Yaqui and the Tarahumare of Mexico, and the Carib and the Arawak of the Antilles. Little is known of their origin, though tradition states that they came from the east. According to Nacirema mythology, their nation was originated by a culture hero, Notgnihsaw, who is otherwise known for two great feats of strength—the throwing of a piece of wampum across the river Pa-To-Mac and the chopping down of a cherry tree in which the Spirit of Truth resided. (Miner 1965 [1956]:415)

The anthropologist goes on to describe the Nacirema's intense focus on the human body and their many private rituals. He provides a detailed account of a daily ritual performed within the home in a specially constructed shrine area:

> 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. . . . 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. (1965:415–416)

If you do not recognize this tribe, try spelling its name backwards. (*Note:* Please forgive Miner for his use of the masculine pronoun in describing Nacirema society in general; his writings are several decades old.)

In the following section, we provide a brief history of cultural anthropology and its theoretical foundations. We also include discussion of the concept of culture; important cultural categories based on gender, race and ethnicity, and age; some distinctive features of cultural anthropology; and an overview of three major debates in cultural anthropology.

A Brief History of Cultural Anthropology

The distant origins of cultural anthropology go back to writers such as Herodotus (fifth century BCE, or Before the Common Era), Marco Polo (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries), and Ibn Khaldun (fourteenth century), who travelled extensively and wrote reports about cultures they encountered. More recent conceptual roots are found in writers of the French Enlightenment, such as philosopher Charles Montesquieu, who wrote in the first half of the eighteenth century. His book, *The Spirit of the Laws*, published in 1748 [1949], discussed the temperament, appearance, and government of various people around the world. Montesquieu explained cultural differences as due to the differing climates in which people lived (Barnard 2000:22ff). European colonial expansion prompted Enlightenment thinkers to question the

functionalism: the theory that a culture is similar to a biological organism, in which parts work to support the operation and maintenance of the whole.
holism: the perspective in anthropology that cultures are complex systems that cannot be fully understood without paying attention to their different components, including economics, social organization, and ideology.
cultural relativism: the perspective that each culture must be understood in terms of the values and ideas of that culture and should not be judged by the standards of another.

FIGURE 1.2 Key Figures in Cultural Anthropology

Late Nineteenth Century	
Sir Edward Tylor	Armchair anthropology, first definition of culture
Sir James Frazer	Armchair anthropology, comparative study of religion
Lewis Henry Morgan	Insider's view, cultural evolution, comparative method
Early Twentieth Century	
Bronislaw Malinowski	Functionalism, holism, participant observation
Franz Boas	Cultural relativism, historical particularism, advocacy
Margaret Mead	Personality and culture, cultural constructionism, public anthropology
Ruth Benedict	Personality and culture, national character studies
Zora Neale Hurston	Black culture, women's roles, ethnographic novels
Mid- and Late Twentieth Century and Early Twenty-First Century	
Claude Lévi-Strauss	Symbolic analysis, French structuralism
Beatrice Medicine	Native American anthropology
Eleanor Leacock	Anthropology of colonialism and indigenous peoples
Marvin Harris	Cultural materialism, comparison, theory building
Mary Douglas	Symbolic anthropology
Michelle Rosaldo	Feminist anthropology
Clifford Geertz	Interpretive anthropology, thick description of local culture
Laura Nader	Legal anthropology, "studying up"
George Marcus	Critique of culture, critique of cultural anthropology
Gilbert Herdt	Gay anthropology
Nancy Scheper-Hughes	Critical medical anthropology
Leith Mullings	Anti-racist anthropology
Sally Engle Merry	Globalization and human rights

accuracy of the biblical narrative of human origins. The Bible, for example, does not mention the existence of people in the New World.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the discovery of the principles of biological evolution by Charles Darwin and others had a major impact on anthropology by offering a scientific explanation for human origins and contemporary human variation. Biological evolution says that early forms evolve into later forms through the process of natural selection, whereby the most biologically fit organisms survive to reproduce while those that are less fit die out. Darwin's model is, thus, one of continuous progress of increasing fitness through struggle among competing organisms.

The most important founding figures of cultural anthropology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include Sir Edward Tylor and Sir James Frazer in England and Lewis Henry Morgan in the United States (see Figure 1.2). Inspired by the concept of biological evolution, they developed a model of cultural evolution whereby all cultures evolve from lower to higher forms over time. This view placed non-Western peoples at a "primitive" stage and Euro-American culture as "civilization" and assumed that non-Western cultures would either catch up to the level of Western civilization or die out.

Polish-born Bronislaw Malinowski is a major figure of early cultural anthropology. In the first half of the twentieth century, he established a theoretical approach called **functionalism**: the view that a culture is similar to a biological organism, in which parts work to support the operation and maintenance of the whole. Religion and family organization, for example, contribute to the functioning of the whole culture. Functionalism is linked to the concept of **holism**, the view that one must study all aspects of a culture in order to understand the whole culture.

Franz Boas is considered the founder of North American cultural anthropology. Born in Germany and educated in physics and geography, he came to the United States in 1887 (Patterson 2001:46ff). He brought with him a skepticism toward Western science gained from a year's study with the Inuit, the indigenous people of Baffin Island (see Map 1.2). The Inuit experience taught him that people in different cultures have different perceptions of even basic physical substances, such as water. Boas recognized the individuality and validity of different cultures. He introduced the now widely known concept of **cultural relativism**, or the view that each culture must be understood in terms of the values and ideas of that culture and not be judged by the standards of another. According to Boas, no culture is more advanced than another. His position, thus, contrasted



MAP 1.2 Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic and Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). Baffin Island is the largest island in the Canadian Arctic. Iqaluit, a town of about 3000 people, is the capital of the Nunavut territory. Kalaallit Nunaat, meaning "The Human's Land," is the world's largest island and a self-governed Danish territory. Its population of 56 000 people is mainly of mixed descent between the indigenous Kalaallit (Inuit) and Danish people.



Franz Boas is an important figure in the history of anthropology for many reasons, including his emphasis on a four-field approach and the principle of cultural relativism. ■ (Source: © Bettmann/CORBIS)

markedly with that of the nineteenth-century cultural evolutionists.

Boas promoted the detailed study of individual cultures within their own historical contexts. This approach is called *historical particularism*, or the view that individual cultures must be studied and described on their own terms and that cross-cultural comparisons and generalizations ignore the realities of individual cultures.

Boas helped to institutionalize North American anthropology as a discipline. While a professor at Columbia University, he trained many students who became prominent anthropologists. He founded several professional organizations, and he supported the development of anthropology museums. Boas was also engaged in debates about civil rights and social justice, and he carried out policy research related to these issues (Patterson 2001: 48–50). His socially progressive philosophy sometimes embroiled him in controversy. One study, commissioned by US President Theodore Roosevelt, was to examine the effects of the environment (in the sense of a person's location) on immigrants and their children. At this time, some leaders of the US government were seeking justifications for limiting the numbers of immigrants. Boas and his research team measured the height, weight, head size, and other features of over 17 000 adults and children who had migrated to the United States. The researchers found substantial differences in the measurements of the older and younger generations. Boas concluded that body size and shape can change quickly in response to a different environment. The US Immigration Commission, however, dismissed his findings, and Congress passed the Immigration Restriction Act in 1924. Through this study and many more, Boas left a legacy to anthropology that biology is not destiny and that no populations are innately inferior.

Margaret Mead, whose work is discussed in Chapter 6, was Boas's most famous student. She contributed to knowledge of South Pacific cultures, gender roles, and the impact of child-rearing practices on personality. Her scholarly works as well as her columns in popular magazines had wide influence on US child-care patterns in the 1950s. Mead was, thus, an early *public anthropologist* who took seriously the importance of bringing cultural anthropology knowledge to the general public in order to create positive social change.

The roots of Canadian anthropology are anchored in both the British/European tradition of social anthropology

cultural materialism: a theoretical position that takes material features of life, such as the environment, natural resources, and mode of production, as the bases for explaining social organization and ideology.
interpretive anthropology or **interpretivism**: the view that cultures can be understood by studying what people think about, their ideas, and the meanings that are important to them.

FIGURE 1.3 Canadian Museum Timeline

Canadian anthropology developed in close relationship to its national and regional museums.

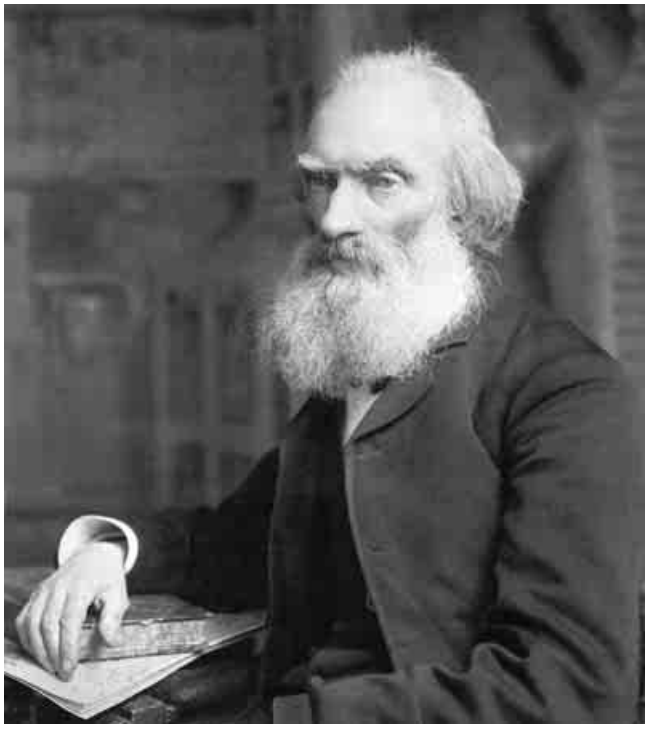
1841	1877	1910	1927	1968	1986
Queen Victoria granted £1500 for a geological survey of the provinces of Canada.	The Geological Survey was mandated to make botanical, zoological, and ethnological collections.	The Geological Survey began a linguistic and ethnological survey of First Nations communities in Canada.	The National Museum of Canada was established.	The National Museum of Man was established as an amalgamation of other museums of natural sciences and technology.	The National Museum of Man became the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and opened to the public in 1989.

and US cultural anthropology. Canadian anthropology was shaped by ethnohistorical and advocacy work with First Nations peoples and strong relations with museums (see Figure 1.3). Many people contributed to the institutional development of a distinguished independent anthropological tradition in Canada.

