HUMANITY

AN INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

James Peoples | Garrick Bailey

TENTH EDITION

Locations of peoples discussed in *Humanity*

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***Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology,* Tenth Edition**
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Preface

A textbook titled *Humanity* might seem presumptuous. The authors chose this title back in 1985, when we began working on the first edition. We thought *Humanity* captures the most distinctive feature of the discipline called anthropology: in the social sciences, anthropology alone studies all the world's peoples. Anthropologists are interested in all humans, including those who lived in the prehistoric past, the historic past, and the present day.

As a scholarly field of study, anthropology is very broad in its scope and interests. Several generations of anthropologists have discovered a vast amount of information about humanity. Paleoanthropologists are uncovering fossils and unwinding genetic relationships that are showing how and when the human species originated and evolved into modern *Homo sapiens.* Archaeologists are digging into information about how prehistoric peoples lived their lives.

Another subfield, cultural anthropology, is the main subject of this book. Research done by cultural anthropologists (fieldwork) often involves years of intensive study while living among some human community. Cultural anthropology describes and tries to explain or interpret the fascinating cultural variability of the world's diverse peoples. In this text, we try to convey to students the life-enriching as well as the educational value of discovering this variability. In the process, we hope students and other readers will experience a change in their attitudes about other cultures, about their own lives and nations, and about humanity in general.

We also hope the book leads readers to think about their own identities as individuals, as members of a particular society with its traditions and ways of thinking and acting, and as participants in an increasingly worldwide human community. To achieve this last goal, we discuss anthropological insights into some of the problems that affect the twenty-first century, such as ethnic conflicts, national and global inequalities, hunger, and the survival of indigenous cultures and languages. As we describe the diversity in various dimensions of human life, including relations with the natural world, marriage, gender, and religion, we suggest the implications of such diversity for contemporary people and societies.

Finally, we want newcomers to anthropology to grasp the full significance of the oldest anthropological lesson of all: that their own values, beliefs, and behaviors are a product of their upbringing in a particular human group rather than universal among all peoples. If understood properly and applied seriously, this principle leads us to question unconscious assumptions and to view ourselves as well as other peoples from new perspectives.

As we write the tenth edition in 2012–2013, the United States and its allies remained involved in conflicts in Afghanistan. Iran is alleged to be developing nuclear weapons—or maybe not. In Syria, fighting between a popular movement (or is it?) and the ruling government has killed thousands. The possibility that chemical weapons are used by the Syrian government sharpens a common international dilemma: under what circumstances do humanitarian values outweigh narrow national interests (and budgets)? Such conflicts, perceived threats, and competitions lead some to believe that peoples of different nations, ethnicities, and religions can never live together in peace and security.

In another part of our planet, the People's Republic of China became the world's second-largest economy in August 2010. Offshoring of production to China decreases consumer prices for the people of Europe and North America—but also reduces high-wage factory jobs on those continents. China's factories, massive building projects, and motor vehicles pollute its own air and water. Emissions of greenhouse gases from nations that use fossil fuels in factory production add to the climate change that already has occurred because of fossil fuel–based development in Western nations. Economic competition between nations and international environmental problems lead to dilemmas that are truly global. Will there inevitably be global winners and losers? How should one nation handle environmental problems that are caused partly by other nations?

In the short term, wars and other forms of conflict and competitions separate antagonists from one another. Yet, overall, the world's regions now interact more frequently and intensively than ever before. Words like *multiculturalism* and *multinationalism* have become familiar to most people in the past couple of decades. Anthropology has much to say about these changes. Just as important, anthropology helps us become more aware of how our own lives are affected by such changes.

New to the Tenth Edition

There are many reasons for the growing interdependence of peoples and nations: increased integration of the world's national economies, rises in international travel and migration, educational exchanges between countries and regions, wide availability of the Internet, worldwide spread of consumer culture, and access to international media. The general term for such changes is *globalization,* which has many dimensions: cultural, economic, political, artistic, linguistic, and religious, to name a few. As in the previous two editions, each chapter of *Humanity* includes a feature called Globalization Challenges and Opportunities in this edition, which focuses on the dimensions of globalization that relate to the chapter's subject. Features in various chapters deal with issues such as how globalization affects cultural diversity, language survival, inequality among nations, religious diversity in the United States, production and sale of art, and cultural and religious fundamentalism. Some discussions are mainly factually based, whereas others present anthropological insights into the process or the results of globalization.

Most chapters contain material that explicitly suggests the relevance of the subject for modern North America, such as climate change, exchange forms, and religious accommodation. We have chosen to delete the previous Closer Look boxes, but some of their information is integrated into the main text, such as language survival and same-sex marriage. In most chapters we have rewritten major sections to simplify the style and word use to make the material more engaging. Sections of several chapters have been retitled and reorganized to improve clarity and logical flow.

To those instructors who are previous users of *Humanity,* the following chapter-by-chapter summary highlights the major changes in this edition.

Chapter 1 again introduces the subdisciplines and discusses the importance of anthropological perspectives, methods, and factual knowledge of cultural diversity. We no longer include applied anthropology as a fifth subfield, but the text emphasizes its importance in the field as a whole and for career opportunities for undergraduates. We eliminated the detailed discussion of human biological evolution but do describe the most essential facts and dates. We highlight the change in cultural anthropological field research away from what some call *tribes* toward what some call *modern societies,* including both "mainstream" and immigrant communities. The discussion of relativism retains the distinction between methodological and moral relativism, using female genital mutilation to illustrate the complexity of the relativism issue.

The topical structure and themes of Chapter 2 (culture) are intact. We continue to integrate terms like *cultural identity, subcultures, roles,* and *social learning* into an extended discussion of the concept of culture, with the goal of demonstrating that the concept of culture is more complicated than most people realize. New research findings about toolmaking methods from South Africa are described in the subsection "Origins of Culture," which also covers archaeological and physical evidence for the use of symbols and language. Coverage of the cultural construction of race is moved to a major section of the chapter.

Chapter 3 (language) further condenses the sections on structural linguistics. There is explicit discussion of the use of language to acquire and enhance power, using new examples of political speech. In the section on language and culture, we cover how linguistic words and concepts might affect views of social reality, illustrated by terms like *family, human rights,* and *democracy.* This chapter continues to emphasize relationships among culture, language, thought, and behavior over the technical aspects of linguistics. Information on Native American words that have been incorporated into English now has its own major section.

Chapter 4 (cultural diversity and globalization) is a new chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context for the chapters that follow, not just the ones concerned with cultural diversity, theories, and methods. After a brief discussion of why and how culture changes, we discuss the broad patterns of culture change that have occurred over the past 150,000 years or so of human history. We end the chapter with a discussion of the global economy.

The focus of Chapter 5 (theory) remains twofold: (1) main historical patterns and early ideas about cultures that gave rise to anthropology today and (2) distinctions between contemporary approaches, which we categorize (broadly) as scientific and humanistic. We try to represent both sides fairly and objectively. Where appropriate, we integrate this distinction into

later empirical chapters by stating the interpretations or explanations each broad approach would offer. Relationships between early theorists and modern themes and divisions are explicitly covered, by showing how new ideas were shaped by earlier ones.

In Chapter 6 (methods) we continue to emphasis that anthropological research has two primary objectives: to describe and explain cultural diversity. Cultural research can also focus on the culture of a people at a particular point, or in the changes in their culture over time. The new Global Challenges and Opportunities box addresses the changing relationship between anthropological researchers and peoples being studied. Increasingly these peoples are concerned with the protection of their intellectual properties rights and privacy; thus changing their relationship to the researcher.

In Chapter 7 (environment) we expanded the section on industrialized societies, which includes a new subsection describing how fossil fuels dramatically increased productivity and the social and cultural implications of this increase. Basic facts about the places and dates of domestication are provided in a separate section. The chapter covers how the cultures of industrial societies differ from those of preindustrial times, environmental impacts (especially climate change and pollution), and the globalization of production and resource harvesting. Major themes include the contributions made by China and other emerging economies to climate change, difficulties of the international system in solving the "public bad" problem, how smaller nations (e.g., island countries) are likely to be most affected, and which nations should pay to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (given the globalization of production). New numerical data are added to several topics. Like Chapter 2, this chapter provides information referred to extensively in later chapters.

Chapter 8 (exchange) is extensively revised. We hope the introductory vignette creates student interest in the general topic. Sections on reciprocity, redistribution, and market forms are largely unchanged except for one new example. More than previous editions, we focus on the distinction between market exchanges—which are ancient and culturally widespread—and market economies—which developed since the Industrial Revolution. Thanks to the comments of reviewers, we give explicit attention to capitalism and socialism as ways to organize industrial and postindustrial economies, including the advantages and weaknesses of each, Neoliberalism and social welfare capitalism are covered. We deconstruct the concept of *productivity,* using Karen Ho's research on Wall Street investment bankers as the primary example. There is a new discussion of the complexities of estimating the costs and benefits of the globalization of factory production, including the wider implications of the collapse of a building containing clothing factories in Bangladesh in April 2013.

In Chapter 9 (marriage and family), we streamlined many discussions while retaining the standard textbook structure from previous editions: ideas about incest taboos, problems of defining marriage, marriage forms and their implications, marital transactions, postmarital residence patterns, and household forms. Along the way, we cover fictive kin, matrifocal families, three unusual cases, and descriptions of Old Testament references to levirate, bridewealth, and brideservice to increase student interest. A new section discusses gay marriage and "culture wars" in the United States (including recent events such as the June 2013 Supreme Court decision). We expanded coverage of the relevance of anthropological studies on marriage and family to twenty-first-century issues.

Coverage in Chapter 10 (kinship, descent, and terminology) also remains pretty standard: forms of descent and kinship, influences on these forms, and a minimized description of kinship terminologies to illustrate the cultural construction of kinship. The concluding section of this chapter suggests implications of diversity in marriage, family, and kinship forms for modern life and the future.

In Chapter 11 (gender), we have completed eliminated some old terminologies, using "Two Spirit" rather than "berdache," and "gendered" rather than "sexual" division of labor. Except for streamlining and rewriting several paragraph, this chapter is much the same as in the ninth edition, which added two new ethnographic cases: the hijra for multiple gender identities and the Vanatinai as a possible example of gender equality. We added more suggestions for the relevance of anthropological findings and ideas to modern understandings.

The basic structure of Chapter 12 (political life) has remained unchanged. However, the box entitled "Murder Among the Cheyenne" has been dropped with much of the discussion integrated into the main text. Although the Global Challenges and Opportunities box retains the old title "Multinational Corporations and the Nation-State," the emphasis is now on the global economy and the resultant growing economic power of these corporations and how they are increasingly challenging the authority of national governments.

Chapter 13 (inequality and stratification) continues to contrast egalitarian, ranked, and stratified societies, incorporating many examples. It also discusses the concept of *ideology* (both religious and secular) and the complexities of evaluating it. As in earlier editions, we updated numerical data on the distribution of income and wealth in the United States, including numbers that bring home the extent to which economic inequalities have increased in the last thirty years. In discussing the functionalist and conflict theories of stratification, we used examples (e.g., CEO-to-worker income ratios) to illustrate some ideas.

In Chapter 14 (religion), we rewrote in places to clarify some points. There is a new discussion of the problems of classifications used by anthropologists to compare religions. The subsection on communal religious organizations is expanded to include rites of passage for both genders and seasonal rituals as well as ancestral rituals and totemism. New brief ethnographic examples are the eastern Pueblo, Gebusi of New Guinea, and Hawaiian *mana.* In the globalization feature on religious pluralism, we added new material on European countries.

Chapter 15 (art) is basically the same with the exception of the Global Challenges box. This new box addresses the question of how increased integration into the global economy and less expensive machine-made goods are changing the artistic visual traditions associated with handmade items.

Chapter 16 (ethnicity) has modifications in the defining and describing the attributes of ethnic groups. The discussions of types of ethnic groups have been changed. The discussion of civilizations has been expanded, while transnational groups have been dropped from the list of types of ethnic groups and are now discussed in greater detail in the Global Challenges box. The data on conflicts have been updated and changed.

Chapter 17 (world problems and the practice of anthropology), though modified, still discusses anthropological insights in the issues of health and health care, population growth, and world hunger. The last part on anthropologists as advocates has been modified, expanded, and updated.

Special Features

The boxed features called A Closer Look are eliminated in this edition, in the interest of space and continuity. Each chapter still contains a feature on globalization, titled **Global Challenges and Opportunities**, a label that reflects the focus of most of their content. A photo accompanies each insert.

Several pedagogical aids are intended to help students understand and retain the material they have just read. Each chapter begins with a set of five to eight **Learning Objectives** that focus on the key concepts, ideas, and themes of the chapter. The learning objectives are tied to the end-of-chapter **Summary**. We hope this helps students come away with a solid understanding of the main points of each chapter.

We continue to include at least one **Concept Review** in every chapter to condense ideas and make sharp distinctions in just a few words. A **Glossary** again is included at the end of the book. **Key Terms** in bold are defined immediately at the bottom of the page when students first encounter them in the chapter.

Anthropology is a highly visual discipline, and *Humanity* holds to the highest standards in providing photographs, figures, and maps to illustrate the text. Maps on the inside front cover show the location of peoples and cultures mentioned in the book.

There are two **indexes**, one a traditional subject index and the other a list of peoples and cultures mentioned in the book.

Resources

Student Resources

CourseMate. The CourseMate for Peoples and Bailey's *Humanity*, tenth edition, brings course concepts to life with interactive learning, study, and exam preparation tools that support the printed textbook. Access an integrated MindTap e-book, glossary, quizzes, videos, and more in the CourseMate for *Humanity*, tenth edition. Go to CengageBrain.com to register or purchase access.

Instructor Resources

Online Instructor's Manual with Test Bank. This online supplement offers learning objectives, chapter outlines and summaries, key terms, suggested supplementary lectures, discussion questions, and more. The instructor's manual also includes updated references to relevant news articles, films, and videos for each chapter. The test bank provides approximately 40 multiple-choice, 15 true/false, and 5 essay questions per chapter.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero. A flexible, online system, Cognero allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions. Cognero also offers you

the ability to create multiple tests in an instant and deliver them from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want!

Online PowerPoint Slides. These vibrant, Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides for each chapter will assist you with your lecture by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook.

CourseReader: Anthropology. *CourseReader Anthropology* is a fully customizable online reader that provides access to hundreds of readings and audio and video selections from multiple disciplines. This easy-to-use solution allows you to select exactly the content you need for your courses and is loaded with convenient pedagogical features like highlighting, printing, note taking, and audio downloads. You have the freedom to assign individualized content at an affordable price. The *CourseReader: Anthropology* is the perfect complement to any class.

The Wadsworth Anthropology Video Library Volumes I–IV. Enhance your lectures with new video clips from the BBC® Motion Gallery and CBS® News. Addressing topics from the four fields, these videos are divided into short segments, perfect for introducing key concepts with footage sourced from some of the most remarkable collections in the world.

AIDS in Africa DVD. Expand your students' global perspective of HIV/AIDS with this award-winning documentary series focused on controlling HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. Films focus on caregivers in the faith community; how young people share messages of hope through song and dance; the relationship of HIV/AIDS to gender, poverty, stigma, education, and justice; and the story of two HIV-positive women helping others.

***Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology,* Third Edition.** Practical and insightful, *Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology,* third edition, is a concise and accessible reader that presents a core selection of historical and contemporary works that have been instrumental in shaping anthropological thought and research over the past decades. Carefully edited by Dr. Gary Ferraro, the third edition includes five new classic readings from the disciplines of cultural anthropology and linguistics. Readings are organized around eight topics that closely mirror most introductory textbooks and are selected from scholarly works on the basis of their enduring themes and contributions to the discipline. These selections allow students to further explore anthropological perspectives on such key topics as culture, language and communication, ecology and economics, marriage and family, gender, politics and social control, supernatural beliefs, and issues of culture change. The new edition also addresses pressing topics such as globalization, ethnic violence, environmental issues, and more. *Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology,* third edition, delivers an excellent introduction to the field of anthropology and the contributions it makes to understanding the world around us.

