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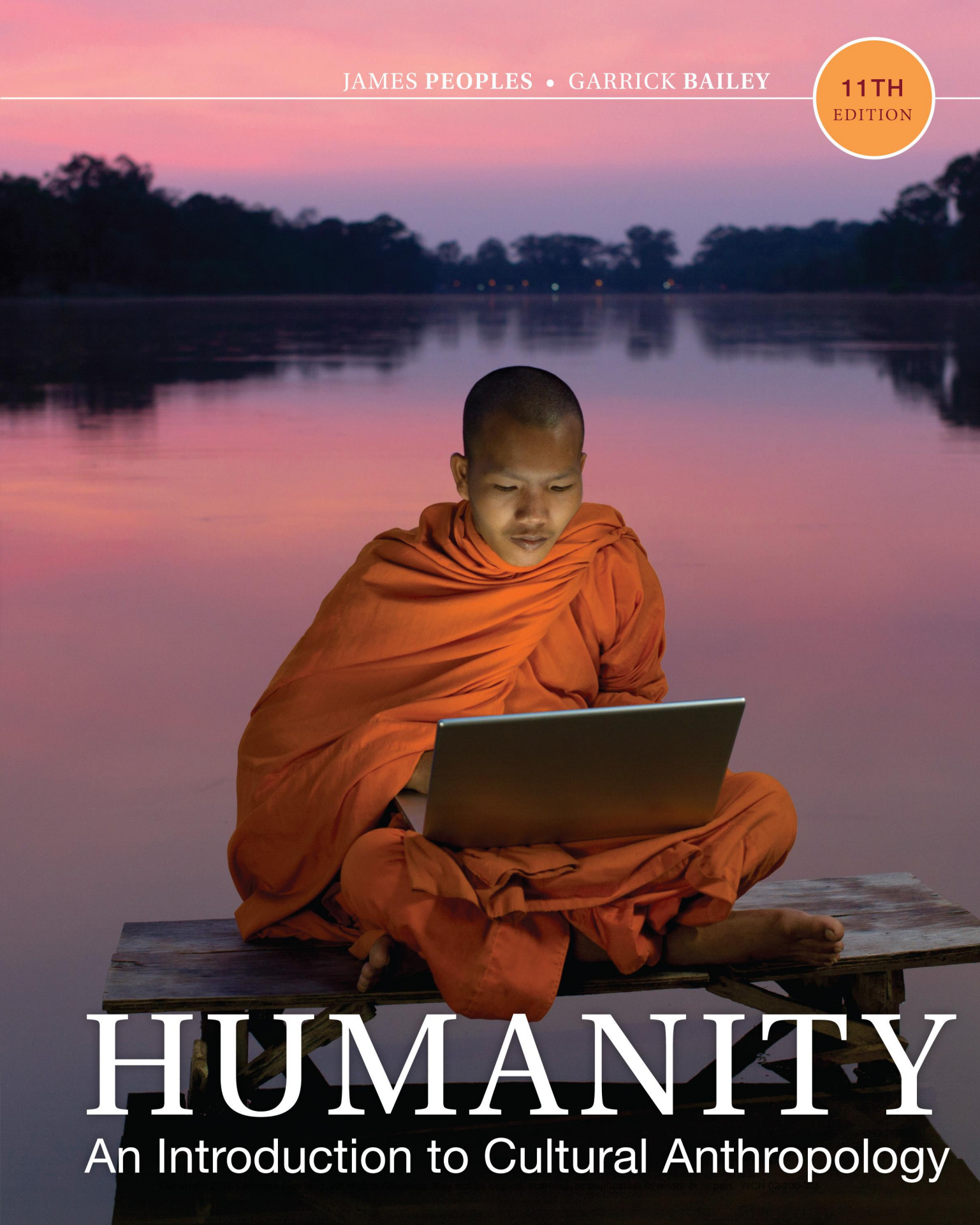
11TH EDITION



HUMANITY

An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Locations of peoples discussed in *Humanity*

EDITION

11

HUMANITY

AN INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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***Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, Eleventh Edition**
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PART IV Anthropology in the Global Community

Preface

Perhaps it is presumptuous to title any textbook *Humanity*. The authors chose this title back in 1985, when we began working on the first edition. We thought *Humanity* captures the distinctive feature of anthropology—that it studies all the world's peoples, including those who lived in the prehistoric past, the historic past, and the present day, as well as peoples who live in every world region.

As a scholarly discipline, anthropology is very broad in its scope and interests. Several generations of anthropologists have discovered a vast amount of information about the human species. Paleoanthropologists are currently uncovering fossils and unwinding genetic relationships that show how and when the human species originated and evolved into modern *Homo sapiens.* Archaeologists are still 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 study while living among some human community. Cultural anthropology describes and explains or interprets the fascinating cultural variability of the world's peoples. In this text, we try to convey to students the life-enriching and 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 current problems, such as ethnic conflicts, national and global inequalities, hunger, religious intolerance, and the survival of indigenous cultures and languages. As we describe the diversity in humanity's cultures, we suggest the implications of such diversity for contemporary people and societies.

Finally, we want students and other newcomers to anthropology to grasp the full significance of the oldest anthropological lesson of all: that their own values, beliefs, and actions 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 individuals to question unconscious assumptions and to view themselves as well as other peoples through the complicated lens of cultural relativism.

Globalization has become an increasingly important theme throughout the last several editions. Each of the 17 chapters includes a feature on globalization, choosing a topic that is relevant for the chapter's content. Features in various chapters deal with issues such as how globalization affects cultural diversity, language survival, global warming, family and marriage practices, inequality among nations, religious diversity in the United States, production and sale of art, and cultural and religious fundamentalism. Some discussions are primarily case studies, whereas others present anthropological insights into the process or the results of globalization. Most chapters contain material that is relevant for modern North America, such as climate change, recent changes in family life and marriage practices, gender inequality, and religious accommodation.

New to the Eleventh Edition

To those instructors who are previous users of *Humanity,* the following summarizes the major changes in the eleventh edition.

Chapter 1 still introduces the four subdisciplines and discusses the importance of anthropological perspectives, methods, and factual knowledge about cultural diversity. We have included new information on human evolution. While retaining coverage of applied anthropology, we've updated the section on careers. We emphasize recent changes in anthropological interests and in research in modern societies and globalization.

To illustrate the complexity of the relativistic perspective, we add a new example of a Jarawa custom while retaining the example of female genital mutilation.

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 culture, with the goal of demonstrating that the concept of culture is more complicated than most people realize. New material appears in the section titled "The Origins of Culture."

Chapter 3 (language) retains coverage of the distinctive characteristics of language, structural linguistics, English's incorporation of Native American words, sociolinguistics, and the relationship between culture and language. Recent material appears about the use of language to acquire and enhance power, using examples from political speech in the American 2016 presidential campaign. The section titled "Language, Perceptions, and Worldview" now has a new and provocative argument about how verb forms might affect savings rates in countries with similar socioeconomic conditions. We again emphasize relationships among culture, language, thought, and behavior over the technical aspects of linguistics.

Chapter 4 (cultural diversity and globalization) provides the historical and cultural context for later chapters that discuss diversity among the world's peoples. We have updated sections, added a new Concept Review, and expanded the coverage of the globalization of academic training.

Chapter 5 (theory) continues its focus on two main areas: (1) historical contacts between the West and Others that gave rise to anthropology, and (2) distinctions between contemporary approaches, which we categorize (broadly) as scientific and humanistic. Where appropriate, we apply this distinction to material in other chapters by stating the interpretations or explanations each broad approach would offer.

Chapter 6 (methods) distinguishes between the methods and goals of the main ways anthropologists learn about humanity: fieldwork and comparisons. Generally ethnographic fieldwork is the primary method used to describe a given people, in time and space, whereas comparative methods are an essential part of efforts to explain or generalize.

