OXFORD

Cultural
Anthropology

Fourth Canadian Edition

Emily A. Schultz
Robert H. Lavenda
Roberta Robin Dods

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Preface to the Canadian Edition

Roberta Robin Dods

In this fourth Canadian edition of *Cultural Anthropology: A Perspective on the Human Condition*, we continue to situate students in a world view informed by a concern for social justice within a discussion of the discipline of anthropology—specifically, cultural anthropology. As globalization brings us into ever-closer relationships with peoples around the world, the anthropological perspective comes into sharper focus. We are challenged to find our better selves in times of change and upheaval as we consider the complications of living in a world of deep diversity. Of all the disciplines offered in our universities, anthropology is like no other in the opportunity to situate each of us in the better place of understanding ourselves and others.

Some chapters have been reorganized to add new materials but, as with the earlier Canadian editions, the conceptual integrity has been maintained. We continue with the 14-chapter structure, designed to fit the semester system of most Canadian universities. Each chapter begins with an outline and a set of learning objectives and concludes with a list of key terms, a chapter summary, critical thinking questions, and lists of suggested readings and related websites. These framing materials challenge students to integrate learned concepts while providing them with a window to a wider world of inquiry. This edition also contains a new "Living Anthropology" box at the end of most chapters that features insights on topical issues in the field from up-and-coming anthropologists in Canada.

In Chapter 1, the beginning of Part I: The Tools of Cultural Anthropology, we begin with a discussion of anthropology and its four traditional subfields—biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology—as well as what could effectively be considered its fifth subfield: applied anthropology. The theme of applied anthropology in its various forms echoes throughout this text. We continue with an introduction to cultural anthropology—its scope and its goals. Further, we explain the concept of culture and examine the critique of its use within a wider historical perspective, and we emerge with an understanding of the efficacy of a holistic approach to anthropological study. We also introduce the methodology of fieldwork and its resulting reportage—ethnography—and conclude with a discussion of ethnocentrism.

We examine ethnographic fieldwork in detail in Chapter 2, offering insight into forms of data collection, ways to prepare for "the field," professional ethics, and culture shock. We also compare three principal modes of ethnographic research: positivist, reflexive, and multi-sited. Our explanation of the dialectic of fieldwork considers the roles people play when acting as an anthropologist's guide in the field, the effects of fieldwork on all involved, and the value and open-ended nature of anthropological knowledge.

Our focus in Chapter 3 is on colonialism, capitalism, and modernity. Viewing historical developments through a critical lens, we examine the rise of political economies and place anthropology as a "player" in the colonial encounter. We then critique the development and use of various classification systems, including

the culture areas classifications that evolved in North America. In conclusion, we reflect on post-colonial realities as a counterpoint and a challenge.

In Chapter 4, which begins Part II: The Resources of Culture, our objective is to understand the theoretical and practical aspects of language and its use. Here, we discuss the relationship between language and culture and the importance of symbolic representation. We introduce some of Charles Hockett's design features of language, and we overview the components of language (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and ethnopragmatics). We also consider linguistic inequality and areas of negotiated meaning exemplified by pidgin languages. The chapter concludes with a brief statement on the dialectic between experience and language and the creation of ambiguity in symbolic systems.

Beginning from the observation that every individual views the world from a unique position, we investigate the nature of identity and the individual in Chapter 5. First, we explore how individual psychology is situated in the context of a symbolic, cultural world and how cultural schemas and prototypes shape the ways we perceive our experiences. We then outline interpretations of intelligence, cognitive (learning) styles, reasoning, and logic. Next, we examine emotion as the product of the dialectic between bodily arousal and cognitive interpretation mediated by, and embedded within, a cultural matrix. Finally, we discuss ranges of sexual and gender identities and how those identities are culturally informed. Norms and normative constructs are considered.

In Chapter 6, we delve into social inequality and explore the multi-dimensional nature of inequality in terms of class, caste, race, and ethnic divisions. We begin by considering the implications of class-stratified societies and class mobility. Next, we present examples of caste, focusing in particular on how divisions of caste impact peoples' way of living in India. We then survey the discredited concept of "race" and its manifestation in today's world, keeping in mind the ethical implications that often arise when "race" is perceived as a social division. Finally, we reflect upon definitions of *ethnicity* before concluding with an examination of what constitutes a *nation*, what a national identity is, and how national identity may manifest in *nationalism*.

In Chapter 7, we analyze the complexities of human social relationships, focusing on different interpretations of marriage, family, kinship, and friendship. Throughout the chapter, we investigate what determines relatedness and group membership, with an awareness of the role of sex and gender in systems of social organization. We discuss marriage as a social process in the context of economic exchange and family alliance. As we explore the dimensions of family life, we outline various family structures and note how families change over time and in response to new global circumstances. We also compare kin-based versus non–kin-based societies and conclude with an appreciation for the nuances of the dimensions of group life.

Making a living is our central focus in Chapter 8. We consider subsistence strategies before moving on to discuss the relationship between production, distribution, and consumption. Additionally, we note the differences between internal (needs) and external (resources) explanations of consumption patterns. We also explore the cultural and symbolic nature of consumption and then elucidate distribution and exchange at local and global levels by examining various forms of exchange—from reciprocity to redistribution to market exchange.

In Chapter 9, we discuss play, art, myth, and ritual. We begin with play, which is an open system that allows us to communicate about communicating (metacommunication) and provides an entrée to meaningful reflexivity. From play, we move on to discuss first sport as embedded in the prevailing social order and then art as play that produces significant transformation-representation. We also explore the relationships between myths, as charters for social action and providers of stories of truth, and ritual, a culturally defined schema that brings text and performance together and that can function as a powerful form of metacommunication.

Chapter 10 focuses on an applied discipline that has been gaining attention in recent years: medical anthropology. While a chapter is not enough to cover all the diverse topics of study that medical anthropologists investigate, we discuss many themes at the heart of the discipline and offer examples of how researchers have applied these themes to real-world situations. We emphasize holism, particularly in our discussion of the impact of physical, social, and cultural environments on the well-being of individuals. We also consider various culturally informed approaches to health care and ways of labelling and defining illness and disease. In addition, we revisit some ethical considerations as we explore the challenges involved in studying human health. Above all, we emphasize the importance of being open to traditional knowledge and non-Western ways of healing.

In Chapter 11, we consider the seemingly simple—yet actually very complex—subject of world view in the context of key metaphors. We explore the role of metaphor, metonymy, and symbolic thought and comment on the anthropological analysis of religion and secularism within the context of world view. As we come to understand world views as instruments of power, we also come to understand how key metaphors and world views are maintained and modified in a world of change.

We begin Part III: Organization of Life: Local to Global with a discussion of social organization and patterns of human interdependence in Chapter 12, noting that no single cause can explain the complexities of human social relations. We consider the human power to act, various forms of social power, and explanations of why human beings submit to institutionalized power. As we investigate how humans invest the world with meaning, we also discuss how people bargain for reality as they negotiate the meaning of history and tradition.

We explore the emergence of the *global world* in Chapter 13. In the context of the history of the development of political economies, we consider globalization and the pressures on nation-states as new cultural processes emerged and continue to emerge. A key issue is the challenge of human rights in a "globalized" world, and we discuss cultural imperialism, cultural hybridization, and cosmopolitanism as responses to this challenge.

In the concluding chapter, we present the idea that anthropology encompasses so much more than what students will learn in a classroom. Anthropology is about the lives and worlds of the people who gift us with their world views. It is a portal to effective global citizenship in a world of uncertainty. Finally, anthropology offers perspective and a way to develop awareness (reflexivity) in order to confront issues and challenge views on freedom and constraint.

A Final Note

Each new edition of *Cultural Anthropology* has moved forward in some small and/or large way to illuminate the trends of the discipline. Nonetheless, what has been constant is the book's core value: a respect for students. Like Emily Schultz and Robert Lavenda, I, too, have taken students seriously. I believe that they have the capacity to read and think as involved adults. It has been my experience using this book over the years that students are happy to be seen as capable of the reflexivity this book espouses. Readers may sometimes complain about or struggle with the content and the concepts, but I have found they can be charmed into learning as they come to appreciate that the text grounds them in an intellectual, emotional, and practical perspective that finds resonance in their—quite substantial—understanding of the world. What we offer are the tools for analysis. Inevitably, students appreciate this book and anthropology as a subject. This book situates them in a world of change and challenges them to engage the anthropological perspective as an increasingly important tool for effective global citizenship.

This edition is bittersweet for me as I retire from active participation in the classroom while continuing with some of my field research that I hope to complete in my final years. I speak to you from a life in anthropology and at a time when we are significantly challenged to hold on to our humanity and to our wonderful home in the stars. The gifts of understanding I have received from others have been magical. The generosities of many have enriched my professional and personal life and in some small way have come to you through my contribution to this book.

Sam Anderson, writing in *The New York Times Magazine* (1 October 2017) on the life and work of the writer John McPhee, comments, "Learning . . . is a way of loving the world, savoring it, before it is gone. In the grand cosmology . . . all the earth's facts touch one other—all its regions, creatures, and eras . . . Every part of time touches every other part of time" (33, 55).

We are all in this river of time—immersed in the waters of life. Swim!

Acknowledgements

Once again, I want to thank the people I met and worked with in the field who gifted me with their friendship and insights into their lives while teaching me to see their worlds and ways of being human. They have been my true teachers, and their kind involvement has been a sacred gift. As this book has always inferred, such generosity helps us face the world with humility, while the study of anthropology situates us in a place of analysis that fosters the development of humble concern and deep hope. None of this could be possible without the kindness of others.

I would like to thank, once more, Emily Schultz and Robert Lavenda for providing the foundation upon which the Canadian editions of *Cultural Anthropology* have been built and for their ongoing insightful comments on the progress made in the current edition.

In this edition we have included the voices of "new" academics in anthropology. Some recently have completed their PhDs, and one is in a post-doc position. Others are on the cusp of completion. They are representative of our future—their voices will keep us aware of our humanity as they continue to gather the sacred gifts others have to impart.

Alphonse Ndem Ahola, University of Alberta

David Cooney, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Joshua Friesen, McGill University

Jennifer Glassco, McGill University

Geoffrey Hobbis, University of British Columbia, Okanagan

Stephanie Ketterer Hobbis, University of British Columbia, Okanagan

Matt Husain, University of British Columbia, Okanagan

Sarah Jacobs, University of Calgary

Nancy Merrill, University of British Columbia, Okanagan

Nhi Ha Nguyen, Queen's University

Michael P. Oman-Reagan, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Maxime Polleri, York University

Judith van Roggen, University of British Columbia, Okanagan

Beyond my sincere thanks to those named above and below (and any I missed), I bid adieu. And to borrow from sci-fi, our portal to the imagining of future worlds, actual and metaphorical, some words of hope: "Live long and prosper" (Spock in *Star Trek)* and "May the force be with you" (Yoda in *Star Wars*). The emergent area of futurist anthropology will continue our legacy of supporting our humanity even onto changing times.

The work could not have proceeded without the exceedingly positive relationship that I developed with my first editors at Oxford University Press. Here, I note these editors from the years and editions specifically: Caroline Starr, senior acquisitions editor; Peter Chambers, developmental editor, higher education division; Amanda Maurice, assistant editor, higher education division; and, recently, Janice Evans, senior editor, higher education division; Rhiannon Wong, assistant editor; and Colleen Ste Marie, copy editor.

Peter worked with me in a sympathetic and supportive fashion on the first two Canadian editions. Without his input and the contribution of Amanda Maurice on the first Canadian edition, I could not have worked through the difficult process of making this book "Canadian" while keeping the tone of the original authors.

Roberta Robin Dods

From the Publisher

Building on the solid foundation of past editions, this fourth Canadian edition of *Cultural Anthropology: A Perspective on the Human Condition* invites students to embark on a journey of cross-cultural comparison. Featuring ethnographic insight from the experiences of the authors' own fieldwork as well as from top researchers in Canada and around the world, *Cultural Anthropology* takes a contemporary and dynamic look at how human agency, cultural creativity, and the material conditions of everyday life interact to shape cultural practices. This thought-provoking text will inspire students to engage with the world beyond the classroom, a world that is stunningly diverse, surprisingly similar, and thoroughly human.

Key Features

Canadian focus. A host of Canadian examples, points of view, and issues offer insight into the many ways in which Canadians have contributed to the field. Students will also enjoy learning about the breadth and depth of anthropological research being carried out in this country today.

Expanded coverage of technology, gender and sexuality, health, globalization, and other essential topics.

Figure 1.15 The Women's March took place on 21 January 2017, with participation from several Canadian cities and an estimated five million people marching worldwide. The rallies were in opposition to the political positions of newly elected President Donald Trump and his administration. Besides protest, what other ways do humans demonstrate agency in their lives?

human agency Human beings' ability to exercise at least some control over their lives.

of **human agency**—the stuff of people's dreams and the realm of their potential for growth.

The Promise of the Anthropological Perspective

The anthropological perspective on the human condition is not easy to maintain. It forces people to question the common-sense assumptions with which they are most comfortable. It increases the difficulty they encounter when faced with moral and political decisions. It does not allow people an easy retreat to ethnocentrism when the going gets rough. Once human beings are exposed to the kinds of experiences that the anthropological undertaking makes possible, they are changed—for better or worse. They cannot easily pretend that these new experiences never happened to them. Once they have had a genuine glimpse of "the other" as human beings equal to themselves, there is no going back—except in bad faith.

So, anthropology is guaranteed to complicate your life. Nevertheless, the anthropological perspective can give you a broader understanding of human nature and the wider world—of society, culture, and history—and thus help you construct more realistic and authentic ways of coping with those complications.

such cultural contexts, with their ragged edges and fuzzy boundaries, human beings must make interpretations, formulate goals, and set out in pursuit of them. A holistic, dialectical approach to the human condition recognizes the existence and importance

Living Anthropology

Linguistic Belonging: Francophone Communities in Canada's Northwest Territories

by Joshua Friesen, PhD Candidate, Anthropology, McGill University

"Home is where the heart is." This proverb rings true for many people in Canada and elsewhere. But how is a home defined? And what about the heart? Does this proverb mean that you feel at home wherever you truly desire to be or that your heart is wedded to a particular landscape, a set of social relations, or a tradition? Is the home a social construct that affords security, entertainment, and economic opportunity, or is it a physical artifact with walls, a roof, and a door? Likewise, is the heart an embodied sense of attachment, a pumping organ, or the seat of human emotion? Cultural anthropologists investigate these questions all over the world by studying how people create and maintain a sense of belonging in a particular time and place. By asking what binds people

together and to their environment, cultural anthropology aims to understand more about a central feature of the human condition: community.

Anthropologists have studied belonging and community in a variety of ways. Research has been done on the difference between spaces and places or on how a physical environment is made over into a cultural landscape with particular meanings, resonances, and collectively significant markers (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). Research has also been done on the definition and creation of social communities (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). How a community is represented, symbolized, and memorialized all has an effect on who feels included therein (Anderson 1991).

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citizens have undermined previous understandings of what nation-states should look like. In addition, they have revealed unacknowledged problems and weaknesses within certain nation-states. For example, the existence and strength of transborder states and citizenries show that some nation-states—especially those sending migrants—are actually what Schiller and Fouron call *apparent states*: they have all the outward attributes of nation-states—government bureaucracies, armies, a seat at the United Nations, and so on—but in fact they are unable to meet the needs of their people (2002: 363).

The strength of long-distance nationalism and transborder citizenries also exposes inconsistencies and paradoxes in the meaning of *citizenship*. Schiller and Fouron contrast **legal citizenship** with **substantive citizenship**. They point out that, for transborder citizens, these two types of citizenship do not necessarily coincide. *Legal citizenship* is granted by state laws and can be difficult for migrants to obtain. But even transborder citizens who obtain legal citizenship often experience a gap between what legal citizenship promises and the way they are treated by the state. For example, a state may treat its citizens who have lived their entire lives within its borders more favourably than it treats its recently naturalized citizens. *Substantive citizenship*, in contrast, is defined by the actions people take to assert their membership in a state and to bring about political changes to improve their lives. Some transborder citizenries call for the establishment of fully fledged **transnational nation-states**. That is, "they challenge the notion that relationships between citizens and their state are confined within that territory," and they work for the recognition of a new political form that reflects the realities of their experiences of national identity (Schiller and Fouron 2002: 359).

The contrast between formal and substantive citizenship illustrates that traditional, seemingly straightforward notions of citizenship have begun to break down in the context of globalization. While such developments may provide new opportunities for some, they create difficulties for others. For example, individuals with complicated or ambiguous citizenship status may have a hard time accessing state-supported social programs (see Clarke 2004; Gledhill 2001). Too often, globalization can have a marginalizing effect on the powerless. As our world continues to globalize, we must ensure that those in need are not left behind.