Human–Environment Interactions: New Directions in Human Ecology. This module by Kathy Galvin begins with a brief discussion of the history and core concepts of the field of human ecology and the study of how humans interact with the natural environment. It then looks in-depth at how the environment influences cultural practices (environmental determinism), as well as how aspects of culture, in turn, affect the environment. Human behavioral ecology is presented within the context of natural selection and how ecological factors influence the development of cultural and behavioral traits, and how people subsist in different environments. The module concludes with a discussion of resilience and global change as a result of human–environment interactions. This module, in chapter-like print format, can be packaged for free with the text.

Medical Anthropology in Applied Perspective Module. This free-standing module is actually a complete text chapter, featuring the same quality of pedagogy and written content in Cengage's cultural anthropology texts. See your sales representative for information on bundling the module with this text.

Acknowledgments

Since the first edition was published in 1988, *Humanity* (the book, not the species) has benefited enormously from reviewers. Some reviewers are long-term users of the text, whereas others have never adopted it for their classes. Of course, we have never been able to incorporate all their suggestions for improvement, or the book would be twice as long as it is. But, over the last 25 years, we have added, subtracted, updated, rethought, and reorganized most of the book based on reviewers' comments. We thank all of them.

For the 10th edition, both authors thank the reviewers listed here (their identities were unknown to us until publication):

Lara Braff, San Diego State University
Maureen Sperrazza, Western Connecticut State University
Francine Melia, University of Nevada–Reno
Jeffrey Ratcliffe, Penn State Abington
Micah Soltz, Columbus State Community College

Although we were unable to make all the changes these scholars suggested, many of their comments are incorporated into the text. Their comments that the book needs to be more *explicit* about the relevance of anthropology in today's world were especially influential.

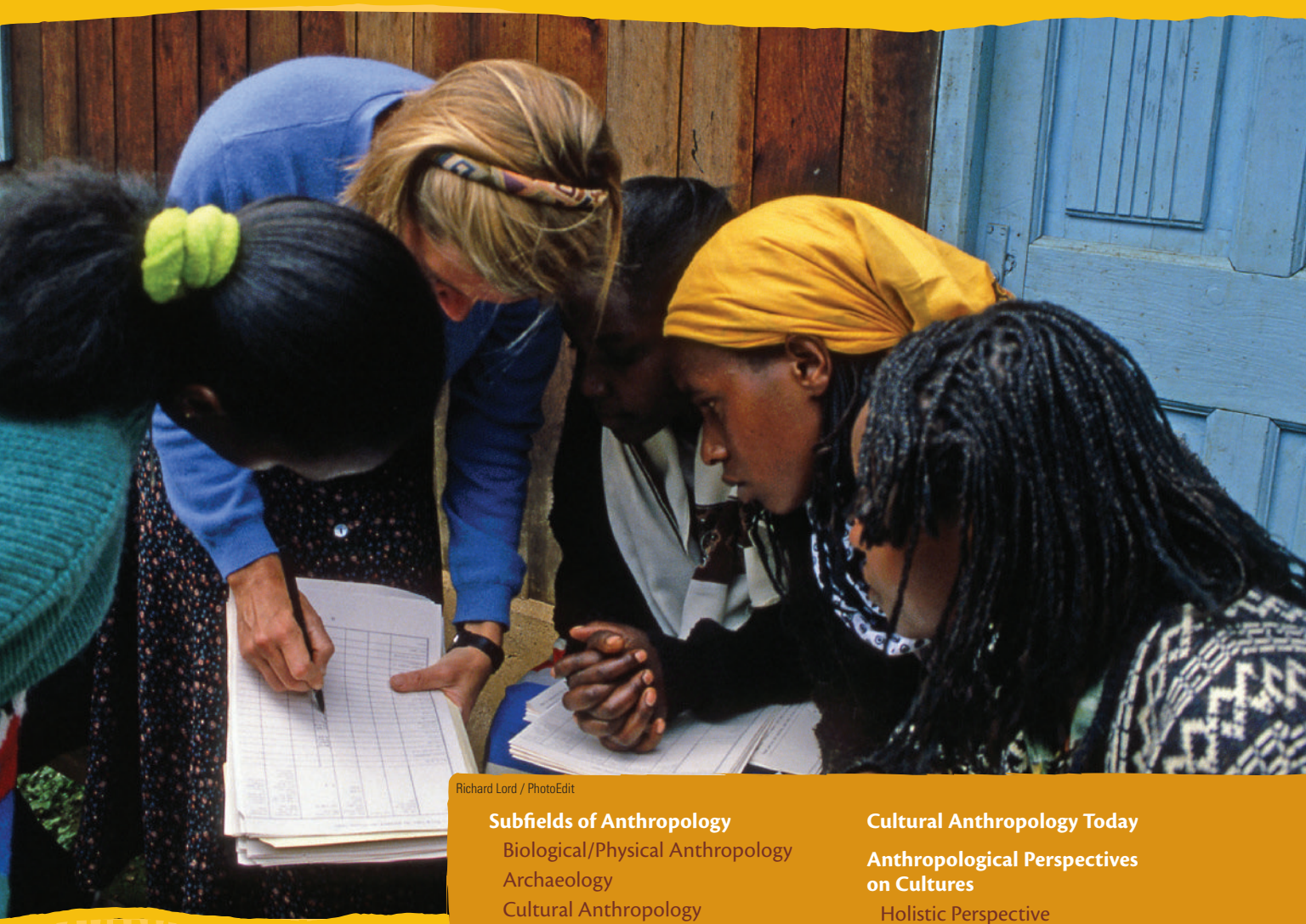
Both authors have benefited from the suggestions of colleagues and friends. Jim is grateful to Thomas Love (Linfield College) for help with the material on energy in Chapter 7 and to Stacia Bensyl (Missouri Western State University) for assistance with Chapter 3. He also thanks Ted Cohen and Mary Howard for their collaboration and support for over twenty-five years (yikes!). Garrick thanks James Faris for his assistance on Nuba body painting, and Robert Canfield for helping to clarify some points on the Pushtun and Afghanistan.

About the Authors

James (Jim) Peoples is currently Professor and Chairperson of Sociology/Anthropology and Director of East Asian Studies at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio. Peoples has taught at the University of California at Davis and the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, among other colleges and universities. He received a B.A. from the University of California–Santa Cruz and a PhD from the University of California–Davis. His main research interests are human ecology, cultures of the Pacific Islands, and cultures of East Asia. His first book, *Island in Trust* (1985), describes his fieldwork on the island of Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia. His latest project is a coauthored book describing the prehistory, history, and contemporary culture of Kosrae island in Micronesia, to which he most recently returned in July and August 2013. Since joining the faculty of Ohio Wesleyan University in 1988, he has taught courses on East Asia, the Pacific, human ecology, cultural anthropology, the anthropology of religion, world hunger, the prehistory of North America, and Native Americans of the southwestern United States. Since 2010, Peoples has been Secretary of the Japan Studies Association. When not teaching, writing, or attending meetings, he enjoys fly-fishing, traveling, and gardening.

Garrick Bailey received his B.A. in history from the University of Oklahoma and his M.A. and Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Oregon. His research interests include ethnohistory, world systems theory, and ethnicity and conflict, with a primary focus on the native peoples of North America. His publications include *Navajo: The Reservation Years* (with Roberta Bailey); *Changes in Osage Social Organization 1673–1906; The Osage and the Invisible World;* and *Traditions of the Osage* and *Art of the Osage* (with Dan Swan, John Nunley, and Sean Standingbear). He also was editor of *Indians in Contemporary Society,* Volume 2 of the *Handbook of North American Indians,* Smithsonian Institution. Bailey has been a Senior Fellow in Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and a Weatherhead Resident Scholar at the School of American Research in Santa Fe. Actively engaged in contemporary Native American issues, he has served as a member of the Indian Health Advisory Committee, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; of the Glen Canyon Environmental Review Committee, National Research Council; and of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Review Committee, Department of the Interior. Bailey has taught anthropology at the University of Tulsa since 1968.

1 The Study of Humanity



Richard Lord / PhotoEdit

Cultural anthropology is the discipline that studies human cultural diversity, usually by visiting people where they live and interacting with them first-hand. This anthropologist is training Kenyan women to help with her field investigation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. **LIST** the four major subfields of anthropology and describe their primary subject matters.
2. **DISCUSS** how anthropology differs from other disciplines that also study humans.
3. **EXPLAIN** some of the practical uses of anthropology in solving human problems.
4. **DISCUSS** how cultural anthropology has changed in the last several decades.
5. **UNDERSTAND** the meaning and importance of the holistic, comparative, and relativistic perspectives.
6. **DESCRIBE** the wider lessons one can learn from studying anthropology.

What makes humans different from other animals? What is human nature, or is there such a thing? How and why do the peoples of the world differ, both biologically and culturally? Have affluent people in industrialized, urbanized nations sacrificed something important in their quest for the good life? If so, what might we learn from "traditional" or "indigenous" people? What are the implications of living in a world whose diverse peoples have recently become connected by global corporations and international communications? These are some of the questions investigated by **anthropology**, the academic discipline that studies all of humanity.

Almost everything about humanity interests anthropologists. We want to know when, where, and how our species originated and why we evolved into what we are today. Anthropologists try to explain the many differences among the world's cultures, such as why people in one culture believe they get sick because the souls of witches devour their livers, whereas people in another think that illness can result from tarantulas flinging tiny magical darts into their bodies. We want to know why most Argentinians and Australians like beef, which devout Hindus and Buddhists refuse to eat. We are curious about why some New Guinea peoples ritually engorge themselves with pork—the same animal flesh that some religions that began in the Middle East hold to be unclean and prohibited as food. In brief, anthropologists of one kind or another are likely to investigate almost everything about human beings: our biological evolution, cuisines, values, art styles, behaviors, languages, religions, and so forth.

anthropology Academic discipline that studies humanity from a broad biological and cultural perspective.

Anthropologists, then, study many different dimensions of humanity. Indeed, the broad scope of anthropology is perhaps the one feature that most distinguishes it from other fields that also study humans, such as psychology and history. Anthropologists are interested in *all* human beings, whether living or dead, Asian or African or European. No people are too isolated to escape the anthropologist's notice. We also are interested in many different *aspects* of humans, including their genetic makeup, family lives, political systems, relations with nature, and emotional responses. No dimension of humankind, from skin color to dance traditions, falls outside the anthropologist's interest.

Subfields of Anthropology

Obviously, no single anthropologist can master all these subjects. Therefore, most modern anthropologists specialize in one of four principal subfields: biological (or physical) anthropology, archaeology, cultural anthropology, or anthropological linguistics. (The Concept Review summarizes the primary interests of each four subfields.) A fifth area, called applied anthropology, uses anthropological methods and insights to help solve real-world problems. Because cultural anthropology is the primary subject of this book, here we briefly summarize the other subfields and describe some of their major findings.

CONCEPT REVIEW

Primary Interests of the Five Subfields of Anthropology

Physical/Biological	Excavation of material remains in prehistoric sites to reconstruct early human ways of life; study of remains in historic sites to learn more about historic, literate peoples
Archaeology	Comparisons of human anatomy and behavior with other primate species; physical (genetic) variation among human populations; biological evolution of *Homo sapiens*
Cultural	Differences and similarities in contemporary and historically recent cultures; causes and consequences of sociocultural change; impacts of globalization and contacts on the world's peoples
Anthropological Linguistics	Relationships between language and culture; role of language and speaking in social life of various peoples; how language might shape perceptions and thoughts

Biological/Physical Anthropology

Biological (also called **physical**) **anthropology** is closely related to the biological sciences in its goals and methods. It focuses on subjects such as the anatomy and behavior of monkeys and apes, the physical (including genetic) variations between different human populations, and the biological evolution of the human species.

Steve Bloom Images/Alamy

One of the most surprising discoveries about the great apes is that they commonly use and even make tools. These two Ugandan chimpanzees are inserting twigs inside termite mounds. When they withdraw the twig, they will eat the insects that have locked their jaws onto it.

Within biological anthropology, researchers in **primatology** study the evolution, anatomy, adaptation, and social behavior of primates, the taxonomic order to which humans belong. Research on group-living monkeys and apes has added significantly to the scientific understanding of many aspects of human behavior, including tool use, sexuality, parenting, cooperation, male-female differences, and aggression. Field studies of African chimpanzees and gorillas, the two apes genetically most similar to humans, have been especially fruitful sources of hypotheses and knowledge.

In the 1960s, famous British primatologist Jane Goodall was the first to observe toolmaking among African chimpanzees. Chimps intentionally modified sticks to probe entry and exit holes in termite mounds. When termite soldiers attacked the intruding objects, the chimps withdrew the probes and licked off the tasty insects. Goodall observed adult chimps teaching their young how to probe for termites, showing that humanity's closest animal relatives have at least a semblance of cultural tradition. Some chimpanzee groups wave tree branches in aggressive displays against other groups and wad up leaves to use as sponges to soak

biological (physical) anthropology Major subfield of anthropology that studies the biological dimensions of humans and other primates.

primatology Part of biological anthropology that studies primates, including monkeys and apes.

AP Photo/Bob Campbell/Turkana Basin Institute

Paleoanthropology is the subfield that specializes in human evolution, using evidence from DNA and fossil discoveries. Here Richard Leakey discusses the evidence for human biological evolution by displaying hominin fossils discovered in the Turkana Basin in Kenya.

up drinking water. Working in West Africa, other researchers have observed some chimp groups using heavy round stones as hammers to crack open hard-shelled nuts. The chimps select stones of the proper shape and weight, control the force of their blows so that the nut does not shatter, and often leave the tools under nut trees for future use.

Other apes also use tools. Using sticks, African gorillas in the wild gauge the depth of water and even lay down tree trunks to cross deep pools. Researchers have seen one young female gorilla use stones to smash open a palm nut to get at the oil inside.

These and other observations dramatically altered our understanding of human–animal differences: prior to such studies, making tools was widely considered to be one of the things humans could do that other animals could not. Also, the ability to make tools reveals a certain amount of mental foresight: the apes must be able to see a natural object as a potential tool that can be used to get something or to solve some problem.

Biological anthropologists who study **human variation** investigate how and why human populations vary physically due to hereditary, genetic factors. All humanity belongs to a single species, which taxonomists call *Homo sapiens.* One of the most important findings of anthropology is that the physical/genetic similarities among the world's peoples far outweigh the differences. Nonetheless, peoples whose ancestral homelands lie in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, the Pacific islands, and the Americas were once more isolated than they are today. During this time, they evolved differences in overall body and facial form, height, skin color, blood chemistry, and other genetically determined features. Specialists in human variation measure and try to explain the differences and similarities among the world's peoples in these physical characteristics. (We return to "racial" variation in Chapter 2.)

Often, genetic differences are related to the environment in which a people or their ancestors lived. Consider skin color. When in sunlight, human skin manufactures vitamin D, a necessary nutrient. Melanin is the substance in human skin that produces the color our eyes perceive as dark. High levels of melanin protect skin against sun damage, so melanin usually is beneficial in tropical environments, where sunlight is most intense. However, as humans migrated into more temperate regions tens of thousands of years ago, too much melanin became harmful. In high latitudes, melanin reduces the penetration of sunlight in the skin, reducing its ability to make vitamin D. Thus, dark pigmentation is harmful in high latitudes like Europe and Siberia, and over many centuries skin grew lighter ("whiter") in such regions.

Human populations who live in high altitudes also have evolved physiological adaptations. Andean peoples of South America have relatively large lungs and high levels of hemoglobin. The blood of Tibetans circulates more rapidly than most other people, allowing their muscles and organs to function more efficiently at elevations over 14,000 feet. Such populations evolved physiological adaptations to supply oxygen to their tissues.

Another aim of physical anthropology is understanding when and how the human species evolved from prehuman, apelike ancestors. **Paleoanthropology** investigates human biological evolution. Over decades of searching for fossils and carrying out meticulous

human variation Physical differences among human populations; an interest of physical anthropologists.

paleoanthropology Specialization within biological anthropology that investigates the biological evolution of the human species.