In Chapter 7 (culture and environment) we updated some factual material, including dates for the beginnings and spread of agriculture and information about the 2015 Paris Accords on climate change. We have rewritten sections to clarify their meaning and wider implications. Like Chapters 2, 4, and 5, this chapter provides information referred to extensively later in the book.

In Chapter 8 (exchange) we include a new introductory vignette on the origin of credit cards to enhance student interest in the general topic. In covering reciprocity, redistribution, and market exchange forms, we provide examples of each in the United States, using a new example of the Affordable Care Act to illustrate political arguments over redistribution. We move on to describe capitalist economies, distinguishing between neoliberal/laissez-faire and social welfare capitalism and their strengths and weaknesses. We have also added new material on global markets in the Global Challenges and Opportunities feature.

In Chapter 9 (marriage and family), this edition includes the standard textbook topical structure: family forms, incest taboos, problems of defining marriage, marriage forms and their implications, marital transactions, postmarital residence patterns, and household forms. We have deleted the discussion of the avunculocal residence pattern to make room for an extensive revision of the section "Same-Sex Marriage and the Culture Wars," which includes recent court decisions and reactions to them. We argue that anthropology's relativistic and comparative perspective offer significant contributions to these topics.

Chapter 10 (kinship) also is standard, covering forms of descent and kinship, influences on these forms, and kinship terminologies, with examples of each topic. We give terminological systems as examples of cultural constructions introduced in Chapter 2. The chapter concludes by discussing the implications of cultural diversity for recent and future changes in marriage, family, and kinship forms and relationships.

The topics for Chapter 11 (gender) are unchanged from the last two editions. We have added new information about how recognition of the complexity of gender identity affects language, going beyond the obvious LGBTQIA to include new child naming practices. The ethnographic examples remain, but we have condensed some to reduce the length. Again, we suggest the relevance of anthropological evidence about diversity and anthropological theorizing to modern life.

In Chapter 12 (political life), portions of the Global Challenges and Opportunities feature have been expanded to include shell companies and tax haven countries; our discussion includes an examination of how these situations have allowed companies to increase their global economic power.

Chapter 13 (inequality and stratification) begins with a new vignette about the contrasting ideas of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump about economic

inequality. After describing contrasts between egalitarian, ranked, and stratified (including caste) societies, the chapter moves into stratification in the United States. We update 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 since 1980. The distinction between religious and secular ideologies is applied to ideas and beliefs in the United States and the West. After discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the functionalist and conflict theories, we attempt to apply them to modern industrial society. We updated numerical data in the Global Challenges and Opportunities feature on China.

In Chapter 14 (religion), in the "Sociological Approaches" section, we added Richard Sosis's idea that costly rituals function to demonstrate commitment to group values and norms, noting its consistency with the evolutionary psychology general theory (discussed in Chapter 5) For each theoretical approach we note that religion creates as many cognitive, psychological, social problems as it allegedly alleviates. There is an entirely new section titled "Will Religion Disappear?" The section "Varieties of Religious Organization" now discusses the complexities of attempting to classify the great variety of humanity's religions into only a few forms or categories.

The introductory discussion of art has been rewritten in Chapter 15 (art), otherwise the chapter is basically the same with the exception of the Global Challenges and Opportunities feature. 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.

Additions to Chapter 16 (ethnicity) include new and updated information on ethnic conflicts in the modern world.

Chapter 17 (world problems and the practice of anthropology) continues to discuss anthropological insights on health and health care, population growth, and world hunger. We have also updated the seemingly unending struggles of people like the San, Dongria Kondh, and Kayapo to protect their lands.

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 feature.

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 the chapters 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 where 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*, eleventh 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*, eleventh 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,* Fourth Edition.** Practical and insightful, *Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology,* fourth 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 fourth edition includes 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 book also addresses pressing topics such as globalization, ethnic violence, environmental issues, and more. *Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology,* fourth, 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 freestanding 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 not 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 eleventh edition, both authors thank the reviewers listed here (their identities were unknown to us until publication):

Frank Araujo, American River College
Leslie Berry, De Anza College
Heidi Bludau, Monmouth University
Deborah Boehm, University of Nevada, Reno
Sheilah Clarke Ekong, Univesity of Missouri, St. Louis
Michael Dietz, College of DuPage
Anna Dixon, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg
Phyllisa Eisentraut, Santa Barbara City College

Becky Floyd, Cypress College
Henri Gooren, Oakland University
Jean Hatcherson, Western Connecticut State University
Rachel Hoerman, University of Hawaii Manoa
Bennett Judkins, Southern Adventist University
Ruurdje Laarhoven, Hawaii Pacific University
Paul Langenwalter, Biola University
Vienna Lewin, North Central University
Aurolyn Luykx, University of Texas at El Paso
Paul McDowell, Santa Barbara City College
Krista Moreland, Bakersfield College
Kevin Pittle, Biola University
Maureen Salsitz, California State University, Fullerton; Cypress College; Orange Coast College
Suzanne Spencer-Wood, Oakland University
Erin Stiles, University of Nevada, Reno
Cindi Sturtzsreetharan, California State University, Sacramento
Scott Vandehey, Linfield College
Mary Vermillion, Saint Louis University
Stephen Wiley, Normandale Community College
Andrew Workinger, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
Stephen Zolvinski, Indian University Northwest

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 again thanks Thomas Love (Linfield College) for help with the text on energy in Chapter 7 and to Stacia Bensyl (Missouri Western State University) for assistance with Chapter 11. 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– Davis and the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, among other colleges and universities. He received a BA 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 BA in history from the University of Oklahoma and his MA and PhD 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

Michael Doolittle/The Image Works

Cultural anthropology is the discipline that studies human cultural diversity, usually by visiting people where they live and interacting with them firsthand.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. **LIST** the four major subfields of anthropology and describe their primary interests.
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 four 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 even 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 what many consider the good life? What are the implications of living in a world whose diverse peoples have recently become connected by global corporations and international communications? These are just a few questions investigated by **anthropology**, the academic discipline that studies all of humanity.

Almost everything about human beings interests anthropologists. We want to know when, where, and how humanity originated and how 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 originating in the Middle East hold to be unclean and prohibit eating. 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.

Anthropologists, then, study many different dimensions of humanity. 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 beliefs about the dead. No dimension of humankind, from skin color to dance traditions, falls outside the interests of anthropology.

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

Subfields of Anthropology

Obviously, no single anthropologist can master all these subjects. Therefore, most anthropologists specialize in one of four principal subfields: biological (or physical) anthropology, archaeology, cultural anthropology, and anthropological linguistics. (The Concept Review summarizes the primary interests of each subfield.) A fifth area, 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 Four Subfields of Anthropology

Physical/Biological	Comparisons of human anatomy and behavior with other primate species; physical (genetic) variation among human populations; biological evolution of *Homo sapiens*
Archaeology	Excavation of material remains in prehistoric sites to reconstruct early human ways of life; study of remains in historic sites to learn more about literate peoples
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 a twig into a termite mound to access insects for food.

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 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 holes in termite mounds. When termite soldiers locked their jaws onto the intruding objects, the chimps withdrew the probes and devoured the tasty insects. Goodall observed adult chimps teaching their young how to probe for termites, showing that humanity's closest animal relatives are capable of learning complex behaviors. Some chimpanzee groups wave tree branches in aggressive displays against other groups. Some wad up leaves to use as sponges to soak up drinking water. Working in West Africa, other researchers have observed some chimp groups using

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.

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 of chimpanzees and gorillas 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. Now that we know that toolmaking is not unique to humanity, we look at other reasons for human uniqueness.

Biological anthropologists also investigate **human variation**, studying how and why human populations vary physically due to genetically inherited differences. 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 such 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 exposed to sunlight, human skin manufactures vitamin D, a necessary nutrient. The melanin existing in human skin produces the color our eyes perceive as dark. High levels of melanin protect darker 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 living 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 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 to investigate 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 *Neandertal* 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 species separated.