Figure 13.7 Canada Day celebrations from abroad in Trafalgar Square, London, England on 1 July 2017. Hundreds of people came out to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday. Here a crowd enjoys snacks and refreshments at the Canada Day Bar, including "Nanaimo Bars: The Original," "La Petite Cabane à Sucre de Québec," "Fresh Cooked Waffles and Maple Syrup," and "Canadian Wild Blueberries." Would you view the celebration as a form of transborder citizenry? Have you seen or experienced other forms of transborder citizenry?

Flexible Citizenship among Diasporic Chinese Families

In her research on diasporic communities of elite Chinese families, anthropologist Aihwa Ong (2002 [1999]) has examined the concept of **flexible citizenship**, defined by "the strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking both to circumvent *and* [to] benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investment, work, and family relocation" (174). This form of citizenship has clear benefits for individuals working in business or commerce.

Although the successes of Chinese businesspeople are often attributed by outsiders to "Chinese culture," Ong's research challenges this simplistic explanation. Many Chinese businesspeople have responded creatively to opportunities and challenges they have encountered since the end of the nineteenth century, when Chinese merchants first became involved in the capitalist economic centres of European colonial empires in East and Southeast Asia. They succeeded because they were able to cultivate close relationships that allowed them to evade or exploit the rules governing three different kinds of institutions: (1) Chinese kinship and family, (2) the nation-state, and (3) the marketplace.

legal citizenship The rights and obligations of citizenship granted by the laws of a state.

substantive citizenship The actions people take, regardless of their legal citizenship status, to assert their membership in a state and to bring about political changes that will improve their lives.

transnational nation-states Nation-states in which the relationships between citizens and their states extend to wherever citizens reside.

flexible citizenship Strategies employed by individuals who regularly move across state boundaries in order to circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes.

New discussions of topics such as cyborg anthropology, virtual realities, transgender identities, Indigenous language revitalization, refugee mental health, and visual research methods offer students insight into important areas of study within anthropology.

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5 Culture, the Individual, and Identity

Chapter Outline

Perception
Cognition
Emotion
Motivation

Personality/Self/Subjectivity
Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Roles: The Creation of Subject Positions
Individual Psychology and Context

Learning Objectives

By the end of Chapter 5, you will be able to

- understand how perception organizes information and frames the "self";
- appreciate cognition as a complex mental process that helps us make sense of our world;
- consider that emotion and motivation are influenced by cultural contexts;

- recognize the roles that socialization and enculturation play in shaping cognitive development;
- consider the "self," the presentation of self, and the self as subject; and
- understand how sex and gender roles influence our sense of identity.

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some anthropologists object to the use of this term because it suggests a role that is limited to supplying information for the benefit of the researcher. Therefore, many contemporary anthropologists choose to describe the people they encounter in the field as *partners*, *participants*, *consultants*, or simply *the people I work with* because these terms emphasize a relationship of equality based on mutual respect. Others prefer the term *teachers*, making it explicit that fieldwork is an active dialogue between the researcher (the student) and the people who are the experts on their own lives (the teachers). Of course, these experts, like all teachers, also learn and develop new perspectives as they interact with their students—reciprocity, again!

Researchers make written notes (documents) even when audio recordings are permitted. The essential written notes can be augmented significantly by the use of videos or photographs (Figure 1.8). Indeed, the use of "shadow catching" technologies—devices that capture a visual representation of life—in the discipline dates back to the earliest period of photography in the nineteenth century. Such photographs have been an invaluable record. In many cases, however, visual records say more about the photographer or videographer than about the image's content. This notion is well illustrated by some of Franz Boas's pictures taken for the US National Museum (see more on this in Chapter 13). Another historical example is photographer Edward Curtis's movie *In the Land of the War Canoes* (1914), which depicts a fictionalized account of the lives of the Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka'wakw) peoples (Northern Vancouver Island).

Two related terms for anthropological studies are *ethnography* and *ethnology*. An **ethnography** is a recorded description of a particular group of people's way of life; **ethnology** is the comparative study of two or more such groups. Thus, cultural anthropologists who write ethnographies are sometimes called *ethnographers*, and cultural anthropologists who compare ethnographic information on many different cultural practices are sometimes called *ethnologists*.

Emerging Approaches: Applied Anthropology

Applied anthropology could be termed *action anthropology*. In applied anthropology, anthropological information is put to practical use to propose solutions to important problems. You may be familiar with the practical applications of forensic anthropology—perhaps

Figure 1.8 Anthropologist Ryan Cook continues the anthropological tradition of the use of technology as he videotapes the spectators and ritual performers at the Popocatépetl volcano in Mexico. How do you think using technology impacts the research process?

you've even encountered media coverage of forensic anthropologists, such as Mark Skinner (Simon Fraser University), who have worked on highly publicized crime cases or genocide investigations. Although generally exposed to less public attention, other areas of application can also make important contributions to social life. For example, when working with a traditionally structured non-Western community, applied anthropologists could

- use the culture's ideas about illness and health to introduce useful public-health practices in a way that makes sense to, and will be accepted by, members of that culture;
- place emphasis on health hazards from environmental contamination (for an example, see more on Grassy Narrows in Chapter 10);
- draw on the knowledge of traditional social organization to ease the problems for refugees trying to settle in a new land; and
- integrate traditional and Western methods of cultivation to help farmers increase their crop yields.

Anthropologists use their professional training to seek social justice, eliminate discrimination, and support human and cultural rights. In Canada, applied anthropologists have frequently acted to

ethnography An anthropologist's recorded description of a particular group of people's way of life.

ethnology The comparative study of two or more cultures.

applied anthropology The use of information gathered from the other anthropological specialties to solve practical problems within and between cultures.

Broad theoretical coverage. The authors bring together traditional anthropological perspectives and cutting-edge theories to reflect the most recent trends in the discipline. The result is a comprehensive, holistic approach that sheds new light on standard topics.

Living Anthropology

New "Living Anthropology" boxes. New end-of-chapter boxes feature insights on topical issues in the field from up-and-coming anthropologists in Canada, highlighting for students critical research being conducted today.

EthnoProfile

"Ethnoprofile" boxes. Brief overviews of relevant geographic, linguistic, demographic, and organizational information offer students contextual information on various societies discussed in the text.

In Their Own Words

"In Their Own Words" boxes. Short commentaries from experts in the field provide students with personal insights and alternative perspectives on key issues.

6

Inequality in the Contemporary World: Class, Caste, Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality

Chapter Outline

Class
Caste
Race

Ethnicity
Nation and Nat...

Learning Objectives

By the end of Chapter 6, you will be able to

- identify aspects of social stratification resulting in class and caste structures;
- consider and challenge various concepts of race, ethnicity, and nationalism; and

- discuss ho... nationalism...

bridewealth The transfer of certain symbolically important goods from the family of the groom to the family of the bride, representing compensation to the wife's lineage for the loss of her labour and child-bearing capacities.

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160   **PART II** | The Resources of Culture

Total private households
14,072,080 (100.0%)

Non-census-family households
4,553,135 (32.3%)

Census-family households
9,519,945 (67.7%)

Couples without children
3,627,185 (25.8%)

Multigenerational households
403,810 (2.9%)

Couples with children
3,738,575 (26.5%)

Other family households
510,380 (3.6%)

Lone-parent families
1,250,190 (8.9%)

...nada, 2016.

..., 2016. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, available from www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170802/p.

Extended, Joint, and Blended Families

Some societies have expanded definitions of the central family unit. Two traditional examples are the **extended family** and the **joint family**. In an extended family, the role each member plays in the family dynamic is tied to his or her position as child, parent, and/or grandparent. In a joint family, the dynamic is less constant since it is composed of, for example, a father and his married sons, as well as the sons' wives and children. Upon the death of the father, the eldest son inherits the position as household head. His younger brothers may not accept his authority as readily as they did their father's, and they may decide to establish separate households with the hope of starting their own joint families. Something similar happens among the polyandrous Nyinba discussed earlier. A group of brothers may take a second wife. At first, all brothers have equal access to both wives, but in time they tend to form groups around each wife, eventually choosing to split the household in two.

In recent decades in North America, anthropologists have become more interested in the increase in the **blended family**. From a historical perspective, such families can be recognized in European folk tales, now termed fairy tales—consider *Cinderella*

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152   **PART II** | The Resources of Culture

Table 7.2 Opposite-Sex and Same-Sex Couples, with and without Children, Canada, 2011

	Opposite-Sex Couples	Female Couples	Male Couples
Without children	3,694,400	24,305	33,855
With children	4,102,880	5,075	1,340
Total	7,797,280	29,380	35,195

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada. 2013. "2011 Census of Canada."

Marriage as a Social Process

We use the term *marriage* to define the alliances and essential social roles that establish and reinforce rights and obligations at the core of social life. Looking at the variety of alliances that we subsume under the term *marriage* allows us to see such alliances as a social process. Our frames of reference now expand beyond traditional Western definitions (Lamphere 2005) (Figure 7.1). Roles evolve as societal norms change with changing times. For example, before Bill 16 was passed in 1964, a woman who entered marriage in Quebec lost her status as an independent adult unless she had a previously arranged legal contract, similar to what we would call a "prenup" (i.e., a prenuptial agreement) today. A married woman under Quebec's Civil Code could not inherit property, open a bank account, or sign her children into hospital for treatment; these "rights" were reserved for her husband. Since 1964, due in large part to social changes supporting women's equality, women in Quebec have shared these rights with their husbands. In 2005, Canada saw further changes to the definition of marriage with the passing of the Civil

Marriage Act, which legally recognized same-sex marriage. More recently, in 2015 the United States legalized same-sex marriage in all states although it remains a somewhat contested issue.

Post-marital living arrangements may reflect the role each partner is expected to adopt in familial and social relationships (see Table 7.1). In many societies, the partners are expected to live with a specific set of family members. Such arrangements, traditionally called "residence rules" by anthropologists, suggest how that culture understands family bonds. This may take on alternative meanings for those living in transnational situations, such as those living in refugee camps and forced to leave the place defined as "home." Here ". . . notions of continuity and belonging are continuously negotiated in relation to processes of change" (Pedersen 2011: 15). Living away from the daily activities, routines, and traditions of "home" is very difficult and requires physical and psychological resources, without which maintaining social bonds may be nearly impossible (16–17).

Some cultures use forms of creative marriage to develop specifically needed social relationships. Evans-Pritchard (1951) described two such forms among the Nuer of East Africa in the early twentieth century. In the first form, a woman could marry another woman and become the "father" of the wife's children. To understand this sort of arrangement, we must distinguish between *pater* (social father role) and *genitor* (biological father or sperm provider role). To establish the marriage, the female husband (the *pater*) gave the bride's lineage cattle as **bridewealth** payments. Then, a male kinsman, friend, or neighbour (the *genitor*) impregnated the wife and contributed labour by performing tasks considered to be men's work. The female husband played the social role of a man. She could marry several women if her wealth permitted, and she could demand damage payment if any wife engaged in sexual activity (adultery) without her consent. She was the *pater* of her wives' children, who were of her patrilineage and called her "father." She administered her compound and her herds as any male head of household

Figure 7.1 Couples wait for their turn during a mass wedding ceremony (an event in which many couples are married at the same time) in Navi Mumbai, India.

Vibrant four-colour design. A wide array of photos, illustrations, maps, tables, and graphs helps bring anthropology to life!

10

States of Being in Wellness and Illness

by Roberta Robin Dods

Chapter Outline

Medical Anthropology
Beyond the Science–Tradition Divide
Integrated Approaches and Holism in Medical Anthropology
Cultural Interpretations and Labels of Illness and Disease

Environments and Well-Being
Health-Care Delivery Systems

Learning Objectives

By the end of Chapter 10, you will be able to

- understand that medical anthropology draws on many disciplines to study well-being, health, illness, and disease;
- appreciate the importance of traditional knowledge and biomedical knowledge in the management of wellness and illness;

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(2) the patient may recover regardless of the interventions taken by caregivers because the disease/illness/injury was, in effect, self-correcting or self/healing; (3) the placebo effect may work to bring about a cure,

simply because the patient believes that it will be effective; and (4) treatments may be ineffective, in some cases leading to the death of the patient.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How is the medical system in Canada an externalizing system? What evidence can you find of internalizing approaches to wellness in Canada? How can these two approaches complement one another?

2. What are the links between environmental contamination and health? How important are efforts to clean up

regions of the world? What can be done about disparities within relatively affluent nations?

4. Anthropologist Bruce Lincoln has observed that the human body in sickness transcends its individual psychological and physical vulnerability, becoming the "site where social pressures and tensions are experienced most acutely" and various community "contradictions and lacerations that divide a community" are played out (2001: 791). How have social pressures and tensions factored into your own experiences with disease and illness? How might Lincoln's observations relate to an epidemic within a community?

Mintz, Sidney W., and Christine M. Du Bois. 2002. "The Anthropology of Food and Eating," *Annual Review of Anthropology 31: 99–119.* This article links diverse areas of research, including food security and social change. The authors note that much remains to be done in examining nutritional practices in many areas of the world.

Rylko-Bauer, Barbara, and Paul Farmer. 2002. "Managed Care or Managed Inequality? A Call for Critiques of Market-Based Medication," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly 16, 4: 476–502.* This paper challenges us to consider the actual cost of care managed by corporations that base decisions on potential profits.

Stephenson, Peter H. 2001. "Expanding Notions of Culture and Ethics in Health and Medicine to Include Marginalized Groups: A Critical Perspective," *Anthropologica 43, 1: 3–17.* A nuanced and historically contextualized paper that examines the ethical challenges involved in practising medicine—both Western and traditional—in a globalizing world.

Van Esterik, Penny. 2002. "Contemporary Trends in Infant Feeding Research," *Annual Review of Anthropology 31: 257–78.* An informative investigation into health and nutrition concerns related to infant care and feeding.

Health Canada: First Nations and Inuit Health
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/index-eng.php

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271   **10** | States of Being in Wellness and Illness

there has not been a comparative study of refugees' mental health before and after their arrival, nor has there been a reliable health-care system for them in the countries of asylum.

Following Kleinman's call for a more involved anthropology of mental health (2012), refugees' experience can certainly benefit from ethnographic inquiries. In anthropological terminology, refugees are persons who, having undergone a violent rite of separation (cf. Turner 1967), are caught in a liminal, in-between state prior to resettlement in countries of asylum. Being a refugee does not automatically imply mental illnesses; nevertheless, such issues are prevalent enough that the French government, for instance, requires physicians' certificates affirming a physical and psychological basis for fleeing persecution (Fassin and d'Halluin 2005). There has indeed

been an increase in refugees admitted on the basis of health problems (Fassin 2005), returning us to the humanitarian basis for resettlement in the 1951 Convention (UNHRC 2017).

The lack of psychiatric structure to accommodate refugees' mental-health needs, and social barriers surrounding mental illnesses in contemporary countries of asylum, is indeed a form of structural violence. This concern for refugees' mental health presents a valuable opportunity for anthropology to discuss two topical issues: (1) mental health-care systems in countries of origin, and (2) the many difficulties in continuing medical health care for pre-settlement refugees in countries of asylum. Is this not why anthropology exists—for its unique insight into the human condition, mediated by institutional forces and sociopolitical infrastructures?

Key Terms

abiotic 251	ethnomedical systems 243	realized niche 252
bioaccumulation 253	etiology 246	shaman 245
biomagnification 253	folk illness 249	sickness 242
biomedicine 242	health 242	social trauma 256
biotic 251	illness 242	structural violence 255
culture-bound syndromes 242	managed care 264	suffering 242
defensive research 254	medical anthropology 242	traditional knowledge 242
disease 242	placebo effect 260	well-being 242
epidemiology 265	positive research 254	

Chapter Summary

1. Medical anthropology is highly interdisciplinary, drawing on and influencing such diverse fields as biology, ecology, biochemistry, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, linguistics, ethics, and religious studies. Thus, medical anthropologists value integrated approaches and holism in their work, and they are always open to a variety of perspectives.

2. Medical anthropologists recognize the tension between traditional knowledge and Western scientific knowledge, but they also recognize that the two approaches intersect in many ways. In the past, the systems were depicted as being in opposition to each other, but contemporary medical anthropologists try to move beyond "either/or" interpretations.

3. Medical anthropologists are aware that physical (biotic and abiotic), social, and cultural environments can have a dramatic impact on human well-being. Within every environment, all components are linked in complex, often indivisible ways. Thus, researchers examine the influence of environments—especially *realized niches*—on human health. Two areas of particular interest are environmental contamination and access to a balanced diet.