© Reuters/Corbis

Forensic anthropologists work with governments and international organizations to identify human skeletal remains and to help determine the causes of death. These forensic specialists are examining remains in El Salvador.

laboratory studies, paleoanthropologists have reconstructed the evolution of human anatomy: limbs, feet, hands, skull, and other physical features.

In the late 1970s, paleoanthropologists began to use new methods for investigating human evolution. Scientists in the field of molecular genetics can now sequence DNA—the genetic material by which hereditary traits are transmitted between generations. By comparing DNA sequences, geneticists can estimate how closely different species are related. Studies comparing the genetic sequences of African apes with humans show that humans share 97.7 percent of their DNA with gorillas and 98.7 percent with chimpanzees and bonobos. DNA from modern humans and DNA sampled from bones of the extinct human species *Neanderthal* are about 99.5 percent the same. Similarities in the DNA of two or more species are evidence that they share a common evolutionary ancestor. Also, the more similar the DNA between two or more species, the less time has elapsed since their divergence from a common ancestor. Thus, anthropologists study DNA sequences to estimate how long ago the species separated.

Through discovering and analyzing fossils, comparisons of DNA sequences, and other methods, the outlines of human evolution are becoming clear. Most scholars agree that the evolutionary line leading to modern humans split from the lines leading to modern African apes (chimpanzees and gorillas) at least 6 million years ago.

Most biological anthropologists work in universities or museums as teachers, researchers, writers, and curators. But many also apply their knowledge of human anatomy to practical matters. For instance, specialists in **forensic anthropology** work for or consult with law enforcement agencies, where they help identify human skeletal remains. Among their contributions are determining the age, sex, height, and other physical characteristics of crime or accident victims. Forensic anthropologists gather evidence from bones about old injuries or diseases, which are then compared with medical histories to identify victims. Forensic anthropologists also excavate and analyze mass graves containing the remains of victims of assassination, hoping to identify them and determine the causes of their deaths.

forensic anthropology Specialization within physical anthropology that analyzes and identifies human remains.

© Robert Brenner/Photo Edit

Prehistoric archaeologists investigate the remote past by the careful excavation of material remains.

Archaeology

Archaeology investigates the human past through excavating and analyzing material remains. Modern archaeology is divided into two major kinds of studies: prehistoric and historic.

Prehistoric archaeology is the study of prehistoric peoples—that is, those who had no writing to keep records of their activities, customs, and beliefs. Much information about the lives of prehistoric peoples can be recovered from the tools, pottery, ornaments, bones, plant pollen, charcoal, and other materials they left behind, in or on the ground. Through careful excavation and laboratory analysis of such remains, prehistoric archaeologists reconstruct the way people lived in ancient times and trace how human cultures have changed over many centuries and millennia. Contrary to impressions given by many television documentaries and popular films, the main goal of excavating archaeological sites is not to recover valuable treasures and other artifacts, but to understand how people lived long ago. Modern archaeologists seek to reconstruct as fully as possible how prehistoric peoples made their tools, lived in their environments, organized their societies, and practiced their religions.

Over decades of meticulous field excavations and laboratory work, archaeologists have learned that agriculture first developed around 10,000 years ago, when some peoples of the Middle East began planting wheat and barley. For the first time, humans transformed certain edible wild plants into *crops.* A few thousand years later, peoples of China, Southeast Asia, and West Africa also domesticated plants like rice and millet. On the other side of the world, in what we now call the Americas, ancient peoples of southern Mexico, western South America, and the Amazon basin domesticated different plants like corn, squash, beans, tomatoes, potatoes, and manioc. Surprisingly, present evidence shows that these six regions where agriculture developed were independent—meaning that the people of one region domesticated plants on their own, rather than learning the idea of agriculture from other peoples. Similarly, civilization (living in cities) developed in several different regions independently, beginning about 5,000 years ago (see Chapter 6).

archaeology Investigation of past cultures through the excavation of material remains.

prehistoric archaeology Field that uses excavations and analysis of material remains to investigate cultures that existed before the development of writing.

To investigate the past of societies in which at least some people could read and write, historians analyze written materials such as diaries, letters, land records, newspapers, and tax collection documents. The growing field of **historic archaeology** supplements historical documents by excavating houses, stores, plantations, factories, and other structures and remains. Historic archaeologists seek to uncover information lacking in old documents about how people lived at a particular time and place.

In early May, 2013, the *New York Times, USA Today,* CNN, and other media reported a startling find by historic archaeologists. In 1607, 104 settlers from England arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, to establish a settlement and make profit for the private company that financed the colony. Only one-third were alive after 9 months in the New World, despite trade with the local Native Americans, the Powhatan. More colonists arrived in the next couple of years. However, in the winter of 1609, the Anglo Jamestown settlers were starving. A drought the previous year had led to low agricultural yields, the fleet of nine ships from England that was supposed to supply the colony had been lost in a hurricane, and relationships with the Powhatan had turned hostile. A letter written in 1625 by the leader of the colony refers to the settlers digging up human corpses to consume their flesh during the Starving Time.

Archaeological excavations in the summer of 2012 led by William Kelso found hard evidence that cannibalism in fact had occurred at Jamestown. The archaeological team unearthed the remains of a girl about 14 years old. After her death, someone had struck the back of the girl's head, and another blow to her left temple split her skull, apparently to remove the brain. Other cuts on the face bones showed that facial tissues had been removed. Douglas Owsley, a well-known forensic anthropologist who studied the skull and the evidence of blows, believes the girl was likely a child of an English gentleman, because analysis of her bones showed a diet high in protein. Excavations in and around Jamestown will continue.

Today, many archaeologists work not in universities but in museums, public agencies, and for-profit corporations. Museums offer jobs as curators and researchers. State highway departments employ archaeologists to conduct surveys of proposed new routes in order to locate and excavate archaeological sites that will be destroyed. The U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service hire archaeologists to find sites on public lands to help make decisions about the preservation of cultural materials. Those who work in *cultural resource management* (CRM) locate sites of prehistoric and historic significance, evaluate their importance, and make recommendations about total or partial preservation.

Since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, private corporations and government agencies that construct factories, apartments, parking lots, shopping malls, and other structures must file a report how the construction will affect historical remains and which steps will be taken to preserve them. Because of this law, the business of *contract archaeology* has boomed in the United States. Contract archaeology companies bid competitively for the privilege of locating, excavating, and reporting on sites affected or destroyed by construction. Hundreds of contract archaeology companies exist, providing jobs for thousands of archaeologists and students.

In 2012, while building a courthouse in Fredericksburg, Virginia, construction workers came across an underground wall. The city government called in contract archaeologist Taft Kiser to lead a team to investigate the wall before the new construction destroyed it. In their hurried excavation (such work used to be called "salvage archaeology"), the team found that the wall was part of an old cellar. The original cellar was from the Civil War period and contained remains of an 1862 battle. The cellar appeared to be a place where Union soldiers sought refuge after a battle. It contained lots of bullets, buttons, pipes, broken pieces from jars and whiskey bottles, and many other everyday objects used by soldiers. The house itself was burned after the 1862 battle, and the cellar was later buried by construction of the city. The cellar was a "time capsule," to use Kiser's words, meaning that it apparently had not been disturbed in the 150 years since the Union soldiers left it.

Cultural Anthropology

Cultural anthropology (also called **sociocultural anthropology** and **social anthropology**) is the study of contemporary and historically recent human societies and cultures. As its name suggests, the main focus of this subfield is culture—the customs and beliefs of some human group. (The concept of culture is discussed at length in Chapter 2.)

historic archaeology Field that investigates the past of literate peoples through excavation of sites and analysis of artifacts and other material remains.

cultural anthropology (social anthropology, sociocultural anthropology) Subfield that studies the way of life of contemporary and historically recent peoples.

As we'll see in future chapters, cultural anthropologists study an enormous number of specific subjects, far too many to list here. Here are a few of the main interests of this subfield:

- studying firsthand and reporting about the ways of living of particular human groups, including both indigenous peoples and peoples who live in modernized, industrialized nations;
- comparing diverse cultures in the search for general principles that might explain human ways of living or that might cause cultural differences;
- understanding how various dimensions of human life—economics, family life, religion, art, communication, and so forth—relate to one another in particular cultures and in cultures generally;
- analyzing the causes and consequences of cultural change, including the causes and consequences of what is commonly called globalization;
- enhancing public knowledge and appreciation of cultural differences and multicultural diversity;
- using anthropological methods and insights to aid understanding of life in today's industrialized, capitalistic nations, including the anthropologist's own nations.

The last three objectives are especially important in the twenty-first century, in which individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds regularly come into contact with one another in the rapidly changing global society. Later chapters discuss some of the work cultural anthropologists have done on globalization and in modern nation-states.

To collect information about particular cultures, researchers conduct **fieldwork**. Most fieldworkers leave their own homes and universities, moving into the communities they study and living in close, daily contact with the people. If practical, they communicate in the local language. Daily interaction with the members of a community provides fieldworkers with firsthand experiences that yield insights and information that could not be gained in any other way. Most fieldwork requires at least a year of residence in the field site, and two or more years are common. Fieldworkers usually report the findings of their research in books or scholarly journals, where they are available to other scholars, students, and to the general public. A written account of how a single human population lives is called an **ethnography**, which means "writing about a people." Thus, most ethnographies are reports about the culture of communities where anthropologists have conducted fieldwork. (We have more to say about the processes and problems of fieldwork in Chapter 6.)

To some people, studies of other cultures seem esoteric—"interesting but of little practical value," they often say. Most anthropologists disagree. We think that what we learn by our descriptions, comparisons, and analyses of cultures helps to improve the human condition. For one thing, studies of other cultures help us understand our own way of life. For another, specific studies carried out by cultural anthropologists have helped solve practical problems in real human communities.

fieldwork Ethnographic research that involves observing and interviewing a community in order to document and describe their way of life.

ethnography Written description of the way of life of some human population.

anthropological linguistics Subfield that focuses on the interrelationships between language and other aspects of a people's culture.

Anthropological Linguistics

Defined as the study of human language, linguistics exists as a separate discipline from anthropology. Linguists describe and analyze the sound patterns and combinations, words, meanings, and sentence structures of human languages. The ability to communicate complex messages with great efficiency may be the most important capability of humans that makes us different from primates and other animals. Once we realize how complicated the knowledge of a language is, we realize that the communicative abilities of humans are truly unique. Certainly our ability to speak is a key factor in the evolutionary success of humans.

Cultural anthropologists are interested in language mainly because of how the language and culture of a people affect each other. The subfield of **anthropological linguistics** is concerned with the complex relationships between language and other aspects of human behavior and thought. For example, anthropological linguists are interested in how language is used in various social contexts: What style of speech must one use with people of high status? How do people of various social categories (like genders, ethnicities), classes (ultrarich, middle), and political persuasions (Tea Partiers, environmentalists) use language to promote their social and political agendas? Does the particular language we learned while growing up have any important effects on how we view the world or how we think and feel? (Chapter 3 provides more information about language and social life.)

As our brief summary of the four subdisciplines confirms, anthropology is a broad field. Even by itself, cultural anthropology—the main subject of this text—is enormously broad: modern fieldworkers live among and study human communities in all parts of the world, from the mountains of Tibet to the deserts of the American Southwest, from the streets of Chicago to the plains of East Africa.

Today's anthropology is quite different than 30 or 40 years ago. Still, the discipline does have a distinctive focus. More so than other fields, anthropology's focus is *human diversity.* Humankind is diverse in a multitude of ways, but two are most important to anthropologists. First, although all modern humans are members of the same species, human populations differ somewhat in their genetic heritage, making humans diverse *biologically.* Second, the customs and beliefs of one society or ethnic group differ from those of other societies or ethnic groups, reflecting the fact that humans are diverse *culturally.* Archaeologists also investigate diversity in the past, between the world's major regions (e.g., how did the prehistoric peoples of Europe differ from those of East Asia 5,000 years ago?). Archaeologists also trace changes in ways of life over long time spans (e.g., how did human life change in the southeastern United States between 4,000 and 1,000 years ago?). Cultural anthropologists investigate, describe, and try to understand cultural diversity today and in the recent past.

Applications of Anthropology

Not too long ago, most professional anthropologists spent their careers in some form of educational institution, either in colleges and universities or in museums. However, since around 1990, more and more anthropologists have jobs in other kinds of institutions. The American Anthropological Association (AAA, often called "Triple A") is the professional association of anthropologists. In its 2006 *Annual Report,* the AAA reported that more than half of anthropologists work outside academic settings, in government agencies, international organizations, nonprofit groups, or private companies. Hundreds of others make their living as consultants to such organizations and institutions.

Applied Anthropology

Applied anthropology use anthropological methods, theories, concepts, and insights to help public institutions or private enterprises deal with practical, real-world problems. Applied anthropology sometimes is viewed as a fifth subfield, but all applied anthropologists have been trained in one or more of the traditional four fields. In this sense, applied anthropology cuts across the other subfields and individuals in all subfields may also do applied work—that is, work that contributes directly to problem solving in an organization.

We discuss some of the ways applied anthropologists have contributed to the alleviation of human problems in later chapters. For now, a few examples illustrate some of the work they do.

Development anthropology is one area in which anthropologists apply their expertise to the solution of practical human problems, usually in developing countries. Working both as full-time employees and as consultants, development anthropologists provide information about communities that helps agencies adapt projects to local conditions and needs. Examples of agencies and institutions that employ development anthropologists include the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme. One important role of the anthropologist in such institutions is to provide policymakers with knowledge of local-level ecological and cultural conditions, so that projects will avoid unanticipated problems and minimize negative impacts.

Educational anthropology offers jobs in public agencies and private institutions. Some roles of educational anthropologists include advising in bilingual education, conducting detailed observations of classroom interactions, training personnel in multicultural issues, and adapting teaching styles to local customs and needs. Many modern nations, including those of Europe and the Americas, are becoming more culturally diverse due to immigration. As a response to this trend, an increasingly important role for educational anthropologists working in North America is to help professional educators understand the learning styles and behavior of children from various ethnic and national backgrounds. Persons trained in both linguistic and cultural anthropology are especially likely to work in educational anthropology.

applied anthropology Subfield whose practitioners use anthropological methods, theories, and concepts to solve practical, real-world problems; practitioners are often employed by a governmental agency or private organization.

Private companies sometimes employ cultural anthropologists full-time or as consultants, creating a professional opportunity often called *corporate anthropology.* As international trade agreements remove tariffs, quotas, and other barriers to international trade, people of different cultural heritages increasingly conduct business and buy and sell one another's products. The dramatic growth of overseas business activities encourages companies to hire professionals who can advise executives and sales staff on what to expect and how to speak and act when they conduct business in other countries. Because of their training as acute observers and listeners, anthropologists also work in the private sector in many other capacities: they watch how employees interact with one another, analyze how workers understand the capabilities of office machines, study how the attitudes and styles of managers affect worker performance, and perform a variety of other information-gathering and analysis tasks.

A rapidly growing field is **medical anthropology**. Medical anthropologists usually are trained both in biological and cultural anthropology. They investigate the complex interactions among human health, nutrition, social environment, and cultural beliefs and practices. Medical anthropologists with extensive training in human biology and physiology study disease transmission patterns and how particular groups adapt to the presence of diseases like malaria and sleeping sickness. Because the transmission of viruses and bacteria is strongly influenced by people's diets, sanitation, sexual habits, and other behaviors, many medical anthropologists work as a team with epidemiologists to identify cultural practices that affect the spread of disease. Different cultures have different ideas about the causes and symptoms of disease, how best to treat illnesses, the abilities of traditional healers and doctors, and the importance of community involvement in the healing process. By studying how a human community perceives such things, medical anthropologists help hospitals and other agencies deliver health care services more effectively. Language and communication also are important influences on health care delivery, so people trained in linguistic anthropology sometimes work in medical anthropology.

medical anthropology Specialization that researches the connections between cultural beliefs and habits and the spread and treatment of diseases and illnesses.

Careers in Anthropology

People who earn doctoral degrees in anthropology have a variety of career options, as the preceding discussion shows. What opportunities exist for those with an undergraduate degree in anthropology?