Recent scientific work shows that the DNA of many modern humans resulted from our ancestors' interbreeding with now-extinct human species. Most people who are not African or African-derived have a small percentage of DNA from Neandertals. (Why not Africans too? Because Neandertal humans never lived in Africa.) Even more surprising is a 2016 finding that another extinct human species, called *Denisovan,* also interbred with the human branch now represented by you and me. Some Melanesian people of the southwestern Pacific have higher percentages of Denisovan DNA than people in other world regions. It is interesting (and food for thought) that the evolutionary line

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.

Gordon Gahan/National Geographic Creative

Paleoanthropologists use evidence from laboratory research on DNA as well as fossil discoveries. Here paleoanthropologist Richard Leakey collaborates with a Kenyan in piecing together the skull of a human ancestor.

that led to modern humans bore offspring with two other human lines that went extinct.

Decades ago, Neandertals were depicted as thickly muscled humans who walked upright but had only the rudiments of technology and culture. Today's paleoanthropologists have a different view and recent research suggests they made significant accomplishments. Most recently, in 2016 archaeologists published evidence that Neandertals living over 170,000 years ago constructed structures deep inside a cave in France. They broke off hundreds of stalagmites and arranged them into six roughly circular structures. The structures were over 1,000 feet from the cave's entrance, so the builders must have used fire to provide light for their constructions.

Back in 2003, researchers unearthed bones of an extinct human relative that was so short—around 4 feet tall—that they nicknamed it "the Hobbit." This species so far has been found only on Flores, a tiny island in Indonesia. In 2016, scientists announced the discovery of a jawbone and six teeth of another small human relative on the same island. These remains are about 700,000 years old, which makes them far too ancient to be a member of our own species. "Hobbits" might have descended from an earlier human ancestor and became smaller after migrating to Flores, due to the island's limited resources. Such dwarfism is well known among other species.

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) by 6 million years ago, but the date of this separation is likely to change with additional research.

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

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

Robert Brenner/PhotoEdit

Prehistoric archaeologists investigate humanity's ancient past by carefully excavating and analyzing material remains.

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 have also excavated and analyzed mass graves containing the remains of victims of assassination, hoping to identify them and determine the cause of their death.

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.

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.

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 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 archaeological excavations 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 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 7).

To investigate the past of societies in which some people could read and write, historians analyze written materials such as diaries, letters, land records, newspapers, and tax collection documents. **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 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 a third of the settlers were alive after nine months, 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 English 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 girl's head with several blows, splitting her skull, to remove the brain. Other cuts on her facial bones showed that facial tissues had been removed. Excavations in and around Jamestown 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 outlining 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.

Cultural Anthropology

Cultural anthropology (also called **sociocultural anthropology** and **social anthropology**) studies 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.)

As we will see in future chapters, cultural anthropologists study an enormous number of specific subjects, far too many to list. 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

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 human societies and cultures.

- Comparing diverse cultures to seek 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 nation

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 system. 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." (We have more to say about the processes and problems of fieldwork in Chapter 6.)

fieldwork Ethnographic research that involves observing and interviewing members of 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. 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 success of humanity.

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 LGBT and ethnicities), classes (ultrarich, working), and political persuasions (supporters of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders) use language to promote their political ideas and 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 vast and diverse 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, the world's people 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.* Prehistoric archaeologists investigate diversity in the distant 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?). Cultural anthropologists investigate 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 uses anthropological methods, theories, concepts, and insights to help public institutions or private enterprises deal with practical, real-world problems. Individuals in all subfields may do applied work—that is, work that contributes directly to problem solving in an organization. A few examples illustrate some of the work of applied anthropologists.

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 to help projects 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 is to help 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.

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.

Medical anthropology is a rapidly growing field, partly because physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers want to understand how cultural and social forces affect their ability to deliver services. Medical anthropologists usually are trained both in biological and cultural anthropology. They investigate the complex interactions among human health, nutrition, social context, and cultural beliefs and practices.

applied anthropology Subfield applying anthropological perspectives, theory, empirical knowledge of cultures, and methods to help assess and solve real-world problems; practitioners are often employed by a governmental agency or private organization.

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

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.

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 American Anthropological Association (AAA), which as mentioned above is the professional association of anthropologists. The AAA website provides information on jobs and careers that are suitable for those with an undergraduate degree in anthropology. Explore the www.americananthro.org site to find many resources for building a career in anthropology and to see the actual jobs obtained by those with a major in anthropology. An Internet search using the phrase "jobs in anthropology" returns many links, and a concise overview of the topic can be found at http://www.onedayonejob.com/majors/anthropology/.

More broadly, how can undergraduate training in anthropology help you build a career? 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 anthropology, from now on when we use the word *anthropology,* we refer to cultural anthropology unless otherwise stated.

Many people imagine that 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 and 1980s. 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.

Robin Nagle's engaging 2013 ethnography *Picking Up* is a study of New York City sanitation workers ("garbage collectors" to most of us). Nagle demonstrates the unsuspected job hazards and little-known skills of the men whose work is so essential in a wealthy country where citizens throw away so much stuff. Like many others who do fieldwork among wealthy industrial or postindustrial nations, Nagle exposes the complexity of the contributions of workers often taken for granted. One Amazon.com reviewer of *Picking Up*—referring to how the book reveals the importance of these "invisible"

jobs—suggested imagining city life without the discard work done by the men Nagle calls "garbage fairies"! Not only does Nagle teach anthropology at New York University; she also is the anthropologist-in-residence for the New York City Department of Sanitation.

Sometimes anthropologists conduct studies of immigrant communities in their own countries. Along with Australia, North America is a continent whose people are mostly descendants of immigrants with diverse ancestral homelands. Some immigrants of the last few decades are largely or partly assimilated, having adopted many of the customs and beliefs of citizens 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, some elderly Hmong who were first-generation immigrants speak little English, have large numbers of relatives living together in houses other Americans consider "single-family" dwellings, use their traditional methods of curing, and (allegedly) eat animals that Americans define as pets.

Likewise, 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 Somali community lives in central Ohio. Many Latinos speak "Spanglish" and continue to celebrate Latin festivals. Citizens whose ancestors came from Italy, Germany, Poland, Greece, and other parts of Europe recognize their national origins with festivals and food. Of course, so do people whose ancestors came from the British Isles, although most fail to recognize that they too have an ethnic heritage and identity. After all, they are not "minorities"!

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. 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.

Image Source/Getty Images

Globalization brings together people of different cultural backgrounds for international travel, education, and business. Learning about other cultures has increasing practical importance in modern global society.

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.

Scholars in disciplines like economics, political science, history, and sociology have researched and theorized about globalization. Most of their work concerns macro-level studies, 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.

Today, globalization and its consequences are one of the most important areas of anthropological work. What are its impacts on people of all nations? Is a global megaculture developing that will someday make all human cultures pretty much alike? In later chapters, we present many examples of such anthropological studies.

The Process of Globalization

Glowimages/Getty Images

Global markets connect the world's regions by trade in finished consumer products and raw materials. This plant in Recife, Brazil, produces fabrics later dyed and woven into clothing sold on the global market.

Stories about *globalization* appear daily in 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 regions 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. There are many current issues that lead to political conflicts, including violent ones. Should the rapidly industrializing countries be forced to enact environmental regulations to curb 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 due to factories located half a world away? How much do modernization and Westernization threaten cultural heritages, and does this affect the rise of religious extremism? Should South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern countries do anything about the flow of information from Western nations in order to protect their cultural traditions? 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 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,

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

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 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

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.

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, 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.