4. Health-care systems take many different forms around the world. Yet medical anthropologists recognize four outcomes of medical treatment that occur cross culturally, regardless of the approach to effecting a cure: (1) the treatment may cause the patient to recover;

Engaging learning tools. Learning objectives, marginal definitions of key terms, critical thinking questions, annotated suggestions for further reading, lists of related websites, and an end-of-book glossary encourage students to actively engage with what they are reading and explore resources beyond the text to enhance their learning experience.

Extensive Ancillary Package. The fourth Canadian edition of *Cultural Anthropology* is supported by a wide range of supplementary resources for the student and the instructor, all designed to enhance and complete the learning experience. The companion websites for *Cultural Anthropology* are found at

www.oupcanada.com/Schultz4Ce
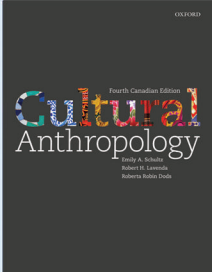
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- **Student Study Guide.** An updated and expanded package of review material—including a list of relevant films, self-testing quizzes of multiple choice and true-or-false questions, essay topics and discussion questions, kinship diagrams, new video links, and weblinks to resources such as online ethnographies—is designed to reinforce student understanding of each chapter and provide direction for further research. The Student Study Guide also contains short commentaries for each chapter written by Roberta Robin Dods that challenge students to think critically about a variety of engaging and relevant cultural topics.

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- **PowerPoint Slides.** These dynamic lecture slides summarize key points from each chapter and incorporate figures and tables from the text.
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- **Test Generator.** This comprehensive bank of test questions provides hundreds of multiple choice, true-or-false, short answer, and mini essay questions along with suggested answers and page references guiding students to related in-text discussions.

COMPANION WEBSITE	Emily A. Schultz, Robert H. Lavenda, Roberta Robin Dods
	Cultural Anthropology, A Perspective on the Human Condition, 4Ce
	ISBN 13: 9780199028528

About the Book

Drawing on the authors' fieldwork experience, this text explores how cultural creativity, human agency, and the material conditions of everyday life interact to shape cultural practices. Discussions of ongoing controversies-including tribalism vs. globalization and increasing inequality between "have" and "have not" regions—show how cultural anthropologists can tackle the world's most pressing social problems through their specialized knowledge and skills.

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Student Resources

Sample Material

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PART I | The Tools of Cultural Anthropology

In Part I, we introduce anthropology—specifically, cultural anthropology—as a way of exploring and gaining knowledge about our world and ourselves. We also consider the possibilities made available by fieldwork, cultural anthropologists' principal method of data collection. Finally, we discuss the historical context for how anthropologists have attempted to make sense of human cultural diversity.

1

The Anthropological Perspective on the Human Condition

Chapter Outline

Explanations of the Human Condition

The Anthropological Perspective:
  The Cross-Disciplinary Discipline

Anthropology and the Concept of Culture

The Challenge of Cultural Differences

Culture, History, and Human Agency

The Promise of the Anthropological Perspective

Learning Objectives

By the end of Chapter 1, you will be able to

- define anthropology's aims and scope of study;
- explain culture as a concept within anthropology;
- distinguish cultural anthropology as a subfield of anthropology;
- articulate connections and relationships between the four major subfields of anthropology in North America;

- explain the world views of dualism and holism, and show ways that the conflict between them has shaped anthropology; and
- explain the relationship between cultural relativism and ethnocentrism, and give examples of both.

Explanations of the Human Condition

Dualistic, Idealistic, and Materialistic Explanations of Our World

What is the world like? And what is the human condition within the world? Indeed, does it make sense to speak of a *single condition* or even a shared *time*? Members of all societies pose questions such as these. And all societies develop their own answers. Bryony Goodwin-Hawkins observes that we are, in effect, in "co-existent temporality" (2012: 22), a cultural/environmental construct, while at the same time experiencing a personal history: "Just as some anticipate an improved future, others look back to a preferred past" (25). Thus, there is great variation in the interpretation of *beingness*. We all struggle with finding our place and its meaning on a personal and a cultural level. If asked what is known about human nature, for example, many North Americans would answer that human nature has two parts: *mind* and *matter*, or *soul* and *body*, or *spirit* and *flesh*. The belief that human nature, or reality as a whole, is made up of two radically different yet equal forces is called **dualism**. The pair of forces is often referred to as a **binary opposition**.

For thousands of years, from the time of the Greek philosopher Plato (428–347 BCE) onward, people of the Western tradition have debated the importance of each half of human nature. They have understood each person as made up of a material (physical) body inhabited by an ethereal mind or spirit. According to Plato, the drama of human existence consists of the internal struggle between the body (drawn naturally to base, corruptible matter) and the mind or soul (drawn naturally to pure, unchanging forms). Christian theology later incorporated the view that each human being consists of a soul that seeks God and a physical body that is tempted by the material world. This view of earthly life as a struggle between spirit (good) and flesh (evil) is sometimes called *conflict dualism*.

Subsequently, Platonic and Christian theories of human nature came to emphasize that although human beings are equipped with physical bodies, their true nature is spiritual, not material; the body is a material obstacle that prevents the full development of the mind or spirit. This view is known as **idealism**. Conversely, others have argued that the activities of our physical bodies in the material world make us who we are. From this perspective, human existence becomes the struggle to exercise our physicality as fully as we can; to put spiritual values above bodily needs would "go against human nature." This view is known as **materialism**. In their most extreme forms, idealism and materialism pose competing forms of **determinism**: idealists claim that human nature is *determined by* the causal force of mind or spirit; materialists argue that human nature is *determined by* the causal force of physical matter.

Many idealists and materialists have sought to strip away our seemingly minor or unnecessary attributes in order to reveal an unchanging core or **essence** of human nature. Indeed, across the history of Western philosophy, various philosophers have assumed that our species has an essence but have disagreed about just what that essence is. Yet other thinkers have argued that human beings come into the world with *no fixed essence*. For them, people are shaped by various forces that they encounter throughout their lives. But what those forces might be, how many there are, and which of them is the most powerful remain part of the debate.

Some nineteenth-century thinkers argued that the most powerful material forces that shape human nature were to be found in the surrounding *natural environment*. Environmental factors thereby shaped past and present societies and, ultimately, their inhabitants' sense of self and society. German philosopher Karl Marx (1818–1883) and his followers, by contrast, argued that forces shaping human beings' self-understanding were rooted in social relations shaped by the mode of economic production that sustained a society (Figure 1.1). Because different groups, or *classes*, played different roles in that production process, members of each group would develop a different sense of what life was all about. An extreme idealist reaction against such materialist thinking, influential in cultural anthropology, has argued that human beings have no fixed essence when they come into the world but they

dualism The philosophical view that reality consists of two equal and irreducible forces.

binary opposition A pair of opposites used as an organizing principle (e.g., body–soul; yin–yang; male–female).

idealism The philosophical view that pure, incorruptible ideas—or the mind that produces such ideas—constitute the essence of human nature.

materialism The philosophical view that the activities of our physical bodies in the material world constitute the essence of human nature.

determinism The philosophical view that one simple force (or a few simple forces) causes (or determines) complex events.

essence An unchanging core of features unique to things of the same kind, making them what they are.

Canada, Dept. of National Defence/Library and Archives Canada
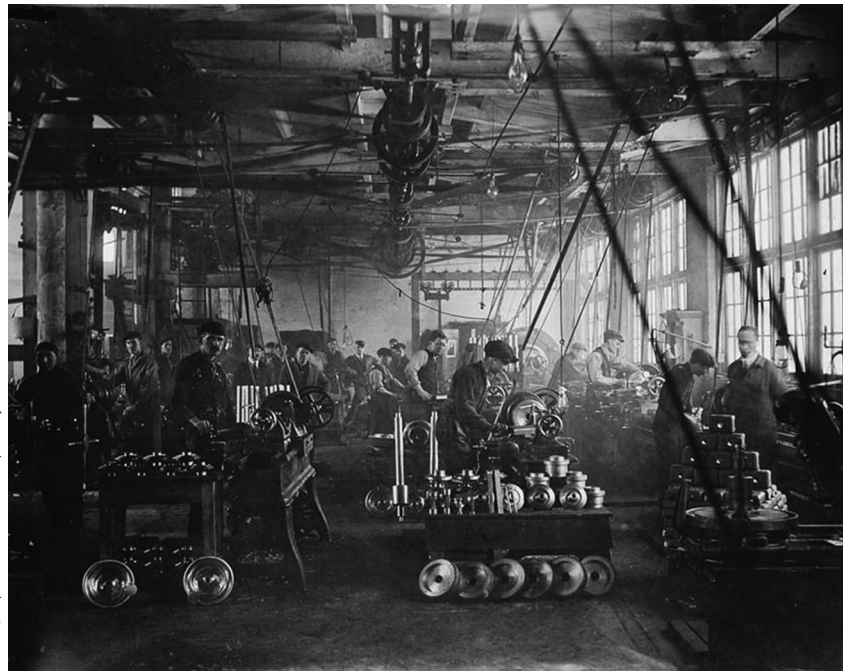
Figure 1.1 Factory workers in Woodstock, Ontario, during World War I. Karl Marx believed that modes of production shape social relations and, in turn, individuals' perceptions of themselves and their place in society. Can you identify some of the modes of production that impact your own life?

holism A perspective on the human condition that assumes that mind and body, individual and society, and individual and environment interpenetrate and even define one another.

become different kinds of human beings as a result of the particular *ideas*, *meanings*, *beliefs*, and *values* that they absorb as members of particular societies (see Benedict 1934).

As liberating as the proposition of being born without a fixed essence may sound, such accounts are not always optimistic. A number of scholars have adapted this basic assumption to portray humans as passive, pliable creatures who are *wholly* formed by environmental, sociohistorical, cultural, or other forces beyond their control. According to these scholars, the open possibilities with which we begin are inevitably closed down tight as human possibilities are overwhelmed by environmental determinism, sociohistorical determinism, or cultural determinism.

Holistic Explanations

Yet there is another approach to the human condition that is less distorting than dualism and less simplistic than idealism or materialism: **holism** (see Figure 1.2). Holism assumes that no sharp boundaries separate mind from body, body from environment, individual from society, my ideas from your ideas, or our traditions from the traditions of others. Rather, it proposes that mind and body, body and environment, and so on, interpenetrate and even define one another. Holism holds great appeal for those who seek a theory of human nature that is rich enough to do justice to its complex subject matter—namely, humans themselves.

Holism sees the whole as greater than the sum of its parts. Human beings are what they are

Figure 1.2 Perspectives on the human condition. While the dualistic approach reduces the human condition to the sum of its parts, the holistic approach considers the human condition to be co-determined through a complex interplay among many internal and external influences. Can you think of any other way(s) of looking at the human condition?

because the mutual shaping of genes and **culture** and experience has produced something new, something that cannot be reduced to the materials used to construct it. Similarly, a society is not just the sum of the behaviours of its individual members but a unique entity, and human beings living in groups are so deeply affected by shared cultural experiences that they become different from what they would have been had they matured in isolation. Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz notes that human beings raised in isolation would be neither failed apes nor "natural" people stripped of their veneer of culture; they would be "mental basket cases" (1973: 40). Social living and cultural sharing are necessary for individual human beings to develop what we recognize as a *human* nature—in all its wonderful diversity.

The Anthropological Perspective: The Cross-Disciplinary Discipline

From the optimistic promise of holism we can engage with the subject matter of **anthropology**, a scholarly discipline that aims to describe, in the broadest possible sense, what it means to be human. Anthropologists want to learn about different human ways of life. Essentially, the anthropological experience is a gift from teachers who live or lived in different social, economic, or geographical circumstances. Anthropologists are often treated to the sweet discovery of familiarity and the joy of making the unfamiliar familiar. They often face, as well, the experience of the familiar becoming unfamiliar; as frightening as this discovery can be, it is also a source of great insight and immense pleasure.

Anthropologists are not alone in focusing their attention on human beings and their creations. Human biology, literature, art, history, linguistics, sociology, political science, economics—all these disciplines and many more—concentrate on one aspect of human life or another. The **anthropological perspective**, unique in the social sciences, draws on the findings of these other disciplines and attempts to fit them together with its own findings in order to understand how different forces collectively shape human life. Anthropologists are convinced that explanations of human activities will inevitably be superficial unless they are holistic—that is, unless they acknowledge that human life is greater than the sum of its parts. Thus, the anthropological perspective recognizes that so long as

they are alive, individuals and societies always remain open to influences and opportunities that may take them beyond what they are at the present moment or what they have been in the past.

To generalize about humanity requires evidence from the widest possible range of human societies. Thus, in addition to being holistic, anthropology is **comparative**. Anthropologists understand that it is not enough, for example, to observe only the group with which they are working, discover that they do not eat insects, and conclude that all human beings do not eat insects. When anthropologists compare human diets in different societies, they discover that insect-eating is quite common and that the North American aversion to this practice is specific to North American society (Figure 1.3). In making such comparisons, anthropologists recognize that all social groups deserve equal treatment and respect, and they reject terms such as *exotic*, *primitive*, and *savage* to describe practices that differ from those of their own group. Thus, anthropological study involves (1) gathering data from many cultures, both past and present, (2) comparing those data to derive informed and testable hypotheses about what it means to be human, and (3) investigating what, if anything, can be said about the human condition that might be valid across space and over time.

This interest in change over time leads anthropologists to explore how individual humans, their societies, and their cultures have evolved.

Figure 1.3 Fried scorpions being sold at a market in Beijing, China. Insects are commonly eaten as a source of protein in many regions of the world. Can you think of any Western dietary staples that might be considered unusual elsewhere?

culture Sets of learned behaviours and ideas that humans acquire as members of a society.

anthropology The integrated study of human nature, human society, and human history.

anthropological perspective An approach to the human condition that is holistic, comparative, and evolutionary.

comparative A characteristic of the anthropological perspective that requires anthropologists to consider similarities and differences in a wide range of human societies before generalizing about human nature, human society, or human history.

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biological evolution
Change (through mutation) in the genetic makeup (the DNA/RNA) of a population that is passed on through the generations.

cultural evolution Evolution of the beliefs and behaviours incorporated into human development through the experiences of teaching and learning.

evolutionary A characteristic of the anthropological perspective that requires anthropologists to place their observations about human nature, human society, or human history in a flexible framework that takes into consideration change over time.

biological (or physical) anthropology The specialty of anthropology that looks at humans as biological organisms and tries to discover what characteristics make humans different from and/or similar to other living things.

Consequently, some anthropologists study the **biological evolution** of the human species, paying attention not only to human origins but also to the patterns of biological variation in living human populations; others study **cultural evolution**, tracing how elements of culture have changed over time. In general, one of anthropology's most important contributions to the study of human evolution has been to demonstrate the critical differences that separate biological evolution, which is situated in environmental *circumstances*, from cultural evolution. This distinction remains important as a way of demonstrating the inadequacy of arguments that assert that everything people do or think can be explained biologically—for example, in terms of "race" or "sex." Because anthropologists are interested in documenting and explaining change, the anthropological perspective is **evolutionary** at its core. And today, as humans move into an era in which even our biological being can be altered through technology, anthropologists' interest in human evolution has taken on additional cross-disciplinary implications.

The diverse ways that people come to understand the meaning of being human through the anthropological perspective can be seen in Figure 1.4. This diagram shows the connections among the four traditional specialties, or subdisciplines, of anthropology and their combined linkage to applied anthropology. As this figure illustrates, at the most inclusive level anthropology is the holistic study of human nature, human society, and human history. The following subsections will explain each of the four major specialties—biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology—as well as applied and medical anthropology.