One very interesting figure was Sir Daniel Wilson, a Scottish archaeologist appointed professor of English literature and history at University College, Toronto, in 1853. He introduced the term *prehistory* into the English language, and offered courses in comparative societies (what we discuss later as ethnology) as early as 1855.

Following World War II, cultural anthropology expanded substantially in terms of the number of trained anthropologists and departments of anthropology in colleges and universities. Along with this growth came increased theoretical diversity. Several anthropologists developed theories of culture based on environmental factors. They suggested that similar environments (for example, deserts, tropical rainforests, or mountains) would predictably lead to the emergence of similar cultures. This approach pursued cross-cultural generalizations, and so it came into direct conflict with Boasian historical particularism (which we defined earlier). At the same time, French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss was developing a quite different theoretical perspective, which became known as *French structuralism*. He maintained that the best way to understand a culture is to collect its myths and stories and analyze the underlying themes in them. (Later chapters in this book provide more details about the work of Lévi-Strauss.) French structuralism inspired the development of *symbolic anthropology*, or the study of culture as a system of meanings, which was especially prominent in the later part of the twentieth century.

In the 1960s, Marxist theory emerged in anthropology, stating the importance of people's access to the means of production. It inspired the emergence of a new theoretical school called **cultural materialism.** Cultural materialism is an approach to studying culture by emphasizing the material aspects of life, especially the natural environment and how people make a living. Also arising in the 1960s was the theoretical position referred to as **interpretive anthropology**, or intepretivism. This perspective developed from both symbolic anthropology and French structural anthropology. It says that understanding culture should focus on what people think about, their ideas, and the symbols and meanings that are important to them. These two positions will be discussed further later in this section.



Sir Daniel Wilson of the University of Toronto, the first lecturer on ethnology in Canada.

Since the 1990s, two other theoretical directions have gained prominence. Both are influenced by *postmodernism*,

an intellectual pursuit that asks whether modernity is truly progress and that questions such aspects of modernism as the scientific method, urbanization, technological change, and mass communication. For the purposes of discussion in this book, the first theory is termed **structurism**, the view that powerful structures such as economics, politics, and media shape cultures and create entrenched systems of inequality and oppression. The second theory emphasizes human **agency**, or free will, and the power of individuals to create and change culture by acting against structures. These two contrasting positions also will be discussed later in this section.

Cultural anthropology continues to be rethought and refashioned. Over the past few decades, several new theoretical perspectives have transformed and enriched the field. *Feminist anthropology* is a perspective that emphasizes the need to study female roles and gender-based inequality. Starting in the 1970s, early feminist anthropologists realized that anthropology had largely bypassed women since its beginning. To address this gap, feminist anthropologists undertook research that explicitly focused on women and girls. A related area is *gay and lesbian anthropology,* or queer anthropology, a perspective that emphasizes the need to study gay people's cultures and discrimination based on sexual identity and preferences.

The Concept of Culture

Although cultural anthropologists are united in the study of *culture,* the question of how to define it has been debated for decades. This section discusses definitions of culture today, characteristics of culture, and bases for cultural identity.

Definitions of Culture

Culture is the core concept in cultural anthropology, so it might seem likely that cultural anthropologists would agree about what it is. In the 1950s, an effort to collect definitions of culture produced 164 different ones (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952). Since then, no one has tried to count the number of definitions of culture used by anthropologists.

British anthropologist Sir Edward Tylor proposed the first definition in 1871. He stated, "Culture, or civilization . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952:81). The phrase "that complex whole" has been the most durable feature of his definition. Two other features of Tylor's definition have not stood the test of time. First, most anthropologists now avoid using the word *man* to refer to all humans; instead, they use generic words such as *people* and *humans*. One may argue that the word *man* can be used generically according to its linguistic roots, but this usage can be ambiguous. Second, most anthropologists no longer equate culture with civilization. The word *civilization* implies a sense of "highness" versus noncivilized "lowness" and sets up a distinction placing "us" (people of the so-called civilized regions) in a superior position to "them."



THIS BRIEF HISTORY of cultural anthropology describes early leaders who were mainly white, European or Euro-American, and male. Compare this pattern with the history of some other discipline you have studied. What are the similarities and differences?

In contemporary cultural anthropology, the theoretical positions of interpretive anthropologists and cultural materialists correspond to two different definitions of culture. Interpretive anthropologists argue that culture includes symbols, motivations, moods, and thoughts. This definition focuses on people's perceptions, thoughts, and ideas, and does not focus on behaviour as a part of culture but, rather, seeks to explain behaviour. Interpretive anthropologists stress the idea that culture is contested and negotiated, and not always shared or imposed. Cultural materialist Marvin Harris states that "A culture is the total socially acquired life-way or lifestyle of a group of people. It consists of the patterned repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of society" (1975:144). Like Tylor's definition of over 100 years ago, Harris's definition pays attention to both behaviour and ideas (beliefs). The definition of culture used in this book follows this more comprehensive approach.

Culture exists among all human beings. It is something that all humans have. Some anthropologists refer to this universal concept of culture as *Culture* with a capital *C*. Culture also exists in a more specific way. **Local culture**, refers to distinct patterns of learned and shared behaviour and ideas found in local regions and among particular groups and are based on ethnicity, gender, age, and more.

structurism: a theoretical position concerning human behaviour and ideas that says "free choice" is an illusion since the choices themselves are determined by larger forces such as the economy, social and political organization, and ideological systems.

agency: the ability of humans to make choices and exercise free will.

local culture: a distinct pattern of learned and shared behaviour and thinking found within larger cultures.

Characteristics of Culture

Understanding the complex concept of culture can be gained by looking at its characteristics. This section discusses some characteristics of culture.

Culture Is Not the Same as Nature The relationship between nature and culture is of great interest to cultural anthropologists in their quest to understand people's behaviour and thinking. This book emphasizes the importance of culture (most of you will already have taken several courses on biology, which emphasizes the importance of human nature). Obviously, culture and nature are intertwined and often difficult to separate in terms of their effects. For example, certain aspects of biology affect people's behaviour and lifestyle, such as being HIV-positive. But it is impossible to predict how a person who is HIV-positive will fare in Culture A versus Culture B. Different cultural contexts shape matters such as labelling and negative stereotypes and access to care and support.

A good way to see how culture diverges from, and shapes, nature is to consider basic natural demands of life within different cultural contexts. The universal human functions that everyone must perform to stay alive are

- Eating
- Drinking
- Sleeping
- Eliminating

You may wonder about requirements for shelter and clothing. They vary, depending on the climate, so they are not included on this list. You may also wonder about sexual intercourse. It is not necessary for individual survival, so it is not included on this list, but it is discussed elsewhere in this book.

Given the primary importance of these four functions in supporting a human being's life, it seems logical that people would fulfill them in similar ways everywhere. But that is not the case.

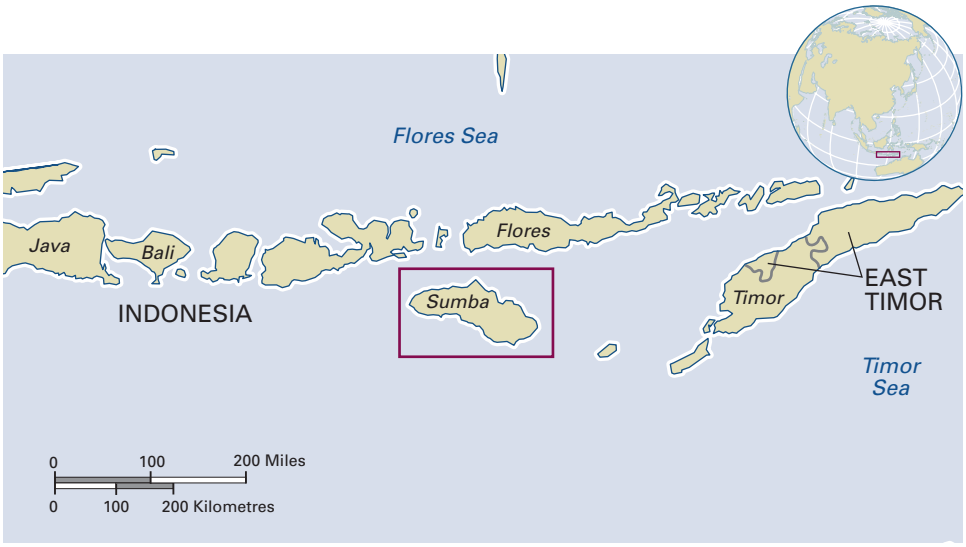
Eating Culture shapes what people eat, how they eat, when they eat, and the meanings of food and eating. Culture also defines foods that are acceptable and unacceptable. In China, most people think that cheese is disgusting, but in France, most people love cheese. Throughout China, pork is a widely favoured meat. The religions of Judaism and Islam, in contrast, forbid consumption of pork. In many cultures where gathering wild plant foods, hunting, and fishing are important, people value the freshness of food. They would consider a package of frozen food on a grocery store shelf as way past its time.