A place to start is the website of the American Anthropological Association, which is the professional association of anthropologists. The AAA site has a page titled "Anthropology: Education for the 21st Century" that overviews the importance and some of the main uses of an anthropological education. Another AAA page is titled "Careers in Anthropology," which lists the general kinds of jobs that can be pursued by people with a bachelor's degree. On this page there are links to YouTube videos on topics like an Intel anthropologist who studies how mobile phones are used by Chinese and Indians, using ethnographic methods to help businesses organize workplaces and appeal to customers, and an anthropologist who witnessed the 1997 Japanese financial crisis and realized the same process was occurring in British banks in 2007.

Here are two other useful websites on careers and jobs:

- The National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA) is the professional association of anthropologists who work predominantly in non-academic jobs. On its website, click the tab "Careers" for job-seeking strategies.
- The Northern Kentucky University website is good for a quick overview of opportunities. Enter "anthropology" in the search box; then scroll down and click on "careers in anthropology."

An Internet search using the phrase "jobs in anthropology" returns many links, including several alternative search phrases.

Generally, in addition to learning to write, analyze, and think critically, students who study cultural anthropology are prepared to examine human life from many alternative perspectives, to study interactions between individuals and groups objectively and insightfully, to adjust to various social situations, to fit into diverse communities by respecting their ways of life, and to be sensitive to the multitude of differences between the world's peoples. Knowledge of the many ways of being human helps thoughtful graduates to have the capacity to consider alternatives that people with other kinds of formal education miss. Of course, along the way, most students master other skills, such as statistical analysis or foreign languages, which demonstrate ability and establish credentials for a variety of career paths.

Cultural Anthropology Today

Because this book deals mainly with the findings and conclusions of cultural (sociocultural) anthropology, from now on when we use the word *anthropology,* we refer to cultural anthropology unless otherwise stated.

In most people's imagination, cultural anthropologists go to far-off places to study "native" peoples. Except for some common but mistaken stereotypes about "natives," this image was reasonably accurate until the 1970s. Until then, cultural anthropology differed from sociology and other disciplines that studied living peoples mainly by the kinds of cultures studied. Anthropologists focused on small-scale, non-Western, preindustrial, subsistence-oriented cultures, whereas sociologists tended to study large Euro-American, industrial, money-and-market countries. Not too long ago, many cultural anthropologists sought untouched tribal cultures to study because living among the "primitives" usually enhanced one's reputation.

All this has changed. As the Internet accelerates global communications, anthropologists publish books with titles like *Dreaming of a Mail-Order Husband: Russian-American Internet Romance* (Johnson, 2007). An anthropologist has done fieldwork among modern Americans who belong to Vineyard churches, an evangelical denomination, showing how they experience God's presence and hear his voice in their everyday lives (Luhrmann, 2012). Changing gender roles and working conditions lead to articles like "Man Enough to Let My Wife Support Me: How Changing Models of Career and Gender Are Reshaping the Experience of Unemployment" (Lane, 2009). In brief, cultural anthropology has widened its investigations well beyond the old idea of Natives. Today we recognize we are all Natives.

Some studies done in the anthropologist's own country are of immigrant communities. Along with Australia, North America is a continent whose people are mostly immigrants. Both continents include people of diverse origins. Some immigrants of the last few decades are largely or partly assimilated, having adopted many of the customs and beliefs of people whose ancestors arrived earlier. In other cases, though, they are only partially assimilated. On the job, they act like they are "mainstreamed." But at home and when among members of their own ancestral communities, they continue their language, cuisine, family relations, wedding and funeral customs, and other practices and beliefs.

For example, in the 1970s, the U.S. government relocated thousands of Hmong, a people of highland Southeast Asia, into places like the central valley of California and the upper Midwest. Even after two or three decades of living in the United States, many elderly Hmong who were first generation immigrants speak little English, have large numbers of relatives living in houses other Americans consider "single-family" dwellings, use their traditional methods of curing, and (allegedly) eat animals that Americans define as pets. Many people with Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and South Asian heritages maintain some traditions of their ancestral homelands to a surprising degree. Some African Americans celebrate their origins with Kwanzaa. A large Somalian community lives in central Ohio. Many Latinos speak "Spanglish" and continue to practice Latin festivals. Citizens whose ancestors came from Italy, Germany, Poland, Greece, and other parts of Europe recognize their national origins. Of course, so do people whose ancestors came from the British Isles, although many of them are not consciously aware that they too have an ethnic heritage and identity.

As anthropologists have focused less on peoples of far away, the boundaries between cultural anthropology and other disciplines (especially sociology) are less clear-cut than they were a few years ago. Most anthropological work, though, is still done in relatively small communities (on the order of a few hundred to a few thousand), where the researcher can interact directly with people and experience their lives firsthand. More than any other single factor, the intense fieldwork experience distinguishes cultural anthropology from other disciplines concerned with humankind.

Image Source/Getty Images

Increasingly, globalization brings together people of different cultural backgrounds for international travel, education, and business. Learning about other cultures takes on increasing practical and well as intellectual importance in modern global society.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Process of Globalization

Glowimages/Getty Images

The global economy links the world's regions by trade in finished consumer products as well as in raw materials. This plant in Recife, Brazil, produces fabrics to be woven into clothing sold on the global market.

Stories about *globalizatio*n appear almost daily in the news media. The parts (continents, regions, nations, cities, towns, small villages) of the global system are interconnected by flows of technology, overseas transportation of resources and products, communications, short-term travel, long-term migration, and market exchanges of raw materials and finished products. Monthly, huge container ships move billions of dollars' worth of products across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. North American consumers benefit from the low labor costs of China, south Asia and other nations when they shop at Walmart, Toys "R" Us, and most clothing and shoe stores. More people than ever before migrate between nations to study and work, affecting their home countries as well as those to which they relocate. The Internet and mobile phones link people together to an unprecedented degree, facilitating the flow of information, ideas, and media between nations.

These interconnections profoundly affect relationships between countries in the twenty-first century. Should the rapidly industrializing countries be forced to enact environmental regulations to curb air pollution and greenhouse gases? If so, by whom and on what authority? What should a democratic government in a developed, free market economy do when its citizens lose jobs from factories located half a world away? Should South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern countries do anything about the flow of information from Western nations to protect their religious heritages? Or should the whole world welcome a "free market" in ideas and beliefs, comparable to the free market in material products? And—perhaps the most important question—who gains and loses the most from the globalization process?

It is important to recognize that globalization is a *process* rather than a *state.* In discussing relationships between parts of a system and the whole system, we often say that the whole affects the parts, which in turn affect the whole. The globalization process impacts nations, so nations respond to globalization, then the process of globalization changes to respond to changes in nations. Thus, as globalization transforms nations it too is transformed. As the global system evolves, some of its parts become more tightly integrated into it, but even localities that most consider isolated or pristine are affected directly or indirectly.

The existence of interconnectedness between world regions is not new, as we will discuss in Chapter 4. Pointing to the half-millennium of contact between regions and peoples,

Also, cultural anthropology remains more comparative in its scope and interests than the other social sciences and humanities. Even today, cultural anthropologists are more likely than sociologists or psychologists to conduct research in a country other than their own.

In the past couple of decades, anthropologists have researched globalization—the process by which citizens of the world's 195 nations participate in a single system that encompasses *all* peoples and nations to varying degrees. Global Challenges and Opportunities presents an overview of the process of globalization in the past several decades.

Disciplines like economics, political science, history, and sociology have done empirical research and much theorizing about globalization. Most of their research concerns the "macro-level," meaning that the unit of study is the nation, region, city within the nation, or—even more "macro"—relationships between nations. Cultural anthropologists occasionally work at this level, but mostly our studies involve intensive, firsthand, prolonged fieldwork in local communities, both rural and urban. We study many dimensions of globalization, including markets, forms of global entertainment, ways of "dating" and getting married, changes in family organizations, how migrant workers adapt to factory life and urban environments, and so on. Such research provides a bottom up view of globalization that complements the top-down view focused on by most of the media and scholars. In later chapters,

some say there is nothing new about globalization. If globalization is only about the existence of "contacts" and "interconnections" between peoples, they are correct. However, both the intensity and the form of contacts and interconnections are different in the twenty-first century. By *intensity,* we mean that the number and importance of contacts and interconnections have increased dramatically in the past several decades; today, the lives of more people are affected more thoroughly than, say, 50 years ago. By *form,* we mean that the ways in which the world's peoples are interconnected are different than in the past. Two differences are especially important, each considered in more detail in later chapters.

First, globalization transforms the division of economic activities between nations and regions. Until the mid–twentieth century, some nations and regions specialized mainly in supplying primary products extracted directly from nature, such as food, metals, lumber, and other raw materials in plantations, mines, and forests. For example, there were "banana republics" in Central America, "gold coasts" in West Africa, and "sugar mills" in the Caribbean. Generally, these nations and regions were known as "underdeveloped" or "Third World." Of course, there were exceptions, but the pattern was that "developed" and mostly wealthier countries bought these relatively low-valued raw materials and turned them into higher-valued, profit-making products with their industrial factories and labor force.

Today, factory production itself is rapidly globalizing. In Latin America, Asia, and other regions, hundreds of millions of factory workers produce finished commodities for sale in international markets. More than ever before, there is an *international* market for industrial labor, meaning that factory workers of the countries we used to call "underdeveloped" are competing with the labor force of the "developed" countries. Whole industries have relocated. For example, the American clothing industry has almost disappeared, its factories replaced by those in China, Indonesia, and other countries with far cheaper labor. Other industries that have moved offshore are toys, shoes, and consumer electronics. Some say the globalization of factory production is leading to the decline of incomes among middle-class families in Europe and North America and is largely responsible for the growing disparity of income and wealth in those regions.

Second, international migration, study abroad, tourism and the Internet are increasing two-way cultural exchanges. Most people think the media are rapidly transmitting the "culture" and "tastes" in fashion, music, films, food, and the like of the West to the rest of the world. One concern is that the North American and European culture (the "West") will eventually destroy local traditions. We take up this and other issues about globalization in later chapters.

In sum, although contacts among peoples and nations is not new, the globalization process has transformed the form and intensity of these interconnections in the last two or three decades. In the remainder of this book, we discuss globalization in boxes like this one as well as in the main body of the text itself. We emphasize the effects of globalization on *all* nations and regions, and not just how people like "Us" are affecting people like "Them," or how "They" threaten "Us."

we present many examples of such anthropological studies.

Globalization has another consequence for anthropological research: people who used to live in remote villages now migrate to urban areas in their own country and abroad. If an anthropologist wants to conduct fieldwork in a "remote" place, some people from such places will have migrated elsewhere in search of employment or excitement. In the twenty-first century, if an anthropologist wants to study "a people," it is increasingly necessary to study them in all the places on our planet where they now live. Today, globalization and its consequences are one of the most important areas of research. What are its impacts on people of all nations? Is a global megaculture developing that will someday make all human cultures pretty much alike?

Anthropological Perspectives on Cultures

The main difference between anthropology and other social sciences and humanities is not so much the *kinds* of subjects anthropologists investigate as the *approaches* we take to studying human life. We believe it is important to study cultures and communities holistically, comparatively, and relativistically. Taken together, these perspectives also make cultural anthropology distinctive.

Holistic Perspective

To study a subject holistically is to attempt to understand all the factors that influence it and to interpret it in the context of all those factors. In anthropology, the **holistic perspective** means that no single aspect of a human culture can be understood unless its relationships to other aspects of the culture are explored. Holism requires, for example, that a fieldworker studying the rituals of a people must investigate how those rituals are influenced by the people's family life, economic forces, political leadership, relationships between the sexes, and a host of other factors. The attempt to understand a community's customs, beliefs, values, and so forth holistically is one reason ethnographic fieldwork takes so much time and involves close contact with people.

Taken literally, a holistic understanding of a people's customs and beliefs is probably not possible because of the complexity of human societies. But anthropologists have learned that ignoring interrelationships among language, religion, art, economy, family, and other dimensions of life results in distortions and misunderstandings. The essence of the holistic perspective may be stated fairly simply: *look for connections and interrelationships, and try to understand parts in the context of the whole.*

Comparative Perspective

More than most people, anthropologists are aware of the diversity of the world's cultures. The ideas and behaviors learned from upbringing and experience in one's own society may not apply to other peoples with different cultural traditions. This implies that any general theories or ideas scholars might have about humans—about human nature, sexuality, warfare, family relationships, and so on—must take into account information from a wide range of societies. In other words, theoretical ideas about humans or human societies or cultures must be investigated from a **comparative perspective**.

The main reason anthropologists insist on comparison is simple: Many people mistakenly think the customs and beliefs that are familiar to them exist among people everywhere, which is usually not the case. Are humans "innately" aggressive? Are nuclear families "biologically based"? Is pair bonding (the nuclear family) "rooted in our evolutionary past"? Do men "inevitably" seek more sexual variety than women? Is competition "in our genes"? Cultural anthropologists are interested in these and other *general* questions about humanity, but we believe that we must consider *all* of humanity to answer them.

Knowledge of cultural variability makes anthropologists suspicious of any general theoretical idea about humans that is drawn from experience of life in only one nation or community. The idea *might* be valid for all people, but we cannot know until we have looked elsewhere. The beliefs and practices of people living in different times and places are far too diverse for any general theory to be accepted until it has been investigated and tested in a wide range of human groups. To state the comparative perspective concisely: *valid generalizations about humans must take into account the full range of cultural diversity.*

Relativistic Perspective

Fundamentally, **cultural relativism** means that no culture—taken as a whole—is inherently superior or inferior to any other. Anthropologists adopt this perspective because concepts such as superiority require judgments about the relative worthiness of behaviors, beliefs, and other characteristics of a culture. However, such judgments are usually rooted in one's own values; and, by and large, values depend on the culture in which one was raised. (If you think there must be universal standards for judging cultures, you may be right. However, aside from such actions as homicide, people don't agree on what they are.)

To see why a relativistic approach to studying cultures is important, contrast cultural relativism with ethnocentrism. **Ethnocentrism** is the belief that the moral standards, values, beliefs, and so forth of one's own culture are superior to those of other cultures. Most people are ethnocentric, and *some degree* of ethnocentrism is probably essential for individuals to have the sense of belonging needed for personal contentment.

holistic perspective Assumption that any aspect of a culture is integrated with other aspects, so that no dimension of culture can be understood in isolation.

comparative perspective Insistence by anthropologists that valid hypotheses and theories about humanity be tested with information from a wide range of cultures.

cultural relativism Notion that one should not judge the behavior of other peoples using the standards of one's own culture.

ethnocentrism Attitude or opinion that the morals, values, and customs of one's own culture are superior to those of other peoples.

It may be necessary for a culture itself to persist. Mild ethnocentrism—meaning that people are committed to certain values but don't insist that everyone else hold and live by those values—is unobjectionable and inevitable. But extreme ethnocentrism—meaning that people believe their values are the only correct ones and that all people everywhere should be judged by how closely they live up to those values—leads to attitudes of intolerance and misunderstandings that anthropologists find objectionable.

Clearly, in their professional role, anthropological fieldworkers should avoid evaluating the behavior of other people according to the standards of their own culture. Ethnocentric attitudes and standards make objectivity difficult while doing fieldwork. Like the holistic and comparative perspectives, the essential point of cultural relativism may be stated simply: *in studying another culture, do not evaluate the behavior of its members by the standards and values of your own culture.*

Unfortunately, many people misunderstand the word *relativism.* To anthropologists, relativism is a *methodological principle* that refers to an outlook that is essential for maximum objectivity and understanding when studying a people whose way of life differs from their own. As a methodological principle, relativism recognizes that behavior viewed as morally wrong (perhaps even sinful) in one society may not be wrong in another. Polygamy, women who go around bare-breasted, and sex between unmarried individuals are common practices among the world's diverse peoples. Unqualified condemnations of the actions or beliefs of such people have no place in anthropological research or in anthropological writings.

However, to a great many people, the term *relativism* means "anything goes" with respect to the behavior of individuals. *Moral relativism* (relativism as a *moral principle)* implies that there are no absolute, universal standards by which to evaluate actions in terms such as right and wrong or good and bad.