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—products extracted directly from nature, such as oil, food, metals, lumber, and other raw materials from wells, 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 has globalized. 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 more developed countries. Whole industries have relocated. For example, the American clothing and shoe industries have almost disappeared, their factories replaced by those in China, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Brazil, and other countries with far cheaper labor. Other industries that have moved offshore are toys and consumer electronics. Some say the globalization of factory production is leading to a decline in income among middle-class families in Europe and North America and is largely responsible for the growing disparity of income and wealth in those regions. It also contributes significantly to the discontent and even despair among working-class people who experience wage stagnation and decline and perceive that the chances of better lives for their children are threatened by "others."

Second, international migration, study abroad, tourism, and the Internet are increasing two-way cultural exchanges. Most people think the media are transmitting the "culture" and "tastes" of the West to the rest of the world. One concern is that the North American and European culture (the West) will eventually destroy national and local traditions. However, millennials know that anime, manga, and K-pop have been transmitted in the opposite direction. Will a global cultural melting pot emerge?

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 three or four decades. In the remainder of this book, we discuss globalization in feature 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."

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 actions such 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. It may be necessary for the culture itself to persist. Mild ethnocentrism—meaning that people are committed to certain values but do not 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.*

Relativism may seem like a simple concept. However, consider what happened recently among a people called Jarawa. Numbering around 400, they live on South Andaman Island, now a part of India. India wanted to help the Jarawa retain their ancient ways, free from the interference of wealthier and more powerful outsiders. The Indian government set aside a forest reserve of 300 square miles so the Jarawa could continue to gather and hunt the wild products of the forest. Unfortunately, poachers entered the reserve, and one of them impregnated a young woman, who gave birth to a boy who was notably lighter skinned than his tribe mates. (The poacher later was arrested for rape.) Previously, Jarawa had been known to kill "mixed blood" infants born from liaisons with outsider fathers. A Jarawa man killed the infant. Indian prosecutors refused to prosecute the Jarawa killer, saying that he was acting to preserve the purity of his "race" and the cultural integrity of his tribe. In real situations like this one, does the relativistic perspective apply? How far should it be taken?

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.

Kablonk RM/Golden Pixels LLC/Alamy

Because of globalization, people of different nationalities and cultural traditions interact through international travel, transnational education, and business. Learning about other cultures is increasingly important for practical, pragmatic purposes in the twenty-first century.

This example illustrates how easy it is to misunderstand 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 routinely appear bare-breasted in public, eating grubs, animal sacrifices, and comparable customs and actions are common among some peoples. Unqualified condemnations of such customs or beliefs have no place in anthropological research or in anthropological writings.

However, to many, the term *relativism* means "anything goes" with respect to the behavior of people in another culture or ethnic group. *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 not only the morality but also the long-term societal 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 non-heterosexual relationships erodes family values and endangers national unity. Many believe that public schools should teach patriotism and traditional morality. Some 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. 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. In 2016, when people were killed and injured by attacks in Brussels, Belgium, and in Orlando, Florida, anthropologists were as horrified as most other people.

One of the main ways the relativistic perspective affects anthropological views on such events is that we seek to understand the historical background and cultural context that contributed to them. Another is that we do not simply assign blame to the culture or religion for the actions of the individuals responsible because most members of that culture or believers in that religion do not engage in such actions. A third way is that anthropologists tend to examine practices and beliefs in their own homelands rather than assuming that their own way of life is best.

Unfortunately, the issues are not as simple in practice as the conceptual distinction between methodological

and moral relativism implies. An example will illustrate. Most people have heard of the custom of *female genital mutilation* (FGM) (sometimes mislabeled "female circumcision"). The practice is widespread (but far from universal) in some regions of northern Africa and southwest Asia. 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, issues of relativism are especially complicated.

How should anthropologists view this custom? Should 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 genital mutilation is not comparable to customs that 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 surgeries to increase or reduce the size of breasts, hip and thigh liposuction, facelifts, and various piercings from female genital mutilation? Is it that they are voluntary? If so, then when a North African woman consents to her procedure, does her consent make the custom acceptable? If a woman feels so constrained by the ideals of beauty as defined by the culture in which she grew up, is it *unambiguously* true that surgery to make her body conform to ideals of beauty and attractiveness 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 circumcision as just as morally objectionable as the deaths and suffering caused by female genital mutilation?

Answers to such questions are not 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 a (Western) anthropologist witnesses customs like female genital mutilation that clearly cause harm, it is difficult to remain morally neutral. In such cases, we usually examine the custom holistically and in its historical context, which often helps us understand the conditions that led to it.

We also should consider comparable practices (such as expensive and painful surgeries to improve attractiveness) that might have a similar character or function within our own culture. We might note that "we" sometimes do similar things as "them." Perhaps we have trouble recognizing the similarity because we are familiar with our own practices, so we need also to examine ourselves when we condemn others. Such a critical look at one's own culture is another dimension of the relativistic perspective.

Such considerations do 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 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 have 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 officeholders 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 do not even apply terms 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 troglodytes* (chimpanzees), many people still do not believe that humans are related to apes—another reason 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 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, provided factual evidence showing that biological differences and cultural differences are independent of each other. Margaret Mead's 1928 book *Coming of Age in Samoa* 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 that it was mainly anthropologists who developed these understandings.

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's impacts on world travel, international migration, multinational business, and conflicts based on ethnic or religious differences. Reducing ethnocentric opinions will not solve the world's problems, 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.

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 cannot figure out why the salesperson thinks they can do business before they have become better acquainted. A manager from a German firm may give unintentional offense when he shoves the business card just formally handed him by 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, a value that often manifests itself as deep respect for teachers. A Euro-American 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? Do people in other cultures share the same kinds of problems, hopes, motivations, and feelings as you do? Or are they 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 those of people who live elsewhere? Anthropology offers the chance to compare yourself to other peoples who live in different circumstances. In learning about others, anthropologists hope that students gain new perspectives on themselves.

SUMMARY

1. **List the four major subfields of anthropology and their primary interests.** 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 other dimensions of human life.

3. **Explain some of the practical uses of anthropology in solving human problems.** Anthropologists apply the insights gained from the concepts, data, methods, and theories of their field to solve real-world problems in areas such 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 four 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.** 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. Anthropologists discovered most existing, reliable knowledge about human evolution, prehistoric populations, and indigenous peoples. 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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To anthropologists, culture means the knowledge and behavior patterns that people socially learn while growing up in a particular society or group. This young woman's tattoos and hair are part of her way of defining her identity and communicate meanings to other persons.

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 or read it almost every day. Often it means that some individuals are "more cultured" than others. For example, we might think that some people 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 sitcoms, TV reality shows, action-adventure movies, rap music, tattoos and other body art, such as body piercings. Maybe you use people's speech habits or clothing styles as grounds 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 apply the term in a different way. In the anthropological conception, it is almost meaningless to claim that one group of people has more culture or is 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* or according to what *standards*? 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 also 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 would eventually become cultural anthropology. In Tylor's 1871 book *Primitive Culture,* he pulled together much of the available information about the peoples of other lands (that is, places other than Europe). His definition of culture is often considered the earliest modern conception of the term. Tylor (1871, p. 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 the broadness of this definition. Culture includes almost everything about a particular people's 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 does not learn some culture would not be considered normal by others

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

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 Iranians, Vietnamese, and Indians think and act. The phrase "Japanese culture" concisely emphasizes these differences. To refer to "the" culture of a people is to 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 English culture. We mean only that the three differ in certain identifiable ways. Anthropologists also do not mean that Japanese, French, or English culture is unchanging. We mean only that they remain in some ways distinct despite the changes they have experienced over the years from historical contacts and globalization. Above all, anthropologists do not mean that Japanese, French, and English 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 English because of their upbringing in different social environments.