Perceptions of taste vary dramatically. Western researchers have defined four supposedly universal taste categories: sweet, sour, bitter, and salty. Cross-cultural research disproves these as universals. For example, the Weyéwa people of the highlands of Sumba, Indonesia (see Map 1.3), define seven categories of flavour: sour, sweet, salty, bitter, tart, bland, and pungent (Kuipers 1991).

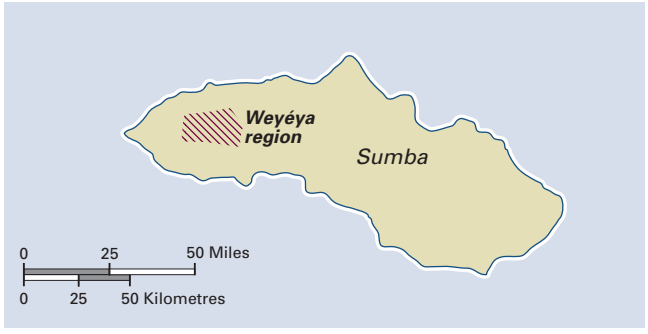
How to eat is also an important aspect of food behaviour. Rules about proper ways to eat are one of the first things a person needs to learn when living in another culture. Dining rules in India require using only the right hand. The left hand is considered polluted because it is



Colombian anthropologist Patricia Tovar (middle) at an anthropology conference in Colombia. In much of Central and South America, applied anthropology is an integral part of cultural anthropology. (Source: Patricia Tovar)



MAP 1.3 Weyéwa Region in Indonesia. Sumba, one of Indonesia's many islands, is seventy-five miles long. The Weyéwa people number about 85 000 and live in small settlements on grassy plateaus. They grow rice, maize, and millet, and raise water buffaloes and pigs.



used for personal cleansing after elimination. A person's clean right hand is the preferred eating utensil. Silverware that has been touched by others, even though it has been washed, is considered unclean. In some cultures, it is important to eat only from one's own plate, whereas in others, eating from a shared central platter is considered proper.

Another area of cultural variation involves who is responsible for cooking and serving food. In many cultures, domestic cooking is women's responsibility, but cooking for public feasts is more often something that men do. Power issues may arise about who cooks what for whom.

Drinking The cultural elaboration of drinking is as complex as for eating. Every culture defines the appropriate substances to drink, when to drink, and with whom. French culture allows for consumption of relatively large amounts of wine with meals. In Canada, water is commonly consumed during meals, but in India, one takes water after the meal is finished. Different categories of people drink different beverages. In cultures where alcoholic beverages are consumed, men tend to consume more than women.

Coffee is the liquid of choice among homemakers in North America, while martinis might be the choice for male corporate executives. The meaning of particular drinks and the style of drinking and serving them are heavily influenced by culture. If you were a guest and the host offered you water, you might think it odd. If your host then explained that it was "sparkling water from France," you might be more impressed. Social drinking, whether the beverage is coffee, beer, or



Two Ethiopian women dining at an Ethiopian restaurant. The main meal consists of several meat and vegetable dishes, cooked with special spices and laid out on *injera* bread, a soft, flat bread that is torn into small pieces and used to wrap bite-sized bits of meat and vegetables. The entire meal can be eaten without utensils. ■ (Source: © Michael Newman/PhotoEdit)

symbol: an object, word, or action with culturally defined meaning that stands for something else; most symbols are arbitrary.

vodka, creates and reinforces social bonds. In Canada, for example, beer is closely identified with national identity.

Sleeping Going without sleep for an extended period would eventually lead to insanity and even death. Common sense might say that sleep is the one natural function that is not shaped by culture, because people tend to do it every 24 hours, everyone shuts their eyes to do it, everyone lies down to do it, and most everyone sleeps at night. But there are many cultural aspects to sleep, including the question of who sleeps with whom. Cross-cultural research reveals varying rules about where infants and children should sleep: with the mother, with both parents, or by themselves in a separate room. Among indigenous cultures of the Amazon, mothers and babies share the same hammock for many months, and breastfeeding occurs whenever the baby is hungry, not on a schedule. Culture often shapes the amount of time a person sleeps. In rural India, women sleep fewer hours than men since they have to get up earlier to start the fire for the morning meal. In fast-track, corporate North America, "A-type" males sleep relatively few hours and are proud of that fact—to have slept too much is to be a wimp. A new disorder in Japan, called *excessive daytime sleepiness* (EDS) (Doi and Minowa 2003), is especially common in Tokyo and other cities. Excessive sleepiness is correlated with more accidents on the job, more absenteeism, decreased productivity, deteriorated personal and professional relationships, and increased rates of illness and death. Women are almost twice as likely as men to experience EDS, and married women are especially vulnerable.

Elimination This subject takes the discussion into more private territory. How does culture affect the elimination process? Anyone who has travelled internationally knows that there is much to learn about elimination when you leave familiar territory. The first question is, Where to eliminate? Differences emerge in the degree to which elimination is a private act or can be done in more or less public areas. Public options include street urinals for males but not for females, as in Paris. In most villages in India, houses do not have interior bathrooms. Instead, early in the morning, groups of women and girls leave the house and head for a certain field where they squat and chat. Men go to a different area. No one uses toilet paper; instead everyone carries in their left hand a small brass pot full of water with which they splash themselves clean. This practice has ecological advantages because it adds fertilizer to the fields and leaves no paper litter. Westerners may consider the village practice unclean, but village Indians would think that the Western system is unsanitary because paper does not clean one as well as water.

In many cultures, the products of elimination (urine and feces) are considered dirty, polluting, and disgusting. People do not try to keep such things, nor do they in any way revere them. In Papua New Guinea, in the South Pacific, people take great care to bury or otherwise hide their fecal matter. They fear that someone will find it and use it for magic against them. A negative assessment of the products of elimination is not universal, however. In some cultures, these substances are believed to have positive effects. Among First Nations cultures of the Pacific Northwest, urine, especially women's urine, was believed to have medicinal and cleansing properties and was considered the "water of life" (Furst 1989). In certain death rituals, it was sprinkled over the corpse in the hope that it might rejuvenate the deceased. People stored urine in special wooden boxes for ritual use, including the first bath that a baby was given (the urine was mixed with water for this purpose).



THINK ABOUT your everyday drinking patterns (no matter what the liquid) and then think about your drinking patterns on special occasions, including weekends, holidays, or special events such as weddings. What beverages do you consume, with whom, and what are the meanings and wider social implications involved?

Culture Is Based on Symbols Making money, creating art, and practising religion all involve symbols. A **symbol** is an object that has a range of culturally significant meanings. Symbols are arbitrary (bearing no necessary relationship with that which is symbolized), unpredictable, and diverse. Because symbols are arbitrary, we cannot predict how a particular culture will symbolize any particular thing. Although we might predict that people who are hungry would have an expression for hunger involving their stomach, no one could predict that in Hindi, the language of much of northern India, a colloquial expression for being hungry says that "rats are jumping in my stomach." It is through symbols that culture is shared, stored, and transmitted over time.

Culture Is Learned Because culture is based on arbitrary symbols, it cannot be predicted, but must be learned. Cultural learning begins from the moment of birth, if not before (some people think that an unborn baby takes in and stores information through sounds heard from the outside world). A large but unknown amount of people's cultural learning is unconscious, occurring as a normal part of life through observation. Schools, in contrast, are a formal way to learn culture. Not all cultures throughout history have had formal schooling. Instead, children learned appropriate cultural patterns through guidance from elders and observation and practice. Hearing stories and seeing performances of rituals and dramas are other long-standing forms of *enculturation*.

Cultures Are Integrated To state that cultures are internally integrated is to assert the principle of holism.



In India, a white sari (women's garment) symbolizes widowhood. To these women, the Western custom of a bride wearing white would seem inauspicious. ■
(Source: Barbara Miller)

Thus, studying only one or two aspects of culture provides understanding so limited that it is more likely to be misleading or wrong than more comprehensively grounded approaches.

Consider what would happen if a researcher were to study intertribal warfare in Papua New Guinea (see Map 1.4) and focused only on the actual practice of warfare without examining other aspects of culture. A key feature of highland New Guinea culture is the exchange of pigs at political feasts. To become a political leader, a man must acquire many pigs. Pigs eat yams, which men grow, but pigs are cared for by women. This division of labour means that a man with more than one wife will be able to produce more pigs and rise politically by giving more feasts. Such feasting enhances an aspiring leader's status and makes his guests indebted to him. With more followers attracted through feasting, a leader can gather forces and wage war on neighbouring villages. Success in war brings gains in territory. So far, this example focuses mainly on economics, politics, and marriage systems. But other aspects of culture are involved, too. Supernatural powers affect the success of warfare. Painting spears and shields with particular designs helps increase their power. At feasts and marriages, body decoration, including paint, shell ornaments, and elaborate feather headdresses, is an important expression of identity and status. Looking at warfare without attention to its wider cultural context yields an extremely narrow view.