Some people blame moral relativism for a host of social problems. For example, in the contemporary United States, many worry about the morality and the long-term social effects of gay and lesbian relationships. When gays and lesbians demanded the equal rights they believe only marriage can grant, in the past several years the legislatures of a number of states passed laws defining marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman. Others worry that society's "acceptance" of extramarital sex or "tolerance" for homosexual relationships erodes family values and increases divorce rates. Many believe that public schools should teach patriotism and traditional morality and blame delinquency and crime on public education that has become too secular. Such arguments and policies imply that there *are* absolute standards and clear rules about right and wrong or moral and immoral behavior. But moral relativism *taken to its extreme* says that few such standards or rules exist.

Newcomers to anthropology often confuse the two meanings of *relativism,* mistakenly believing that anthropologists promote both kinds of relativism. Most anthropologists are methodological relativists, but few are moral relativists. Anthropologists are as likely as anyone to consider oppression, slavery, violence, murder, slander, and so forth as morally objectionable. Many anthropologists speak out against the violence that spokespersons for some "cultures" claim are part of their religion, such as stoning of women found guilty of adultery. When a Pakistani teenager was shot in 2012 for promoting the education of girls, anthropologists did not accept the shooting as part of "Pakistani culture." When the Twin Towers in New York were destroyed on September 11, 2001, and when two bombs at the Boston Marathon killed three and injured 264 on April 15, 2013, anthropologists were as horrified as most other people. One way our discipline affects our views on such events is that we seek to understand the historical background and social and cultural context that led to them. Another is that we do not simply blame the culture or religion for the actions of the individuals responsible.

However, the issues are not as simple in practice as the distinction between methodological and moral relativism implies. An example will illustrate. Most people have heard of the custom of *female genital mutilation* (sometimes mislabeled *female circumcision*). The practice is widespread (but far from universal) in some regions of northern Africa. It varies in severity, ranging from removing the clitoris to stitching shut the labia until marriage. Cultural beliefs about the reasons for the custom also vary. Most often the cultural rationale centers on controlling female sexuality and increasing a woman's desirability as a marriage partner. In many places, a majority of older women support the custom, so it is not unambiguously an issue of male control or oppression of women. Sometimes a girl or young woman herself considers it a symbol of her femininity and of her and her family's honor. In instances in which the girl herself consents, the issue of relativism is especially complicated.

How should an anthropologist view this custom? Do we think of it as just another age-old tradition—comparable to people eating with their fingers or men

covering their genitals with only penis sheaths—that varies from people to people but is *inherently* neither right nor wrong? Surely not: genital mutilation causes pain, exposes women to the dangers of infection and other complications, and is applied only to women because of their gender. Often, it is forced upon a female at a certain age—even if she objects. Because of its pain, danger, selectivity, and social enforcement, female circumcision is not comparable to customs surrounding foods and clothing styles, which vary from people to people but are generally "harmless."

Then is female genital mutilation a form of oppression? And if so, by whom? Can culture itself oppress people? If it is oppression, does the anthropologist simply learn and write about it, place it in its local cultural context, compare the cultures that practice it with other cultures that do not, develop an idea about its meaning and why it occurs, and then do nothing? That is what many anthropologists believe we should do *as anthropologists.* Others disagree, believing instead that we should speak out against such practices, both as anthropologists and as human beings.

Then again, exactly what counts as "such practices"? Does eating dogs or cats or horses count? Does female footbinding in 1600s China count? Would tightly binding the waists of women in nineteenth-century Europe count? In the twenty-first century, just how different are breast augmentation or reduction surgery, hip and thigh liposuction, face lifts, and nose jobs different from female circumcision? Is it that they seem to be voluntary? If so, then when a North African woman consents to her circumcision, does her consent make the custom acceptable? And if a woman feels constrained by the ideals of beauty as defined by the culture in which she grew up, is it unambiguously true that her liposuction or breast augmentation is voluntary?

Along these same lines, why is there so little international concern over the removal of the foreskin of American male infants, who have absolutely no choice when a physician mutilates their genitals? In 2009 in the Eastern Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa, 91 men died from their circumcisions, considered a rite of passage into manhood. Should we regard male circumcisions as just as morally objectionable as the deaths and suffering caused by female genital mutilation?

Answers to such questions are not entirely obvious, which is our main point. Most anthropologists would probably be satisfied with the following solution. Relativism as a methodological principle is essential to anthropological research because it facilitates fieldwork and leads to greater objectivity. Moral relativism is a separate matter and depends largely on one's personal standards and values. When an anthropologist witnesses customs like female circumcision that clearly cause harm, it is difficult to remain morally neutral. In such cases, we need to examine the custom holistically to place it in its cultural context: perhaps the "victim's" perception of "harm" differs from ours, or perhaps the harm is necessary to achieve some more important objective. We also should consider comparable practices (such as breast augmentation) that might have a similar character or function within our own culture. After doing so, we might note that "we" sometimes do similar things as "them." Perhaps we have trouble recognizing the similarity because it involves "us," so we need also to examine ourselves when we condemn others.

This perspective does not resolve the essential tension between methodological and moral relativism. Do you believe that human rights are universal? If so, then you are *not* a moral relativist. On the other hand, knowledge of cultural diversity leads some anthropologists to wonder about the assumptions implicit in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, found at the United Nations website. For example, Article 16(3) states, "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." Anthropologists are likely to ask questions like "What is meant by *family*?" and anthropologists are skeptical of the assumption that the family is the "*natural* and *fundamental* unit of society."

Some Lessons of Anthropology

In late 2011, the governor of Florida asked whether state-funded universities really need anthropology departments. The governor was interested mainly in saving money for his state. But he specifically targeted anthropology, rather than sociology, literature, economics, or philosophy. Why?

Anthropology does seem esoteric. As we've seen, historically most cultural anthropologists did fieldwork in far-off places, studying "primitive cultures," "tribes," or (more politely) "indigenous peoples." Then we published articles and books that for the most part only anthropologists and their students read—the latter mainly because they were required to. What good is that?

Many political office holders as well as others do not like anthropology for another reason. The field very often adopts a critical perspective on prevalent

assumptions, ideas, and practices. We question common assumptions about "human nature." We challenge prevalent beliefs about the causes of inequalities based on socioeconomic and ethnic characteristics. When we hear that families are declining, we look beyond the deterioration of moral standards and alternative sexualities as "the" cause. Most of us even don't apply concepts like *deteriorate* and *decline* when talking about change in families. When environmentalists criticize China and India for their pollution of water and air and their rising contributions to global warming, anthropologists ask how such environmental problems look from the perspective of the Chinese and Indians. As a colleague once said, "Anthropologists think otherwise."

What insights does anthropology offer about humanity? What is the value of the information that anthropologists have gathered about the past and present of humankind? We consider these questions in future chapters. For now, we note some of the most general insights and contributions.

First, anthropology helps us understand the biological, technological, and cultural development of humanity over long time spans. Most of the reliable information available about human biological evolution, prehistoric cultures, and non-Western peoples resulted from anthropological research. This information has become part of our general storehouse of knowledge, recorded in textbooks and taught in schools. We easily forget that someone had to discover these facts and interpret their significance. For example, only in the late nineteenth century did most scientists accept that people are related to apes, and only in the last several decades has the relationship between humans and African apes become clear. Although we *Homo sapiens* (modern humans) share over 98 percent of our genes with *Pan troglydytus* (chimpanzees), many people still do not believe that humans are evolutionarily related to apes—another reason, perhaps, that anthropology is unpopular with some public officials.

Anthropology has contributed more than just facts. Anthropological concepts have been incorporated into the thinking of millions of people. For example, in this chapter, we have used the term *culture,* confidently assuming our readers know the word and its significance. You may not know that the scientific meaning of this word, as used in the phrase *Tibetan culture,* is not very old. Well into the nineteenth century, people did not fully understand the importance of the distinction between a people's culture (the *learned* beliefs and habits that made them distinctive) and their biological makeup (their *inherited* physical characteristics). Differences we now know are caused largely or entirely by learning were confused with differences caused by biological inheritance. Early twentieth-century anthropologists such as Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber marshaled empirical evidence showing that biological differences and cultural differences are independent of each other. The writings of Margaret Mead on Samoan girls challenged prevalent beliefs about gender and adolescence. As these examples illustrate, anthropologists have contributed much to our knowledge of the human condition, although most people are not aware how important anthropology was in developing these understandings and insights.

Another value of anthropology is that it teaches the importance of knowing and understanding cultural diversity. Anthropology urges all of us not to be ethnocentric in our attitudes toward other peoples. Mutual respect and understanding among the world's peoples are increasingly important with globalization, with its world travel, international migration, multinational businesses, and conflicts based on ethnic or religious differences. The world's problems will not be solved simply by eliminating ethnocentrism, but a more relativistic outlook on cultural differences might help to alleviate some of the prejudices, misunderstandings, stereotypes, interethnic conflicts, and racism that cause so much trouble among people on all continents. How much can understanding cultural differences help in alleviating international tensions and outright conflicts?

A related point is that anthropology helps to minimize the miscommunications that commonly arise when people from different parts of the world interact with one another. As we shall see in Chapter 2, our upbringing in a particular culture influences us in subtle ways. For instance, English people know how to interpret one another's actions on the basis of speech styles or body language, but these cues do not necessarily mean the same thing to people from different cultures. A Canadian businessperson selling products in Turkey may wonder why her host does not cut the small talk and get down to business, whereas the Turk can't figure out why the salesperson thinks they can do business before they have become better acquainted. A manager from a German firm may be unintentionally offensive when he shoves the business card of his Korean or Japanese counterpart in his pocket without carefully studying it. A Vietnamese student attending a California university may come across as a sycophant to her professors because her culture values learning so highly, which manifests itself as deep respect for teachers. An Anglo tourist visiting the Navajo

reservation in Arizona may misinterpret a Navajo's reticence to make eye contact as unfriendliness, when it means something else to the Navajo. Anthropology teaches people to be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences—people's actions may not mean what we take them to mean, and much misunderstanding can be avoided by taking cultural differences into account in our dealings with other people.

Finally, people can use anthropology's comparative perspective to understand their own individual lives. By exposing you to the cultures of people living in other times and places, anthropology helps you see new things about yourself. How does your life compare to the lives of other people around the world? What assumptions do you unconsciously take for granted about people in other places and humanity in general? Do people in other cultures share the same kinds of problems, hopes, motivations, and feelings as you do? Or are individuals raised in other societies completely different? How does the overall quality of your existence—your sense of well-being and happiness, your family life, your emotional states, your feeling that life is meaningful—compare with that of people who live elsewhere? Anthropology offers the chance to compare yourself to other peoples who live in different circumstances. When they learn about others, anthropologists hope that students gain new perspectives on themselves.

SUMMARY

1. **List the four major subfields of anthropology and their primary subject matters.** Anthropologists usually specialize in one of four subdisciplines. Biological/physical anthropology studies the biological dimensions of human beings, including nonhuman primates, the physical variations among contemporary peoples, and human evolution. Archaeology uses the material remains of prehistoric and historic peoples to investigate the past, focusing on the long-term technological and social changes that occurred in particular regions of the world. Cultural anthropology is concerned with the social and cultural life of contemporary and historically recent human societies. Anthropological linguistics concentrates on the interrelationships between language and other elements of social life and culture.

2. **Describe how anthropology differs from other disciplines that also study humans.** The broad scope of anthropology distinguishes it from other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. The field as a whole is concerned with all human beings of the past and present, living at all levels of technological development. Anthropology is also interested in all aspects of humanity: biology, language, technology, art, religion, and all other dimensions of human life.

3. **Explain some of the practical uses of anthropology in solving human problems.** More and more, anthropologists are applying the insights gained from the concepts, methods, and theories of their field to solve real-world problems in such areas as development, business, education, and health care services. Most people who do applied work are trained in cultural anthropology, but the other three subfields also are represented. As an undergraduate major, anthropology trains people in critical thinking and cultural sensitivity, skills that are increasingly useful as globalization brings diverse people together into larger systems.

4. **Discuss how cultural anthropology has changed in the last several decades.** Until around 1970, cultural anthropology concentrated on cultures known as "tribal" or "indigenous." This is not as true in the globalized world of today. Many anthropologists conduct research in the urbanized, industrialized nations of the developed world. However, firsthand, extended fieldwork in villages or relatively small towns or neighborhoods continues to be a hallmark of cultural anthropology. Also, cultural anthropologists are more comparative and global in their interests and research than other social scientists.

5. **Understand the meaning and importance of the holistic, comparative, and relativistic perspectives.** Cultural anthropologists approach the study of other cultures from three main perspectives. Holism is the attempt to investigate the interrelationships among the customs and beliefs of a particular people. The comparative perspective means that any attempt to understand humanity or explain cultures or behaviors must include information from a wide range of human ways of life. Cultural relativism urges fieldworkers to try to understand people's behaviors on their own terms, not those of the anthropologist's own culture. Most anthropologists consider themselves methodological relativists, but moral relativism is a separate, though related, matter.

6. **Describe the wider lessons one can learn from studying anthropology.** Anthropology has practical value in the modern world. Most existing, reliable knowledge about human evolution, prehistoric populations, and indigenous peoples was discovered by anthropologists. Early anthropologists were instrumental in popularizing the concept of culture and in showing that cultural differences are not caused by racial differences. The value of understanding peoples of different regions and nations is another practical lesson of anthropology, one that is increasingly important as global connections intensify. The information that ethnographers have collected about alternative ways of being human allows individuals to become more aware of their own life circumstances.

2 Culture

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Anthropologists usually say that the cultural features of a human group refer to the learned knowledge and behavioral patterns of its members. In most circumstances one peoples' culture should not be considered inferior to another peoples' culture. This tattooed person in a record shop has culture to the same degree as people who regularly go to symphonies and art galleries.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

1. **DEFINE** culture in a way that is useful to compare and contrast different cultures.
2. **UNDERSTAND** the concept of cultural knowledge and five of its key components.
3. **DISCUSS** the evidence for the origins of the human capacity for culture.
4. **ANALYZE** the relationship between cultural knowledge and the behavior of individuals.
5. **DESCRIBE** why cultural and biological differences between human populations vary independently.

The word *culture* is so common that we hear it almost every day. Sometimes we mean that some individuals are "more cultured" than others. For example, some people believe they are more "culturally sophisticated" than other people because they regularly attend symphonies or go to art galleries. Perhaps you have heard someone complain about the "popular culture" of TV reality shows, action-adventure movies, rap music, online gaming, tattoos and other body art, tongue and navel piercings, and the like. Maybe you use people's speech style or personal tastes as a basis for thinking that some persons have "more culture" than others because of their ethnic identity, social class, or where they went to school.

Taken in context, these meanings of the word *culture* are fine. However, anthropologists define and use the term in a different way. In the anthropological conception, it is impossible for one group of people to "have more culture," or to "be more cultured" than another group. Anthropologists believe that judgments about "high culture" and "low culture" are themselves based on cultural assumptions ("high" according to *whom*?) Phrases like "working-class culture" and "popular culture" do have meaning in anthropology, but that meaning usually does not imply judgments about relative quality or sophistication.

In this chapter, we discuss the anthropological conception of culture. After giving the word a fairly precise definition, we cover some of its main elements, introducing some important concepts and terms along the way. We consider how anthropologists think about the relationship between cultural differences and biological heredity.

Introducing Culture

The Englishman E. B. Tylor was one of the founders of the field that was to become cultural anthropology. In Tylor's 1871 book, *Primitive Culture,* he pulled together much of the information available about the "natives" of other lands (that is, places other than Europe). His definition is often considered the earliest modern conception of culture. Tylor (1871, 1) wrote that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Notice that this definition is very broad, including almost everything about a particular people's overall way of life, from "knowledge" and "art" to "customs" and "habits." Notice also that culture is something an individual acquires as "a member of society," meaning that people learn their culture from growing up and living among a particular group.