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, thoughts and actions 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 interact and are interdependent. 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 clarify 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 what to say. Your speech 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, females, and other gender identities
- 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)
- Perceptions of the world, both natural and social

This list could be expanded to include all other knowledge that 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.*

Behavior includes all the things people regularly do, or how they habitually act. *Regularly* and *habitually* imply that 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, usually we are more interested in **patterns of behavior** than in the behaviors

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

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

of particular individuals, which might be idiosyncratic. To avoid repetition, we sometimes use the terms *behavior* and *actions* as synonyms for *patterns of behavior.*

Defining Culture

It is useful to have a formal and fairly precise definition of *culture:*

> **Culture** is the *shared, socially learned knowledge* and *patterns of behavior* characteristic of some group of people.

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

Shared

Culture is *collective*—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. Individuals who share the same culture usually do not have to explain their intentions or actions to one another so as to avoid cultural misunderstandings.

The characteristic that "some group of people" shares culture is intentionally imprecise. 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, have only a couple hundred members, yet the people speak a unique language and have distinct customs and beliefs.

We often assume that people who share a common culture are members of the same nation-state (country). Identifying a cultural tradition with a single nation is sometimes convenient because it allows us to use phrases like "Canadian culture" and "Chinese culture." The identification of culture and country is reasonably 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, the giant neighbor of South Korea and Japan, the People's Republic of China, recognizes 56 minority peoples, some of whom have traditional homelands within China that are labeled "Autonomous Regions" on maps.

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.

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. 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. France at one point legally banned the headscarves worn by many Muslim women.

European resentments increased greatly in late 2015 when tens of thousands of Syrians fleeing conflict in their homeland became refugees in many European countries. Are a few of them Islamic terrorists? Will they take our jobs or lower our wages? Can our social safety net support them? Will they follow our laws or undermine our culture?

In addition to increasing diversity within most nations today, there are other complexities of the word *shared*. Individuals have a **cultural identity**, meaning that they define themselves partly by the cultural group in which they were raised or with which they identify. Your cultural identity helps define who you are, along with your ideas about your gender, race, and other features.

culture The shared, socially learned knowledge and patterns of behavior characteristic of some group of people.

cultural identity Cultural tradition a group of people recognizes as its 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.

Yet cultural identity is complicated: If you are African American, you may feel 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 Euro-Americans in how you think and act, you might still identify with others 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 contrast with traits that define other identities (see Chapter 16).

For such reasons, confounding "culture" with "nation" is simplistic: Many cultural groupings and identities 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, Northern 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 them, like Episcopalians and Southern Baptists. The word *subculture* often is applied to people based on sexual orientation, as in LGBT 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 complicated: 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, western Europe with East Asia, English with French, Cherokee with Anglo, North with South, Catholic with Methodist. In most cases, the context of the discussion adequately defines the level contrasted.

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

The word *subculture* is often applied 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, saying that "culture is shared by some group of people" is not a simple matter. In the global society of the twenty-first century, 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 do not invent their culture, no more than each generation invents its own language. Rather, the members of any given generation learn their culture from previous generations. In time, they 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.

The process by which infants and children learn the culture of those around them is called **socialization** or **enculturation**. Learning one's culture 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* implies that it is not transmitted to new generations through biological reproduction. Culture does not grow out of a people's gene pool or biological makeup, but is something the people born into that group develop 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.*

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

- Intentional instruction by others, such as family members and teachers
- Observation and imitation of the behavior of others, such as peers and role models
- Listening and other forms of communication
- Inference, or figuring out things on their own from what they already know from previous instruction, observation, and communication

Notice that the first three methods depend on social interactions, whereas the fourth results from rational thought, emotional responses, and some degree of introspection and awareness of one's individuality.

As an infant, you did not learn what is good to eat primarily by trying out a variety of things that might be edible and then rejecting things that tasted bad or made you sick. 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 socially 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). By this process of repeated social learning over many generations, knowledge accumulates. People alive today live largely from the knowledge acquired and transmitted by previous

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

Is Everyone Becoming a Westerner?

As interactions between the world's nations become more frequent, their impacts differ widely. People concerned about these impacts have varied opinions on what the future holds for cultural diversity on our planet.

Some fear (although others hope) that the cultures of the most wealthy and militarily powerful regions will eventually become globally dominant, gradually displacing other traditions. Many North Americans see evidence of this trend when they travel to places like East Asia or India and find businesses like McDonald's or KFC thriving. This is what many Middle Eastern political and religious leaders fear as they ban movies with scantily clad women. Some wealthy European countries like Italy and France are concerned that the American consumer culture is overwhelming their national traditions. Some see the international marketing of products as cultural imperialism, with companies from the United States usually identified as the main perpetrators—although Nokia (Finland), Nestlé (Switzerland), Samsung (South Korea), Panasonic (Japan), De Beers (South Africa), ASUS (Taiwan), and other companies with global markets and advertising also are quite involved.

CHRIS MARTINEZ/Newscom/La Opinion/Los Angeles

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

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.

An alternative is that new cultural forms and understandings will arise out of increased contacts between peoples that result from travel and migration. International travel for tourism and 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 now destination countries for migrants. Large numbers of people from former colonies have immigrated to nations like France (Algerians) and Britain (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, 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 eventually outvoted) by immigrants. They wonder whether "those people" can or even want to be culturally assimilated. Those who

generations. Even "innovators," who often receive much credit and reward, build off what previous generations have learned and socially transmitted. They recombine existing things and ideas into something new—no easy task and also not entirely "their" idea.

Third, because culture is socially learned, human groups are capable of changing their ideas and behaviors very rapidly. Biological evolution (resulting from genetic change) 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 of a human population to be massively transformed. Furthermore, your genetic makeup is fixed at conception. During the course of your life,

continue to speak their native tongues are especially suspect. Others who are more sympathetic to diversity enjoy the new choices in food, films, and music that immigrants bring with them, believing that immigration culturally enriches their nations.

Globalization has other effects. In some countries, people feel culturally and economically 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 Islamic Middle East, but they should be aware that similar reactions are occurring in their own nations.)

In countries with large numbers of immigrants, sometimes newcomers are culturally and linguistically assimilated into the majority or so-called mainstream. Future generations may not be recognized as immigrants nor consider themselves such. Or, 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. In large North American cities, these include Chinatowns, Koreatowns, "little Mexicos," and so forth. Programmers and software engineers from India work in California's Silicon Valley and other places. To find spouses, many of them go online to connect with people they have never met. They might ask their parents in their ancestral region to set up meetings with suitable husbands or wives for 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.

Thus, globalization has diverse impacts. There is no point in trying to predict 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 with the observable trappings of culture rather than with *culture* as anthropologists usually use the term. For example, McDonald's originated in the United States, but does its presence in Japan and South Korea threaten those cultures? Do Honda manufacturing plants in the Midwest threaten American culture? If you are an American citizen, did you feel your culture was endangered 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, and so on) 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 such as bread, steak, potatoes, and peas originated in other places. Although corn, tomatoes, beans, and chilies originated in North America, those of us with European ancestry learned about them from the original Native Americans. Many features of most cultures came from somewhere else or arose of various mixtures from various places, so borrowing from foreigners and/or combining foreign features to create new things is more common that most realize.