The fact of cultural integration is also relevant to applied anthropologists who are involved in analyzing cultural change. Attempting to introduce change in one aspect of culture without giving attention to what its effects will be in other areas is irresponsible and may even be detrimental to the survival of a culture. For



MAP 1.4 Papua New Guinea. The Independent State of Papua New Guinea gained its autonomy from Australia in 1975. Mostly mountainous with coastal lowlands, PNG is richly endowed with gold, copper, silver, natural gas, timber, oil, and fisheries. Its population is around 5 700 000. Port Moresby, the capital, has a high rate of HIV/AIDS infection among the working-age population.

globalization: increased and intensified international ties related to the spread of Western, especially United States, capitalism that affects all world cultures.

localization: the transformation of global culture by local cultures into something new.

class: a way of categorizing people on the basis of their economic position in society, usually measured in terms of income or wealth.

example, Western missionaries and colonialists in parts of Southeast Asia banned the practice of headhunting. This practice was embedded in many other aspects of culture, including politics, religion, and psychology (a man's sense of identity as a man sometimes depended on the taking of a head). Stopping headhunting might seem like a good thing, but its cessation had disastrous consequences for the cultures in which it was practised.

Cultural Interaction and Change

Cultures interact with each other and change each other through contact. Trade networks, international development projects, telecommunications, education, migration, and tourism are just a few of the factors that affect cultural change through contact. **Globalization**, the process of intensified global interconnectedness and movement of goods, information, and people, is a major force of contemporary cultural change. It has gained momentum through recent technological change, especially the boom in information and communications technologies (Pieterse 2004).

Globalization does not spread evenly, and its interactions with and effects on local cultures vary substantially from positive change to cultural destruction and extinction. Four models of cultural interaction capture some of the variation (see Figure 1.4). The *clash of civilizations* argument says that the spread of Euro-American capitalism and lifeways throughout the world has created disenchantment, alienation, and resentment among other cultural systems. This model divides the world into the "West and the rest."

The *McDonaldization* model says that under the powerful influence of US-dominated corporate culture, the world is becoming culturally homogeneous. "Fast-food culture," with its principles of mass production, speed, standardization, and impersonal service, is taken to be at the centre of this new global culture.

Hybridization is the third model. Also called *syncretism*, *creolization*, and *cultural crossover*, hybridization occurs when aspects of two or more cultures are mixed to form something new—a blend. In Japan, for instance, a grandmother might bow in gratitude to an automated banking machine. In the Amazon region and in the Arctic, indigenous people use satellite imagery to map and protect the boundaries of their ancestral lands.

A fourth pattern is **localization**, the transformation of global culture by local cultures into something new. Consider the example of McDonald's restaurants. In many Asian settings, people resist the pattern of eating quickly and insist on leisurely family gatherings (Watson 1997). The McDonald's managers accommodate and alter the pace of service to allow for a slower turnover of tables. In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, McDonald's provides separate areas for families and for "couples." In another example, Western-style department stores in Japan have played a major role in introducing Western goods into Japanese society by cleverly contextualizing them within Japanese customs. One such item is the diamond engagement ring, which has been promoted not as a sign of emotional love between the two engaged people but as part of *yuinōhin*, a series of gifts from the groom's household to the bride that symbolize a long and happy life together (Creighton 1992).

Many more examples of cultural localization exist, throwing into question the notion that a form of Western "mono-culture" is taking over the entire world and erasing cultural diversity. In some contexts, Western culture is localized in ways that make it difficult for a Westerner to comprehend (see the accompanying Multiple Cultural Worlds box).

FIGURE 1.4 Four Models of Cultural Interaction

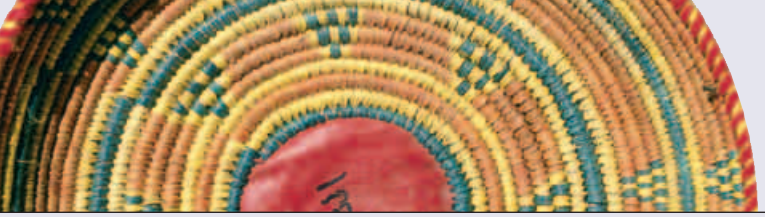
Clash of civilizations	Conflict model
McDonaldization	Takeover and homogenization model
Hybridization	Blending model
Localization	Local cultural remaking and transformation of global culture

Multiple Cultural Worlds

Many local cultures exist within every culture. Much of this internal cultural differentiation is structured by the categories of class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, region, and institutions. A particular individual fits into several categories, but may identify more or less strongly with one, say, a teenager, a woman, or a member of a visible minority. Memberships may overlap or they may be related to each other hierarchically. The contrast between difference and hierarchy is important. People and groups can be considered different from each other on a particular criterion, but not unequal. For example, people with blue or brown eyes might be recognized as different, but this difference does not entail unequal treatment or status. In other instances, such differences do become the basis for inequality.

Class

Class is a category based on people's economic position in society, usually measured in terms of income or wealth and exhibited in terms of lifestyle. Class societies may be divided into upper, middle, and lower classes. An earlier definition of class associated with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels says that class membership is determined by a group's relationship to ownership of the means of production, or how groups



Multiple Cultural Worlds

GLOBALIZATION AND TOMATO PRODUCTION

Every food item creates complex relations of production and consumption. Consider the tomato. The Tomasita Project (Barndt 1999) traced the journey of a tomato from the Mexican field to a Canadian fast food restaurant. The tomato was chosen as a symbol of globalization and the shifting roles of women as producers and consumers of food. With collaborators from Canada, Mexico, and the United States, women told their stories about making and producing food. One story told of the members of a Canadian family working at McDonald's, often on different shifts, so that they seldom ate together; other stories tell of the peasant and indigenous labourers working on tomato plantations in Mexico, making CDN$3.50 a day, barely able to afford their traditional tortillas and beans. These stories bring out a North–South conundrum: while fresh tomatoes come north, fast food restaurants like McDonald's are moving south, and at a faster rate since NAFTA was implemented in January 1994. Tomatoes have complex metaphorical meanings and fit into culturally constructed recipes and meals. When multinational corporations control food production, tomatoes also become commodities.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- Provide anther example of how a food product you regularly eat illustrates globalization.



A view into the yard of a house of a low-income neighbourhood of Kingston, Jamaica. People in these neighbourhoods prefer the term *low-income* to *poor*. ■ (Source: Barbara Miller)

of people make a living. Separate classes are, for example, the *working class* (people who trade their labour for wages) and the *landowning class* (people who own land on which they or others labour). Classes are related in a hierarchical system, with certain classes dominating others. According to Marx and Engels, class struggle is inevitable as those at the top seek to maintain their position while those at the bottom seek to improve theirs. People at the bottom of the class structure may attempt to improve their place in the hierarchy by gaining access to resources and by adopting aspects of upper-class symbolic behaviours vis-à-vis speech, dress, leisure, and recreation.

Class is a key basis of cultural stratification in most contemporary states, but it is a relatively recent social development in human history. For example, in precontact groups in the Amazonian region, all members had roughly equal wealth. In complex and large capitalist states, however, classes are prominent forms of cultural differentiation. Some scholars say that global systems of cultural integration now mean that indigenous groups, which themselves have little internal class differentiation, have become part of a global class structure, with their position being at the bottom.

race: a classification of people into groups on the basis of supposedly homogeneous biological traits.
ethnicity: a shared sense of identity among a group based on a heritage, language, or culture.
indigenous peoples: groups who have a long-standing connection with their home territory that predates colonial or outside societies that prevail in that territory.
gender: culturally constructed and learned behaviours and ideas attributed to males, females, or blended genders.

Race, Ethnicity, and Indigenous People

Race refers to groups of people with supposedly homogenous biological traits. However, race is a culturally constructed category, not a biological reality. In South Africa, race is mainly defined on the basis of skin colour. In pre-twentieth-century China, however, the basis of racial classification was body hair (Dikötter 1998). Greater amounts of body hair were associated with "barbarian" races and the lack of "civilization." Chinese writers described male missionaries from Europe, with their beards, as "hairy barbarians." Even in the twentieth century, some Chinese anthropologists and sociologists divided humans into evolutionary stages on the basis of their body hair. One survey of humankind provided a detailed classification on the basis of types of beards, whiskers, and moustaches.

Physical features do not explain or account for behaviour or ideas, as Franz Boas proved a century ago. Instead, the fact of being placed in a particular racial category and the status of that category in society are what explain racial behaviours and ideas. Rather than being a biological category, race in the anthropological view is a cultural or social category just like class. People's perceptions about race and their use of racial differences may result in racism, discrimination and marginality of certain groups. Racial differentiation has been the basis for some of the most invidious oppression and cruelty throughout history. A concept of racial purity inspired Nazi leader Adolf Hitler to pursue his program of exterminating Jews and others who were not of the Aryan "race." Racial apartheid in South Africa denied citizenship, security, and a decent life to all those labelled non-white (including, for example, "blacks" and "coloureds").



A drawing of an Ainu (indigenous) person of Japan in a Chinese anthropology textbook published in 1918.