Biological Anthropology

Biological (or physical) anthropology focuses on human beings as living organisms and what makes the genus *Homo* different from or similar to other living things. This specialty of anthropology has its roots in the nineteenth-century interest in human physical variation, which was a by-product of centuries of exploration and encounters between people from geographically distant societies. At the time, variation in the physical appearance of peoples around the world was a matter of interest, and early physical anthropologists invented elaborate techniques to measure observable features of human populations, including skin colour, hair, and body type. This "scientific" evidence facilitated the classification of all peoples into supposedly unambiguous categories based on distinct sets of biological attributes. Such categories were called "*races*," and many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century physical anthropologists were convinced that their studies would reveal clear-cut criteria for racial classification.
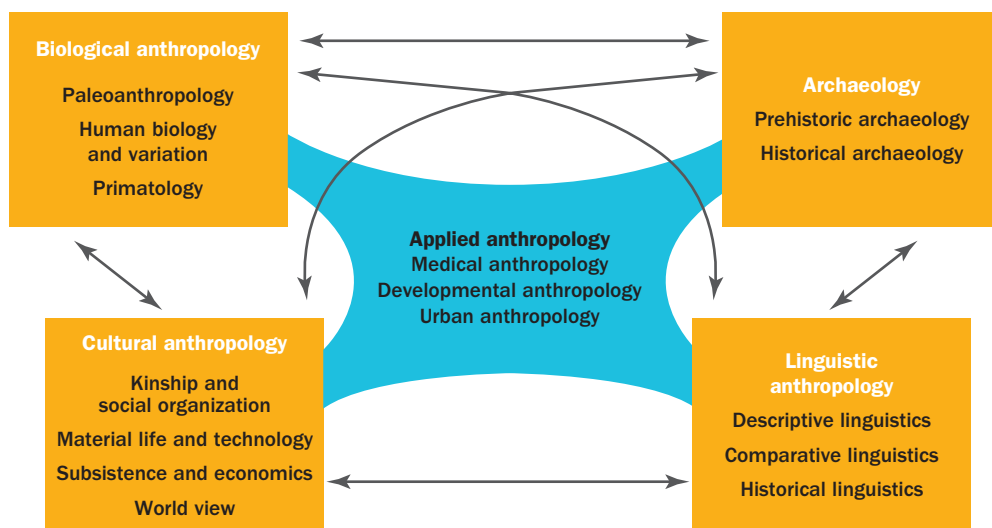
Figure 1.4 In North America, anthropology is traditionally divided into four specialties: biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology. Applied (action) anthropology draws on information provided by the other four specialties to facilitate and support change in those communities that seek advocacy-oriented help, which anthropologists can provide.

The peoples whom these early physical anthropologists were trying to assign to racial categories were, in most cases, non-European peoples, peoples coming under increasing political and economic domination by colonizing European (and European-ancestry) capitalist societies. These peoples differed from "white" Europeans in ways other than physical appearance—they had their own languages and customs, and they possessed technologies that were, in most cases, no match for the might of the industrialized West. As a result, racial categorization not only noted individuals' physical characteristics but also made judgments on people's mental and moral attributes, and races were ranked in terms of these attributes. Not surprisingly, "white" Europeans and their "white" descendants in power outside Europe were seen as superior, while other "races" were considered to represent varying grades of inferiority. In this way, the first physical anthropologists helped develop theories that would justify the social practice of racism (see Chapter 6). Indeed, racism influenced official social policies in many Western nations well into the twentieth century. In Canada, one of the most destructive of such policies was the government's implementation of mandatory residential schools for Indigenous children. Oneida scholar Roland Chrisjohn and his colleagues observe that these schools destroyed the circles of life and life-affirming metaphors of unity and wholeness, substituting instead Euro-Canadian "circle games" of the "empty non-existence of zero" (1997: 115).

Yet even as racist policies continued to affect the lives of individuals, many physical anthropologists in the early twentieth century began realizing the fallacy of racial categorization. New theories, many based on principles of holism, led these anthropologists to question past assumptions. In addition, new scientific advancements, such as the discovery of blood types, led them to add data on individuals' internal features to their calculations. The more they learned about the inner biological attributes of human beings, the more they realized that "races" with distinct and unique sets of such attributes simply did not exist. They concluded that the concept of "race" was not a reflection of fact but instead a cultural label invented to sort people into groups set in socioeconomic power hierarchies.

Support for non-racial understandings of human populations has a long history among anthropologists in North America. Pioneering anthropologist Franz Boas, for example, who in the early 1900s founded the first department of anthropology in North America (at Columbia University), had long been uncomfortable with racial classifications. Boas and his students devoted much energy to debunking racist stereotypes, using both their knowledge of biology and their understanding of culture. As the discipline of anthropology developed in the United States and then Canada, students continued to be trained in both human biology and human culture, to provide them with the tools to fight racial and ethnic stereotyping. Rejecting the racial thinking of the nineteenth century, many modern anthropologists who study human biology prefer to call themselves *biological anthropologists* and focus on patterns of variation within the human species as a whole.

Today, some biological anthropologists, such as Biruté Galdikas (Simon Fraser University), work in the subfield of **primatology**; others, such as Pamela Willoughby (University of Alberta), work in the field of **paleoanthropology**. Other specialties focus on human adaptability in different ecological settings, on human growth and development, or on the connections between a population's evolutionary history and its susceptibility to disease. Forensic anthropologists, as noted below in the applied anthropology discussion, use their knowledge of human skeletal anatomy to aid law enforcement and human rights investigators (see Figure 1.5). Molecular anthropologists trace

primatology The study of non-human primates, the closest living relatives of human beings.

paleoanthropology The study of the fossilized remains of human beings' earliest ancestors.

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Figure 1.5 A forensic anthropologist examines a human skull at the mortuary facility of the International Commission on Missing Persons in Bosnia. Forensic anthropologists work with human remains to aid police investigations. How do you think the work of forensic anthropologists contributes to social justice and the discussion of cultural contexts?

chemical similarities and differences in cells, tissues, and organs; what they have learned about the immune system, for example, has enabled them to contribute actively to HIV/AIDS research. In all these ways, biological anthropologists can illuminate what makes human beings similar to (and different from) one another, from other primates, and from other living organisms.

Archaeology

archaeology The specialty of anthropology interested in what human beings can learn from material remains left behind by earlier human societies.

Archaeology is the study of the human past through the analysis of material remains (Figure 1.6). Archaeologists must also be knowledgeable about the history of the sites they investigate—they must be familiar with past technologies and environmental as well as economic indicators (e.g., plant and animal remains)—so they can recognize valuable details and situate their findings within the greater scientific landscape. Archaeologists frequently work in teams with other scientists who specialize in specific areas of research. Their findings complement those of paleoanthropologists and indeed sometimes become common interest. For example, archaeological information about the use of stone tools in a particular region may correlate with fossil evidence of prehistoric human occupations.

One such example of an archaeological research project involving experts from various fields is the Dakhleh Oasis Project in Egypt (see EthnoProfile 1.1).

Figure 1.6 An archaeological dig at Qumran, the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 11 caves near the Dead Sea between 1947 and 1956. Excavation work and analysis of material remains are central to archaeologists' study of the human past. What sorts of insights can material remains offer about the ways that cultures change over time?

Project director Anthony J. Mills, who initiated the project in 1978, describes it as

> a long-term regional study of the interaction between environmental changes and human activity in the closed area of the Dakhleh Oasis . . . since the first incursion of humans in the Middle Pleistocene, perhaps 400,000 years ago, down to the twenty-first century oasis farmers, and all the human activity and all the changing environmental conditions for which there is evidence within the time period. (Mills 2013)

Participants in the study include environmentalists, physical anthropologists, linguists, historians, and archaeologists specializing in various areas of study. The project has attracted researchers from around the globe, and several Canadians—including anthropologist Maxine Kleindienst—have signed on to contribute to the massive undertaking.

Scientific dating techniques allow archaeologists to make hypotheses about the age, territorial ranges, and patterns of sociocultural change in ancient societies, thus tracing the spread of cultural inventions over time and space. American archaeologist Jeremy Sabloff points out that archaeology is an "action" science in the modern world, as it "can play helpful roles in broad, critical issues facing the world today . . . inform[ing] us in general about lessons to be learned from the successes and failures of past cultures and provid[ing] policy-makers with useful contexts for future decision-making" (2008: 17). In such a context, archaeology becomes applied anthropology, which we discuss later in this chapter.

Linguistic Anthropology

Perhaps the most striking cultural feature of our species is language—symbolic communication (see Chapter 4). Anthropologists have long recognized the connections between language and human culture, and many early anthropologists were the first researchers to transcribe non-Western languages and to produce grammars and dictionaries of those languages. When investigating living cultures, linguistic anthropologists often connect with one or a few members of the culture who can act as guides to the language and customs of specific social groups (Figure 1.7). The loss of languages is also a concern, as each language is a unique way of understanding ourselves and our place in the universe. Contemporary linguistic anthropologists and their counterparts in sociology (called *sociolinguists*) study the

Region: Northeastern Africa

Nation: Egypt

Language: Nearly all of the 14 colonies that constitute the Dakhleh Oasis—including Mut, Al-Qasr, and Qalamoun—have their own dialect of Arabic.

Population: 75,000 (2002)

Environment: Desert oasis

Livelihood: Farming (dates, oranges, mangoes, wheat)

Political organization: Region in a modern nation-state

For more information: Chandler, Graham. 2006. "Before the Mummies: The Desert Origins of the Pharaohs," *Saudi Aramco World* 57, 5: 2–11; Mills, Anthony J. 2013. "Dakhleh Oasis Project," *Monash University Arts*, available at http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/ancient-cultures/excavations-in-dakhleh-oasis-egypt

linguistic anthropology
The specialty of anthropology concerned with the study of human languages.

cultural anthropology
The specialty of anthropology that studies how variation in beliefs and behaviours is shaped by culture and learned by different members of human groups.

way language differences frequently correlate with differences in gender, class, or ethnic identity.

Linguistic anthropology has become so highly specialized that modern linguistic anthropologists are deeply trained in both linguistic and cultural anthropology, and many cultural anthropologists receive linguistics training as part of their professional preparation. Linguistic anthropologists are applied anthropologists in some instances, working to maintain endangered languages and attempting to help us understand the nature of language and its links to our cultural identity.

Cultural Anthropology

Now we come to the central topic of this book: **cultural anthropology**, which is sometimes called *sociocultural anthropology*, *social anthropology*, or *ethnology*. In general, cultural anthropology focuses on sets of learned behaviours and ideas that human beings acquire as members of a society. Recognizing that people ordinarily take their culturally shaped beliefs and behaviours for granted, anthropologist Michael Herzfeld has suggested that cultural anthropology might be usefully defined as "the study of common sense," although "sense" as a concept is not *common* to all cultures, and what one group considers to be "common sense" may not seem *sensible* to anyone outside that group (2001: 1).

Because people everywhere use culture to adapt to and transform everything in their wider world, the field of cultural anthropology is vast. Cultural

anthropologists tend to specialize in one domain of human cultural activity or another. Many cultural anthropologists, for example, study language, music, dance, art, poetry, philosophy, religion, or ritual. Some study the ways particular groups of human

Figure 1.7 Canadian linguistic anthropologist William Thurston with his friend Avel, a Lusi speaker, travelling in Papua New Guinea. During their travels, Avel acted as guide and introduced Thurston to the community, where he collected material on the Mouk language. How can understanding a group's language help anthropologists understand that group's culture?

Photo taken by Rick Goulden, 1981

beings organize themselves to carry out collective tasks, whether economic, political, or spiritual. This focus is in some ways similar to the discipline of sociology (the study of social behaviour or society, which, broadly, looks at the organization, institutions, and social interactions of large groups), and from it has come the identification of anthropology as one of the social sciences. In fact, sociology and anthropology developed during the same period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and thus share some similar interests in social organization. Sociology, however, is usually conducted within the society in which the researcher lives—in effect their "home" culture. Now this is not to say that anthropologists do not work in their "home" culture, but they do extend into other cultures for their cross-cultural directive. While both disciplines can address similar issues, it is the interest in *comparing* different forms of human social life that sets anthropology apart from sociology.

Anthropologists have worked diligently to come to

> . . . an honest accounting of anthropology's checkered history, [which] must recognize the role of colonial subsidy (van Willigen 2002; Willis 1974). Without it, there would be no discipline of anthropology. Ethnology played an important role in the colonial administrative experience of many countries [and the] British, in particular, made extensive use of anthropologists, most commonly as staff researchers. There is little evidence, however, that anthropologists served in positions with line authority or policy-making capacity. (Rylko-Bauer et al. 2006: 179–80)

As a result, modern cultural anthropologists have become concerned with studying *all* human societies, including their own, and they reject labels such as *civilized* and *primitive* for the same reason they reject the term "*race*": these concepts all carry offensive connotations.

In recent years, many cultural anthropologists have researched contemporary issues of gender and sexuality, environmental change, transnational migration, urbanization, globalization, and the lasting impact of colonialism. One interesting area of research focuses on material culture. Like archaeologists, cultural anthropologists interested in material life describe the natural setting for which

technologies have been developed, and they analyze the way technologies and environments shape each other. They also study the effects of foreign technologies on local populations using post-colonial perspectives. We will take a closer look at these topics in later sections of this chapter as well as in chapters to come.

Historically, colonialism brought many Western technologies (e.g., railroads, mechanical clocks, firearms) to non-Western peoples, often with enormous impact. With the age of globalization upon us, another area of interest is the spread and influence of electronic media and communications technologies. Studies have shown, for example, the creative and unanticipated ways that peoples use popular media and online communication tools (e.g., email, instant messaging) to make sense of their own local cultural context and situate it in a wider world. For example, consider the ways in which social media aided in the organization of women's marches in over 80 countries around the world on 21 January 2017 (including several in major Canadian cities) to advocate for a number of human rights issues, including women's rights, immigration reform, LGBTQIA rights, racial equality, and freedom of religion following Donald Trump's inauguration as president of the United States.

As cultural anthropologists have become increasingly aware of the many influences that stretch across space to affect local communities, they have also become sensitive to those that stretch across time. As a result, many contemporary cultural anthropologists make serious efforts to place themselves and their cultural analyses in detailed historical contexts and are open to engaging with archaeologists and historians with related interests.

Cultural anthropologists, no matter what their area of specialization, ordinarily collect their data during an extended period of fieldwork (the topic of Chapter 2). Fieldwork entails involvement in the everyday routine of those among whom they live and is a period when the anthropologist receives one of the most meaningful gifts that any human can receive—entry into the lives of others. This gift is part of an act of *reciprocity*: an exchange of mutual benefit. Researchers can enhance the reciprocal relationship by participating in social activities and negotiating the meaning of what they observe with the people they work with. Fieldwork is also a time of deep *reflexivity*: thinking about why and how one thinks about specific things.

People who share information about their lives have traditionally been called **informants**; however,

informants People in a particular culture who work with anthropologists and provide them with insights about local ways of life.

some anthropologists object to the use of this term because it suggests a role that is limited to supplying information for the benefit of the researcher. Therefore, many contemporary anthropologists choose to describe the people they encounter in the field as *partners*, *participants*, *consultants*, or simply *the people I work with* because these terms emphasize a relationship of equality based on mutual respect. Others prefer the term *teachers*, making it explicit that fieldwork is an active dialogue between the researcher (the student) and the people who are the experts on their own lives (the teachers). Of course, these experts, like all teachers, also learn and develop new perspectives as they interact with their students—reciprocity, again!

Researchers make written notes (documents) even when audio recordings are permitted. The essential written notes can be augmented significantly by the use of videos or photographs (Figure 1.8). Indeed, the use of "shadow catching" technologies—devices that capture a visual representation of life—in the discipline dates back to the earliest period of photography in the nineteenth century. Such photographs have been an invaluable record. In many cases, however, visual records say more about the photographer or videographer than about the image's content. This notion is well illustrated by some of Franz Boas's pictures taken for the US National Museum (see more on this in Chapter 13). Another historical example is photographer Edward Curtis's movie *In the Land of the War Canoes* (1914), which depicts a fictionalized account of the lives of the Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka'wakw) peoples (Northern Vancouver Island).

Two related terms for anthropological studies are *ethnography* and *ethnology*. An **ethnography** is a recorded description of a particular group of people's way of life; **ethnology** is the comparative study of two or more such groups. Thus, cultural anthropologists who write ethnographies are sometimes called *ethnographers*, and cultural anthropologists who compare ethnographic information on many different cultural practices are sometimes called *ethnologists*.

Emerging Approaches: Applied Anthropology

Applied anthropology could be termed *action anthropology*. In applied anthropology, anthropological information is put to practical use to propose solutions to important problems. You may be familiar with the practical applications of forensic anthropology—perhaps

Figure 1.8 Anthropologist Ryan Cook continues the anthropological tradition of the use of technology as he videotapes the spectators and ritual performers at the Popocatépetl volcano in Mexico. How do you think using technology impacts the research process?

you've even encountered media coverage of forensic anthropologists, such as Mark Skinner (Simon Fraser University), who have worked on highly publicized crime cases or genocide investigations. Although generally exposed to less public attention, other areas of application can also make important contributions to social life. For example, when working with a traditionally structured non-Western community, applied anthropologists could

- use the culture's ideas about illness and health to introduce useful public-health practices in a way that makes sense to, and will be accepted by, members of that culture;
- place emphasis on health hazards from environmental contamination (for an example, see more on Grassy Narrows in Chapter 10);
- draw on the knowledge of traditional social organization to ease the problems for refugees trying to settle in a new land; and
- integrate traditional and Western methods of cultivation to help farmers increase their crop yields.