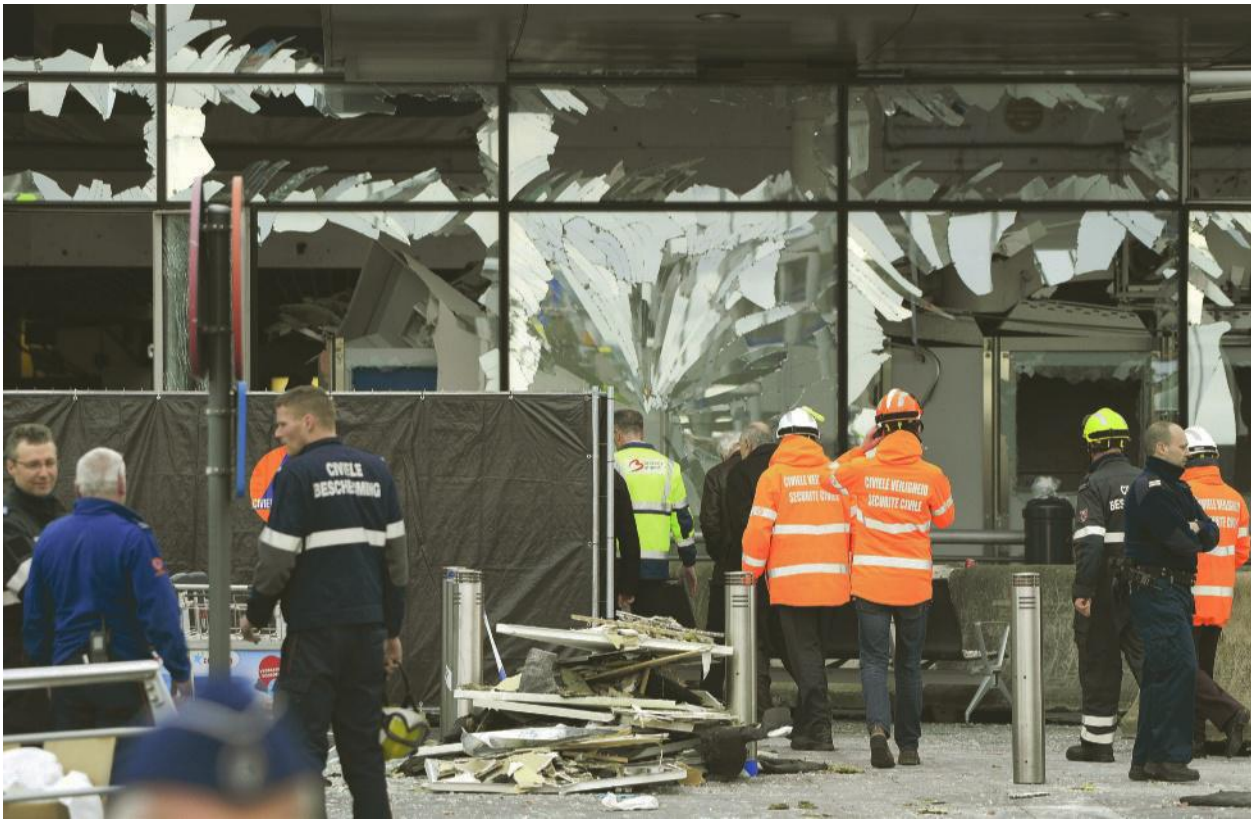
Finally, it is worth countering the common opinion that the transmission of the material manifestations of culture has been in only one direction—from the West to the Rest. Certainly, Western movies and music are popular in most of the world, as are Western fashions, cosmetics, and a host of other trappings. But similar things have moved in the other direction. Japanese anime and manga, karaoke, sushi, and horror movies have made it big among North American young people. Indian and Chinese movies, shisha or hookah smoking from the Middle East, East Asian martial arts and tai chi, tattoos featuring Chinese characters, and salsa dancing and music also are very popular. 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). 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 and remains popular in the United States, and even more so in Japan and Taiwan

Are you feeling threatened yet?

however, your ideas and actions are able (and 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.

Social learning has a downside, too. For reasons no one fully understands, sometimes ideas and beliefs arise that lead some to harm or even kill other people. In 1995, in Japan the members of a "cult" called Aum Shinrikyo released a nerve gas in five trains at rush hour, injuring



YORICK JANSENS/AFP/Getty Images

Belgian officers inspect the airport in Brussels, where three simultaneous terrorist attacks on March 23, 2016, killed 31 people. Brussels is the headquarters of the European Union and ISIS may have chosen it as part of an effort to weaken the EU.

over 5,000 and killing 12 people. 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, Al Qaeda terrorists crashed airplanes into the Twin Towers of New York City's World Trade Center, as well as into the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Nearly 3,000 people were killed that day. On December 14, 2012, a 20-year-old man killed 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Even more people died in 2007 when a student killed 32 in a mass shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. In March 2016, 31 people were killed and about 300 injured in an attack at two locations in Brussels, Belgium. ISIS claimed two of its members as the perpetrators. And in Orlando, Florida, in June 2016, 49 people were killed and another 53 were wounded by a man who had pledged allegiance to ISIS.

None of these people 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 beliefs and 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 for real or imagined past wrongs, or against groups perceived as threatening, or to achieve some greater good. Sometimes, beliefs not only harm other people, but also the individuals who accept them. The men who guided the 9/11 aircraft died, as did the mass murderers in Newtown, San Bernardino, and Orlando. The individuals who commit acts of terror commonly commit suicide.

Knowledge

By *cultural knowledge*, anthropologists 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 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.

- 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.

Patterns of Behavior

As everyone knows, 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:* gender identities, 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 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, in the 1980s had you visited a certain area of the Amazonian rain forest and encountered a people called the Yanomamö, you might have been shocked by some of their actions. By most cultures' standards, the Yanomamö 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 each other on the chest, alternating one blow at a time. More serious quarrels sometimes call for clubs, with which men bash each other 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 Yanomamö and Semai people illustrate an important characteristic of most human behavior: its social nature. Humans are supremely social animals, interacting with others throughout most of our lives in patterned social relationships. Anthropologists give special attention to the regularities of these patterned relationships, including things such 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 Yanomamö 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 Yanomamö, 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. Actually, though, anthropologists do not consider some things to be cultural that most other people do. For example,

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

CONCEPT REVIEW Components of Cultural Knowledge

Component	Brief Definition	Examples
Norms	Standards of propriety and appropriateness	Expected behaviors at weddings and in classrooms
Values	Beliefs about social desirability and worth	Individual rights; work ethic
Symbols	Objects and behaviors with arbitrary and conventional meanings	Interpretations of nonverbal behavior; meanings of sacred objects
Classifications and Constructions of Reality	Divisions of reality into categories and subcategories	Kinds of persons; divisions of nature into kinds of plants and animals
Worldviews	Interpretations of events and experiences	Origin and content of good and evil; fate of soul in afterlife

many anthropologists do not see architecture and art objects 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, art expresses a culture's values, ideals of beauty, conflicts, worldviews, and so forth. Houses and public buildings are products of a people's family life, sexual practices, political organization, ideas of beauty and symmetry, religious beliefs, and status distinctions. Many anthropologists do not even see writing as part of culture. 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 largely on how we choose to define culture. Different definitions serve different purposes: One or another is useful only for *some* purposes. Here we consider shared knowledge and behavioral patterns as the essence of culture, but we could define *culture* in such a way that it includes material objects (like tools, art, and architecture).

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

Cultural Knowledge

Cultural knowledge includes beliefs, attitudes, rules, assumptions about the world, and other kinds of information stored in our brains. In this section, we discuss only five elements of cultural knowledge: norms, values, symbols, classifications and 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 a few words.

Norms

Norms are shared ideas 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 *ought, should,* and *situations.* The fact 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.

Any culture includes hundreds or thousands of norms. People are not consciously aware of many of them. (For example, the next time you interact with

someone, try standing closer than "normal" and observe their reaction.) Sometimes people feel that norms are irrational, arbitrary rules that stifle their creativity or keep them from doing what they want for no reason—other than that society disapproves. 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 social gatherings where you do not know many people, you may feel awkward or nervous. But in your culture people know how to introduce themselves, so soon you are telling others who you are and asking other guests what they do, what they are studying, and where they are from. 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 guides to how to do something in such a way that others know what you are doing and accept your actions as normal rather than thinking you are strange.

Values

Values refer to beliefs about the way of life that is desirable for 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. At the level of individuals, 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. One way to think of values is that they provide important 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, as suicide bombers illustrate.