Ethnicity refers to a sense of group affiliation based on a distinct heritage or worldview as a "people," for example, Caribbean Canadians or Italian Canadians, the Croats of Eastern Europe, and the Han people of China. This sense of identity can be vigorously expressed through political movements or more quietly stated. It can be a basis for social ranking, claimed entitlements to resources such as land or artifacts, and a basis for defending or retrieving those resources.

Compared to the term *race*, *ethnicity* is often used as a more neutral or even positive term. But ethnicity has often been a basis for discrimination, segregation, and oppression. The "ethnic cleansing" campaigns conducted in the early 1990s by the Serbs against Muslims in the former Yugoslavia are an extreme case of ethnic discrimination. Expression of ethnic identity has been politically suppressed in many cultures, such as that of the Tibetans in China. Tibetan refugees living outside Tibet are struggling to keep their ethnic heritage alive. Among First Nations groups in contemporary Canada, a shared ethnicity is one basis for cultural and spiritual revival.

Indigenous peoples, following guidelines laid down by the United Nations, are defined as groups who have a long-standing connection with their home territory predating colonial or other societies that prevail in their territory (Sanders 1999). They are typically a numerical minority and often have lost the rights to their original territory. The United Nations distinguishes between indigenous peoples and *minority ethnic groups* such as the Roma, the Tamils of Sri Lanka, and African Americans. This distinction is more useful in some contexts than others (Maybury-Lewis 1997b). The San peoples of Southern Africa, and their several subgroups, are an important example of indigenous peoples whose way of life was dramatically affected by colonialism and now by globalization (see the Ethnographic Profile).

Gender

Gender refers to patterns of culturally constructed and learned behaviours and ideas attributed to males, females, or sometimes a blended or "third gender." Thus, gender variability can be contrasted to sex, which uses biological markers to define the categories of male and female. Sex determination relies on genital, chromosomal, and hormonal distributions and, thus, depends on Western science to determine who is male or female. Cultural anthropology shows that a person's biological makeup does not necessarily correspond to gender. A simple example is that in the West, people tend to associate the activity of sewing with women, but in many other areas of the world, sewing (or tailoring) is mainly

Ethnographic Profile

San Peoples of Southern Africa

San is a cluster name for many groups of southern Africa who speak related languages, all having glottal click sounds. Around 2000 years ago, the San were the only people living in southern Africa, but today they are restricted to scattered locations throughout the region. European colonialists referred to San people as Bushmen, a derogatory term at the time but one that San people now prefer over what some locals call them. Some San also refer to themselves with the English language term *First People*.

For many centuries, the San supported themselves through collecting food such as roots and birds' eggs and by hunting eland, giraffe, and other animals. Now, pressure from African governments, farmers, ranchers, game reserves, diamond companies, and international tourism have greatly reduced the San's access to their ancestral land and their ability to survive. Some have been arrested for hunting on what they consider their land.

The Ju/'hoansi ("True People") are a subgroup of San who live in a region crossing the borders of Namibia, Botswana, and Angola and numbering between 10 000 and 15 000 people. As described by Richard Lee in the early 1960s, they were highly mobile food collectors and quite healthy (1979). Today, many have been forced from their homeland and live as poor, urban squatters or in government-built resettlement camps. Many work as farm labourers or in the international tourist industry, serving as guides and producing and selling crafts.

The specifics of their situation now depend on government policy toward indigenous foragers in the particular country where they live. Conditions are most difficult for them right now in Botswana due to forced sedentarization.

Transnational advocacy organizations, including Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) and First People of the Kalahari (FPK), are making progress in protecting the rights of San peoples. Recently, WIMSA waged an international legal case with a large pharmaceutical company and succeeded in ensuring that the San receive a portion of the profits from the commercial development of hoodia (*Hoodia gordonia*). Hoodia is extracted from a cactus indigenous to the Kalahari region. An effective appetite suppressant, it is now widely available in North America and on the Internet as a diet pill.

Readings

Richard Katz, Megan Biesele, and Verna St. Denis. *Healing Makes Our Hearts Happy: Spirituality and Cultural Transformation among the Kalahari Jul'hoansi*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1997.

Sidsel Saugestad. *The Inconvenient Indigenous: Remote Area Development in Botswana, Donor Assistance, and the First People of the Kalahari*. Uppsala, Sweden: The Nordic Afrika Institute, 2001.

Marjorie Shostak. *Nisa: The Life and Times of a !Kung Woman*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Video

Bushmen of the Kalahari: A Bushman Story (National Geographic Videos, 1973).

Website

The Kalahari Peoples Fund: www.kalaharipeoples.org.

Thanks to Alison Brooks, George Washington University, for reviewing this material.





Richard Lee (left) asks Ju/'hoansi men about food plants of the Kalahari Desert. This photograph was taken in 1968. Lee, and many other researchers affiliated with the Harvard Kalahari Research Project, learned to speak the Ju/'hoansi language and make glottal clicks using the upper part of the larynx. ■ (Source: Stan Washburn/AnthroPhoto) ***San peoples have long consumed parts of the hoodia plant to suppress hunger and thirst when on long trips in the desert (right). Now, they cultivate it for commercial use in a diet pill.*** ■ (Source: Louise Gubb/CORBIS)



MAP 1.5 ***Ju/'hoansi Region in Namibia and Botswana.*** *Before country boundaries were drawn, the Ju/'hoansi freely ranged across their traditional territory (shaded area), depending on the seasonal availability of food and water. Now, they must show a passport when crossing from one country to another.*

men's work. The task, in other words, has nothing to do with biology. Only a few tasks are related to biology, such as nursing babies.

Cross-culturally, gender differences vary from societies in which male and female roles and worlds are largely shared, with few differences, to those in which genders are sharply differentiated. In much of rural Thailand, males and females are about the same size, their clothing is quite similar, and their agricultural tasks are complementary and often interchangeable (P. Van Esterik 2000). Among the Hua of the New Guinea Highlands, extreme gender segregation exists in almost all aspects of life (Meigs 1984). The *rafuri*, or men's house, physically and symbolically separates the worlds of men and women. The men live in strict separation from the women, and they engage in rituals seeking to purge themselves of female influences and substances: nose or penis bleeding, vomiting, tongue scraping, sweating, and eye washing. Men possess the sacred flutes, which they parade through the village from time to time. If women dare to look at the flutes, however, men have the right to kill them for that transgression. Strict rules also govern the kinds of food that men and women may eat.

In many cultures, the lives of gay and lesbian people are adversely affected by discrimination based on gender identity and sexual preferences. Other societies are less repressive, such as Thailand, Indonesia, and many First Nations groups around the world.

Age

The human life cycle, from birth to old age, takes a person through cultural stages for which appropriate behaviour and thinking must be learned anew. Special rituals marking physical maturation, marriage, or the end of a period of learning are found in all societies, with varying degrees of elaboration. In many African herding societies, elaborate age categories for males define their roles and status as they move from being boys with few responsibilities and little status, to young men who are warriors and live apart from the rest of the group, to finally becoming adult men who are allowed to marry, have children, and become respected elders.

In many cultures, adolescents are in a particularly powerless category since they are neither children, who have certain well-defined rights, nor adults. Given this "threshold" position, many adolescents behave in ways of which the larger society disapproves and defines as deviance, crime, or even psychopathology (Fabrega and Miller 1995). Many youth gangs in North America are examples of situations in which adolescents have a marginal social position associated with signs of psychological deviance. Concerning women, cross-cultural research shows that in many pre-industrial societies, middle-aged women have the highest status in their life cycle if they are married and have children (J. Brown 1982).

Institutions

Institutions, or enduring group settings formed for a particular purpose, have their own cultural characteristics. Institutions include hospitals, boarding schools and universities, and prisons. Anyone who has entered such an institution has experienced that feeling of strangeness. Until you gain familiarity with the often unwritten cultural rules, you may do things that offend or puzzle people, that fail to get you what you want, and that make you feel marginalized and insecure.

Hospitals are excellent examples of institutions with their own cultural rules. Melvin Konner, an anthropologist who had studied among a group of indigenous hunting-gathering people of southern Africa and had taught anthropology for many years, decided to become a doctor. In his book, *Becoming a Doctor* (1987), Konner reports on his experience in medical school, providing an anthropologist's insights about the hospital as a particular kind of cultural institution. One of his most striking conclusions is that medical students undergo training that in many ways functions to dehumanize them, numbing them to the pain and suffering that they will confront each day. Medical training involves, for example, the need to memorize massive amounts of material, sleep deprivation, and the learning of a special form of humour and vocabulary that seems crude and even cruel. Some special vocabulary items are *boogie*—a verb meaning to move patients along quickly in a clinic or emergency room (as in "Let's boogie!"); a *dud*—a patient with no interesting findings; and a *gomer*—an acronym for Get Out of My Emergency Room, referring to an old, decrepit, hopeless patient whose care is guaranteed to be a thankless task, usually admitted from a nursing home.

Relationships of power and inequality exist within institutions and between different institutions. These relationships crosscut other criteria, such as gender. Recent claims by women prisoners in North America of rape and abuse by prison guards are an example of intra-institutional inequality linked with gender inequality. Within and between universities, rivalries are played out in the area of competition for large research grants as well as in athletics. Within the classroom, studies document that many professors are not egalitarian in the way they call on and respond to students, depending on their gender, race, or "looks." In the Kilimanjaro region of north Kenya, a lesson about proper sexual behaviour directed to secondary school students advised boys to "preserve your bullets" and girls to "lock your boxes" (Stambach 2000:127–30). The surface message is that boys should learn to control their mental processes and girls should look after their possessions, which they keep in a metal trunk beneath their bed. The underlying message is that boys should learn to control their sexual desire and that girls should protect their bodies. The separate metaphors, bullets and boxes, for the boys and the girls, reflect and reinforce gender differences in moral codes and expected behaviour.