Anthropologists use their professional training to seek social justice, eliminate discrimination, and support human and cultural rights. In Canada, applied anthropologists have frequently acted to

ethnography An anthropologist's recorded description of a particular group of people's way of life.

ethnology The comparative study of two or more cultures.

applied anthropology The use of information gathered from the other anthropological specialties to solve practical problems within and between cultures.

support First Nations land claims and resolve public policy issues (Hedican 2008).

While many anthropologists would argue that applied work can be done *within* any of the four traditional specialties, an increasing number of anthropologists have come to view applied anthropology as a separate field of professional specialization (see Figure 1.4). Thus, more universities in Canada and the United States have begun to develop courses and programs specifically in applied anthropology.

Emerging Approaches: Medical Anthropology

medical anthropology
An area of anthropological inquiry that focuses on issues of well-being, health, illness, and disease as they are situated in their wider cultural contexts.

Medical anthropology is one of the most rapidly growing branches of anthropology. Beginning half a century ago as a form of applied anthropology, it has developed into an important anthropological specialty that has offered new ways to link biological and cultural anthropology. Medical anthropology concerns itself with human health—the factors that contribute to disease or illness and the ways that human populations deal with disease or illness (Baer et al. 2003: 3). Medical anthropologists may consider the physiological variables that are involved with human health and disease, the environmental features that affect human well-being, and the way the human body adapts to various environments. Contemporary medical anthropologists engage in work that directly addresses the anthropological proposition that human beings must be understood as biological organisms.

Particularly significant has been the development of *critical medical anthropology*, which links questions of human health and illness in local settings to social, economic, and political processes operating on a national or global scale. Indeed, critical medical anthropologists have been among the most vocal in pointing out how various forms of suffering and disease cannot be explained only by the presence of microbes in a diseased body but may depend on—or be made worse by—the presence of social inequality and a lack of access to health care. According to anthropologist Merrill Singer, critical medical anthropology "is committed to the 'making social' and the 'making political' of health and medicine" (1998: 195). Thus, critical medical anthropologists pay attention to the way social divisions based on class, "race," gender, and ethnicity can block access to medical attention or make people more vulnerable to disease and suffering. They draw attention to the way traditional Western

biocultural organisms
Organisms whose defining features are co-determined by biological and cultural factors.

biomedicine "encourages people to fight disease rather than to make the changes necessary to prevent it," for example, by linking low birth weight in newborn babies to poor nutrition but failing to note that poor nutrition "may be a major health factor among impoverished social classes and oppressed ethnic groups in developed countries despite an abundance of food in society generally" (Singer 1998: 106, 109).

One of the most important insights of critical medical anthropologists has been to point out that "various practices that bioculturalist anthropologists have traditionally called 'adaptations' might better be analyzed as social adjustments to the consequences of oppressive sociopolitical relationships" (Singer 1998: 115). Gavin Smith and R. Brooke Thomas, for example, draw attention to situations where "social relations compromise people's opinions" for attaining biological well-being and cultural satisfaction but where people do not passively accept this situation and choose instead to "try to escape or change these relations"; Smith and Thomas call these practices "adaptations of resistance" (Smith and Thomas 1998: 466). We will examine medical anthropology in more detail in Chapter 10.

Anthropology and the Concept of Culture

Unquestionably, the emergence of culture has had a profound impact on the evolution of human nature and human society. Thus, it is not surprising that the idea of culture as a marker of our humanness has been central to anthropological thought since the early days of the discipline. Pioneering anthropologist Edward B. Tylor defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired . . . as a member of society" (1958 [1871]: 1). Most of the later definitions have built on this theme.

From the anthropological perspective, culture is central to explanations of why people are what they are and why they do what they do. Anthropologists have shown that members of a social group behave in a particular way *not* because the behaviour is an inevitable result of human biology but because it is *learned*—individuals observe and then copy certain actions performed by others. At the same time, no one would deny that biology plays a role in determining what people *can* learn. As such humans are **biocultural organisms**. Their biological makeup,

formed by their genes and cellular chemistry, contributes to their capacity to create and use culture.

Of course, other living species learn, but humans' way of interacting with the wider world is distinct for two reasons:

1. Humans' large, complex brains are capable of extremely intricate open symbolic thought.
2. Their hands are capable of manipulating matter in both powerful and delicate ways.

Being capable of open symbolic thought means that people are able to make sense of their world through **symbols**. For example, consider alphabetic symbols, which are used to represent the sounds of spoken languages. On a deeper level, the sounds themselves are shared symbols for meanings that speakers try to express. The fact that human beings can translate from one language to another suggests that the same or similar meanings can be expressed by different symbols in different languages. However, people do not use symbols only to form language. Everything people do in society has a symbolic dimension, from how they conduct themselves at the dinner table to how they bury the dead.

To understand the power of culture, anthropologists are also paying increasing attention to the role played by **material culture** in the lives of biocultural human organisms—for example, worldwide variations in clothing, housing, tools, and techniques for getting and preparing food and making material goods (Figure 1.9). Many cultural anthropologists have traditionally emphasized the way that people's dealings with artifacts are shaped by the cultural meanings they attach to those artifacts. This emphasis has seemed particularly necessary in the face of the widespread assumptions in our own North American society that material objects have obvious functional meanings that are the same for everyone, everywhere. But cultural anthropologists have found repeatedly that the same object can mean different things to different people.

At the same time, innovative theories of materiality developed in the fields, called cyborg anthropology and science studies, have provided cultural anthropologists with new ways of conceptualizing relations between persons and things. Many examples centre on human experiences with new kinds of things—computers, cellphones, the Internet—that are increasingly central to the everyday lives of people all over the world. For instance, persons who play online video games seem to join

Figure 1.9 A Bedouin woman in Jordan makes bread on the top of an oil drum, which she has reshaped and placed on top of rocks; in the past, she would have used more traditional materials. What might this use of materials tell us about the environment in which this woman lives?

Figure 1.10 LAN parties allow people to establish a local area network (LAN) connection between their devices in order to play multi-player video games together. Here gamers participate in a LAN party at the gaming festival "DreamHack" in Leipzig, Germany. What could cultural anthropologists take away from these new relationships between persons and technology?

with the technology and the other players to form a seamless hybrid entity (Figure 1.10); similarly, the technology that links us to friends on Facebook or Instagram disappears from our awareness. This is a phenomenon that anthropologist Daniel Miller calls *the humility of things*: "objects are important, not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but quite the opposite. It is often

symbol Something that stands for something else.

material culture Objects created or shaped by human beings and given meaning by cultural practices.

precisely because we do not *see* them" (2010: 50). The merging of persons and things is sometimes a source of pleasure, as when people do their holiday shopping on the Internet; but it can also be troubling when they realize that their web-surfing activities are being tracked by commercial web bots. For these and other reasons, we agree with Daniel Miller that "the best way to understand, convey, and appreciate our humanity is through attention to our fundamental materiality" (2010: 4). And this means taking material culture seriously.

Culture's beginnings are deep in time. They can perhaps be glimpsed, in our modern world among Japanese macaques, who have invented a custom of washing sweet potatoes, and among wild chimpanzees, who have developed techniques to gain access to food or water (Figure 1.11). Humans' primate ancestors surely shared similar aptitudes when they started walking bipedally over 5 million years ago, possibly with tools of wood and bone. Two-and-a-half million years later, their descendants were making stone tools, conceptually from an imagination of a different order. We can follow this path to the silicon chip and beyond. Thus, as paleoanthropologist Richard Potts puts it, "an evolutionary bridge exists between the human and animal realms of behaviour" (1996: 197). Potts urges us to think of the modern human capacity for culture not as a uniform monolith but rather as a structure whose various pieces were added at different times in our evolutionary past (Figure 1.12). The foundation of culture, he proposes, contains five elements:

1. *Transmission*, the ability to copy behaviour by observation and/or instruction
2. *Memory*, the ability to remember new behaviours (which allowed traditions to develop)
3. *Reiteration*, the ability to reproduce or imitate behaviour or information that has been learned
4. *Innovation*, the ability to invent and modify behaviours
5. *Selection*, the ability to select which innovations to keep and which to discard

To the five basic elements, Potts adds three elements that evolved later and made *human* culture possible:

6. *Symbolic coding*, or *symbolic representation*, the ability to use symbols to represent elements of reality

Figure 1.11 A six-year-old western chimpanzee, Joya, uses rocks as tools to crack open palm oil nuts in Bossou Forest, Mont Nimba, Guinea.

7. *Complex symbolic representation*, the ability to communicate freely about the past, the future, and the invisible or imaginary
8. *Institutional development*, the ability to create complex and variable forms of social organizations unique to our species

Symbolic coding is something human beings share with other species, in particular the great apes. *Complex symbolic representation* distinguishes human language, however, from the simpler vocal communication systems of apes. Apes, and indeed other mammals, have limited abilities to remember complex symbolic structures and to hold information on things remote in time and space; human beings, on the other hand, can think about, invent, and discuss much more complex ideas in great detail and depth. Indeed, humans evolved to be far more capable than any other species of learning and manipulating symbolic representations. Moreover, as biological anthropologist Terrence

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Figure 1.12 The modern human capacity for culture did not appear all at once. Rather, the various pieces that make it up were added at different times in our evolutionary past.

by contact with other members of our social group. Such learning is sometimes called **habitus** since it is rooted in habitual behaviour. In addition, because cultural traditions encompass the varied situational knowledges and skills of many different individuals, they allow the group to adapt and accomplish beyond any individual's limitations.

Looking at human cultures across time and space, anthropologists can see they are *patterned*; that is, related cultural beliefs and practices repeatedly show up within a cultural group. An example of a common **cultural pattern** is a particular group's language. (See the discussion of *schemas* in Chapter 5.) Some cultural patterns are rooted in specific historical events: that English and French are widely spoken in Canada is connected to the colonial conquest and domination of Canada by speakers of English and French. Many factors contribute to cultural pattern variation. The English of Newfoundland and Labrador, the English of southwestern Quebec, and the English of various First Nations communities differ in rhythm and vocabulary. Researchers have found that cultural constructs and language learning environments in Indigenous communities influence the acquisition of what are termed "heritage languages" as well as English (Bernhardt, Ball, and Deby 2007).

Because of this patterned cultural variation, anthropologists frequently distinguish different "cultural traditions" from one another. Although doing so can be useful as a kind of shorthand, we must remember that the boundaries between cultural traditions can be fuzzy, ultimately resting on someone's judgment about how different one set of customs is from another. Indeed, customs in one area of a culture may contradict customs in another area, as when religion tells people to share with others and economics tells them to look out for themselves. In addition, people have always borrowed cultural elements, so there may be much overlap between apparently distinct traditions.

With cultural traditions we must not assume conformity over time. Cultures constantly change, and many people refuse to be limited by cultural practices of the past. Yet there is also the question of *traditional culture*: What aspects of the past do specific peoples want to protect, maintain, or retrieve? (Note Regna Darnell's discussion in the "In Their Own Words" box that follows.) Worldwide, this is a fundamental dilemma for peoples who have been subjugated or forced to abandon elements of their traditional cultures (e.g., under colonization). In the Canadian context, this question is of

habitus Everyday, routine social activity rooted in habitual behaviour.

cultural pattern A behaviour or idea that members of a specific society repeatedly pass on to one another, across generations, and that is thus recognizable to all members of that society.

co-evolution The relationship between biological processes and symbolic cultural processes in which each makes up an important part of the environment to which the other must adapt.

Deacon suggests, the huge adaptive value of complex symbolic representation for our ancestors appears to have led to genetic changes that improved our brain's symbolic capacities. Put another way, culture and the human brain **co-evolved**, each shaping the development of the other (Deacon 1997). Yet it is the final element given by Potts—*institutional development*—that made it possible for human culture to develop in such elaborate ways. As a result of our ability to create complex social organizations, culture has become "the predominant manner in which human groups vary from one another . . . it *swamps* the biological differences among populations" (Marks 1995: 200). Humans are truly biocultural organisms.

Humanity has survived and prospered in often difficult situations because traditions are passed on to new generations and people can modify them to meet their changing needs. Many practical survival skills, such as what is good to eat and where it is safe to sleep, are never explicitly taught but are learned

In Their Own Words

Invisible Genealogies

Canadian anthropologist Regna Darnell speaks to the concepts of "tradition" and "traditional" culture.

"Traditional" culture is a moving target, always changing and adapting to new circumstances. It is located in the contemporary practices of the communities whose interests and concerns direct the work of anthropologists. The label "traditional" is used with considerable rhetorical force in contemporary Native American communities and in their interactions with non-Native institutions and individuals. "Tradition" does not imply returning to some idealized pure culture that existed before Columbus spearheaded the invasion of the "new" world. Native Americans recognize that their societies, like those of white people, whether in Europe or America, have changed in 500 years; all peoples have a history in which living traditions are continuously invented and reinvented.

. . . In my view, anthropologists, in the field and in their writing alike, must respect both the cultural heritage and the contemporary practice of the peoples with whom they work. "Tradition," in such a discourse, refers to that which is continuous with the past, in line with the practices and values of a moral community. Native people themselves can and should define what is traditional within their own communities. They do so in terms of innovations that serve to maintain the identity of the community and its members in relation to their collective histories and personal agencies. "Tradition," in Native American terms, holds much of the meaning that "culture" embodies for anthropologists. If it is invented, we must celebrate its creativity and adaptability under conditions of change. That anthropologists sometimes produce alternative interpretations for other purposes is, of course, another matter.

Source: Darnell, Regna. 2001. *Invisible Genealogies: A History of Americanist Anthropology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 16–17.

particular concern to First Nations peoples. Ron Ignace, a member of a First Nations band in British Columbia, expressed such concerns in an interview with anthropologist Noel Dyck:

> They [some anthropologists and museums] don't seem to understand that we still exist as a people, that we adapt and change and we have that right to adapt and change, while still maintaining some of our principles that were tried and true over the years. Particularly principles that are necessary for survival as a people. (Ignace et al. 1993: 168–9)

As Ignace's comments suggest, the question of how anthropologists can best represent the cultures they study to an outside population is a matter that requires great consideration, sensitivity, and, most importantly, consultation.

Beyond Anthropology and Culture/Cultures

For many years, the concept of "culture" anchored the anthropological perspective and illuminated the human condition in powerful ways. Yet, over time,

the term *culture* came to mean somewhat different things to different people. In the 1990s and through the beginning of the twenty-first century, culture became the most contested concept of anthropology.

Essentially, the critique centred on the specific definition of *culture* (singular) and of *cultures* (plural). The former distinguishes the human characteristic of being able to create and imitate patterned, symbolically mediated ideas and activities that promote the survival of the species, while the latter indicates a particular, learned way of life belonging to a specific group of human beings. Of the two definitions, the second has elicited the most objections. Those who "write against culture" (Abu-Lughod 1991) defend the validity of *culture* as a concept, but they object to the use of the term *cultures* because it highlights the differences, rather than shared humanness, between groups of people. To some, this focus on differences suggests a lingering racism in the field of anthropology.

Sherry Ortner notes that the essence of the critique was that in the atmosphere of post-colonialism, "many ethnic groups, and many contemporary post-colonial intellectuals, react very strongly against being studied as specimens of cultural differences and otherness" (1999: 8). But Ortner also points out

that it is not an issue of "banishing" the concept of cultures but rather of thinking on the process of "reconfiguring this enormously productive concept [*cultures*] for a changing world, . . . a changing landscape of theoretical possibilities" (8). What she calls for are three "imperatives":

1. "[E]xoticize and objectify the culture of the ethnographer, placing it in the same analytic framework" (8). This imperative would allow anthropologists to highlight differences between cultures without implying that their own culture is better or more "normal" than others.
2. "Emphasize the issue of meaning-*making*," an active process (8–9). This imperative would ensure that anthropologists represent cultures as dynamic rather than static and that they recognize individuals as active participants in making sense of their own lives.
3. "[S]ituate cultural analysis within . . . larger analyses of social and political events and processes" (9). This imperative would force anthropologists to work toward a greater purpose, rather than simply engaging in cultural analysis as an "end in itself." It would also force them to recognize the reality that no community exists in isolation.