Although people may say they cherish their values, it is easy to overemphasize their importance in real people's lives. For one thing, to uphold one value sometimes leads us to neglect others (e.g., people who value career enhancement may be less available to their families, although they value those relationships also). For another, our personal interests can lead us to ignore or downplay some values in some situations (e.g., people who value honesty may still believe that it is acceptable to be less forthcoming in competitive business situations). Also, 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 those accused of crimes have rights to a speedy trial and an attorney. But perceived threats from people accused of terrorism 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 should a nation do when national security seems to conflict with upholding human rights? To say that values are shared does not mean that everyone gives them the same importance. And which values apply often depends on situational rather than absolute factors.

Many disagreements about public policy arise from how much weight people place on one of their values as opposed to other values. "Something" should be done about undocumented immigrants, but should 11 million people be rounded up and sent back to their birth countries? To prevent new ones from entering the United States, should the government build a wall across the southern border?

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 placed on marriage, which some consider the bedrock of society. But recent trends lead to questions about who can marry whom, what rights are involved with alternative marriages, and which unions should be legally recognized. In April 2016, North Carolina legislated that individuals can only use the public restrooms of their birth gender, to deter trans people from using the alternative restroom. Many states have legislated that businesses cannot be forced to provide services in support of acts that violate their religious beliefs, such as making wedding cakes or issuing marriage licenses for gays and lesbians even if same-sex marriage is legal in that state. Perhaps you know of older people who favor only traditional marriage and family but whose opinion changes when one of their children comes out.

Most Americans hold strong 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 provides their children a head start in life. Yet shouldn't people be allowed to give their wealth to their children if they so choose? It

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

is their *private property* (another value), but children who inherit large amounts of property have done nothing to earn it—which conflicts with values about working for what you have.

Symbols

Symbols are things (like objects or an actions) that represent, connote, or call to mind something else. Just as we learn norms and values during socialization, 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.

For the most part, people's shared understandings about the meanings of actions and objects are unconscious. Contrast this to values: We can speak to inquiring strangers about 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 have shared understandings of 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.

Many symbols are objects that stand for something important or sacred: a flag, a cross, a wedding ring, a religious text. Other symbolic objects have practical uses or functions, in the sense that they are useful in everyday life: not only expensive cars, enormous houses, gaudy jewelry, and clothing styles have practical uses but also 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 in 1967 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 slain soldiers, public buildings, 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 is 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. Menorahs are meaningful to Jews, as are headscarves to Muslims. Some Japanese continue to revere their emperor, even though the emperor himself renounced his divinity in 1945.

Symbols are critical to meaningful social interactions. 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. Because you assume that most 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. 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 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

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

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 parents could tell when you were lying?)

One 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. You would signal "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" by wrinkling your nose, rather than by shrugging your shoulders.

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.

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.

Lane Oatey/Blue Jean Images/Getty Images

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 recognize that these two young women are just friends.

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 term 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.

Natural Reality

How a people divide up plants, animals, landscape features, seasons, and other dimensions of the natural world is culturally constructed. As just one example, the Hanunóo, an indigenous people of the tropical forests of the Philippines, identify 1,600 kinds of plants. They distinguish 400 more "kinds" of forest plants than a botanist would. The Hanunóo 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 Hanunóo wrong,

classification of reality (cultural construction of reality) The ways in which the members of a culture divide up the natural and social world into categories, usually linguistically encoded.

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, an animal that is sacred to them. The fact that a given animal or plant is edible does not mean that people *consider* it edible (otherwise more North Americans would eat dogs, as do many East and Southeast Asians, and horses, as do some 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, but they also differ on what reality *is:* One culture's definition of reality may not be the same as that of another culture.

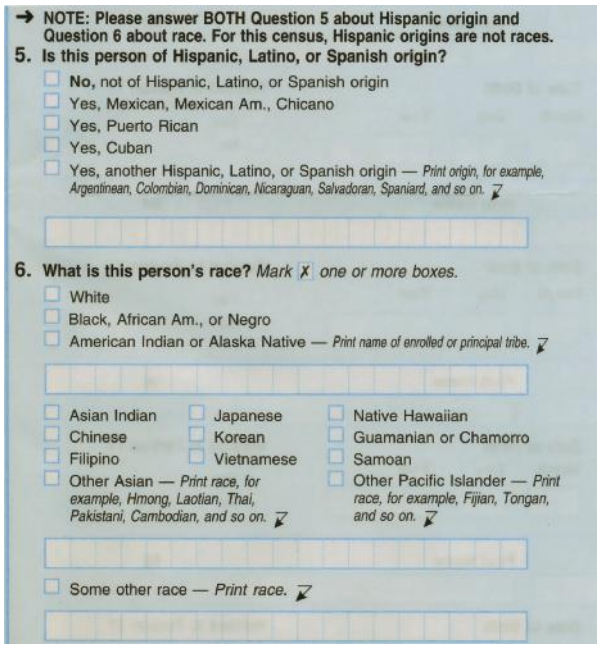
Social Reality

Countless generations of people in a particular culture found ways of ordering and classifying phenomena into categories. However, human senses can be misleading: The Earth is not truly flat although it appears to be from ordinary perceptions; the sun only appears to move across the sky; rocks are not completely solid; life forms change, but too slowly for humans to notice in their lifetime. Only in the last few centuries have systematic observations and experiments allowed scientists to realize the limitations of our sensory impressions.

In addition to natural phenomena, human beings also make cultural constructions of 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.

Most people assume that race is a natural category—determined by an individual's genes, easily visible, and mostly obvious. If people cannot 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. (Figure 2.1 illustrates the complexity and confusion surrounding racial classification.) Thus, President Barack Obama is the first black U.S. president, although his mother was white. (Incidentally, the late Ann Dunham Soetoro was a cultural anthropologist who did fieldwork in Pakistan and Indonesia.) Even if we are born and live in a place that is racially homogeneous, we can observe racial differences by visiting almost any large city. Race certainly seems natural.

Most anthropologists disagree. They argue that race is not, in fact, a 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? (For simplicity, from now on we will use the term *race* without quotation marks with the understanding that the term connotes a cultural construction.)



→ **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
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Other Asian — *Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.*
- ☐ 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. In item 5, the form correctly does not equate "Hispanic origin" with "race." However, notice that there are 12 "races" specifically listed in item 6, and others are lumped together as "other Asian" or "other Pacific Islander." Presumably, if you fall into one of these two categories, 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 say people are the same or different races, 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 factor, and other characteristics) would produce 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 lactase. Culturally, we define some physical features as relevant (we consider them *significant*) whereas others are unrecognized (unperceived) or irrelevant. In short, the 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 in earlier days were 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 physically 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*! The villagers recognized distinctions between themselves that outsiders did not see, not only revealing their cultural constructions but suggesting that other peoples' racial categories might also be constructed.

Fourth, racial classifications change over time even within the same cultural tradition. In the Americas, people who today are seen as racially indistinguishable 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. Further, many viewed Jewish people as a distinct racial group, even though Judaism is a religion. Such distinctions may 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 race or grouped with other populations into a single racial type or how many human races exist.
- Different cultures identify different numbers and kinds of races, raising doubts about the biological reality of any given culture's racial categories.
- Even within a single society or nation, the definition of race changes over time.

So, do some anthropologists deny that there are physical differences between populations whose ancestors originated in different continents? No. To claim that races are culturally constructed is not to deny biological/genetic realities. However, it does deny that these differences cluster in such a way that they produce categories of people who consistently differ in the same biological ways (i.e., races).

Individual human beings differ from one another physically in a multitude of visible and invisible ways. If races—as most people define them—are real biological entities, then people of African ancestry would share a wide variety of traits while people of European ancestry would share a wide variety of *different* traits. But once we add traits that are less visible than skin coloration, hair texture, and the like, we find that the people we identify as the same race are less and less like one another and more and more like people we identify as different races. Add to this point that the physical features used to identify a person as a representative of some race (e.g., skin coloration) are continuously variable, so that one cannot say where brown skin becomes white skin. Although the physical differences themselves are real, the way we use physical differences to classify people into discrete races is a cultural construction.