Distinctive Features of Cultural Anthropology

Several features of cultural anthropology have traditionally distinguished it from other disciplines. Scholars in other disciplines, however, have been adopting anthropological approaches. Thus, while cultural anthropology's traditional characteristic features may no longer be unique to the field, they are still part of its identity and character.

Ethnography and Ethnology

Cultural anthropologists approach the study of contemporary human life in two basic ways. The first is in-depth study of one culture. This approach, **ethnography**, meaning "culture writing," provides a first-hand, detailed description of a living culture based on personal observation. Ethnography is usually presented in the form of a full-length book.

In the first part of the twentieth century, ethnographers wrote about "exotic" cultures located far from the homes of European and North American anthropologists. Classics of this phase of ethnography include A.R. Radcliffe-Brown's *The Andaman Islanders* (1922), a study of people living on a group of small islands off the coast of Burma; Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), concerning a complex trade network linking several islands in the South Pacific; and Reo Fortune's *Sorcerers of Dobu* (1932), which describes a culture in the Western Pacific islands, with a focus on its social and religious characteristics. Although early Canadian ethnographies were not considered classics, it is interesting that the mammoth ethnography, *The Bella Coola Indians* by T.F. McIlwraith (the first professional anthropologist to hold an academic position at a Canadian university), was ready in draft form in 1925, but not published until 1948 because the editors judged the material to be obscene (Barker 1987).

For several decades, ethnographers tended to treat a particular tribal group or village as a bounded unit. The era of "village studies" in the ethnography of India, extending from the 1950s through the 1960s, is an example of this trend. Dozens of anthropologists went to India for fieldwork, and each typically studied in one village and then wrote an ethnography describing that village. These anthropologists were inspired by the perspective of holism, the view that says cultures consist of integrated features, such as economy and religion, and one must study all of the features to have a complete picture. Examples of village studies include Adrian Mayer's *Caste and Kinship in Central India* (1960), S.C. Dube's *Indian Village* (1967), and Gerald Berreman's *Hindus of the Himalayas* (1963). The topics of concern were caste, agricultural practices, kinship, and religion. Little attention was given to exploring links between villages, or to determining the effects of world forces such as nineteenth-century colonialism or twentieth-century post-colonialism on the villagers' lives. Berreman's book is an exception. It includes a detailed chapter entitled, "The Outside World: Urban Contact and Government Programs."

Recent ethnographies, from 1980 onward, differ from earlier ethnographies in several ways. First, they are more likely to treat local cultures as embedded within regional and global forces. Francis Henry's *Victims and Neighbors: A Small Town in Nazi Germany Remembered* (1984) examines social relations between Jews and Christians in a town in Germany where Henry grew up during the 1930s. The ethnography combines extensive interviews in 1979 about events in the 1930s to document acts of kindness in the context of state-encouraged hatred. This study demonstrates the importance of local context in understanding events of global importance such as World War II. Second, many contemporary ethnographies are focused on one topic of interest and avoid a more holistic approach. Cultural anthropologists in this category feel that holism is an impossible goal, since no one can perceive cultures from all their complex angles. A third trend is incorporating history into ethnography. Philip Gulliver and Marilyn Silverman's *Merchants and Shopkeepers: A Historical Anthropology of an Irish Market Town* (1995) examines a town in southeast Ireland that has been a site of commerce for nearly 800 years. As a regional trade centre, the location provides an opportunity to analyze shopkeeping and entrepreneurial strategies over a long duration. A fourth trend is for an increasing number of ethnographic studies to be situated in Western, industrialized cultures. Philippe Bourgois's research in New York's East Harlem for his book, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (1995), explores how people in one neighbourhood cope with poverty and dangerous living conditions. Daniel Wolf's research on a biker gang in Alberta, *The Rebels: A Brotherhood of Outlaw Bikers* (1991), provides another example of urban ethnographic work close to home.

While these topics may superficially resemble something that a sociologist might study, the approach of a cultural anthropologist provides a unique perspective that is more richly detailed from the everyday perspective of the people.

ethnography: a firsthand, detailed description of a living culture, based on personal observation.

ethnology: the study of a particular topic in more than one culture using ethnographic material.

ethnocentrism: judging other cultures by the standards of one's own culture rather than by the standards of that particular culture.

In contrast to ethnography, **ethnology** is cross-cultural analysis, or the study of a particular topic in more than one culture using ethnographic material. Ethnologists have compared such topics as marriage forms, economic practices, religious beliefs, and child-rearing practices in order to examine patterns of similarity and variation and possible causes for them. For example, some ethnologists examine the amount of time caretakers spend with infants and how contact time may shape personality. Anthropologists also contribute ethnological insights to help improve public policy (Fox and Gingrich 2002). Taking a comparative or internationalist approach prompts a wide view of issues such as human rights, family organization, and religious beliefs and opens up more options for thinking about the quality of life today and in the future.

Ethnography and ethnology are mutually supportive. Ethnography provides rich, culturally specific insights. Ethnology, by looking beyond individual cases to wider patterns, provides a comparative view and raises new questions that prompt future ethnographic research and can provide policy insights.

Cultural Relativism

Most people grow up thinking that their culture is *the* way of life and that other ways of life are strange, perhaps even inferior. Other cultures may even be considered less than human. Cultural anthropologists have labelled this attitude **ethnocentrism**: judging other cultures by the standards of one's own culture rather than by the standards of that particular culture.



Penny Van Esterik interviewing the manager of a tourist park in Suphanburi Province, Thailand.

Ethnocentric views have fuelled centuries of efforts at changing "other" people in the world, sometimes in the guise of religious missionizing and sometimes in the form of secular colonial domination. Looking back to the era of European colonial expansion beginning in the fifteenth century, it is clear that exploration and conquest were intended to extract wealth from the colonies. In addition to plundering their colonies, the Europeans also imposed their culture on indigenous groups. The British poet, Rudyard Kipling, reflected the dominant view when he said that it was "the white man's burden" to spread Western culture throughout the world. Many contemporary world powers hold similar attitudes, making foreign policy decisions that encourage the adoption of their economic, political, and social systems.

The opposite of ethnocentrism is cultural relativism, the idea that each culture must be understood in terms of the values and beliefs of that culture and should not be judged by the standards of another culture. Cultural relativism assumes that no culture is better than any other. How does a person gain a sense of cultural relativism? The best way is to be able to spend substantial amounts of time living with people outside your own culture. Studying abroad and socially engaged travel help. More locally, you can experience aspects of other cultures by reading about them, learning about them in anthropology classes, doing Internet research, cooking and eating "foreign" foods, listening to "world music," reading novels by authors from other cultures, making friends who are "different" from you, and exploring the multicultural world on your campus.

One way that some anthropologists have interpreted cultural relativism is to use *absolute cultural relativism*, which says that whatever goes on in a particular culture must not be questioned or changed because no one has the right to question any behaviour or idea anywhere—it would be ethnocentric to do so. The position of absolute cultural relativism can lead, however, in dangerous directions. Consider the example of the Holocaust during World War II, in which millions of Jews and other minorities in much of Eastern and Western Europe were imprisoned and murdered as part of the German Nazis' Aryan supremacy campaign. The absolute cultural relativist position becomes boxed in, logically, to saying that since the Holocaust was undertaken according to the values of the culture, outsiders have no business questioning it. Can anyone feel truly comfortable with such a position?

Critical cultural relativism offers an alternative view that poses questions about cultural practices and ideas in terms of who accepts them and why, and who they might be harming or helping. In terms of the Nazi Holocaust, a critical cultural relativist would ask, "Whose culture supported the values that murdered

millions of people on the grounds of racial purity?" Not the cultures of the Jews, Roma, and other victims. It was the culture of Aryan supremacists, who were one subgroup among many. The situation was far more complex than a simple absolute cultural relativist statement takes into account because there was not "one" culture and its values involved. Rather, it was a case of *cultural imperialism*, in which one dominant group claims supremacy over minority cultures and proceeds to change the situation in its own interests and at the expense of the subjugated cultures. Critical cultural relativism avoids the trap of adopting a homogenized view. It recognizes internal cultural differences and winners/losers, oppressors/victims. It pays attention to the interests of various power groups. Critical cultural relativism can be applied to illuminate recent and contemporary conflict situations, such as those in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Afghanistan.

Many cultural anthropologists seek to *critique* (which means to probe underlying power interests, not just to offer negative comments as in the general usage of the term *criticism*) the behaviour and values of groups from the standpoint of some set of generally agreed-on human rights. But they recognize how difficult it is to generate a universal list of what all cultures view as good and right. As Claude LÈvi-Strauss once commented, "No society is perfect" (1968:385). While considering the "imperfections" of any and all cultures, cultural anthropologists, like people in general, should be open about their own positions and biases and try to view all cultures with an equally "critical" eye.

Valuing and Sustaining Diversity

Anthropologists value and are committed to cultural diversity just as environmentalists value and are committed to biological diversity. Thus, cultural anthropologists contribute to the preservation of cultural diversity and knowledge by describing cultures as they have existed, as they now exist, and as they change. Many have become activists in the area of cultural survival.