Since Tylor's day, anthropologists have defined culture in hundreds of ways, although the main elements of Tylor's original conception of culture are still with us. Practically all modern definitions share certain key features. Anthropologists agree that culture

- is learned from others while growing up in a particular human society or group;
- is widely shared by the members of that society or group;
- is responsible for most differences in ways of thinking and behaving that exist between human societies or groups;

- is so essential in completing the psychological and social development of individuals that a person who did not learn culture would not be considered normal by other people.

In brief, culture is learned, shared, largely responsible for differences between human groups, and necessary to make human individuals into complete persons.

Cultural anthropologists often use the term *culture* to emphasize the unique or most distinctive aspects of a people's customs and beliefs. When we speak of Japanese culture, for example, we usually mean the beliefs and customs of the Japanese that make them different from other people. How Japanese think and act differs in some ways from how North Americans, Iranians, Chinese, and Indians think and act, and the phrase *Japanese culture* concisely emphasizes these differences. When we speak of the culture of a people we call attention to all the things that make that people distinctive from others.

There are some things that anthropologists do *not* mean by the word *culture.* We do not mean that Japanese culture is inherently better or worse than, say, French or Iranian culture. We mean only that the three differ in certain identifiable ways. Anthropologists also do not mean that Japanese, French, or Iranian culture is unchanging. We mean only that they remain in some ways distinct despite the changes they have experienced over the years from historical contact and globalization. Above all, anthropologists do not mean that Japanese, French, or Iranian cultures are different because of the biological (genetically based) differences between the three peoples. We mean only that children born into the three cultures are exposed to different ways of thinking and acting as they grow up. They *become* Japanese, French, or Iranians because of their upbringing in different social environments.

Notice that individuals do not invent their culture, just as each generation does not invent its own language. Rather, the members of any given generation learn the cultural ideas and beliefs from previous generations. They also transmit that culture to future generations, albeit with some changes. Of course, during their lifetimes some people have more influence on their culture than others, but even very innovative and creative people build on the cultural knowledge their group has learned from previous generations.

How do cultures differ? At the broadest level, they vary in ways of thinking and ways of behaving. *Ways of thinking* means what goes on inside people's heads: how they perceive the world around them, how they feel about particular people and events, what they desire and fear, and so forth. *Ways of behaving* refers to how people commonly act: how they conduct themselves around parents and spouses, how they carry out ceremonies, what they do when they are angry or sad, and so forth. Obviously, thought and behavior are connected. How we act depends, in part, on how we think. In turn, how we think depends, in part, on how people around us behave, because our observations of their actions shape our thoughts.

Ways of thinking and behaving obviously are related. But because neither completely determines the other, anthropologists commonly distinguish between them by using the terms *knowledge* and *behavior*. An analogy with language will help understand why this distinction matters. All the knowledge (information) you have in your head about how to communicate by talking is *language.* What you actually say or talk about in particular situations is *speech.* Although you could not communicate without mastering a language, that knowledge alone does not tell you what to talk about or how to talk about it. That depends on the situation: who is present, your goals at the moment, how you and others define the occasion, and so forth.

Cultural knowledge includes all the information about the world and society that children learn and adults apply during their lives. It is what you know because you were born into a given group at a certain time. Cultural knowledge includes things like

- attitudes about family, friends, enemies, and other kinds of people;
- notions of right and wrong (moral standards);
- conceptions about the proper roles of males and females;
- ideas about appropriate dress, hygiene, and personal ornamentation;
- rules about manners and etiquette;
- beliefs about the supernatural;
- standards for sexual activity;
- notions about the best or proper way to live (values); and
- perceptions of the world, both natural and social.

This list could be expanded greatly to include all other knowledge that the members of a society or other group learn from previous generations. These and other kinds of knowledge largely determine how the members of a culture think, react, and sometimes feel. In this text, we sometimes use words like *beliefs* and *ideas* as synonyms for cultural knowledge.

cultural knowledge Information, skills, attitudes, conceptions, beliefs, values, and other mental components of culture that people socially learn during enculturation.

As for *behavior,* it includes all the things people regularly do, or how they habitually act. As the terms *regularly* and *habitually* imply, members of the same culture generally adopt similar behaviors in similar situations (e.g., in church, on the job, at a wedding or funeral, visiting a friend, sitting in a classroom). Anthropologists are usually more interested in these regularities and habits—in what most people do most of the time in similar situations—than in the behavior of particular individuals. That is, we are more interested **patterns of behavior** than in the behaviors of individuals, which might be idiosyncratic. To avoid repetition, we sometimes use the terms *behavior(s)* and *action(s)* as synonyms for *behavioral patterns.*

Defining Culture

The concept of culture is so important that it is useful to have a formal and fairly precise definition of the term:

> The **culture** of a group consists of shared, socially learned knowledge and patterns of behavior.

This definition seems simple and even sounds like "plain common sense," but in fact each part of it is problematic, as we now discuss.

Shared . . .

Culture is a *collective* phenomenon—it is shared. People brought up in a given culture are mostly able to communicate with and interact with one another without serious misunderstandings and without needing to explain what their behavior means. If you are German, other Germans are far less likely than Saudi Arabians to misunderstand your intentions. Individuals who share the same culture usually don't have to explain their intentions or actions to one another so as to avoid "cultural misunderstandings."

Implicit in *shared* is "by some group of people." This is intentionally a vague phrase. The nature of the group that shares culture depends largely on our interests. The people who share a common cultural tradition may be quite numerous and geographically dispersed, as illustrated by phrases like *Western culture* and *African culture.* We use such phrases whenever we want to emphasize differences between Africans and Westerners. However, in this context the hundreds of millions of people to whom *culture* refers are so scattered and diverse that the term *group* has little (if any) meaning. On the other hand, the group that shares a common culture may be small. Some Pacific islands or Amazonian tribes, for instance, had only a couple hundred members, yet the people spoke a unique language and had distinct customs and beliefs.

We often assume that people who share a common culture are members of the same nation-state (country). The identification of a cultural tradition with a single nation is sometimes convenient because it allows us to use phrases like "Canadian culture" and "Chinese culture." In these and other cases, the people whom we identify as "sharing" culture are the residents of one country. This identification of culture and country is accurate for some countries, like South Korea and Japan—although both these nations have immigrants and foreign residents, and Japan has an indigenous culture, the Ainu.

However, most modern nations contain a lot of cultural diversity within their boundaries. This is especially true for nations with a history of colonialism. For example, the internationally recognized national borders of most African and South Asian countries are a product of their history as colonies, not of their indigenous cultural or ethnic identities. That is, more often than not, colonizing nations created boundaries between "their" colonies to further their own interests rather than to reflect cultural distinctions and ethnic divisions (see Chapters 4 and 16). Thus, modern India has dozens of languages and cultural identities, as do most sub-Saharan African nations like Kenya and Tanzania. The government of the People's Republic of China recognizes 56 minority peoples, some of whom theoretically have traditional homelands labeled *autonomous regions* on maps.

Modern European nations are also multicultural: migrants from North Africa, Turkey, South Asia, and other regions now work in European countries like France, Germany, and Great Britain. The immigrants enrich their host countries with new cuisines, festivals, music, and other cultural practices. But they also take jobs and have different beliefs and behaviors. Some "native" Europeans view immigrants as a political threat and as endangering their own way of life. For example, in 2009, the citizens of Switzerland were so anxious about immigrants from Islamic countries that they voted for a law against building more minarets—the towers that identify (Muslim) mosques.

There are other complexities of the word *shared*. People have a **cultural identity**, meaning that

patterns of behavior Within a single culture, the behavior most people perform when they are in certain culturally defined situations.

culture Socially learned knowledge and patterns of behavior shared by some group of people.

cultural identity Cultural tradition a group of people recognize as their own; the shared customs and beliefs that define how a group sees itself as distinctive.

Universal Images Group/Getty Images

The development of the global economy encourages international migration to seek education, better employment, a more satisfying social life, and even spouses. These men are Muslims praying in the courtyard of the Central Mosque – in London, England.

individuals define themselves partly by the cultural group in which they were born and raised. Your cultural identity helps define who you are, along with your ideas about your gender, race, and other features. Yet cultural identity is actually complicated: if you are an African American, you may feel like you share a common identity with people born and living in Africa or with people of African heritage living in Haiti or Jamaica or parts of Brazil. Although you are far more likely to be like Anglo-Americans in how you think and act, nonetheless you might identify with other persons whose ancestors were Africans. Similar considerations apply to other cultural identities, such as individuals whose parents were born in East Asia and Latin America. Notice that *cultural identity* implies contrast: the traits that define identity such as physical features and historical origins are contrasted with other traits that define alternative identities.

For these reasons, the identification of "culture" with "nation" is simplistic, because many cultural groupings, identities, and traditions coexist within the boundaries of most modern nations. The term ***subculture*** refers to cultural variations that exist within a single nation. Most obvious are *regional subcultures.* Contrast the American states of Mississippi and Connecticut; the Canadian provinces of Quebec and British Columbia; or the Great Britain regions of Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and England.

Sometimes people extend the concept of subculture to particular groups that recruit their members from the nation at large, as in phrases like *corporate cultures* or *occupational cultures.* Particular religious denominations are sometimes called subcultures to emphasize contrasting worship rituals and values between churches, like Episcopalians and Southern Baptists. The word *subculture* often is applied to people based on sexual orientation, as in gay, lesbian, and straight subcultures. Some people distinguish subcultures based on contrasts like rural and urban, public school and prep school, homemakers and professional women, and even male and female.

These examples show that culture is shared at various levels, which makes the notion of *shared culture* more complicated than it seems: At which level shall we speak of "a" culture or of "the" culture of people X? Generally, the words *culture* and *subculture* are useful if they contrast some group with another of the same kind—for example, West Europe/East Asia, English/French,

subculture Cultural differences characteristic of members of various ethnic groups, regions, religions, and so forth within a single society or country.

Cherokee/Anglo, north/south, Catholic/Methodist. In most cases, the context of the discussion adequately defines the level.

The word *subculture* is often used too loosely, however. It is most useful when it points out distinctions that have many dimensions. For example, if gay subculture refers *only* to sexual orientation, then the word *subculture* is not very useful. It becomes more meaningful if it refers to broader contrasts between straights and gays in values and lifestyles. Also, the more similarities there are between the members of the groups we wish to contrast, the less meaningful the concept of subculture becomes. Not just any difference between groups should be called *subcultural* (otherwise, even families could be subcultures). Distinctions based on criteria like occupation, employment status, or type of school, are so vague that they have limited usefulness.

For all these reasons, in the global society of the twenty-first century, the simple statement "culture is shared among some group of people" has many complexities. In fact, some people think the entire world is headed toward "sharing" a single culture – a monolithic global culture. This possibility is discussed in Global Challenges and Opportunities.

. . . Socially Learned . . .

Individuals acquire their culture in the process of growing up in a society or some other kind of group. The process by which infants and children learn the culture of those around them is called **socialization** or **enculturation**. Learning one's culture, of course, happens as a normal part of childhood. To say that culture is learned from others seems commonsensical, but it has several important implications that are not completely obvious.

To say that culture is *learned* is to say that it is not acquired genetically—that is, through the process of biological reproduction. A people's culture does not grow out of their gene pool or biological makeup, but is something the people born into that group acquire as they grow up. Africans, East Asians, Europeans, and Native Americans do not differ in their cultures because they differ in their genes— they do not differ *culturally* because they differ *biologically.* Any human infant is perfectly capable of learning the culture of any human group or biological population, just as any child can learn the language of whatever group that child is born into. To state the main point in a few words: *Cultural differences and biological differences are largely independent of one another.* (We qualify this statement later in this chapter.)

To say that culture is *socially* learned is to emphasize that people do not learn it primarily by trial and error. The main ways children learn culture are by observation, imitation, communication, and inference. One important way in which humans differ in degree, though not in kind, from other primates is their ability to learn by imitating and communicating with other humans. When you were an infant, you did not learn what is good to eat primarily by trying out a variety of things that might have been edible and then rejecting things that were not edible. Rather, other people taught you what is and is not defined as food. If you are a North American, you probably view some animals (cattle, fish, chicken) as food and others that are equally edible (horses, dogs, guinea pigs) as not food. You did not discover this on your own but by learning from others what is edible, good tasting, or appropriate. This social learning of what is good to eat spared you most of the costs (and possible stomachaches and health hazards) of learning on your own by trial and error.

Relying on social learning rather than trial and error gives humanity many advantages. First, any innovation that one individual makes can be communicated to others in a group, who thus take advantage of someone else's experience. If you recombine the elements of old tools to develop a more effective tool and share your knowledge, other members of your community can also use that better tool.

Second, each generation learns the culture of its ancestors and transmits it to the next generation, and so on to future generations. Thus, any new knowledge or behavior acquired by one generation is potentially available to future generations (although some of it is lost or replaced with each generation). By this process of repeated social learning over many generations, knowledge accumulates. People alive today live largely off the knowledge acquired and transmitted by previous generations. In modern societies, certain kinds of knowledge are transmitted through formal education in schools and colleges as well as through informal teaching by parents, relatives, and community members.

Third, because culture is socially learned, human groups are capable of changing their ideas and behaviors very rapidly. Genetic change (biological evolution) is slow because it relies on biological reproduction. In contrast, no genetic change and no biological evolution need occur for the knowledge and behavior patterns

socialization Process of social learning of culture by children.

enculturation (socialization) Transmission (by social learning) of cultural knowledge to the next generation.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Is Everyone Becoming a Westerner?

CHRIS MARTINEZ La Opinion Photos/Newscom

In most modern nations, there are subcultures based on region, ethnic identity, national origin, and many other features that people use to define and themselves as distinctive from others. These Korean-American people of Los Angeles are having a festival that educates others about the Korean culture.

As contacts between the world's nations become more common and intense, people in various places react differently depending on their own culture, the nature of the contacts, and their personal circumstances. The impacts on local cultural traditions therefore differ widely. Those concerned about these impacts have opinions, often strong ones, on what the future holds for cultural diversity on our planet.

First, some fear (while others hope) that the cultures of the most wealthy and militarily powerful regions will eventually become globally dominant, gradually displacing other traditions. This is what many North American travelers to East Asia or India conclude when they see businesses like McDonald's or KFC thriving. It is what many Middle Eastern political and religious leaders fear when they ban movies with scantily clad women. Even some wealthy European countries like Italy and France are concerned that their national traditions are being overwhelmed by the "American consumer culture." Some call the international marketing of products *cultural imperialism,* with companies from the United States usually identified as the main perpetrators—although Nokia (Finland), Nestle (Switzerland), Samsung (South Korea), Panasonic (Japan), De Beers (the South African diamond company), and other companies with global markets and advertising are equally involved.

In short, many believe that what they call Western culture is becoming *the* global culture. Some seem to treat this global cultural future as inevitable—for better or worse.

However, perhaps new forms of culture will arise out of the increased contacts between peoples that result from travel and migration. International travel for tourism or business exposes people to other places and peoples. Many travelers go back home with new understandings and appreciation of the countries that hosted them. Temporary and permanent migration connects peoples and traditions. Most of the richest countries of Europe were formerly colonial powers and many of them are destination countries for migrants. In some, large numbers of people from former colonies have immigrated, as in France (Algerians) and Britain (Pakistanis and Indians). In destination countries like Canada, the United States, and recently Australia, immigrants arriving for jobs bring their traditions along with their labor. Some citizens of destination countries worry about being culturally overwhelmed (and outvoted) by immigrants. They wonder whether "those people" can or even want to be culturally assimilated. Others more sympathetic to diversity enjoy the new choices in food, films, music, and books immigrants bring with them, believing that immigration culturally enriches their nations.

However, globalization also has opposite effects. In some countries, people feel culturally threatened by the frequency and intensity of contacts, which leads them to cling more firmly to what they believe are their traditional values. Globalization can lead to greater attachments to a cultural past perceived as pure or uncorrupted by foreign influences. Outside influences are consciously rejected, sometimes with profound political consequences, including violence. (Most readers will think this paragraph refers to the Middle

of a human population to be utterly transformed. Furthermore, your genetic makeup is fixed at conception. During the course of your life, however, your ideas and actions are likely to change dramatically.