In recent years this debate has receded to be replaced with an urgency to address specific important issues in a world of change. Applied approaches and advocacy have found prominence in the discussion of emerging global concerns, and anthropologists work to understand as well as offer expertise. An example of this can be found in the literature on children in war:

> The humanitarian definition of childhood and its expression in international law is embedded in transnational politics, is not cross-culturally grounded, and is extremely limiting. . . . A more complex and nuanced understanding, informed by ethnographic research and anthropological insight, can offer the possibility for finding appropriate and effective solutions in different sets of circumstances. . . . [and] a more nuanced view of both the vagaries of war and the contextual definition of childhood should deepen our ability to create more effective approaches that will protect the most vulnerable members of society and give

> victims of war a sense that justice has been achieved, whatever the cultural context. (Rosen 2007: 304–5)

So people are turning increasingly to issues of human rights in a multitude of specifics, such as personhood, loss of place through environment change, forced migration, development, and globalization. Goodale (2006) wants us to accept an *irreducible ethical pluralism*, arguing that it is "so valuable for a reconfigured anthropology . . . to shed light on how specific ethical theories reflect the interplay between important ideas and social practices . . ." (34). This is the response to the culture/cultures critique. Further, many anthropologists now work outside the academy. As Bierschenk notes, "a hitherto largely unused opportunity for greater self-reflection arises . . . in the entirely practical sense of the ethnographic research of the roles, practices and functions of . . . anthropologists who operate outside of academe" (2014: 90–1).

The Challenge of Cultural Differences

The same objects, actions, or events frequently mean different things to people within different cultures. In fact, what counts as an object or event in one culture may not be recognized as such in another. Even within a single cultural tradition, the meaning of an object or an action may differ depending on the context. Quoting philosopher Gilbert Ryle, anthropologist Clifford Geertz notes that "there is a world of difference between a wink and a blink, as anyone who has ever mistaken one for the other has undoubtedly learned" (1973: 6).

Thus, human experience is inherently ambiguous. To resolve the ambiguity, experience must be interpreted. Human beings turn to their own cultural traditions in search of an interpretation that makes sense and is coherent. They do this daily as they go about life among others with whom they share traditions. But this interpretive activity does not cease at the boundary of their specific place in their culture, and serious misunderstandings may arise when two individuals are unaware that their cultural traditions or cultural ground rules differ. Noting the potential for misunderstanding in such encounters, anthropologists are careful to distinguish between two approaches: *ethnocentrism* and *cultural relativism*.

Ethnocentrism

ethnocentrism The opinion that one's own way of life is the most natural, correct, or fully human way of life.

Ethnocentrism is the term anthropologists use to describe the opinion that one's own way of life is natural or correct—indeed, the only way of being fully human. Ethnocentrism is one response to the inevitable tension between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Yet this "solution" is problematic because it reduces other ways of life to distorted versions of one's own.

The greatest problems with ethnocentrism arise when the members of one society go beyond merely interpreting another way of life in ethnocentric terms and decide to do something about the differences they observe. For example, if individuals from one group conclude that the other way of life is wrong, they might try to convert the members of the other group to their own way of doing things. If the others are unwilling to change their ways, the failed attempt at conversion may transform into an active dualism: *we* versus *they*, *civilization* versus *savagery*, *good* versus *evil*. The ultimate result may be war and *genocide*—the deliberate attempt to exterminate an entire group based on "race," religion, national origin, or other cultural features. Throughout history, such assumed differences have also been used as an excuse for economic and political gains by one group over another. Anthropologist and genocide specialist Alexander Laban Hinton goes so far as to call genocide "the Janus face"—the darker flip side—of the Western **metanarratives** of "civilization" and "progress" that drove the rise of the modern nation-state (2002: 1). Even in more recent times, ethnocentric justifications for war and genocide have persisted, playing a large part in such conflicts as the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides in the 1990s and the continuing tragedy in Darfur.

metanarrative A grand-scale story or theme that members of a given culture recognize and that often drives ideas and actions within that culture.

cultural relativism Approaching the cultures of other peoples with a sympathy such that applying your own beliefs, values, and practices does not become the standard for the basis of understanding.

Is it possible to avoid ethnocentric bias? A holistic approach to relationships between ourselves and others, both across and within cultural traditions, holds promise. So too does humans' lifelong ability to learn—if people honour this potential in themselves and in others. People with a cultural background very different from your own may help you see possibilities for belief and action that are drastically at odds with everything your tradition considers possible. By becoming aware of these unsuspected possibilities, you become a different person. In effect you may be gifted with an "Aha!" moment—a moment of sudden clarity and discovery. In addition, when you share elements of your own culture with people from another cultural background, those individuals are likely to be affected in a similar way.

Learning about other cultures opens us up to new possibilities. Once such learning occurs, people can no longer claim that any single culture has a monopoly on truth. Rather, they must recognize that the truth embodied in any cultural tradition is bound to be partial, approximate, and open to further insight and growth.

Cultural Relativism

Anthropologists must come to terms with the consequences of learning about cultural differences as they do their fieldwork. One result has been the formulation of the concept of **cultural relativism**. Boas taught that cultural relativism was the considered response to racism and prejudice. One of his students, Ruth Benedict, commented that all cultures are "equally valid patterns of life, which mankind has created for itself from the raw materials of existence" (1934: 279). Definitions of cultural relativism have varied over time as different anthropologists have tried to draw conclusions based on their own experiences with other ways of life. One definition that attempts a holistic approach states that cultural relativism involves "understanding another culture in its own terms sympathetically enough so that the culture appears to be a coherent and meaningful design for living" (Greenwood and Stini 1977: 182).

Taking a relativistic approach can help us understand what at first might seem incomprehensible from an outsider's perspective. For example, cultural relativism can help us understand how genocide could develop in a society. Consider the example of the Holocaust in Europe. The Holocaust was intimately related to certain cultural patterns and historical processes that were, and perhaps are yet, deeply rooted in German and European society (Figure 1.13). Answering questions on the causes of the Holocaust involves investigating the historical roots of anti-Semitism and nationalism in Germany.

Some people might be inclined to take a deterministic approach to explaining such an event, arguing that the killers cannot be blamed for their own actions because they had no choice but to do what their culture dictated. These same people might also argue that all members of the culture committing the genocide are responsible because it was their collectively constructed culture that led to the genocide. Yet to accept the argument that "their" culture made them do it is to accept a pessimistic version of cultural determinism that can offer only a simplified account of any complex phenomena. This sort of

cultural determinism makes three major faulty assumptions about human nature and human society:

1. Cultures have neat boundaries between them and are sealed off from one another.
2. Every culture offers people only one way to interpret experience (cultures are uniform and permit no variety, harbour no contradictions, and allow no dissent).
3. People living in these closed cultural worlds are passively shaped by culture, helpless to resist indoctrination into a single world view, and incapable of inventing alternatives to that view.

Yet lived human experience undermines all three of these assumptions. To begin with, cultures are not sealed off from one another. Their boundaries are fuzzy, indeed porous, and people with different cultural backgrounds regularly exchange ideas and practices. Internally, they are not uniform. Even without the alternatives introduced from the outside, every culture offers a variety of ways to interpret experience, although not all may be officially sanctioned. In addition, cultures are constantly being redefined by their members. Finally, human beings are not passive lumps shaped unresistingly to fit a single cultural mould. After all, there is no such thing as a single cultural mould in a society acquainted with variety; and, in a society where options exist, choices must be made.

In contrast to the deterministic approach, a relativistic understanding of the Holocaust—and mass genocides in general—accomplishes several things. Such an understanding makes the events more comprehensible, even coherent. It reveals, to our horror, how the persecution and murder of human beings can appear perfectly acceptable when placed in a particular context of meaning, thus challenging our own views on violence. The one thing that this relativistic understanding does not do, however, is allow us to excuse mass killers for what they have done on the grounds that it was all due to their culture.

Understanding something is not the same as approving of or excusing it. When people grow to understand a cultural practice that they at first found repellent, they may arrive at a number of different conclusions. They may change their minds and decide that the practice is desirable, at least in some contexts. They may conclude that the practice in question is more suitable for the people who employ it than any of their own practices would be. They might even recommend that the practice be adopted in their own society. But the opposite may also be the case.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park

Figure 1.13 A sign posted in Berlin, Germany, in 1933 assaults passersby: "Germans defend yourselves against jewish [sic] atrocity propaganda, buy only at German shops!" Such public displays of combined anti-Semitism and nationalism are evidence of the cultural preoccupations that led to the Holocaust. How can taking a relativistic approach to other cultures help us make sense of this sort of hateful display?

People may understand perfectly the cultural rationales—for example, those behind such practices as slavery, infanticide, headhunting, or genocide—and still refuse their approval. They may not be persuaded by the reasons offered to justify the practice, or they may be aware of alternative practices that could achieve the desired outcome using less drastic methods. Indeed, any cultural practice with far-reaching consequences for human life likely will have critics as well as supporters within the society

where it is practised. This is certainly the case in North American societies, where such sensitive topics as abortion, capital punishment, gun laws, and same-sex marriage have been and continue to be discussed in many contexts.

Cultural relativism makes moral reasoning more complex and, often, less comfortable. It does not, however, require people to abandon every value their own society has taught them. Someone's culture, like every other culture, offers more than one way of evaluating experience. Exposure to the interpretations of an unfamiliar culture forces people to reconsider the possibilities their culture recognizes in light of new alternatives. It invites people to search for areas of intersection as well as areas of disagreement. What cultural relativism does discourage is the easy solution of refusing to consider alternatives from the outset. Also, it does not free humans from sometimes facing difficult choices between alternatives whose rightness or wrongness is less than clear-cut. In this sense, "cultural relativism is a 'tough-minded' philosophy" (Herskovits 1973: 37). As cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo (2008) comments,

> Relativism . . . argues for engagement, for dialogue between cultures. This is not the kind of easy cosmopolitanism that implies enormous privilege—the capacity, for example, to spend three days in the Bali Hilton. It's a deeper form of knowing that entails some recognition that I am one among others. I'm not the centre of the universe.

Thus, at its core, cultural relativism is an argument against ethnocentrism.

Culture, History, and Human Agency

The human condition is rooted in time and shaped by history. As part of the human condition, culture is also historical, worked out and reconstructed in every generation. As paleoanthropologists have shown, the human species is itself a product of millions of years of evolution. Hence, human history is an essential aspect of the human story.

Anthropologists sometimes disagree about how to approach human history. Nineteenth-century thinkers, such as Herbert Spencer, argued that examining the evolution of social structures over time was central to the study of the human

condition. Other anthropologists, however, were not interested in change over time. In the 1930s, British anthropologist A.R. Radcliffe-Brown justified this lack of interest by pointing out that in societies without written records, knowledge about past life is non-existent; according to him, any attempt to reconstruct such past life would be an unfounded attempt at "conjectural history."

Approaches such as this, which ignore the significance of *oral* (as opposed to *written*) histories, lost support by the end of the twentieth century. Lyotard argues that traditional cultures or traditional segments of post-traditional societies—societies that do not have written records—work in worlds of *knowledge* ("savoir") as opposed to worlds of *learning* ("connaissance"). Dods elaborates further on this distinction:

> . . . The world of *savoir* can be reduced neither to science nor to learning, as we understand these terms in the world of Western science or the academy. In this context *savoir* is reminiscent of the Lévi-Strauss discussion of mythical thought as "an intellectual form of *bricolage*" (1966: 21). What has meaning in the world of *savoir* is not a form of knowledge located in a set of denotative statements but rather sets of knowing that include "notions of 'know-how,' *savoir-faire* 'knowing how to live,' *savoir-vivre* 'how to listen' *savoir-écouter*" (Lyotard 1987: 78–9). It is the way things are done, much like the Japanese concept of *do*. Knowledge becomes a question of competence, not merely the simple determination and application of the criterion of truth. (Dods 2004: 547)

In other words, anthropologists cannot conclude that knowledge shared orally, through storytelling, is any less meaningful than more rigidly recorded history. Different ways of transmitting knowledge from person to person, generation to generation, simply reflect the diversity of the human condition. No matter what the method of transmission, all societies choose what aspects of their history they want to remember, and the collective memory of a people is transmitted "in their historical, social, and political context" (Rodriguez and Fortier 2009: 7).

Other early anthropologists had no interest in history for a different reason. Western capitalist culture, with its eye on the future and its faith in

progress—a theme from the Enlightenment—has had little use for the past. It is therefore no wonder that some anthropologists built clockwork models of social structures that could be trusted to run reliably without "losing time." In these models, human beings and societies are likened to machines. If a living organism is used as the model of society, and if organisms are nothing but machines, then a machine model of society, with individuals as robot-like moving parts, is not at all far-fetched (Figure 1.14).

A holistic approach—one that focuses on inclusive assessment of counter points of view—to human history, however, rejects these clockwork models. Our biocultural heritage has produced a living species that uses culture to overcome biological and individual limitations. The result has been the emergence of beings capable of studying themselves and their own biocultural evolution.

But just how free from limitations are humans? Opinion in Western societies often polarizes around one of two extremes: either people have *free will* and may do just as they please, or their behaviour is *completely determined* by biology or society. Many social scientists, however, are convinced that a more realistic description of human freedom was offered by Karl Marx, who wrote, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted by the past" (1963 [1852]: 15). Humans regularly struggle, often against great odds, to exercise some control over their lives (Figure 1.15). People are *agents*, but agents who cannot escape from the cultural and historical contexts within which they act. People must frequently select a course of action when the "correct" choice is unclear and the outcome uncertain. Some anthropologists even liken humanity's existence to a minefield that people must painstakingly try to cross without blowing themselves up. In
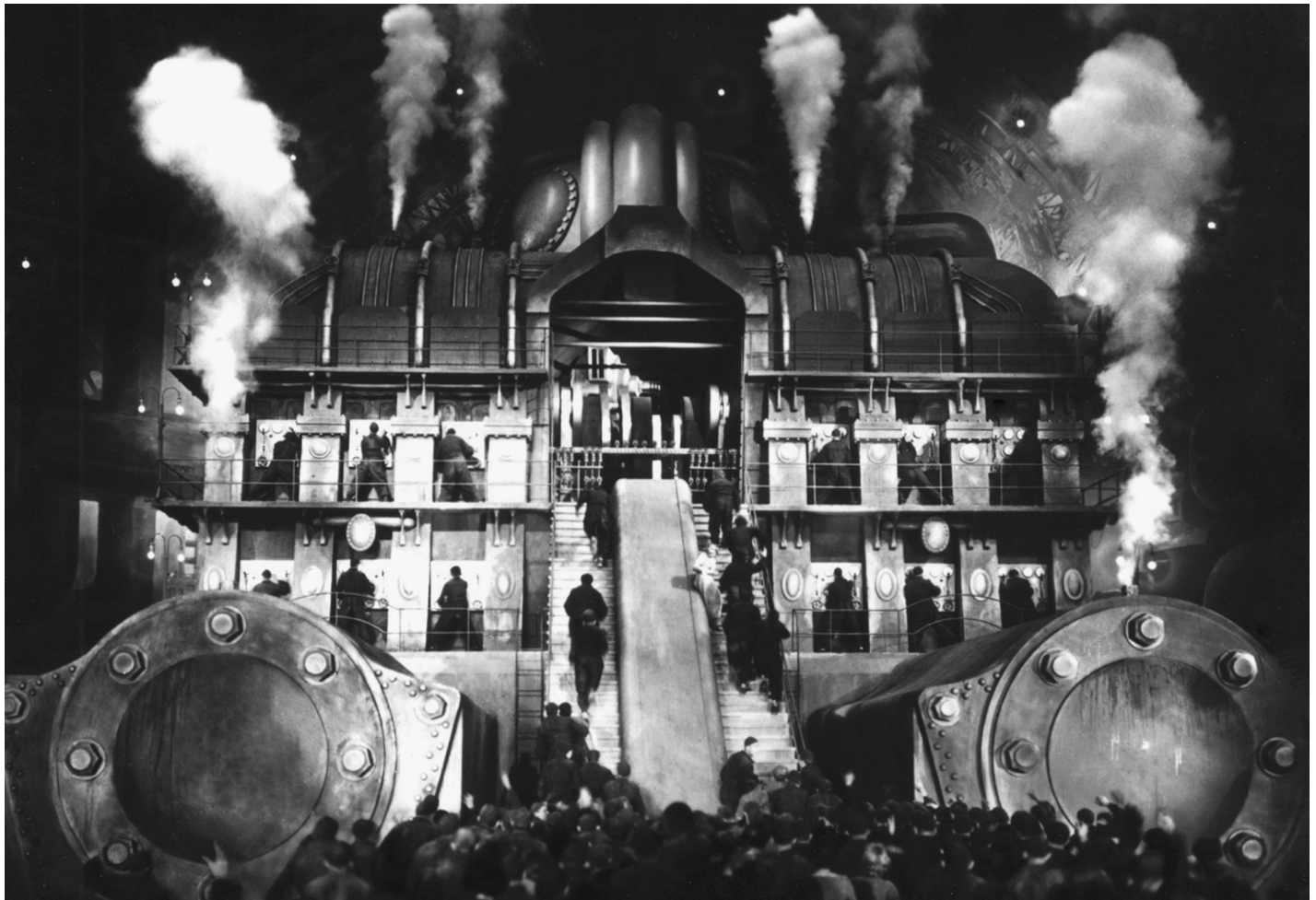
Figure 1.14 In the 1927 film *Metropolis*, a lower class of labourers work within a machine-like power plant, which strictly limits what they can do, to supply the ruling classes. Does this technological metaphor speak to the issues of globalization and the place of workers in our changing world?