Since 1972, an organization named Cultural Survival has been helping indigenous people and ethnic minorities to interact as equals with others in society. Cultural Survival's guiding principle is printed on the inside cover of this book. Cultural Survival sponsors programs to help indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities protect and manage natural resources, claim land rights, and diversify their means of livelihood.

Three Theoretical Debates

Within cultural anthropology, enduring theoretical debates both divide the discipline and provide threads that give it coherence. Contemporary theoretical approaches include interpretive, symbolic, political ecology, political economy, and postmodernism. Although different departments of anthropology in Canada often have specific theoretical orientations, Canadian anthropologists in general tend to avoid extremely deterministic interpretations of human behaviour. They seek to explain difference as well as similarity, and address questions that crosscut theoretical (and national) borders. Three important contemporary debates, explained briefly here, will resurface throughout the book. Each is concerned with cultural anthropology's basic question of why people behave and think the way they do.

Biological Determinism versus Cultural Constructionism

Biological determinism seeks to explain why people do and think what they do by considering biological factors such as people's genes and hormones. Thus, biological determinists search for the gene or hormone that might lead to certain forms of behaviour such as homicide, alcoholism, or adolescent stress (see the Critical Thinking box). They examine cultural practices in terms of how they contribute to the "reproductive success of the species," or how they contribute to the gene pool of subsequent generations through promoting the numbers of surviving offspring produced in a particular population. Behaviours and ideas that have reproductive advantages logically are more likely than others to be passed on to future generations. Biological determinists, for example, have provided an explanation for why human males apparently have "better" spatial skills than females. They say that these differences are the result of evolutionary selection because males with "better" spatial skills would have an advantage in securing both food and mates. Males with "better" spatial skills impregnate more females and have more offspring with "better" spatial skills.

Cultural constructionism, in contrast, maintains that human behaviour and ideas are best explained as products of culturally shaped learning. In terms of the example of "better" male spatial skills, cultural constructionists

biological determinism: a theory that explains human behaviour and ideas mainly as a result of biological features such as genes and hormones.

cultural constructionism: a theory that explains human behaviour and ideas as being mainly the results of learning.

would provide evidence that such skills are passed on culturally through learning, not genes. They would say that parents socialize their sons and daughters differently in spatial skills and that boys are more likely to gain greater spatial skills through learning than girls, in general. Anthropologists who favour cultural construction and learning as an explanation for behaviours such as homicide and alcoholism also point to the role of childhood experiences and family roles as being more important than genes or hormones. Most cultural anthropologists are opposed to biological determinism and support cultural constructivism. However, some of them connect biology and culture in their work.

Interpretive Anthropology versus Cultural Materialism

Interpretive anthropology considers how people use symbols to make sense of the world around them, and how these meanings are negotiated. Interpretive anthropologists view culture as a contested domain, not a given. They favour an approach to ethnography that constructs a rich, complex description emerging from the insider's point of view. Interpretive anthropology tries to communicate this complexity, and rejects approaches that are reductionistic. For example, if Hindus in India say they don't eat cows because cows are sacred, interpretive anthropologists would explore the meaning of food and eating within the Hindu religion. Similarly, an interpretive anthropologist like Mary Douglas argues that pigs cannot be eaten by Jews because of their taxonomical definition in Jewish belief as defined in the rules of Leviticus. The pig is a hoofed animal that does not chew its cud, unlike cows and sheep, and is categorized as anomalous and, thus, impure. Materialists have rejected such reasoning because the rules of Leviticus are untestable (Harris and Ross 1987:60).

Cultural materialism emphasizes the importance of material conditions in studying and explaining human behaviours and ideas. Cultural materialists take as basic the material features of life, such as the environment, natural resources, and ways of making a living. *Infrastructure* is the term that refers to these crucial material factors. Infrastructure largely shapes the other two domains of culture: *structure* (social organization, kinship, and political organization) and *superstructure* (ideas, values, and beliefs). Cultural materialists seek explanations for behaviour and ideas by looking first and primarily at infrastructural factors. For example, a materialist explanation for a taboo restricting the eating of a particular animal first considers the possibility that such an animal plays a more important role alive, such as cows' utility in agricultural work in India.

The debate between interpretive anthropology and cultural materialism has a long history in cultural anthropology, and its philosophical roots can be traced back to Plato (who emphasized that the only reality is ideas) and Aristotle (who emphasized that there is some sort of reality that can be learned about through observation). These days, most cultural anthropologists take an approach that combines the best of interpretive anthropology and cultural materialism.

Individual Agency versus Structural

The individual agency versus structural debate concerns the question of how much individual will, or agency, has to do with why people behave and think the way they do, versus the power of forces, or "structures," that are beyond individual control. Western philosophical thought gives much emphasis to the role of agency. The individual is supposed to be able to choose how to behave and think. In contrast, analysts who emphasize the structural argue that "free choice" is an illusion since choices are structured by larger forces, such as the economy, social and political institutions, and ideological systems.

A prime example is the study of poverty. Those who emphasize agency focus their research on how individuals attempt to act as agents, even in situations of extreme poverty, in order to change their situation as best they can. Theorists who see the world controlled by structures would emphasize that the poor are trapped by large and powerful forces. They would describe how the political economy and other forces provide little room for agency for those at the bottom. An increasing number of cultural anthropologists seek to blend a structural perspective with attention to agency.

Beyond the Debates: Holism at Heart

Cultural anthropologists often take different theoretical positions. Some apply their work while others follow academic pursuits. But it is fair to say that cultural anthropologists are united in their interest in and care about humanity and its richly varied cultures.

Cultural Anthropology and Careers

Some of you reading this book may take only one anthropology course to satisfy a requirement. Others may become interested in the subject matter and take a few more. Some will decide to major or minor in anthropology. Even just one course in anthropology can change



Critical Thinking

ADOLESCENT STRESS: BIOLOGICALLY DETERMINED OR CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED?

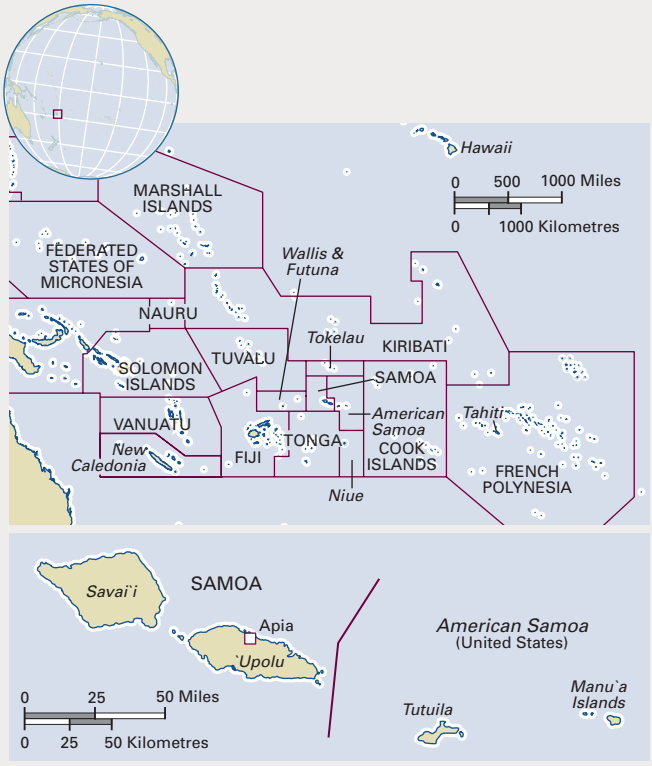
Margaret Mead, one of the first trained anthropologists of North America, went to Eastern Samoa in 1925 to spend nine months studying child-rearing patterns and adolescent behaviour. She sought to answer these questions: "Are the disturbances which vex our adolescents due to the nature of adolescence itself or to the civilisation? Under different conditions does adolescence present a different picture?" (1961:24). Mead observed and interviewed 50 adolescent girls of three different villages. Her conclusion, published in the famous book, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1961 [1928]), was that, unlike the typical experience in the United States, children in Samoa grew up in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. As young adolescents, they made a sexually free and unrepressed transition to adulthood. These findings had a major impact on thinking about child rearing in North America, prompting attempts at more relaxed forms of child rearing in the hope of raising less-stressed adolescents.

In 1983, five years after Mead's death (at which point she had no chance for response), Derek Freeman, an Australian anthropologist, published a strong critique of Mead's work on Samoa. Freeman said that Mead's findings on adolescence were wrong. Freeman, a biological determinist, believes that, universally, adolescents are driven by hormonal changes that cause social and psychological upheavals. He claims that Mead's work was flawed in two major ways. First, he says her fieldwork was inadequate because Mead spent a relatively short time in the field and she had insufficient knowledge of the Samoan language. Second, he says that her theoretical bias against biological determinism led her to overlook or under-report evidence that was contrary to her interests. In addition, he marshals statistical evidence against Mead's position. He compares rates of adolescent delinquency in Samoa and England and finds that they are similar in both cultures. On the basis of this result, he argues that sexual puritanism and social repression also characterized Samoan adolescence. In other words, Samoa is not so different from the West with its supposedly pervasive adolescent problems.