In sum, culture is learned, not inborn, which means that cultural differences cannot be explained by biological/genetic differences between groups of people. The fact that culture is *socially* learned gives humanity some big advantages over other animals: innovations can spread, knowledge can accumulate over time, and peoples' ideas and actions can change rapidly in a single generation.

East, but they should be aware that a similar reaction is occurring in their own nations.)

In countries with large numbers of immigrants, sometimes the newcomers are culturally and linguistically assimilated into the majority or so-called mainstream. Then, future generations may not be recognized as immigrants nor consider themselves such. Alternatively, instead of assimilation, people from a particular national background may establish permanent cultural enclaves in their new homelands. Festivals, cuisines, family and living arrangements, and languages are often preserved in these enclaves, which include various Chinatowns and Koreatowns in North American large cities. Young programmers and software engineers from India work in California's Silicon Valley and other places. To find spouses, many of them use dozens of specially designed websites to connect with people they have never met. They might ask their parents back home to set up meetings with suitable husbands or wives when they go back home. As these examples illustrate, as people of the past and present have migrated from their original countries, they have kept some of their traditions and maintained communities as ethnic enclaves within the larger society.

Not surprisingly, then, globalization has diverse impacts. There is no point in predicting what will happen in the end, mainly because changes will continue in future decades. There will never be an end, in the sense of a final outcome to cultural change once the global system has stabilized—because the global system will never stabilize.

It is worth pointing out, however, that when people discuss the worldwide spread of "Western culture," in most cases they are really talking and worrying about the external manifestations of culture. They are concerned about the observable trappings of culture rather than about *culture* as anthropologists usually use the term. For example, McDonald's originated in the United States, but is its presence in Japan and South Korea a threat to those "cultures"? Is American culture threatened by Honda manufacturing plants in the Midwest? If you are an American citizen, did you feel your "culture" was threatened when a Chinese company bought IBM and started producing computers with the Lenovo label? If you are a Canadian resident of Vancouver, British Columbia, did you worry that your traditions were under attack when thousands of immigrants from Hong Kong settled in your city in the 1990s?

In fact, many things that people now believe are "theirs" originated elsewhere. The "English" alphabet came from the ancient Greeks, who adapted it from the even more ancient Phoenicians. English numerals (1, 2, 3, . . .) are in fact Arabic numerals. The English language originated in northern Europe out of the Germanic subfamily, which is part of the widespread Indo-European language family. Canadian and American staples like bread, steak, and peas originated from other places. At least corn, tomatoes, beans, and chilis originated in North America, but actually those of us whose ancestors were immigrants from Europe learned about them from the original Native Americans.

Finally, it is worth countering the common opinion that the transmission of the material manifestations of culture has been in only one direction—from the West to the Rest. Certainly, Western movies and music are popular in most of the world, as are Western fashions, cosmetics, and a host of other trappings. But similar things have moved in the other direction. Japanese *anime* and *manga,* karaoke, sushi and sushi bars, and horror movies have made it big among North American young people. Indian and Chinese movies, *shisha* smoking from the Middle East, East Asian martial arts and tai chi, tattoos featuring Chinese characters, and salsa dancing and music also are doing well. In Honolulu, you can visit bars that serve kava (a mouth-numbing drink made from the root of a plant from the pepper family, which originated in Polynesia and other Pacific islands like Fiji, Vanuatu, and Pohnpei). In most large North American and European cities, you can visit restaurants that will sell you food from practically anywhere. In late 2012, a Korean singer called Psy set a record for the most hits on YouTube with the music video Gangnam Style. K-Pop was all the rage. Are you feeling threatened yet?

Social learning has a downside, too. For reasons no one fully understands, sometimes ideas and beliefs arise that lead those who believe them to harm or even kill other people. In 1995, in Japan the members of a "cult" called Aum Shinrikyo coordinated the release of a nerve gas in five trains at rush hour, injuring over five thousand and killing twelve persons. In Oklahoma City in April, 1995, Timothy McVeigh bombed the Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people. McVeigh was influenced by antigovernment, antitax, pro-gun movements. This was the worst terrorist attack on American soil until September 11, 2001. On that date, terrorists influenced

Gordon M. Grant/Alamy

A police lieutenant speaks with reporters about the shooting of 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012. Social learning provides the cultural knowledge essential to get along with other people. However, occasionally some individuals process and interpret that knowledge in harmful ways, especially when the technology needed to do so is readily available.

by Al Qaeda guided an airliner into the Twin Towers of the New York City World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and rural Pennsylvania, killing nearly 3,000 people.

On December 14, 2012, a 20-year-old man killed 20 children and 6 adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. This was only the second-deadliest gun violence in the United States. Even more people died in 2007 when a senior student killed 32 in a mass shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

None of these individuals simply thought up the beliefs and ideas that led to their violent behavior. They were influenced by the beliefs and ideas of others, perhaps because in their minds these ideas made sense of their life experiences. None of the original beliefs necessarily called for violence, but for some individuals violence was justified for revenge against a generalized Other, or in to achieve some greater good. Individuals react differently to what they have socially acquired from others around them. Sometimes, beliefs not only harm other people, but also the individuals who accept them: the men who guided the 9/11 aircraft died, and the mass murderers at Sandy Hook and Newtown committed suicide.

. . . Knowledge . . .

When anthropologists use the phrase *cultural knowledge,* we do not mean that a people's beliefs, perceptions, rules, standards, and so forth are true in an objective or absolute sense. In our professional role, for the most part anthropologists do not judge the accuracy or worthiness of a group's knowledge. For us, the most important thing about cultural knowledge is not its truth value but that

- the members of a culture share enough knowledge that they behave in ways that are meaningful and acceptable to others so that they avoid frequent misunderstandings and usually do not need to explain what they are doing; and
- the knowledge guides behavior such that the people can survive, reproduce, and transmit their culture.

In a few words, cultural knowledge generally leads to behavior that is meaningful to others and adaptive to the natural and social environment. We consider some of this knowledge later. Notice what this might mean for your life and your culture: your cultural knowledge leads you to act in acceptable and meaningful ways and allows your culture to persist, but that does not imply that this

knowledge is true. Most of us find it much easier to recognize that this applies to Others than to Ourselves.

. . . and Patterns of Behavior

Even individuals brought up in the same culture differ in their behaviors. The behavior of individuals varies for several reasons. First, individuals have different *social identities:* males and females, old and young, rich and poor, family X and family Y, and so forth. Actions appropriate for people with one identity may not be appropriate for others. Second, the behavior of individuals varies with *context and situation:* a woman acts differently depending on whether she is interacting with her husband, child, priest, or employee. Third, each human individual is in some ways a *unique* human individual: even when brought up in the same society, we all differ in our emotional responses, appetites, interpretations of events, reactions to stimuli, and so forth. Finally, cultural standards for and expectations of behavior are often *ambiguous.* For these and other reasons, the behavior of individuals is not uniform within the same culture.

Despite such complexities, within a single cultural group, behavioral regularities or patterns exist. For instance, into the 1980s had you visited a certain area of the Amazonian rain forest and encountered people known as the Yanomamo, you might have been shocked by some of their actions. By most cultures' standards, the Yanomamo are unusually demanding and aggressive. Slight insults often lead to violent responses. Quarreling men may duel in a chest-pounding contest, during which they take turns beating one another on the chest, alternating one blow at a time. More serious quarrels sometimes call for clubs, with which men bash one another on the head. Fathers sometimes encourage their sons to strike them (and anyone else) by teasing and goading, while praising the child for his fierceness.

If, on the other hand, you visited the Semai, a people of Malaysia, you might be surprised at how seldom they express anger and hostility. Indeed, you might find them *too* docile. One adult should never strike another—"Suppose he hit you back?" they ask. The Semai seldom hit their children—"How would you feel if he or she died?" they ask. When children misbehave, the worst physical punishment they receive is a pinch on the cheek or a pat on the hand. Ethnographer Robert Dentan suggests one reason for the nonviolence of the Semai: children are so seldom exposed to physical punishment that when they grow up, they have an exaggerated impression of the effects of violence.

The contrasting behavioral responses of the Yanomamo and Semai people illustrate an important characteristic of most human behavior: its social nature. Humans are supremely social animals. We seldom do anything alone, and even when we are alone, we rely unconsciously on our cultural upbringing to provide us with the knowledge of what to do and how to act. Relationships between people are therefore enormously important in all cultures. Anthropologists give special attention to the regularities and patterning of these social relationships, including such things as how family members interact, how females and males relate to one another, how political leaders deal with subordinates, and so forth.

The concept of **role** is useful to describe and analyze interactions and relationships. Individuals are often said to have a role or to play a role in some group. Roles usually carry names or labels, such as *mother* in a family, *student* in a classroom, *accountant* in a company, and *headman* of a Yanomamo village. Attached to a role are the group's *expectations* about what people who hold the role should do. Learning to be a member of a group includes learning the expectations of its members. Expectations include rights and duties. The *rights* (or privileges) defined by my role include the benefits the group members agree I should receive as a member. My *duties* (or obligations) include other group members' expectations of my behavior.

Rights and duties are usually *reciprocal:* My right over you is your duty to me, and vice versa. My duties to the group as a whole are the group's rights over me and vice versa. If I adequately perform my duties to the group, then other members reward me, just as I reward them for their own role performance. By occupying and performing a role in a group, I behave in ways that others find valuable, and I hope that some of my own wants and needs will be fulfilled. Conversely, failure to live up to the group's expectations of role performance is likely to bring some sort of informal or formal punishment. Among the Yanomamo, young men who refuse to stand up for themselves by fighting are ridiculed and may never amount to anything. The shared knowledge of roles and expectations is partly responsible for patterns of behavior.

Defining culture as shared and socially learned knowledge and behavior seems pretty inclusive. What else could be "cultural"? Actually, some things most people commonly consider part of culture are not viewed as part of culture by many anthropologists. For example, many anthropologists do not see architecture and art objects

role Rights and duties that individuals receive because of their personal identity or membership in a social group.

such as paintings and sculptures as part of a people's culture. They are, rather, physical representations and material manifestations of cultural knowledge. They are *products* or *expressions* of culture rather than *aspects* of culture. For instance, some think that art expresses a culture's values, ideals of beauty, conflicts, worldviews, and so forth. Houses and public buildings are products of aspects of culture such as family life, sexual practices, political organization, ideas of beauty and symmetry, religious beliefs, and status distinctions.

Similar considerations apply to other kinds of physical objects and material things. For example, tools are physical manifestations of the ideas of their human makers and users, who have a mental template that determines the form of the tool. Even writing is not seen as part of culture by many anthropologists. Rather, writing is a means of storing knowledge, transmitting information, and—in the case of fiction— telling stories that are meaningful in the cultural group. Thus anthropologists do not agree on whether such material objects—often called *material culture*—are "part of culture" or only "material manifestations" of culture.

Notice, though, that these complications depend on how we define culture. Here we consider shared knowledge and behavioral patterns as the essence of culture. We could define *culture* in such a way that it includes material objects (like tools, art, and architecture).

Cultural Knowledge

Cultural knowledge includes beliefs, attitudes, rules, assumptions about the world, and other bits and pieces of information stored in our brains. In this section, we discuss five elements of cultural knowledge: norms, values, symbols, constructions of reality, and worldviews. We cover these elements because they are among the most important components of cultural knowledge and because their anthropological meaning goes beyond that of everyday speech. The Concept Review previews the five major components in just a few words.

Norms

Norms are shared ideals (or rules) about how people ought to act in certain situations, or about how particular people should act toward particular other people. The emphasis is on the words *ideals, rules, ought, should,* and *situations.* To say that norms exist does not mean everyone follows them all the time. Some norms are regularly violated, and what is normative in one situation need not be in other situations. *Norm* thus does not refer to behavior itself. Rather, *norm* implies that (1) there is widespread agreement that people ought to adhere to certain standards of behavior, (2) other people judge the behavior of a person according to how closely it adheres to those standards, and (3) people who repeatedly fail to follow the standards face some kind of negative reaction from other members of the group.

norms Shared ideals and/or expectations about how certain people ought to act in given situations.

Any culture includes hundreds or thousands of norms. People are not consciously aware of all norms. (For example, the next time you interact with someone, try standing closer than "normal," and observe their reaction.) Borrowing a distinction from sociology, we distinguish *folkways* from *mores* (pronounced "morays"). *Folkways* are norms about how things should be done (properly/improperly) or what behavior is called for (appropriate/inappropriate) in a given situation. Most customs about politeness are folkways, as are greetings, introductions, and table manners. *Mores* are norms about behavior that carry moral connotations, meaning that others judge an individual's character (right/wrong) according to how well she or he adheres to the more. Many collective judgments we make about someone's personal morality or character are based on mores. Many standards about sexual behavior and familial obligations are mores.

Like most dichotomies, the distinction between folkways and mores is clear in theory but not always in practice. How to dress is a folkway when the judgment of others is based on whether your outfit is appropriate for the occasion. Dress also can be a more when others evaluate you negatively if you dress immodestly. Whether to give gifts and what kind of gift to give can be a folkway, if you give too little (inconsiderate) or too much (embarrassing to the recipient). It can also be or a more, if others think you are a slimeball for not living up to your social obligations.

Sometimes people feel that norms are irrational or arbitrary rules that stifle their creativity or keep them from doing what they want for no good reason. In fact, though, norms make social interactions much more predictable and so are quite useful to us as individuals. It is mainly because we agree on norms that we know how to behave toward others and that we have expectations about how others should behave toward us in diverse social situations or settings.

For example, at a party where you do not know many people, you may feel a little nervous. But in your

CONCEPT REVIEW Components of Cultural Knowledge

Component	Brief Definition	Example
Norms	Standards of propriety and appropriateness	Expected behaviors at weddings and in classrooms
Values	Beliefs about social desirability and worthwhileness	Individual rights
Symbols	Objects and behaviors with conventional meanings	Interpretations of nonverbal behavior
Constructions	Divisions of reality into categories and subcategories	Kinds of persons and natural phenomena
Worldviews	Interpretations of events and experiences	Origin of good and evil

culture people know how to introduce themselves, so soon you are introducing yourself, shaking hands, and asking the other guests what they do, what they are studying, and where they work. Perhaps you even know subtle ways of figuring out whether someone is "available." Here, and in many other cases in everyday life, we do not experience norms as oppressive. Rather, norms are useful instructions on how to do something in such a way that others know what you are doing and accept your actions as "normal."

Values

Values consist of a people's beliefs about the way of life that is desirable for themselves and their society. Values have profound, though partly unconscious, effects on people's behavior. The goals we pursue, as well as our general ideas about the good life, are influenced by the values of the culture into which we were born or raised. Values affect our motivations and thus influence the reasons we do what we do. Values are also critical to the maintenance of culture as a whole because they represent the qualities people believe are essential to continuing their way of life. We may think of values as providing the ultimate standards that people believe must be upheld under most circumstances. People may be deeply attached to their values and, sometimes, are even prepared to sacrifice their lives for them.

Although people may say they cherish their values, it is easy to overemphasize their importance in people's lives. For one thing, to uphold one value sometimes leads us to neglect others (e.g., people "value" career enhancement as well as family life). For another, our personal interests can lead us to ignore or downplay some values in some situations (e.g., people should be "honest" but also should successfully compete). Finally, our fears, loves, hates, and other emotions can lead us to ignore our values in favor of other concerns.

Here are some North American examples that illustrate such complexities. Most people agree that persons accused of crimes have rights to a speedy trial and an attorney. But perceived threats from real and imagined terrorists lead many to agree that these values can justifiably be ignored in some situations. As an abstract moral value, prisoners of war should not be tortured. But national security also is important. What shall we do when national security seems to conflict with upholding human rights? Many disagreements about public policy are based on how much weight people place on one of their values as opposed to other values. To say that values are "shared" does not mean that everyone gives them the same importance.

Then there are conflicting values. For instance, there are *family values,* but what constitutes a family? Many do not think gay and lesbian couples count as families. There are values about *equal opportunity*, but if opportunities are to be truly equal then people should not be allowed to pass much wealth to their children because that would give their children a head start. Yet shouldn't people be allowed to give their wealth to their children if they so choose? It is their *private property* (another value), but children who inherit large amounts of property have done nothing to earn it (which conflicts with many other values).

values Shared ideas or standards about the worthwhileness of goals and lifestyles.