Shawn Goldberg/Shutterstock.com

Figure 1.15 The Women's March took place on 21 January 2017, with participation from several Canadian cities and an estimated five million people marching worldwide. The rallies were in opposition to the political positions of newly elected President Donald Trump and his administration. Besides protest, what other ways do humans demonstrate agency in their lives?

human agency Human beings' ability to exercise at least some control over their lives.

of **human agency**—the stuff of people's dreams and the realm of their potential for growth.

The Promise of the Anthropological Perspective

The anthropological perspective on the human condition is not easy to maintain. It forces people to question the common-sense assumptions with which they are most comfortable. It increases the difficulty they encounter when faced with moral and political decisions. It does not allow people an easy retreat to ethnocentrism when the going gets rough. Once human beings are exposed to the kinds of experiences that the anthropological undertaking makes possible, they are changed—for better or worse. They cannot easily pretend that these new experiences never happened to them. Once they have had a genuine glimpse of "the other" as human beings equal to themselves, there is no going back—except in bad faith.

So, anthropology is guaranteed to complicate your life. Nevertheless, the anthropological perspective can give you a broader understanding of human nature and the wider world—of society, culture, and history—and thus help you construct more realistic and authentic ways of coping with those complications.

such cultural contexts, with their ragged edges and fuzzy boundaries, human beings must make interpretations, formulate goals, and set out in pursuit of them. A holistic, dialectical approach to the human condition recognizes the existence and importance

Living Anthropology

Linguistic Belonging: Francophone Communities in Canada's Northwest Territories

by Joshua Friesen, PhD Candidate, Anthropology, McGill University

"Home is where the heart is." This proverb rings true for many people in Canada and elsewhere. But how is a home defined? And what about the heart? Does this proverb mean that you feel at home wherever you truly desire to be or that your heart is wedded to a particular landscape, a set of social relations, or a tradition? Is the home a social construct that affords security, entertainment, and economic opportunity, or is it a physical artifact with walls, a roof, and a door? Likewise, is the heart an embodied sense of attachment, a pumping organ, or the seat of human emotion? Cultural anthropologists investigate these questions all over the world by studying how people create and maintain a sense of belonging in a particular time and place. By asking what binds people

together and to their environment, cultural anthropology aims to understand more about a central feature of the human condition: community.

Anthropologists have studied belonging and community in a variety of ways. Research has been done on the difference between spaces and places or on how a physical environment is made over into a cultural landscape with particular meanings, resonances, and collectively significant markers (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). Research has also been done on the definition and creation of social communities (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). How a community is represented, symbolized, and memorialized all has an effect on who feels included therein (Anderson 1991).

More recently, terms such *social-inclusion*, *belonging*, and *community* have become especially important for countries with large groups of new immigrants. Researchers have found that newcomers who feel included by their adoptive communities have better economic and social outcomes than those who feel excluded (Government of Canada 2006).

In Canada and elsewhere, domestic labour mobility is an important feature of the national economy. Global competition and international markets for goods and services create a constant flux in the profitability and competitiveness of Canadian commodities. In the domain of primary resource extraction this flux and change is especially noticeable, and large flows of Canadian labourers regularly move across the country—from Newfoundland to Alberta, from Quebec to the Northwest Territories, and so on—in order to find work (Ferguson 2011).

For these mobile workers, creating a sense of belonging can be difficult. In their ethnographic fieldwork on French-Canadian migrant workers in Canada's Northwest Territories (NWT), Lindsay Bell and Monica Heller examine how French speakers from francophone communities in Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick create and recreate a sense of belonging and community in the NWT (in Duchêne and Heller 2012). They highlight the essential role that language plays in the production and maintenance of community for these workers. In the predominantly anglophone economy of the NWT, francophone community institutions, such as French elementary and secondary schools, were identified as the primary means for French Canadians to maintain their ties to a francophone "home." The Canadian federal government funds these institutions as part of a nation-building project meant to create and project the image of Canada as a truly bilingual community. Despite the efforts of the federal government to support French schooling and francophone community organizations in the NWT and elsewhere, Bell and Heller find that, "francophone institutional spaces are . . . complicated sites of tensions between pride and profit" (2012: 178). They argue that while these institutions help to reproduce the pride a community feels in its language, identity, and belonging, they are also sites for non-francophone individuals to acquire the cultural capital that comes with being bilingual in a federal Canada (177). In this way, government-sponsored community-building institutions act as sites both for grounding a mobile francophone community in a linguistic heritage that is localized elsewhere, and for creating a new pan-Canadian bilingual identity, which is more sought-after on the domestic and global labour markets.

Ethnographies such as Bell and Heller's highlight the ways in which belonging and community are always connected to political and economic conditions. In the case of francophone migrants to the NWT, attempts by Canada's federal government to support and affirm the French language have also created the conditions for the erasure of French-Canadian distinctiveness. Marketing and promoting a bilingual Canadian population is at once both more inclusive and also at odds with original notions of French-Canadian belonging and community. This tension between, as Bell and Heller put it, "pride and profit" straddles a recurring theme in examinations of the human condition: that of the trade-offs between the prideful traditions of home and the incentives of work and profit. In short, sometimes the heart leads humans away from their homes.

Key Terms

anthropological perspective   5
anthropology   5
applied anthropology   11
archaeology   8
binary opposition   3
biocultural organisms   12
biological (or physical) anthropology   6
biological evolution   6
comparative   5
cultural anthropology   9
cultural evolution   6
cultural pattern   15

cultural relativism   18
culture   5
determinism   3
dualism   3
essence   3
ethnocentrism   18
ethnography   11
ethnology   11
evolutionary   6
habitus   15
holism   4
human agency   22

idealism   3
informants   10
linguistic anthropology   9
material culture   13
materialism   3
medical anthropology   12
metanarrative   18
paleoanthropology   7
primatology   7
symbol   13

Chapter Summary

1. Various models have been devised to explain humans and their cultures: dualism, idealism, and cultural determinism, for example. Since anthropology aims to describe, in the broadest sense, what it means to be human, anthropologists have developed a perspective on the human condition that is holistic, comparative, and evolutionary.

2. North American anthropology is usually considered to have four major specialties or subdisciplines: biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology. Some anthropologists consider a fifth to be applied anthropology, and some consider medical anthropology to be an emerging approach as well. Each of the four traditional subdisciplines can inform the others, and each can contribute to problem-solving within and between cultures.

3. Many anthropologists criticized the use of the term *cultures* to refer to particular, learned ways of life belonging to specific groups of human beings. Critics argue that the plural concept of *cultures* seems to endorse an oppressive kind of cultural determinism. This has somewhat lessened as time has moved on and anthropologists have turned increasingly to what could best be termed issues of human rights and the development of *irreducible ethical pluralism.*

4. Ethnocentrism is a form of reductionism. Anthropologists believe it can be countered by a commitment to cultural relativism, an attempt to understand the cultural underpinnings of behaviour. Cultural relativism makes moral decisions more difficult because it requires us to take into account many things before we make up our minds. Cultural relativism does not require us to abandon every value our society has taught us; however, it does not permit the easy solution of refusing to consider alternatives from the outset.

5. Through fieldwork, cultural anthropologists gain insight into another culture, both by participating with their informants in social activities and by observing those activities as outsiders. Ethnographies are published accounts of what an anthropologist learned during fieldwork. Ethnology involves comparing ethnographic information from two or more different cultures. Because human experience is often ambiguous, adaptation requires cultural interpretation, which is a constant, necessary process, whether it is an attempt to understand people or symbols within one's own culture or those of another culture.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Using the concepts of *idealism* and *materialism*, how would you develop definitions of what it means to be human? How deterministic are your definitions?

2. What are the advantages of taking a holistic approach in anthropology? How does the concept of holism relate to the concept of cultural relativism? Can holism succeed in anthropology without cultural relativism?

3. How do the four original subdisciplines of anthropology—biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology—contribute to an understanding of humans? How does applied anthropology add to this anthropological perspective, and what would you consider to be its ethical position in anthropology?

4. Can we move from ethnocentrism to an *irreducible ethical pluralism*?

Suggested Readings

In Recent (and Relatively Recent) Publications

Benhabib, Seyla. 2002. *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* **(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).** This book examines what we mean by "political membership" and what constitutes a "political community": How do we bring people we term "aliens"—strangers, immigrants, asylum seekers—into our political processes? What boundaries must be negotiated?

Borofsky, Robert, Fredrik Barth, Richard A. Shweder, Lars Rodseth, and Nomi Maya Stolzenberg. 2001. "When: A Conversation about Culture," *American Anthropologist,* **New Series, 103, 2: 432–46.** A discussion of what culture is and is not, as well as how and when anthropologists should use the culture concept.

Feder, Kenneth L. 2014. *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology,* **8th edn (New York: McGraw-Hill).** An entertaining and informative exploration of fascinating frauds and genuine archaeological mysteries seen through an application of the scientific method.

Marks, Jonathan. 2002. *What It Means to Be 98% Chimpanzee: Apes, People, and Their Genes* **(Berkeley: University of California Press).** A lively and provocative text by a molecular anthropologist who explains what can and cannot be

concluded from the fact that the genomes of chimpanzees and humans are nearly identical.

Ortner, Sherry. B. 2006. *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press). So you want to be an anthropologist? This is a must-read, either now or when you are in an advanced theory course!

Relethford, John. 2013. *The Human Species: An Introduction to Biological Anthropology*, 9th edn (New York: McGraw-Hill). An excellent, clear introduction to biological anthropology.

Sahlins, Marshall. 1999. "Two or Three Things That I Know about Culture," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5, 3: 399–421. A thoughtful consideration of the lasting importance of culture as an anthropological concept.

Skinner, Mark, and Kristina Bowie. 2009. "Forensic Anthropology: Canadian Content and Contributions," in *Handbook of Forensic Anthropology and Archaeology*, ed. Soren Blau and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press), 87–103. A survey of forensic anthropology in Canada, Chapter 8 in an in-depth handbook for forensic anthropologists.

Smedley, Audrey. 1998. "'Race' and the Construction of Human Identity," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 100, 3: 690–702. An examination of how "race" came to be associated with human identity, and the problems with this association.

Taylor, Christopher C. 2002. "The Cultural Face of Terror in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994," in *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*, ed. Alexander Laban Hinton (Berkeley: University of California Press), 138–78. Exploring a topic central to Canadian discussions of participation in peacekeeping, this chapter from a book on genocide challenges us on the nature of culture.

Watson, Patty Jo. 1995. "Archaeology, Anthropology, and the Culture Concept," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 97, 4: 683–94. This article relates how an anthropologist/archaeologist evolved in her thinking about the nature of the subject of her discipline and her specialty within that discipline.

Historical Perspective (1940s–1960s)

Boas, Franz. 1940. *Race, Language and Culture* (New York: Macmillan). A collection of Boas's most influential essays on anthropology.

Kroeber, Alfred L. 1948. "White's View of Culture," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 50, 3 (Part 1): 405–15. American cultural anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber, who studied under Boas, examines and clarifies a view of culture put forth by Leslie A. White (see below).

Montagu, Ashley. 1962. "The Concept of Race," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 64, 5 (Part 1): 919–28. An examination of "the concepts of race as they are used with reference to man," written by a highly accomplished British-American anthropologist.

Stocking, George W., Jr. 1966. "Franz Boas and the Culture Concept in Historical Perspective," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 68, 4: 867–82. German-American scholar George W. Stocking, Jr, takes a close look at Boas's view of culture, just over 20 years after Boas's death.

White, Leslie A. 1959. "The Concept of Culture," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 61, 2: 227–51. Another classic analysis of the culture concept, this time from American anthropologist Leslie A. White, writing a decade after Kroeber (see above) published his comments on White's earlier view of culture.

Related Websites

Archaeology at Parks Canada
www.pc.gc.ca/eng/progs/arch/index.aspx
Canadian Anthropology Society
www.cas-sca.ca
CBC News: Residential Schools
www.cbc.ca/news/
canada/a-history-of-residential-schools-in-canada-1.702280
American Anthropological Association
www.aaanet.org
AnthroBase: Informant (Debated Terminology)
www.anthrobase.com/Dic/eng/def/informant.htm
Society for Applied Anthropology
www.sfaa.net

Online Videos

Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Mass Murder in the US and Canada (Lecture by Dr Kim MacInnis)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWv8sYCNUsc
National Geographic: Cultural Differences
video.nationalgeographic.com/video/movies/
cultural-differences-ggtu
Uncontacted Tribes: First Ever Aerial Footage of Uncontacted Amazon Tribe
www.uncontactedtribes.org/brazilfootage

2 Fieldwork: A Meeting of Cultural Traditions

Learning Objectives

By the end of Chapter 2, you will be able to

- understand the value of ethnographic fieldwork;
- describe how fieldwork is used in cultural anthropology;
- outline key stages in the process of preparing to do fieldwork;
- understand the importance of professional ethics;
- compare and contrast three modes of ethnographic research: positivist, reflexive (including phenomenological), and multi-sited;
- consider the effects of fieldwork on all involved; and
- appreciate the value and open-ended nature of anthropological knowledge.

Ethnographic fieldwork is challenging. This has remained so even as anthropologists' understanding of the world has changed with the ease of travel, their wider knowledge of cultures, their broader research interest even within their own communities, and the somewhat ubiquitous access to modern communications. If anthropologists consider all of this in a historical perspective of, say, Bronisław Malinowski in the "field," it all seems so very adventurous and somewhat romantic. And this view detracts from the seriousness of what anthropologists ask others to do and the seriousness of the work in which they engage.

Generally, "the anthropologist" is the person who shows up in a community with plans to be there for a year or more, claims to be interested in the community's way of life, interacts with the local peoples, and records observations (Figure 2.1). Here, the anthropologist is the recipient of a great gift. People in diverse communities give of themselves and their resources. They share their families and friendships, homes and food, as well as insights into their lives and culture. This was so in the past and remains so today. Receiving this gift can be a deeply humbling experience. Anthropologists know, too, that deep learning occurs on both sides of the cultural divide. The process of *reciprocal* action and influence in this space changes all in essential ways. Thus, **fieldwork** broadens understandings of cultural worlds and transforms the self-understandings of anthropologists and the people with whom they work.

There is a deep obligation on the part of the anthropologist to remember one essential thing: an anthropologist gets to go home, but the people of the community *are at home* and they stay there. Thus, transformations that occur during fieldwork may have a strong impact on their lives. There is, then, the profound responsibility of behaving ethically in seeking and accepting the gift of insight into other people's lives.

Methods of Collecting Information

Anthropologists conducting fieldwork collect data using various methods. They consult published

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Figure 2.1 Ethnographic fieldwork involves entering into a community and forming reciprocal relationships with the people of that community. What kinds of effects do you think fieldwork can have on the people whose lives are being observed? How might anthropologists be affected by the process?

literature and archives. **Structured interviews** are also important for, as Charles L. Briggs comments, they allow anthropologists to consider "science/anti-science debates, questions of scale, and explorations of similarities of methods between anthropology and other forms of 'expert' knowledge" (2007: 551), and these *experts* may well be our teachers in other cultures (Dods 2004). Sometimes questionnaires and psychological tests are used but never alone since the information they uncover may not have an appropriate context and therefore may be highly misleading. To mediate this, anthropologists use **participant-observation** (Figure 2.2). Participant-observation involves direct, face-to-face interaction between the researcher and his or her local research partners, as they go about their daily lives. The method was pioneered by cultural anthropologists and remains characteristic of anthropological work. It allows anthropologists to understand interactions in a wider context of social networks and cultural beliefs and values because it is embedded in the

fieldwork An extended period of close involvement with the people in whose way of life anthropologists are interested, during which anthropologists ordinarily collect most of their data.

structured interviews A method for gathering information whereby an anthropologist (or another researcher) asks a set of predetermined questions and records participants' responses.

participant-observation The method anthropologists use to gather information by living and working with the people whose culture they are studying while participating in their lives as much as possible.