Because of Mead's reputation, Freeman's critique prompted a vigorous response from scholars, mostly in defence of Mead. One response in defence of Mead came from Eleanor Leacock, an expert on how colonialism affects indigenous cultures. Leacock (1993) claimed that Freeman's position failed to take history into account: Mead's findings apply to Samoa of the 1920s while Freeman's analysis is based on data from the 1960s. By the 1960s, Samoan society had gone through radical cultural change due to the influence of World War II and intensive exposure to Western influences, including Christian missionaries. Freeman's data, in her view, do not contradict Mead's because they are from a different period.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- Mead felt that finding one "negative case" (no adolescent stress in Samoa) was sufficient to disprove the view that adolescent stress is a cultural universal. Do you agree that one negative case is sufficient?
- If an anthropologist found that a practice or pattern of behaviour was universal to all cultures, does that necessarily mean that it is biologically driven?



MAP 1.6 Samoa, American Samoa, and the South Pacific. Samoa, or the Independent State of Samoa, was known as German Samoa (1900–1919) and Western Samoa (1914–1997) until it was recognized by the United Nations as a sovereign country. Its population is around 177 000. American Samoa, or Amerika Samoa in Samoan English, is a territory of the United States with a population of roughly 57 000. During World War II, US Marines in American Samoa outnumbered the local population and had a strong cultural influence. Unemployment rates are now high and the US military is the largest employer.

your way of thinking about the world and your place in it. On top of that, it can add to your ability to get a job that values the kinds of thinking and skills that anthropology provides.

Majoring in Anthropology

An anthropology B.A. is a liberal arts degree. It is not, however, a professional degree, such as a business degree or a degree in physical therapy. It provides a solid education relevant to many career directions that are likely to require further study, such as law, criminal justice, medicine and health services, social services, education, humanitarian assistance, international development programs, and business. Students interested in pursuing a B.A. major in anthropology should know that a degree in this discipline is at least as useful as other liberal arts majors for either graduate study or a professional career.

Anthropology has several clear advantages over other liberal arts majors, and employers and graduate schools are increasingly recognizing these features. Cultural anthropology provides knowledge about the world's people and diversity. It offers insights about a variety of specialized research methods. Cross-cultural awareness and communication skills are valuable assets sought by business, government, health-care providers, and non-governmental organizations.

The question students always ask is this: "Is it possible to get a good job, especially one related to anthropology, with a B.A. in anthropology?" The answer is yes, but it takes planning and hard work. Do the following: Gain expertise in at least one foreign language, study abroad, do service learning during your undergraduate years, and conduct an independent research project and write up the results as a professional report or conference paper. Package these skills on your resumÈ so that they appear relevant to employers. Do not give up. Good jobs are out there, and coursework and skills in anthropology are increasingly valued.

Anthropology can also be an excellent minor. It complements almost any other area of study by adding a cross-cultural perspective. For example, if you are majoring in music, courses about world music will greatly enrich your primary interest. The same applies to subjects such as interior design, psychology, criminal justice, international affairs, economics, political science, and more.

Graduate Study in Anthropology

Some of you may go on to pursue a master's degree (M.A.) or doctorate degree (Ph.D.) in anthropology. If you do, here is some advice: Be passionate about your interest but also be aware that full-time jobs as a professor or as a professional anthropologist are not easy to get. To expand possibilities of a good job, it is wise to consider combining a professional skill with your degree program in anthropology, such as a law degree, an M.A. degree in project management, a master's of public health (M.P.H.), a certificate in disaster relief, or participation in a training program in conflict prevention and resolution.

Useful skills will make your anthropology degree more powerful. In biological anthropology, it may be course work in anatomy that helps you get a job working in a forensics lab or teaching anatomy in a medical school. In archaeology, it may be your experience on a summer dig that helps you get a job with a firm that investigates building sites before construction begins to check for the presence of fossils or artifacts. In cultural anthropology, cross-cultural experiences or knowledge of a foreign language may get you a position with an international aid organization. In linguistic anthropology, your knowledge of bilingualism means that you can help design a more effective program for teaching English to refugees or immigrants.

Living an Anthropological Life

Studying cultural anthropology makes for smart people and people with breadth and flexibility. In North America, university graduates are likely to change careers (not just jobs, but careers) several times in their lives. You never know where you are going to end up working, or in what endeavour. So it pays to be broadly informed about the world. Cultural anthropology will help you to ask original and important questions about the world's people and their relationships with one another and to provide original and important answers. It will enrich your daily life by increasing your exposure to the world's cultures. When you pick up a newspaper, you will invariably find articles that connect with what you have learned in your anthropology classes. You will be able to view your own everyday life as culturally constructed in interesting and meaningful ways.



Key Questions Revisited

WHAT is anthropology?

Anthropology is an academic discipline, like history or economics. It comprises four interrelated fields in its attempt to explore all facets of human life from its very beginnings until the present: archaeology, physical or biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology.

Each field contributes a unique but related perspective. The perspective of this book is that applied anthropology, just like theoretical anthropology, should be an integrated and important part of all four fields, rather than a separate, fifth field. Examples of applied anthropology in the four fields include forensic anthropology, nonhuman primate conservation, assisting in literacy programs for refugees, and advising businesses about consumer preferences.

WHAT is cultural anthropology?

Cultural anthropology is the field within general anthropology that focuses on the study of contemporary human culture—that is, on patterned and learned ways of behaving and thinking. It has several distinctive features that set it off from both the other fields of general anthropology and other academic endeavours. It uses ethnographical and ethnological approaches, supports the view of cultural relativism, and values cultural diversity.

Culture is the key concept of cultural anthropology. Some anthropologists define culture as both shared behaviour and ideas, while others equate culture with ideas alone and exclude behaviour as a part of culture. Important characteristics of culture are that it is adaptive, related to nature but not the same as nature, based on symbols, and learned. Cultures are integrated within themselves. They also interact with other cultures and change. Several models of cultural interaction involve varying degrees of conflict, blending, and resistance. People participate in cultures of different levels, including local cultures shaped by such factors as class, race/ethnicity/indigeneity, gender, age, and institutions.

HOW is cultural anthropology relevant to a career in the world of work?

Taking just one course in cultural anthropology expands awareness of the diversity of the world's cultures and the importance of cross-cultural understanding. Employers in many fields—such as public health, humanitarian aid, law enforcement, business, and education—increasingly value a degree in cultural anthropology. In today's diverse and connected world, being culturally informed and culturally sensitive is essential.

Graduate degrees in cultural anthropology, either at the M.A. or Ph.D. level, are even more likely to lead to professional positions that directly use your anthropological education and skills. Combining graduate course work in anthropology with a professional degree, such as master's degree in public health or public administration, or a law degree, is a successful route to a meaningful career outside academia.

KEY CONCEPTS

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anthropology, p. 4
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myanthrolab

To reinforce your understanding of this chapter, and to identify topics for further study, visit MyAnthroLab at www.pearsoned.com/myanthrolab for diagnostic tests and a multimedia ebook.

SUGGESTED READINGS

William I. Adams, *The Philosophical Roots of Anthropology*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 1998. Adams considers five ideas as roots of North American anthropology: progressivism, primitivism, natural law, Indianology (the study of First Nations), and German idealism. These ideas help explain why North American anthropology, compared with British anthropology, for example, retained the four-field structure.

Thomas J. Barfield, ed. *The Dictionary of Anthropology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1997. This reference work contains hundreds of brief essays on concepts in anthropology, such as evolution, myth, functionalism, and applied anthropology, and on important anthropologists.

Stanley Barrett, *Anthropology: A Student's Guide to Theory and Method*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. This helpful handbook for undergraduate anthropology students provides a useful overview of the development of the discipline, and links methods to past and present theories.

Merryl Wyn Davies and Piero (illus.), *Introducing Anthropology*. Cambridge, UK: Icon Books, 2002. This book offers snappy insights on key thinkers, developments, and arguments in anthropology. Each page is illustrated with cartoon-like drawings that make for lively reading.

Marvin Harris, *Our Kind: Who We Are, Where We Came From and Where We Are Going*. New York: HarperCollins, 1989. This book contains 100 thought-provoking essays on topics in general anthropology's four fields, including early human evolution, tool making, Neanderthals, food preferences, sex, sexism, politics, animal sacrifice, and thoughts on the survival of humanity.

F. Manning, ed., *Consciousness and Inquiry: Ethnology and Canadian Realities*. Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1983. CES paper 89e. In this edited volume, eminent Canadian anthropologists present overviews or historical perspectives on their areas of specialization, including applied anthropology in Canada.

R. Bruce Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson, eds. *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, 3rd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004. This sourcebook on northern peoples contains 26 chapters with sections divided by region. Chapters about various cultural groups provide historical context and updates on the current situation.

Pearl T. Robinson and Elliott P. Skinner, eds., *Transformation and Resiliency in Africa: As Seen by Afro-American Scholars*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1983. Framed by an introductory essay on black scholarship on Africa and a conclusion that looks toward the future, nine chapters explore different areas of African culture, including labour migration in Kenya, politics and government in Nigeria, religion in the Ivory Coast, religion and popular art in urban Africa, and the transformation of African music.

George W. Stocking, Jr., *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992. The author provides a detailed examination of the emergence of cultural anthropology from Tylor through Boas and Mead, with a summary chapter on major paradigms in the history of general anthropology.

Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982. In this book, Wolf examines the impact since 1492 of European colonial expansion on the indigenous cultures with which they came into contact. He also traces various phases of trade relationships, including the slave trade and goods such as fur and tobacco, and the emergence of capitalism and its effects on the movement of people and goods between cultures.