For these and other reasons, most anthropologists agree that race is more of a cultural construction than a biological reality. Indeed, the American Anthropological Association recommended (unsuccessfully) eliminating

the word *race* from the 2010 U.S. census. The American Anthropological Association has an excellent website that portrays conceptions of human differences: http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html

Why does it matter whether race is a cultural construction rather than a biological reality? As long as people can avoid viewing some races as inferior to others, why is it so important that we see race as a cultural construction?

For one thing, once a culture classifies people into kinds or types, it is difficult to avoid ranking the types according to some measure of quality or inborn talent. Familiar qualities include intelligence, work ethic, athletic ability, and musical talent. Some people believe Asians are naturally smart and work hard, whereas African Americans are better natural athletes, dancers, and musicians. From such seemingly innocent stereotypes, we too easily conclude that it is natural talent that puts many Asians near the top of their class and explains why so many African Americans succeed in athletics, dance, and music.

Another reason to view race as culturally constructed is that doing so helps to avoid confusing race with other kinds of differences that have nothing to do with physical differences. Most North Americans do not distinguish—at least not consistently—differences due to race from differences due to language, national origin, or cultural background. The latter differences, of course, are based on culture and/or language, not on physical characteristics. Too easily, *race* is confused with *ethnicity*. For example, many people view Native American and Hispanic as the same kind of identity as race. But Hispanics may be black or white or brown or any other humanly possible color, and many people who identify themselves as Native Americans based on their origins and culture are indistinguishable physically from Americans with European ancestry.

Last, race is currently a part of the way people identify themselves to one another. It is an important part of an individual's social identity. Another person's perception of you—and your perception of yourself—is affected by your assumed membership in some racial category. Such identities often carry racial pride. Racial pride may be a positive force in the lives of people who have suffered the effects of prejudice and discrimination, as older African Americans who were part of the 1960s Black Power movement will appreciate. Yet racial pride cuts both ways, as those familiar with the beliefs and activities of the Aryan Nation and other such groups dedicated to maintaining racial purity know.

Political leaders and opinion shapers in the popular media can and do manipulate the opinions of one race about other races to further their own political and social agendas. Playing on racial prejudice to win votes needs to be subtle, lest candidates and opinion shapers be charged with racism. But there are code words that may signal true intent: The "welfare queens" of the 1980s have become "people who want free stuff."

Worldviews

The **worldview** of a people is the way they interpret reality and events, including their images of themselves and how they relate to the world around them. Worldviews are affected by cultural constructions of reality, which we have just discussed. But worldviews include more than just the way a culture carves up people and nature into "kinds."

People have opinions about the nature of the cosmos and how they fit into it. All cultures include beliefs about spiritual souls and what happens to souls after bodies become lifeless in this world. People have ideas about the meaning of human existence: how we were put on Earth, who or what put us here, and why. They have notions of evil: where it comes from, why it sometimes happens to good people, and how it can be combated. They have beliefs about what supernatural powers or beings are like, what they can do for (or to) people, and how people can worship or control them. Everywhere we find myths and legends about the origins of living things, objects, and customs. (We have more to say about such topics in Chapter 14.)

These examples all derive from a people's religion. But it is important not to confuse worldview and religion, and especially not to think that *religion* and *worldview* are synonymous. Although religious beliefs do influence the worldview of a people, cultural traditions vary in aspects of worldview that we do not ordinarily think of as religious.

For instance, the way people view their place in nature is part of their worldview: Do they see themselves as the masters and conquerors of nature, or as living in harmony with natural forces? The way people view themselves and other peoples is part of their worldview. Do they see themselves, as many human groups do, as the only true human beings and all others as essentially animals? Or do they see their way of life as one among many equally human but different ways of life? Most modern scientists share a similar

worldview The ways in which people interpret reality and events, including how they see themselves relating to the world around them.

worldview: They believe that all things and events in the universe have natural causes that we can discover through certain formal procedures of observation, experimentation, and systematic logic.

Atheists also have a worldview: Nothing supernatural created the universe and our planet, and everything now works automatically and mechanically, with no divine input necessary. Many religious persons claim that such beliefs can lead to disbelief in absolute moral standards—with no divine guidance, "anything goes," they fear. Atheists and agnostics respond that human well-being and social responsibility can serve equally well as a moral compass and that some of history's worst tragedies have been caused by religion and hatreds derived from religion.

Origins of Culture

Like so much else about our early past, when humanity began to depend on culture is uncertain. Most anthropologists think the essence of culture—without which everything else cultural could not exist—is the ability to create and understand symbols. If meanings are arbitrary and conventional, that implies a highly developed ability to distinguish the meanings of objects and behaviors from their outward forms. Dating the development of the ability to understand symbols would then imply that culture was present. But how to determine when humanity developed this capacity?

It is difficult to know whether some long-gone people had the ability to create and understand symbols. For example, artifacts like spear points were made for practical purposes—that is, to provide something useful like food or shelter. Tools are not necessarily symbolic, as shown by the fact that other animals make and use them. Decades ago, toolmaking was seen as the hallmark of humanity, but evidence that apes and other animals make tools debunked this idea (see Chapter 1). Painting or carving representations of nature and people would be evidence of symbol use. Famous caves in France and Spain contain impressive paintings of mammals and human handprints. However, these are no earlier than about 40,000 years ago.

If music making could be identified, that too could be evidence of symbols. In June 2009, a team of archaeologists reported the earliest known musical instrument. About 35,000 to 40,000 years ago, a prehistoric group living in what is now southwestern Germany made a flute from the wing bone of a vulture. The flute had at least five fingering holds that produced different notes, and the makers modified one end of the bone to make it into a better mouthpiece. The technique for making the flutes seemed highly developed, suggesting that flute-making skills developed even earlier. Why people would make a musical instrument is subject to speculation. One commentator suggests that these early inhabitants of Europe "produced symbolic objects that embodied complex beliefs shared by a larger community of individuals" (Adler, 2009, p. 696). If so, then the instruments, and perhaps music itself, requires the mental ability to create and understand symbols.

From Africa, archaeologists uncovered evidence that strongly suggest even earlier symbolic capacity from at least 80,000 years ago. These discoveries included beads, a form of art, and evidence of sophisticated transmission of knowledge that suggests language.

In 2007, archaeologists reported evidence that early *Homo sapiens* from North Africa created objects that carried a meaning beyond their physical properties. An international team of archaeologists excavated marine shell beads that ancient people of Morocco manufactured around 82,000 years ago. Many beads were perforated and had wear patterns indicating that they had been strung and worn on the body. Some were coated with a mineral, red ochre, showing that the makers altered the natural color of the shells. It is highly probable that people were decorating their bodies with the beads, implying that others understood the beads as symbols of beauty, status, family or group identity, or the like. The beads communicated meanings that were not determined by their appearance or other physical properties. That is, the beads were symbols.

From a site in southern Africa comes more evidence of symbolic capacity. At a cave on the South African coast known as Blombos, prehistoric people incised lines in crisscross patterns on ochre rocks. Archaeologists working there found abalone shells in which remains of processed (ground and powdered) ochre were stored. They also found 70 marine shells that had been perforated and strung on a cord to produce a necklace or similar ornament. These remains are between 70,000 and 100,000 years old.

In 2012, archaeologists published findings about a site on the South African coast dated to about 71,000 years ago. Here ancient people used fire to heat the mineral *silcrete.* Heat-treating made it easier to flake stone stools accurately and finely, allowing the manufacture of tiny stone tools called *microliths*, an inch or less in length. Several microliths were attached to a bone or wooden shaft with cords and/or sticky pitch. When thrown or thrust, the sharp edges of the microlith penetrated the hides of animals more efficiently than a single stone point attached only to the tip of a spear. To manufacture microliths, the prehistoric