An anthropologist engages with citizens in the Khammouan province of Laos. Fieldwork offers anthropologists the opportunity to gain insight into new cultural worlds and to reflect on their own culture in a new way.

Figure 2.2 Participant-observation has long been a hallmark of research in cultural anthropology, whether in the 1920s with pioneering cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead on the island of Samoa (left) or in the 1980s with Canadian anthropologist Naomi McPherson in Papua New Guinea (right). What could be some of the benefits and challenges of participant-observation over other information-gathering techniques (e.g., interviewing, handing out questionnaires)?

positivism The view that there is a single reality "out there" that can be detected through the senses and that there is a single, appropriate scientific method for investigating that reality.

day-to-day life of the community. However, as Nayar notes, "Going to the field raises questions about methodology as often the reality is not as straightforward as theory. . . . [since] relations are complex and messy. The consequence is that . . . we need to keep some basic principles of research in mind and then adapt them accordingly" (2012: 36).

Modes of Ethnographic Fieldwork: A Short History

> Over the last century, ethnography as an imaginative analytical vehicle produced true knowledge about a great range of patterns of human relationship. . . . As much as we can recognize it as the product of a particular author, we can equally comprehend an ethnography as taking holistic shape at the tense intersection of ethnographic conversations and social scientific debates involving many differentially placed voices. (Wardle and Blasco 2011: 124)

When anthropology began to take on its own identity as an intellectual discipline during the nineteenth century, it aspired to be scientific. As a result, early anthropologists adopted **positivism**, the traditional philosophy of the physical sciences. Indeed, this perspective heavily influenced the pioneering ethnographers who established the fieldwork tradition—for example, Bronisław Malinowski, credited with "inventing" long-term participant-observation–based fieldwork; Franz Boas, who did much of his fieldwork on the Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl) in British Columbia; Margaret Mead, Boas's best-known student, who conducted extensive fieldwork in the South Pacific; and Frank G. Speck, with his extensive work with the Algonquians of eastern Canada.

Since the early twentieth century, anthropologists' approaches to fieldwork have changed. While anthropologists still aim to be scientific in their study of human nature, human society, and human history, they now understand "science" very differently, recognizing that there is not just one but a *variety* of scientific methods, each able to produce reliable knowledge about the world (e.g., Knorr Cetina 2000). Similarly, they recognize that this can produce diverse perspectives, thereby enriching our understanding of reality. Thus the *reflexive* approach and, increasingly, phenomenological analysis

have emerged in recent decades. In the following discussion, we will examine in greater detail the positivist and the reflexive approach as well as phenomenology.

The Positivist Approach

The positivist approach has its roots in French philosopher Auguste Comte's (1798–1857) "positive philosophy." In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was refined by a group of influential thinkers known as *positivists*. Today, *positivism* has become a label for a particular way of looking at and studying the world scientifically.

First, positivists want to explain the **material world** in terms of material causes and processes detected through our senses. Second, they are committed to a separation of facts from values. They justify this separation on the grounds that facts relate to the nature of physical, material reality—what *is*—whereas values are based on speculation about what *ought to be*. To positivists, scientific research is concerned only with the former. As a result, all valid scientific inquiry, no matter the focus, should be understood as different aspects of a single, disinterested quest for knowledge. In other words, the truth remains the truth whether people like it or not, whether it conforms to their idea of what is good and proper or not. Third, they are convinced that a single scientific method can be used to investigate any domain of reality, from planetary motion to chemical reactions to human life. The most ambitious positivists are convinced that all scientific knowledge will ultimately be unified in a "theory of everything"—Stephen Hawking aside. As a result, the goal of the positivist program has been to produce **objective knowledge**.

Applying Positivist Methods to Anthropology

For the positivist, the standard research scenario involves a scientist in a laboratory. This approach creates obstacles for those who study human life by means of participant-observation. Early cultural anthropologists were aware of these obstacles, and they tried to devise ways to get around them. Their first step was to approximate lab conditions by testing hypotheses in different cultural settings. These settings were carefully selected to display the same range of variation, naturally, that a laboratory scientist could create artificially. As a result, the field could be seen as a living laboratory. Each research setting would

correspond to a separate experimental situation, a method called *controlled comparison*. Margaret Mead used this method in the 1930s when she studied four different societies in an attempt to discover the range and causes of gender roles.

Anthropologists such as Mead were encouraged by the enormous successes that the physical scientists had attained through positivist approaches. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, positivistically inclined anthropologists studied cultures their contemporaries had neither heard of nor cared to know. Rejecting the unstructured, impressionistic work of an earlier period, they attempted to produce accounts that were systematic and accurate. Overall, they were more or less successful, although they were sometimes accused of insensitivity.

Yet there remained a problem: in order to remain true to positivism, anthropologists had to record objective facts from the perspective of an invisible observer; yet in order to get closer to the truth, they had to admit that they were personally involved in the situation. In fact, they regularly developed close ties to the people among whom they worked, often defending their full humanity to outsiders and, at times, even intervening on their behalf with governments. Yet none of these efforts showed up in their ethnographies. To resolve these apparent conflicts, they needed to find a new approach.

Questioning the Positivist Approach

In the 1960s and 1970s many assumptions about the way the world worked were called into question, as was the nature of scientific inquiry. Anthropologist Derek Freeman's critique (1983, 1998) of Margaret Mead's early fieldwork in Samoa illustrates the tone of the debate (see Côté [2000] for a summary of the Mead–Freeman controversy and Shankman's [2009] critical discussion of the Freeman evaluation). Anthropologists began to show how different observers, working from different assumptions, often produce different ethnographies about the same society. At the same time, they noted that differently situated fieldworkers also came to many similar conclusions, and these conclusions allowed them to link their work in productive ways.

Consider the case of anthropologist Annette Weiner, who conducted fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands nearly 60 years after Bronisław Malinowski. Malinowski and Weiner were anthropologists of different nationalities and different genders working in different villages with different participants during

material world The physical world in all its manifestations. We experience this world through our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and movement.

objective knowledge Knowledge about reality that is absolute and true for all people, in all times and places.

different periods of time. Weiner made an important contribution to our understanding of Trobriand life by describing and explaining activities involving Trobriand women's "wealth" (Figure 2.3)—activities that were central to the continued healthy functioning of Trobriand life but about which Malinowski had written nothing. Weiner might have published her findings by declaring that Malinowski had got it wrong. But this route did not appeal to her, primarily because, as she alluded to, he got so very much right. Malinowski's own preoccupations led him to write about aspects of Trobriand life different from those that interested Weiner. As a result, he left behind a portrait of Trobriand society that Weiner later felt obliged to supplement. Nevertheless, much of Malinowski's work remained valid and insightful to Weiner. In tribute to him, she quoted long passages from his ethnographies (see Weiner 1976, 1988; see also the EthnoProfile on the Trobriand Islanders in Chapter 8).

Beginning in the 1960s, anthropologists also began to reconsider the ethics and politics of positivist science in general and of participant-observation in particular. They began to pay close attention to the nature of the relationships they developed with their participants, and they re-examined the laboratory model of fieldwork, noting the differences between anthropology and other more traditionally scientific disciplines. In the physical sciences, for example, it is fairly easy to justify a hierarchy elevating scientists over their subject matter. Indeed, it seems difficult to imagine the ethical or political obligations that a geologist might have to a rock. Matters are otherwise when human beings are the subject of inquiry. To approach human beings as objects, lacking the same inquisitive intelligence as the scientists who study them, is to mischaracterize the subject matter of anthropology. Anthropologists *do* have ethical obligations to other human beings; political factors *can* complicate the relationships ethnographers develop during fieldwork. Further, there *is* a mutual inquisitiveness that needs to be acknowledged in the fieldwork experience. It is *human interaction* that is central to cross-cultural understanding. Thus, by extension, anthropologists came to understand that they are *human beings* in relationships, not impersonal recording machines. In doing so, they become aware that observation "has a subjective component by virtue of the observer's . . . decision to recognize certain distinctions" (Allen and Hoekstra 1991: 49). In effect, anthropological observation cannot be entirely value free.

Figure 2.3 Trobriand women's wealth, consisting of dried, processed banana leaves, being collected at a funeral.

Questioning positivist science is not taken lightly. Those who do raise objections are often accused of abandoning scientific discipline entirely, allowing material facts to be obscured by the researcher's individual, *subjective* values and preferences. But does the rejection of positivism turn anthropological fieldwork into just one person's subjective impressions of other people? Most anthropologists would answer a firm *no* because fieldwork is a *dialogue*; ethnographers engage in real conversations with their local research partners. Such dialogues are often characterized by mutual patience and painstaking collaborative attempts to sort things out and to piece things together in mutually coherent pictures of reality. When successful, the outcome is a new understanding of the world that both anthropologist and participant can share. This means that field data have not **subjective meaning** but **intersubjective meaning**: field data are the product of long dialogues between researcher and participant. Through dialogue and negotiation, intersubjective meanings are achieved.

The Reflexive Approach

The intersubjective meanings on which participants rely are public, not private. Participants take them for granted, but they may not be obvious to an outsider. In order to make these meanings explicit, anthropologist and participants together must occasionally step back from the ordinary flow of daily life and examine them critically. They must think about the way members of the culture *normally* think about their lives. This thinking about thinking is known as **reflexivity**; thus, fieldwork in cultural anthropology is a reflexive experience.

Reflexive fieldwork retains a respect for detailed, accurate information-gathering, but it also takes into consideration a broader range of contextual information than does positivist fieldwork. It pays explicit attention to the ethical and political context of research, the background of researchers, and the full partnership with our in-culture teachers that produce collaborative relationships leading to anthropological knowledge. Ethnographic knowledge shaped by reflexivity becomes what science and technology scholar Donna Haraway (1991) has called **situated knowledge** and involves making explicit exactly who you are as an ethnographer—your gender, nationality, political preference, class/ethnic/educational backgrounds, and so forth. Once you have identified your own social location, you will be better able to

understand your unique perspective—your *situated subjectivity*—that informs your research choices. You will also be better able to present who you are to the people with whom you will be working. Both these distinctions inform you as an ethnographer and shape the relationships you have in the field.

Being *aware* of who you are will help you identify the limits of what you can discover. For example, in some societies, being a female ethnographer may bar you from studying certain social activities that are central to the local culture. In such a case, your ethnographic account is bound to be partial and could be seen as weak under the test of "scientific objectivity." Nevertheless, a detailed, reflexive account of what you were able to learn may be far more reliable than a strictly "objective" account. After all, such an account would explicitly acknowledge the fact that you did not talk to everybody or see everything, and it would openly admit that your observations are partial and thus *situated*. This avoids suggesting sweeping generalizations about an entire social group. As such, it allows anthropologists to develop a fuller, truer account of aspects of people's lives.

Reflexive commitment means anthropologists are obligated to reveal to everyone involved how data are gathered. Additionally, anthropologists have argued that they must also share their conclusions with their participants and include their participants' reflections on those conclusions in their published ethnographies. For example, after conducting fieldwork in a poor neighbourhood in the US, cultural anthropologist Bettylou Valentine (1978) persuaded several of her participants to comment on her manuscript before publication. She visited them for lengthy discussions and found that, in general, they agreed with her conclusions. In the published volume, *Hustling and Other Hard Work: Life Styles in the Ghetto*, Valentine includes both her own conclusions and her participants' voices in the final chapter. Valentine's ethnography presents a vivid example of the open-endedness of the dialogue between anthropologist and participant: no single interpretation of human experience is final. This kind of mutual reflexivity is at the heart of anthropological knowledge, and it invites future anthropologists and others to continue the dialogue from their own uniquely situated position.

Anthropologists can also take what is known as a phenomenological approach. Robert Desjarlais and C. Jason Throop define **phenomenology** as "the study of phenoma as they appear to the consciousness of an individual or a group of people; the study

subjective meaning
Meaning that seems true to a particular person, based on his or her personal values, beliefs, opinions, and assumptions.

intersubjective meaning
Meaning rooted in the symbolic systems of a culture and shared by participants in that culture.

reflexivity Critically thinking about the way one thinks; reflecting on one's own experience.

situated knowledge
Knowledge that is set within or specific to a precise context or situation.

phenomenology The study of first-person experience of consciousness in the material world, which is based on the conscious (intentional) framing of the meaning or content of the observed. In different conditions or situations, people come to recognize their responses to different conditions of intentionality. These include "embodiment, bodily skills, cultural context, language and other social practices, social background, and contextual aspects of intentional activities" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/#WhatPhen).

In Their Own Words

Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology

Robert Desjarlais and C. Jason Throop speak to phenomenological approaches in anthropology.

Many anthropologists have found great utility in phenomenological methods in anthropological inquiry. The focus on "life as lived" and human consciousness in all of its lived realities . . . have enabled anthropologists to step beyond, on the one hand, anthropological considerations of cultural discourses, social relations, and political economy alone and, on the other, psychological considerations of selfhood, psychodynamics, and subjectivity (Abu-Lughod 1991; Biehl et al. 2007; Jackson 1998). At the same time, anthropologists have tended to shy away from the more general, categorical, culture-free pronouncements often sounded by phenomenological philosophers, preferring instead to couch their findings within specific cultural and historical settings (Jackson 1998, 2009b). Anthropologists have also rooted much of their research less in philosophical reasoning than in ethnographic research and so . . . anthropologists have worked to introduce more fully the historical, the cultural, the variable, and the relative into phenomenology. They have also given priority, at times, to people's own formulations of the world and their place within it as they have sought to detail the contours of "local phenomenoloies" (Halliburton 2002). . . .

Starting in the mid-1980s, several anthropologists . . . had come to focus unduly on questions of meaning, discourse, structural relations, and political economy to the neglect of the everyday experiences, contingencies, and dilemmas that weigh so heavily on people's lives (Desjarlais 1992; Jackson 2005; Kleinman 1995, 1999; Seeman 2009; Stoller 1997; Turner & Bruner 1986; Wikan 1990). Subsequent inquiries along these lines have offered reflections on the cultural, genealogical, ontological, and epistemological dimensions of the concept of "experience" itself, leading to the somewhat paradoxical understanding that the category of experience is, at once, highly needed in anthropological thought and deeply charged, overdetermined, and culturally constituted (Desjarlais 1997; Mattingly 1998; Throop 2003, 2010c). Indeed, on the one hand, phenomenological anthropologists have often explicitly relied on the concept of experience as a way to orient their research generatively to the complexly temporal, at times ambiguous, and deeply ambivalent realities of human existence. On the other hand, when used in an unreflexive way, the category itself at times presumes and promotes unexamined cultural assumptions concerning articulations of self, subjectivity, and social action that may blind us to other possible forms of life and ways of being. Along with efforts toward an anthropology of experience, a number of orientations have emerged out of interest to map out how phenomenal processes take form in particular cultural and historical settings. . . . In undertaking inquiries along the lines of a "cultural phenomenology," anthropologists have examined how questions of selfhood, sociality, temporality, agency, pain, and morality, among others, tie into social and cultural formations in specific sociocultural settings and lifeworlds (Csordas 1990, 1994a, b; Geurts 2002; Pinto 2008; Throop 2009b, 2010a–c). Advocates of a critical phenomenology, in turn, have stressed the need to attend to the many, and often highly charged, political, social, and discursive forces that contribute to life in particular settings (Biehl et al. 2007; Good 1994; Desjarlais 1997; Scheper-Hughes 1993; Willen 2007b). . . . In general, this work, while attending to particular situations faced by people in specific sociopolitical settings, often inquires into ostensibly universal dimensions of human experience.

positionality A person's uniquely situated social position, which reflects his or her gender, nationality, political views, previous experiences, and so on. See *situated knowledge.*

of things as they appear in our lived experiences" (2011: 92). According to Desjarlais and Throop, anthropologists employing a phenomenological approach "focus on 'life as lived' and human consciousness in all of its lived realities" (2011: 92). The desire for an "anthropology of experience" started in the mid-1980s, when several anthropologists began to feel that anthropology had come to "neglect . . . the everyday experiences, contingencies, and dilemmas that weigh so heavily on people's lives" (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 92–3). From Desjarlais and Throop, anthropologists see that reflexivity and phenomenology go hand in hand. This is explored further in the "In Their Own Words" box above.

While the reflexive and phenomenological methods are accepted by many contemporary anthropologists, such acceptance is not without criticism, most of which centres on the reliability of anthropologists' self-reports on **positionality**. People's descriptions of themselves are not always reliable. Indeed, most