Symbols

A **symbol** is something (like an object or an action) that represents, connotes, or calls to mind something else. Just as we learn norms and values during socialization, so do we learn the meanings that people in our group attach to symbols. And just as norms and values affect patterns of behavior, so do the understandings people share of the meanings of symbols. Our shared understandings of the meanings of actions allow us to interact with one another without the need to explain our intentions. We need not state explicitly what we are doing and why.

For the most part, the understandings that people share about the meanings of actions and objects are unconscious. We can speak to inquiring strangers about many of our values and explain to them why we believe they are important. But it is nearly impossible to tell someone why a particular gesture, a way of walking, a style of dress, or a certain facial expression carries the meaning it does rather than some other meaning. We "just know." "Everyone knows," for such things are common knowledge and maybe even common sense—to people who share the symbols.

Two important properties of symbols are that their meanings are arbitrary and conventional. *Arbitrary* means there are no inherent qualities in the symbol that lead a human group to attribute one meaning to it rather than some other meaning. Thus, the wink of an eye that often means "just kidding" in some cultures is—literally—meaningless in other cultures. *Conventional* refers to the fact that the meanings exist only because people implicitly agree they exist. Thus, at an intersection, a red light means "stop," but only because all drivers agree that it does.

Words provide a familiar example of the arbitrary and conventional nature of symbols. In English, the word for a certain kind of large animal is *horse,* but in Spanish, the same animal is called *caballo,* in German *pferd,* in Arabic *hisanun,* in French *cheval,* and so on for other languages. The meaning "horse" is conveyed equally well by any of these words, which is another way of saying that meanings are arbitrary and conventional.

Often we think of symbols as objects that stand for something important or sacred: a flag, a cross, a wedding ring, a religious text. Other objects have practical uses or functions, in the sense that they are useful in everyday life: expensive cars, enormous houses, expensive jewelry, and clothing styles are status symbols. Even individual persons can be symbols: The queen of England and the emperor of Japan have little formal power in their nation's constitution. Rather, they symbolize their people's history, traditions, and values. Many citizens are emotionally attached to them despite the expense of maintaining the trappings of their offices.

Victor Turner's ideas about symbols have influenced anthropology and other disciplines for decades. Writing about objects used in rituals among the Ndembu, an indigenous people of Zambia, Turner noted that Ndembu ritual symbols have several properties that make them powerful in the minds of people. Turner called two of these properties *multivocality* and *condensation.* Symbols represent many qualities and abstract values simultaneously (multivocality). They do so by expressing their meanings in a material form (condensation) that is easy to represent, think about, and become emotionally attached to. National flags, monuments to soldiers, and religious symbols like statues and crosses are good examples of these two properties. People become emotionally attached to such symbols, which can come to stand for all that is right and valuable. Some feel that flag burning should be illegal and even treasonous. To many, gun ownership is a symbol for individual rights and regulation of guns is an infringement of freedom—heartfelt emotions are expressed when governments want to restrict the right to bear arms. The cross represents more to Christians than just the death of Jesus. Some Japanese continue to revere and their emperor, even though the emperor himself renounced his divinity in 1945.

Behavior as well as objects communicate meanings that are arbitrary and conventional. Our shared understandings of what actions mean allow us to interact with one another without the need to explain our intentions, or to state explicitly what we are doing and why.

The shared understandings that allow people to correctly interpret the meanings of behaviors are enormously important. Because you assume that the people you interact with share your understandings, in most situations you know how to act and what to say so as not to be misunderstood. In other words, cultural knowledge includes common understandings of how to interact with one another appropriately (i.e., according to shared expectations) and meaningfully (i.e., in such a way that other people usually are able to interpret our intentions).

Nonverbal communication provides a fine example of these understandings. When you interact with someone face to face, the two of you are engaged in a continual giving and receiving of messages

symbols Objects, behaviors, qualities, and other phenomena whose culturally defined meanings have no necessary relationship to their inherent physical qualities.

communicated by both speech and actions. Spoken messages are intentionally (consciously) sent and received. Other messages—including body language, facial expressions, hand gestures, touching, and the use of physical space—are communicated by nonverbal behavior, much of which is unconscious. Nonverbal messages emphasize, supplement, or complement spoken messages. We are not always conscious of what we are communicating nonverbally, and sometimes our body language even contradicts what we are saying. (Is this how your mother often knew when you were lying?)

The general point is that cultural knowledge conditions social behavior in ways people do not always recognize consciously—at least until someone's behavior violates our understandings. Furthermore, many gestures and other body movements with well-known meanings in one culture have no meaning, or have different meanings, in another culture. On a Micronesian island studied by one of the authors, people may answer "yes" or show agreement by a sharp intake of breath (a "gasp") or by simply raising the eyebrows. One may also answer "yes" by the grunting sound ("uh-uh") that carries exactly the opposite meaning to North Americans. Pointing out a direction is done with the nose, not the finger. You would signal "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" by wrinkling your nose, rather than by shrugging your shoulders. It is rude to walk between two people engaged in conversation; if possible, you walk around them; if not, you say the equivalent of "please excuse me," wait for permission, and then bend at your waist while passing between them.

Aside from showing the social usefulness of shared understandings of symbolic actions, these examples illustrate one way misunderstandings occur when individuals with different cultural upbringings interact. Raised in different cultures in which gestures and sounds carry different meanings, individuals (mis)interpret the actions of others based on their own culture's understandings, often seeing the others as rude, unfriendly, insensitive, overly familiar, and so forth.

Consider some examples. Arabs and Iranians often stand "too close" for the Canadian and American comfort zone. In South Korea, it is common to see two young females holding hands or with their arms around each other while walking. But their touching symbolizes nothing about their sexual orientation, nor does two men holding hands in parts of the Middle East. Japanese are less likely than North Americans to express definite opinions or preferences or to just say no to a request. To outsiders, this reluctance often comes across as uncertainty, tentativeness, or even dishonesty, whereas the Japanese view it as politeness. The common American tendency to be informal and friendly is viewed as inappropriate in many other cultures where outward displays of emotions are not displayed to mere acquaintances.

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Symbols include more than physical objects like religious icons, jewelry, clothing, and cars. When people are socialized they understand the cultural meanings of behavior as well. Most Koreans and Japanese realize that these two young women are just friends.

In a world where the globalization of trade and international travel are commonplace, it is worth knowing that much of what you "know" is not known to members of other cultural traditions, just as what they "know" may be unfamiliar to you. Think before you take offense at their actions. And think before you give it.

Classifications and Constructions of Reality

The members of a cultural tradition share beliefs about what kinds of things and people exist. They have a similar **classification of reality**, meaning they generally share knowledge of the basic kinds of animals, plants, inanimate objects, and humans exist. Another phrase for this is the **cultural construction of reality**: from the multitude of differences and similarities that exist in some phenomena, a culture recognizes (constructs) only some features as relevant in making distinctions. The cultural construction of reality implies that different peoples do not perceive the human and natural worlds in the same ways.

classifications of reality (cultural constructions of reality) Ways the members of a culture divide up the natural and social world into categories, usually linguistically encoded.

Natural Reality

How a people divide up plants, animals, landscape features, seasons, and other dimensions of the natural world is cultural constructed. As just one example, the Hanunoo, a tropical forest people of the Philippines, identify 1,600 kinds of plants. They distinguish 400 more "kinds" of forest plants than a scientific botanist would. The Hanunoo make fine distinctions between flora because of the way they use the forest for slash and burn farming (discussed in Chapter 7). It is not that the botanist is right and the Hanunoo wrong, but that they use different criteria to construct their plant classification.

How people culturally construct natural phenomena influences how they define and use nature. Plants, animals, minerals, waters, and the like are classified not just into various kinds but also into various categories of usefulness. For example, what one group considers *food* is not necessarily defined as *food* by another group. Muslims and Orthodox Jews consider pork unclean. Traditional Hindus refuse to consume the flesh of cattle, their sacred animal. The fact that a given animal or plant is edible does not mean that people *consider* it edible (or else more North Americans would eat dogs, as do many East and Southeast Asians, and horses, as do many French).

Finally, people of different cultures differ in their beliefs about the kinds of things that do and do not exist. Some people believe in witches who use malevolent supernatural powers to harm others. Traditional Navajo believe that witches can change themselves into wolves, bears, and other animals. The Tukano people of the Bolivian rain forest believe that a spirit of the forest controls the animals they depend on for meat. So when meat is scarce, a Tukano shaman makes a supernatural visit to the abode of the forest spirit. He promises to magically kill a certain number of humans and to send their souls to the forest spirit in return for the spirit's releasing the animals so the hunters can find game.

As the Navajo and Tukano examples illustrate, not only do different cultures classify objective reality in different ways, they also differ on what reality *is:* one culture's definition of reality may not be the same as that of another culture.

Social Reality

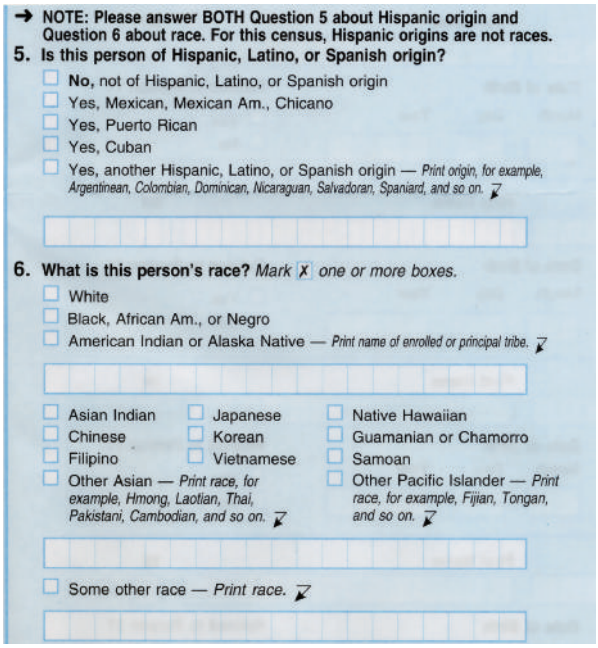
The preceding discussion of the cultural construction of natural reality reminds us of what used to be called *folk classifications*. As generations of "prescientific" peoples tried to make sense of the world and events based on their experiences, they culturally constructed (probably unconsciously) their perceptions of the natural world. After all, human senses can be misleading: the Earth is not truly flat as once thought; the sun only appears to move across the sky; rocks are not completely solid; life forms change, but too slowly for a human to notice in her or his lifetime. In the last few centuries, systematic observations and experiments have allowed scientists to realize the limitations of our sensory impressions. So "folk classifications" are being replaced by scientific taxonomies based on objective methods. We know so much more about the world than past generations.

True, in general. However, in addition to natural phenomena, human beings also culturally construct human beings, placing them into categories and attributing certain characteristics to those categories. In future chapters, we discuss cultural constructions of families and of gender. Here we consider another cultural construction, that of race.

Race remains a controversial and sometimes even explosive topic in many countries. In the United States, in early 2013 the government of Mississippi attempted to overturn the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed voting laws that discriminated against blacks in some states. The act specifically forbad literacy tests, for in the past they were the primary means used to make it difficult or impossible for African Americans to vote. Mississippi is now arguing that the era of racial discrimination has passed, and wants the Supreme Court to overturn the Voting Rights Act. More generally, conservatives argue that "race-based" hiring and college admissions practices deny opportunities to qualified white people, many of whom come from socioeconomic backgrounds that are just as deprived as those of many minorities.

Most people assume that race is an objective, natural category into which most individuals can be assigned. If people can't tell which race you are, they probably think of you as "mixed race." *Mixed race* is a tricky concept because people of "mixed racial heritages" are usually assigned to whichever racial category is seen as the minority one. Thus, President Barack Obama is the U.S. first black president, although his mother was white. (The late Ann Dunham Soetoro, incidentally, was a cultural anthropologist who did fieldwork in Pakistan and Indonesia; the latter country is the one that some Americans claim Obama was actually born in.)

Can't we observe racial differences by visiting almost any large city? Race certainly seems natural. Most anthropologists disagree. They argue that race is not, in fact, an objective and natural category, but a cultural construction of people based on perceptions and distinctions that arise more from culture than from biology. What does this mean, and why do most anthropologists believe it?



→ NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 5 about Hispanic origin and Question 6 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.

5. Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- ☐ No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- ☐ Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- ☐ Yes, Puerto Rican
- ☐ Yes, Cuban
- ☐ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin — *Print origin, for example, Argentinean, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on.*

6. What is this person's race? *Mark* ✗ *one or more boxes.*

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black, African Am., or Negro
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.*
- ☐ Asian Indian
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Other Asian — *Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.*
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Native Hawaiian
- ☐ Guamanian or Chamorro
- ☐ Samoan
- ☐ Other Pacific Islander — *Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.*
- ☐ Some other race — *Print race.*

Figure 2.1 **In this portion of the 2010 United States Census Form—sent to all American households—respondents are asked to identify their "race." Question 5. Correctly, does not equate "Hispanic origin" with "race." Notice that there are 12 "races" specifically listed in question 6. Furthermore, if you are a Pacific Islander or Asian, you have lots of "races" with which you can identify yourself. How many of these are "races," in the anthropological meaning?**

First, the differences out of which race is constructed are only skin deep. When we place people into racial categories, we generally focus on selected visible physical traits: skin color, facial features, hair characteristics, and so forth. If we looked beyond observable traits to consider other (invisible or less visible) traits, different racial categories would result. For example, a racial classification of the world's people based on blood groups (ABO, rH, and other factors) would yield a different classification than one based on skin color. So would a racial classification based on the shape of teeth or jaws, or on the ability of adults to digest the milk enzyme called lactase. Culturally, we define some physical features as relevant (we consider them significant) whereas others are unrecognized (unperceived) or irrelevant. In short, the sets of traits we use to define races lead to one kind of racial classification, but we would have a different classification if we used different traits.

Second, how many "races" are there? Most elderly people raised in North America would say three, which used to be called Mongoloid, Negroid, and Caucasoid. This threefold classification of humanity is based on the history of contacts between Europeans and certain peoples of Africa and Asia. But why only three? Why not 6 or 13 or 40? The so-called Pygmies of central Africa are quite different physically from their Bantu neighbors, as are the once-widespread Khoisan peoples of southern Africa. The indigenous peoples of New Guinea, Australia, and the surrounding islands are quite different not only from many of their neighbors but also from some Africans whom they outwardly resemble in their skin coloration. Many people of southern Asia have skin as dark as some Africans, although in some other physical characteristics they resemble Europeans. What about Malaysians, Polynesians, and Native Americans? Should they be separate races, or combined with others? If so, which others?

Third, along these same lines, different cultures sometimes develop different racial classifications. Brazil is well known for its history of interbreeding among peoples from different continents. Based on his fieldwork, Conrad Kottak reported that in a single village in northeastern Brazil, 40 different terms were used to refer to "race"! To non-Japanese, Japan appears to be a racially homogeneous country. Yet many "true" Japanese recognize and culturally emphasize the differences between themselves and descendants of immigrants from Korea. Also a few Japanese remain prejudiced against the Burakamin, the modem descendants of groups whose ancestors are believed to have engaged in low-level occupations. Yet Burakamin are so indistinguishable physically that those "pure" Japanese who still care about such things have to investigate the ancestry of potential spouses to be sure they are not Burakamin.

Fourth, racial classifications change over time even within the same cultural tradition. In the Americas, people who are today considered indistinguishable racially once were widely viewed as members of different races. When large numbers of Irish immigrated to the Americas after the potato blight struck Ireland in the mid–nineteenth century, they were considered a race by many other Americans whose ancestors had lived here somewhat longer. Jews were also seen by many as a distinct racial group. Such distinctions sound absurd today—to most North Americans, at any rate. Perhaps present-day racial divisions seem will seem equally absurd in the next century.

In sum, most anthropologists believe that race is culturally constructed for the following reasons:

- Different racial categories can be constructed by applying different criteria.
- There is no objective way to determine whether some population should be considered a separate